Philosophy as a Way of Life

Ancients and Moderns

Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot

WILEY Blackwell

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Edited by

Michael Chase
Stephen R. L. Clark
Michael McGhee

WILEY Blackwell

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Foreword

John H. Spencer

Philosophy, the love of wisdom, has many branches reaching out from its elusive primordial center, but these manifold paths may seem to be rather pointless mental excursions unless we simultaneously strive for self-knowledge and seek the best possible ways to live our lives. Unfortunately, suggesting that philosophical inquiry should be guided by an unwavering desire for wisdom, or that it could lead to profound self-transformation, is not likely to win one many friends at most academic conferences. Why has the profession of philosophy generally eschewed the idea of the philosophical life, and why has it become so far removed from its historical roots? The reasons are complex, but a brief and partial response would note that several influential analytic philosophers in the last century rejected deep metaphysical exploration and shunned ancient philosophy in general. With a misplaced desire to mimic their parochial and often distorted view of the sciences, they essentially restricted the aims of philosophy to mere linguistic or logical analysis. Such approaches to certain types of questions can be valuable, but they certainly do not apply to all areas of philosophical inquiry. Ironically, several of the greatest pioneering physicists in the last century were far more in tune with the ancients than many contemporary philosophers. For example, Einstein certainly knew the power of ancient thought: "in a certain sense, therefore, I hold it true that pure thought can grasp reality, as the ancients dreamed" (1954, p. 274). He also offered these relevant remarks:

> The ideals which have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth. Without the sense of kinship with men of like mind, without the

> occupation with the objective world, the eternally unattainable in the world of art and scientific endeavours, life would have seemed to me empty. The trite objects of human efforts – possessions, outward success, luxury – have always seemed to me contemptible (1954, p. 9).

Einstein held in contempt what our society teaches us to esteem, for superficial success and luxury are like shadows on the wall of Plato's cave distracting us from our pursuit of truth, turning us away from our most significant goals. Instead, his real guiding principles, the highest ideals, were Truth, Beauty, and Kindness (or what he would also call the "morally good" (1954, p. 66)). Such metaphysical concepts would not be out of place for contemporary mathematical physicist Roger Penrose or for Werner Heisenberg, the formulator of the uncertainty principle in quantum theory. Heisenberg also stated repeatedly that modern physics had definitely decided in favor of Plato and Pythagoras over the materialism of Democritus. Through a deep personal experience, Heisenberg came to an intuitive and immediate understanding of Plato's *Timaeus*, where we find abstract, nonphysical geometric forms and relationships at the foundation of physical reality. Indeed, several pioneering physicists have admitted the importance of intuition and imagination beyond discursive analysis, and even recognized the importance of the mystical, of some sort of direct experiential contact with ultimate reality (Spencer 2012). In contrast, many philosophers in the last century have ignored or belittled the Platonic tradition, and have fled from the sort of metaphysical notions that Einstein openly admitted were essential to his way of life.

During my time as a PhD student at the University of Liverpool, one of my former professors, Pierre Grimes, directed me to the writings of Pierre Hadot, whose ground-breaking work in the revival of the ancient ideal of the philosophical life inspired me in 2004 to create a "Philosophy as a Way of Life" conference. I asked my friend and fellow student John Adams to assist me, and with his tireless commitment and keen attention to detail the two of us discovered the joys and challenges of hosting a three-day international conference, bringing together thirty-nine speakers from around the world (Adams and Spencer 2007). One thing that we all learned from this experience is that regardless of the diversity of philosophical backgrounds – from Nietzsche to Neoplatonism – there are many graduate students who are seeking a philosophical life as an integral part of their academic studies. We were fortunate to have Michael McGhee and Michael Chase as part of our group of keynote speakers,

and along with Stephen Clark they have prepared the present volume of papers, inspired in part by the success of our conference. Jennifer Bray and Jeff Dean at Wiley-Blackwell have also been very helpful throughout the long process of bringing this volume to fruition, and we should also thank the courageous student presenters who voiced their dissatisfaction with the status quo of academic philosophy.

Hadot (1995, p. 272) is generally correct that "ancient philosophy proposed to mankind an art of living," whereas "modern philosophy appears above all as the construction of a technical jargon reserved for specialists." It is my hope that the papers presented in this volume will help to bridge the gap between the importance of academic rigor and the necessity of experiencing and living what we teach.

1

Introduction

Michael Chase

The Life of Pierre Hadot

Pierre Hadot, Professor Emeritus of Hellenistic and Roman Thought at the Collège de France and Director of Studies at the Fifth Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études, died on the night of April 24–25, 2010, at the age of 88.

Born in Paris in 1922, Hadot was raised at Reims, where he received a strict Catholic education, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1944. But he soon became disenchanted with the Church, particularly after the conservative encyclical *Humani Generis* of August 12, 1950, and he left it in 1952 (Eros also played a role in this decision: Hadot married his first wife in 1953).

Now employed as a researcher at the National Center of Scientific Research (CNRS), Hadot was free to devote himself to scholarship. He began with Latin Patristics, editing Ambrose of Milan and Marius Victorinus. This was the period, from the late 1950s to the 1960s, when, under the guidance of such experts as the Jesuit Paul Henry, he learned the strict discipline of philology, or the critical study and editing of ancient manuscripts, an approach that was to continue to exert a formative

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influence on his thought for the rest of his life. Also during this period, Hadot's deep interest in mysticism led him to study Plotinus and, surprisingly enough, Wittgenstein, whose comments on "das Mystische" (*Tractatus* 6.522) led Hadot to study the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations* and publish articles on them, thus becoming one of the first people in France to draw attention to Wittgenstein (reedited as Hadot 2004). Hadot wrote *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* (Hadot 1993) in a month-long burst of inspiration in 1963, a lucid, sincere work that is still one of the best introductions to Plotinus. Hadot would continue to translate and comment upon Plotinus throughout the rest of his life, founding in particular *Les Écrits de Plotin*, a series, still in progress, that provides translations with extensive introductions to and commentaries on all the treatises of Plotinus' *Enneads*, in chronological order.[1] On a personal level, however, Hadot gradually became detached from Plotinus' thought, feeling that Plotinian mysticism was too otherworldly and contemptuous of the body to be adequate for today's needs. As he tells the story, when he emerged from the month-long seclusion he had imposed upon himself to write *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision*, he went to the corner bakery, and "seeing the ordinary folks all around me in the bakery, I [. . .] had the impression of having lived a month in another world, completely foreign to our world, and worse than this – totally unreal and even unlivable" (Hadot 2011, p. 137).

Elected Director of Studies at the Fifth Section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 1964, Hadot married his second wife, the historian of philosophy Ilsetraut Marten, in 1966. This marked another turning point in his intellectual development, for it was at least in part thanks to his wife's interest in spiritual guidance in Antiquity that the focus of Hadot's interests would gradually shift, over the following decade or so, from the complex and technical metaphysics of Porphyry and Marius Victorinus to a concern for the practical, ethical side of philosophy, and more precisely the development of his key concept of philosophy as a way of life.

At Hadot's request, the title of his Chair at the EPHE Ve was soon changed from "Latin Patristics" to "Theologies and Mysticisms of Hellenistic Greece and the End of Antiquity." In 1968, he published his thesis for the State doctorate, the massive *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Hadot 1968; 1971), in which he attributed a previously anonymous commentary on Plato's *Parmenides* to Porphyry, the Neoplatonic student of Plotinus. This monument of erudition arguably remains, even today, the most complete exposition of Neoplatonic metaphysics.

It was around this time that Pierre Hadot began to study and lecture on Marcus Aurelius – studies that would culminate in his edition of the *Meditations*,[2] left unfinished at his death, and especially in his book *The Inner Citadel* (Hadot 1998). Under the influence of his wife Ilsetraut, who had written an important work on spiritual guidance in Seneca (Hadot 1969), Hadot now began to accord more and more importance to the idea of spiritual exercises, that is, philosophical practices intended to transform the practitioner's way of looking at the world and consequently his or her way of being. Following Paul Rabbow, Hadot held that the famous *Exercitia Spiritualia* of Ignatius of Loyola, far from being exclusively Christian, were the direct heirs of pagan Greco-Roman practices. These exercises, involving not just the intellect or reason, but all of a human being's faculties, including emotion and imagination, had the same goal as all ancient philosophy: reducing human suffering and increasing happiness, by teaching people to detach themselves from their particular, egocentric, individualistic viewpoints and become aware of their belonging, as integral component parts, to the Whole constituted by the entire cosmos. In its fully developed form, exemplified in such late Stoics as Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, this change from our particularistic perspective to the universal perspective of reason had three main aspects. First, by means of the discipline of thought, we are to strive for objectivity; since, as the Stoics believe, what causes human suffering is not so much things in the world, but our beliefs about those things, we are to try to perceive the world as it is in itself, without the subjective coloring we automatically tend to ascribe to everything we experience ("That's lovely," "that's horrible," "that's ugly," "that's terrifying," etc.). Second, in the discipline of desire, we are to attune our individual desires with the way the universe works, not merely accepting that things happen as they do, but actively willing for things to happen precisely the way they do happen. This attitude is, of course, the ancestor of Nietzsche's "Yes" granted to the cosmos, a "yes" that immediately justifies the world's existence.[3] Finally, in the discipline of action, we are to try to ensure that all our actions are directed not just to our own immediate, short-term advantage, but to the interests of the human community as a whole.

Hadot finally came to believe that these spiritual attitudes – "spiritual" precisely because they are not merely intellectual, but involve the entire human organism, but one might with equal justification call them "existential" attitudes – and the practices or exercises that nourished, fortified, and developed them, were the key to understanding all of ancient

philosophy. In a sense, the grandiose physical, metaphysical, and epistemological structures that separated the major philosophical schools of Antiquity – Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism[4] – were mere superstructures, intended to justify the basic philosophical attitude. Hadot deduced this, among other considerations, from the fact that many of the spiritual exercises of the various schools were highly similar, despite all their ideological differences; thus, both Stoics and Epicureans recommended the exercise of living in the present.

Hadot first published the results of this new research in an article that appeared in the *Annuaire de la Ve* section in 1977: "Exercices spirituels." This article formed the kernel of his book *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Hadot 1995), and was no doubt the work of Hadot's that most impressed Michel Foucault to the extent that he invited Hadot to propose his candidacy for a Chair at the Collège de France, the most prestigious academic position in France. Hadot did so and was elected in 1982. Hadot's view on philosophy as a way of life consisting of the practice of spiritual exercises was given a more complete narrative form in his *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* (Hadot 2002).

Another aspect of his thought was more controversial: if philosophy was, throughout Antiquity, conceived as a way of life, in which not only those who published learned tomes were considered philosophers, but also, and often especially – one thinks of Socrates, who wrote nothing – those who lived in a philosophical way, then how and why did this situation cease? Hadot's answer was twofold: on the one hand, Christianity, which had begun by adopting and integrating pagan spiritual exercises, ended up by relegating philosophy to the status of mere handmaid of theology. On the other, at around the same historical period of the Middle Ages, and not coincidentally, the phenomenon of the European University arose. Destined from the outset to be a kind of factory in which professional philosophers trained students to become professional philosophers in their turn, these new institutions led to a progressive confusion of two aspects that were, according to Hadot, carefully distinguished in Antiquity: doing philosophy and producing discourse about philosophy. Many modern thinkers, Hadot believed, have successfully resisted this confusion, but they were mostly (and this again is no coincidence) such extra-University thinkers as Descartes, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Schopenhauer. For the most part, and with notable exceptions (one thinks of Bergson), University philosophy instruction has concentrated almost exclusively on discourse *about* philosophy rather than on philosophy itself, conceived as a practice or living act. Indeed, one might add,

extending Hadot's analysis, that contemporary universities, whether in their "analytic" manifestation as the analysis of language and the manipulation of quasi-mathematical symbols, or in their "continental" guise as rhetorical display, irony, plays on words, and learned allusions, seem to share one basic characteristic: they are quite incomprehensible, and, therefore, unimportant to the man or woman on the street. Hadot's work, written in a plain, clear style that lacks the rhetorical flourishes of a Derrida or a Foucault, represents a call for a radical democratization of philosophy. It talks about subjects that matter to people today from all walks of life, which is why it has appealed, arguably, less to professional philosophers than to ordinary working people, and to professionals working in disciplines other than philosophy.[5]

Pierre Hadot taught at the Collège until his retirement in 1992. In addition to Plotinus and Marcus, his teaching was increasingly devoted to the philosophy of nature, an interest he had picked up from Bergson that he had first set forth in a lecture at the Jungian-inspired Eranos meetings at Ascona, Switzerland in 1967 (Hadot 1968). Combined with his long-term love of Goethe (Hadot 2008), this research on the history of mankind's relation to nature would finally culminate in *The Veil of Isis* (*Le Voile d'Isis*), a study of the origin and interpretations of Heraclitus' saying "Nature loves to hide," published a mere four years before his death (Hadot 2006). Here and in the preliminary studies leading up this work, Hadot distinguishes two main currents in the history of man's attitude to nature: the "Promethean" approach, in which man tries to force nature to reveal her secrets in order better to exploit her, and the "Orphic" attitude, a philosophical or aesthetic approach in which one listens attentively to nature, recognizing the potential dangers of revealing all her Secrets.

Memories

Having won a grant from the Canadian government to pursue my doctoral studies in Neoplatonism anywhere in the world, I followed an old teacher's advice and contacted the author of the book on the subject that I most admired: *Porphyre et Victorinus*. I first met Pierre Hadot at a conference at Loches, France, in the summer of 1987, where he gave a memorable lecture on "The Sage and the World" (Hadot 1991). He was kind enough to read and comment on the M.A. thesis I had written on Porphyry and, while I could not officially enroll under his direction for my

PhD since the Collège de France was not a degree-granting institution, I did enroll under his successor at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Philippe Hoffmann. After attending Hadot's lectures at the Collège for a couple of years, I persuaded him to allow me to translate some of his works into English, and this marked the beginning of a close friendship between Pierre and Ilsetraut Hadot and my wife Isabel and myself. As I continued my studies, he continued to help me out with advice, books, and articles and, when times got rough, with a few hundred francs per month from his own pocket as well.

What I remember most about Pierre Hadot was his simplicity. Although he had reached the highest echelons of the hierarchical French academic scheme, he never let it go to his head: in his lectures he spoke clearly, without excess rhetorical flourish. When he wrote on the blackboard, he did so with complete grace and relaxation, and often with that self-deprecating laugh that was so characteristic of him. On one occasion, he invited Isabel and me to lunch, along with half a dozen others; we were to meet at his office at the Collège de France. We all showed up, and Hadot began to lead the whole bunch of us off to the restaurant. In the hallway, however, he came across a lost-looking young couple, obviously foreigners, and asked them if he could help them. They were looking for the cafeteria, they told him timidly, and Pierre Hadot, instead of merely giving them directions, insisted on accompanying this unknown couple all the way to the cafeteria, leaving his "invited" guests to twiddle their thumbs. Each individual, known or unknown, deserved respect and courtesy in the view of Pierre Hadot. Yet he also spent a good deal of his life as an administrator, particularly at the EPHE, where he showed himself to be a tough and uncompromising negotiator, especially when questions of principle were at stake.

Over the years, my wife and I enjoyed the Hadots' hospitality on many occasions, often at their home in Limours, a suburb some 20 miles south of Paris, where he was very proud of his well-kept garden and loved to go for walks in the neighboring woods. When he was in Paris, we would often go for dinner to a Vietnamese restaurant on the Rue des Écoles, no longer extant, to which Michel Foucault had introduced him. He always encouraged us to have the deep-fried banana for dessert, mainly because, although he loved the dish, his delicate health and vigilant wife would not allow him to order it for himself, but he could always sneak a bite from someone else's plate. In every circumstance, he was the same: simple, unpretentious, with a mischievous gleam in his eye. Seldom has a man worn his erudition more lightly. Seldom, as well, has a man

practiced so well what he preached. Although he won numerous awards and distinctions,[6] he never discussed them in any tone other than that of self-deprecating humor. He liked to tell of how Jacqueline de Romilly once telephoned him to let him know he had been nominated for the prestigious Grand Prix de Philosophie of the Académie Française: "We didn't have anybody this year," she allegedly told him, "and so we thought of you." He also had great fun with the fact that two volumes of his articles were published by Les Belles Lettres in a collection entitled "l'âne d'or" – "The Golden Ass."[7] He claimed, with a characteristic twinkle in his eye, that he had posed for the fine portrait of the golden donkey that graced the cover of these books.

As a young philosophy student, I had often been disillusioned by finding that my philosophical heroes had feet of clay: although they wrote fine-sounding phrases in their books, they were often vain, disdainful, or otherwise unpleasant when one met them in person. Not so Pierre Hadot: like Plotinus he was always available to himself, but above all to others. For his eightieth birthday, Hadot reserved a restaurant near Limours for over a hundred guests, who were distributed at tables in groups of six to eight. As the meal progressed, Hadot made sure to come and sit for a while at each table, laughing and joking with everyone, making each guest feel as though he or she were truly special to him. Waiters and hostesses received, unfailingly, the same friendly, non-condescending treatment.

I last saw Pierre Hadot on April 12, 2010, when, despite his weakness, he made the trip from Limours to Paris to attend a celebration devoted to him at the library of the École Normale Supérieure. At age 88, he was extremely fragile, and his eyesight and hearing were failing rapidly. Yet he held out for 2 hours, answering questions from the audience – something he always disliked, convinced that he was not sufficiently eloquent in unrehearsed repartee – and seeming to regain strength as the evening progressed. At the end, he thanked the organizers and participants, emphasizing that what was important was that the event had been organized and carried out in an atmosphere of friendship and mutual respect. Soon afterward, he entered the hospital at Orsay and was diagnosed with pneumonia. He died less than two weeks after his appearance at the ENS accompanied, as he had been for 45 years, by his beloved Ilsetraut.

Needless to say, it is too soon to give a definitive evaluation of Hadot's thought, and only the future will verify, or fail to verify, Roger-Pol Droit's judgment on him: "discrete, almost self-effacing, this singular thinker might well be, in a sense, one of the influential men of our epoch."[8] What is certain is that he has trained a generation of students and scholars who

continue his work, and that his writings, translated into many languages, have continued to inspire readers from throughout the world, many of whom wrote him to say in a variety of formulations: “You have changed my life.” Pierre Hadot was a man almost destitute of personal vanity, but if there was one thing he was proud of, it was not the multiple honors he received throughout his career, but the effect he had on the average reader.

The Present Volume

The idea for this volume arose in the course of discussions between Michael McGhee and me as a result of a conference on Philosophy as a Way of Life held at the University of Liverpool in November 2004. Initially, Michael McGhee was responsible for soliciting and editing the British contributions, and I for the North American and European ones. If this book has finally seen the light of day, it is due, above all, to the collaboration of Stephen Clark, who contributed his editorial expertise and efficiency to the project beginning in the spring of 2012.

The publication of this volume has, needless to say, taken much longer than initially foreseen, and I would like to thank the contributors and publisher for their patience. In the interim, some of the articles have appeared elsewhere in various forms.[9] It is regrettable that Pierre Hadot did not live to see this publication. I believe, however, that in its breadth and variety, the present volume retains its value as a testimony to the importance of his notion of philosophy as a way of life.

Notes

1. *Les écrits de Plotin publiés dans l’ordre chronologique*, sous la dir. de P. Hadot, Paris: Éd. du Cerf (Coll. Textes). More than a dozen volumes have appeared in the series, two of them (*Traité 38* [VI,7], 1988; *Traité 50* [III,5], 1990) by Hadot himself.
2. Marc Aurèle, *Écrits pour lui-même*. Tome 1, Introduction générale. Livre I, éd. et tr. Pierre Hadot, avec la collab. de Concetta Luna. Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1998. (Collection des Universités de France).
3. Nietzsche, *Posthumous Fragments*, end 1866-Spring 1887, 7, [38], cited in Hadot (1995, p. 277).

4. I leave out Cynicism and Skepticism, partly, because it is debatable whether they were actually "schools" as opposed to philosophical tendencies and, partly because, unlike the other schools they refrained from metaphysical speculation.
5. As of 2006, Hadot's works had been cited by researchers working in management studies, economics, the study of Chinese thought, education, sociology, political science, and women's studies, to name but a few.
6. 1969: Prix Saintour décerné par l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres; 1969: Prix Desrousseaux décerné par l'Association pour l'encouragement des Études Grecques; 1972: elected Corresponding Member of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur of Mainz; 1979: Silver medal, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; 1985: Docteur honoris causa de l'Université de Neuchâtel; 1990: Prix Dagnan-Bouveret de l'Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques; 1992: Prix d'Académie (Fondation Le Métais-Larivière Fils), Académie Française; 1999: Grand Prix de Philosophie de l'Académie Française; 2000: elected Corresponding Member of the Akademie der Wissenschaften at Munich; 2002: Docteur honoris causa de l'Université de Laval (Québec).
7. *Études de philosophie ancienne*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1998. (L'âne d'or; 8); *Plotin. Porphyre. Études néoplatoniciennes*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1999. (L'âne d'or; 10). These works contain some of Hadot's more technical works on the history of Greek and Latin philosophy, but also some of his early studies on the philosophy of nature. There is material for many more such volumes, among the 100 or so articles Hadot penned throughout his career.
8. "Pierre Hadot, 86 ans de sagesse," *Le Point. Débats*, 17/04/2008, accessed at http://www.lepoint.fr/actualites-chroniques/2008-04-18/pierre-hadot-86-ans-de-sagesse/989/0/238823.
9. The present introduction is based on the obituary of Pierre Hadot which I contributed to the Harvard University Press Blog in 2010 (http://harvardpress.typepad.com/hup_publicity/2010/04/pierre-hadot-part-1.html). A version of my later contribution to the volume was published in Adams and Spencer (2007, pp. 5–17). A French version of Gwenaëlle Aubry's contribution appeared in Davidson and Worms (2010); see also Rizvi (2012) and Ganeri (2010) for earlier versions of their essays. Constraints on the volume's size mean that some papers originally intended for the volume, by Philippe Vallat, David Cooper, Stephen R. L. Clark, and Catalin Partenie, have been omitted. Cooper's essay on Beauty is to be found at Cooper (2012).

2

Ancient Philosophers
A First Statistical Survey

Richard Goulet

Until recently, ancient philosophy was studied by genuine philosophers concerned with the history of ideas, or by philologists trying to provide editions and translations of documents handed down by the manuscript tradition. Philosophy as a social movement in the ancient world, the daily professional activity of the well-established figure of the philosopher, or the impact of philosophical ideas on the Greek and Roman societies have not produced an extensive literature. While some intuitive convictions are commonly held on these matters, no general inquiry has ever been carried out, and no statistical value of any kind is currently available. Asking specialists how many philosophers are known through our documents would probably produce very disparate answers. Standard books on the history of philosophy would suggest a few hundred, some more specialized dictionaries or encyclopedias perhaps some six or seven hundred, but our own accounts have identified nearly 3000 names, not all of whom are necessarily full-fledged philosophers, but at least important witnesses of ancient philosophical tradition.

The present paper is a first attempt at gathering statistics about the philosophical "population" of Antiquity. This is a risky undertaking, for many reasons that will be enumerated later on. Yet these charts and graphs may provide precious information about the historical and social impact of ancient philosophy, and of the "ways of life" promoted by the various schools.

Philosophy as a Way of Life: Ancients and Moderns – Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot, First Edition.
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How Can We Identify Ancient Philosophers?

Finding all the known philosophers and entering them into a database for statistical purposes may seem unrealistic. *The Dictionary of Ancient Philosophers* (*DPhA*) (Goulet 1989–) published since 1989 with the help of near two hundred international specialists provides at least the most elaborate list of philosophers from the Presocratics to the Neoplatonists of the sixth century CE. About 80% of the entries have already been published in the first five volumes and a supplement, letters S–Z being still in preparation, but the complete list includes near 3000 names, many of these being known only by inscriptions, papyri, or later literary mentions. From the outset of the project in the early 1980s, a large number of parameters, such as date, school, sex, places of origin and education, masters and students, were systematically gathered in the database, so that a minimal statistical survey may now be undertaken.

The final written entries of this dictionary will surely modify some details of the currently available information, and a definitive report is planned to accompany or be included in the last volume, to be published in the next two years, but an initial attempt may be welcome, if only to clarify some procedures and draw a general sketch.

The *DPhA* as a Sample of Ancient Philosophical Society

Of course, the 3000 entries of the *DPhA* do not represent the actual "population" of ancient philosophers. They offer no more than a "sample" for our enquiry, most probably a rather small sample of all persons in the ancient world who termed themselves "philosopher," or philosopher of any single school. This sample cannot verify overly rigid norms. It is simply a list of those philosophers who have left some literary, historical, or archaeological trace. The average teacher of philosophy and the crowd of their students in the ancient world had probably a very slight chance to escape complete obscurity. And even for less obscure figures, we are not sure that all of them were correctly registered through our examination of the documents. Many names were discovered after the corresponding volume had been published, and had to be dealt with in supplementary volumes. But on the whole such new discoveries remain scarce.

Discarding Intruders

We must be aware that the *DPhA* was not meant to be a short list of cross-verified philosophers. It includes some names that were judged to be important witnesses of ancient philosophical tradition, a status which may apply to persons hostile to philosophers, to Christian authors of apologies directed against philosophers, or to major documentary sources like Diogenes Laertius. Some entries are dedicated to anonymous or pseudepigraphical texts, rather than to historical persons. A special case is offered by a few probably fictitious names of philosophers appearing in authors like Lucian, or by persons termed "philosophers" in more or less ancient tradition, but whose status as philosophers the author of the article rejects. These entries may be useful to complete our information about ancient philosophy, but they are out of place in our sample and must be discarded. One may still hesitate with regard to the fictitious names, because the author's attempt at depicting a typical, even if ridiculous, situation may testify to actual social and contemporaneous figures, if not individuals. Our choice has been to eliminate all these names.

Even without these adventitious entries, verifying the philosophical claims of the remaining entries is not always easy. The status of philosopher is given in our sources to mythological or legendary figures like Musaeus or Abaris, to astrologers, alchemists, magicians, physicians, and scientists of many kinds, to statesmen and generals having attended the class of a philosopher for a while, or having welcomed a philosopher in their entourage, to monks and bishops having led a Christian life conceived as philosophical, and so on. Such names must in general be excluded from our corpus of philosophers, but sometimes only an in-depth study can tell us if the person has some claim to be included in our inquiry. In any case, in the current version of our statistics, the benefit of doubt must be extended to those whose status as philosopher has not yet been rejected.

For the present survey, we have identified 2463 historical persons as philosophers, out of the 2997 names available in our listings.

What is a Philosopher, After All?

Faced by all these pseudo-philosophers, one may ask on what basis have we selected the philosophers of our corpus? The main criterion was for a person to have been described as a philosopher or a philosopher of

some philosophical school in ancient sources, to have produced or have been said to have produced philosophical treatises, to have expressed unmistakably philosophical ideas, or to have taught philosophy to some disciple(s). Having followed the teaching of a philosopher was not generally taken as a sure indication that philosophy was the actual content of this teaching.

Such an intellectual was a well-identified figure in ancient society, if only by his cloak. His special status might even be confirmed by laws ensuring – or not, according to the taste of the reigning emperor – immunities from civic charges. Even without official tenure, any philosopher was allowed to gather disciples and give them lessons at home or in public areas.

When we come to Christian philosophers, they could be intellectuals or theologians who wanted to develop a religious version of traditional philosophy. At other times, the term seems to mean no more than "monk," a status that was considered as the Christian counterpart of the ascetic, if not Cynic, philosopher in ancient society.

At some later date in Byzantium, the word "philosopher" came to be used to designate almost any kind of intellectual, especially if he had written something.

Chronological Interval

The chronological interval for this inquiry has been set according to the original scope of the *DPhA,* and extends from the sixth century BC to the end of the sixth century AD.

How Can Philosophers Be Dated?

Our chronological information about ancient philosophers varies a great deal in precision. For some, like Plotinus, we have an exact year of birth, death, and even of important moments of their life. Most of the time, we can locate a philosopher within a century. Sometimes, our documentation allows a very rough dating: the Hellenistic period, Roman imperial period, late Empire, and so on. In many cases, we have no idea of the date, or just a relative date *ante quem* provided by the date of our source of information. Since our chronological system offers only centuries from −6 to + 6, we had to leave all these philosophers of indeterminate date

in the limbo of a totally indefinite dating, and two general chronological forks: the Hellenistic period and the Imperial period.

Another problem was raised by philosophers whose lives and activities span two centuries. In such cases, the century matching the longer period of activity for this philosopher was retained and, when no such information was available, the more ancient of the two centuries. This is pure convention, but does not necessarily jeopardize the quality of the statistics.

A Simplified Mediterranean Map

Another simplification was needed for geographical localization. Registering the cities of origin or activity would result in with hundreds of different places. Therefore, all localities were reduced to a few general geographical regions: Greece, Asia Minor (including Rhodes, Crete, and all the islands of the Aegean sea), East (including Mesopotamia), Egypt, Africa (except Egypt), Italy, West (except Italy) and other countries (for instance Thrace). Most of the time, Greece could be restricted to Athens, Egypt to Alexandria, and Italy to Rome, but it seemed difficult to maintain coherent geographical divisions with both regions and cities.

Some Known Artifacts

A last *caveat* must be added. We know numerous philosophers through a few lists of names miraculously saved by the tradition. For instance, a few hundred ancient Pythagoreans from the sixth to fourth century BC are listed in Iamblichus' *De vita pythagorica.* In the histograms, the huge column that stands up for this group of philosophers tends to flatten all the other values and equalize most of the differences in values between the other groups. We must use similar lists for Stoics in the third century BC, or Academic philosophers in the second century BC. But we should resist the temptation to set aside such data or to correct the scores they give, because this exceptional information is probably much closer to the real figures than is the scant information we can grasp for the other periods or other schools. Once again, these statistics reflect our knowledge of ancient philosophers, rather than historical or social reality, and the general impression that they give is more valuable than every single detail.

Another problem is raised by the overly large amount of undocumented data. We simply do not know the date, school, or place of origin of many philosophers. These values appear in the chart in N/A (not available) columns or lines. But the graphs would be less significant if these were included in the data, and all the others would be flattened out as a result. It seemed better to keep the N/A data outside the graphs.

Available Parameters

Each contributor to the *DPhA* was expected to incorporate in his article some objective particulars: name, date, gender, place or origin, formation, activity, school, teachers, students, books written, political or civic activity, iconography, and so on. This common material, that remains incomplete for the philosophers still to be studied in the two last volumes, and had to be completed by other encyclopedic entries available, forms the basis of the current statistical inquiry. The actual entries of the database could not be displayed in the present paper. A list may be consulted at http://upr_76.vjf.cnrs.fr/DPHA/DPhA_Main.html (Goulet 2012) and I can mail to any interested scholar an updated list of all the names taken into account or rejected in my statistics. But enough with preliminaries, let us look at a few charts.

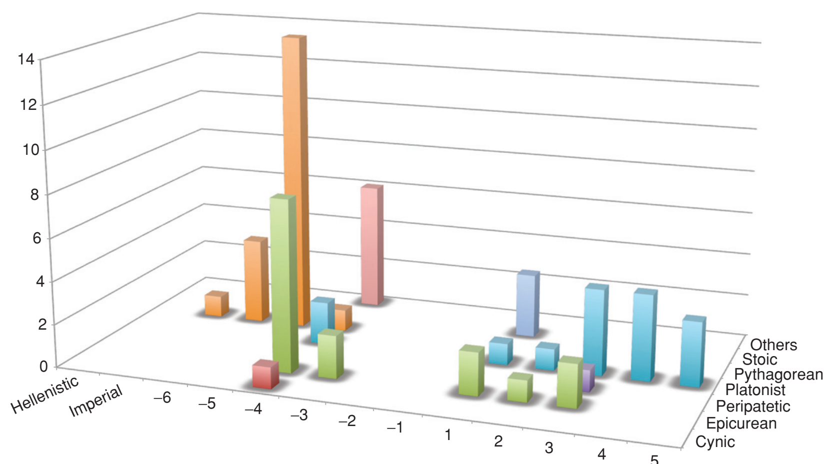
Gender Study

Chart 2.1 and Graph 2.1 are dedicated to women philosophers. There are 85 of them, out of a total number of 2463 philosophers. That makes 3.45%. For 21 women (24.7%), we do not know to which school they belong, and for one of them, we have no chronological information. There are 21 listed as Pythagoreans, many of them known through Iamblichus' catalogue; 13 are related to the Platonic or Neoplatonic tradition, and 15 are Epicureans.

Very few of these women were real philosophy teachers or writers, as was Hypatia in Alexandria. Treatises were attributed to the Cynic Hipparchia. Some of these ladies were members of Epicurus' Garden, others were Roman matrons, wives or daughters of Stoic opponents to the imperial authorities, or Roman well-born ladies welcoming a philosopher like Plotinus in their home. In Plato's Academy, two women attended the lectures, but they came dressed in men's clothing. The 20 women

Chart 2.1 Women philosophers by schools and centuries

Schools/Centuries	*N/A*	*Hellenistic*	*Imperial*	*−6*	*−5*	*−4*	*−3*	*−2*	*−1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Total*
N/A	1			2		2			2	6	2	4	1	1	21
Cynic	2					1									3
Epicurean						8	2			2	1	2			15
Peripatetic												1			1
Platonist						2				1	1	4	4	3	15
Pythagorean	1		1	4	14	1									21
Stoic										3					3
Others						6									6
Total	4		1	6	14	20	2		2	12	4	11	5	4	85



Graph 2.1 Women philosophers by schools and centuries
(For color version, see color plate section)

philosophers that we can locate in the fourth century BC show at least that women were typical figures of the Athenian schools. When a woman is honored as a philosopher in an Imperial inscription, it is more difficult to know if the word refers to a simple quality of life, or celebrates some teaching activity or high-level education.

So Many Schools

Chart 2.2 lists all the ancient philosophers by school and by century. The schools are intended here as original antique affiliations, and not as modern philosophical classifications. For instance, many historians of philosophy would populate the heading "eclectics" with several names, but we know of only one ancient philosopher who applied to himself such a name (Potamon of Alexandria). There are some 33 different schools, some of which are alternative names (Peripatetics/Aristotelians), but others may reflect some major change in the definition of the school (it has been shown that "Academic" and "Platonist" probably refer to different historical realities). Many of these schools disappeared rapidly, merged with others or changed their name; for instance, according to Diogenes Laertius, the Eliacs were named Eretriacs after Menedemus.

Chart 2.2 Philosophers by schools and centuries

Schools/Centuries	*N/A*	*Hellenistic*	*Imperial*	*−6*	*−5*	*−4*	*−3*	*−2*	*−1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Total*
N/A	74			6	38	52	31	26	52	74	118	54	118	53	15	711
Academician	24	3				54	41	74	25	1	2					224
Annicerean	24						1									25
Aristonean							3									3
Aristotelian	1					3	2	1	2		3	3	2	1		18
Cynic	5	2	6			22	7		3	10	8	1	10	1		75
Cyrenean		1				10	1									12
Democritean	1	1			1	3				1						7
Dialectician	2					6	3									11
Eclectic									1							1
Eleatic					3											3
Eliac						4										4
Empedoclean									1							1
Empiricist	2						2	4	4	2	6	1				21
Epicurean	9	9	1			31	35	23	54	15	20	3	3	2		205
Eretrian						2	1									3
Eudemonist						1										1

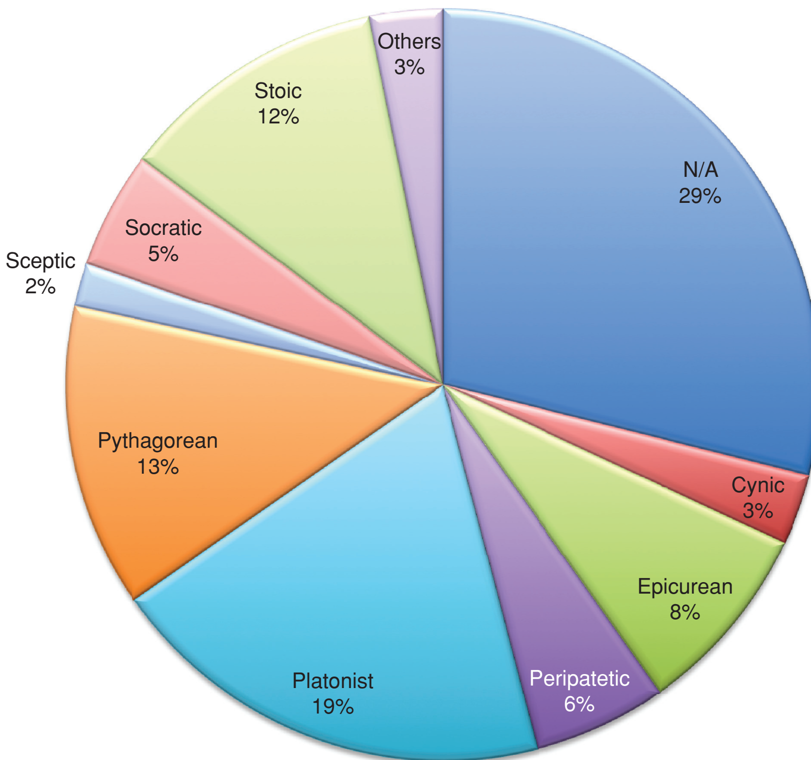
Schools/Centuries	*N/A*	*Hellenistic*	*Imperial*	*−6*	*−5*	*−4*	*−3*	*−2*	*−1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Total*
Hegesianist						1										1
Heraclitean	1	1			3	2										7
Middle Platonist			1				1				14	9	1			26
Megarean	1					21										22
Neoplatonist			1									27	39	44	15	126
Orphist		4				1										5
Peripatetic	5	3				23	43	13	13	5	14	3	1			123
Platonist	6	1	3			1	2	1	2	16	39	13	11	6		101
Presocratic				7	17	2										26
Pyrrhonist										1						1
Pythagorean	14	4	4	21	220	30	5	3	6	9	4		1			321
Sceptic	1	2				3	6	2	6	2	1				1	24
Sextian									4	2						6
Socratic		1			36	2			1	1	1					42
Sophist					18	2										20
Stilponean						4										4
Stoic	12	4	3			2	71	55	37	63	22	13	1			283
Total	182	36	19	34	336	282	255	202	211	202	252	127	187	107	31	2463

Chart 2.3 Philosophers by schools and centuries (simplified version)

Schools/Centuries	*N/A*	*Hellenistic*	*Imperial*	*−6*	*−5*	*−4*	*−3*	*−2*	*−1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Total*
N/A	74			6	38	52	31	26	52	74	118	54	118	53	15	711
Cynic	5	2	6			22	7		3	10	8	1	10	1		75
Epicurean	9	9	1			31	35	23	54	15	20	3	3	2		205
Peripatetic	6	3				26	45	14	15	5	17	6	3	1		141
Platonist	30	4	5			55	44	75	27	17	55	49	51	50	15	477
Pythagorean	14	4	4	21	220	30	5	3	6	9	4		1			321
Sceptic	3	2				3	8	6	10	5	7	1			1	46
Socratic	27	2			36	50	6		1	1	1					124
Stoic	12	4	3			2	74	55	37	63	22	13	1			286
Others	2	6		7	42	11			6	3						77
Total	182	36	19	34	336	282	255	202	211	202	252	127	187	107	31	2463

Leading Schools

A more compact chart (Chart 2.3) that reduces these 33 schools to some eight major affiliations is more convenient for our examination. First of all, we must take into account the fact that we do not know in the case of 711 philosophers (28.86%), to which school they adhere, if they did at all. That may mean that for every period the title of "philosopher" could stand by itself. This is conspicuous in many inscriptions of later times, where a philosopher is honored as such, without any reference to a special school. The sector graph Graph 2.2 shows that if we leave aside the Pythagoreans (13.03%) whose importance decreased rapidly following



Graph 2.2 Philosophers by schools (simplified version)
(For color version, see color plate section)

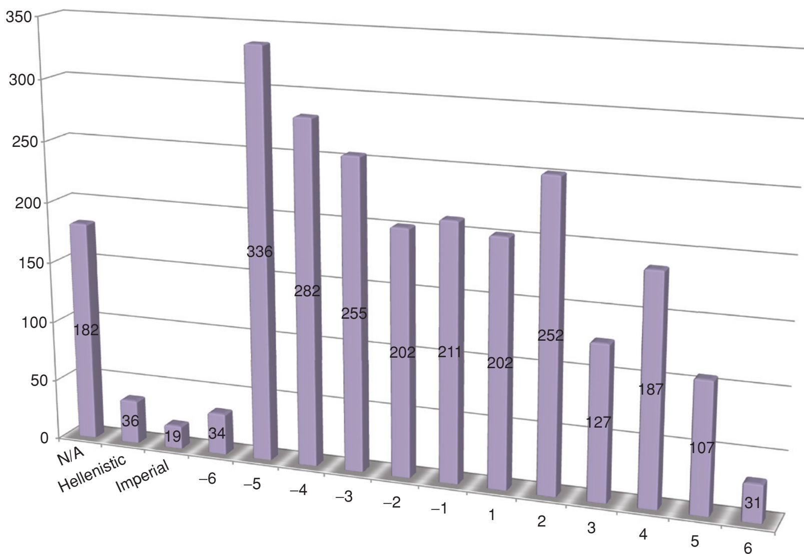
the fourth century BC, a broad majority of philosophers belonged to the four most important schools:

Academics and Platonists (down to the Neoplatonists of late Antiquity): 19.36%;
Stoics: 11.61%;
Epicureans: 8.32%;
Aristotelian–Peripatetics: 5.72%.

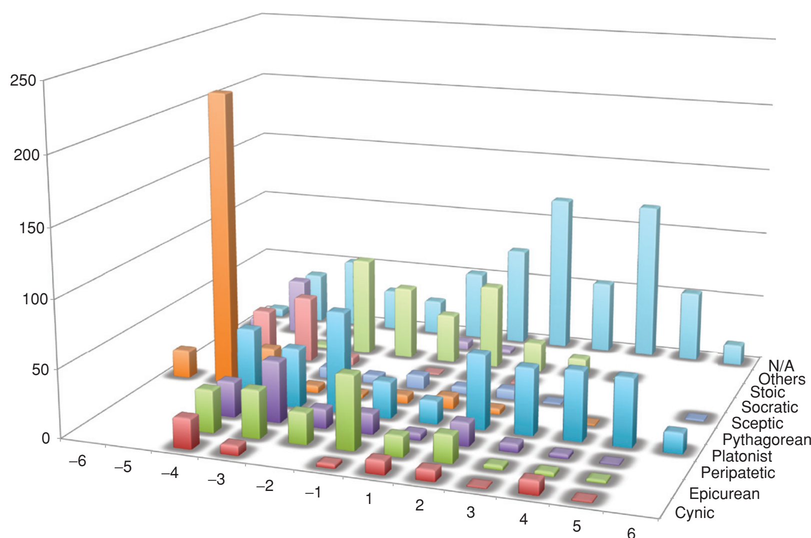
These four schools amount to 45.02% of the whole corpus (and 63.29% of the restricted corpus of philosophers whose school is identified).

Schools in History

If we look at the chronological distribution (Graph 2.3), without regard for the single schools, and if we remember the excessive importance



Graph 2.3 Philosophers by centuries
(For color version, see color plate section)



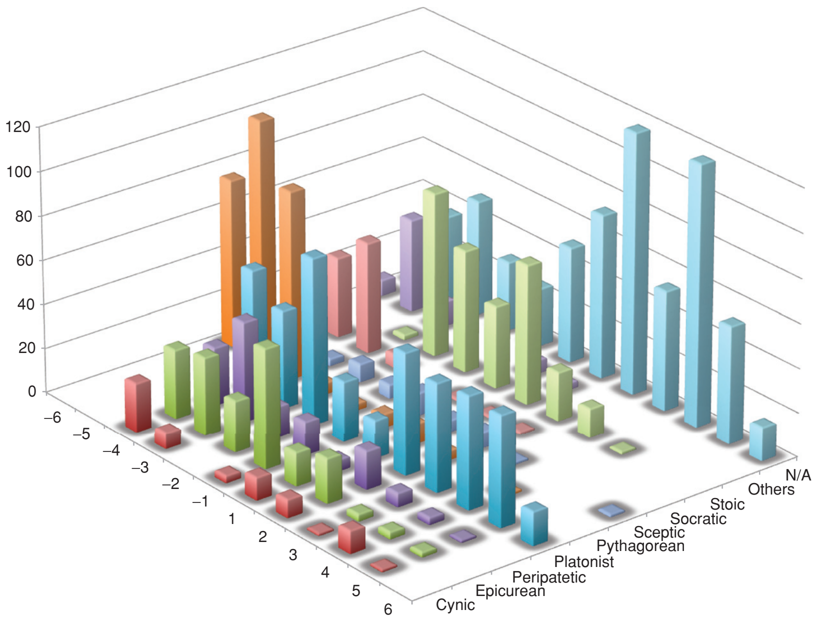
Graph 2.4 a Philosophers by schools and centuries (simplified version) (For color version, see color plate section)

in our charts of the Pythagoreans of the fifth century BC, we can say that the scores remain rather even through the larger part of Antiquity, at least until the second century AD. The four last centuries give a clear impression of some decadence in philosophical study or activity.

The following graph (Graph 2.4a) gives some more details. The supremacy of the four major schools is clear, and would be more evident if the Pythagorean tower of the fifth century BC did not flatten all the other values. Since Iamblichus does not provide any date for his long list of ancient Pythagoreans, a small improvement to our graph would be to distribute half of the Pythagoreans of the fifth century to the sixth century and to the fourth century (Graph 2.4b).

For the pre-Christian era (from the fourth century to the first century BC), we can gather the following cumulative scores:

Academics and Platonists: 201;
Stoics: 168;
Epicureans: 143;
Peripatetics: 100.



Graph 2.4 b Philosophers by schools and centuries (simplified version)
(For color version, see color plate section)

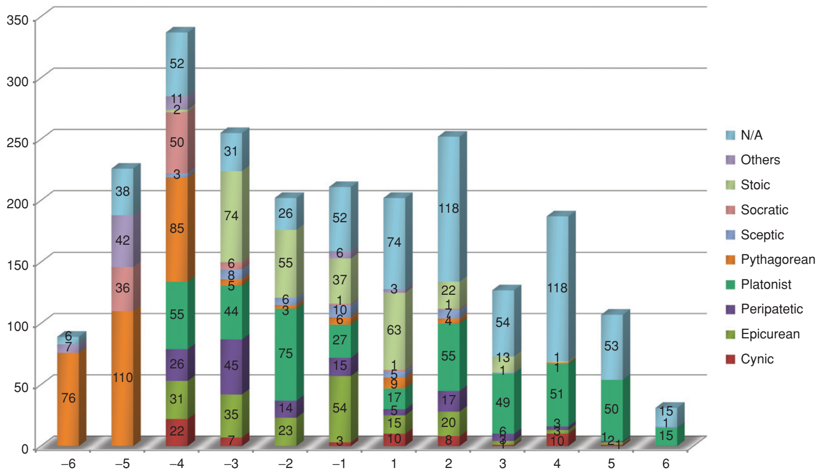
If we add the scores for the two following centuries, we can sum up the values for the Golden Age of these traditional schools:

Academics and Platonists: 273;
Stoics: 253;
Epicureans: 178;
Peripatetics: 122.

Total: 826 philosophers (33.53% of the whole corpus and 47.14% of the restricted corpus of philosophers whose school is identified).

Over the last four centuries, by contrast, the scores are far lower:

Academics and Platonists: 165;
Stoics: 14;
Epicureans: 8;
Peripatetics: 10.



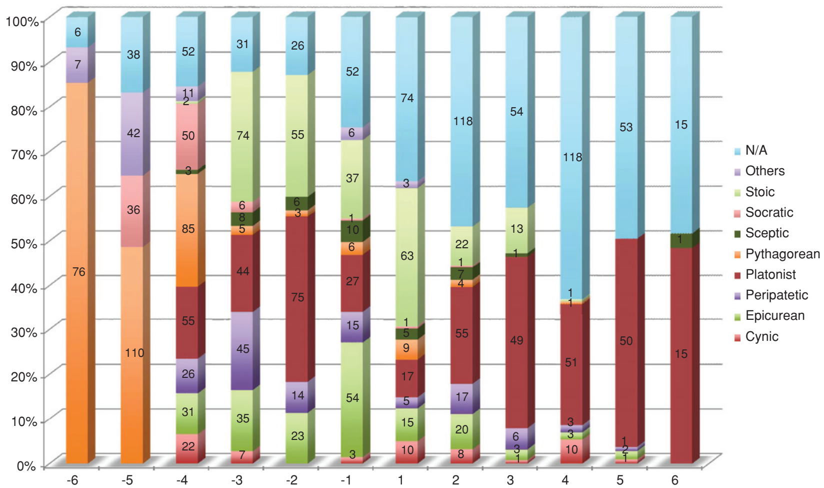
Graph 2.5 Philosophers by schools and centuries – stacked column chart (For color version, see color plate section)

Total: 197 philosophers (7.99% of the whole corpus and 11.24% of the restricted corpus of philosophers whose school is identified).

Socratics reached high scores from the fifth to third centuries BC (92 philosophers). Cynics offer rather even values throughout their history, with an otherwise attested break in the second century BC.

One can see immediately from these scores, also reflected on our graph, that by the end of Antiquity, only one school, the (Neo-)Platonic school, survived, having absorbed in the meantime a large amount of Aristotelian doctrines.

Another way of displaying the same data (Graphs 2.5: stack column chart, and 2.6: 100% stacked column chart) shows more clearly the same progressive decline of all the philosophical schools save the (Neo-)Platonic one, and also the proportional increasing number of philosophers known without any specified affiliation. For the last three centuries, the "non-affiliated" or independent philosophers exceed half of the total population of philosophers. The lack of documentation may partly explain this phenomenon, but other explanations are possible: it may have been useless to specify the school one was part of in a context where almost all philosophers were Platonists (which is the case for all the philosophers whose life is related by Eunapius, for instance), and there may have been more and more philosophers, like Themistius' father or



Graph 2.6 Philosophers by schools and centuries – 100% stacked column chart (For color version, see color plate section)

Hypatia, teaching the doctrine of different schools without committing themselves to any single specific school, if any still existed outside the Platonic school.

Greek Philosophers Saved by Direct Transmission

This conclusion confirms the result of a distinct statistical inquiry, published elsewhere, on the texts that have been preserved until today by direct transmission.[1] Using information provided by the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (TLG) canon of texts, we can say that Greek philosophical texts written before the seventh century and saved by direct transmission (excluding the miraculous preservation of papyri, or texts known through quotations in later authors) amount to some 10 million words (10,755,159), which represents some 30,000 pages of plain text in the format of CAG. The relevant authors are listed in Charts 2.4a and b.[2]

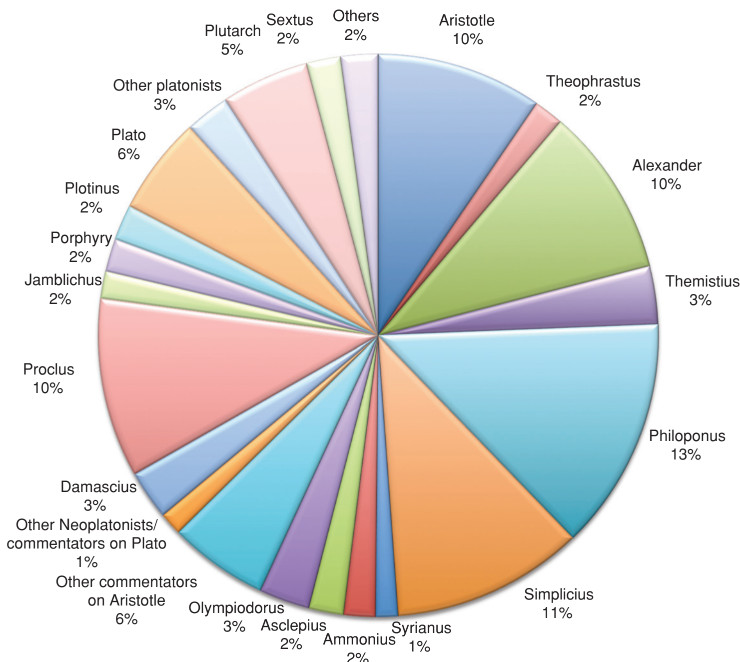
It is easy to see that Plato, Aristotle, and their numerous commentators, most of them Neoplatonists, represent the largest part of our corpus. There may be only some 4% of texts outside this Platonic–Aristotelian mainstream. This is shown on the sector graph (Graph 2.7) matching these figures. If this corpus originally had come from the collections of some library or many libraries, we would expect to find some texts of

Chart 2.4 a Word count for philosophical authors saved in direct transmission

Aristotle	*Theophrastus*	*Alexander*	*Themistius*	*Philoponus*	*Simplicius*	*Syrianus*	*Ammonius*	*Asclepius*	*Olympiodorus*	*Other commentators on Aristotle*
1 015 272	181 507	1 036 035	355 020	1 422 513	1 177 392	136 789	193 401	213 500	310 949	609 759
Plato	Plutarch	Plotinus	Porphyry	Iamblichus	Proclus	Damascius	Other Platonists	Other Neoplatonists or commentators on Plato	Sextus	Others
599 894	538 563	216 398	201 353	165 915	1 093 884	300 692	270 472	139 118	209 334	228 281

Chart 2.4 b *TLG* authors or texts included in the secondary lists

Other Platonists	Alcinoos, Albinus, Theon of Smyrna, Longinus, Anatolius, Julian, Salustius, Synesius
Other commentators on Aristotle or Theophrastus	Aspasius, Dexippus, Priscianus *(Metaphrasis)*, Elias, David, Stephanus, *Anonymi In Aristotelis Categorias, Anonymi In Aristotelis Ethica Nicomachea* (three commentaries), *Anonymi In Aristotelis Librum De Interpretatione, Anonymi In Aristotelis Sophisticos Elenchos* (six commentaries), *Anonymi In Aristotelis Librum Alterum Analyticorum Posteriorum Commentarium*
Other Neoplatonists or commentators on Plato	Hermias, Hierocles, Marinus, Aeneas, *Anonymus De Philosophia Platonica*
Other philosophers	Pythagorean *Carmen Aureum,* Ocellus, Antisthenes, Bolus, Andronicus, Cornutus, Cebes, Heraclitus the Allegorist, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Nepualius, *Corpus Hermeticum,* Cleomedes, Geminus



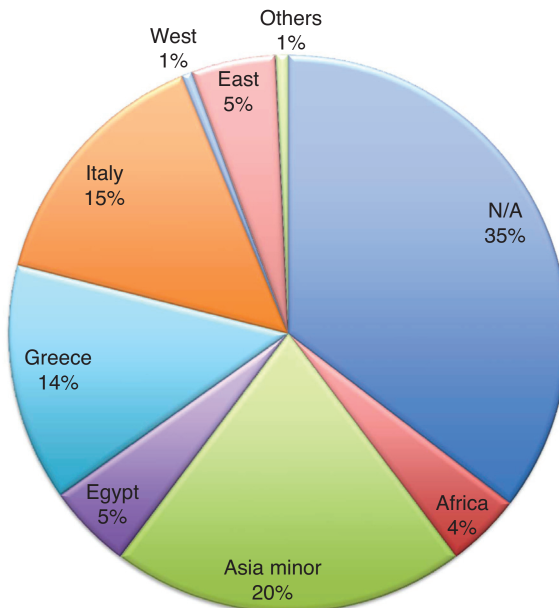
Graph 2.7 Philosophical texts saved by direct transmission
(For color version, see color plate section)

the ancient Stoa or from the Garden of Epicurus. Perhaps one could still read texts from the Presocratics or the Socratics. In fact, all these philosophical traditions have totally disappeared, and all we now have of them are fragments from papyri or later quotations. It is clear that chance, even if it played a role in the conservation or destruction of any single document, cannot explain the overall statistical values of the graphic. Schools, and more exactly the Neoplatonic school, played an important role in selecting ancient philosophical texts for preservation.

The role played by the late Neoplatonic school in textual transmission is in line with the conclusions of our Graphs 2.4a or 2.4b.

Where Did They Come From?

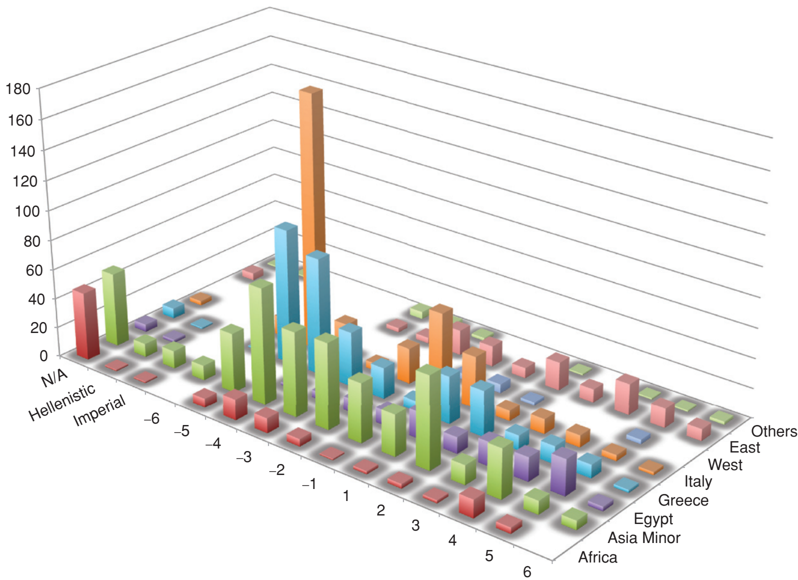
The geographical parameters (Chart 2.5; Graphs 2.8, 2.9, and 2.10) are less often documented in the *DPhA* entries. The place of origin of our philosophers remains unknown in 35.4% of the cases. Asia Minor is the greatest provider of philosophers (505/20.5%), followed by Italy



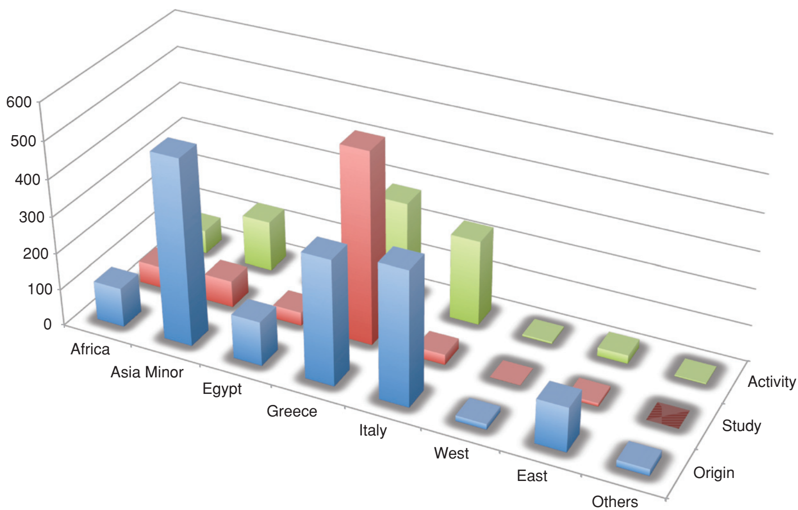
Graph 2.8 Areas of origin of the philosophers
(For color version, see color plate section)

Chart 2.5 Philosophers by geographical areas of their place of origin and by centuries

Areas of origin/Centuries	*N/A*	*Hellenistic*	*Imperial*	*−6*	*−5*	*−4*	*−3*	*−2*	*−1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Total*
N/A	93			10	26	76	133	66	79	74	116	67	84	40	8	872
Africa	46	1	1		6	14	10	5	1	2	3	2	12	4		107
Asia Minor	50	9	12	10	40	78	57	58	40	28	62	13	33	9	6	505
Egypt	5	2				2	5	9	10	18	11	16	16	24	3	121
Greece	7	1		1	91	79	37	21	7	32	31	10	12	9	2	340
Italy	3			13	173	25	5	24	56	35	7	10	8	4	2	365
West									4	6	2			3		15
East	5					3	4	17	14	7	19	9	21	13	8	120
Others	1	1				5	4	2			1		1	1	2	18
Total	210	14	13	34	336	282	255	202	211	202	252	127	187	107	31	2463



Graph 2.9 Areas of origin of philosophers by centuries
(For color version, see color plate section)

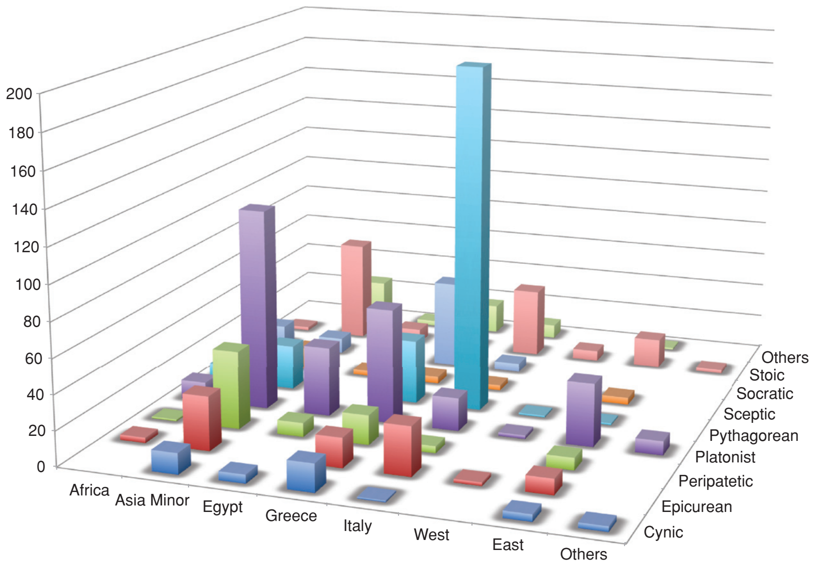


Graph 2.10 Areas of origin, study, and activity
(For color version, see color plate section)

Chart 2.6 Philosophers by schools and by geographical areas of their place of origin (simplified version)

Area	*Origin*	*Study*	*Activity*
N/A	872	1735	1636
Africa	107	59	65
Asia Minor	505	73	139
Egypt	121	37	74
Greece	340	521	287
Italy	365	28	232
West	15	1	5
East	120	9	23
Others	18	0	3

(365/14.81%, with a huge number of ancient Pythagoreans: the usual tower), Greece (340/13.80%), and the East (120/4.87%). Chart 2.6 and Graph 2.11 suggest that no region supports any special school, and that each one provides philosophers to each of the major schools. From a different perspective, it seems that philosophers of all the major schools

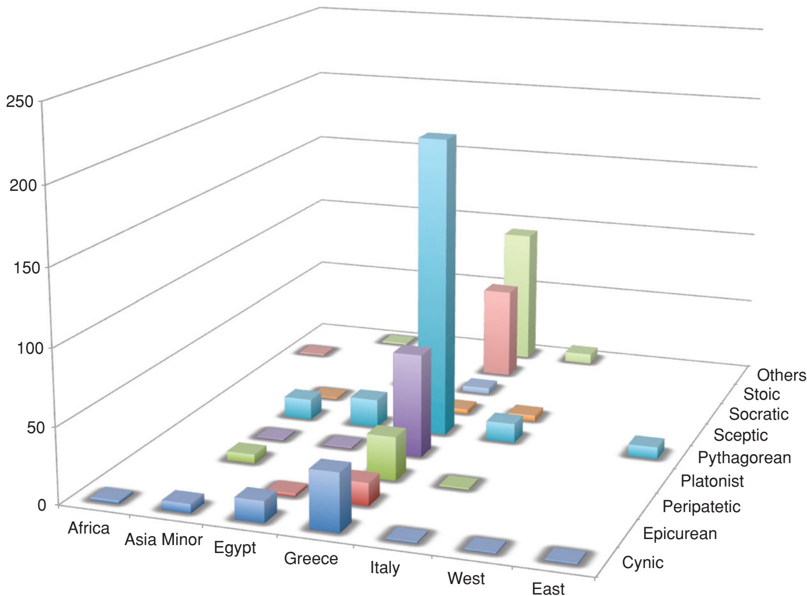


Graph 2.11 Philosophers by schools and by geographical areas of their place of origin (simplified version)
(For color version, see color plate section)

could come from any geographical region. This conclusion by itself testifies to the fact that philosophy was a widespread phenomenon throughout ancient society, and at every period.

Where Did They Study?

The place where our philosophers received their training remains unknown in 70.44% of cases. The only region that achieves a high score is Greece, with 521 students and 21.15% of the whole population. Greece is of course here a metonymy for Athens. Chart 2.7 and Graph 2.12 confirm this leading role of Greece or of Athens as philosophical *alma mater* of the ancient world. But one must not overlook the lower values in the chart: they prove that philosophical teaching occurred in many other regions, and a fairly large number of cities are known for having been centers of philosophical training (Alexandria, Rome, Pergamon, Tarsus, later on Ephesus, Constantinople, etc.). And of course in most



Graph 2.12 Philosophers by schools and by geographical areas of study (simplified version)
(For color version, see color plate section)

Chart 2.7 Philosophers by areas of their place of study and by centuries

Areas of study/Centuries	*N/A*	*Hellenistic*	*Imperial*	*−6*	*−5*	*−4*	*−3*	*−2*	*−1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Total*
N/A	132			32	292	134	124	86	171	181	231	107	156	66	23	1735
Africa	56					1							1	1		59
Asia Minor	43				2	2	3	1		2	6		13		1	73
Egypt							1	2	2	4	2	6	6	10	4	37
Greece	4	2			41	144	127	113	33	9	11	2	3	29	3	521
Italy				2	1	1			5	6	2	10	1			28
West														1		1
East												2	7			9
Total	235	2		34	336	282	255	202	211	202	252	127	187	107	31	2463

cities of the ancient world, a student could expect to find more humble teachers, in some cases a master able, like Themistius' father, to expose the doctrines of all the major schools of philosophy. The graph confirms that philosophical training for each of the schools was available outside Greece.

Where Did They Teach?

The place where our philosophers taught remains unknown in 66.42% of cases (Chart 2.8 and Graph 2.13). Naturally enough, Greece maintains the first place on the podium, with 287 (11.65%) philosophers known to have been active in that region; followed by Italy with 232 (9.41%). A more detailed analysis would reveal that in many cases students came to Athens but returned home later on to teach in their hometown or region.

Teacher and Students

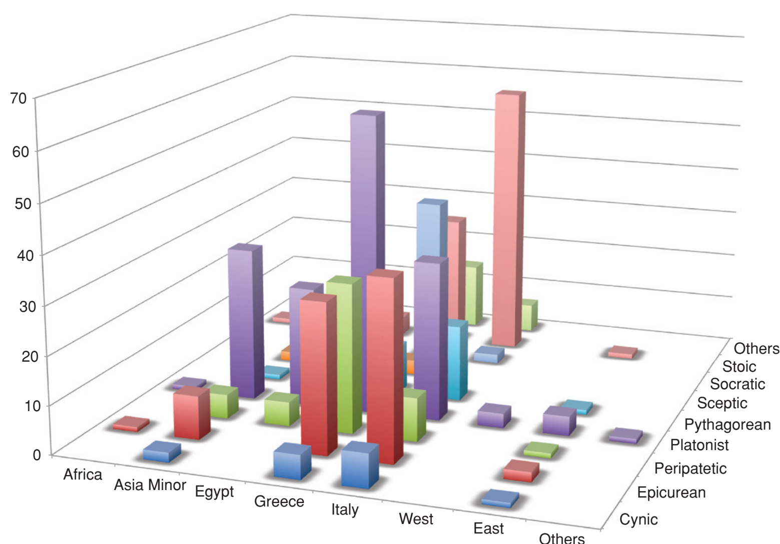
One of the most common features of this population is that a philosopher is generally known along with his teacher. We know the teachers of at least 783 philosophers (31.79%). This may suggest that philosophy was not an individual undertaking, and that producing fresh and original views was generally not the aim of most of these thinkers. Philosophy was a heritage, a *diadochè,* and, at least in the golden era of the great Athenian schools, philosophical affiliation was the general rule. When a citizen is celebrated as a *philosophos*, the most natural meaning is that he was a teacher of philosophy, but in the city it could include teaching of other disciplines like rhetoric.

For the most part, philosophers were teachers, and we do happen to know the names of at least one disciple for 257 philosophers (10.43%). For 301 philosophers (12.22%) some kind of teaching activity is documented, even when we do not know the name of any of their students.

Of these teachers, 96 (3.89%) are known as leaders of one of the major philosophical schools, either as scholarch or *diadochos,* a term used not only for official leaders of former schools but also for holders of municipal chairs in the Imperial period.

Chart 2.8 Philosophers by areas of their place of activity and by centuries

Areas of activity/Centuries	*N/A*	*Hellenistic*	*Imperial*	*−6*	*−5*	*−4*	*−3*	*−2*	*−1*	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*Total*
N/A	121			29	277	204	203	155	120	113	162	65	115	56	16	1636
Africa	56		1					1			3	1	2	1		65
Asia Minor	43	1	4		1	11	5	6	6	4	15	4	28	6	4	138
Others									2						1	3
Egypt	2						6	3	3	7	12	6	13	19	3	74
Greece	3		1	1	55	61	39	24	16	15	29	21	7	13	2	287
Italy	3	1		4	3	6	2	10	64	63	31	25	13	5	2	232
West														5		5
East			1					3				5	9	2	3	23
Total	228	2	7	34	336	282	255	202	211	202	252	127	187	107	31	2463



Graph 2.13 Philosophers by schools and by geographical areas of activity (simplified version)
(For color version, see color plate section)

Teaching and Book Writing

Another important activity was the writing of treatises, compendia, manuals, or more often commentaries on the *authoritative* books of the school. Of our corpus, 697 philosophers, (28.29%) wrote something, a fairly high value. There are 120 who wrote commentaries of some kind (4.87% of the whole population, but 17.21% of those who wrote something). Some of these philosophers, like Epicurus or Chrysippus, wrote hundreds of books. An almost unknown philosopher like Chrysanthius of Sardis is said by Eunapius to have written at the age of 80 more books than a young man could even read. We can hardly overestimate the amount of such philosophical production that has disappeared totally in the shipwreck of ancient literature. Other philosophers deliberately wrote nothing.

Philosophers on Stone

If there were only one interesting conclusion to draw from this inquiry, it could be the fact that at least 285 philosophers (11.57%) are known

through inscriptions. Almost every year new names are discovered inscribed on stones that turn up in excavations. Most of the time, the inscription gives us very little more than the name and place of origin of a philosopher, sometimes his school (here and there, we may be misled by some homonymy). But these documents are a precious indication of the social status of the philosopher in society. It meant something for a city or a family to honor a citizen as having been a philosopher or a "*platonikos philosophos*." Philosophy was not only a private doctrinal affair, nor a purely individual "way of life." It had a social function and the status of the philosopher was recognized in every little township within the Roman empire, as well as in the law codes. Some institutional details remain obscure. For instance, no less than 15 philosophers are identified as having had some link with the famous Museum of Alexandria, or with some other Museum: they were priests of the philosophical Muses, fed at the Museum, members of the Museum, and so on. Was this always the famous Alexandrian Museum, or some other local institution, as there happened to be in Athens, Ephesus, or Antioch? Were they all professional *philosophers*? Epigraphists are still discussing the meaning of such formulas.

Statues and Portraits

In many cases, at least for 108 philosophers (4.38%), not only an inscription but a statue or a portrait is also preserved, or at least literarily attested, a clear indication of the high consideration received by the philosopher in ancient society and of the concern of ancient society for its famed intellectuals.

Sidelines

For 405 philosophers of our list, another activity is registered: they were poets, musicians, historians, librarians, grammarians, mathematicians, astronomers, sophists, and so on, and in 72 cases, physicians. But we also meet cart drivers, tanners, architects, alchemists, engineers, painters, sculptors, lawyers, generals, pantomimes, wrestlers, boxers, shoemakers, barbers, and many Christian bishops.

Philosophers and Politics

The social visibility of philosophers through inscriptions or statues in the ancient society is paired with a personal commitment to the political and civic lives of the community. Some 282 *philosophers* of our population (11.44%) are known to have played such a role at different political levels. This value does not take into account the political ideas of the philosophers, but their actual involvement in various political or civic activities, including the murder of local tyrants. Attending the school of Athenian philosophers for a few months seems to have been a must in the high Roman society. If we take into account philosophers from the West (Italy, Gaul, Spain) and exclude from the list the ancient Pythagoreans of Southern Italy, we find a group of 222 "philosophers," 93 of who are known to have played a role at some important political or civic level. We might be reluctant to count these statesmen alongside more scholarly figures, but the philosophical training or at least the philosophical interests of these people is well documented, and ancient sources call them philosophers.

Conclusions

These are a few facts drawn from the database of the *DPhA*. More values could be extracted, and surely much more analysis and interpretation would be required to do justice to the material here summarily gathered. This raw data should also be placed in close relation with literary testimonies of different periods. A closer examination of the entries, together with many corrections derived from the articles that are still to be written, will probably modify our information here and there. But on the whole, this provisional inquiry may serve to confirm or qualify the intuitive views we have about ancient philosophers.

Notes

1. For a more detailed presentation of this other set of statistics, see Goulet (2007).
2. No text from the biographical, medical, or scientific tradition and no text related to what is called "Christian philosophy" has been included.

3

Philosophy as a Way of Life
As Textual and More Than Textual Practice

Richard Shusterman

I

Philosophy is typically identified with the textual practices of reading and writing and oral dialogue that have long dominated the genre. But it has also, especially in ancient times, fiercely asserted itself as something other and more than textual exercises; it claimed to be an entire way of life, an art of living dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom (as the word "*philosophia*" implies), and thus to the practices that such pursuit should entail. The recovery of this image of philosophy at the end of the twentieth century has been largely due to the path-breaking efforts of Pierre Hadot, who influenced Michel Foucault and others in this enterprise.[1] My aim in this paper is to probe to what extent philosophy as a practice or art of living requires a literary or more generally textual form, but then also to consider why it should not confine itself to the limits of discourse.

Philosophy, of course, has long displayed a variety of recognized literary genres – essays, dialogues, poems, meditations, treatises, speeches, confessions, memoirs, letters, discourses, journals, commentaries, investigations, sermons, notes, lectures, fragments, aphorisms, inquiries, outlines, sketches – and the list could be doubled and will grow with the

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arrival of new literary genres, such as the blog, which has already been enlisted into philosophical use.

To distinguish philosophy as more than literature, as other than mere textual practice (whether poetic or rhetorical, written or oral), ancient philosophers often insisted that their enterprise was essentially a way of life rather than a form of language; that philosophy had to be expressed in action beyond mere utterances or textual inscriptions. In this tradition, philosophers such as Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca, and later Renaissance philosophers like Montaigne, disparage as mere "grammarians" or "mathematicians" those philosophers who devote more "care and attention to their speech than . . . to their lives," and thus "teach us how to argue instead of how to live" (Seneca 1969, p. 160, 207). Philosophy, in this tradition, derives its value and "authority over other arts" by being the "most valuable of all arts, the art of living well" (Montaigne 1992, p. 124). "Philosophy," says Seneca, "takes as her aim the state of happiness," not book learning or textual production, the zealous pursuit of which can indeed prove harmful (Seneca 1969, p. 171). Diogenes Laertius reports that Socrates was not alone among the eminent ancient philosophers who "wrote nothing at all" and instead conveyed their teaching primarily through the conduct of their exemplary lives, rather than by formulated doctrine (Diogenes 1925, p. 1, 17). As Montaigne writes, "To compose our character is our duty, not to compose books [. . .] Our great and glorious masterpiece is to live appropriately" (Montaigne 1992, pp. 850–851). Though this tradition of philosophy as a way of life has greatly waned in modern times with the institutionalization of philosophy as an academic profession of theoretical writing, we still hear echoes in Thoreau's famous complaint: "There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live" (Thoreau 1969, p. 270). And the insistence on philosophy as a way of life that goes beyond textual practice has been reasserted in contemporary times by philosophers as different as Foucault, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and John Dewey (Shusterman 1997).

There is, of course, no contradiction between living and writing philosophy. Indeed, the most successful ancient philosophies combined discourse and deeds, theory and practice. The Stoic life of simple consistency with nature and tranquil acceptance of its provenance was, for example, both justified and facilitated by philosophical discourse that viewed the whole world as a perfect, living organic unity, whose parts, as necessary to the whole, must be accepted. The same symbiosis exists between the Epicurean life of unmixed tranquil pleasures and its discourse

on the nature and limits of human sensations and sentience. If philosophy is supposed to assert truths about the world, it must do so in some literary form, through some discursive linguistic expression. The point of asserting philosophy as a way of life rather than merely as a form of literature could still be important in underlining that philosophy needs to go beyond mere discourse and engage a world beyond that of words. How, indeed, could it do without writing? Even if it is the philosopher's actual embodied life rather than her discourse that is most important, the exemplary meaning of that life could not long survive her death without an enduring literary expression of discursive testimony. The tradition of the embodied philosophical life thus requires the literary genre of biography (including autobiography), and philosophy seems to have first firmly established itself through Plato's brilliantly literary account of Socrates' life and death for the sake of philosophy.

If both philosophical theories and philosophical life-stories require some literary formulation, then what kind of philosophy might exist without literary form? Perhaps the most likely candidate would be what Socrates identifies as the most basic and essential philosophical task, the one that prompted his philosophical quest – the Delphic injunction to "know thyself," which he also closely connected with the idea of caring for oneself.[2] Unlike narrating philosophical lives or expressing theories about knowledge, being, justice, and beauty, the task of self-knowledge and self-care would seem, *prima facie*, to be a matter of silent introspection and discipline rather than verbal explanation and exposition. Philosophy, as such, would apparently require no special literary formulation.

In the *Phaedrus*, for example, Socrates tells us that he cannot concern himself with all sorts of speculative knowledge, because he is wholly engaged and "still unable" to do "as the Delphic inscription orders, to know myself; and it really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have understood that. This is why I do not concern myself with them. I accept what is generally believed, and, as I was saying, I look not into them but into my own self" (230a). Having identified self-examination as the philosophical project *par excellence*, the very same dialogue strikingly offers Plato's most vigorous critique of writing as a mode of philosophy. Socrates does not condemn writing in general; he even affirms its value for literary arts, since it provides a man "gardens of letters for amusing himself." But unlike literature, philosophy is too serious a matter to be identified with even "noble amusement," since it concerns the essential health of the mind. Written formulations of knowledge make the mind weak by undermining the cultivation of memory. Writing fills men with

an empty conceit of their own wisdom, which without memory is shallow and unabiding. Written philosophy is further censured as epistemologically inadequate, because orphaned from the voice of the author who could explain or define it; it cannot speak to answer interrogators and is helplessly exposed to misinterpretation. Finally, the written word is metaphysically inferior, a lifeless image of oral communication and thus, as it were, two removes from "the living, breathing discourse of the man who knows," "a discourse that is written with knowledge in the soul" (276a). The Greek term translated here as "discourse," but also often (in this and other contexts) as "word," is the seminal notion of *logos*. This term denotes not only the discursive expression (or words) of a thought but the unexpressed "inward thought itself" (Liddell 1997, pp. 476–477).

If the possibility of wordless thinking is granted (and even Wittgenstein seems to allow this possibility), then *logos* (despite its intimate connection with words) might also signify such silent, wordless thinking (Wittgenstein 1967, p. 122). Moreover, even if silent thinking requires some link to concepts or words, it can hardly be considered literature, so that philosophical self-knowledge could then apparently be pursued through introspection without the need of literary form, whether written texts or oral soliloquies. Moreover, in the Platonic dialogues *Alcibiades* (131b) and *Charmides* (164d), the philosophical project of knowing oneself is identified with being "self-controlled" or being "temperate" rather than with a specifically discursive knowledge about one's person or mind. The work of philosophy as perfecting greater self-control would likewise not seem to require any real literary performance.

Having identified this option of philosophy without literature, I want to consider it more critically. Even if philosophical self-examination and self-mastery are matters of introspective discipline, such introspection, I shall argue, requires careful literary formulation for its most successful pursuit. Further, philosophical self-examination and self-mastery require more than introspection. Finally, however, I maintain that these philosophical activities also require more than literary means, so that philosophy is both literature and more than literature.

II

We should begin by underlining the psychological dangers of such silent introspection, by first recalling that the dominant ancient meaning of the Delphic injunction to "know thyself" was in fact a critical warning

for mortals to know their place and limitations by acknowledging their inferiority to the gods. The project of self-knowledge was thus, from the outset, bound up with self-criticism, just as self-care highlighted recognizing one's flaws that required amelioration. We see this quite clearly in *Alcibiades*, where Socrates convinces the talented, proud, and ambitious young Athenian that he is in fact hopelessly unready to pursue his political ambitions because he is miserably deficient in self-knowledge and self-cultivation, and thus requires a friend like Socrates to put him on the right path through a combination of dialogical criticism and friendly encouragement.

The project of solitary absorption in one's self and its inadequacies seems a recipe for depression and frustration. Even Montaigne, surely among the greatest advocates of solitary self-study, warned of its psychological dangers, since honest self-examination reveals "an object that fills us with discontent; we see nothing in us but misery and vanity. In order not to dishearten us, Nature has very appropriately thrown the action of our vision outward" (Montaigne 1992, p. 766). Likewise, Kant while insisting that "the First Command of all Duties to Oneself . . . is '*know* (scrutinize, fathom) *yourself*,'" warns that this involves a "descent into the hell of self-cognition" even if such a descent is necessary to "pave the way to godliness" (Kant 1991, p. 191). Nietzsche similarly cautions that introspective "digging into oneself, this straight, violent descent into the pit of one's being, is a painful and dangerous undertaking" (Nietzsche 1999, p. 340). Nietzsche thus gives preference to the creative, dynamic project of self-transformation, "to become what one is"; for which "*nosce te ipsum* [know yourself] would be the recipe for destruction" (Nietzsche 1992, pp. 34–35). Goethe goes even further by protesting this emphasis on solitary self-examination that brings "psychological torments" and unhealthily directs us "away from the activities of the outer world to an inner false contemplation" (Goethe 1966, Vol. 12, 413; Vol. 13, 38). Instead, he argues, one can know oneself better by knowing one's world, which includes knowing one's place in it among other things and other persons. By comparing our views of life with others, we can gain a more objective and nuanced self-knowledge than we could through isolated introspection.

We thus move from the charge that silent and solitary introspection is psychologically morbid, to the critique of its epistemological inadequacy. Several arguments can be brought to support the claim that effective self-knowledge requires some form of mindful literary practice and preferably, a form of writing. First, there is a need to objectify the self in some way in

order to examine it. The examining subjectivity (or "I") must be directed at some representation of the self (or "me"). Verbal descriptions and expressions of that self provide such representations. Without gainsaying the important presence of nameless feelings and nonverbal images that stream through consciousness, it is clear that our most precise, articulate, and examinable representations of the self are expressed in language and thus formulated in terms of words and meanings that are public and shared.

Secondly, uttered or written formulation gives thought an exterior expression that enables the subject herself to experience it in a different way that allows more critical distance. What seems right in one's interior thinking may ring false and inadequate once it is actually said or written down. If critical thinking, rather than mere thinking, is essential to philosophical self-examination, then literary expression is also essential. Moreover, as Horace proverbially put it – *littera scripta manet* (the written word remains) – writing has a durability and accessibility that neither silent thought nor oral expression could provide, though recording technology has now provided oral literature with powers of permanence and reproducibility similar to written texts. Such durability enables continued consultation and reexamination of self-analysis, which is essential for measuring one's progress in self-knowledge and self-cultivation. Though it may weaken the powers of spontaneous memory, the use of writing and other technologies of recording, in fact extends our abilities to remember by providing enduring reminders.

Writing, with its graphic spatial features, can be particularly effective in sustained efforts of self-knowledge and self-improvement. Consider, for example, Benjamin Franklin's autobiographical account of the little book of virtues he devised "for Self Examination" and progress toward "moral perfection." It consisted in an inventory of 13 virtues, vertically listed on each page, with the days of the week running horizontally and perpendicular to the top of the list, creating a grid of empty squares where he would "mark by a little black spot every Fault [he] found upon Examination to have been committed respecting that Virtue upon that Day" (Franklin 1986, pp. 90–100). Such a method prevented him from self-deception about his progress, even if his desire to think well of himself would incline his memory to forget his faults. Those faults would be marked there in baleful black to remind him, displaying with graphic clarity in the immediacy of a quick glance, precisely those virtues in which he had been the weakest and which required the greatest efforts to improve.

Franklin's book, it might be objected, is more a matter of accounting charts than the conventional stuff of literature, though his book also included for each virtue an aphoristic precept and a few hortatory literary fragments from famous authors. But books that instead are composed with a concern for fine literary style can also, by that very character, serve as enduring means for self-examination and its work of memory. When oral or written texts are well wrought with engaging literary qualities, they are more likely to be cherished, consulted, preserved, remembered, and hence can provide better service to philosophical investigations. It is, therefore, not surprising that philosophers take considerable pains to express their self-examining thoughts in attractive literary form, even if they are inscribed initially in the form of notes made for one's private contemplation and use. Consider the wonderfully evocative aphorisms and literary fragments that Wittgenstein secretly recorded in his so called "coded notebooks," a collection of which have been posthumously decoded and published in *Culture and Value* (Wittgenstein, p. 1980).

The effort to pursue one's self-examining inquiries in literary form has a fourth advantage. Vague feelings can be rendered more precise and discriminating through literary expression. The care that one takes in giving one's thoughts and feelings an adequate and attractive literary formulation can, moreover, prompt and guide one's mind to new insights. Language does not so much mirror thought as shape it. William James notes how the different names of wines help us discriminate their subtly different flavors far more clearly than we could without the use of such names, while T.S. Eliot argues that the poet's role in forging new language enables us to feel things that could not otherwise be felt, thus "making possible a greater range of emotion and perception for other men, because he gives them the speech in which more can be expressed" (James 1983, p. 483; Eliot 1978, p. 134).

So far, we have concentrated on how the process, discipline, and techniques of careful literary expression can improve the individual's efficacy in exercising solitary philosophical self-examination and self-care. But we must not forget that an undeniably major merit of expressing one's efforts at self-examination in well-crafted literary formulation concerns the ways that such literary expression reaches out to other people who can then encourage, advise, comfort, and otherwise support the individual in her quest for self-knowledge and self-improvement.

As already noted, an honest critical examination of the self is likely to be a painful process that brings up disturbing personal flaws, ills,

feelings of guilt, and fears, which one's consciousness may have suppressed for the individual's own mental health and stability. In such circumstances, it is extremely valuable to have a caring friend or interlocutor with whom one can share one's self-revelations, and whose continuing friendship affirms that one's self, despite all the faults uncovered, is still worthy of friendship and respect, and is indeed appreciated partly through its disciplined efforts of self-examination and self-improvement. This need for a dialogical friend in the pursuit of self-knowledge and self-improvement is already clear in Plato's *Alcibiades*, where Socrates uses his external perspective to show his interlocutor's lack of self-knowledge and need for self-cultivation, but repeatedly frames his exhortation of Alcibiades to undertake this pursuit by underlining his enduring love for Alcibiades and assuring Alcibiades his faithful, affectionate support in this self-ameliorative struggle: "someone who loves your soul, will not leave you as long as you're making progress" (131d). And the dialogue closes with the hope that Socrates' own pursuit of self-cultivation "will be cared for in return" (135e) by his beloved young friend. It should be obvious, moreover, that when such self-revealing dialogical exchange between friends is expressed in an attractive literary form, the rewarding pleasures of literary style adds zest to the communication and can even deepen the bonds of friendly affection and mutual appreciation.

Moreover, because one is revealing oneself to someone whose love and loyalty is trusted and respected, there is a powerful incentive (both emotional and moral) to do one's best to be as honest, clear, insightful, and articulate as possible in expressing oneself. Among the many interdependent complementarities of self and other, one's sense of responsibility to an intimate other can drive the self to be more responsibly frank and diligently rigorous in self-examination than when one is left to one's own devices. Also, when there is no fear that one might have to face an embarrassed, bored, or disappointed look from one's interlocutor at the very moment of one's self-expression because that interlocutor is not physically present but is being addressed in a letter, then self-exposure can be freer still (despite the fear that one's message could reach other eyes). In today's very different world, intimately detailed self-revelations are exchanged over email that might never have been expressed if the interlocutors were confined to real-time and face-to-face communication (despite the ever-present risk of interception).

It is, therefore, not surprising that the Socratic idea of self-examination and self-transformation through open yet mindfully focused and

stylistically attractive communication with friends soon evolved in antiquity from the form of oral dialogue to the genre of letters. Written expression has distinct advantages. It allows one to take more time to compose one's thought in a more careful, critical, and attractive form without making one's interlocutor wait in silence during the time needed for formulating one's views. This extra time enables one to probe deeper in introspective analysis, providing more detail and nuance of one's mood and following a line of inquiry at greater length than one could do in oral communication with a friend. The written technology of "introspection" can thus be seen as changing the very practice and experience of philosophical self-examination. As Foucault argues, citing, for example, the loving correspondence between the young emperor-to-be Marcus Aurelius and his rhetoric teacher Fronto (a relationship rather parallel to that of Alcibiades and Socrates), "A relation developed between writing and vigilance. Attention was paid to nuances of life, mood, and reading, and the experience of oneself was intensified and widened by virtue of this act of writing" (Foucault 1988, 28).

Besides, because writing is recorded and hence preserved beyond its immediate context of production, one's soul-searching message can be composed at one's leisure and in tranquil privacy, yet nonetheless be faithfully communicated without the need for one's interlocutor to be physically present. Indeed, through copying and forwarding the message can reach more than one friend. Moreover, the written form allows the receiver of the message to examine it at his convenience and pace and even reexamine it repeatedly so as to ensure better understanding and provide better critical feedback to the philosophical friend who composed it. One prominent example of this genre of philosophical writing is Seneca's famous *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* (a collection of 124 letters dealing with ethical issues and written to his friend Lucilius). Since words do not simply clothe thoughts but rather shape them, it follows that greater literary skill in formulating the letters should enhance the revelatory insights of the self-analysis, as well as recommending them for repeated perusal, and consequently, more attentive and perceptive feedback from readers of the letters.

The powers of the epistolary form, with its sense of direct, personal communication, are such that it has even been deployed as a fictional device for philosophical composition, in which we find the putative philosophical correspondence between two friends, who are but the creations of a different philosophical author (for example, the Julius and Raphael of Schiller's *Philosophical Letters*). Given the proven powers of

friendship-grounded epistolary self-examination and self-cultivation in philosophy's ancient pursuit of the art of living, it is not surprising that Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, though not formally composed as letters, is addressed not to the general public of readers but directly to God, as an intimate, loving, caring, and attentive (though infinitely superior) friend with whom one could share one's deepest secrets, struggles, and hopes for self-knowledge, self-improvement, and salvation, and who provides the sturdiest support for this pursuit of the good while also being the ultimate judge of its success. In this path-breaking philosophical and "literary work of art," which innovatively combined the verbal music of the Latin rhetorical tradition with the sweet sacred language of Christian prayer, "The pronoun '*tu*' – 'Thou', 'You' – occurs in 381 out of the 453 paragraphs of the *Confessions*" (Brown 1992, p. xiii).

If the psychological advantages of externalizing one's self-analysis in literary form are now evident, the epistemological advantages should be no less obvious. Solitary introspection for self-analysis and self-care faces the unavoidable problem that one's view of oneself is always partial, in both senses of "biased" and "incomplete" (which the French language neatly distinguishes as "*partial*" and "*partiel*"). One cannot even view the surface of one's body without the help of a mirror or other reflecting device. The depths of one's soul, the complex layers, quirks, and weaknesses of one's personality are hardly transparent to one's own consciousness either because they are implicitly repressed or because, as part of one's second nature, they are so close that they escape attention. Even if one subjects oneself to the strictest scrutiny one's own critical reason can muster, it remains within the limits of one's own subjective capacities. Subject-centered reason must therefore yield to the greater power of communicative rationality even within the quest for self-knowledge.

Goethe, we recall, in sharply criticizing the traditional ideal of introspective self-examination, insisted that a healthier and more reliable self-knowledge can be gleaned not only by looking outward to the world to teach us about ourselves and our place in it but also, especially, by learning about ourselves through the testimony of others. "Most effective are our neighbors, who have the advantage, from their standpoint, of comparing us to the world, and therefore of achieving a better knowledge of us than we ourselves could acquire. In my riper years, I have given great attention to how others have been inclined to know me, by which, as if through so many mirrors, myself and my inner being could become clearer" (Goethe 1966, p. 38). While adversaries' views of him

could not be taken to heart because of their essential negative bias, he claims he "readily and without limit depends for guidance" on those held "by his friends and always regards them with pure trust as truly edifying" (Goethe 1966, p. 38). Contemporary experimental studies in psychology confirm that one's well-intentioned teachers and sympathetic colleagues provide a surer sense of one's abilities than can be discerned by one's own self-reflection. Students asked to evaluate themselves honestly consistently overvalue their abilities and even actual performance, while their teachers and peers give more accurate judgments of them. Moreover, feedback from peers (as from teachers) tends to improve both the self-knowledge and the performance of students (Dunning 2005).

What an individual can learn from others about one's self is not, however, confined to their expressed opinions about that self or their reactions to one's own formulations of self-analysis. It just as importantly includes the others' articulated views on a whole range of topics that concern the wider world. Because a great many of the self's beliefs are so implicit that it takes contrast to bring them to full consciousness, by discovering what others think about things, and especially how their views and interests differ from one's own, an individual can come to distinguish more clearly and know more deeply her own opinions and values. This encounter with different views has always been one of the highly touted benefits that literature offers for philosophical and personal insight. Thinkers as different as T.S. Eliot and T.W. Adorno have insisted that when we read a literary work of art, we must, in order simply to grasp its meanings and achieve the aesthetic experience it offers, immerse ourselves (at least in an initial first stage) empathetically into its world and the beliefs that structure it, though one should thereafter proceed to a second stage where those views are subjected to critical questioning from one's own perspective.[3] Yet, one's own perspective can be transformed by a powerful author; "you have to give yourself up, and then recover yourself," Eliot claimed, but "the self recovered is never the same as the self before it was given" (Tate 1966, pp. 55–56). Wide reading is especially valuable, Eliot argues, because it prevents an overwhelming of the self, "an invasion of the underdeveloped personality [. . .] by the stronger personality of the poet" (Eliot 1936, pp. 103–104). In caring for the self, the need to read widely in literature is not so much for accumulation of informational knowledge but "because in the process of being affected by one powerful personality after another, we cease to be dominated by any one, or by any small number. The very different views of life, cohabiting in our minds, affect each other, and our own personality asserts itself and

gives each a place in some arrangement peculiar to ourself" (Eliot 1936, pp. 103–104).

III

Eliot's remarks on reading display the general tendency to blend the projects of self-knowledge and self-cultivation, whose connection is highlighted in Plato's *Alcibiades* and elsewhere in antiquity. The Greek term for this second project "*epimeleia*" implies the notions of caring for or carefully attending to something, of showing concern for something, of taking charge, managing, or governing something. Since the initially dominant meaning of the Delphic command to know oneself was to humbly note one's human and personal limitations so as not to risk, through hubris, punishment from the gods and the powerful, the relationship of self-knowledge to self-care were clear and unproblematic. However, when self-knowledge is construed more in terms of rigorously analyzing one's self and inner character, then there is the possibility of a serious tension between self-examination and self-care, because too much ruminative self-analysis can be detrimental to psychological health.

This worry is what drives Nietzsche and Goethe to prefer the notion of creative self-transformation through one's activities in the world to an introverted preoccupation with one's private consciousness. If William James and John Dewey also express this worry in different ways, Foucault (explicitly building on Nietzsche) is more forthright in urging that self-care is more important than self-knowledge, and that philosophical literature (even with respect to the self) should be more focused on transforming the self, escaping (rather than dwelling on) the limits of its present state. If "the main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning," then the literary writing provides an excellent way both to transform oneself and to hide one's self behind a faceless labyrinth of words (Foucault 1988, p. 9). "I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face," claims Foucault. "Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same" (Foucault 1972, p. 17). By creating a textual persona to conceal, and thus protect the self-examining self from physical exposure to the public, an exposure that could be much too inhibiting and risky, there is greater freedom for imaginative experiments through which one can question one's self and the social conventions that define it, thus probing one's own limits (and society's) in a more adventurous quest for self-transformation.

Since Plato's use of the figure of Socrates, philosophy has made great use of such textual personae.

But for all its values of concealing the individual behind the veils of textual constructions and even fictional pseudonyms, literary form is also a crucial device for bringing oneself into the public and thus transforming oneself productively, precisely through the public exposure that literary composition brings to the subject herself and that rescues her from the privacy of her thoughts, feelings, and imaginative efforts of self-knowledge and self-care. I use the feminine pronoun here pointedly, because two of the twentieth century's most important female philosophers (Hannah Arendt and Simone de Beauvoir) have insisted on the value of literature for liberating woman's project of self-realization from the oppressively stifling confinement of self-examining introspection, of private, ephemeral interiority.

In her book on Rahel Varnhagen (née Levin), the turn-of-the-nineteenth-century Jewish salon intellectual, Arendt stresses the importance of Rahel's chosen literary practice of letter writing as necessary for her quest of self-realization, by ensuring that her rich inner life found external expression in a literary form that made them no longer ephemeral and private. In the same way, her reading of literature (especially Goethe) gave her the tools not only to experience life more subtly but also to capture and convey that experience in precise and preserving language. "The function of language is preservation," and what literature embodies can "remain longer than is possible for ephemeral human beings" (Arendt 1997, pp. 170–171). Through her absorption in literature's "absolute precision in the use of words," "Rahel acquired to the point of mastery the art of representing her own life" to others and thus emerging more confidently beyond her inner world into the real "intricacies of social life" (Arendt 1997, pp. 170–173). "She had learned that pure subjectivity which makes a point of bearing a world within itself is doomed, because this inner world" rests too narrowly on the mere contingency of the individual's experience without sufficient support by broader social existence and recognition (Arendt 1997, p. 173). Through literary writing, even in the form of letters which she circulated among her friends, social recognition of one's distinctive personhood could be achieved, and through such recognitive processes the self could be transformed.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir continuously cautions against the special dangers that introspective self-examination poses for women. Distanced from the life of public action and essentially confined to the private domains of caring for home, husband, and children, woman is

already overly inclined to "being occupied with herself" in the realm of contemplative interiority, "to study her sensations and unravel their meaning" (Beauvoir 1989, p. 623). Relegated to the essential role of ornament whose value depends on its always presenting a charming appearance, woman is already too absorbed in critical self-analysis of what she is and how she looks to achieve a radical transformation of her condition in the world. "She still regards her life as an imminent enterprise," measured by "subjective success" (Beauvoir 1989, p. 626). Rather than self-analysis, "what woman essentially lacks today for doing great things is forgetfulness of herself," an escape from critical subjective imminence that enables the transcendence of projecting oneself boldly and forcefully into the world of action (Beauvoir 1989, p. 702). Given the societal conventions that have constrained the possibilities of women to make a public mark in the world, writing presents an extremely important mode of transcendence and public recognition. Beauvoir always proudly defined herself as a writer rather than a philosopher, and it is clear from her extensive autobiographical writings that she regarded writing as an indispensable tool for converting self-analysis into active transcendence in the public sphere. "This was the meaning behind my vocation," she writes in examining her early years. "I would take my childhood in hand again and make of it a faultless work of art. I saw myself as the basis of my own apotheosis" (Beauvoir 1959, p. 57). To transcribe one's life, feelings, and thoughts in a literary form can thus transform the self not only by taking it beyond its interior experience so that it can play a more public role, but by reshaping the self into a more coherent and effective narrative that supports further activity of transformational transcendence.

Another way that writing the self can help care for and transform the self is by enlisting others to encourage and assist us in that pursuit. Instead of struggling alone with one's efforts at self-reform, by expressing that struggle in a literary form that can appeal to others the self can acquire an extensive support group to cheer it on but also to admonish it when it strays or lapses. An interesting contemporary example of this can be found in the increasingly popular genre of blogs devoted to debt. In these blogs (with such names as "bloggingawaydebt.com," "wereindebt.com," and "makelovenotdebt.com") the individual bloggers (who typically remain anonymous) try to get a handle on their struggle with debt and irresponsible credit card spending by reaching out to a wide, anonymous Internet audience to share this struggle with them, revealing to an extensive public intimate financial details and personal feelings that they dare not share with their family and close friends. In order

to connect to these unknown people through the Internet, the bloggers claim to rely on their "good communication skills," and without sufficient literary skills to recount, with poignancy and humor, their struggles with debt and spending, how could they succeed in engaging this initially unknown audience? (Leland 2007, p. 1). The bloggers also claim that feedback from their Internet public has helped their self-discipline, not only through the "supportive" comments but through "the fear of censure" for their failures (Leland 2007, p. 23).

IV

Having thus far urged the need for literature in pursuit of the philosophical tasks of self-examination and self-care, I now briefly argue that philosophy in this sense must also be more than literature. Discourse, no matter how powerful and exquisite, is not enough. To know oneself requires knowing one's deeds as well as one's words, just as the judgments of others are more reliable if based also on their actions beyond the speech acts they perform in utterance or writing. Formulations of one's philosophical ethos must be tested in trials of experience, especially since a philosopher's views can often be a contrasting compensation for one's own life rather than a faithful expression of one's experience or character. *Argumentum ad hominem* is today considered a glaring logical fallacy and is surely irrelevant to philosophy's more formal, abstract issues. But in earlier times, it was common to test a philosopher's views by his manner of life, often with special emphasis on his way of facing death. As Montaigne praises Socrates, Cleanthes, and Seneca for how they managed and ended their lives, so he condemns Cicero for the wretched, cowardly way he met his death. In fact, Socrates, who produced no writings and whose words we only know through their interpretation by others, gave philosophy its inspirational power largely by his heroic model of living and dying in the courageous pursuit of wisdom rather than for any specific doctrine or literary masterpiece that he left us. Similarly, when Plato uses his persona in the *Phaedo* to argue for the immortality of the soul, the Socratic example of actually meeting death with cheerful welcome rather than cowering fear gives a more powerful aura of credibility to the discursive arguments Plato offers.

Thus far, I have dealt only with philosophy and literature in the Western context. Let me conclude by reminding readers that philosophy and literature are also intimately intertwined in the Asian philosophical

traditions, which have not suffered from Plato's foundationally formative attack on mimetic literature as essentially deceptive and morally destructive. Yet Asian traditions also emphasize with particular force that the philosophical quest for self-knowledge and self-improvement cannot be a mere matter of words alone. The *Bhagavad Gita* (or "Song of God"), a poem that forms part of the *Mahābhārata* (one of the two major Sanskrit epics of ancient India) is a key text for Yogic and Vedantic doctrines, and thus is often described as basic guide to Hindu philosophy. But, when it comes to the actual Yogic practice of philosophy – whether we are dealing with the Yoga of Action, the Yoga of Devotion, or the Yoga of Meditation (which are all delineated in the *Gita*) – we obviously cannot limit philosophical practice to the realm of mere words.

The same message of philosophy as literature and more than literature is evident in the Confucian tradition. On the one hand, Confucius insists on the importance of poetry, repeatedly affirming the value of the *Shih Ching* or *Book of Songs* for guiding one's thought and efforts at self-cultivation: "My young friends, why don't you study the *Songs*? Reciting the *Songs* can arouse your sensibilities, strengthen your powers of observation, enhance your ability to get on with others, and sharpen your critical skills" (Ames and Rosemont 2002, 16:13).[4] On the other hand, Confucius repeatedly insists that fine words are not enough, that they require fine action to make them convincing, and that without such action they in themselves are suspicious. "What can possibly be done with people who find pleasure in polite language but do not draw out its meaning, or who comply with model sayings but do not reform their ways?" . . . "Exemplary persons would feel shame if their words were better than their deeds" (Ames and Rosemont 2002, 9:24, 14:27). Moreover, right action for Confucianism is not merely performing the proper act, but also requires performing it with the "proper countenance" or "demeanor" that expresses the proper attitude (Ames and Rosemont 2002, 2:8, 8:4). Similarly, the Confucian tradition emphasizes that some of the most persuasive lessons in the philosophical art of self-cultivation can be conveyed without words, through the wordless, radiating power of the bodily bearing and gracious action of the teacher, who instructs by the exemplarity of his being and behavior, in ways that both interpret and complement the words of his teaching (Shusterman 2012, pp. 319–320). As Mencius says of Confucius, "His every limb bears wordless testimony" (Dobson 1969, p. 181).

If philosophy requires not only words but also more than words, then there is a twofold challenge for philosophy as a way of life. It is not enough

to compose our texts and refine our language with logical and literary skill; we must also take real pains, in practicing philosophy, to give careful composition to our character, behavior, and bearing, and to refine them through harmonizing grace and attractive style that is artfully appealing though not artificial or insincere.

Notes

1. Of Hadot's many works on the topic see especially Hadot 1995. Though enormously indebted to Hadot's research and insights, I have questioned the way his one-sided focus on the Platonic idea of "spiritual exercises" as a means of liberating the mind from the body tends to exclude the somatic dimension of spirituality, and the way somatic exercises function in the ancient versions of philosophy as a way of life in both occidental and oriental cultures. Also challenging his insistence that the asceticism of philosophy as a way of life precludes the aesthetic dimension, I have argued that the aesthetic and ascetic are not at all incompatible, as many varieties of minimalist aesthetics illustrate. For these points see Shusterman 1997, 2004 Chapter 1, and 2008.
2. Self-knowledge, of course, also forms an essential part of larger philosophical projects, as, for example, when Descartes makes the self-knowledge of the knowing subject a crucial first step in his general theory of knowledge.
3. See Adorno 1984, 346, 387, 479. On the one hand, "one must enter into the work" and "give oneself over to the work"; but on the other, "Those who have only an inside view of art do not understand it". For more on the two-stage theory of reading shared by Eliot and Adorno, see Shusterman 2000 Chapter 8.
4. The *Songs* are an anthology of 305 poems compiled about 600 BC from a selection of already existing poems, some of which date back several hundred years earlier. According to one tradition, Confucius personally selected these works from an earlier collection of over 3000 poems, choosing and arranging them to exemplify his ideas about government and harmonious personal relations.

4

Charismatic Authority, Spiritual Guidance, and Way of Life in the Pythagorean Tradition

Constantinos Macris

A Promising Field of Research: The Greco-Roman Tradition of "Guidance of the Soul"

Since the pioneering work of Paul Rabbow,[1] and above all the remarkable synthetic essays of Ilsetraut Hadot on the Greco-Roman tradition of "guidance of the soul"[2] and on the role played in it by the "spiritual guide,"[3] the modern concept of "spiritual guidance"[4] has proved its validity, and contributed significantly to the advances made in the study of that central reality of ancient culture that is constituted by the dynamic relationship between master and disciple.[5] Indeed, the expression "spiritual guidance" has the advantage of stressing the most essential and vivid aspects of this relation. Thanks to the work of Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault, this concept can now be situated in a network along with such proximate notions as "technologies of the self,"[6] "spiritual exercises,"[7] and "perfecting oneself,"[8] which reveal the means used in the process of guidance and the goal at which it aims. All these concepts refer to individual practices, but these practices, in turn, include a strongly collective dimension, as they usually took place within circles or communities devoted to philosophy.[9]

The highly varied ways in which the phenomenon of guidance is documented in schools of thought as diverse as Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Neoplatonism, not to mention Hermeticism, show that the use of the

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expression "spiritual guidance" to describe pagan, pre-Christian or non-Christian realities is not as anachronistic and misplaced as it may appear at first glance.[10] This does not mean, however, that the modalities and contents of ancient guidance do not feature profound divergences when one moves from one tradition to another.[11] The examination of some aspects of the Pythagorean tradition from the perspective of guidance undertaken in the following pages will not belie this factual observation.[12]

Particularities of the Pythagorean Tradition: Variety, (Dis)Continuity, Source Problems

The panoramic and diachronic examination proposed here does not, of course, imply that the Pythagorean tradition has to be considered a monolithic block or a continuous and uninterrupted current. Quite the contrary, even a superficial reading of the ancient sources suffices to show that as early as the fifth century BC, Pythagoreans with widely divergent tendencies (co-)existed, ranging from the superstitious asceticism of the "acousmatics" ("listeners") and the pre-Cynicism of the Pythagorists of Middle Comedy, to the scholarly research of the "mathematicians" ("learners"),[13] with many nuances between these extremes.[14] Similarly, after a long period of "Dark Ages" extending from the second half of the fourth century BC (when the last anti-Pythagorean revolt in Southern Italy and the final exodus of the Pythagoreans occurred) to the first century BC (the revival of Pythagoreanism in both Rome and Alexandria), the individuals and/or groups that defined themselves, or were defined by others, as Pythagoreans presented such a wide doctrinal and even anthropological and sociological diversity (ranging, e.g., from miracle-working "divine men" to sober philosophers devoted to mathematics), that it is impossible not to make distinctions between them.[15]

The study of Pythagoreanism in the archaic and classical period raises serious source problems for the historian. The practices of orality, silence, and secrecy that marked the beginnings of the movement,[16] followed by the break caused by the "pogrom" inflicted on the Pythagoreans by their political enemies, who burned their books and caused a diaspora of the sect's members throughout the Greek world,[17] resulted in the almost complete lack of primary and secondary evidence, both epigraphic and literary, concerning Pythagoras (circa 570–480 BC) and the Pythagoreans of the first generations. The tradition had not preserved any authentic

writings of Pythagoras,[18] and his exclusively oral teaching did not have the good fortune of being written down by any of his immediate disciples, as was the case for the teachings of another master of orality, Socrates, whom one can see and hear in the works of his personal disciples: Plato's dialogues and Xenophon's *Memoirs of Socrates*. The only traces that remain of the initial period of Pythagoreanism are (a) the *acousmata*, that is, oral definitions and prescriptions recorded from an indeterminate period, both by Pythagoreans such as Androcydes, and by people foreign to the sect, such as Anaximander the Younger and Aristotle (see below, p. 63 ff.); and (b) a handful of authentic fragments of Philolaus of Croton (circa 470–390 BC, a rough contemporary of Socrates). For the rest, one is obliged to content oneself with representations of Pythagorean realities contained in more or less biased testimonies that might be defined as "tertiary."[19] These do derive from ancient sources, to be sure (such as the historian Timaeus of Taormina and the Peripatetic biographer and musicologist Aristoxenus of Tarentum), but they are indirect – almost all from the fourth century BC – , and preserved by late authors in the form of quotations or periphrastic adaptations (essentially from the third century AD).[20] At least two of these, the Neoplatonist philosophers Porphyry and (especially) Iamblichus, displayed very pronounced pro-Pythagorean positions, and did not abstain from expressing their personal views on the essence of the Pythagorean "tradition."

The problems confronted by scholars focusing on the later phases of the history of Pythagoreanism, that is, those of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods, are of a wholly different nature. What is characteristic here is the great profusion of apocryphal texts attributed to Pythagoras and ancient Pythagoreans, texts whose date, place of origin, purpose, and *Sitz im Leben* are hard to determine.[21] However, *pace* Burkert and Centrone, it would probably be wrong to consider those texts as the heterogeneous and disparate manifestations of a purely literary phenomenon, bearing no connection to extant "textual communities" that expressly considered themselves part of the Pythagorean tradition.[22]

A Constant Factor: The Practice of the Pythagorean Way of Life as a Path Toward Spiritual Perfection

We will see later that one of these controversial texts, the *Golden Verses*, a short poem dating back to the Hellenistic period,[23] constitutes the most complete and impressive illustration of spiritual guidance in a

Pythagorean milieu. This fact confirms that the poem was composed to satisfy the spiritual needs of the members of a brotherhood and not simply to give the impression that such was the case.[24] The same holds true of the archaic Pythagorean "catechism,"[25] the core of authentic oral teaching that can be partially reconstructed by collecting and classifying the *acousmata* that are found scattered among later authors. Nevertheless, we do not have a coherent discourse of guidance in this case, but rather a conglomerate of definitions and prescriptions intended to inculcate a particular way of living, the *bios pythagoreios*, that aims at a form of personal salvation.

Despite the chronological distance that separates the *Golden Verses* from the *acousmata*, what is at issue in both cases is the practice of the Pythagorean way of life, that gives guidance all its meaning. Although this peculiar and idiosyncratic *bios* assumed different forms in different historical periods, geographical areas, and cultural milieus, it remained, from the beginning to the end of the history of Pythagoreanism, its very essence and hallmark, its *idiasmos.*[26] Already exemplified by Pythagoras himself at the highest and most paradigmatic level of the "divine man,"[27] the *pythagoreios bios* was adopted by its practitioners in such a consistent and enthusiastic way that it provoked the admiration of Plato in the *Republic* (Book X, 600 a–b), the only *locus platonicus* in which Pythagoras' name is mentioned at all. It was also the subject of specific treatises *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* written by Aristoxenus of Tarentum and by Lycon at the beginning of the Hellenistic age,[28] as well as by Iamblichus in the imperial era. Only the last of these treatises has been preserved fully.

Pythagoras as "Guide in Education" and Beloved Master: The Testimony of Plato's *Republic*

The passage from the *Republic* mentioned above is particularly interesting for our purposes.[29] On the one hand, it seems to elevate Pythagoras to the level of a true educator of youth, a leader of or guide in education (*hêgemôn paideias*) in the private sphere (*idiai*, as opposed to *dêmosiai*), thus more or less explicitly removing this honorable title from the man who was traditionally considered to hold it in the Greek world, namely Homer. On the other hand, Plato recognizes in the sage of Samos the model of the beloved master, in whose company his disciples found

much pleasure. Indeed, he had introduced for them, as well as for future generations, a "path" or "way" of life (*hodos biou*) that distinguished those who practice it from those who do not.[30] Here, we are deep within the context, imagery, and language of guidance. This distinctive way of life which, apparently, was to accompany its practitioners like a permanent *habitus* is not far from lifelong education, that is, one that is not restricted to simple school education.[31] Thus, we can safely say that Pythagoras is fully invested with the key role of spiritual guide and master.[32]

Unfortunately, the aforementioned paucity of ancient documentation contemporary with or slightly later than Pythagoras does not allow us to fill out his role further and give it more substance. This kind of frustrating inaccessibility is, of course, not rare in the study of guidance in general, given that it is always difficult to sketch from life, in all its "experiential" aspects, the intimate relation that individually links a spiritual master to each of his disciples. In the case of Pythagoras, however, we must accept that our knowledge in this area is restricted to almost nothing. To remedy this defect, we can make the most of the available evidence to accomplish essentially three tasks:

(a) Synthesize the data (amply recorded in our sources) illustrating the exceptional *charismatic authority* that was invested in the "master of wisdom," Pythagoras, that is, the central pivot in the necessarily hierarchical, or at any rate asymmetrical, relation presupposed by spiritual guidance.[33]
(b) Determine the original content and meaning of the Pythagorean way of life introduced by Pythagoras himself, and practiced in diverse ways by his personal disciples and spiritual descendants, in order to examine to what extent it constitutes a path toward spiritual perfection, intended for persons who wished to purify themselves with a view to achieving a higher good, namely blessed happiness (in this life or after death), contemplation, mystical union, divinization, and immortality.[34]
(c) Examine the ways in which guidance was carried out as a progressive and systematic educational program within the Pythagorean communities, which thus became, as it were, the institutional locus of spiritual guidance in the broad sense of the term – unless this picture is the result of an illusion due to the retrospective inclusion, and idealization, by fourth-century BC sources of features drawn from the later schools of the Academy and the Lyceum.

Ipse Dixit: The Charismatic Authority of Pythagoras and its Basis

The authoritative aura surrounding Pythagoras as a master is documented in such a striking way that it has almost completely erased the traces of what is, in principle, its necessary complement in this kind of relation (and which attracted Plato's attention in the passage from the *Republic* cited above), namely, the emotional dimension, the intimate relation of love that links the master to those designated in the sources as his *philoi*, *gnôrimoi,* or *hetairoi.*[35] Despite evidence (late but not necessarily suspect) of the great love Pythagoras felt for his friends, disciples, and associates, and the particular sensitivity he showed in caring for their bodies and souls,[36] it does not seem rash to conclude that, if guidance is a combination (with variable dosage) of authority/power and love/affection, ancient Pythagoreanism represents a mixture with a strong authoritarian predominance. Such, at least, is the image that clearly emerges from reading the available sources.[37]

According to ancient witnesses whose testimony can scarcely be doubted, the authority granted to Pythagoras by his disciples was based on his prodigious knowledge acquired in the course of a long series of journeys, his unrivalled mental strength, and his ability to remember the previous lives of his soul, but above all on his impressive miracle-working activity, which authenticated the introduction of the new doctrine of reincarnation and of the soul's celestial immortality – a doctrine that went beyond the limits of human knowledge. The famous saying *autos epha* (*ipse dixit*, i.e., "the Master said it"[38]) gave perfect expression to the absolute respect inspired by the presence, wisdom, and actions of Pythagoras, a respect that was transformed into genuine veneration, and went so far as the pure and simple identification of the master with Apollo (the god of the revealed wisdom of the oracles), god of the Seven Sages, and the philosophers. In these circumstances, a distance was created, a profound "anthropological" gap that noticeably separated the "divine" master from the disciples who sat at his feet. Perhaps, one image will best illustrate this distance: according to a legend of indeterminate date, Pythagoras taught his circle of "esoterics" behind a curtain, whereas the "exoteric" disciples (*ektos sindonos*) were not admitted to see him in person, and had access to his teachings by hearing alone.[39]

In Search of the Master's Authentic Words: The Primitive Catechism Contained in the *Acousmata*

Pythagoras thus appears as the oldest example of the absolute authority of the master's wisdom in the Greek world,[40] and in particular of his living words,[41] within a philosophical school or tradition. However, these words have not been preserved, and their reconstitution seems as arduous a task as that of the *logia* of Jesus or the *ḥadīth* of Muḥammad. At best, one may suppose that Pythagoras' voice is reflected in the *acousmata* ("things heard") or *symbola* ("tokens," "passwords" intelligible only to the initiated; "things to be interpreted"; or "signs that distinguished Pythagoreans from others"): those brief, mysterious oral formulas, almost oracular, that contain the basic catechism of primitive Pythagoreanism, as it was given form early on by the sect's propaganda.[42]

The use of the term "catechism" is by no means abusive, for at least two of the three kinds of *acousmata* reported by tradition proceed by questions and answers.[43] The first one, which asks *ti esti*, consists of a set of questions about the nature of beings, and offers mystical definitions, for instance, "What are the Isles of the Blessed? – The sun and the moon." The second, which asks *ti malista*, seeks superlatives, that is, the things or actions that possess the *summum*, or perfection, of each quality, for instance: "What is wisest? – Number." The third kind, by contrast, presents itself in the form of normative prescriptions indicating *ti prakteon kai ti mê prakteon*, what must be done and not be done, in matters of religious ritual, morals, and even food consumption, for instance, "One must engender children", or "One must not sacrifice a white cock."[44]

In terms of literary form, the procedure followed in the *acousmata* is reminiscent of the *Capital Maxims* (*Kuriai doxai*) of Epicurus or the *Manual of Epictetus* (written by Arrian) – philosophical "breviaries" as it were, whose aim was to summarize the essence of Epicurean or Stoic teaching, doctrines, and precepts, in suggestive, incisive, and easily memorizable formulas, so that the disciple might have them at hand (*prokheira*) at every moment. These are extraordinarily efficacious instruments of guidance, intended not only for beginners, but also for those already making progress. Their efficacy involves the fact that the concentrated, concise formula of the message strikes the listener, provoking a powerful emotional effect.[45] This was well known to the ancients, who from the

time of Hesiod and the Seven Sages accorded a place of honor to verses, sentences, and maxims for moral instruction and ethical guidance.[46]

In the case of the *acousmata*, the adoption of the catechetical form with its questions and answers further facilitates the memorization and assimilation of the doctrines and precepts contained in them, while their aphoristic style has the virtue of investing them with an irresistible authority, imposing them as indisputable, if not revealed truths, and as commandments that must be obeyed. The deliberate obscurity of these words of wisdom, which puts them on a par with the riddles and oracles of the Pythian god, endowing them with a double meaning, literal, and allegorical–symbolic, reinforces their authority while encouraging the addressee to mobilize both the acuity of his mind and his imagination to penetrate their hidden meaning.[47] As can be seen, all these elements take us some distance from the simple advice-cum-guidance encapsulated in the sayings and apophthegms (*hypothêkai* and *gnômai*) attributed to Hesiod or the Seven Sages, who preceded Pythagoras chronologically.

Given this context, it will come as no surprise to read in Iamblichus[48] that the acousmatic Pythagoreans strove to collect and piously preserve the largest possible number of *acousmata*, certainly learning them by heart, and to act according to the "divine teachings" they contained, convinced as they were that they must not speak themselves, and actually abstaining from doing so.[49] In this way, Pythagoras' words became autonomous from the living presence of the Master whose stamp of authority they bore, and acquired the power to mould the lives of the ancient Pythagoreans even in his absence, after his death; one would be tempted to speak in this case of "guidance *in absentia*." Could there be a better example of the interiorization of guidance?

The composite character and heterogeneity of the collections of *acousmata* that have come down to us have often been emphasized, and rightly so.[50] It has been pointed out, for instance, that the definitions of the *ti esti* type suggest a "physical," "naturalistic" exegesis of certain "mythemes" of the Orphic cosmogonies, comparable to the one developed by the commentator of the Derveni papyrus.[51] The superlatives of the *ti malista* type share the interest in the quest for perfection that is also found in some of the apophthegms of the Seven Sages,[52] which the *acousmata* take up and transform with the obvious intention of competing with them, while at the same time keeping their distance.[53] As far as the dietary taboos and ritual prescriptions of the third group of *acousmata* are concerned, they are often borrowed from traditional cults, particularly mystery religions,[54] and

combined with rational rules for behavior reflecting popular morality, and precepts expressed in proverbial form.

What should be emphasized here is that, on closer inspection, and without wishing to oversystematize the available data, one may discern a certain coherence in what at first glance seems to be a mere *bricolage*.[55] Thus, the first type of definitions explains to the Pythagorean the phenomena of the natural world that surrounds him, assigning him a place in the cosmos, and offering him an eschatological perspective. The maxims of the second series provide a summary of the theoretical foundations for his choices in life, indicating the highest degree of the various qualities that are valued positively by the Master or by the sect. Finally, the prescriptions of the third category remind him, not only on every cultic occasion, but also at the most trivial moments of his daily life, how he must behave in order to remain in conformity with his beliefs and *Weltanschauung* (for instance, concerning the omnipresence of demons and the constant scrutiny of his life by divine powers).

A Set of Normative Prescriptions Intended to Inculcate a Disciplined Life Conduct[56]

If one more closely investigates the content of the *acousmata* of the last category, which are by far the most frequently cited, one notes that they are distinguished by their eminently practical concerns, and more specifically by the obstinate search for purity they demonstrate in every aspect of action.[57] In fact, we find in them (a) various prescriptions, particularly prohibitions, ritual observances and rules concerning the proper way of accomplishing sacrifices, and other religious customs, which must be strictly followed, even if they are sometimes justified by considerations of a moral nature; (b) dietary taboos and abstinences, for example, from certain animals like cocks or various species of fish, from some body parts of animals, or from beans; and (c) ethical precepts, which urge one, for example, to follow god, to procreate, not to drive away one's spouse, to give the best advice, to seek not pleasure, but laborious work, to carry out the duties of war, and so on. This set of rules was intended to persistently inculcate a specific way of life, the *bios pythagoreios*, which distinguished the Pythagoreans from ordinary people and enabled them to recognize each other. This *bios* was characterized by respect for the gods, concern for purity, the value accorded to painful efforts (*ponos*), and the attention given to the correct accomplishment of rituals.

It should be noted that the *acousmata* of the third category were in all likelihood directly addressed to the listener, in the second person singular ("Do this," "Don't do that"[58]). This device facilitated their absorption by the addressee as commandments,[59] and combined with the regulatory and normative finality of the precepts, made them a particularly effective means of guidance, which has to be understood as "the practice of training well, of educating, of automatizing the reference to an inner scale of values that are then expressed in external behavior."[60] Here what is aimed at is the acquisition of a discipline that fully engages the body as well, particularly by means of diet and the concern for purity, and entailing "postures and corporeal gestures"[61] that accompany the Pythagorean all day long in his everyday life, not only when he speaks, laughs, or carries out his religious duties, but even in such apparently insignificant acts as his way of making his bed, putting on his shoes, giving his hand in greeting, stirring a fire, biting his fingernails, or urinating,[62] so that he never forgets that he is not like the others. This leads us to recall that the emphasis constantly placed on the notion of spirituality when one speaks of spiritual guidance risks concealing how important the active participation of the body is in the latter, since spiritual progress implies a specific diet, as well as physical exercises of purification, training, and asceticism.[63]

A "Path Toward Perfection" Aiming at Personal Salvation

What was it, however, that motivated someone to adopt the Pythagorean way of life as a "path toward perfection"? Was it the simple desire to give flesh and bones to a system of values and an ideal of life? Or was it the will to achieve a more transcendent, but also a more "utilitarian" goal, such as personal salvation? The question is important and must be raised whenever we are faced with the phenomenon of guidance, about which one can ask whether the itinerary of spiritual progress and the process of self-perfection it implies constitute an end in themselves, or are used as an instrument with a view to obtaining a higher good. The answer given to this question is often equivocal, for it is not rare for the two motives to be combined. This is exactly what happens in the case of the *bios pythagoreios*. As Jan Bremmer has tried to show by using the sociological model of Max Weber as an interpretative tool, the practice of this highly religious way of life was not mere superstition. On the contrary, it was

governed both by an internal rationalism that sought to realize values as such (*wertrational*), and by a rational, consciously calculated effort to achieve the desired "utilitarian" goals by using the appropriate means (*zweckrational*) – a situation that is reminiscent of the attitudes of Puritans and Pietists of the modern period.[64]

In the present context I would like to draw attention to the second aspect, that of rationality employed to serve a goal. For although, surprisingly, the ascetic way of life introduced by Pythagoras did *not* always lead to absolute, radical, and complete vegetarianism, which would or should have been the obvious corollary of the metempsychosis that he also proclaimed,[65] it must have been linked in some way to this new doctrine of salvation. For primitive Pythagoreans, the goal of the extremely conscious and disciplined life they led, full of precautions that seem to us superstitious, was to achieve a permanent state of purity through the practice of an exceptionally scrupulous piety, which sacralized the slightest aspect of daily life. On the basis of some scattered indications, one may assume (although this is not explicitly formulated in the sources) that by means of various purifications, the memory training they practiced, and their striving for moral excellence, the Pythagoreans sought to acquire the ability to recall the previous lives their soul had lived, and above all to ensure for themselves a better fate in their future reincarnations, and even an ascent and a blessed life in the Elysian fields after death.[66]

A similar goal is clearly expressed in another, later Pythagorean document, the *Golden Verses*, which promised nothing less than immortality and divinization to the members of the community (or communities) that used it as a *vade mecum*, insofar as they translated the series of precepts contained in the poem into a consistent way of life (see below, p. 73 ff.). By contrast, the situation is much less clear with regard to determining the nature and/or goal of the kind of *bios* adopted by such figures as (a) Parmenides' Pythagorean teacher Ameinias, a poor but honest and virtuous man (*kalos kagathos*) who led him to a life of stillness (*hêsychia*);[67] (b) Empedocles, who was known for the Pythagorean dignity reflected in his way of life and bearing (*skhêma*),[68] and who was also the author of the *Katharmoi*, a poem of Orphico–Pythagorean inspiration intended to reform the life of his fellow citizens of Agrigentum by means of purifications;[69] (c) Philolaus and Archytas, the most illustrious representatives of the "mathematical" branch of the Pythagorean sect,[70] of whom the second is said to have spoken against pleasures and *voluptas*;[71] or, finally, (d) the Pythagoreans of the fourth century BC, as they were known, directly or indirectly, to their contemporaries Plato, Aristotle,

Aristoxenus, and Timaeus.[72] Since the testimonies are fairly insubstantial, or else contradict one another on important points (such as the Pythagoreans' attitude to civic sacrifices or the radical nature of their vegetarianism[73]), we are reduced to making conjectures on a number of points: the form assumed in Plato's time by the *pythagoreios tropos tou biou* which inspired his praise of Pythagoras in the *Republic* (examined above); or the amount of, and the balance between, reliable historical information and features of literary stylization contained in the descriptions provided by Aristoxenus and Timaeus (both of whose testimonies are preserved in late sources) of the way of life led by Pythagorean groups.

The "Communitarian" Dimension: The Pythagorean Sect as Locus for Education and Guidance

What emerges from the testimonies dealing with the Pythagoreans as a group is that their way of life was practiced in a community, or more precisely, in what one may call the Pythagorean society or sect, to use the term "sect" in its modern, sociological sense.[74]

Iamblichus has preserved a detailed description of the way guidance was carried out as an educational program inside the sect, merging various materials into a continuous narrative, an essential part of which goes back ultimately to Timaeus and Aristoxenus. Obviously, taking the passage from Plato's *Republic* 600 a–b as a guideline for his exposition, Iamblichus gives a lengthy account of the role of "guide in education" (*hêgemôn paideias*) attributed there to Pythagoras, making him the initiator of many "paths of instruction and education" (*hodoi paideias*).[75] These ways could be followed within the sect, which, in the author's view, was nothing other than an institutionalized philosophical school – the Pythagorean *hairesis.*[76] In a systematic, ordered way that corresponds more to the demands and ideals of the *paideia* of his own time than to the reality of ancient Pythagoreanism, Iamblichus first presents the pedagogical instrument, namely, *logos*, on which guidance was based. This reasoned discourse had a calming effect and was the ideal vehicle for transmitting advice, because of its persuasive force, capable of convincing even animals bereft of reason and leading them to conversion.[77] Iamblichus then describes the recollection of the previous life or lives lived by the soul of the person being guided (achievable only with the help of

Pythagoras), as the necessary starting point for his or her self-knowledge, which, in turn, is the prerequisite for every educational process (*On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Chapter XIV). This process actually begins with the "rectification" of the character of the person being guided, and the "attunement" of his soul by music (Chapters XV and XXV).[78] It continues with the purification of his soul, by means of a series of exercises such as laborious efforts, punishments for vice, abstinences, silence, and secrecy (*ekhemuthia*) (Chapter XVI), as well as by the *praeparatio* of the intellect through the mathematical sciences (Sections 75–79 of Chapter XVII). In its Neoplatonized version, the goal of the program was the contemplation of the intelligible realities and the soul's return to true being (Chapter XII).

Although this fascinating picture of progressive, ordered guidance sketched by Iamblichus represents, as such, a late antique and specifically Neoplatonic view of things, all its constituent elements are ancient and authentic, and can be dated roughly between the age of Pythagoras and the beginning of the Hellenistic era.[79] The same holds true of the concept of progressive education as an initiation into the mysteries, which underlies Iamblichus' narrative.[80] Moreover, two sections from this narrative can be isolated, which contain descriptions whose origin seems to go back to Timaeus and Aristoxenus respectively.

In the first section (Chapter XVII, Sections 71–74, and Chapter XX), emphasis is placed on the mechanisms of filtering and selection that ensured the gradual admission of aspiring students by means of a series of entrance and aptitude tests and examinations; first among the novices (the "apprentice" Pythagoreans), then among the full-fledged members of the sect (the "admitted" ones). If they failed, the candidates were rejected; and if the novices divulged the secrets of the sect, they were expelled. Although there is no doubt that this part of the description is rewritten by Iamblichus, at least two elements take us back to the Pythagoreanism of the fourth century BC, as depicted by Timaeus. These are (a) the physiognomic examination of the students, namely, the practice of assessing their character by interpreting features of their physical appearance and bodily movements,[81] and (b) the 5-year probationary period of silence, which was imposed upon the neophytes with a view to training them in self-discipline and making them better prepared for the Master's guidance.[82] Timaeus describes the atmosphere of fraternity, solidarity, and friendship that prevailed in these communities devoted to continuous training and guidance. He also accords great importance to

their feeling of belonging to a new family, and to the fact that the members placed their possessions in common ownership and chose to live a communal life.[83]

The second section (Chapter 21), which, except for a few additions or alterations, essentially follows Aristoxenus,[84] allows us to step inside the school of Croton, and take more than a furtive glance at its daily life, since we witness the unfolding of the complete program of a typical day in the life of a Pythagorean community, from morning to night. The members' schedule is punctuated by various activities: moments of quiet meditation during solitary morning walks, intended to cleanse the mind and set it in order; meetings in the temples, suitable for teaching as well as for edifying and reforming the character; physical exercise and baths, enabling them to take care of their bodies; frugal meals, guaranteeing a healthy diet; moments of contemplation of what has been learned, during walks in groups of two or three, and so on. At the end of the day, the oldest member gave an evening exhortation summarizing the sect's moral precepts.

This collective portrait reflects the organization of Pythagorean groups of "mathematical" tendency in the first half of the fourth century BC, albeit through the distorting mirror of a Peripatetic who sympathized with this tendency, but simultaneously wanted to purge the Pythagorean tradition of any traces of "acousmatic" superstition, and present the Pythagoreans in a more modern light, as the members of an open "club" – an image which obviously brought them closer to his own ideals.

Toward a Rational Morality: The Avatars of Pythagorean Spiritual Guidance

Aristoxenus is a pivotal figure, who played the multiple role of recorder, interpreter, and, to some extent, regulator of the evolution observed in the Pythagoreanism of the Classical period, leaving his indelible mark on the image that subsequent generations were to have of this current of thought. For it is obvious that between the time of Pythagoras and that of Aristoxenus, who claims to have known the last of the Pythagoreans, a change is discernible in the internal dynamics of the movement. This change is reflected in the predominance of an increasingly rational morality in the discourse of *ethical* guidance and indoctrination used by the sect (in this case, the available evidence does not allow us to speak of *spiritual* guidance in the full sense of the term).[85]

Our sources have preserved traces of several forms of this "ethical guidance", but I will limit myself here to providing a concise, indicative survey of them.

(1) First, there is the moralizing and "symbolic" exegesis of the *acousmata* themselves, for which the term *symbola* henceforth prevailed in collections that began to circulate as early as the time of Anaximander the younger (circa 400 BC),[86] author of a book entitled *Interpretation of Pythagorean Symbola.*[87] In particular, the collection of the Pythagorean Androcydes constituted the standard text until the end of Antiquity, and fragments of it were still used in various works endowed with a pedagogical purpose, such as Ps. Plutarch's *On the Education of Children* (Chapter 17), Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata* (Chapter V, Sections 27–31), or Iamblichus' *Protrepticus* (Chapter 21). Two examples will suffice to indicate the change in perspective that thus occurred: "Don't stir the fire with a knife" in fact urges us not to further excite an angry person by provocative words; "Don't eat the heart" means "Do not let your heart grieve."[88]

(2) The Crotonian speeches attributed to Pythagoras and addressed to four different audiences[89] form a document that is basically homogeneous and fairly ancient.[90] These rather brief speeches crystallize Pythagorean moral thought of the fifth to fourth centuries BC, while adapting it to various groups of addressees: (a) adult men, members of the Council of the city; (b) young people; (c) children; and (d) women. Each of these groups is given the moral advice appropriate to its age, status, and function.[91] With these speeches we have, as far as we know, the first occurrence of a rhetorical elaboration of Pythagorean moral thought, which sometimes simply juxtaposes brief formulas taken from the *acousmata*,[92] and here one cannot help recalling the importance of the hortatory dimension in guidance literature.[93]

(3) With Aristoxenus' *Pythagorean Precepts* (*apophaseis*), we witness a series of rules and general principles according to which one must organize one's life.[94] These are set forth methodically, and linked together by a clear rational structure. Contrary to what could be implied by its title, this work is no simple concatenation of apophthegms or aphorisms, but a well-argued whole, in continuous discourse, from which there emanates a fairly strict system of family, social, and sexual behavior, ordered in a highly rationalized way and corresponding to the Pythagorean ethics of the fourth century BC.[95]

The treatise contains precepts concerning the various stages of human life, sexuality, reproduction, and education, as well as more extensive analyses on friendship, luck, the control and training of desire, the respect for order, laws and ancestral customs, and the necessity for supervision of all aspects of human life.

(4) Aristoxenus also devoted a special work to describing the Pythagorean way of life, a work full of anecdotes illustrating it, with known or anonymous members of the sect as the protagonists.[96] No doubt the best known of these stories is the one narrating how the friendship of Damon and Phintias was put to the test by Dionysius II, the tyrant of Syracuse (367–357 BC).[97] As a biographer, Aristoxenus made a decisive contribution to constructing the Pythagorean moral *exemplum*, which he apparently proposed as a model to be followed. We would thus have here the first appearance in the Greek tradition of what might be called "guidance by example," in the service of which the new genre of biography was mobilized[98] – a genre elaborated, if not introduced, by Aristoxenus himself, as Arnaldo Momigliano has shown.

(5) The ethical treatises that are part of the abundant (pseudo-) Pythagorean literature of the Hellenistic and Imperial periods continued the intellectual trend begun by the Crotonian speeches attributed to Pythagoras, and by Aristoxenus' works on Pythagoreanism. One can say that these texts laid the foundations of a Pythagorean ethic, which, in the process, appropriated many elements of the moral philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and even of the Stoics.[99] Unfortunately, the moralizing letters circulating under the names of Pythagoras or of Pythagorean women,[100] which a priori could have constituted promising material for our study of guidance in a Pythagorean milieu,[101] limit themselves to recycling banalities on family behavior or women's role in the home, and lack the force of direct communication one might have expected.

(6) With Pythagorean *gnômologia* such as the *Precepts of Theano*,[102] the *Sentences of Demophilus*,[103] the *Pythagorean Sentences*, and the pagan original that inspired the christianized *Sentences of Sextus*,[104] all of which present a certain "family resemblance" and seem to date from the second century AD, we return, in a sense, to our starting point, that is, the preference for brief formulas. Yet even a hasty comparison of these collections with those of the *acousmata* shows that the overall tone here is rather different, although we do find in them the usual incentives not to seek wealth, to concern oneself

with the soul rather than the body, to cure the passions, to avoid anger, to master speech and know when to keep silent, and so on. The regulation of man's relation with the divinity is at the center of the overwhelming majority of the sentences contained in these collections, which, because of their condensed spirituality and their efficacy as instruments of guidance, were used abundantly by the Neoplatonist Porphyry in the consolatory letter he addressed to his wife Marcella,[105] and had considerable success in Christian monastic circles.[106]

A Digest of Spiritual Guidance in Verse Networked With Other Guidance Texts: The Pythagorean *Golden Verses*

The document in verse known as *Carmen aureum* can be considered the epitome of all kinds of Pythagorean literature that convey the discourse of guidance. We have already had occasion to mention in passing this poem of Hellenistic Pythagoreanism, which was still used as a propaedeutic instrument of spiritual guidance in the Imperial period, and in late Antiquity, by such Neoplatonists as Iamblichus, Hierocles, and Proclus, who deliberately introduced it into their curricula of study.[107]

After the meticulous study which Johan C. Thom devoted to these 71 verses, it can no longer be maintained that this work is a late rhapsodic assemblage of versified sayings.[108] His analysis has convincingly showed that this important specimen of spiritual guidance from Antiquity succeeded in integrating essential elements of the ethics proper to the Pythagorean tradition within a whole that is both coherent and concise, combining them with others that were part of the dominantly Platonic common morality. What is more, the poet provides these ethics with a metaphysical foundation, as well as a perspective of salvation expressed in a promise of immortality, for which references to Empedocles and the *Orphica* are mobilized. As far as the form of the text is concerned, the *Golden Verses* employ literary means that render guidance extremely effective: gnomic formulation, expression in poetic verse, the use of the second person singular and of the imperative, modes of exhortation, encouragement and consolation, oath by the (unnamed) founder of the sect, an allusion to the wisdom resulting from an initiation, which confers authority on the discourse, the religious tone of a *Hieros logos*, and the clear eschatological promise at the end. All of the above are found in the space of a few easily memorizable verses.

The poem is clearly articulated into two quite distinct parts. In the first part (v. 1–44[109]) the fundamental ethical principles and practical precepts which the disciple must master are set forth. They urge him to respect the hierarchy of the *veneranda* (gods, heroes, demons, parents); to choose his friends with care and behave well toward them; to dominate his passions; to abstain from all shameful acts; to practice justice; to lead a simple existence enabling the maintenance of bodily health; to seek the right measure in all things; to reflect before acting and to do only what is useful for oneself; and to relativize things, envisaging them within a perspective that takes the mortality of the human condition into account and fully accepts destiny. The internalization of these principles and precepts, which the disciple must consistently apply to his everyday life, is ensured by the practice of such exercises as memorization, meditation, predeliberation, examination of the actions one has accomplished, and self-evaluation, all of which are mentioned in the first half of the poem.[110] They all enable the student to become more mature, morally as well as spiritually. It is precisely with a view to assisting him in his effort to make progress by himself, that his teacher or the community to which he belongs provide him with this breviary or *vade mecum* of good conduct, to which he can have recourse at any time, even when he is not close to the teacher or in the company of his colleagues, thus compensating for the shortcomings of his memory as well.

The poem's "psychagogic" function[111] is reinforced in the second part (v. 45–71), which encourages the disciple to persevere and to make efforts to meditate on the precepts; to put them into practice and become familiar with them to the point of loving them with all his heart (*erân*) by pointing out to him the ultimate benefits he may obtain if he follows the "path toward perfection" proposed to him in the first part; the promise is even sealed by a formal oath (v. 47–48). Thus, the disciple learns that he has not only been placed "in the tracks of divine virtue" (46), but also on the path to knowing (a) the constitutive difference that distinguishes the immortal gods from mortal men, (b) the essence of nature, and (c) the cause of human misery and suffering (which is none other than Discord [*Eris*]) (49–60). The revelation of the secrets of nature and the realization of the human condition will in turn enable him to deliver himself from evil, through the knowledge of his personal demon, and through being reminded of the divine origin of a special category of human beings (61–64), of which he himself no doubt hopes to be part.

What is extremely interesting for our inquiry is the fact that the essential doctrines alluded to here by the *Golden Verses* are simply touched upon

within the poem. Yet, they must certainly have been developed in other works used by the same Pythagorean community that used the *Golden Verses* both as a fundamental text for the instruction of young disciples, and as a standard memorandum intended for those making progress. The explicit reference to the implementation of alimentary (or other ?) prescriptions contained in other works entitled *Purifications* and *Deliverance of the Soul* (67–68), just before the stunning promise that closes the poem, proves that the latter was not self-sufficient. In other words, the disciple was not supposed to content himself with these 71 verses in order to attain perfection, even if he had engraved them in golden letters upon his innermost being. Apparently, it was only by covering a complete program of spiritual guidance, for which one made use of a set of writings under the guidance of a master and in the company of other peers, within a community, that the disciple had a chance to succeed in purifying and liberating his soul, leaving his body behind, and reaching the free *aither*; in other words, in becoming "immortal, an undying god, no longer mortal" (*athanatos, theos ambrotos, ouketi thnêtos*) (70–71).[112]

We must always bear this in mind when examining guidance texts which have come down to us detached from their original context, and sometimes even indirectly and in snippets. For spiritual guidance is above all a lengthy path followed – under the guidance of someone more advanced and experienced whom one might designate, following Victor Hugo, as "shepherd of the people, conductor of men, guide and master" – by troubled and thirsty people, in quest of wisdom, perfection, or salvation.

Translated from the French by Michael Chase

Notes

1. Rabbow (1954), with the review by G. Luck, *Gnomon* 28 (1956, 268–271).
2. I. Hadot (1969), esp. 7–71 and 164–176.
3. I. Hadot (1986).
4. It should be noted at the outset that this concept bears strong Christian connotations that go back to post-Tridentate Catholicism and are inevitably related to the institutionalized figure of the confessor and the disciplinary powers of the Church as controller of consciences; see Schaller (1998).
5. See Filoramo (ed.) (2002, 2006); Stroumsa (2005); and the case studies by Sberveglieri (1998, 2002) and Sfameni Gasparro (2002). Monaci Castagno

(2002), on Origen, also emphasizes the continuities with the guidance practices of the pagan philosophical schools.

6. Foucault (1986, 2005), *passim*; cf. Martin, Gutman, and Hutton (eds) (1988); Detel (2005); O'Leary (2002); Davidson (2005). For a critical look at Foucault's approach, P. Hadot (2002[4], pp. 305–311), (1995b, pp. 206–213); Senellart (2003).
7. Launched by Rabbow (1954) – who in turn was obviously taking up the title of the *Exercitia Spiritualia* by Ignatius Loyola – this expression was definitively consecrated for the field of ancient philosophy by the key work of P. Hadot (2002[4] [1981[1]], 1995b). See also P. Hadot (1995a), *passim*, esp. 107–114, 191–196, 210–216, 276–333, and 361–370 = Hadot (2002, pp. 66–70, 122–126, 135–139, 179–220, 241–247); and cf. Davidson (1995); Davidson and Worms (eds) (2010).
8. P. Hadot (2002[4], 377–391), at 378 ff.
9. On the spiritual guidance practiced by the various ancient philosophical schools, see the brief overview by P. Hadot (1995a, pp. 322–333 = Hadot (2002), pp. 211–220).
10. With regard to the pagan philosophical tradition, the expression is also used by Des Places (1957).
11. This has been emphasized by Stroumsa (2005), who has tried to sketch a comparative phenomenological analysis of the master–disciple relationship in the cases of the pagan philosopher and the Christian "new philosopher," that is, the monk.
12. cf. Riedweg (2008[2], pp. 30–34, 63–67).
13. Burkert (1972, pp. 192–208).
14. For a pluralistic conception of the Pythagoreans of the classical period, see Delatte (1915, pp. 308 ff.); Zhmud (2012, pp. 5 ff., 105–134).
15. On the post-classical Pythagoreanism, see Burkert (1961, pp. 226–246); Dörrie (1963); Kingsley (1995, pp. 317–334); Centrone (1996, 2000a); Bonazzi (2000, pp. 41–53); Kahn (2001, pp. 63–157); Staab (2002, pp. 15–34, 63–100). For the expression "varieties of Pythagoreanism," O'Meara (1989, pp. 9–29).
16. Burkert (1972, pp. 178–179); Brisson (1987); Bremmer (1995, pp. 63–70); Petit (1997). *Contra*, Zhmud (2012, pp. 150–158).
17. von Fritz (1940); Minar (1942).
18. For full discussion, see Riedweg (1997). Although the author is right in emphasizing that the categorical assertion that "Pythagoras has written nothing" is found only in later sources, I do not share his optimism with regard to the existence of traces, however slender, of genuine works by Pythagoras.
19. cf. Burkert (1998, pp. 304–305).
20. See the detailed examination of the sources by Burkert (1972, pp. 97–109) and Zhmud (2012, pp. 8–15, 25–60, 61–77).

21. Brief overview of the *Pseudopythagorica* in Macris (2002, pp. 79–85). Centrone (2000b) has made an important attempt at a historical contextualization of this literature.
22. The parallel cases of Hermetic, Jewish intertestamentary, and Christian apocryphal literature, which were long denied, unjustifiably, any concrete historical roots in communities, strongly encourage us to affirm such a connection; cf., for example, Sfameni Gasparro (2002, pp. 71–72, 88–89); van den Kerchove (2012).
23. For the poem's date, see the convincing demonstration by Thom (1995, pp. 35–58) and Thom (2001).
24. It seems to me that Centrone's suspicions and doubts about the use of the *Golden Verses* within a community (2000b, p. 447), in fact derive from his a priori belief (based on the authority of Burkert (1961)) that during the Hellenistic period Pythagoreanism survived "only on a literary level, as a cultural trend."
25. This appropriate term was used for the first time by Delatte (1915, pp. 271–312) (chapter entitled "Le catéchisme des acousmatiques").
26. cf. Huffman (1999, p. 70, pp. 72–74, 83–84); Huffman (2008c, p. 299, 301). The term *idiasmos* is used by a certain Apollonius quoted by Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Sections 255 and 257, but it may go back to Timaeus of Taormina in the third century BC; cf. Burkert (1982, p. 14 = 2006, p. 207 with n. 63).
27. On the *exemplum Pythagorae* and its imitation by the (wannabe) "divine men," see Macris (2006).
28. On Aristoxenus' treatise, see below, p. 72 with n. 96; on Lycon's, Centrone and Macris (2005, 201 ff.).
29. cf. Huffman (2000, 922 ff.).
30. In this sense, "Pythagoras can justly claim to have been the first thinker to set forth a comprehensive plan for a good life [. . .] based on a [specific] view of the world" (Huffman 1999, p. 75).
31. This individualized education has the twofold goal of "enabling the disciple to become aware of himself, that is to say, of his defects and his progress," and to help him "make particular reasonable choices demanded by everyday life" (Hadot 1995a, pp. 322–323 = Hadot (2002), pp. 212–213).
32. Pythagoras' "impact as a teacher of a way of life" is also highlighted (and thus somehow confirmed) by Plato's contemporary, and rival as an educator, Isocrates (*Busiris,* 29); cf. Huffman (1999, p. 72).
33. For the importance of the master's authority in his relations with his disciples, see Steiner (2003).
34. The search for spiritual progress and personal perfection is a central element of the phenomenon of guidance. For the Christian domain, compare the definition proposed by Hausherr (1955, p. 10), as well as its re-elaboration by Lucca (2002, pp. 44–45, 60). cf. also M. Catto, *Introduzione*, In Catto,

Gagliardi, and Parrinello (eds) (2002), p. 15). The case of Evagrius gives an excellent illustration of this idea of an itinerary of perfection; cf. Guillaumont (2004, pp. 205–335). On the "perfectionism" that characterizes ancient philosophy, see P. Hadot (2002^4, pp. 377–391); Davidson (2010).

35. One thinks automatically of the counterpoint represented from this perspective by the Socrates–Eros of Plato's *Symposium*. Steiner (2003, pp. 26–28) devotes a fine passage of his essay to remind us that "there inheres in effective teaching as in realized discipleship an exercise of love." On the terms used to designate the disciples of Pythagoras, see Burkert (1982, p. 14 with n. 62).
36. See, for example, Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*, Section 33 (with the occurrence of the rare verb *hyperagapân*, "love exceedingly").
37. For Pythagoras as a "charismatic master of wisdom" of the late archaic period, see Macris (2003).
38. See Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, I, 5, 10; and Diogenes Laertius VIII, 46, with the parallels adduced in the editions of A.S. Pease and A. Delatte respectively.
39. Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Section 72.
40. For later developments, see Sedley (1989, 1997); Alexander (2001); and Sberveglieri (2002, pp. 50–56) (on Epicureanism).
41. cf. Alexander (1990).
42. For a new suggestion that could confirm the genuine character and early date of the *acousmata* by linking them to Heraclitus' fr. 129, see Huffman (2008a, p. 33, 41 ff., pp. 45–46). For a radically skeptical and reserved approach to the sayings circulating in Antiquity under the name of Pythagoras, Vítek (2009); Zhmud (2012, pp. 169–205).
43. From this point of view, the catechism of the *acousmata* could be seen as a minimal form of question-and-answer literature (*Erotapokriseis*), on which see Jacob (2004) and Papadoyannakis (2006).
44. For examples of *acousmata* classified according to these three categories, see Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Sections 82–86. For more complete lists with commentary, see Delatte (1915, pp. 271–312); Burkert (1972, pp. 166–192), esp. 170–173; Hüffmeier (2001); Riedweg (2008^2, pp. 63–77). Exhaustive bibliography in Thom (1994, pp. 94–96); cf. also Macris (2002, p. 92 n. 62).
45. cf. I. Hadot and P. Hadot (2004, pp. 21–25, 41–44, 51–52).
46. See Skarsouli (2006, pp. 69–71) (with bibliography).
47. On the importance of obscurity and riddles in the philosophical–religious thought of archaic Greece, see Kingsley (1995, pp. 360–363) and *passim* (cf. index, *s.v.*). On the Pythagorean *symbola* as riddles, Berra (2006). For a discussion of their relationship with symbolism, secrecy and the mysteries, Struck (2004, pp. 96–107) and *passim*. Hermann (2004, pp. 82–86)

(esp. 83) draws a parallel with the "pass-phrases" used in Freemasonry to test "a candidate's proficiency or the authenticity of foreign membership."

48. *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Section 82.
49. According to the felicitous formulation by Burkert (1982, p. 19), "the whole complex of the Pythagorean life, with all its rules and avoidances, seems to have rested on the most authoritarian foundation, the Master's words; *autos epha*, "he himself said it," and this is the end of the discussion."
50. See, for example, Vítek (2009, pp. 245–247).
51. See Riedweg (2008[2], pp. 76–77), who speaks of oral sayings pertaining to natural philosophy.
52. A point already noted by Aristotle, if the information transmitted by Iamblichus (*On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Section 83) genuinely goes back to him; cf. Burkert (1972, p. 169).
53. In this regard, Delatte (1915, pp. 284–285) speaks of Pythagoras' "reform." Pythagorean participation in competitions for wisdom involving superlatives is reflected in the testimonies of Aristotle and his pupil Eudemus concerning opposing characterizations of time; see Macris (2012a).
54. Burkert (1972, pp. 172 ff.).
55. Burkert (1972, 185 ff.) insisted on the coherence conferred upon the *corpus* of the *acousmata* by the *religious* concern that characterizes a large number of items belonging to all three categories.
56. cf. Burkert (1985, pp. 301–304).
57. Parker (1983, pp. 281–307).
58. This is the case with the summarizing list of them, without any authorial intervention, which Iamblichus gives in Chapter 21 of his *Protreptic to Philosophy*, before moving on to their exegesis. Elsewhere, the *acousmata* as they appear in our sources are either expressed in the infinitive form of the imperative, which gives a more general value to the prohibitions, or simply reported in indirect discourse.
59. The use of the imperative is also current in several Delphic precepts and apophthegms of the Seven Sages, as well as in gnomic and didactic literature. Moreover, this literature is addressed nominally to a specific person, whether son, brother, or disciple (cf. several verses cited by Skarsouli (2006)). By means of this dedication, the author may finally obtain a greater number of addressees with reinforced immediacy; cf. Piccione (2002, pp. 173–175).
60. M. Catto, "Introduzione," In Catto, Gagliardi, and Parrinello (eds) 2002: 20.
61. See previous note.
62. All the *acousmata* alluded to here appear in the list given in Chapter 21 of Iamblichus' *Protrepticus*.
63. cf. G. Filoramo, "Introduzione," In G. Filoramo (ed.) (2002, pp. 8–9).

64. Bremmer (1999, pp. 76–77). Huffman (1999, pp. 72–73) too stresses that the Pythagorean way of life was attractive because of both the moral discipline that it imposed and the hopes it nourished for one's soul in the afterlife.
65. cf. Burkert (1972, pp. 180–185); Detienne (1977). Not until Empedocles did the doctrine of metempsychosis achieve a level of absolute systematicity and reach its ultimate consequences; see Balaudé (1997).
66. cf. Parker (1983, pp. 281–307); Huffman (1999, pp. 72–73); Riedweg (2008^2, pp. 62–67); Macris (2003, pp. 263–265 with n. 105, 278 ff.).
67. Diogenes Laertius, XI, 21, quoting Sotion (fr. 27 Wehrli); cf. Kingsley (1999, 176 ff., 179–187). The "Pythagorean and Parmenidean" way(s) of life are mentioned together in a second century text (*The Tablet of Cebes*, 2) as lived by someone "in word but also in action."
68. According to Alcidamas (a sophist of the early fourth century BC quoted by Diogenes Laertius, VIII, 56), Empedocles owed this *semnotês* to his Pythagorean apprenticeship.
69. See Riedweg (1995); Bollack (2003).
70. Huffman (1993, pp. 8–11; 2005).
71. See Cicero's *On Old Age* (Chapter XII, 39–41), with Huffman (2002).
72. Their way of life seems to have influenced Xenocrates (circa 396–314 BC), the Pythagorean(izing) successor of Plato in the early Academy: his biography in Diogenes Laertius (Book IV, 6–11) is full of Pythagorean features.
73. cf. above, p. 67 with n. 65.
74. For a detailed demonstration, see Macris (2003, pp. 275–278), inspired by Burkert (1982, pp. 2–3; 12–22), recently re-elaborated by Riedweg (2008^2, pp. 98–104). *Contra*, Zhmud (2012, pp. 165–168).
75. Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Sections 58–133, with Staab (2002), pp. 479–481 (general plan), 287–350 (analysis); Lurje (2002); Macris (2004, Vol. I: 25–50, 91–92, 117–120).
76. Macris (2009, pp. 150–164).
77. See Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Chapter XIII. It was Iamblichus (and already, to some extent, his source: Nicomachus) who gave this meaning to the miracles that present Pythagoras as communicating with animals, but his remark about reasoned discourse is correct, and the importance thus accorded to the calming qualities and the persuasive force of the word corresponds perfectly to the conclusions reached by Skarsouli (2006) concerning the masters of wisdom of the Archaic period.
78. The terms put into quotation marks derive from the vocabulary of music, and seem to have acquired their new moral meaning among the Pythagoreans. On the practices of music therapy in ancient Pythagoreanism, see Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*, Section 33 (cf. Sections 30 and 32), with Macris (2001, p. 280 n. 113); Provenza (2012); cf. also Skarsouli (2006, 59 ff.).

79. One can verify this by comparing each of these elements with dated items of information, preserved in sources that are less detailed than Iamblichus' treatise, but such a point-by-point comparison is beyond the scope of the present study.
80. Macris (2003, p. 253 n. 48).
81. Evans (1969, p. 5, 27–28).
82. On the practice of silence, see above, p. 58 with n. 16.
83. Minar (1944); Burkert (1982, pp. 15–17); Macris (2003, p. 275 and n. 141).
84. See Boyancé (1939), in response to the excessive skepticism of Festugière (1937); cf. Burkert (1982, p. 16).
85. Since history is written by the victors – in this case the mathematicians – we are not in a position to say anything about the modalities of guidance among those who continued the acousmatic tradition, namely, (a) the "Pythagorists," who left their mark on Middle Comedy, and (b) such pre-Cynic figures as Diodorus of Aspendos. However, the conservatism that characterizes the traditionalist branch they represent guarantees that the advice of the *acousmata* must have been still operative for them (perhaps reinterpreted in a symbolic–allegorical sense; see below, under (a) in the main text), and that such advice must have continued to govern the way of life they practiced.
86. Or even earlier, if we accept Huffman's (in my view problematic) suggestion (2008a, 42 ff.) that the *syggraphai* referred to in Heraclitus' fr. 129 are in fact Pythagoras' sayings, already written down in collections circa 500–490 BC.
87. cf. Węcowski (2007).
88. For further discussion, see Vítek (2009, pp. 247–253).
89. They are preserved by Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Sections 37–57. cf. de Vogel (1966, pp. 70–147).
90. Their origin and date are uncertain, but as early as the Hellenistic period they seem to have been an integral part of the story of Pythagoras' educational activity at Croton. cf. Macris (2002, pp. 100–101 with n. 97); Macris (2003, p. 282, n. 168).
91. Pythagoras' *polytropia* when addressing different audiences was already considered proof of wisdom and praised by the Socratic Antisthenes (fr. 51 Decleva Caizzi), whereas the obligations of different age groups (children, adolescents, adults, and the aged) are discussed in Aristoxenus' *Pythagorean Precepts* (fr. 35); cf. Zhmud (2012, pp. 46–47). On the effort to ensure adaptability to the addressee in "ethical guidance," see Glad (1995).
92. See Delatte (1915, pp. 304–305). In all philosophical traditions, "ethical guidance" is characterized by this accordion-like dialectical give and take between compact, concise formulations and the rhetorical elaboration, both

argumentative and hortatory, of the sect's moral principles and fundamental doctrines.

93. cf. I. Hadot (1969, 12 ff.) and *passim*.
94. I am convinced by Burkert (1972, p. 101, n. 17) that Sections 101–102, 174–176, 180–183, 200–213, and 230–233 of Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* should be also added to frs. 33–41 of Fr. Wehrli's collection, which derive primarily from the *Anthology* of Johannes Stobaeus and are attributed explicitly to Aristoxenus' *Pythagorean Precepts*, although Iamblichus gives no indication of his source.
95. Huffman (2006, 2008b).
96. It is highly likely that the fragments appearing in Fr. Wehrli's collection under the titles *On Pythagoras and His Disciples* (frs. 11–25) and *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* (frs 26–32) in fact come from the same work, designated in two different ways in the sources; cf. Macris (2004, Vol. II, pp. 9–10). The same may be true of the *Life of Archytas* (frs. 47–50), which might be part of the same single work on the Pythagoreans.
97. Aristoxenus, fr. 31 Wehrli = Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, Sections 233–236; cf. Macris (2012b).
98. On the importance of exemplarity in ancient culture, see Döring (1979); De Luise and Farinetti (1997); Brown (1983); Alexandre (1996).
99. Here are a few titles that give some idea of their theme and content: *On Moral Education, On the Way of Life, On Happiness, On Virtue, On the Virtuous and Happy Man, On Good Humor, On Luck, On Piety, On Wisdom, On Prudence and Blessedness, On Justice, On Parents, On Domestic Happiness, On Harmony, On a Spouse's Moderation*, and so on. Some of these texts have been studied by Centrone (ed.) (1990). Friendship and the moderation of passions are two of the topics that are dealt with prominently in them; see Thom (1997) and Thom (2008).
100. See Städele (1980).
101. The importance of epistolographic material for the study of guidance emerges very clearly from papers devoted to the *Letters* of Cicero (cf. Cancik-Lindemaier (1998); Sberveglieri (1998)), and more generally from Malherbe (1987).
102. Possekel (1998).
103. Sodano (ed.) (1991a).
104. Chadwick (1959) (which also contains an edition of the *Pythagorean Sentences* and of the *Sentences of Clitarchus*).
105. cf. Rocca-Serra (1971); Sodano (1991b).
106. Chadwick (1959).
107. Thom (1995, pp. 17–26).
108. The following analysis and reflections summarize the results obtained by Thom (1995), while extending them from the perspective of guidance.
109. Thom also includes the next five verses in this part.

110. Pythagorean self-examination, its mnemonic aspects, its late transformation into "examination of the conscience," and its influence on the Sextii, Seneca, and Galen, among others, have been studied by Thom (1995, pp. 38–43, 163–67) (with previous bibliography), as well as by I. Hadot, P. Hadot, and M. Foucault (in the works referred to above, nn. 2, 3, 6, and 7); see also Porphyry, *Life of Pythagoras*, Section 40, with Macris (2001, pp. 299–304, nn. 132–134); Parrinello (2002, pp. 276–280).
111. This is the expression used by Thom (1995) when discussing what we call here spiritual guidance; see in particular pp. 77–79 of his work, explicitly devoted to this subject.
112. This situation is somewhat reminiscent of the search for immortality we find in the Hermetic textual communities; cf. Mahé (1991).

5

Alcibiades' Love

Jan Zwicky

Those who think clearly are free.
—Robert Bringhurst

I have always loved the sound of the word *philosophy*. This must be why I first tried to read it as a child. But why did philosophy itself come to matter to me? Why does it matter to me still? Better: *what* is philosophy that it should have held my gaze, since mid-adolescence really, and through the multiple confusions of its late twentieth century and early twenty-first century North American incarnation?

The spirit of these questions is old, as old as the discipline and its name. In the European literary tradition, philosophy has been wondering about itself since its inception some 2,600 years ago. It has defined, and doubted, and redefined itself with at least as much energy as it has focused on core questions of ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. The dictionary tells us it means love of wisdom. But what is that? *Thinking in love with clarity*, I have suggested. *Love of knowing that you do not know*, according to Plato's Socrates. What, if anything, have these two definitions to do with one another? What would it be to make either a way of life?

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Let us start with the Socratic definition – loving knowing that you do not know – and ask first what it would be to make loving anything a way of life. Love cannot be willed. A "way of life" connotes a practice, a discipline, something you can get up in the morning and *do*. We cannot get up in the morning and will love.

But we *can* get up in the morning and will attitudes that dispose us to love. Postures of openness, of attention.

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Attentiveness as a way of life, then – a way of *living*.

And what is it that the existence of this participle in so many languages should teach us? – Perhaps that grasp of the synchronic picture, however big, is not the full story. That continuance, ongoingness, practice – *phusis?* – is fundamentally constitutive of the whole.

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We can also will honesty.

But I have found that the more important honesty has become to me over the years, the less I have been able to say, or the narrower and more remote the avenues in which I could stand and speak. Stand? More like stumble to my knees, helpless before the loveliness of the world, its violence and terror, the ruin my species – or my species in my culture – has wrought, is wreaking.

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No. Have I ever felt I could *say* anything with the hope of getting it right? Always the attempt falls short.

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Still: getting up in the morning and assuming a discipline of attentiveness, of alert care, towards knowing that one does not know. What would that look like?

Well, honesty, perhaps, rigorous but not judgemental. Unflinching but not unkind.

A willingness to admit mystery.

Compassion for the self as it wavers in and out of existence in proximity to mystery.

An exercise in courage.

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Alcibiades, in Plato's *Symposium*, says to Socrates: "Let anyone – man, woman, or child – listen to you or even to a poor account of what you say – and we are all transported, completely possessed." And then, turning to the others: "I swear to you, the moment he starts to speak, I am beside myself: my heart starts leaping in my chest, the tears come streaming down my face, even the frenzied Corybantes seem sane compared to me – and, let me tell you, I am not alone. I have heard Pericles and many other great orators, and I have admired their speeches. But nothing like this ever happened to me: they never upset me so deeply that my very own soul started protesting that my life – *my* life! – was no better than the most miserable slave's. . . . You can't say that isn't true, Socrates. I know very well that you could make me feel that way this very moment if I gave you half a chance. He always traps me, you see, and he makes me admit that my political career is a waste of time, while all that matters is just what I most neglect: my personal shortcomings, which cry out for the closest attention. So I refuse to listen to him; I stop my ears and tear myself away from him, for, like the Sirens, he could make me stay by his side till I die."

Socrates makes Alcibiades feel that his life is worthless, and this binds him to him absolutely. What an extraordinary confession.

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And Plutarch says of Aristippus, who had heard, second hand, an account of Socratic discussion: ". . . he was so powerfully affected that his body began to deteriorate; he became very pale and thin until such time as he sailed for Athens . . . and acquainted himself with the man and his words and his philosophy, whose goal was ⟨ for a person⟩ to recognize his own faults and be rid of them."

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Plutarch's account may make us think we are dealing with a charismatic and the kind of cult that can grow up around such a figure: someone

who Knows the Answers and will provide them at the price of blind obedience. This is not philosophy; philosophy, at its core, is about the rejection of blind obedience. But it is also clearly not what Plato, or indeed Xenophon, thought we were dealing with in the figure of Socrates. Plato's Alcibiades, a charismatic himself, lets us know we are in the presence of charisma, but there is nothing in his speech, or in the rest of Plato's *oeuvre*, that suggests we have signed up with a cult. If we have not, though, this makes Alcibiades' confession, Aristippus' conversion, even more remarkable. Philosophy – *philosophy!* – could do *this* to a person?

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Hegel, writing centuries later in a student's album, says: "Not curiosity, not vanity, not the consideration of expediency, not duty and conscientiousness, but an unquenchable, unhappy thirst that brooks no compromise leads us to truth." Hegel was not a charismatic; nor was he particularly susceptible to cults. But we may, I think, imagine that he understood Alcibiades' love. As does the philosophic spirit in each of us when we brush up against any genuinely philosophical gesture: our hearts leap in our chests, the tears come to our eyes, we are prone to think we are crazy and we would like often enough to set the whole thing down, to turn or tear ourselves away. But we are done for, claimed: we belong to what we have scented – unquenchably, uncompromisingly, and indeed sometimes unhappily – until we die.

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But what is it that we have brushed up against? – this thing, this discipline, this knowledge or unknowledge, this way of being in the world, that so rivets our attention? What is Alcibiades in love with? *Symposium* offers us several answers, and offers them simultaneously, layering them over one another: Alcibiades is in love with Socrates; that is, with Eros. He has made the same mistake the sophist, Agathon, and the young untutored Socrates have made before him: he is in love with love. But this is not quite right. Alcibiades' speech has none of Agathon's rhetorical veneer; in the gesture of telling the truth, Alcibiades embodies it. Look again: Alcibiades *is* in love with what Eros hasn't got: beauty. He is in love with integrity, with *enkrateia*, with Socrates' moral excellence. He is in love with that which opens to reveal divine, golden, utterly beautiful

agalmata – statues, icons, images honoring the gods. He is in love with what is hollowed out: nothing in itself; a vessel, an empty conduit between gods and humans; that is, *eros*; that is, awareness of absence; that is, knowing that one does not know. The phrases crowd on one another as the *agalmata* crowd in Socrates' vacant interior. And the intellect's questions: *Is* moral beauty integrity? Is integrity based on self-control? Could it be a kind of emptiness? Egolessness? Availability to the divine? Is any of this knowing that one does not know?

And where in this portrait of Alcibiades' love is philosophy as dialectic, the grasp of ontological gestalts and their division according to natural kinds? No one falls in love with the Stranger from Elea. No one falls in love with the last three quarters of *Parmenides*, even though it is announced as equivalent to a competition in Love's game.

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After numerous exercises, and abstract characterizations and applications of dialectic, the Stranger from Elea, in *Statesman*, says: ". . . every sort of expert knowledge everywhere throws away the bad [elements] so far as it can, and takes what is suitable and good, bringing all of this – both like and unlike – together into one, and so producing some single kind of thing with a single capacity."

Whose goal was to recognize his own faults and be rid of them.

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What is it to be "rid of our faults"? A long tradition of reading Plato understands it as a kind of primness: Prohibition and nonrecreational sex. Put less crudely, should we understand the excellence with which Alcibiades has fallen in love as an extirpation, an emaciation, of the spirit? Indeed, isn't this exactly the image Plutarch offers us?

Look again: Aristippus becomes pale and thin in his yearning to *start* the process, not as a result of undergoing it. And look at Socrates: drinking everyone under the table, frightening the enemy in battle with his "swaggering gait and roving eye," playing up to the beautiful boys only to turn the tables on them and become the hotly pursued beloved. He is anything but emaciated. No, this is an excellence whose emptiness is tremendous interior wealth.

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Honesty is not brutality – neither to others nor to oneself. What is required is to face the demons, not face them down.

Does this mean that compassion is the overriding virtue? Yes. I think so.

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How does one acquire compassion? — One can will oneself to exercise what one has, but one cannot fill the reservoir by an act of will.

Imaginative identification: the emptying of the self so that the shapes of other selves can become real. Others, the world, becoming real inside one, inside the space where "one" once was.

And, of course, still is: compassion is useless without a steady hand and good distance vision.

An attentiveness in which one is, and is not, the other. Identified but distinct. A metaphor.

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What is it to be rid of our faults?

My students, when asked to think deeply about this question, respond (hesitantly, with a puzzled tone), "It's as though I would be more complete" or "I think I would become free." Free how? "Free to be myself. My real self." And what is that? "I think that other guy was right. It would be like being free to be my whole self – what he said about becoming complete." Again, what extraordinary confessions.

I must, for the sake of honesty, admit that not all students respond this way. Some say, "Who knows what I'd be like? Who I am includes my faults. There is no way for the person I am now to know what it would be like to be different." But this, I think, underlines, makes more astonishing, that some students respond less skeptically. The debater's argument is there, *and it is rejected* in favor of something that is difficult and perhaps even embarrassing to try to articulate.

I think my courageous students are right. To be rid of one's faults is indeed to become the whole – that is, integrated – being that is the precondition of becoming free.

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integrate, tr. v., to form a whole. — L. *integrātus*, pp. of *integrāre*, 'to make whole, renew', fr. *integer*. See **integer** and verbal suff. **-ate**.

integrity, n., wholeness, completeness; uprightness. — F. *intégrité*, fr. L. *integritātem*, acc. of *integritās*, 'completeness, soundness, blamelessness', fr. *integer*. See **integer** and **-ity**.

⋆

If we imagine the mature Socrates – he of the roving eye and unmatched capacity for booze – to have ascended the ladder of Diotima's higher mysteries, then he has carried each of the rungs up with him. He loves, but instead of seeking to fill his lack, he embraces it. Instead of clogging his interior by stuffing it with the objects of his desire, he remains in the condition of desire. He actively seeks this posture: he loves, but in each instant lets go of what he loves. Better: he loves, but without the desire to possess.

At each stage of the ladder, it is achieving this stance that allows us to move to the next. We become more, not less, available to love; we expand our range. By loving without needing to own what we love, we achieve what Hegel might have termed erotic sublation. We offer ontological applause.

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Alcibiades tells us that to encounter philosophy is first to discover that we are not what we thought we were: that what we think most important – the postures and possessions that generate social envy – has little to do with our true nature. It is also to discover that preoccupation with social roles and goods, and neglect of "all that matters, . . . [our] personal shortcomings," is to be enslaved, to be unfree.

But what then? "Expert knowledge" says that we develop integrity out of a diverse assortment of talents, proclivities, dispositions, and skills by throwing out the bad and collecting the serviceable bits and pieces into "a single kind of thing with a single capacity." And this expert knowledge, according to the Stranger from Elea, just is dialectic: collection and division: ontological gestalt and precisation.

It's as though I would be more complete.

*

Notoriously, however, Plato never really tells us how dialectic proceeds. Despite the examples and demonstrations in *Sophist* and *Statesman*, despite the agonizing length of the logic-chopping exercises in *Parmenides*, the key questions are never answered. One of them is posed directly at *Statesman* 263a: Young Socrates asks the Stranger how, in attempts at division, arbitrary "parts" are to be distinguished from real genera. The Stranger praises Young Socrates effusively for his discernment, but then declines to answer. The other question – how to tell what species to leave out of the "collection of elements" – is, to the best of my knowledge, never explicitly framed. *Letter VII*, though enticing, is vague – and, it seems, deliberately so – on all crucial details.

How is it that dialectical expertise produces *enkrateia*? What is the relation between *eros* and integrity? And is it love, or intellectual discipline, that hollows us out – makes us radiant, but empty, vessels for golden *agalmata*?

*

Let us ask again: what is this moral beauty that so overwhelms Alcibiades?

At first it looks like courage – or at least this is how it strikes me when I encounter it in a student, say, or a friend. A breathtaking honesty – someone stepping right out into the open, without a thought for how they might appear, their gaze held by something that has nothing to do with themselves. They are simultaneously vulnerable and untouchable – singular. It might look like stupidity or clumsiness if it were not for the sense of intelligence behind the gesture, an intellectual firmness. We sense that they are in some way compelled, not helpless, but acting under the pressure of necessity, responding with great attention to something they perceive to be obvious. Moral beauty is always unselfconsciously resolute.

And the lack of self-consciousness is indeed crucial. Heroic postures cannot *be* heroic if they are self-aware. Only from the outside is it possible, with justice, to construe another's actions as heroic. And, if they *are* heroic, with this recognition will come the realization that this cannot be communicated to the person in question. The claim will make no sense to them; you will trouble them by demanding precisely the focus that they cannot have if they are to continue to do what they are doing.

And so the impression shifts and deepens: moral beauty looks like courage, looks like intelligence, looks like necessity, looks like humility. It

looks simultaneously like integrity, and like defenselessness. Everything is being risked.

The paradox is important here; it is the key. It is in being able to risk everything that we become free. And this freedom allows our useful bits and pieces to settle naturally into place – the result of a kind of chiropractic of the soul. The muscle unclenches, space opens in the joint, and a single, unbroken, continuous motion becomes possible. This is integrity in action.

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And what is love if it isn't risking everything?

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Earlier, in *Sophist*, before he describes the way of expert dialectical knowing, the Stranger from Elea says: "... the *elenkhos* [cross-questioning, refutation] is the greatest and most efficacious of *katharses* [purifications, cleansings, clarifications]." If we are forced to scrutinize our opinions, and discover that they are inconsistent, then we will "get angry with [ourselves], and become gentle towards others." We will lose our "inflated and rigid beliefs about [ourselves]"; and no loss is more beneficial. Such beliefs clog the soul from the inside just as physical ailments clog the body from the inside and prevent it from benefiting from food. In both cases, health depends on ridding ourselves of these faults or blockages. We must come to know how much we do not know in order to be whole.

⋆

> **whole**, adj. — ME. *hale, hole, hol, hool,* 'healthy, whole', fr. OE. *hāl*, 'whole, unhurt, healthy, well', rel. to ... Goth. *hails*, 'complete, alone, whole, healthy, well, sound', ... fr. I.-E. base ∗*qailo*-, ∗*quailu*-, 'complete, sound, well, happy', whence also OSlav. *cělŭ*, 'whole, complete', Lett. *kaîls*, 'naked, bare, bald', OPruss. *kailūstikan*, 'health', W. *coel*, 'omen', and prob. also Gk. κοῖλυ (Hesychius), 'beautiful'. Cp. **hale**, 'healthy', which is a doublet of *whole* ....

⋆

Thinking in love with clarity, loving knowing that we do not know: it is the point where these two definitions intersect that each is most potent.

That point is interior silence – neither the bunched frustration of failure, nor quietism, but a stillness in which we recognize emptiness, our possibilities for resonance, as home.

⋆

We cannot will love, but love is the goal: an egoless availability, the capacity to touch and be touched by what is, to become replete with meaning.

What we can will is attempts at attentiveness, the uncluttered vision that both precipitates and is precipitated by love.

⋆

"You can't be serious! Love is madness; it is, as the saying goes, blind. It *distorts* our vision, it doesn't correct it. When we're in love, we see what we want to see, not what's there." Socrates agrees: love is a species of madness. But he claims it is the most divine division of its genus, and, his sexual abstinence notwithstanding, he is neither stupid nor inexperienced.

I don't wish to deny that love can obscure the truth. It produces and depends upon imaginative identification. If we are not skilled and disciplined, the imagination can project rather than discern, and we can identify with those projections. We lack vocabulary here; let us indeed call this blind love. But such love, which projects and then identifies with its own projections, is not Socratic madness; it is not Herbert's clear-eyed compassion.

And, given time, there is no problem *telling* the difference. But how do we learn to live it? How do we become skilled and disciplined in love?

How do we learn to pay attention?

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Seriously to seek moral beauty, Plato argues, is to undergo the *elenkhos*.

To refuse it is to refuse to be released from the greatest of taints (μέγιστα ἀκάθαρτον); it is to acquiesce in deformity (αἰσχρὸν γεγονέναι). *Eudaimonia*, the well-being of the spirit in us, requires the purity and beauty that results from the refutation of faulty belief.

The Stranger from Elea also suggests that it is failure to be able to collect and divide according to forms (εἴδη) that is at the root of false opinion. We do not see the world as it *is*.

The *elenkhos* rids us of our faults; through it, we embrace humility and are enabled to see what is. We are cleaned out, unclogged, turned into the emptiness that is *eros* for the world, and simultaneously made whole.

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To encounter the *elenkhos*, Alcibiades tells us, is to experience oneself as enslaved. Actually to undergo it, my students suggest, is both to become truly oneself and to become free.

In what sense "free"? I think perhaps free to trust that one sees the world, and oneself, as they actually are. Free, then, to make a choice, where one perceives that one has a choice; and free to be untroubled by anxiety where one perceives that one does not.

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And the connection between freedom and self-control?

What Socrates has, Plato suggests, is not self-control in some Procrustean sense, but rather the freedom from being shoved around that comes with self-knowledge. It's not that he suppresses his feelings, is cold or removed. Quite the reverse. He becomes free to feel them *all the more intensely* because he need not fear the consequences of such feeling. He will always have a choice about how to act.

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Or so the argument goes. Do I believe it? Not entirely. The capacity for intense feeling, even when one knows oneself free to choose, can have devastating consequences. It is, itself, a door to communion: it opens one up, makes one permeable, to both horror and beauty, the dark as well as the light. One needs luck, great luck, to avoid damage if one invites such openness.

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Or is it that being *damaged* by the dark, by horror, by ruin is exactly the measure of the extent to which one remains clogged by faults, by false

opinions? Is it that pain enters, and leaves, the truly whole, truly empty vessel without trace?

Home: that place where love ceaselessly sustains us and despair ceaselessly passes through.

*

But wait. Why should we think faults are false opinions? Aren't they propensities to act? A tendency to impatience, say, or to self-pity, or to narcissism, to imagining that everything is one's fault. The thought – and it is Freud's and Chuang-tzu's as much as Socrates' – is that these propensities will manifest themselves not *just* in actions, but in beliefs about the world. "Why didn't you speak to Nancy?" "Oh, she snubbed me; she's such a snob." "No, she's not. Where did you get that idea?" "Didn't you see it? I was standing at the checkout and she walked by without saying a word." "Are you sure she even saw you? What time was it? Was she in a rush to get home?" "You just don't get it: she thinks I'm beneath contempt. Why are you defending her? You think I'm stupid?" *Under* the propensities to act are beliefs that are at least protopropositional: *the world owes me*, *I'm worthless*, *money is the answer*, *power is the answer*, *fame is the answer*. We change our behavior by confronting and rejecting these formational beliefs.

Realizing how *fundamentally* wrong we have been, if the lesson goes deep enough, can open us to compassion: others are as messed up as we are; they, too, act out of pain, out of blindness, out of self-absorption. They, too, fail to see what is right in front of them. They, too, hold profoundly mistaken beliefs about the world. Who are we to judge?

*

But now we're talking psychology rather than philosophy, aren't we? Plato did not distinguish: philosophy – *elenkhos* and *dialectic* – just was psychogogy: lifting the eye of the mind from its bed of slime; leading the enslaved soul out of the cave. But his view is antique, surely: just as physics was distinguished from metaphysics, so, a few centuries later, study of the psyche was distinguished from philosophy proper.

Note what we have to mean by "philosophy proper," though, in order to maintain the contrast: philosophy as "science," or at least as an academic discipline from which psychology (as a science) can be distinguished. Is there anything in such a conception of philosophy – let's call

it professional academic philosophy – that involves "a way of life"? Yes: but it looks like the life of Aristophanes' Thinking Shop: at its worst, sophistry; at its best, the cultivation of analytic skill divorced from real engagement with the world.

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It is important that Plato himself did not think such a simple story could be told. You can't tell the truth, he argues, without also acquiring the capacity to lie effectively: both depend on knowing "precisely the respects in which things are similar and dissimilar to one another". The discernment of the *true* rhetorician is thus identical to that of the philosopher. The difference between Socrates and Callicles is not to be cashed out in terms of pure and valid argumentation versus mere eristic: Socrates' elenctic wrestling is full of highly suspect – well, let's be honest, downright bad – arguments. The only reason Socrates, in Plato's version, is not a sophist is that he does not wish to win for the sake of his own fame, but for the sake of the other's soul.

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We cannot tell such a simple story either.

In the first place, many professional philosophers do engage with the world in unsophistical ways: they teach with real passion; they analyze moral and political issues in the media; they serve on the boards of NGOs and advocacy groups. Secondly, many are not analytic philosophers: as so-called continental philosophers, they are much more concerned with literary, existential, cultural, and historical dimensions of Western European thought. There is, increasingly, communication between the two groups; there are, increasingly, young philosophers who are willing and able to read in both traditions.

But there is still, I think many of us would agree, something missing, or perhaps awry – a target that, despite our efforts, we don't hit. Neither our own nor our students' hearts leap from their chests; the tears do not stream down our faces as we contemplate the latest issue of *JPhil*. Professionalism insulates us; we pursue our careers.

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And still the story is too simple. Plato was right, I think: the fundamental *skill* is a kind of conceptual *diaeresis*, the capacity for *discrimination* in

thought. Call it analysis and synthesis, call it division and collection, it is the same talent that undergirds both legal sophistry and Socratic self-understanding. In the case of sophistry, the skill is turned on others and the world, in an attempt to make money or garner fame. In the case of self-understanding, we turn the instrument on ourselves. The initial attempt, the decision to pursue the *katharsis*, requires a certain amount of courage: often we are forced to it only through catastrophe. But critical self-examination breeds honesty; and honesty brings relief – even in the face of fear. Thus courage grows with exercise.

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And so, late in the day, I find myself returning to my early training, what seemed to me at the time to be an exercise in empty eristic. What has held my gaze, without my conscious understanding, is a sensed connection between the capacity for analytic conceptual discrimination and the possibility of leading the good life. It is not, of course, the skill itself that takes our breath away; rather, it is what results when the skill is exercised on the self – a paradoxical combination of vulnerability and integrity, a clarity and directness of vision, a limpid honesty. This is moral beauty. It makes the hair on our forearms rise and our throats go dry. It prompts tears. But although it is indeed such beauty that arrests us, what makes that beauty possible is the same analytic and discriminatory expertise that we cultivate in attempts to define angling or determine how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. That expertise is at the heart of the *elenkhos*, which we still must practice if we are to find and then to trust ourselves, if we are to see things as they are. If we are to foster genuine attentiveness, make ourselves permeable, skilled in love, able to embrace and sustain the world's darkness without damage.

If we are to learn to think clear of our faults and so become free.

Notes

page 84 ***Philosophy as thinking in love with clarity***: Zwicky (1992). The notion of clarity developed there is one that emphasizes the etymological foundations of the word, which link it with resonance rather than analysis.

page 86 ***Alcibiades, in Plato's* Symposium*, says***: Plato, *Symposium* 215d–216b, trans. Nehamas & Woodruff (1989).

And Plutarch says of Aristippus: Plutarch, *De curiositate* (Περὶ πολυπραγμοσύνης), *Moralia* 516c, trans. after Kahn (1996, 16, n. 30).

page 87 ***Hegel, writing centuries later . . . , says***: Hegel (1960, Vol 4, 67), trans. Kaufmann (1978, 215).

page 88 ***even though it is announced as equivalent to a competition in Love's game***: Plato, *Parmenides* 137a.

After numerous exercises, and abstract characterizations and applications of dialectic: Plato, *Statesman* 285a–c.

the Stranger from Elea, in* Statesman*, says: Plato, *Statesman* 308c, trans. C.J. Rowe in Cooper (1997).

with his "swagg'ring gait and roving eye": Alcibiades, at 221b in Plato's *Symposium*, appears to be quoting Aristophanes' *The Clouds* 361-2 (. . . σοὶ δὲ / ὅτι βρενθύει τ'ἐν ταῖσιν ὁδοῖς καὶ τὠφθαλμὼ παραβάλλεις). Trans. Nehamas & Woodruff (1989).

page 90 ***integrate . . . integrity***: Klein (1967).

he loves, but without the desire to possess: Compare McKay (2001, 26): "longing . . . without the desire to possess".

And this expert knowledge . . . just is dialectic: Plato, *Statesman* 285b, *Sophist* 253d–e and *passim*. Compare Plato, *Phaedrus* 265d–e and 273e.

gestalt and precisation: terms first developed in connexion with Gestalt psychology, referring to the analgorithmic grasp of wholes and the subsequent discernment of their constituent elements, followed by re-gestalting of the 'precised' whole and subsequent re-precisation, and so on.

page 92 ***Earlier, in* Sophist*, . . . the Stranger from Elea says***: Plato, *Sophist* 230b–d, trans. Fowler (1921).

whole: Klein (1967).

page 93 ***Herbert's clear-eyed compassion***: George Herbert, "Love (III)" ("Love bade me welcome . . . "). The poem has been collected numerous places. For an authoritative text see Patrides (1974, 192).

μέγιστα ἀκάθαρτον/αἰσχρὸν γεγονέναι: Plato, *Sophist* 230e.

page 94 ***The Stranger from Elea also suggests***: Plato, *Statesman* 285a–b.

page 95 ***lifting the eye of the mind from its bed of slime***: Plato, *Republic* Book VII 533d.

leading the enslaved soul out of the cave: Plato, *Republic* Book VII 514a–517c.

page 96 ***Aristophanes' Thinking Shop***: Aristophanes, *The Clouds* 94ff.

both depend on knowing "precisely the respects . . . ": Plato, *Phaedrus* 262a.

The difference between Socrates and Callicles: See Plato, *Gorgias* 481b ff.

6

Stoics and Bodhisattvas
Spiritual Exercise and Faith in Two Philosophical Traditions

Matthew T. Kapstein

I

In the study of Hellenistic philosophy, as in many areas of Buddhist studies, we are sometimes hard put to respond clearly to the oft-repeated question, "Is it a philosophy or a religion?" The problem here is of course *our* problem and not one for Hellenes or Buddhists; for the impulse to define a firm boundary separating the two domains, in the form that we know it today, belongs to our inheritance from the Enlightenment, above all its interrogation of the proper bounds of faith and reason, an issue to which we shall return later. Merely to affirm, however, that the strict opposition of philosophy and religion, as presupposed in the initial question, is an artifact of our own intellectual universe does not by itself confer upon us a better way to think about it. It is here that the contribution of Pierre Hadot, in particular his vision of "philosophy as a way of life" founded upon the key concept of "spiritual exercise," has proven a powerful means to cut through the Enlightenment's dilemma and so to embark upon pathways of thought traversing more distant worlds.

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It must be stressed, nevertheless, that this is not to say that there is *no* distinction to be drawn between philosophy and religion in the realms with which we are concerned here. In both cases, we find cultural phenomena that we would tend to assign unambiguously to the one or the other, and which were classed quite separately in their original settings: Porphyry on the categories, for instance, by contrast with Mithraic initiation; or the Indian Buddhist Dharmakīrti's discussions of perception when juxtaposed with the cult of the stūpa. Such oppositions, however, are contrived and not very informative; they ignore altogether the large but less well-demarcated territory intervening between the extremes. Hadot's discussion of philosophy as a spiritual exercise for the Stoics illustrates this very well:

> The Stoics . . . declared explicitly that philosophy . . . was an "exercise." In their view, philosophy did not consist in teaching an abstract theory – much less in the exegesis of texts – but rather in the art of living. It is a concrete attitude and determinate life-style, which engages the whole of existence. The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to *be* more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom. (Hadot 1995, pp. 82–83)

In short, to adopt a way of speaking that is more customary in the study of religion than it is in contemporary philosophy, Hadot directs us to envision philosophy itself in this context as a soteriological enterprise.

In the study of Buddhism, by contrast, the overall soteriological orientations of the tradition are generally recognized and taken for granted; what has proven more difficult is to investigate its philosophical dimensions in their relationship to them. Under the ascendant star of analytic philosophy toward the end of the last century, in particular, work on Buddhist philosophies tended to focus upon those areas in which the traditional sources studied seemed to suggest considerable affinities with the analytic project: philosophy of language, logic, theory of knowledge, and problems in metaphysics, including universals, personal identity, and idealism (examples include Arnold 2005; Dreyfus 1997; Garfield 2001; Hayes 1988; Kapstein 2001; Siderits 2003; and Tillemans 1999). For in

areas such as these, it is true that thinkers in India as well as their heirs elsewhere in Asia, and notably in Tibet, entertained puzzles and proposed reasoned solutions that, in their general outlines and often in the particular details of arguments, anticipated developments with which we are familiar in recent philosophy in the West. The impetus to insist upon the analytic *bona fides* of Buddhist philosophy was reinforced, too, by the knowledge that mainstream academic philosophy, Anglo-American as well as Continental, was generally ignorant of these matters and had long since pigeonholed Indian and Buddhist thought as what it called "mystical," as Matilal (1971) has remarked. In what now appears to me to have been an effort at overcompensation, those of us who study these philosophies sometimes sought to appear more critical than Kripke, so to speak. In order to establish that what we were investigating was in fact philosophy, we in effect bracketed the tradition's own interest in spiritual progress right out of the equation.

II

To clarify matters somewhat, it will be useful to consider briefly the place of philosophy in Buddhist education. As this is by no means consistent throughout the Buddhist world, I shall limit my remarks here to some aspects of Tibetan Buddhism (on which see, in particular, Dreyfus 2003) and its Indian antecedents. What we must note at the outset, what cannot be stressed too much, is that the topics of study that appear, for one trained in contemporary Anglophone philosophy, to be most characteristically philosophical are almost exclusively taught as aspects of the training of religious professionals, particularly monks, who are a fortiori committed to a "determinate lifestyle." The apparently philosophical parts of the curriculum correspond closely to the topics that are emphasized in the formal textual exegesis and debate practices that are, in many monastic colleges at least, the focal points of the educational process, though they are by no means the whole of the educational process. In this context, four subjects are regarded as particularly important in connection with systematic study and debate: logic and epistemology, the dialectical philosophy known as Madhyamaka, the Buddhist "metadoctrine" or Abhidharma, and the topics and categories elaborated in the class of texts called "Perfection of Wisdom." A fifth subject, the Vinaya or monastic code, was sometimes also taught using debate as a pedagogical method, though we seldom find questions derived from the Vinaya

occupying much space in Indian or Tibetan Buddhist philosophical writings. Each of these five fields of study finds its epitome in a single Indian text, which students are usually required to memorize, and many of the other texts studied, which are the objects of formal exegesis, are either commentaries upon these five, or else closely and explicitly related to them.[1] In connection with this scholastic program, it must be emphasized that the questions Tibetan monks are trained to discuss and debate with infinite subtlety often have little apparent practical interest, even in traditional terms.

Besides the courses of study associated with the "debate curriculum," with its focus upon five key Indian texts and additional works related to them, there were other programs playing various roles in traditional Tibetan education. Some of these pertained to the education of specialists, including doctors, astrologers, artists, and ritual masters, while others were of more general application, in some respects paralleling – though about this we ought not to insist too much – our notions of a "liberal" education. Thus, educated laymen and some clergy were schooled in poetics and the literary arts, areas in which, as in the scholastic curriculum, a small range of major Indian works were singled out for concentrated study and memorization (Kapstein 2003). More pertinent to our present concerns, however, is an area of crucial educational concern, one that is characteristically treated in the West as a fundamental part of philosophy, but that among Buddhists is seldom an area to be engaged in formal debate. I am speaking of ethics.[2]

Tibetan ethical education has not been very well studied to date. I believe that most current approaches can be traced back to a program of study that was first formulated during the eleventh century, relying upon the half dozen Indian works that came to be known in Tibet as the "six texts of the Kadam ('scripture and precept') order." This was the monastic order formed among the Tibetan disciples of the Indian master Atiśa, whose sojourn in Tibet, from 1042 until his death there in 1054, is generally regarded as having inspired a remarkable reformation, whereby an emphatic commitment to Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics became a keystone for the teaching of all Buddhist orders in Tibet (Kapstein 2006, Chapter 4). The six texts stressed by the Kadam are generally thought to form three pairs: the first two are edifying works, verses and stories exemplifying the ideals of the Buddhist life, and the self-sacrifice and endurance of the bodhisattva as he progresses through diverse lifetimes on the path to perfection. They are said to be taught primarily to encourage faith. The second pair, both attributed to the circa eighth-century

master Śāntideva, essentially concerns practical guidance on the Mahāyāna path, particularly in its ethical dimensions, while the last elaborates the same path from a pre-eminently doctrinal/theoretical perspective.[3] Corresponding to this curriculum, and relating with particular clarity to the two works of Śāntideva on the practice of the path, is a substantial genre that developed in the early Kadam order called *lojong*, an expression that is often translated as "mind-training," but could equally well be rendered as "spiritual exercise." For, while *lo* means "mind, thought, intellect," *jong* embraces the semantic range of "to refine, purify, cleanse, train (oneself, e.g., in a sport), exercise."[4] This latter element is used, for instance, to speak of refining precious metals from their base ores, a metaphor informing the *lojong* literature that finds a resonance in a frequently cited verse from Śāntideva:

> Taking this impure body, the priceless body,
>
> the Buddha Jewel, is what it makes of it.
>
> It is philosopher's stone, most catalytic;
>
> grasp firmly, then, this "enlightened spirit."
>
> (*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 1.10, Sanskrit text in Vaidya 1960)

Although spiritual progress may be likened to alchemical transformation, however, it is to be realized, according to Śāntideva, only through slow and patient efforts.

Like Śāntideva's writings, the works of the *lojong* genre are concerned in general with the practical challenge posed by the Mahāyāna path, the need for constant training of thought, speech, and action, in order to accord oneself with the ideal of the bodhisattva, the being whose life is determined by the ideal of enlightenment, revealed in its perfection in the example of the Buddha. Accordingly, *lojong* texts treat primarily the cultivation of such virtues as equanimity, compassion and loving-kindness, together with an awareness of the world as fleeting and empty, but they sometimes also take up practical details of everyday life: how to eat and drink, what to think while falling asleep, passing in and out of doors, mounting the stairs, going to the toilet . . . The goal of this training is, as Hadot puts it with reference to the Stoics, "self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom," to be realized at all times and under all circumstances. As such, the *lojong* tradition, together with the Indian works that inspired it, became part of the common heritage

of all Tibetan Buddhist orders, and it informs, to varying degrees, the ethical education of the laity as well. Thus, in a letter of spiritual advice addressed to a thirteenth-century Mongol noblewoman, Khubilai Khan's Tibetan preceptor, the lama Pakpa (1235–1280), writes:

> When entering the road say, "May I enter enlightenment's path!"
>
> On crossing a river say, "May I traverse the torrent of sorrow!"
>
> When you climb up a stairway say, "May I ascend the stairway of freedom!"
>
> When meeting someone say, "May I meet with sublime individuals!"
>
> When you see an empty pot say, "May I be empty of faults!"
>
> When you see a full pot say, "May I be full of good qualities!"
>
> (Chos-rgyal 'Phags-pa Blo-gros-rgyal mtshan, *Dpon mo Puṇḍa ri'i don du mdzad pa bsgrub pa'i rim pa rab tu gsal ba,* trans. in Kapstein 2010)

The discipline of *lojong* constitutes, in my view, the fabric upon which much of the Tibetan Buddhist practice, including what we hold to be philosophical practice, is arrayed, in virtue of which that practice is coherent and whole, not merely a disconnected aggregation of doctrines, rituals, and routines. Further, I believe that the philosophical integrity of the tradition comes clear only when this is kept emphatically before us. In what follows, I wish to begin to sketch out some of the entailments of this conviction by means of a comparative sketch, juxtaposing aspects of Stoicism, as represented above all in the teaching of Epictetus, with the path of Mahāyāna Buddhism as disclosed primarily in works attributed to the Indian master Śāntideva.

III

In some respects, the project of comparing Stoicism and Mahāyāna Buddhism may appear to be an improbable one.[5] While the latter determines that we strive for an enlightenment that contributes to the liberation of all living beings, the doctrines of the former would seem to entail that this is impossible. For though both strongly affirm principles of causality and cyclicity in the constitution of the world, Buddhism apparently grants considerably more freedom of human agency than does Stoicism, at least insofar as one can in some sense choose one's destiny; and, by the

same token, although the Stoics affirm both a sort of individual reappearance and a pattern of cosmic cycles, their conception of eternal return in the strict and literal sense is foreign to the Buddhist notion of the bodhisattva's ongoing spiritual progress through numberless lives. These distinctions, moreover, sometimes issue in markedly different ethical orientations: the Buddhist elevation of compassion in the constellation of cardinal virtues finds its Stoic pendant in a more restrained attitude of commiseration. Thus, Epictetus says:

> When you see someone weeping in sorrow, either because a child has gone on a journey, or because he has lost his property, beware that you be not carried away by the impression that the man is in the midst of external ills, but straightway keep before you this thought: "It is not what has happened that distresses this man (for it does not distress another), but his judgement about it." Do not, however, hesitate to sympathize with him so far as words go, and, if occasion offers, even to groan with him; but be careful not to groan also in the centre of your being. (Oldfather 1928, pp. 495–497 (*Encheiridion* 16))

For Śāntideva, by contrast, the phenomenon of suffering in some sense annuls the very basis for distinguishing between self and other. He writes:

> To appease my own pain,
>
> to assuage the pains of others,
>
> I give myself to others,
>
> grasp others as my own self.
>
> (*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 8.136, Sanskrit text in Vaidya 1960)

Nevertheless, Epictetus' views regarding our common participation in a providential cosmic order, together with his insistence upon our propensities to misjudge severely the actual extent of our autonomous control, lead him in effect to join company with the Buddhist's reservations regarding self-interest. Like the latter, he comes to judge self-interest, when allowed free rein, to be in the final analysis self-defeating:

> If someone places his interest in the same pan of the scale where he places piety, the honourable [*to kalon*], country, parents, and friends, all of these are secure. But if he places his own interest in one pan and his friends, country, relatives, and justice itself in the opposite pan, all the latter vanish,

> weighed down by his interest. For wherever 'I' and 'mine' are placed, to there the creature inevitably inclines . . . (*Discourses*, 2.22.18-20, trans. Long 2002, p. 199)

Here, his thinking almost converges with that of Śāntideva, who begins his *Compendium of Lessons* with this verse:

> So long as neither I, nor others, take pleasure in fear and pain,
>
> What distinction is there then of self, that I take care of it and not other?
>
> (*Śikṣāsamuccaya*, *kārikā* 1, Sanskrit text in Bendall 1957)

Hence, despite pronounced differences of cosmology, of many particular doctrines, of nuance and accent, there nonetheless is much in Buddhism and Stoicism that merits close comparison. Especially noteworthy is the rigor with which both hold that our pains and frustrations stem from false beliefs about ourselves, beliefs that are to be therapeutically overcome through a sustained process of education and *ascesis*. In the Stoicism of Epictetus, this process begins in the hard confrontation with the thought that one's powers and properties are far more tightly circumscribed than we often conceitedly believe them to be, and that our erroneous judgments about this lead to heteronomy and to grief. Arrian records him as summarizing the essential path of his teaching in these words:

> Where, then, is progress? If any man among you, withdrawing from external things, has turned his attention to the question of his own moral purpose, cultivating and perfecting it so as to make it finally harmonious with nature, elevated, free, unhindered, untrammeled, faithful, and honourable; and if he has learned that he who craves or shuns the things that are not under his control can be neither faithful nor free, but must himself of necessity be changed and tossed to and fro with them, and must end by subordinating himself to others, those, namely, who are able to procure or prevent these things that he craves or shuns; and if, finally, when he rises in the morning he proceeds to keep and observe all this that he has learned; if he bathes as a faithful man, eats as a self-respecting man, – similarly, whatever the subject matter may be with which he has to deal, putting into practice his guiding principles . . . this is the man who in all truth is making progress . . . But if he has striven merely to attain the state which he finds in his books and works only at that, and has made that the goal of his travels, I bid him go home at once and not neglect his concerns there, since the goal to which he has travelled is nothing; but not so that other goal – to study how a man may rid his life of sorrows and lamentations, and of such cries as "Woe is

> me!" . . . and to learn the meaning of death, exile, prison, hemlock, that he may be able to say in prison, "Dear Crito, if so it pleases the gods, so be it" . . . (Oldfather 1998 [1925], pp. 33–35)

The propensities to crave or to shun that which one does not and cannot govern are similarly central to Śāntideva's analysis of the heteronomous self:

> These enemies – craving, aversion and more –
>
> have neither hands nor feet.
>
> They're neither heroic, nor wise.
>
> How, then, have they made me their slave?
>
> Dwelling within my own mind,
>
> they're well poised to strike me down!
>
> If I'm not enraged by that,
>
> then curse my forebearance ill-placed!
>
> (*Bodhicaryāvatāra* 4.28–4.29, Sanskrit text in Vaidya 1960)

Epictetus and Śāntideva concur then in holding that false conceptions of the self and its properties bring us to grief, in considering it to be possible and desirable for us to reattune ourselves in this respect, and in setting before us an ideal goal, one that we most probably will not attain but is worth adopting as our trajectory, nevertheless, to be seen in the figure of the sage who has achieved a perfect harmony with the real order of things as they are. A closer comparison between them may therefore prove illuminating. In the short space that remains to me here, I will limit myself to the exploration of one point alone.

IV

In reading Śāntideva's *Compendium of Lessons*, we meet a challenge for philosophical reflection early on; for it is faith rather than reason that the author vigorously extols:

> One who wishes to bring closure to pain, and to arrive at happiness' end,
>
> Must plant firm faith as the root, and fasten the mind to enlightenment.
>
> (*Śikṣāsamuccaya*, *kārikā* 2, Sanskrit text in Bendall 1957)

For many of us, this affirmation will mark the text at once as a religious tract, and, in some sense, so it is. But I would like us to dwell a bit on Śāntideva's appeal to faith, to ask what this may have meant in a learned medieval Buddhist, and not a postenlightenment Christian, context, and to enquire into what message may be found here for the project of "philosophy as a way of life."

In contemporary Western philosophy, the question of faith remains squarely within the ambit of the dispute that arose within Western Christian thought between fideism and rationalism. The debate emerged in the wake of the sixteenth-century revival of skepticism, but it was during the eighteenth century that it achieved what has remained to all intents and purposes its modern form. As a distinguished Catholic philosopher puts it, what is at issue here is "whether belief in God, and faith in a divine word, is a reasonable or rational state of mind" (Kenny 1983, p. 1). As such, it is difficult, if not impossible, for those of us trained in the Western tradition to detach the concept of faith from questions surrounding the grounds for belief in the Christian god. (And I stress the Christian character of the debate precisely because it seems to have remarkably little traction among religious thinkers even in the other monotheisms.) That faith is a determining feature of theism is so deeply engrained in our whole way of thinking that one noted religionist, in a work devoted to a comparative study of "faith and belief" in the major religions, found the presence of a notion much like faith in Buddhist discourse to entail a Buddhist belief in something much like god.[6] Keeping Śāntideva and Epictetus in mind, I would like to adopt here a somewhat different tack and argue the following points instead: (1) taking the Buddhist concept, and not the Christian one, as primary, we might find something much like the Buddhist "faith" presupposed in Stoic philosophy; and (2) more generally, some such concept must be admitted in order to cash out the notion of "philosophy as a way of life" overall. But before we can establish these points, we must first characterize the conception of faith that was current in mid-first millennium Buddhist thought itself.

The Sanskrit term that is generally rendered as "faith" is *śraddhā*, a word that literally means "placing trust." The same word is used in both Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical contexts, and in modern Indian languages it can mean faith in or devotion to a divinity or revered teacher.[7] A secondary derivative, *śrāddha*, "that which pertains to keeping faith," refers to funeral and memorial rites for parents and ancestors; it is the trust one keeps with the Manes. As a technical expression in Buddhist

scholastic philosophy, however, the primary term *śraddhā* is analyzed as follows:

> *Śraddhā* is belief with respect to what is so, favor with respect to the presence of [positively valued] qualities, and aspiration for realized capacities.[8]

In common usage, any one of these alone may serve to define a given occurrence of the word "faith"; the three together, however, are taken to describe that sort of faith that is deemed appropriate for an aspirant on the Buddhist path. Let us consider briefly the three parts of the definition in turn:

(1) "a belief with respect to what is so." Typically, this is taken to refer to the nature of things as they are, and as disclosed accordingly in the Buddha's teaching, but specifically it is the teaching of an ethically ordered world, determined by the causal operation of *karman*, that is at stake; for this aspect of the teaching can, in principle, only be verified by an omniscient being, such as the Buddha is supposed to be.
(2) "favor with respect to the presence of (positively valued) qualities." This qualifies the affective dimension of faith, the favorable inclination that one feels toward that which is regarded as inspiring, in this case, the Three Jewels of traditional Buddhism, but in some contexts too, one's personal teachers, or tutelary divinity.
(3) "aspiration for realized capacities." Faith in this respect is characterized by an orientation to a goal, whereby one's own potential for enlightenment may be disclosed.

Stripped of its peculiarly Buddhist qualifications, this definition appears to me to be a clever one, the three features it names corresponding to the credential, affective, and volitional determinations of the attitude it defines. We catch a first hint of how it might apply to Stoicism in some words of Hadot:

> Men suffer from an almost universal corruption of or deviation from Reason. Yet the Stoics still urge people to philosophize – that is, to train themselves for wisdom. They therefore believe in the possibility of spiritual progress. (Hadot 1998, pp. 76–77)

Because our reason is corrupt, therefore, we must believe in at least some aspects of the Stoic teaching, prior to any possibility of our knowing their truth, as a condition for our philosophizing as a Stoic at all.

In the teachings of Epictetus, what we have been speaking of as faith is perhaps less clearly thematized than it is in our Buddhist sources. Does this suggest that it is relatively less important here? In fact, I doubt that this is the case. Two concepts discussed by Epictetus seem most relevant to our reflections in this regard: the one, "piety" (*eusebeia*), pertaining directly to our orientation to the gods, and the second, "confidence" (*tharsos*), characterizing our own moral purpose. The former concerns in part our customary obligations and duties to the gods, but there is more:

> In piety toward the gods . . . the chief element is this, to have right opinions about them – as existing and as administering the universe well and justly – and to have set yourself to obey them and to submit to everything that happens . . . (Oldfather 1928, p. 511 (*Encheiridion* 31))

The pious individual, therefore, is one who believes in the providential order of the Stoic cosmos, and accordingly seeks to conform to this order. His confidence, though rooted in this belief and in his own moral condition, may additionally find a sort of inspiration in the philosophers who have gone before:

> What *you* are afraid of is this – that you may not be able to live the life of an invalid, since, I tell you, you have only to learn the life of healthy men – how the slaves live, the workmen, the genuine philosophers, how Socrates lived . . . If this is what you want, you will have it everywhere, and will live with full confidence. (Oldfather 1928, p. 235)

And as to what, for the Stoic, should be the proper object of our devoted regard, this is most forcefully expressed in the words of Cicero:

> Philosophy! The guide of our lives, the explorer of all that is good in us, exterminator of all evil! Had it not been for your guidance, what would I ever have amounted to – and, what, indeed, would have become of all human life? It was you who brought cities into existence . . . Inventor of laws, teacher of morals, creator of order! You were all these things. And now, you are *my* refuge and rescuer. (Cicero 1971, "Discussions at Tusculum," 54)

This resonates well with the Buddhist insistence upon "favor with respect to positively valued qualities." It is philosophy itself, then, that has become the characteristic object of Stoic "faith."

Given this, how are we to understand and characterize this faith – that is not the faith of a Christian philosopher struggling to reconcile his religious convictions with scientific reason – in the terms afforded by contemporary ethics? In fact, I find very little evidence that the question has been considered in much depth, the contemporary discussion of "faith" having been hijacked, to all intents and purposes, by the debate over fideism versus rationalism. We may turn to Bernard Williams, however, for some promising suggestions about how we might begin to proceed. Reflecting upon the conditions productive of what he calls "ethical conviction," Williams rejects both cognitive and voluntarist explanations. For, on the one hand, ethical concepts may "not satisfy the conditions of propositional knowledge," while, on the other, if "ethics is a matter of decision, and we are uncertain, then we are uncertain what to decide."[9] He is not saying, of course, that conviction is altogether lacking in cognitive and volitional dimensions, but just that these cannot be invoked reductively in explanatory accounts. In place of these two alternatives, he argues:

> We need a third conception, for which the best word is perhaps *confidence*. It is basically a social phenomenon. This is not to deny that when it exists in a society, it does so because individuals possess it in some form, nor that it can exist in some individuals when it is lacking in society . . . The point of bringing in this conception is not that philosophy, which could not tell us how to bring about conviction, can tell us how to bring about confidence. It is rather that this conception makes it clearer than other models did why philosophy cannot tell us how to bring it about. It is a social and psychological question what kinds of institutions, upbringing, and public discourse help to foster it. . . . This does not mean that it has nothing to do with rational argument. Social states can be affected, one way or another, by rational argument. Moreover, if we try to generate confidence without rational argument or by suppressing it, we are quite likely to fail . . . (Williams 1985, p. 170)

Though Williams' comments point us in the right direction, the account is, I think, in some respects too thinly developed. For when I set upon a life project, which may or may not involve a departure from my upbringing, conform or not with the dominant discourses and forms of

institutional life of my community, and may be but partially grounded in conclusions derived from rational argument, I may nevertheless be imbued with reasonable confidence, and with the often compelling affective trajectories that accompany such confidence. While Williams' formulation clearly permits this – he does not, for instance, "deny that . . . it can exist in some individuals when it is lacking in society" – we still seem to need a way to get at the something more that is involved here, to flesh out the astute but somewhat bloodless conception of ethical confidence Williams has adumbrated. For consider the individual who comes from circumstances of extreme deprivation, in which not only are ignorance and poverty normal but also normative, who nonetheless determines that her path will be that of success in one of the liberal professions. Certainly, the formation of confidence, together with decisions of the will, is involved in any such history, but something essential must be present prior to these factors, engendering the very possibility of their arising, without precisely determining them; there must be, I think, the elaboration of a particular picture of the world, one in which the actor is herself part of the picture and in which it appears possible and desirable to adopt a particular course of life. Moreover, as our example suggests, this formation of a world-picture cannot always be mechanically read off from a prior mix of social facts, institutions, and upbringing. My task here, however, is not to provide an etiological account of what I am calling the "world-picture," for I would like to suggest that it is just this, and not its varied causes, whatever they may be, that lends to ethical confidence its customary force and depth. Accordingly, we need to suggest how we might approach, in this context, the characterization of the world-picture itself.

To begin, we should be wary of the metaphor of a picture, because pictures are static things and the "world-picture," as I have termed it, includes possible paths upon which are projected the anticipated actualizations of one's potentialities in time. The world-picture turns out to be a motion picture marvelously permitting one to regard indefinitely many lines of possible development. In other contexts, this sort of world-picture-in-motion has been termed quite simply a "myth." And to see what myth might mean in this case, we may turn to the reflections of the Polish philosopher Leszek Kołakowski, who speaks of our "need" for the production of myths:

> Let us attempt a description of the need which generates answers to questions that are ultimate and metaphysical – that is, incapable of conversion into scientific questions . . . [T]his need can be described . . . [f]irst as the

> need to make the empirical realities understandable; that is, to grasp the world of experience as intelligible by relating it to the unconditioned reality which binds phenomena teleologically . . . A mythical organization of the world (that is, the rules of understanding empirical realities as meaningful) is permanently present in culture. The objection that such an organization does not become true as a result of its permanence, or of the reality of the needs which give rise to it, has no argumentative power for a consciousness whose mythopoeic stratum has been aroused, since here the predicates "true" and "false" are inapplicable . . . Myth degenerated when it changed into a doctrine, that is, a product demanding and seeking proof. (Kołakowski 1989, pp. 2–3)

Kołakowski further holds that the needs to which mythopoeia additionally responds include the "need for faith in the permanence of human values" and the "desire to see the world as continuous." In short, our myths facilitate our construction of a world that is a continuous and meaningful whole, in which our values endure. And, as I have argued elsewhere, such myths are felt to be true to the extent that those who live within them are satisfied that the ends to which they are directed will not issue in self-defeat (Kapstein 2000, p. 143).

Joining, now, the arguments of Williams and Kołakowski together, we may suggest that "ethical confidence" may be engendered for "a consciousness whose mythopoeic stratum has been aroused," and, more precisely, a consciousness to which the ethical prospects of its mythical world are clearly and positively disclosed. The ethical confidence of such a consciousness, moreover, may correspond rather closely to what I have been calling "faith."

⋆

If these general contentions are correct, then it would seem that we cannot have "philosophy as a way of life" without a pronounced element of faith engendered in the field of myth. Faith and myth – this begins to seem much like religion. This conclusion, however, is one that we would do well to embrace, for the *cordon sanitaire* whereby some have sought to keep religion in quarantine with respect to philosophy has never been, and indeed can never be, perfectly maintained. This is so, if for no other reason than because, as Kołakowski rightly argues, the ideal of pure reason is itself a mythopoeic construction (Kołakowski 1989, esp. Chapters 2 and 4).

There are other reasons, too, for embracing these conclusions. Hadot's famous phrase is attractive to us not just because it serves us so well in the effort to interpret philosophy in the remote past, but, together with its rich hermeneutical promise, it also suggests a destination for philosophy today. It is for this reason, indeed, that Hadot's work belongs to philosophy and not solely to the archeology of ideas. The prospects of philosophy as a way of life, I would say, may be realized when we find our way to dwelling confidently within our philosophical myths, however they may have been constructed. It is from this position that we may meet Epictetus and Śāntideva not just as our distant ancestors, but as challenging conversation partners, capable of shaking our lives even now.

Notes

1. The five texts in question are: Vasubandhu, *Abhidharmakośa* ("Treasury of the Abhidharma"); Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇavārttika* ("Commentary on Logic and Epistemology"); Candrakīrti, *Madhyamakāvatāra* ("Introduction to the Madhyamaka"); Maitreyanātha, *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* ("Ornament of Realization"); and Guṇaprabha, *Vinayasūtra* ("Aphorisms of the Vinaya").
2. For a broad survey of Buddhist ethics, refer to Harvey (2000); and for a thoughtful investigation of basic principles, see Keown (2001).
3. Kapstein (2007). The three pairs are: (1–2) the *Udānavarga* ("Collection of Aphorisms") and *Jātakamālā* ("Garland of Birth-Tales"); (3–4) the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* ("Compendium of Lessons") and *Bodhicaryāvatāra* ("Introduction to Enlightened Conduct"); and (5–6) the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra* ("Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras") and *Bodhisattvabhūmi* ("Bodhisattva Stage").
4. Thupten Jinpa (2006) provides a superb translation of one of the most important compilations of *lojong* texts.
5. "In some respects" because, of course, Greek–Indian philosophical comparisons, as well as the difficult question of mutual influence, have been widely explored. See, among recent contributions, McEvilley (2002), Gowans (2003), and Sick (2007). The latter is of particular interest for its effort to ground the discussion of Hellenistic–Indian philosophical exchange on clear philological evidence.
6. Smith (1979, p. 32): "By shifting the question from whether the Buddha and his followers believed in God (to which the answer is evidently 'no') to whether they had faith in God, we hope to have demonstrated that for some in the latter case the answer can or must be 'yes.' At least, one's answer will be 'yes' if one means by God, at least in part, that quality of or reality in the universe in which he and they did have faith." This seems to me to be an instance of

petitio principii, for faith in God (under some description or another) is, here, supposed to flow from the very concept of faith, and that is precisely what is in question.

7. On the use of the term in Brāhmaṇical contexts, see Lévi 2003 [1898], pp. 108–109, 114–115.
8. Pradhan (1950, p. 6): *śraddhā katamā/ astitva-guṇatva-śaktatveṣv abhisaṃpratyayaḥ prasādo 'bhilāṣaḥ*. For commentary, see Tatia (1976, p. 5, line ix).
9. Williams (1985, pp. 167–170). I am grateful to my colleague at the University of Chicago, Dan Brudney, for recommending Williams' work to me in this context.

7

Philosophy as a Way of Life

Spiritual Exercises from the Buddha to Tagore[1]

Jonardon Ganeri

Spiritual Exercises and the Aesthetic Analogy

Of the many interrelated themes in Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Hadot 1995), two strike me as having a particular centrality. First, there is the theme of attention to the present instant. Hadot describes this as the "key to spiritual exercises" (1995, p. 84), and he finds the idea encapsulated in a quotation from Goethe's *Second Faust*: "Only the present is our happiness" (1995, p. 217). The second theme is that of viewing the world from above: "philosophy signified the attempt to raise up mankind from individuality and particularity to universality and objectivity" (1995, p. 242). Insofar as both attention to the present and raising oneself to an objective view imply the mastery of individual anxiety, passion, and desire, they belong to a single conception, that conception being one of a "return to the self":

> Thus, all spiritual exercises are, fundamentally, a return to the self, in which the self is liberated from the state of alienation into which it has been plunged by worries, passions, and desires. The 'self' liberated in this way is no longer merely our egoistic, passionate individuality: it is our moral person, open to universality and objectivity, and participating in universal nature or thought. (1995, p. 103)

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Richard Sorabji (Sorabji 2002, pp. 238–239) has questioned the extent to which it is true to say *generally* of the ancient philosophers that they found value only in the present, conceding the idea principally to Marcus Aurelius, an author to whom Hadot has given special attention.[2] Sorabji too, however, has spoken of what he terms the "inwardness" of the ancient spiritual exercises, and he has pointed out that the idea of turning inward is more ancient than Augustine, who indeed says that he learned to look inward from the Platonists. For Hadot, the guiding metaphor seems to have been the one introduced by Plotinus, who likened the inward turn to the activity of a sculptor, chipping away at a block of marble in order to manifest the statue within. Thus *Ennead* 1.6.9:

> How then can you see the sort of beauty a good soul has? Go back into yourself and look; and if you do not yet see yourself beautiful, then, just as someone making a statue which has to be beautiful cuts away here and polishes there and makes one part smooth and clears another till he has given his statue a beautiful face, so you too must cut away excess and straighten the crooked and clear the dark and make it bright, and never stop 'working on your statue' till the divine glory of virtue shines out on you, till you see 'self-mastery enthroned upon its holy seat'.

Hadot makes the point that for Plotinus, a sculptor merely exposes something that pre-exists in the marble. This is the reason why he finds fault with the use to which Michel Foucault has put the ancient exercises, in Foucault's description of them as the "cultivation of the self" through "techniques." Foucault, alleges Hadot, misunderstands the Plotinian metaphor as implying an exaggerated aestheticism, and even a Dandyism, according to which one fabricates a personality for oneself as if creating a work of art (1995, p. 102, 211). In an appraisal of the role of the aesthetic analogy in ancient ethics, Joseph Sen has pointed out that the Plotinian conception of the inward is based on a concept of subtraction: "The ideal psychic state is not something to be newly made or created but is experienced with the removal of those accretions which have hidden and thus prevented a realization of the self which we already are" (Sen 1995, p. 24).

For some ancient Indians, the thought that death occurs not just once but many times over within the span of a single human life provides not comfort but additional anxiety. If one is to be cured of the fear that an endless chain of "re-deaths" is our fate, one remedy is to learn to see one's true self as something indestructible. That thought motivates the spiritual exercises described in the Upaniṣads. These typically involve

precisely that "return to the self" of which Hadot speaks, encouraging us to turn our attention inward in order to reacquaint ourselves with a universal, impartial self that indwells each of us. A couple of verses from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* are enough to illustrate the point. Turning inward is the way to free oneself from sorrow and desire, to reach wisdom and even immortality:

> Finer than the finest, larger than the largest,
> is the self that lies here hidden
> in the cave of a living being.
> Without desires and free from sorrow,
> a man perceives by the creator's grace
> the grandeur of the self. (*Kaṭha* 2.20)
> The Self-existent One pierced the apertures outward,
> therefore, one looks out, and not into oneself.
> A certain wise man in search of immortality,
> turned his sight inward and saw the self within. (*Kaṭha* 4.1)[3]

Wilhelm Halbfass has observed that later philosophers in the Upaniṣadic tradition of Vedānta use the term *svāsthya* "coinciding with oneself; being in one's own true, natural state" to refer to a soteriological goal involving the removal of obstacles that distance us from an appreciation of our underlying self: "Final release" (*mukti*) or "isolation" (*kaivalya*) of the self is not to be produced or accomplished in a literal sense, but only in a figurative sense, just as the regaining of the natural state of health (*svāsthya*) through medical therapy is not the accomplishment or acquisition of something new, but only a return to a "previous" state, a removal of disturbances and obstacles." (Halbfass 1991, p. 251). The recovery of this natural state of the self is achieved by means of exercises whose function is to train one to regard apparent diversity as merely apparent, assenting to such appearances being regarded as a precondition for desire and other forms of emotional attachment. One way to accomplish this is to learn to "withdraw" the senses. The most celebrated expression of the idea is found at *Bhagavad Gītā* 2.58, though the same metaphor is found in Buddhist and other Indian texts too:

> And when he draws in on every side his senses from their proper objects,
> As a tortoise its limbs, – firm-stablished is the wisdom of such a man.

This idea of a "return to the self" by way of a withdrawal of the senses has an echo in other of the spiritual exercises catalogued by Marcus Aurelius, who speaks of retreating to a "*daimon*" within, as the Indians might to an "*ātman.*"[4]

Philosophy and Therapy

Two philosophers belonging to the fourth or fifth century CE refer to a model of the discipline of philosophy that has four divisions: an account of what is sought to be removed or eliminated (*heya*, literally "what ought to be abandoned"), an account of the etiology (*heya-hetu*, literally "that which produces *heya*"), an account of the state or condition achieved subsequent to this elimination (*hāna*; literally "abandonment"), and finally an account of the method to be employed to bring this condition about (*hāna-upāya*; literally "the means leading to *hāna*"). Their model of philosophical practice generalizes and abstracts from two earlier fourfold accounts of practical disciplines. One is the soteriology made famous by the Buddha as the "four noble truths," consisting in accounts of suffering (*duḥkha*), the causes of suffering (*samudaya*), liberation from suffering (*nirodha*), and the path from suffering to liberation (*mārga*) in the shape of eight sorts of "right understanding." The other is a model of medicine found in the treatises of the physicians, according to which there is an account of disease (*roga*), the causes of disease (*roga-hetu*), health or "freedom from disease" (*ārogya*), and the treatment of disease (*bhaiṣajya*).[5] One of the two philosophers who advance the model is the author of the *Yogasūtra*. Thus *Yogasūtra* 2.1.16–17, 24–26:

> What is to be abandoned is future suffering. What produces this is the self's contact with the perceived . . . the cause [in turn] of that is lack of knowledge. The state achieved by abandoning this is the isolation of the self; it consists in the non-presence of the self's contact [with the perceived] and follows when there is no lack of knowledge. The method to be employed is the persistent discrimination [between *buddhi* and *puruṣa*].

So the "spiritual exercise" here is a practice of discrimination which leads to a "return to the self" in the form of the self's isolation from the perceptual world. Patañjali goes on to add that this practice of discrimination is supported by such things as postures (*āsana*), breathing control (*prāṇāyāma*), holding the mind steady (*dhāraṇā*), meditation (*dhyāna*,

samādhi), ethical restraint (*yama*) and religious observance (*niyama*) (*Yogasūtra* 2.1.29).

The other philosopher to promote the model is Vātsyāyana, author of a commentary on the *Nyāya-sūtra*, the foundational text of the most outwardly "theoretical" of the Indian philosophical schools, Nyāya (and one may certainly think of Indian Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Yoga, etc. on analogy with the Hellenistic schools of Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Cynicism insofar as they have acknowledged founders and founding principles, with adherents, codes of conduct, and development of doctrine, even if there are important differences in teaching arrangements and other matters of social organization). In his commentary on the first sūtra, he says:

> The highest good is reached by means of knowledge of such knowables as the self, as will be explained in the next sūtra. One reaches the highest good, indeed, by rightly understanding the four *arthapadas*, namely what ought to be abandoned, that which produces it, its complete abandonment, [which is] the final goal, and the method for bringing that about. (*Nyāyabhāṣya* 2, 14–16)

Vātsyāyana will go on to stress that the ideas of the highest good and the knowledge that leads to it are subject-specific; thus, while the highest good in medicine is health, the highest good in the "science of the self" (*ātmavidyā*) is "liberation" (*apavarga*). The next sūtra is then read as identifying what ought to be abandoned as suffering (*duḥkha*), its cause as erroneous beliefs (*mithyājñāna*), the condition of the abandonment of suffering as liberation (*apavarga*), and the method as acquiring knowledge, including knowledge of the self (*ātmajñāna*). He explains that erroneous beliefs produce in us lusts (*rāga*) and revulsions (*dveṣa*), which lead first to greed (*lobha*) and thence to acts of harm (*hiṃsā*), stealing, and sexual indiscretion.[6] It is ironic, in view of the similarity of this scheme with the four noble truths of the Buddha, that the mistake about the self identified here is the error of thinking that it does not exist. The knowledge that is the antidote to such errors is knowledge of the "real nature" (*tattva*) of the entity in question. Vātsyāyana concludes by noting that the condition of being without pain and suffering is also a condition of being without pleasure, because pleasure and pain are always intermixed, just as someone who wishes to administer a bitter poison, mixes it into honey.[7]

Another commentator, Uddyotakara, however, thinks that one should include as causes of suffering both erroneous beliefs and "cravings" (*tṛṣṇā*), as well as merit and demerit. He considers that the condition of abandonment is having knowledge of the real nature of things, and the

method for acquiring it to be the philosophical treatises (*śāstra*), and distinguishes that condition of abandonment from the final goal, liberation.[8] More generally, if it is knowledge of the "real nature" of things which is sought, then the methods – the "exercises" – will be ones of studying, debating, and examining with the help of evidence. These have approximate counterparts in the spiritual exercises documented by Hadot (1995, p. 84, 89, 153). Uddyotakara's remarks are clearly influenced by Buddhism, where all unwholesome emotions, it is claimed, have a possessive ingredient, which philosophical knowledge about the impossibility of possessing can eliminate. Hatred, for example, is the belief that the person hated is preventing me from getting something I crave; if I come to know that the true nature of things is that everything is in flux and so there can be neither possessed nor possessor, then it is impossible (or at least irrational) to continue to feel that way.

If we return to our earlier discussion, the therapeutic model outlined in both the Yoga and Nyāya schools seems to be one of "subtraction." In every case, there is an elimination of suffering (in all its forms), leading to states of spiritual wholeness conceived of either as the self in isolation or the self as free from lusts and aversions, pleasurable or painful alike. A slightly later Nyāya philosopher has expressed the matter very clearly: "In eliminating its particular qualities, the self rests in its own natural state – being permanent, it is not itself eliminated."[9] In these systems, acquiring knowledge of a certain privileged sort is the key spiritual exercise, and so, as is perhaps most explicitly stated by Naiyāyikas, the study and practice of philosophy – reading philosophical texts, debating, arguing, and so on – is the fundamental activity in what Hadot has appropriately described as a "return to the self."

Plutarch and the Buddhists: Returning Oneself to the Present Moment

Instead of a model based on the activity of a sculptor, Plutarch speaks instead of weaving or painting a life with the help of active memory, allowing the memory of unpleasant things to form the muted backdrop against which more pleasant memories can shine out and be made prominent. I will quote Plutarch's important and densely argued passage in full:

> But just as the man pictured in Hades plaiting a rope allows a grazing donkey to consume what he is plaiting, so forgetfulness, unaware of most things and ungrateful, snatches and overruns things, obliterating every

> action and right act, every pleasant discussion, meeting, or enjoyment, and does not allow our life to be unified, through the past being woven together with the future . . . But those who do not preserve or retrieve the past in memory, but allow it to flow away from under them, make themselves needy every day in actual fact, and empty and dependent on tomorrow, as if last year and yesterday and the day before were nothing to them and had not actually happened to them . . . What we should do is make the bright and shining events prominent in the mind, like the colours in a picture, and hide and suppress the gloomy ones, since we cannot rub them out or get rid of them altogether.[10]

I find in the contrast between Plotinus and Plutarch the reflection of a more general contrast between two interpretations of the spiritual exercises. In the first interpretation, the value of the spiritual exercises is *restorative*, returning the person to a state of psychological health, from which they have departed. According to the second interpretation, the spiritual exercises are instead *generative*, producing in the person a condition (e.g., an "identity" or a "character") that had not been there before.

It is not entirely clear whether Plutarch's view about weaving is that there is no self until one is woven, or that the weaving fashions, for a person who is already there, an "identity" or "character" or "personality" that is their own.[11] Elsewhere, he speaks as if in favor of the view that there are no continuous selves:

> The man of yesterday has died and turned into the man of today, and the man of today is dying in turning into the man of tomorrow. No one stays still, or is a single person, but we become many, with matter whirling and sliding round a single image and a shared mould. . . . Each of us is compounded of hundreds of different factors which arise in the course of our experience, a heterogeneous collection combined in a haphazard way.[12]

Sorabji has argued that this passage is incompatible with the earlier one about weaving, and possibly represents a poorly integrated acquaintance with Buddhist ideas about the self: "Plutarch could have argued consistently, if he had chosen, that the short-term selves should be woven into a long-term biography. But in fact, when he recommends biographical weaving, he treats the short-term selves of the Growing Argument as no more than a simile. And in practice, it would not have been possible to combine the therapy of weaving, to produce tranquility, with the therapy

of dwelling on discontinuity to allay fear of death" (2002, p. 248). And again, "If [Plutarch and Seneca] really mean the same [as the Buddhists], it will be incompatible with the rest of what they say, which suggests that it could be an alien growth. [I]t is incompatible with . . . Plutarch's belief that we have genuine memories that we can use to weave our lives into a unity . . . Plutarch might be expected to say no more than that one acquires a new identity in an everyday sense" (2006, p. 39–40). For Plutarch, the spiritual exercises help us not fret about the past or worry about the future, but they do so by encouraging us to see the good and the bad as belonging within a harmoniously unified whole life, with the bad providing a dim backdrop to the more pleasant. Plutarch sees no therapeutic value in thinking of our past miseries as simply flowing away and ceasing to belong to us.

It is open, of course, even for someone who thinks that the self is just a river of fleeting experience, to find value in weaving together everything that is in their mind at a given moment, including the (merely apparent) memories they have; and indeed the possibility which Sorabji envisages but does not attribute to Plutarch might be what some Buddhists have in mind when they speak of constructing a sense of self by way of an activity involving the "appropriation" (*upādāna*) of one's memory and experience.[13] More often, though, the resonance is with those spiritual exercises which involve an attention to the present moment, and indeed a reduction of oneself to a single point in time. Buddhists argue, unlike Plutarch, that there *is* therapeutic value in the idea that there are no continuous selves. The line of thought is roughly as follows: thinking that there are no continuous selves is an "antidote" to the belief that the self is continuous or permanent, but this second belief is what makes it possible for us to "crave" for things we do not yet have, or mourn that which we have lost. Since unsatisfied cravings are the source of "suffering" in all its forms, we cure ourselves of suffering with the remedy that is the idea that there are no continuous selves (and that there are no continuous objects of craving either). Reminiscent, in a way, of Marcus Aurelius' advice to live each day as if it is one's last,[14] the idea is that it is hard to worry about the future if one does not expect to be there. For example, *Milinda-pañhā* 4.2.3:

> It was in regard to those beings who have defilements and in whom there is an excessively wrong view of self and in regard to those who are uplifted and downcast by pleasures and pains that it was said by the Lord [Buddha]: 'All tremble at punishment, all fear death.'[15]

Neither, perhaps, will one be greatly agitated by the memory of past calamities, although one will be able to feel compassion for that other one upon whom they fell. Another dissident line of thought agrees that we do construct lives and characters and personae for ourselves, but sees the function of the spiritual exercises as one of dismantling these constructs, in order to return us to a state in harmony with nature, rather than to the self. Many Buddhists too, especially those within the Abhidharma school, have proposed the use of exercises of breakdown and dissolution, as did the Buddha himself. In the *Simile of the Lute*, for example, the Buddha explains that if one looks within and investigates, one will find only the psychological elements and not the self, just as one will search in vain among the components of a lute for the sound that the lute makes:

> 'This lute, sire, consists of numerous components, of a great many components, and it gives off a sound when it is played upon with its numerous components; that is, in dependence on the parchment sounding board, the belly, the arm, the head, the strings, the plectrum, and the appropriate effort of the musician . . .' So too, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu investigates form . . . feeling . . . perception . . . volitional formations . . . consciousness. As he investigates form . . . feeling . . . perception . . . volitional formations . . . consciousness, whatever notions of 'I' or 'mine' or "I am" had occurred to him before no longer occur to him.[16]

This is the way, the Buddha explains, for someone in whom lust, desire, hatred, or delusion has arisen to acquire a mind that is steady, settled, unified, and concentrated. The concept of self, upon which those possessive emotions depend, does not survive an analytical break-up of the mind into its components any more than the sound made by the lute survives if the lute is broken into its parts. In the *Simile of the Lute*, the aesthetic analogy is used to compare the self with a piece of music in the air, and the point of the analogy is to emphasize that it has an ephemeral nature.

The idea that one should aim to reduce one's sense of self to a point in time is evident in Āryadeva's verse "What is called someone's life is nothing other than a moment of consciousness. People certainly do not know this; consequently self-knowledge is rare" (*Catuḥśataka* 1.10). The seventh century Buddhist Candrakīrti explains that

> People, with such misleading ideas as 'this is that' and 'the self is that,' attribute unity to a continuum of constructed things, a continuum that is not something different from the individual things that constitute it. For

> this reason, they act without understanding that it is momentary. Consequently, it is difficult to find among people anyone who understands the nature of the self. Someone who knows the nature of the self does not engage in harmful actions, because there is no longer a reason for error. Since people, for the most part, are prone to harmful actions, self-knowledge is rare in the world. Therefore, intelligent people, with great enthusiasm, should constantly exert themselves to analyze the nature of the self.[17]

Coming to know that there is no enduring self is thus clearly seen as a therapeutic philosophical achievement. No emotion that requires one to admit the existence of enduring self, such as regret or possessive desire, is able to survive the surgical removal of that commitment. Though possibly free of regret and anxiety, such a life may be, as Plutarch suggests, a "needy" one, for one will need constantly to be affirmed in the present; one will have neither a past nor a future to sustain one. The therapy of "dwelling on discontinuity" is intended to do more, however, than merely allay a fear of death, even if that fear is the basis of many others; it does also produce tranquility by removing unwelcome emotions. If anything, the problem is that it does too much – for will it not also eliminate wholesome emotions like hope?

A Life Complete at Every Moment

There are, however, dissident voices. One of these rejects the aesthetic model altogether, whether it sees life as *sculpting* a self or *weaving* a persona and *narrating* a biography. For any artistic endeavor might be ended before it has reached completion, and any work of art might be left unfinished. A human life, however, it has sometimes been suggested, is complete at every moment; and if that is right, then the aesthetic analogy in any of its modes is singularly inappropriate.

Marcus Aurelius points to the disanalogy with aesthetic activities like drama and dancing:

> Nor is his life cut short, when the day of destiny overtakes him, as we might say of a tragedian's part, who leaves the stage before finishing his speech and playing out the piece. (3.8)

> In dancing and acting and such-like arts, if any break occurs, the whole action is rendered imperfect; but the rational soul in every part and wheresoever taken shews the work set before it fulfilled and all-sufficient for itself, so that it can say: '*I have to the full what is my own*.' (11.1)

It is with the same idea – an idea antithetical to the aesthetic paradigm – that the *Meditations* are brought to an end (12.35–6). Among the Indians, the thought seems to me most clearly and beautifully expressed by Rabindranath Tagore:

> A young friend of mine comes to me this morning to inform me that it is his birthday and that he has just reached his nineteenth year. The distance between my age and his is great, and yet when I look at him it is not the incompleteness of his life which strikes me, but something which is complete in his youth. And in this differs the thing which grows, from the thing which is being made. A building in its unfinished stage is only too evidently unfinished. But *in life's growth every stage has its perfection, the flower as well as the fruit.* (Tagore 1912, p. 98, my italics)

> There are men whose idea of life is static, who long for its continuation after death only because of their wish for permanence and not perfection; they love to imagine that the things to which they are accustomed will persist for ever. They completely identify themselves in their minds with their fixed surroundings and with whatever they have gathered, and to have to leave these is death for them. They forget that *the true meaning of living is outliving, it is ever growing out of itself.* The fruit clings to its stem, its skin clings to the pulp and the pulp to the seed so long as the fruit is immature, so long as it is not ready for its course of further life. Its outer covering and its inner core are not yet differentiated and it only proves its life by its strength of tenacity. But when the seed is ripe its hold upon its surrounding is loosened, its pulp attains fragrance, sweetness and detachment, and is dedicated to all who need it. Birds peck at it and it is not hurt, the storm plucks it and flings it to the dust and it is not destroyed. It proves its immortality by its renunciation. (Tagore 1912, p. 40, my italics)

As a mode of being-in-the-world, learning to think of one's life as complete at each moment seems to me to have many advantages. It does not require that one attach no value to the past or the future in order to allay dismay and anxiety, nor to think of oneself or the world as only momentary. Also, it does not expect of us the high-mindedness necessary to see oneself wholly objectively in terms of one's place in the cosmos. While I am not convinced that Tagore's analogy with *organic* growth is entirely successful, we may say that one's life is not so much a work of art as a work indefinitely extendable, adding to itself as a city might a new building or suburb, without any implication that what exists before the addition is unfinished.

Taming the self

A fascinating discussion of the ends of human life is to be found tucked away in four short sections of the *Śāntiparvan*, a voluminous book of philosophical reflection embedded within the body of the *Mahābhārata*. The text represents a clear attempt to absorb and integrate general ethical insights into the moral framework of the Hindu epic. It can be read, therefore, as an attempt to articulate a set of widespread ethical concerns. What is the "highest good" (*niḥśreyasa*)? The *Śāntiparvan* gives a direct and unequivocal answer: it is the taming (*dama*) of the self (12.154.7). Taming the self is a subduing, a rendering calm or tranquil, a pacification. What needs to be tamed is the self's inclination to reach out to things that are "external" to oneself (where "external" means both physically exterior and outside of one's influence). So taming is a pulling back, a drawing in, a restraint (cf. *Bhagavad Gītā* 10.4); it is a form of self-control. One who achieves this is without fear, anger or envy, and has a profound steadiness of mind (*gāmbhīrya dhairya*; 12.156.12), that is an imperturbability in the face of either pain or pleasure (12.156.9). This is because "reaching out" is greed, a wish to obtain (*lobha*), and from this arises both anger and desire. With this in check, one lives the life glorified as one of wise conduct (*śiṣṭāçāra*), namely the life of one who is fearless in the face of death, equal in the face of pleasure or pain, self-controlled, and impartial (12.152.20–26), delighting in no acquisition and pained by no loss. Such a person lives as one for whom acting well is just like a movement of one's body; in particular, there is no ulterior cause for such activity, such as wealth or fame (12.152.27). With the taming of self are also associated – perhaps optimistically – forgiveness, patience, abstention from injuring others, truth, sincerity, wisdom, mildness, modesty, liberality, contentment, pleasantness of speech, benevolence and freedom from malice (12.154).

It takes knowledge (*jñāna*) to achieve such a life, for greed and ignorance go hand in hand (12.153); and it takes "spiritual austerity" (*tapas*) (12.155). What, though, is the role of knowledge in "taming" the self? Greed is a failure to understand that none of things one seeks to obtain is going to last (12.157); it should also be understood that greed is, of its nature, insatiable (12.152). Anger is greed together with sensitivity to other people's faults, and so is removed by tolerance (*kṣamā*), which comes from forbearance (*kṣānti*). The result of anger is desire (*kāma*), which arises from willfully wanting something (*saṃkalpa*).

A beautiful metaphor is used to illustrate this conception of the self-controlled life. One who lives wisely is said to tread softly on the earth: "As the track of birds along the sky or of fowl over the surface of water cannot be discerned, even so the track of such a person does not attract notice." Such a life has but one drawback, and this is that a person who lives thus is regarded by others as weak and simple. But for this, those others can be forgiven, and a life so lived is one from which one does not need to retreat: "What need has a man of self-control for a forest? Similarly, of what use is a forest to him that has no self-control? That is a forest where the man of self-control dwells, and that is even a sacred asylum." This, clearly, is not a transcendental, privative ideal, but a way of living in the world, in a human community, one in which one can adopt either the practices of the cities or those of the forest. This life, the life of a *dānta*, a "tamed" one, it is said, is one of tranquility (*praśama*; 12.154.18).

Philosophy and the Ends of Life

That epistemic practices have a role in living a life well is asserted explicitly in the *Śāntiparvan* analysis: knowing that desires are insatiable and the things desired unstable is a solution to anger and greed. Yet it is not very explicit just how it is that knowledge, or philosophy more generally, can serve in this way as a spiritual exercise. Perhaps that is not surprising, for the *Śāntiparvan* is not a work of academic philosophy; it is a work of epic literature. So let us turn once again to the academic philosophers, specifically those of the Nyāya school. They say that the study of philosophy is indispensible in reaching the highest good: "What leads to the highest good is knowledge (*tattvajnāña*)," specifically knowledge of the methods of inquiry and their objects, including the forms of debate (*Nyāya-sūtra* 1.1.1). The connection is this: "In the sequence of suffering, rebirth, activity, moral failing, and cognitive error, removing each by removing its successor leads to liberation (*apavarga*)" (*Nyāya-sūtra* 1.1.2). That is to say, moral failings are produced and sustained by cognitive errors, so if the error is removed, the moral failing will disappear too. Likewise, moral failings indirectly result in and sustain suffering, and a state free of suffering is the result of their removal.

One fundamental way in which we go wrong is to mistake a thing for its opposite. We "mistake suffering for pleasure, the unreal for the real,

that which is not a remedy for a remedy, the afraid for the fearless" and so on (*Nyāya-bhāṣya* under 1.1.2). We mistakenly think of "liberation" as a state of complete insentience, and so as quite undesirable. These cognitive errors instill in us wants and aversions, and that leads us to moral failings like falsehood, malice, deception, and greed. These failings in our moral psychology make us act immorally too; we engage in harmful acts toward others: theft, lies, rudeness, and fault-finding. These contrast sharply with the virtues of thought, word, and deed for which we strive.

Why, though, is it claimed that cognitive errors lead us to *desire* per se, rather than to desire *the wrong things*? Mistaking a sea shell for a piece of silver, I might want to go after it; and if I did, I would be desiring something which is not really there. But if it *really* had been a piece of silver, there seems to be nothing wrong with my wish to obtain it. The answer, presumably, is that we are not speaking here of ordinary empirical knowledge, but of that philosophical wisdom one derives from the *śāstras*, the texts. If I do not know what good evidence is, I cannot know if any of my beliefs matches up to it. But if I do not know this, then acting on anything I believe, true or false, would carry with it a degree of moral risk. The elimination of moral risk requires that I have "theoretical" expertise in the arts of knowing. One might live a life that happened to be free from mistakes entirely by chance, but that would not be a good life. For a life to be a good one, the absence of suffering must rest on something more secure than chance.

How does one discriminate between a thing and a masquerade of it? How does one distinguish between a true pleasure and a pain that passes itself off as a pleasure? This, exactly, is what philosophy excels in – distinguishing between pretence and truth. An instance is the difference between a good argument and an argument that only pretends to be a good one, that is, a piece of sophistry. Philosophy shows us how to see through the pretences of reason. Without a secure ability to do that, our attempts to live well in thought, deed, and speech are subject to moral risk. Uddyotakara raises a further issue: incompatible beliefs cannot simultaneously be entertained, but what ensures that truth trumps error? According to him, it is only that true beliefs have a foundation that the false ones lack.

It is, of course, true that a great deal is said about such transcendental spiritual goals as *mokṣa*, *mukti*, and *nirvāṇa*, and that these goals are represented as an ultimate, idealized aspiration for all. Mortal human beings, though, do not aspire actually to become sages; rather, they take

the image of the sage as a device to help them pursue those goals that are properly their own. Thinking about *mokṣa* and *nirvāṇa*, as well as about the buddhas and the *ṛṣis*, helps us to actualize the human ends that are ours. Entertaining the idea that one is striving for a transcendent ideal might itself be a spiritual exercise, a practice that forms a part of the good for a human being. If that is right, then it would be a mistake to read the descriptions of the transcendental states and the means to reach them as if they were literal expressions of a path from the world of men to the world of the gods. For the Indians, no doubt, these ideal states are given a characterization in largely privative terms, as states free from pain, free from suffering, free from anger and desire, and often indeed, free from pleasure too. The idea that what one should aim for is an existence that is so colorless has been one reason that European philosophers have struggled to engage with the Indian philosophical imagination. From my point of view, the very fact that the ideal states are described in such unappealing terms shows us that these are not really intended as descriptions of the good for human beings. The question to ask is a different one: namely, how might entertaining the idea that one is striving to achieve such a state help one get *somewhere*; and indeed, where might one be attempting to get for this to be an appropriate method for getting there? Might it be, for example, that reflecting on the nature of an existence entirely void of either pleasure or pain will help us to reexamine the relationship between these two? One might be led, for example, not to eschew pleasures altogether, but to be somewhat wary of them: to aim to live in such a way that pleasure is not itself the motivation of one's actions. Believing that the ideal state is a pleasureless state might lead me, not to give up all pleasure, for that is not a realistic human end, but to allow myself to be nourished by the pleasures I have and also to resist voluntarily seeking out new ones. That is, entertaining such an ideal might lead me to a life characterized as one of restraint and self-control.

Philosophy, then, enables us to see through the pretences of reason, and so makes it possible for us to direct our efforts securely on their target, the living of a life free of suffering. This is not a life of insentient catatonia, for having as our outside aim a life free of suffering does not imply that the life which ensues is devoid of pleasure. It implies only that the pleasures are, as it were, collateral, that their presence does not distract us from our ultimate aims. A life of the restrained mind is a life in which pleasure provides neither the goal nor the motivating reason; but such need not be a life without pleasure.

Notes

1. Many thanks to Michael McGhee and Stephen Clark. An earlier version of some of this material appears in Ganeri 2010.
2. For example, Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* 3.10: "[A]nd remember withal that it is only this present, a moment of time, that a man lives: all the rest either has been lived or may never be."
3. For other examples, see for example, *Chāndogya* 6.1.1–7; 8.7.1–8.12.6. The translations are from Olivelle 1998.
4. *Meditations* 6.6: "But if there appears nothing better than the very deity (*daimon*) enthroned in thee, which as brought into subjection to itself all individual desires, which scrutinizes the thoughts, and, in the words of Socrates, has withdrawn itself from all the enticements of the senses . . ."; compare 3.12, 3.16, and also 4.3: "From now therefore bethink thee of the retreat into this little plot that is thyself."
5. For references: Wezler 1984, pp. 289–337.
6. *Nyāyabhāṣya* 7, 1–11.
7. *Nyāyabhāṣya* 8, 4.
8. *Nyāyavārttika* 3, 18–4, 1.
9. Śrīdhara (circa 990 CE), in the *Nyāyakaṇḍalī* (1997, p. 17).
10. Plutarch, *On Tranquillity* 473 B – 474 B; trans. Sorabji 2002, pp. 232–233.
11. For a subtle and extensive discussion of Plutarch's view about the self, see Sorabji 2006, Chapter 9.
12. Plutarch, *On the E at Delphi* 392 B, trans. Sorabji 2002, p. 248; and 393 B, trans. Babbitt 1936.
13. I have discussed this Buddhist view in Ganeri 2007, Chapters 6, 7.
14. *Meditations* 2.5. cf. also 8.5: "Fret not thyself, for all things are as the Nature of the Universe would have them, and within a little thou shalt be nonexistent."
15. Trans. Horner 1996, Vol. 1, p. 204.
16. *Saṃyutta Nikāya* iv 197–8; trans. Bodhi 2000, p. 1254.
17. Trans. Lang 2003, §41. There are many other Buddhist manuals of spiritual exercises, including notably Buddhaghoṣa's "Path of Purification" (*Visuddhimagga*) and Śāntideva's "Guide to the Path to Buddhist Awakening" (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*).

8

Approaching Islamic Philosophical Texts

Reading Mullā Ṣadrā Šīrāzī (d. 1635) with Pierre Hadot[1]

Sajjad H. Rizvi

Within the history of philosophy, the history of Islamic philosophy is emerging as a flourishing field – and, as with all attempts to make sense of the course of philosophical traditions within a cultural context, one wonders what method is most appropriate to apply in the reading of the text. Earlier approaches tended to focus on the classical period sitting within a paradigm of Greco-Arabia, seeking to discover the Greek (Aristotelian) originals and reducing the thought of al-Fārābī (d. 950) and Avicenna (d. 1037) to their Greek antecedents. The root assumption was that the Arabs did little with the content of the thought they translated. Others (such as the famous Leo Strauss) favored a more esoteric reading of the texts, assuming that the study of philosophy itself was a marginal and persecuted endeavor in the world of Islam. However, neither of these approaches is terribly useful for the study of later Islamic philosophy beyond the twelfth century – Suhrawardī (d. 1191) had already moved into a critique of Avicenna that went beyond any attempt to reduce him to either Aristotelianism or Platonism, and the remarkable popularity of philosophical inquiry, weaved into the range of disciplines studied in seminaries in the Timurid and Safavid periods in the Islamic East after 1400 would seem to obviate the need for an esoteric reading of the text. The peripatetic tradition in Islam was itself a creative modification of the Aristotelian tradition, especially the Neoplatonic tradition of the commentators, well before the early modern period. Therefore,

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attempting to make sense of the Iranian Safavid thinker Mullā Ṣadrā Šīrāzī (d. 1635), I found myself stumped with a basic question of methodology: how do I make sense of his thought, which is so removed from the categories and approaches to philosophy of our own time, not least from the major trends within Anglo-American (post) analytic philosophy? Reading the existing (rather limited at that time) secondary literature did not help much; confusion was a basic state of response. What was Mullā Ṣadrā's thought, and how could we gauge the nature of his contribution to Islamic intellectual history? How did he interpret the term *ḥikma(t)*, often rendered as "philosophy" and how should it be interpreted? Should we even consider him to be merely a "philosopher"? Does our description of him as a philosopher diminish his role of thinker, teacher, and exegete, especially given the prevalence in many premodern societies of the polymath who contributed in a variety of fields? Are our tastes in Islamic philosophy condemned to following fashions in the wider history of philosophy? What did he understand by the concept of philosophy? Do we need to revise and rethink what we mean by philosophy? Also, let us note that nowhere in his work does he describe himself primarily in terms that either render or approximate our concept of "philosopher."[2]

In fact, he is quite dismissive of the "philosopher" or "pseudophilosopher" who, for him, rehearses and repeats doctrines and positions from within Aristotelianism, without either verifying them or being able to construct arguments for understanding the nature of either human reality or that of the cosmos; for Mullā Ṣadrā, they are "physicalists" and sensory reductionists incapable of witnessing metaphysical realities (Šīrāzī 2003, p. 49, 54). Like most premodern thinkers, he believed that the nonphysical and the immaterial and somehow more real than what we can perceive and sense in this world. Most philosophers for him were dogmatic schoolmen devoid of the analytical and spiritual skills, which he sought. His ideal person is a particular type of hieratic, a thinker and an agent whose ethical commitment is clear in his righteous conduct, and whose metaphysical acumen is established through his ability to witness reality as it is – in short, he is one of *al-šuhadā' al-ṣāliḥīn*, a deeply Qur'ānic term for the intellectual and spiritual elect (Šīrāzī 2007, pp. 4–5). So what is the nature and goal of intellectual inquiry and "philosophizing" for Mullā Ṣadrā?

The existing works (representative of the nascent sub-field of Sadrian studies within the already rather limited field of the study of philosophy and the intellectual life in Islam) seemed to take me in two contrary directions (cf. Rizvi 2009, pp. 4–14; Legenhausen 2007, pp. 167–175).

On the one hand, the approach favored by Henry Corbin and Seyyed Hossein Nasr considered Mullā Ṣadrā to be a "theosopher" engaged in a noetic exercise of higher synthesis, in which thought was geared to making sense of ultimate reality by blending Avicennan rationalism with mystical insight drawn from Sufi traditions.[3] He was therefore more than a philosopher: to borrow a term from late Neoplatonism, he was a magus (cf. Shaw 1995). Those trained in philosophy departments, not least in the analytic tradition, are often puzzled by this approach, because it does not tally with their concept of philosophy as a discursive training in modes of reasoning in thought and language.[4] Corbin famously explained his approach to *ḥikmat* as philosophy in the following terms:

> The term *ḥikmat* is equivalent to the Greek *sophia*: the term *ḥikmat ilâhîya* is the literal equivalent to the Greek *theosophia*. Metaphysics is designated in general as dealing with the *ilâhîyât*, the *Divinalia*. The term '*ilm ilâhî* (*scientia divina*) cannot and must not be translated by that of "theodicy". The Muslim historians' idea of "Greek sages" is that their wisdom also derived from the "niche of lights of prophecy". This is why, if we content ourselves with transposing to Islam the question of the relation between philosophy and religion, as it is traditionally raised in the West, one raises the question askance, because one takes only part of the situation into consideration [. . .]
>
> Wherever philosophical research (*taḥqîq*) was "at home" in Islam, was where one reflected on the fundamental fact of prophecy and prophetic revelation, with the hermeneutical problems and the situation implied by this fundamental fact. Philosophy then assumes the form of a "prophetic philosophy" (Corbin 1986, p. 14)

It is this emphasis on prophetic philosophy that leads Corbin to privilege the study of the esoteric, the Shi'i, the Neoplatonic, reaffirmed by his disciple Christian Jambet, who asserts that philosophy in the Muslim world had necessarily to be a meditation upon the sense of revelation and the reality of existence and the divine, failing which it could only be a historical moment in the transmission of Greek learning to the Latin West (Corbin 1986, pp. 22–38, 219–220; Jambet 2002, p. 10; Jambet 2011).[5] Philosophy, thus, constitutes a hermeneutics of the sacred, an attempt to unveil hidden meaning (*kašf al-maḥǧūb*) and reality encoded within the cosmos so that the true nature of the "sacred history" (*hiéro-histoire*) of the hidden God that reveals himself through the cosmos and his friends is made apparent (Corbin 1972, I, pp. 3–51;

Corbin 1981, pp. 24–27; Corbin 2008, pp. 43–44). While there is much to ponder in Corbin's concept of prophetic philosophy and his reorientation of the study of philosophy in Islam, it seems that this approach fails in two ways. First, it posits a phenomenological approach to the study of philosophy that deliberately condemns historicism, and consequently lapses into an ahistorical mode of inquiry (Corbin 1985, pp. 22–34). Even a simple acquaintance with conventionalism as championed by Quentin Skinner would hold up the problem of deracinating the work of Mullā Ṣadrā from his context and the intellectual and linguistic conventions of his time (cf. Skinner 2002, Pocock 2009). Second, in its quest for tying philosophical inquiry to religious commitment, it fails to explain the wider intellectual context of the thinker, and what he considers philosophizing as an activity and practice to be in his context and for his community. Further, in pursuit of the esoteric, one can easily lose grasp of the basic fact that thinkers like Mullā Ṣadrā claim to provide Aristotelian *demonstrations* for their mystical insights, and remain keen students of the history of their practice; it is for this reason that his major *œuvre*, *The Transcendent Wisdom of the Four Journeys of the Intellect* (*al-Ḥikma al-muta'āliya fī-l-asfār al-'aqlīya al-arba'a*) is a wonderful resource for a selective but extensive history of philosophical and mystical reasoning in the world of Islam. The mysto-centrism and the privileging of the esoteric means that one fails to discern the formal aspects of argumentation that is clear in the work. If Mullā Ṣadrā was only interested in mystical insight and direct experience, why did he construct reasoned arguments?

On the other hand, we have what I would term 'analytical Sadrianism', by analogy to the well-established analytical Thomism popular among Catholic philosophers, especially in North America. This represents an increasingly influential school of Shi'i seminarians in Iran, enamored with the Anglo-American analytic tradition, who want to make Mullā Ṣadrā a philosopher *tout court* who could and should be read alongside the greats and engaged in a dialogue with Descartes and Kant, and influenced by the study of and translation of the works of these pivotal figures in the history of European philosophy (Muǧtahidī 1995, Āgāhī 2004, Paya 2010, Seidel 2010). Located in hybrid seminary-universities such as Mufid University and at centers such as the Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute (both in Qum), its proponents read Mullā Ṣadrā divorced from his context, social, intellectual, and theological, in much the same way that the analytic school treats Kant or seeks to engage in a dialogue with other religiously motivated analytic thinkers (cf.

Legenhausen 2007a, 2007b). He becomes *the* systematic philosopher of Islam, a source of philosophical doctrine on life, the universe, and everything, to be deployed apologetically. Mullā Ṣadrā dominates this understanding of philosophy just as Aquinas does in other contexts, and is often shaped into the thinker that one wishes to analyze in order to engage in comparative philosophy. This is partly with a view toward a philosophical triumphalism that vindicates one's religious views: philosophy as handmaiden to theology, so to speak, a tendency eminently perceivable in the Shiʿi seminary since the 1950s and exemplified in *Usūl-i falsafa va raviš-i ri'ālizm* (Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism) of the seminarian thinker and exegete Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1981) (Algar 2006, Awǧabī 2008, Qārāmalikī 2004, Ǧibrā'īlī 2007). The use of Mullā Ṣadrā in pursuit of this new form of philosophical theology (*kalām-i ǧadīd*) is problematic if we wish to consider philosophical reasoning to be preliminary and constantly in need of revision, reassessment, and rearticulation. It also raises an important question about the possibility of an independent intellectual field of philosophy.

Alongside these two tendencies is a third that emerged from the late 1990s as a shift in, but continuation of, aspects of Corbin's approach, namely a phenomenological Sadrianism in which Mullā Ṣadrā becomes a Husserl or Heidegger before his time, fundamentally deconstructing substance mode metaphysics and ushering in the phenomenological turn in Islamic thought. This approach has been facilitated by the work of the eminent Husserlian Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka in a number of comparative volumes dedicated to phenomenology and Islamic philosophy (Tymieniecka 2003, 2006, 2008). This phenomenological appropriation implies an interest in key areas of concern within phenomenology, such as the nature of religion in this world, consciousness and intentionality, and of course the very self-conscious act of philosophizing.

In this game of discovering the "real Mullā Ṣadrā" (or perhaps appropriating and reading him in the light of one's own experience and training, and one cannot entirely divorce oneself from vulnerability to this critique), reading his actual works seemed to extend this confusion: arguments would branch out from authoritative citations from the Qur'ān, prophetic and imamic sayings, and the *logia* of the ancients, especially the famous *Theologia Aristotelis*, that famed Neoplatonic Arabic paraphrase of sections of Plotinus' *Enneads* IV–VI (Plotinus 1947); syllogistic formulations abound, as does precise and careful critique of his predecessors, not least Avicenna (d. 1037), Suhrawardī (d. 1191), and Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240); and yet all along there would be paeans to the beauty of

mystical ecstasy, quotations of poetry, and the desire to conjure divine providence and practice *ḥikma* with the exercises, supererogatory prayers and supplications that one 'expects in a spiritual tradition – Islamic philosophy as a spiritual practice and ethical commitment rooted in the beliefs and practices of Shiʿi Islam.

So how do we make sense of Mullā Ṣadrā? It was an act of serendipity that one day, sitting in the library at the classics faculty in Cambridge, I came across for the first time the work of Pierre Hadot; browsing in the Neoplatonism section, I found his work translated into English as *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. It led me to rethink fundamentally what Mullā Ṣadrā was trying to do, based on the paradigm and prism of approaching his work as a Neoplatonic practice of *askesis*, of philosophy as a spiritual exercise and way of life.

Hadot's work seemed to put forward four critical insights for the study of ancient thought that may be grafted (or at least applied as a calque) onto the study of medieval thought and indeed Islamic thought (cf. Hadot 2002). First, the history of philosophy develops in a series of leaps and contextual and felicitous mistranslations, misreadings, and creative mistakes. What is important, therefore, is not to read Mullā Ṣadrā on Aristotle and compare the result to the Aristotle that we know from the (often analyticizing) study of Aristotle in philosophy and classics departments, but the Aristotle that he read, received, and creatively manipulated, a thoroughly Islamicized and Neoplatonized Aristotle with elements of Plotinus, Porphyry, and even Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240), an Aristotle who spoke Arabic. It is this process that makes commentary literature such a creative force for the history of philosophy, and impels us to read philosophy as the product of particular school traditions (cf. Wisnovsky 2004). Thus philosophy takes place within a tradition. Reading the text is not therefore a simple dialogue across time, but a practice rooted in a school tradition and the commentary culture associated with key texts, and significantly with concomitant spiritual practices, paramount among which is meditation, as a means to read the nature of reality and of God. In his inaugural lecture as professor at the Collège de France, Hadot said

> Each school, then, represents a form of life defined by an ideal of wisdom. The result is that each one has its corresponding fundamental inner attitude [. . .] but above all every school practises exercises designed to ensure spiritual progress toward the ideal state of wisdom, exercises of reason that will be, for the soul, analogous to the athlete's training or to the application of a medical cure [. . .]

> It seems to me, indeed, that in order to understand the works of the philosophers of antiquity we must take account of all the concrete conditions in which they wrote, all the constraints that weighed upon them: the context of the school, the very nature of *philosophia*, literary genres, rhetorical rules, dogmatic imperatives, and traditional modes of reasoning. One cannot read an ancient author the way one does a contemporary author [. . .] in fact, the works of antiquity are produced under entirely different conditions than those of their modern counterparts (Hadot 2001, pp. 270–274; Hadot 1995, pp. 59–61)

An important corollary of this point is that there is a difference between reading a contemporary philosophical text and one in the past (Hadot 2010a, pp. 93–96, 2011, 52ff). The very practice of reading is distinct, because of the privileging of the oral in the latter and the nature of the teaching imparted – and because the professional contexts of the two are quite distinct (cf. Dillon 2005). This indicates the fundamental role of discourse and orality in the construction and perpetuation of a tradition.

Second, training in philosophizing is intended to inculcate practices of dialoguing. Philosophy is primarily an oral exercise and requires engagement: merely reading a written text will not allow one to understand the hermeneutical rules and methodology of the school, which are unwritten in the treatises (Hadot 2001, p. 272). The written word is an *aide-mémoire* for the spoken word, the logocentrism inherent in the philosophical tradition and predicated on the idea of philosophy as revealed word, encoded in a sacred book, requiring a spiritual master to initiate and explicate (Athanassiadi 2006, pp. 31–70; cf. Carruthers 1990). Dialoguing, basic to the Socratic method, is a learned practice within a community, an externalization of the need to inculcate an examination of the self, an inner dialogue and attention to and care of the self – to know oneself as the Delphic maxim has it, and as the famous Islamic saying "he who knows himself, knows his Lord" (*man* ʿ*arafa nafsahu* ʿ*arafa rabbahu*) articulates (Hadot 2001, p. 41). Of course, it is worth asking in what sense one can consider dialoguing to be a spiritual exercise. Hadot answers in the following manner:

> In the first place, discreetly but genuinely, the dialogue guides the interlocutor – and the reader – towards conversion. Dialogue is only possible if the interlocutor has a real *desire* to dialogue: that is, if he truly wants to discover the truth, desires the Good from the depths of his soul, and agrees to submit to the rational demands of the Logos [. . .] Furthermore

> [...] every dialectical exercise, precisely because it is an exercise of pure thought, subject to the demands of the Logos, turns the soul away from the sensible world, and allows it to convert itself towards the Good. It is the spirit's itinerary towards the divine (Hadot 2001, p. 47; Hadot 1995, p 93)

Dialogue is thus a mode for the expression and emergence of the self, in dialogue with the teacher, but also with the text itself, insofar as the reading of the text is designed to effect and activate switches in the soul that take it along the path of transformation through the mode of nondiscursive pedagogy (Rappe 2000, pp. 3–23). Discourse is thus taken in two rather different senses: the former is addressed to a disciple or the self and linked to an "existential context, a concrete praxis," while the latter is formal and has an intelligible content (Hadot 1995, p. 26). It is the former that amounts to a spiritual exercise. And significantly, this spiritual exercise must be conducted within a tradition and within a community. As Hadot said in a recent interview, "philosophy implies a certain way of life, and life in a community" (Hadot 2010b, p. 21). The question for historians and contemporary thinkers is whether the *madrasa* and the university constitute such communities.

Third, philosophizing requires spiritual exercises, which are more than just intellectual and contemplative, but entail a mode of living, a way of life. The exercise of philosophy is spiritual because it affects the totality of the life of the thinker. Philosophizing is therefore not just about pedagogy, or learning how to learn, but is also a training and guiding of the soul, or learning how to live and to become. Theoretical knowledge is insufficient; it needed to be practiced and implemented, to become present to the mind and a "habitus of the soul" (Hadot 1995, p. 23). Drawing upon the Stoic ideal of the philosophical life as an art of living, Hadot argues that spiritual exercise takes one beyond the acquisition of philosophy as theory:

> The philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being. It is a progress which causes us to be more fully, and makes us better. It is a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it. It raises the individual from an inauthentic condition of life, darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry, to an authentic state of life, in which he attains self-consciousness, an exact vision of the world, inner peace, and freedom (Hadot 2001, p. 23; Hadot 1995, p. 83).

In this sense, philosophy is therapy for the soul, in which knowing is being and becoming – philosophy does not just cause one to know, but it causes one to be in a particular way (Hadot 1995, p. 265; Hadot 2001, p. 291; cf. Nussbaum 1994, Sorabji 2000). One's epistemic states entail deep psychological and ontological commitments to what one wishes to be. Philosophizing is therefore the care of the self from which the care for one's wiser social and civic context arises (Hadot 2002, pp. 36–38). It is insufficient to associate spiritual exercises with ethical living alone within a community – after all, ethics is but one of the three parts of philosophy: the distinction between theory and practice applies to physics and metaphysics as well in ancient philosophy (Hadot 1995, p. 24). Philosophy as agency, however, does seem to imply a rejection of the purely ratiocinative, a key criticism that Cooper makes of Hadot (Cooper 2012). But insofar as philosophy is an act, it is more than a theoretical attitude and concurs with some interesting trends in modern philosophy such as Wittgenstein (on whose thought Hadot wrote) who wrote in the *Tractatus* 4.112: "Philosophy is not a theory (or a body of doctrine) but an activity". This is to say that philosophy should not be reduced to propositional language but often needs to go beyond to clarify thought. Other contemporary philosophers see the significance of the socially and communally embedded nature of philosophy as practice as well.

Fourth, the cultivation of philosophy was designed to have an effect on the soul of the seeker, so that he could not just think but orient himself in the world, with the goal of becoming a sage. At the heart of Hadot's thought is a particular anthropology of the ancient philosopher: humans need to understand and live in this world, but also recognize the ability to make their world (Hadot 2001, p. 343). The sage of antiquity is a philosopher whose practice allows him to be embedded in this world. That rootedness makes him cosmic, and hence provides the possibility of making and humanizing his world:

> If ancient wisdom was so closely tied to the world, it was not because it believed the world to be limited [. . .] or rational [. . .] but it was because it was precisely an attempt to see things by means of a new vision, to tear itself away from the conventional world of the human, all-too-human, and to confront the vision of the world *qua* world (Hadot 2001, pp. 355–356)

It is in this sense that the sage not only affects the world he inhabits and lives, but also is capable of creatively reconfiguring how we understand reality. He is more than just a modern scientist investigating phenomena.

This notion of the sage as one who makes the world is a common Sufi trope, related to the idea of the realized Sufi as the perfect human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), in the image of God, who participates in the divine names and deploys divine attributes. Such a sage in the Islamic tradition thus becomes the face of God (Corbin 2008). Philosophy is thus not an end in itself but because it entails a "love of wisdom", it is sagacity and becoming a sage that is the goal – which is precisely why the later Islamic tradition preferred the term *ḥikma* (or wisdom) to *falsafa* to describe their activity.

But alongside these useful insights, and the desire to address ancient thought as philosophy, and not as something of antiquarian interest for the historian for the period, Hadot's own humility before the texts was appealing. It was, therefore, salutary to learn that my confusion was an echo of Hadot's perplexity in the face of the ancient philosophical texts that he encountered. As he says

> At first [. . .] the problem for me was to explain the (apparent) incoherencies of the philosophers. There was the enigma of Plato's dialogues, which are often aporetic and not consistent with each other [. . .] Finally, I came to think that these apparent inconsistencies could be explained by the fact that Greek philosophers did not aim, above all, to provide a systematic theory of reality, but to teach their disciples a method with which to orient themselves, both in thought and in life. I would not say that the notion of a system did not exist in Antiquity. The word existed, but it designated an organized totality whose parts depended on each other (Hadot, 2010a, p. 148; Hadot 2011, pp. 89–90)

So now if we turn back to our "philosopher" Mullā Ṣadrā, we can consider how useful Hadot's approach may be in understanding him. For this purpose, I will focus on three themes: philosophy as a way of life and of discourse, philosophy as a spiritual exercise, and the problematic concept of philosophy as an act within a community. Hadot seems content to use the term philosophy to describe those practices that he considers to constitute the philosophical life; philosophy is the discipline that he defines. Mullā Ṣadrā similarly is quite critical of philosophy *qua falsafa* as an Aristotelian discipline of discourse, but champions his approach to reality through the oft-used synonym of *ḥikma* (Šīrāzī 1981, IX, p. 108). The very definitions that he offers of *ḥikma* are revealing, in that they suggest that the pursuit of philosophy requires more than ratiocination, a heavy dose of intuition, even mystical experience, and an exegesis of the ways in which God discloses himself.

Consider two examples. The first is the definition in the *Four Journeys*, his major work:

> Know that *ḥikma* is the perfecting of the human soul (*istikmāl al-nafs al-insānīya*) through cognition of the realities of existents as they truly are, and through judgments about their being ascertained through demonstrations, and not understood through conjecture or adherence to authority, to the measure of human capacity. One might say that it [philosophizing] ascribes to the world a rational order understood according to human capability, so that one may attain a resemblance to the Creator.
>
> The human emerges as a mixture of two: a spiritual form from the world of command [the intelligible world] and sensible matter from the world of creation [the sensible world], and thus he possesses in his soul both attachment [to the body] and detachment [from it]. *Ḥikma* is sharpened through the honing of two faculties relating to two practices: one theoretical and abstract, and the other practical, attached to creation [. . .]
>
> The theoretical art [. . .] is the *ḥikma* sought by the lord of the messengers – peace be with him – when he sought in his supplication to his lord when he said: 'O My Lord, show me things as they truly are', and also [sought] by the intimate of God [Khalīl = Abraham] when he asked: 'My Lord, bestow upon me judgement (*ḥukman*)'. [Q. Sūrat al-Shu'arā' v. 82]. Judgement is verifying the existence of things entailed by conceptions (Šīrāzī 2004, I, pp. 23–24)

This definition makes it clear that philosophizing is more than a ratiocinative discourse, but is in fact closely associated with the practice of theosis (*ta'alluh* in Arabic), central to Neoplatonic conceptions of philosophy as a practice that seeks to invoke the divine through magical practices to understand and even become reality (cf. Jolivet 1991 and Yaman 2010). It also closely relates this practice to a prophetic inheritance, and connects philosophizing to the Qur'anic notion of wisdom. Similar to Plato's famous passage in the *Theaetetus*, theosis is an attempt to flee the vicissitudes and veils of material life and to transcend to a noetic realm (the famous doffing metaphor of *Enneads* IV.8.1 captured in the Arabic *Theologia Aristotelis* and cited copiously by Mullā Ṣadrā) where through the beatific vision of the One, the would-be sage can gain a complete understanding of the rational order of the cosmos.

This theme is made more explicit in the second definition, deriving from his exegesis of the Qur'ān, in which he collates an exegetical philosophy with a philosophical anthropology. He writes

> Know that the human is the most noble of beings, as he was at the beginning of his generation in the very limits of baseness and imperfection that arise out of the nature of the elements and components [that formed him] like all other species of animals, and his nature was in degrees of baseness in relation to other substances and entities, except that he has in his essence a faculty of progression to the very limit of perfection and progress to the lights of the transcendent Origin and the active Sustainer, stripped of evil and calamity, becoming one of the inhabitants of the world of light, bestowed with the bounty of the afterlife and with bliss; it does not behoove divine providence to allow him (the human) to wallow in the grazing grounds of the passions like insects and worms [. . .]
>
> For it is known that everything has a perfection that is specific to it for which it was created, and an act that completes it that is appropriate. The perfection of the human is through the perception of divine stations and partaking of divine intelligible knowledge by stripping away material sensible attachments and renouncing base worldly matters, and being saved from the impulses of passion and freed from the bonds of carnal, concupiscent desires. All this is not made easy except through guidance and learning and disciplining and steadfastness (*bi-l-hidāya wa-l-taʿlīm wa-l-tahḏīb wa-l-taqwīm*)) [. . .]
>
> It is incumbent upon one who wishes to traverse the way of the people of reality and certainty, after purifying his soul from the vicious character traits, to set aside the company of the negators (of God) and the astray, because there is a seal set upon their hearts and their audition and their sight, yet they do not understand, and also (to set aside) the company of the innovators, who are astray because when the prophets came to them with clear proofs, they delighted in what knowledge they possessed, and they embraced them not, but mocked them. May God preserve you from the evil of these two groups and not place you among them even for an instant [. . .] We seek refuge from them in God [. . .] and in the light of the sound natural disposition in the contented heart (Šīrāzī 1987, I, p. 2–3)

Returning to the themes in Hadot's work, one finds philosophy as both theory and practice in Mullā Ṣadrā, practice as a way of discourse but also as a way of mystical experience and insight. The pedagogy of training souls requires spiritual masters, sages who can inculcate virtues and guide the initiate in the pursuit of the good (Šīrāzī 2004, I, p. 18). Philosophy is thus a religious commitment that requires some divine grace for success and attachment to divine providence (Šīrāzī 2004, I, p. 13).

But what about the spiritual practices that philosophy as a way of life entails? Dialogue in the Socratic method is a given of *madrasa* practice,

in which is it often called the *mubāḥaṯa* or discoursing – and Mullā Ṣadrā makes it clear that the rehearsal of discourse and dialogue is critical to philosophizing (Šīrāzī 1981, IX, p. 108). In a rather basic sense, the teaching of the text takes place in the dialogical context of the class, and this discourse is further rehearsed in repetitions in which the students reiterate the lessons and arguments encountered. In the narrower sense of quasi-theurgic practices or Sufi disciplining of the soul (through the spiritual exercise of *riyāḍa*), philosophy for Mullā Ṣadrā cannot forsake spiritual practices. It is precisely these practices and the cultivation of a mystical method that marks out his philosophical method from Avicennism, and indeed other currents in Islamic philosophy. In his commentary on the Chapter of the Event (*Sūrat al-wāqiʿa*), Mullā Ṣadrā writes:

> The perfection of the human lies [. . .] in disposition towards divine cognition, and transcendence above material *sensibilia*, and self-purification from the restraints of carnal and passionate appetites. This can only be acquired through guidance, teaching, discipline, and formation of righteous character (Šīrāzī 1984, p. 132)

Spiritual practice and discourse that is conscious and self-reflective require a sage as guide and mentor. This further entails a clear idea of what a sage is. In the *Four Journeys*, Mullā Ṣadrā explains the qualities of a sage:

> The sage possesses the qualities of generosity, good humour, fine judgement, pronounced taste and experiences of spiritual insight (Šīrāzī 1981, VI, p. 6)

Such a sage is a Neoplatonic holy man, the hieratic engaged in theurgy. This leads us to the final issue to consider: the nature of the community in which philosophizing is practiced and led by the sage, as Hadot insisted. Unfortunately we have little by way of direct accounts of the teaching and practice of philosophy, even by Mullā Ṣadrā. The history of the practice of philosophy in Safavid Iran, and indeed in the world of Islam, has still to be written, a history that would be more sociologically attuned to practices of knowledge production, formation, and dissemination. Mullā Ṣadrā is clear that there is a community, a *qawm*, which practices philosophy, a circle centered on texts and sages who define that practice. Even if one does not have much information on the details of the community, and of course, any *madrasa* is a community by definition and we know that his *madrasa* in Shiraz (the Madrasa-yi Ḫān) where he taught was founded

for the purposes primarily of teaching philosophy, one knows that the community is bounded and closed to those not worthy of it (Rizvi 2007, p. 27). In the *Four Journeys*, he says:

> It is forbidden for most people to set out to acquire these complicated sciences and join the community, because those worthy are rare and exceptional. Guidance to inquiry is an act of grace from God (Šīrāzī 1981, III, p. 66)

However, the actual practice of philosophy is not well attested in the sources. What we do have are some indications. For example, the true heir of Mullā Ṣadrā and his leading disciple and son-in-law Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāšānī (d. 1680) in an important autobiography *Šarḥ-i ṣadr* wrote that having mastered the scriptural arts, he sought someone to teach him the esoteric arts (*'ilm-i baṭin*) that, for him, included *ḥikma*. Finally, he found Mullā Ṣadrā in Qum and served him as his disciple for eight years, engaged in spiritual exercises (*bih riyāżat va muǧāhadāt mašġūl šud*) (Kāšānī 2009, I: p. 125). He also alluded to the prophetic precedence of such a relationship, comparing his service to Mullā Ṣadrā to Moses' service to Jethro in a famous verse. However, the actual nature of the spiritual exercises, and even the nature of the theurgy that might have been part of them, in the study and dissemination of *ḥikma* needs further investigation.

By way of a conclusion, I want to reiterate that the Hadot paradigm is a fruitful way of reading Mullā Ṣadrā especially since it seems to be consistent with the way in which he himself presents *ḥikma* and his endeavor. I would not wish to claim that this is an approach that can work for all Islamic philosophical traditions, just as one might raise a question about whether it is necessarily the case that all ancient philosophies are ways of life that involve spiritual practices. Therefore, it is worth putting forward some reservations about the use of this theory. First, one wonders about basic issues of commensurability across cultures, space, and time. Hadot's own work stresses the need to pay careful attention to contexts of the practice of philosophy without reducing it to historicism. One should also be aware of drifting from one totalizing theory of reading to another: in a recent assessment of philosophies as ways of life in ancient philosophy, John Cooper has raised an important caveat (Cooper 2012, pp. 18–20). We should not assume that all philosophers in the ancient world necessarily shared the same approach to philosophy or lived in such communities or shared spiritual practices. Even if they felt that being a philosopher entailed an ethical commitment to living in a particular way, it did not necessarily lead to the sets of practices,

psychological states, and existential attitudes that Hadot thought essential. Similarly, Hadot's evidence for his paradigm, according to Cooper, seems rather late – and it is clear that the best examples that he offers come from Stoic and later thinkers such as Marcus Aurelius (Hadot 1998). Safavid Iran may share values, ideas, and even some contextual parallels to late antiquity, but basic notions of competing communities of religious and philosophical commitment were not common in seventeenth century Iran. This is not to argue that late antiquity was devoid of imperial fiats in areas of doctrine and philosophy, and that heretication and objectification of heterodoxy were absent (Athanassiadi 2004; 2010). Second, we know rather little about the actual practice of philosophizing, the communities that did philosophy and the social contexts in the Safavid period. The Shiʿi context of Safavid Iran is a particularity distinguishing Mullā Ṣadrā from an Iamblichus. Even if they shared notions of dialogue, practices of discourse or mysticism, notions of the centrality of spiritual exercises, and even the belief that philosophizing requires not just a spiritual master as guide but also a community, this does not necessarily mean that these concepts sufficiently overlap. They may just be homonymously understood. Mystical practices and theurgy in pagan late antique philosophy cannot be identical to Shiʿi Sufism and spiritual practices through invoking God and supplicating through the intermediaries of his friends. Most importantly, I am not suggesting that one set aside other approaches and adopt Hadot's approach as a singular, totalizing hermeneutics for studying Safavid philosophical texts. The use of Hadot should not preclude the consideration of other approaches, perhaps even a sort of mash-up of hermeneutical approaches. Rather, I am proposing a more open approach to the text that is worth testing. Philosophical practice, even within the study of Islamic thought, perhaps needs more of an experimental turn, not a conversion from one absolute and closed reading to the text to another. This would be very much consonant with Mullā Ṣadrā's own distrust of closure, his condemnation of imitation, and the mere mechanistic rehearsal of doctrine known as *taqlīd*.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was published as Rizvi 2012.
2. Mullā Ṣadrā seems to prefer the term *ʿālim rabbānī* or *ʿārif rabbānī* or *ʿārif mutaʾallih*, insofar as philosophy is a practice designed for inhabitation and

training in methods of reading the modes in which God discloses himself in reality, and through which one attains a likeness to the divine (*theosis*, *tašabbuh bi-l-bārī*) – see Širazi 2003, p. 3. The model for the ʿ*ālim rabbānī* is the first Shiʿi Imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib – see Šīrāzī 1999, p. 51. The term ʿ*ārif rabbānī* approximates, and brings to mind, the "holy" or the "divine" man of late Neoplatonism – see Fowden 1993, 289–91; cf. Stroumsa 2005.

3. I shall not pursue my polemic against the use of the term theosophy here, but instead suggest my alternative to *ḥikma ilāhīya*: onto-theology. I recognize that this term itself is fraught with problems due to its usage by Heideggerians, and I do not use it with the assumption of a fundamental division between philosophy and theology in Safavid intellectual history – for a discussion of the term, see Robbins 2002.
4. Of course, analytic philosophy is a notoriously fissiparous and disharmonious tradition, and cannot be reduced to post-Fregean philosophy of language. For an excellent discussion of the question, see Glock 2008.
5. This notion of prophetic philosophy or a philosophical–theological tradition bestowed by the gods is very much part of the late Neoplatonic reading of its history. For example, Proclus famously wrote: "All of Greek theology is the child of Orphic mystagogy: Pythagoras was the first to receive initiation from Aglaophamos, Plato in turn received from the Pythagorean and Orphic doctrines perfect knowledge concerning the gods" (Proclus 1968–1987, I.5, pp. 25–26).

9

Philosophy and Self-improvement

Continuity and Change in Philosophy's Self-conception from the Classical to the Early-modern Era

John Cottingham

Introduction: The Path of Modern Philosophy

Philosophy is, perhaps uniquely, a self-reflexive discipline, preoccupied not just with its subject matter, but with itself, with the nature of the philosophical enterprise, and with what it means to be a philosopher. One of the great achievements of Pierre Hadot has been to chart how philosophy's self-conception has shifted over time, first as the culture of the classical world gave way to that of medieval Christianity, and then again through the long and gradual emergence of the modern age.

In the latter phase of the story, as related by Hadot, there is often something of an elegiac note – a kind of implied lament about the way in which what was originally a profoundly serious undertaking, concerned with nothing less than the art of living, ended up, in its modern academic guise, as "mere fencing in front of a mirror" (Schopenhauer 1958 [1819], Vol. 2, pp. 163–164: cited in Hadot 1995, p. 271). Schopenhauer's telling phrase signals the relegation of philosophy to a purely abstract and theoretical subject, cut off from the goal that gave it its very *raison d'être* in earlier times, the goal of achieving a vision of reality that would lead to self-understanding and self-transformation.

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For those committed to the traditional conception of what makes philosophy worth doing, the way the subject has developed in the contemporary Anglophone philosophical world perhaps presents an even gloomier picture than the developments charted by Hadot. For Hadot's somber verdict on the evolution of philosophy is tempered by his acknowledgement, within the European context, of the influence of an (broadly existentialist) approach to the subject, which takes its cue from thinkers such as Nietzsche and Bergson; in this conception of philosophy, Hadot notes with approval, the subject "consciously returns to being a concrete attitude, a way of life and of seeing the world" (Hadot 1995, p. 108). The predominant movement in today's English-speaking philosophical culture, by contrast, is toward an increasing fragmentation of the subject into a set of highly professionalized specialisms and quasi-scientific and highly technical sub-disciplines whose connection with a "way of life" is virtually nil – except in the minimal sense that achieving the relevant qualifications and mastering the relevant intellectual techniques is how their practitioners happen to earn their living. If anyone today were to ask whether a member of a modern philosophy department can hope to "live better" than a lawyer, say, or a member of a metallurgy department, the question would in all probability be taken to be merely about relative salary and career prospects.

It might be tempting to take the moral high ground here, and condemn the prevailing tenor of modern analytic philosophy as a corrupt falling-off from the noble standards of a finer age. The development of philosophy as just another "career" for articulate and well-educated members of society might seem rather like what happened to the career of ministers in the Church of England in Victorian England, as trenchantly satirized, for example, in the novels of Anthony Trollope. For characters like Archdeacon Grantly in *The Warden* (1855), any original goals of spirituality and service had largely given way to the enterprise of climbing up the ecclesiastical ladder and securing access to the various emoluments and preferments that were an accepted part of the career structure for a clergyman. And so, *mutatis mutandis*, one might think, for today's academic philosopher.

But, however, tempting it might be, to indulge in such lofty condemnations would, I think, be a mistake. The ecclesiastical parallel, for one thing, does not quite work, since while spirituality must surely provide the core rationale for the existence of a church, it is a genuine matter for debate whether there may not be perfectly proper alternative goals for philosophy, other than that of seeking a "way of life and of seeing the

world." The defenders of philosophy as practiced in its modern professional academic guise may well be prepared to argue that the exalted and "spiritual" conception of the subject proposed by Hadot is outmoded or otherwise suspect, and they may share the stance of those who have recently defended a more down-to-earth future for the subject, which welcomes the "naturalistic revolution that has swept over Anglophone philosophy over the last three decades" – a revolution inspired by the vision that philosophers should "either . . . adopt and emulate the method of successful sciences, or . . . operate in tandem with the sciences, as their abstract and reflective branch" (Leiter 2004, pp. 2–3).

The reference to the sciences in the manifesto just quoted is highly significant. This kind of vision of what philosophy is about appears to draw much of its strength from the triumphant rise of science over the last few centuries, which has done so much to transform our understanding of the world and the circumstances of our lives. If, as seems plausible, this success of science rests on its methodology – rigorous logic, careful empirical observation and testing, the search for austerity and precision of language, and the filtering out of the personal and emotional dimensions of experience in favor of what can be impersonally and objectively established – then it is hardly surprising that philosophers should want to share in that success by adopting the relevant methods. And if they do so, it is in turn hardly surprising that philosophy should cease to be concerned with the kinds of "spiritual exercise" which occupied many of its past practitioners. For the hallmark of the earlier approach was, as Hadot has so eloquently shown, that its advocates implicitly held that the tools of the intellect alone were not sufficient: "imagination and sensibility played a very important role" (Hadot 1995, p. 82). The hallmark of the modern scientistic approach, by contrast, is precisely its austere intellectualism – its resolute avoidance of anything that smacks off the affective domain or the subjective response and its insistence on objective measurement and detached and impartial assessment.

Whether or not we approve of the path much modern philosophy seems to be following, it is of great importance for anyone who cares about the subject to try to understand how these developments have come about. And if the line taken in the preceding paragraph is correct, then an obvious way to do this is to go back to the origins of the scientific revolution in the early modern period. By seeing how far the "new" science required the early-modern philosophers to move away from the spiritual goals that characterized the philosophical culture of their predecessors, we may be able to get a glimpse of how philosophy's self-conception began to shift;

and in doing so, we may perhaps get a little nearer to understanding how the subject stands today. In what follows, I shall be pursuing some of the issues raised by Hadot about the nature and evolution of the philosophical enterprise by examining the conception of philosophy developed by the most influential of the inaugurators of the modern age, René Descartes. Descartes, like all innovators, owed a great deal to the pre-existing culture against which he reacted; and since that pre-existing culture involved a conception of philosophy whose roots go right back to the ancient world, it will be necessary to begin by taking a brief look at how the philosophical project was viewed by its Greco-Roman practitioners.

Philosophy in Antiquity

Much of Hadot's work on "philosophy as a way of life" draws on Hellenistic conceptions of the subject, and it is undoubtedly true that those conceptions linked philosophy very closely with the goal of helping us to live better lives. The Stoics offered a strikingly optimistic vision of what philosophy can do for us by way of making our lives harmonious and happy:

> The end is to live in harmony with nature, which amounts to living in accordance with virtue; for nature leads us towards virtue. Now living in accordance with virtue is the same as living in accord with our experience of what happens by nature; for our own natures are parts of the nature of the whole. So the end comes down to this: to live in agreement with nature, that is, in accord with our own nature and that of the whole, engaging in no activity forbidden by the universal law. This law is right reason that pervades everything, and is identical to God who directs and disposes everything that exists. So virtue, and the smooth flow of life, which we see in those who are happy, arises when everything is done according to the harmony of each person's individual spirit with the rational will of the disposer of all things.[1]

And in similar vein, though with a very different cosmology, the Epicureans promoted philosophy as a way of achieving tranquility of mind – the ability, in Lucretius' phrase, *pacata . . . omnia mente tueri,* "to view all things with a mind at peace" (Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 5.1203), as a result of a correct philosophical grasp of the nature of the universe and our (unavoidably temporary) place within it.

Yet for all their popularity (and clearly the hunger for "guides to living" was as pervasive in the Greco-Roman world as it is among today's perusers of the "body-mind-spirit" sections of our bookstores), one may be inclined to ask whether these Hellenistic conceptions of philosophy's role may not have represented something of a "silver age" for philosophy – a debasement of the more austere Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions which provided the gold standard for the subject in its original form. For if we look back at the founders of philosophy, what we seem to find is less in the way of recipes for tranquil living, and much more in the way of logical argumentation, conceptual analysis, the search for accurate definitions, and abstract inquiries about language and meaning – in short, the very elements that form the meat and drink of modern analytic philosophy. So cannot a case be made out for saying that it is the modern analytic academic who is the true inheritor of the pristine tradition of Plato and Aristotle, while the seemingly more glamorous idea of philosophy as a way of life is in fact an aberration?

Such a line of argument will not ultimately work. It ignores, in the first place, the fact that the logical and conceptual inquiries of Plato and Aristotle were very much in the service of metaphysics, a vision of reality and man's place within it. Even in the philosophizing of Socrates, whose apparently neutral and disinterested search for definitions and conceptual clarification perhaps seem closest in spirit to what many modern analytic practitioners take philosophy to be about, there is an underlying moral commitment to achieving a life of integrity and virtue. This is manifested, for example, in the seriousness that led Socrates, threatened with the death penalty, to insist that "for a human being, the unexamined life is not worth living" (Plato *Apology,* 35a5). This Socratic slogan is often invoked by those who see philosophy as merely concerned with critical logical inquiry; but the actual wording should remind us that philosophical "examination," for Socrates, involves the entire character of someone's life (*bios*). As Socrates goes on to explain, his philosophical vocation was linked with an unwavering allegiance to the dictates of his conscience, the "god," as he puts it, whose inner voice demanded his obedience (Plato *Apology,* 40a2–c2). His activities, engaging his interlocutors in philosophical dialogue, were designed to "induce young and old to make their first and chief concern not for their bodies or their possessions, but for the highest welfare of their souls" (Plato *Apology,* 30a6–b1).

In the case of Plato, we clearly have a paradigm case of what Iris Murdoch aptly called "metaphysics as a guide to morals" (Murdoch 1992).[2]

The training Plato envisages for his philosophical elite is nothing less than a complete program of *askesis*,[3] that is to say a comprehensive discipline of the soul, to fit it, morally, spiritually, and intellectually, for the pursuit of wisdom. So far from being a narrowly logical training, what Plato goes on to envisage (in *The Republic*) is a systematic molding and purification of the whole person, which includes, for example, musical, literary, and mathematical elements (Plato *Republic,* 377ff). Philosophy in its highest form is, to be sure, seen by Plato as a very abstract enterprise, involving the dialectical ascent of the mind to the Forms (*Republic*, Book VI); but in Plato's unitary vision of ultimate reality, it turns out that beauty, truth, and goodness are essentially interrelated, so there can be no doubt that the goal for the philosopher kings, as they eventually emerge out of the cave and into the light, is complete moral as well as intellectual transformation. Indeed, the very notion of separating out these two kinds of progress into quite distinct elements involves retrojecting our modern separatist categories onto what was for Plato a unified conception of the calling of a philosopher. Although at one point, stressing the political job the guardians are required to do, Plato observes that the aim is the welfare of the whole city (*holê hê polis*), not that of any one group (328b); he is nonetheless adamant that the philosophical program he has described will produce "genuine riches" for its practitioners: not the riches of gold, but "the true happiness of a good and rational life" (*hou dei ton eudaimona ploutein, zoês agathês kai emphronos,* 521a1–2).

Aristotle, though presenting us with a much more down-to-earth metaphysics – one that rejects Plato's transcendent forms in favor of an immanentist account of the good[4] – nevertheless sees the philosophical enterprise as an inherently moral undertaking, which holds the key to human flourishing or *eudaimonia*. A virtuous person, who excels in respect of those special functions which define our essential nature as human beings, is envisaged as achieving fulfilment through the cultivation of wisdom. This includes, for Aristotle, both the kind of theoretical or contemplative wisdom of which Plato would have approved – one crowned with pleasure that is "marvelous in purity and permanence" (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.1177a25) – and also the kind of practical wisdom which supports a good moral life. This, as Aristotle insists, involves not just the right beliefs and judgments, but also the right emotional balance, "for the moral virtues are bound up with feelings, and belong to the composite (person)" (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.1178a19–20).[5]

The underlying conception of philosophy that inspired the two great founders of the subject is thus fully in accord with Hadot's verdict on the general tenor of ancient philosophy, from its Socratic and Platonic roots, through its Hellenistic phase, and right down to the Neoplatonic writers of the third century AD:

> All the schools agree that man, before his philosophical conversion, is in a state of unhappy disquiet. Consumed by worries, torn by passions, he does not live a genuine life, nor is he truly himself. All schools also agree that man can be delivered from this state. He can accede to genuine life, improve himself, transform himself, and attain a state of perfection. It is precisely for this that spiritual exercises are intended. Their goal is a kind of self-formation, or *paideia*, which is to teach us to live, not in conformity with human prejudices and social conventions – for social life is itself a product of the passions – but in conformity with the nature of man, which is none other than reason. (Hadot 1995, p. 102)[6]

A Medieval Shift?

If we concede the essential correctness of Hadot's picture (and it is documented in impressive detail), the obvious next step is to ask when this long-standing model of philosophy and its role began to erode. Hadot himself suggests that the crucial shift came in the middle ages, as a result of the growing dominance of Christianity. From the second century AD onward, Christianity began "to present itself as a philosophy – the Christian way of life," and as a result, many of the traditional "spiritual exercises" of antiquity were integrated into Christian models of living (Hadot 1995, p. 269). Philosophy, by contrast, started to be conceived of as the "handmaid" of the Christian theological vision, "providing theology with the conceptual, logical, physical, and metaphysical materials it needed." And as a result, "we can say that philosophy in the Middle Ages had become a purely theoretical and abstract activity" (Hadot 1995, p. 270).

One certainly has to acknowledge the austerely abstract and theoretical flavor of much of the philosophy produced in the medieval universities. The context for philosophizing becomes that of the lecture room and the debating hall; logical disputation rather than spiritual enlightenment seems to be the central objective, and hence, some considerable truth has to be allowed to Hadot's thesis. When Thomas Aquinas, toward the

end of his life, was led to abandon philosophy, now believing that all his past work had been "as straw,"[7] he appeared to have undergone a fundamental change that disclosed his earlier academic philosophizing as irrelevant to his spiritual welfare or the salvation of his soul; yet one can hardly imagine a Stoic sage taking this view of philosophy, since Stoicism construed philosophical enlightenment and spiritual progress as intricately intertwined, if not identical. So there is, to be sure, an obvious and compelling point behind Hadot's central distinction between philosophy as a university discipline and philosophy as a way of life.

What is, however, more questionable, is the idea of a distinctive medieval shift from the latter to the former. Aquinas' "academic" philosophizing was, after all, in many ways a continuation of the Aristotelian project; and for Aristotle, the subject had already to a very large extent been adapted to the demands of the lecture room and separated into particular areas of study (ethics, politics, logic, metaphysics, physics, biology, and so on), with all the apparatus of discipline and specialization that this implies. In short, all the various elements that characterized the philosophical activity of the middle ages – academic debate, theoretic discussion, close and specialized focus on particular areas of inquiry – were already part of the way philosophy was done in ancient classical times. Even Plato, by conviction much more holistic and integrationist in his conception of philosophy than Aristotle, wrote distinct dialogues devoted to particular aspects of philosophy: moral, aesthetic, political, epistemological, linguistic, and metaphysical.[8] Many of these more specialized Platonic texts, like many Aristotelian ones, could have been almost tailor-made for study and commentary in the debating rooms of the medieval schools, and indeed they are still perfectly at home in many of the seminar rooms of our modern universities.

So it does not seem so much a matter of a medieval shift in the conception of philosophy, as of the institutions of the middle ages fastening with enthusiasm on an aspect of the subject which had always been there. Yet it is important to note that the other more "spiritual" aspect of philosophy, its concern with individual enlightenment and with how human beings are to live, is also prominently present both in the classical and in the medieval conceptions of what it is to philosophize. Thus, the various specialized components of philosophy that we have just listed – moral, aesthetic, political, epistemological, linguistic, and metaphysical – are all fused together in Plato's *Republic*, into a comprehensive treatise which outlines a path out of the darkness of ordinary unphilosophical living into the upper air of philosophical enlightenment – a spiritual utopia

in which the soul is set free to contemplate the truth, and all its parts are truly in harmony under the sovereignty of reason. Or again, coming down to the middle ages, there is no good reason for construing what we now think of as the "scholastic" aspects of Aquinas' work as belonging to an entirely separate enterprise from the spiritual goals that informed his religious life. On the contrary, a plausible case can be made out for saying that, notwithstanding their specialized detail and logical intricacy, his manifold commentaries and philosophical treatises are all supposed to be put to the service of an overriding project, whereby he aimed "to display Christianity as a way of life" (Healey 2003, p. x). For Aquinas, philosophical inquiry, which seeks an understanding of the causes of things, is ultimately "ordered entirely to the knowing of God" (Aquinas *Summa contra Gentiles* Book 3, Chapter 25, Section 9). And God is the final end and good of all created things, the goal wherein their ultimate happiness lies.

Cartesian Continuities

The upshot of our argument so far is that philosophy in both its classical and medieval incarnations has consistently involved systematic logical inquiry of an abstract and often quite technical kind, but has also consistently adhered to the goal of seeking the good for humankind. The love of wisdom (in Greek *sophia*, or in Latin *sapientia*), which figures in the original conception of the subject first developed by Plato, involves not simply a search for knowledge (*episteme*, *scientia*), but a quest for enlightenment and tranquility – the kind of understanding of reality and our place within it that will enable us to live fulfilled and happy lives, free from the fears and anxieties caused by ignorance and the attachment to false goods and deceptive pleasures.

This conception of philosophy was still alive and well when Descartes was studying philosophy as a schoolboy at La Flèche. One of the latest textbooks was a four-part *Summa philosophiae*, by the scholastic Eustachius a Sancto Paulo, which Descartes later described as "one of the best of its type ever produced" (letter to Mersenne of November 11, 1640, in Adam and Tannery, 1964–1976 (hereafter "AT"), II, 232, and Cottingham *et al.*, 1991 (hereafter "CSMK"), 156). Its four parts dealt with dialectic or logic (including the Aristotelian categories and the theory of the syllogism), ethics (covering actions, passions, virtues, and vices), physics (natural causes and principles, cosmology, geography, and

the vegetative, sentient, and rational soul), and metaphysics (the study of being, and the nature of substances, including created substances and uncreated substance or God). Although the book was clearly intended for school and university teaching, with its austere academic prose often calling to mind the dryer passages of Aristotle or Aquinas, the idea of philosophy that is espoused is by no means entirely abstract or set apart from questions about how human life is to be lived. On the contrary, the opening of part two declares in resounding tones that "the goal of a complete philosophical system is human happiness" (*universae philosophiae finis est humana felicitas*: Eustachius, 1609, Preface to Part II, in Ariew *et al.*, 1998, p. 68).

What is remarkable, for those brought up to think of Descartes as mainly preoccupied with "epistemological" questions (about, for example, the validation of knowledge and the existence of the external world),[9] is how much of his own philosophy is directed toward just this goal. Like Eustachius, Descartes aimed to produce a *complete* philosophical system – indeed at one time he considered having Eustachius' text printed alongside his own *summa*, the *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), in order to show the reader how his system had improved on that of his scholastic predecessor.[10] The celebrated metaphor of philosophy as a tree, which he uses in his preface to the 1647 French translation of the *Principles*, captures both the integrated or organic nature of the subject (metaphysics being the roots, physics the trunk, the more specific disciplines – medicine, mechanics and morals – the branches) and also its aspirations to yield fruit in our lives (AT IXB, 14, and Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch, 1987 (hereafter "CSM"), I, 186). Like Eustachius, Descartes was in no doubt as to the implications of his work for human life and human fulfilment:

> An examination of the principles of my philosophy, and the long chain of truths that can be deduced from them, will make people realize how important it is to continue the search for these truths, and to what a high degree of wisdom, and to what perfection and felicity of life these truths can bring us.[11]

Descartes' ethics are in no sense an afterthought, tacked on to the rest of his system. On the contrary, right at the center of his metaphysical program outlined in his masterpiece, the *Meditations*, there is the idea of a spiritual search, a "journey toward God," to use the title of a famous thirteenth-century work by St Bonaventure with which Descartes was

certainly familiar.[12] I have drawn attention elsewhere to the clear links which unite the philosophical meditations of Bonaventure and Descartes and the Augustinian spirituality which underpins both. Both Bonaventure and Descartes, following Augustine's famous slogan "*in interiore homine habitat veritas*" ("The truth dwells within the inner man": Augustine *De vera religione* Book I, Chapter XXXIX, Section 72), undertake an interior journey. In order to find God, Augustine argues, you should "go back into yourself"; and in similar vein, Bonaventure declares "let us return to ourselves, into our mind, that we may search for the 'the light of truth' shining in our minds, as through a glass, in which the image of the Blessed Trinity shines forth."[13] In just the same way, Descartes tells us "I turn my mind's eye upon myself," to find the idea of God stamped there like the "mark the craftsman has set on his work" (Third Meditation, in AT VII, 51: CSM II, 35). And the conclusion of his journey in the Third Meditation finds him (in a devotional passage often filtered out by today's secular commentators) lost in adoration at the "beauty of the immense light" which he has discovered. Like that of his two religious predecessors, Descartes' quest for reality follows the Platonic discipline of *aversio* – the turning of the mind away from the senses, to prepare it for the ascent to the light. And the light which Descartes seeks is not just some kind of mathematical or logical enlightenment, but the light which represents *goodness* as well as truth (see Cottingham 2006).

So far, then, we find that the Cartesian conception of the philosophical enterprise is, perhaps surprisingly, very close to that of his medieval and classical forebears. Like them, he saw philosophy as involving systematic and rigorous arguments, and like them he was not averse to the idea of philosophy as an academic discipline: we know that he wanted his ideas to be taught in the universities of the time – hence, his desire to have his own compendium of philosophy compared with that of a typical scholastic predecessor, in the hope that it might be accepted as a better textbook for use in the classroom.[14] But none of these aspects of his approach should be seen as ruling out, or replacing, the old idea of philosophy as a search for a better way of living – an idea to which he clearly adhered. If we look carefully at his central metaphysical texts, and refrain from filleting out those passages which do not fit the agenda of modern analytic academy, what we find, in both style and substance, is a very considerable continuity with the spiritual tradition of earlier philosophizing. Yet in spite of all this, there are, as we shall now see, certain crucial aspects of Descartes' approach that implied a very

different conception of the philosophical enterprise than anything that had gone before.

The Scientific Turn

It is commonplace to say that Descartes was the "father of modern philosophy." Whether or not this label is apt, it is certainly the case that Descartes consciously presented himself as an innovator (see Cottingham 1992). Much of this innovation was concerned with his famous program for the mathematicization of science – the replacement of the scholastic apparatus of substantial forms and real qualities with a physics based purely on the quantifiable notions of size, shape, and motion. Yet innovative though it may have been (and indeed successful, if not in the specific detail of Descartes' theories, then at least in its general conception of the way forward for physics), this fresh approach does not yet represent the kind of radical break in philosophy's self-conception that we are looking for. For there was nothing in the "new" Cartesian science that seemed inherently inimical to the traditional ideals of spirituality or to the continued flourishing of a religious worldview. On the contrary, if the world could be understood on Cartesian principles as a mathematically ordered system, this could be taken to be fully consistent with the standard Stoic and Christian idea of *logos* or rationality at the heart of the cosmos. This was certainly how it struck the "incomparable Mr Newton," who thought the workings of the cosmos "could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being" (Newton 1687, trans. Motte 1729, pp. 344–346).

Descartes himself appears to have regarded his new mathematical physics and his theistic metaphysics as working entirely in tandem. Describing the development of his scientific system as an outgrowth from his metaphysics, he observes in the *Discourse on the Method* (*Discours de la méthode*, 1637, Part V) that he "noticed certain laws which God has so established in nature, and of which he has implanted such notions in our minds, that after adequate reflection we cannot doubt that they are exactly observed in everything which exists or occurs in the world." (AT VI 41; CSM I, 131). Metaphysics reveals our minds to be divinely illuminated, and hence innately apt to intuit the divinely ordained principles that govern God's other creation, the natural world. The new science may at the time have aroused suspicions in some circles (there were doubts

about whether Descartes' quantitative physics allowed room for the doctrine of the transubstantiation and suspicions that, however guardedly, he was advocating the same heliocentric cosmology that had got Galileo into trouble).[15] But these sorts of anxieties appear with hindsight to tell us more about the ecclesiastical conservatism of the times rather than about any deep structural incompatibilities between the Cartesian system and the demands of the Christian faith.[16] Certainly there is no reason to doubt the genuineness of Descartes' own professed allegiance to the Catholic Church,[17] even though he was an avowed opponent of the scholastic philosophy to which the Church happened, for various historical and other reasons, to have aligned itself.

So far, then, the "new" Cartesian philosophy, for all its innovations in physics and the methodology of science, does not in itself seem to be subversive of the traditional conception of philosophy as a moral and spiritual quest. Yet for all that, it seems to me, his work does, in the end, usher in a significant shift in the aims and scope of the philosophical enterprise. The reasons for this appear to be related not so much to the content of any Cartesian theories (the metaphysical doctrines about God, mind, and matter, for example, or the explanatory hypotheses in physics), but instead to Descartes' new and distinctively modern vision of the *power* of his new philosophy to change the world.

Descartes is best known for his claims to establish a new certainty, and to sweep away the philosophy of his predecessors. As he scathingly remarked (here thinking principally of natural philosophy, or what we would now call science), "the philosophy (hitherto practiced), despite being cultivated for many centuries by the most excellent minds, contains no point which is not disputed and hence doubtful." (*Discourse,* Part I, AT VI 8; CSM I 115). But Descartes' epistemic ambitions are ones we can see with hindsight to have been misguided: science cannot achieve, and does not need, watertight certainty, merely reliable methods for testing hypotheses and weeding out the mistaken ones (*Discourse,* Part VI, AT VI 62; CSM I 142). Far more significant than Descartes' epistemic goal was a *pragmatic* one – to put real power for change into the hands of mankind. Much of the natural philosophy of his predecessors was a somewhat impotent business – a matter of contemplating, often in a rather abstract way, the "principles" that supposedly governed the world and its manifold phenomena. Descartes, by contrast, saw his philosophy-cum-science as *practical*: his eyes were "opened to the possibility of gaining knowledge which would be very useful in life, and . . . which might replace the speculative philosophy taught in the schools" (*Discourse,*

Part VI, AT VI 62; CSM I, 142). The Cartesian goal, in what now strikes many as a chilling phrase, is nothing less than to make ourselves "masters and possessors of nature" (*maîtres et possesseurs de la nature*: *Discourse*, Part VI, AT VI 62; CSM I, 142)[18] To see exactly why Descartes' vision of the uses of philosophy turned out, almost accidentally, to cut across the traditional conception of "philosophy as a way of life," we need to look at the details of Descartes' program not for physics but for moral philosophy.

How could the new science help us with ethics? Descartes was adamant that it could: in constructing his system of ethics, he declared that he would deal with the subject *en physicien* – as a physicist (Prefatory letter to *The Passions of the Soul,* 1649). What this meant was that his work as a moral philosopher, in mapping out the conditions for the good life, would be bolstered by the results of his work in physiology and in particular his discoveries about the way in which the emotions and passions were "caused, maintained, and strengthened" by various impulses in the nervous system (*Passions of the Soul*, Article 29). By understanding the physiological causes of the passions, and the way in which certain emotions depend on automatic patterns of response determined at a physiological level, we can, Descartes proposes, learn how to reprogram the bodily mechanisms so as to modify our feelings, and hence our conduct.[19]

Why is this so new and so damaging to traditional conceptions of moral *askesis* and spiritual progress? One might at first suppose that Descartes is merely proposing new and more efficient methods for the improvement of the soul: his predecessors had proposed cognitive enlightenment (the Stoics) or careful training of the dispositions appropriate for virtue (Aristotle); what Descartes offers, one might think, is simply a shortcut. Instead of a laborious struggle to suppress the passions, as some of the Stoics had proposed, or the inevitable hostages to upbringing given by the Aristotelians, why not simply modify the course of the nervous impulses, so that the damaging inclinations that lead us off the path of virtue are rechanneled toward more healthy and more worthy objects?

The answer lies in the *way* that is proposed for the cultivation of virtue. In the earlier "spiritual" (in the broadest sense) programs, the nature of the training proposed is inherently and necessarily linked to the goal of moral improvement which it subserves. Prayer and fasting, to take a specifically Christian example, are not just arbitrarily and instrumentally connected with the enlightened and purified states at which they aim; rather, the very process, the very discipline of bodily self-denial and of prayerful mental focusing, is itself partly constitutive of the good which

is pursued. Thus, for example, for a member of a religious community, each act of prayer, where one's consciousness is directed, in gratefulness and humility and hope, toward the source of being and goodness, is another thread added to the fabric of the life dedicated to God. But the examples do not have to come from such a spiritually exalted or ideal form of life. Even in the mundane context of the ordinary, Aristotelian-style, training in virtue (the injunction, for instance, to grow in generosity by doing generous things[20]) the same structure obtains. The child who is affectionately guided by her parents to share her toys with her younger sibling, and who is induced to share in the joy felt by the recipient and the parental onlookers, will be starting to make the transition from second-hand virtue or mere controlled behavior, to genuine virtue.[21] Her act, though not yet fully autonomous, nonetheless deserves genuine praise, for by it she begins to learn something of the true nature of generosity, and the reasons for being generous.

Contrast this with behavior modification of the kind envisaged by Descartes. The reprogramming of the relevant patterns of response is a process that is only contingently, and as it were "externally" connected with the desired goal. If someone feels attracted to bad objects (if they are drawn to pornography, say, or to overeating, or to financial dishonesty), they may be able to modify the relevant impulses by a careful program of stimulus–response conditioning (which is exactly what Descartes proposes);[22] but that process will not itself constitute any moral advance in their awareness or character. However, beneficial in terms of its outcome, such induced changes have no inherent moral significance: their value hinges merely on their instrumentality toward some desired end. (Some people may find the following parallel helpful – though those who do not may ignore it without the main argument being affected. The kind of contrast I am concerned to underline here is reflected nowadays in two quite different paradigms of therapeutic treatment for psychological disorders: the kind of "behavioral" approach that seeks, fairly mechanically and instrumentally, to modify the damaging patterns of conduct, and the more traditional psychotherapeutic process, which involves the whole person's embarking, under the guidance of an analyst, on the long and difficult path of self-discovery and moral realignment.[23])

It is highly significant, if we are to understand the "externalism" of Descartes' approach, that he invokes the model of training an animal to explain what he has in mind – yet seemingly without recognizing that when transferred to human beings the process will, as it were, *bypass* their

interior journey of development as a genuine moral agent. The relevant passage is worth quoting at length:

> It is useful to note that although the movements [in the brain and nervous system] which represent certain objects to the soul are naturally joined to the movements that produce certain passions in it, yet through habit the former can be separated from the latter and joined to others which are very different. . . . And the same may be observed in animals. For although they lack reason, and perhaps even thought, all the movements [of the nervous system and brain] which produce passions in us are nevertheless present in them too . . . So when a dog sees a partridge it is naturally disposed to run towards it; and when it hears a gun fired, the noise naturally impels it to run away. Nevertheless, setters are commonly trained so that the sight of partridge makes them stop, and the noise they hear afterwards, when someone fires at the bird, makes them run towards it. These things are worth noting in order to encourage each of us to make a point of controlling our passions. For since we are able, with a little effort, to change the movements of the brain in animals devoid of reason, it is evident that we can do so still more effectively in the case of human beings. (*Passions of the Soul*, Article 50)

Descartes himself, to be sure, would have argued that all this new instrumental knowledge, derived from the new science, is being put to the service of the good. If the Christian-Platonic metaphysics of the *Meditations* is still in place, then when we retrain our psychophysical responses in the way suggested by the new ethics, this will simply be in order to enable our lives to conform more closely to the vision of the true and the good, to which our metaphysical reflections have opened our eyes. Nevertheless, the genie of instrumentalism, once out of the bottle, cannot easily be put back. Philosophy, in its new scientific guise, offers us mechanical means to achieve what we want – and these are means which in themselves have nothing to do with the traditional spiritual paths of moral growth and the struggle for enlightenment. They are to be judged, quite simply, by their efficacy.

However, sincere and well-intentioned Descartes' own vision may have been of what the new science could achieve in the ethical sphere, what he has in fact unleashed is a seductive fantasy of a swift and easy "fix" for the good life: the idea that we have the power to get to where we want by any technological means available. In the external sphere – in matters of shelter, transport, nutrition, health, and so on – the Cartesian goal of making ourselves "masters of nature" and using scientific technology

to free ourselves from "innumerable diseases," discomforts, and inconveniences (*Discourse,* Part VI, AT VI 62; CSM I 143), is one which has undoubtedly set the agenda for modernity. It would be hypocritical to deny that we have all been beneficiaries of this, though it is perhaps too early to say whether the long-term costs to our human environment will turn out to be severely in excess of what had been anticipated. But in the more internal sphere of the moral life, there is no doubt that Descartes' optimistically easy mechanical solutions to the problems of human weakness and emotional instability have seriously worrying implications. As we so often find in other parts of his system, Descartes' philosophy is Janus-faced, affording us frequent glances back to the tradition he grew out of, but also allowing glimpses forward to the modern age that his ideas helped to launch. It would be unfair to lay all the manifold problems of modern instrumentalist ethics at Descartes' door; but if the argument of this paper has been right, there is more than a little reason to see his approach as (perhaps unwittingly) subversive of the ancient ideal of moral philosophy as directed toward the goals of ethical and spiritual growth.

Notes

1. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 7, 87–89, summarizing the views of the three founding fathers of Stoicism, Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus (third century BC). Translated with omissions by John Cottingham. See Long and Sedley (1987, 63C).
2. It should be noted, incidentally, that part of Murdoch's claim is that even purportedly "neutralist" conceptions of the philosophical enterprise always turn out to have an implicit evaluative agenda: "Philosophical doctrines which profess neutrality, whether they are professedly analytic (against preaching) or scientific (against value) cannot help, by what they obliterate or what they emphasise, making moral judgements" (Murdoch 1992, p. 297).
3. For the significance of this term (and the distinction between ancient Classical usage and the modern notion of "asceticism"), see Hadot (1995, p. 128).
4. For an alternative view of Aristotle, which emphasizes the continuities and affinities between Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics, see Gerson (2005).
5. By the phrase "the composite" (*to syntheton*, 1178a20), Aristotle means not some kind of separated intellect, but one who is genuinely human (*anthrôpikon*), a rational embodied being of flesh and blood.
6. The Neoplatonic sources drawn on to reach this verdict include Plotinus and Porphyry. Hadot's general picture would need some careful qualification when applied to Aristotle, since the Aristotelian model emphasizes the

crucial importance in ethical formation of the right kind of upbringing and childhood training (*Nicomachean Ethics* 2.1104a 20–25) – an idea that implies the need for caution about the possibility of "self-formation", or the supposed power of man, as Hadot puts it, to "transform himself." In spite of this, Aristotle does implicitly recognize the need for a transition from the state where reason is followed "second-hand", as it were, in the voice of one's parents or teachers, and the true ideal of virtue in which reason is fully internalized by the individual, enabling him to determine for himself the right principles for action. Virtue in this highest sense appears, for Aristotle, to be the prerogative of adult males, though he allows a secondary kind of virtue which involves having a mind that "does in a way participate in reason in the sense that it is obedient and submissive to it" (1. 1102b30). In the latter passage, Aristotle is talking "intra-psychically," about the appetitive and desiderative element *within* the soul of a given individual; but he seems quite prepared to transfer this model to the "inter-psychic" case: in what has become a notorious passage in the *Politics* (Book I, Chapter 13), he articulates the idea that "virtue" for women and children, and slaves, is not virtue in the strict sense that applies to men, but is, in varying degrees, a matter of their being responsive to the rational element of those (males) who rule the household.

7. Following Mass on the feast of St. Nicolas, December 6, 1273. The source is the minutes of St Thomas' canonization inquiry (1319).
8. For example, see, respectively, the *Protagoras, Symposium, Laws, Theaetetus, Cratylus,* and *Parmenides.*
9. Descartes explicitly disavows the role of a champion epistemologist holding the line against some supposed "skeptical crisis," observing that "the great benefit of my arguments (in the *Meditations*) is *not*, in my view, that they prove what they establish – namely, that there really is a world and that human beings have bodies and so on – *since no sane person has ever seriously doubted these things*. The point is that in considering these arguments, we come to realize that they are not as solid or as transparent as the arguments which lead us to knowledge of our own minds and of God." (Synopsis to *Meditations* (1641) in Adam and Tannery (eds.) 1961–1976 (hereafter "AT"), VII, 15–16, and Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch (1987) (hereafter "CSM" II, 11, emphasis supplied). For more on this theme, see Cottingham (2005, 25–41).
10. The plan is mentioned in the letter to Mersenne of November 11, 1640, in AT II, 233, and Cottingham *et al.* (1991) (hereafter "CSMK"), 157.
11. "Ces principes . . . et la grande suite des vérités qu'on en peut déduire, leur fait connaître combien il est important de continuer en la recherche de ces vérités, et jusques à quel degré de sagesse, à quelle perfection de vie, à quelle félicité elles peuvent conduire." (Prefatory letter to the 1647 French edition of the *Principles of Philosophy*, AT IXB 20: CSM I, 190).

12. The reasoning at a crucial point in the *Meditations* (*Meditationes de prima philosophia*, 1641), Third Meditation (AT VII 46: CSM II 31), where Descartes uses his recognition of his own imperfection as a premise in the argument for God's existence, follows almost exactly the wording in Bonaventure in his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (Bonaventure, 1891, 202 (Chapter 3, Section 1). See further J. Cottingham (2007B, 15–44).
13. "Ad nos reintraremus, in mentem scilicet nostram, in qua divina relucet imago; hinc . . . conari debemus per speculum videre Deum, ubi ad modum candelabri relucet lux veritatis in facie nostrae mentis, in qua scilicet resplendet imago beatissimae Trinitatis" (Bonaventure, 1891, Chapter III, Section 1).
14. Speaking of his plan to compose the *Principles,* Descartes told his editor Mersenne "I have resolved to spend time writing my philosophy in an order which will make it easy to teach." (letter of December 31, 1640, AT III 276, and CSMK 167).
15. For the transubstantiation, see the Fourth Set of Replies published with the *Meditations* (AT VII 254: CSM II 177); for the Galileo controversy, see Descartes' letter to Mersenne of April 1634 (CSMK 43).
16. See further Cottingham (2007, pp. 287–301, esp. pp. 290f).
17. Explicitly affirmed in the final paragraph of the *Principles of Philosophy.*
18. For Descartes' technological vision as harbinger of our modern ecological woes, see Plumwood (1993).
19. For a detailed account, see Cottingham (1998, Chapter 3, Section 5).
20. Compare Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II, Chapter 1.
21. For the distinction between controlled conduct and genuine virtue, see Aristotle, (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII, Chapter 9).
22. For Descartes as a pioneer of the theory of the conditioned reflect, see Cottingham (1998, Chapter 3, Section 5).
23. For parallels between the psychotherapeutic and spiritual exercises, see Cottingham (2005, Chapter 4).

10

Descartes' *Meditations*: Practical Metaphysics

The Father of Rationalism in the Tradition of Spiritual Exercises[1]

Theodor Kobusch

Form and Method

Descartes' *Meditations*,[2] one of the few world wonders in the history of philosophy, indicates by its title that it claims to replace Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. We have here not only a transformation of content, in that – in the wake of Augustinian thought – the two questions on God and the Soul, come to the foreground. These questions, which were traditionally regarded as under the purview of theology, Descartes ranges among the main problems of philosophy (AT VII 1). Nor does Descartes' refoundation of metaphysics rely on a mere change in the philosophical method. Above all, the new contribution of Cartesian metaphysics with regard to Aristotelian metaphysics is a change in the *form* of metaphysics, which seems to be extraneous to it but in reality co-determines it in the most intimate way. This form is meditation.

Descartes' *Meditations* are intellectual exercises that extend over six days. On almost every new day, a reference is made to the results or intermediary results of the previous day, or the spiritual experiences of the last days. This division into days, as well as the physical back-references, already mentioned in the First Meditation and repeated in the Third,

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the repetitions, the monologue form, and other elements, point to the fact that Descartes' *Meditations* must be understood within the tradition of philosophy in the sense of spiritual exercises (Nolte 1995, esp. 110; Hadot 1987).

Descartes chooses the form of meditation, since it coincides better with the analytical method he prefers. He deliberately opposes it to the form of *Disputationes* from Suárez, with which we are familiar as he was, for instance. Yet he also opposes it to *Theoremata* (Aegidius Romanus, Duns Scotus) and *Problemata*, all of which follow the Euclidean, that is, the synthetic method. Descartes thus takes his distance in the clearest way, both from the essay form of the Aristotelian tradition and from its method. Despite this unambiguous distancing from the pre-given *mos geometricus,* Descartes does not wish to invent a new method. On the contrary, he seeks to reawaken an old one, since "nothing is older than the truth." It is Descartes' overall intention to reactualize what is most ancient, and for this purpose he could call upon a tradition that reached back to Antiquity.[3]

"I, for my part, have in my meditations followed analysis alone, which is the best and truest path to instruction," as Descartes himself says (AT VII 156). What is meant is the so-called mathematical analysis, invented by the Late Antique mathematician Pappus. This method itself consists of an analytic and a synthetic element, and also represents the historical background of such famous methodological doctrines as Kant's transcendental method or the phenomenological method of Husserl. According to this method, which Descartes came to know in the 1588 Latin translation of Pappus' works, what is sought must first be assumed as given (cf. AT VI 372); then one observes what results from it until one concludes, in a step-by-step return to its conditions, or as one progresses toward the consequences, to what is already known, namely to the axioms. In the synthetic part, one starts from the endpoint of the analysis, and reaches what is sought once again by means of a synthetic construction. This method is used in the *Meditations*, insofar as at the end of the First Meditation, the problem of whether the pre-given complex reality of material being exists is assumed to be solved by means of the (obviously negative) postulate that all is nothing, and a reduction is carried out to the simple conditions, before what is sought (the existence of the material world) appears in a new light in the Sixth Meditation.[4]

Descartes' justification for preferring the analytical over the synthetic method reveals a side of his thought that has been almost completely overlooked. The analytical method is appropriate for attracting attention

to a matter, both in the knowing subject and in those who wish to accompany him on this path of meditation. In metaphysics, attention is required to a particularly high degree, since the clear and distinct conceptualization of the primary notions is infinitely difficult, owing to the prejudices that weigh down upon us from our youth. Descartes therefore constantly demands from his readers particular attention, which is easier to achieve on the analytical path, whereas on the synthetic path all that is achieved is the correct derivation of consequences, which can nevertheless also be accomplished by the "less attentive" (AT VII 158/159). Descartes even goes a step further: one reason why analysis is the true path of thought is that it shows how the matter in question is found "methodically," that is, in such a way that each person can follow the path, to such an extent that the reader, if he follows this method and directs his attention to all things in an adequate way, makes the matter under observation his own, as if he had found it himself. In contrast, the synthetic method cannot really satisfy the reader, since it remains external both to him and to the matter at hand, and does not show how the matter was found (AT VII 155/156).

Thus, it is on the path of analysis that attention is most readily awakened. I make the matter at hand my own by means of attention. Yet what most properly belong to me are the first principles that I already possess, but which have been blocked by the prejudices of the senses. Correspondingly, the search for the true self is clothed in the form of meditation. In this sense, Descartes' *Meditations* are a one-time exercise of attention. The division of the philosophical material into six Meditations, which themselves are carried out over six days, in accordance with the Hexaemeron tradition and with Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*,[5] is, as Descartes expressly remarks, oriented toward what is required by "unique attention," and therefore a separate treatment (AT VII 130). Another important spiritual exercise, which is to a certain extent carried out in the service of attention, is "circumspection." The meditator must "look carefully around" for what is most deeply within him, especially as a doubter, when he seeks to separate what is clearly and distinctly known from what is unclear and confused.[6] Attention and circumspection are the spiritual exercises that provide an indication of the tradition in which Descartes' *Meditations* are situated. It is that tradition in which, since the Stoa, philosophy has been understood as a spiritual exercise. In the Church Fathers, but also in twelfth century Christian thought, the Stoic starting points were developed into a philosophy of attentiveness. In this sense, the Christian philosopher in the simple sense of the term, or the

monk, must particularly cultivate the exercises of attentiveness and circumspection in order vigilantly to protect his inner being. Meditation is also a spiritual exercise, which was discovered as such and established as a literary genre in this tradition. It thus appears as a spiritual exercise, for instance, in Bernard of Clairvaux and other twelfth-century authors, alongside the reading of scripture and prayer.[7] Earlier still, in the Carolingian period, meditation even stood for spiritual exercises as such. In this sense, the gymnasium was the place for spiritual exercises, that is, for philosophy or meditation.[8] According to the idea of this tradition, which goes back to Antiquity, meditation, like the other spiritual exercises, is of the nature of a purification, insofar as it frees the practitioner from worldly cares, both superfluous and necessary.[9] This definition is immediately relevant for understanding Descartes' *Meditations*, for Descartes, too, as he explains at the beginning of his First Meditation (AT VII 17/18), wishes to keep himself free of all cares with a view to the general overthrow of all his previous opinions. The meaning of the contents of the traditional notion of meditation can also be discerned in Descartes' work. In the twelfth century, the Victorines, in particular, had defined the notion in such a way that it meant the intensive, arduous investigation of what is unknown and obscure.[10] Descartes takes up this idea at the end of the First Meditation, when he designates persistent delving into meditation as an "arduous" exercise or as "vigilance."

Universal Doubt as an Exercise of Thought

Descartes' *Meditations* take up the question of certainty, which had been raised in a comprehensive sense in the fourteenth century (in the sense of theoretical and practical knowledge and eternal salvation), in that what was sought was the *fundamentum inconcussum* [unbroken foundation] that lies at the basis of all knowledge. This is achieved by toppling the edifice of all previous opinions, that is, through universal doubt. The most difficult intellectual labor is this liberation from prejudices. Descartes therefore estimates a period of several months, and several weeks at the least, for this labor to bear real fruits (AT VII 130). Yet this liberation from prejudices is necessary, since they block the light of natural reason. The goal of the Meditations is to make this light visible, that is, the "primary notions" of reason, than which nothing can be more evident and more true.[11]

Liberation from prejudices takes place along the path of doubt. In order for all prejudices to be eradicated, doubt must be universal. It is applied to everything that exists in a veridical way, whether its nature is particular or general, simple or compound. Practical truths, as well as religious truths, are however expressly excluded. Universal doubt therefore concerns all theoretical truths.[12] It is, moreover, a methodical, not an existential doubt, which by means of well thought-out reasons, gradually makes all of theoretical reality appear as dubious. The illusions of the senses, the argument from dreams, and the "old view" of a deceptive God are the grounds for doubt through which the spiritual exercise of the "negation" of everything true, from the most particular to the most universal, becomes possible. In an inner dialogue, Descartes shows that something universal is contained in every particular, which escapes the argument from doubt previously mentioned. Thus, all dreams, mentioned as grounds for the negation of concrete, sensible, ever-determinate being, contain such determinate universal things as eyes, hands, or head *simpliciter*, or something even more universal, such as extension, number, time, or place. Similarly, even the painter with the most gifted imagination, when he paints something entirely new, must at least use "true colors," which, according to Descartes, opposing certain Scholastic doctrines of colors, are always "true" as such.[13] Finally, the most universal truths in things, namely mathematical things, which resist the dream argument, are tracked down. In order to make them, too, seem doubtable, Descartes has recourse to the Nominalist conception of a deceitful God,[14] who could have set things up in such a way that there were no such things as extension, magnitude, place, and so forth, although they seem to me to exist, and that even the most universal mathematical truths, such as $2 + 3 = 5$, express no genuine existence, but merely an apparent one.

Thus, on strong and carefully weighed grounds, everything in the realm of theoretical reality is doubtable. However, not everything is accomplished by the one-time display of the grounds for doubt, for the old opinions and prejudices return. In this situation, since habitual opinions once again gain the upper hand, even though they somehow appear to be dubious, the meditating subject resolves to complete the negation he has undertaken by a supposition. It is therefore intellectually "posited" that all is nothing and/or false.[15] There is no heaven, no earth, no tones, no colors; I myself have no senses, and bodies, extension, place, motion, and the like are mere chimeras. This kind of nihilization is a supposition in the sense of a thought experiment. In what follows, it is "refuted/reposited" step by step. It is important to see that this supposition, that is, the

intellectual nihilization of all that is, is indebted to the method of analysis. For according to this method, inaugurated by Pappus and taken up by Descartes, a problem is first assumed to be solved (AT VI 372). This is precisely what happens at the end of the First Meditation, when it is "presupposed" that all is nothing. Descartes himself saw this close connection between supposition and analytical method. He says: "For the manner of the analytical procedure, which I have followed, occasionally allows one to presuppose certain things that have not yet been sufficiently explained, as was shown in the First Meditation, in which I assumed many things that I subsequently refuted."[16] In its decisiveness and radicality, the supposition, in which everything is posited to be nothing in a thought experiment, resembles a bent stick that, in order to be straightened out, is not only stretched, but bent in the opposite direction (AT VII 349). Descartes also used this image, stemming from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, in the context where it originally belonged, namely in the realm of practical philosophy. More precisely, Descartes made use of it in the question of how Christian virtues, for instance the love of one's enemies, are related to natural virtues.[17] It is not by chance, however, that it was also used in medieval philosophy, in a context similar to that of Descartes' First Meditation. In order to clarify the difference between an *ens reale* [real being] and an *ens rationis* [being of reason], the Scotist François of Meyronnes, in the spirit of the Aristotelian image of the bent stick, radically posited everything, from what is sensibly perceived to second intentions, as *ens reale*, as if the distinction was then self-evident (Kobusch 1987, p. 219). The situation at the end of the First Meditation is comparable, but in an inverse sense: to discover what is truly existent, Descartes, by means of the intellectual exercise of supposition, posits everything as mere thought, that is, as being nothing.[18]

Cogito: "Noticing" One's Own Thought

When, at the beginning of the Second Meditation – that is, on the second day – Descartes once again repeats the supposition of the previous day, and, with the help of the argument of the deceitful God, posits everything as false and deceptive, and hence as nothing, he has the unmistakable experience of his own existence. Even if the *genius malignus* (evil demon) can "deceive me, as far as he can, yet he can never bring it about that I am nothing, as long as I think that I am something." The proposition,

"I am, I exist" is therefore necessarily true "whenever it is stated by me or conceived in my mind" (AT VII 25). It is what appears to the mind freed from all prejudices as the "most evident" and "most known" (AT VII 446). It can therefore not be the genuine subject of "knowledge" in the scholastic sense, since only conclusions can be known. Instead, the *cogito, ergo sum* is a "primary idea" in the sense of a self-evident principle (*per se notum*), or a principle that is experienced through inner experience. When we "notice" (*advertimus*) that we are thinking substances, then "we experience" that one can only think if one exists (AT VII 140).[19] In the "Conversation with Burman," the "*cogito, ergo sum*" is designated directly as the object of "experience," that is, of inner experience (AT V 147). Consciousness is nothing other than having such inner experiences. When, in the Third Meditation, Descartes asks whether there could perhaps be a hidden force within me, ensuring the preservation of myself, the idea is rejected with the justification that this force would then have to be conscious."But I experience that there is no such force," and I therefore know in the most evident way that I depend on a being that is distinct from me (AT VII 49). Inner experience, or, as Descartes also says, "inner knowledge," which is not reflexive knowledge, but precedes all reflection, means "noticing" (*advertere*) something. Thus, the "cogito" does not express a reflexive knowledge of oneself, but the "noticing" of one's own thought and being.[20] "Noticing" (*advertere*) is the inclination toward itself that is proper to the mind or the intellect. It is the business of the imagination to dream, but only the intellect can notice that one is dreaming (AT VII 358/359). The concept of "noticing" is not only the primary notion of the *Meditations*, but a fundamental element of Descartes' philosophy.[21] Philosophy as a whole is, as Husserl later takes up Descartes' idea, as transmitted by Carl Stumpf, "pleasure in noticing."[22]

In any case, something universal is implicitly included in the knowledge of individuals or particulars, something along the lines of "everything that thinks, exists." Descartes can therefore also say that it lies in the nature of our mind to form general propositions in this way, on the basis of our knowledge of an individual.[23] The universal, thus implied in knowledge of the universal, is thus something co-known, or something known implicitly, something known in a way that is not properly thematic. It is precisely at this important point in the development of his ideas that Descartes reminds us that his philosophy is a philosophy of attention. The "Cogito" is due to consciousness' strong and exclusive attention to what it experiences. The implicit universal, however, lies outside the

realm of attention and is co-grasped, non-thematically, as an *a priori* proposition. To this extent, Descartes' doctrine of the "Cogito" also provides an answer to the basic Scholastic question of what the human mind knows first and foremost. Already in the *Discourse*, the *Cogito* is called the "first principle of philosophy" in this sense (AT VI 32). In the *Principles*, it is termed the "primary and most certain" of all knowledge encountered by the person who philosophizes in the correct "order."[24] According to the discussion so far, at any rate, we must specify this definition. The "Cogito" can be called what is first known, insofar as it is grasped before everything sensible, and indeed before everything dark and unclear. And since only that knowledge can be called "clear" that is present and manifest to the attentive mind – and it is, to this extent, to be distinguished from merely "certain knowledge"[25] – the "Cogito" must be called the first known among clear and plain kinds of knowledge. Thus, analysis, which begins with universal doubt until the end of the Second Meditation, has led to the discovery of the first explicit principle of our knowledge: the first, clear, and plain knowledge that expresses something existent, in which, nevertheless, other universal principles may lie embedded implicitly and unnoticed.[26] With this characterization of the "Cogito," Descartes is obviously continuing Scholastic conceptions of the first principles.

Attention and Knowledge of God

The problem of certainty is not yet definitively solved by the discovery of the first principle. Even at the end of the Second Meditation, an allusion is made to the obstinacy of old habits, which do not easily yield to new knowledge. Even the theological "old opinion" of the all-powerful deceptive God still threatens the certainty of evident knowledge. Descartes can even imagine that this omnipotent spirit could deceive him in those things that he believes he sees as evidently as possible with the eyes of the mind (AT VII 36), and we must understand: even in the "Cogito." What Descartes means is that as long or as often (*quoties*) as our consciousness remains under the influence of the traditional "old opinion" of the omnipotent deceptive God, even what is most evident, like the "Cogito," seems to be subject to error. However, when we direct ourselves to those things, that is, pay attention to those things, that we know clearly, then the "Cogito" appears as a bulwark even against the omnipotent deceptive God.

What, however, of the other truths, such as the mathematical one that 2 + 3 = 5? As long as the specter of an omnipotent deceptive God is not refuted, no certainty on any matter seems to be achievable (AT VII 36,28). This is why the proof of God's existence is necessary. Without knowledge of the true God, there can be no certainty and truth in any branch of knowledge (AT VII 71). Now, we had called the "Cogito" that which is primarily known. Does the knowledge of God precede the knowledge of one's own existence? Is God therefore the real first known? As in the case of the question of the relation of the "Cogito" to the other self-evident principles, it is "attentiveness" that plays the decisive role here as well. For when I attend (*attendo*) to the fact that I doubt, and in this way experience myself as something imperfect and dependent, then there appears before my spiritual eye the clear and distinct idea of an independent and perfect being, that is, God (AT VII 53). Indeed, in the Third Meditation, in a line of thought that seems Platonic, Descartes has shown that the knowledge of my own imperfection and contingence necessarily includes the knowledge of a perfect, necessary being, and therefore the undeveloped, always-presupposed knowledge of God. The knowledge of infinite, divine being is actually "prior" to that of my finite existence.[27]

"Explicitly," therefore – as Descartes distinguishes once again in the *Conversation with Burman*, we have known ourselves and our imperfection prior to God's perfection, since we direct our attention to ourselves rather than to God. "Implicitly," however, the knowledge of God and of perfection must come first, since every lack and every negation presupposes its corresponding affirmation.[28] We can thus say: the "Cogito" is what is first known *explicitly*, but God is what is first known *implicitly*. Both Descartes' idea and his terminology seem to some extent to have been already prepared in the medieval tradition.[29]

A much more serious problem arises with the fact that Descartes sometimes seems to make the truth of every evident item of knowledge, including that of the "Cogito," dependent on the knowledge of God. Yet this inevitably leads to a circle. On the one hand, the truth of what is known clearly and distinctly is supposed to found God's existence; on the other, God's existence is supposed to be proved through clear and distinct knowledge. Arnauld and the circle around Mersenne were the first to formulate this so-called Cartesian circle.[30] For Descartes, it seems not to have been a real problem. A distinction must of course be made between the clear knowledge of a state of affairs, on the one hand, which by definition (AT VIII/1 22) is present and manifest to the attentive mind, that is, the mind that attends to it on the grounds of its judgment; and

the recollection of the clear knowledge of this state of affairs on the other hand. We can only be certain of the truth of recollection if we presuppose God's existence and truth (AT VII 246). However, insofar as recollection is included in every kind of human knowledge – since conclusions necessarily presuppose it – even the most evident knowledge always remains subject to a possible doubt: the doubt, that is, that mankind may be of such an imperfect nature that it is mistaken even in the most obvious cases of knowing. This doubt can only be disarmed once it is known that human nature was created by a veridical and nondeceptive God (AT VII 428). As Descartes also says in the Fifth Meditation, it remains true that clear and distinct knowledge, that is, knowledge carried out with attentiveness, always guarantees truth. It must be known, however, that attention cannot be continuously directed to the grounds for which one judges a state of affairs in a such and such way, but it becomes distracted, so that "if I did not know God" as the guarantor of truth, I would be dissuaded from my opinion and never achieve a true, certain knowledge. Thus, concerning a triangle, for instance, I know with the highest evidence and clarity that its three angles are equal to two right angles: as long as I am attentive to the demonstration. However, when I must recollect that I have had this clear knowledge, then, "if I did not know God," I might be overcome by doubts (AT VII 69/70). The *Principia* argue in a similar way: when demonstrations are constructed from "universal concepts," that is, self-evident axioms such as "equal plus equal makes equal," or that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, *vel sim.*, then they are to be considered true, as long as attention remains directed to the premises from which they were deduced. But human beings cannot always attend to these axioms. Later, when they must recall them, they also recall that they by no means know whether or not they are created in such a way that they are mistaken even in what appears to be most evident. They can therefore have no knowledge with certainty, before they have known God.[31] However, since all our knowledge is such that it must be reduced to grounds and first principles if it is to be genuine knowledge, rather than mere "conviction,"[32] Descartes can also say that the certainty and truth "of all knowledge" depends on the knowledge of God, and nothing can be perfectly known of any state of affairs before God is known (AT VII 71. 226).

It is obvious that according to Descartes' doctrine, the defects of human knowledge lie in recollection. In a sense, God fulfills the function of making up for this deficit. Attention, in contrast, is that which includes the truth within itself. Its proper object is the primary or universal

concepts, the axioms or self-evident principles, the "eternal truths," or not only what Scholasticism, but also Descartes himself, called the "self-understandable" (*per se notum*).[33] Thus, the *Meditations* make clear what philosophy is, and how it has been understood from Antiquity to phenomenology: as attention to what goes without saying and escapes notice, or, as phenomenology says, as the perception of "the most self-evident self-evidences" (Husserl), in the sense of the essence of the lifeworld.[34]

It is of the highest importance to see that what Descartes says about the relation between infallible attention and recollection as subject to error concerns the overall structure of consciousness. For something analogous holds true for practical knowledge as well. Descartes alludes to this in an important letter to Father Mesland, in which the discussion turns, among other topics, upon the problem of moral error. As knowledge that is clear, that is, "attentive," guarantees truth in the realm of the theoretical, so for Descartes, the clear knowledge of what is to be done or left undone also guarantees practical truth, insofar as the will (*le cours de nostre desir*) cannot escape this knowledge. Yet it is in the nature of the soul to be, to some extent, attentive to the same matter at hand only for a moment, namely when we direct it to the grounds of that matter. When we lend attentive attention to the grounds of our action, and therefore "clearly" see what is to be done and what is to be left undone, we cannot, as long as we see it in this way, fall into sin (*il nous seroit impossible de pecher*), just as clear and distinct knowledge cannot be false. However, as soon as attention turns away from the grounds for which we wish to do something or leave undone, we retain in our memory only the fact that it was something willed, whereas we can present other grounds to our mind that allow us to doubt and lead to the suspension of judgment, or even to a contrary judgment. Morally bad action, or "sin," is thus to be explained by the fact that it is to be traced back to a simply confused knowledge or the recollection of an earlier judgment, that is, to a knowledge that takes place without attention to its grounds (*sans avoir attention aux raisons*).[35] The function of "attention" is obviously the same in the realms of theory and of practice.

The *Meditations* as a Form of Life

As we have seen, the *Meditations*, insofar as they accomplish the general overthrow of previous opinions and carry out universal doubt, are directed to the field of theoretical truths. Yet they undoubtedly contain a practical element as well, which still does not seem to have quite dawned

on previous research. Like circumspection, meditation has, right from the outset, a particular affinity with the domain of the practical.[36] Descartes' *Meditations* take up this Scholastic practical meaning of the concept, insofar as they do not bring a new theory into play, but expressly demand a transformation of one's form of life. The "true path, and in my judgment the only one," indicated particularly in the Second Meditation, is not to be taken once, but over and over again. The radical overthrow of all theoretical truths is itself no abstract theory, but the destruction of a "lifetime habit," and its replacement by the other "habit" of fewer days (AT VII 131).

For Descartes, the *Meditations* themselves are of a practical nature and, indeed, in the medieval sense of the word "practical." In the Middle Ages, "practical" meant everything that can be referred to (human) will as its cause (Kobusch 1989). The will, and hence freedom as well, plays a considerable role in the *Meditations*, and not merely as a theme of philosophical considerations. Freedom is what consciousness, in the individual *Meditations*, "experiences" on the practical side.[37] The *Meditations* are also "stages of freedom."[38] In the Fourth Meditation, Descartes tells how "these days" he has "experienced" the lowest stage of freedom, when he was in a state of "indifference," since no rational reason inclined him to one side rather than the other, and out of this indifference he resolved to adopt the assumption (*suppositio*) that all is nothing. This clearly refers to the end of the First Meditation.[39] The indifference described at the end of the First Meditation is a legitimate one, a legitimacy grounded in the fact that it is the will that is at work here, when it comes to the withholding of judgment or to assumption (*voluntate plane in contrarium versa*), but the subject of discussion in the *Meditations* is not practical but theoretical truths.[40] Descartes clearly distinguishes both domains, the theoretical and the practical. If one were to assume an indifferent state of the will in the field of the practical, and hence with regard to the question of whether I should choose good or evil, then this would be an instance of illegitimate indifference, since the will must by its nature strive only for the good.[41]

According to the famous *Letter to Mesland*, indifference as the lowest stage of freedom, when the will "is not inclined more to one side than another by any knowledge of the true and the good," is to be distinguished from the indifference that underlies all acts of will, as a "positive capacity to determine oneself toward one or the other."[42] "These days," however, Descartes experiences not only the lowest, but also the next highest stage of freedom. For when he examined whether something in the world really existed, he "noticed" that from the mere fact that he was examining, his

own existence obviously followed, so that he could not help but hold this clear insight to be true. It was no external force that made his will incline to agreement, but the sole light of the truth of this insight. Thus, the "Cogito" represents a higher stage of freedom, in which the subject experiences all the more freely the less it experiences indifference.[43]

Finally, the knowledge of God must be considered, within the *Meditations*, as the highest stage of freedom. In his famous *Letter to Mesland*, Descartes also established, in a way, the criterion for the stages of freedom. It comprises "solely in the ease of action," so that it is one and the same thing to do something "freely," "spontaneously," or "of one's own free will."[44] Indeed, the *Meditations* begin once the burden of prejudices has been shaken off, and the mind has been led away from the world of the sensible, with the easy knowledge of one's own existence. The knowledge of God even appears as the first and easiest thing, and moreover the most obvious and certain, that the human mind can come to know. In this sense, we read in the Fifth Meditation: "Nihil illo prius aut facilius agnoscerem [I would not admit anything to be prior to or easier than it]."[45] Then, however, begins the incomparably more difficult work of the synthetic part, in which the existence of the complex material world – which was also the starting point of universal doubt – is proved. Descartes himself described the true path to the truth, traversed in the *Meditations*, as the path *a facilioribus ad difficiliora* [from easier to more difficult things]. By this he means the "order of the grounds of reason," not the "order of objects."[46] Yet the order of the grounds of reason begins with the simple and more familiar, progressing to the more complex and the less familiar (Gouhier 1962, pp. 104–112). Once Descartes, in the context of the analytical part, has uncovered (*detego*: AT VII 64,2) what is easiest to know, God's existence and essence, it is time, as we read at the end of the Third Meditation, to spend a while in the contemplation of God, that is, in "intuition, wonderment, and prayer." The contemplation Descartes means is not the abstract theory of the Aristotelians. It is the highest philosophical form of life we can experience in this world, which was already known in the Victorine–Bonaventurian world (Kobusch 2009); an image of the perfect felicity of the afterlife.[47]

Notes

1. Translated from the German by M. Chase. All the translator's additions, including translations of Latin texts, are indicated by square brackets [. . .].

2. Citations are from the following edition: Descartes, René, *Oeuvres*, ed. by Ch. Adam and P. Tannery, Paris: Leopold Cerf 1996 (Repr.).
3. Descartes, *Epistola*, AT VII 3: *nihil est veritate antiquius*. cf. also Descartes, AT VII 464; *Epistola ad P. Dinet*, AT VII 579; AT VII 580: "[. . .] nihilque in mea, quod non sit vetus. Nam, quantum ad principia ea tantum admitto, quae omnibus omnino Philosophis hactenus communia fuere, suntque idcirco omnium antiquissima." [And there is nothing in mine that is not ancient. For as far as principles are concerned, I admit only those that have been generally common to all philosophers until now, and are therefore the most ancient of all] cf. *Epistola ad P. Dinet*, AT VII 596. On the ancient background of this motif, cf. Kobusch (2006), Chapter IV.
4. On the method of mathematical analysis, cf. especially R. Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, texte et commentaire par Gilson (1947, p. 188). I have taken the description of the method from Oeing-Hanhoff (1979, esp. pp. 40–43). cf. also Oeing-Hanhoff (1971); also Engfer (1982).
5. For this reason, Gouhier (1962) often speaks of Descartes' *Meditations* as a "metaphysical *Itinerarium*." However, only six days are filled with arduous spiritual exercises. "For Descartes, Sunday belongs not to philosophy, but to faith," says L. Oeing-Hanhoff in his contribution, underestimated by Cartesian studies: Oeing-Hanhoff (1979, p. 44).
6. See *Med. III*, AT VII 35, 5: "Nunc circumspiciam diligentius [. . .]"; similarly, *Med. III*, AT VII 35, 42, 27 und 158, 14: "[. . .] diligentissime circumspiciantur [. . .]." cf. also Descartes, *Princ. Phil.* I 13, AT VIII/1 9: "[. . .] undiquaque circumspicit [. . .]."
7. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Parabolae*, in: *Bernardi opera* 4, 283: "Then, appropriate exercises, that is, readings, meditations, prayers, and spiritual affections." Isaac de Stella, *Sermones*, 274/276: "Thus, exercise, or spiritual sense, consists in these three things, that is, reading, mediation and prayer."
8. cf. Rhabanus Maurus, *De Universo*, PL 111, 387 A–B: "The gymnasium is the general place for exercises. Yet there was a place in Athens where philosophy was taught, and the study of wisdom was practiced, for 'gymnasium' is Greek for what is called 'exercise' in Latin, that is, meditation."
9. cf., for instance, William of St. Thierry, *Commentatio in Cantica Canticorum ex S. Bernardi Sermonibus Contexta*, PL 184, 433 B/C: "Every kind of purificatory act, that is, which purifies us for the vision of God, such as vigils, fasts, readings, and moral regrets, are due to the grace of God."
10. cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *Homiliae in Ecclesiasten*, PL 175, 116 D–117 A: "Thus, meditation is a curious and sagacious faculty of the mind, which tries to investigate obscure things, and to unfold what is entangled." Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 59: "Meditation is frequent thought with good sense, which prudently investigates the cause and origin, the mode and usefulness of each thing." Richard of St. Victor, *Benjamin maior*, 8: "Meditation strives, often on arduous and rough paths, toward the goal of correct living, through

great mental exertion." Richard of St. Victor, *Benjamin maior*, 10: "Yet in this very point they differ the most from meditation, whose concern is always, with whatever diligence of effort, whatever mental difficulty, to learn every arduous thing, to break through what is obscure, and to penetrate what is hidden." Richard of St. Victor, *De exterminatione mali et promotione boni Super Quid est tibi mare*, PL 196, 1102 C: "It pertains to meditation to investigate what is hidden, to contemplation to admire what is evident, for meditation is the studious investigation of hidden truth."

11. *II. Resp.*, AT VII 135: "[. . .] ita scilicet ut, ad ea quae iam scripsi diligentius attendendo, liberet se praejudiciis, quibus forte lumen eius naturale obruitur, et primis notionibus, quibus nihil evidentius aut verius esse potest, [. . .] credere assuescat [so that, attending more diligently to what I have already written, he may free himself from prejudices, by which his natural light may be veiled, and that he may become accustomed [. . .] to believe in the primary notions, than which nothing can be more evident or more true]." On the conceptual opposition between "prejudice" and "primary" or "general notion," cf.also Descartes, *Princ. Phil.* I 50, AT VIII/1 24.
12. Descartes, *Synopsis*, AT VII 15; *Princ. Phil.* I 3, AT VIII/1 5. On the distinction between theory and practice, cf. also AT VII 149. 350.
13. Descartes, *Med.* I, AT VII 20,7. 12: *veri colores*. On Descartes' confrontation with traditional doctrines of colors, cf. Kobusch (1987), 218 f.
14. On this point, cf. Gregory (1974).
15. Descartes, *II. Med.*, AT VII 27,22: "supposui enim ista nihil esse."
16. Descartes, *IV. Resp.*, AT VII 249.
17. *Letter to Mersenne*, January 1630, AT I 110.
18. In the *Second Responses* (AT VII 134), Descartes implies that he is aware of the meaning of the notion of *ens rationis* in the sense of that which is nothing.
19. cf. also *VI Resp.,* AT VII 427: "Nam sane fieri non potest quin semper apud nosmetipsos experiamur nos cogitare; [. . .]" [For of course it cannot happen otherwise than that we always experience ourselves, within ourselves, as thinking]. Descartes obviously understands the "Cogito" in the sense, thematized particularly by the Franciscans, of the inner experience of our own act, which has the same degree of certainty as the *per se nota*. cf., for instance, Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia/3: Ordinatio I* d.3 p.1 q.4, 144ff.
20. Descartes, *VI. Resp.*, AT VII 422: "In general, however, it is enough it to know this with that internal knowledge that always precedes reflective knowledge [. . .] Thus, when one notices that one is thinking [. . .]" cf. AT VII 473: "advertens rem quae cogitat non posse non existere, [. . .]" [noticing that the thing he is thinking cannot fail to exist [. . .] AT VII 481: "Then noticing that nothing is known by me with more certitude and obviousness, than the fact that I am thinking [. . .]."
21. cf., for instance, AT VII 69; 219; 438; 481.
22. As quoted in Goldstein (2007, p. 31).

23. *II. Resp.*, AT VII 14, 1: "For such is the nature of our mind, that it forms general propositions from the cognition of particulars." cf. *Entretien avec Burman*, AT V 147: "We do not separate those propositions from singular things, but we consider them within such things."
24. Descartes, *Princ. Phil.* I 7, AT VIII/1 7; cf. I 10, 8. 10; I 12, 9, 5; *II. Resp.* AT VII 155.
25. Descartes, *Princ. Phil.* I 45, AT VIII/1 22: "I call 'clear' what is present and open to the attentive mind." Descartes took up the medieval distinction between what is evident (of knowledge) and what is certain (for instance, of belief), cf. for instance AT VII 519: "It is one thing to perceive clearly, and other to know with certainty, since we know many things with certainty which we no longer perceive clearly, not only from divine faith, but also because we perceived them clearly in the past."
26. *Entretien avec Burman*, AT V 147: "Because, that is, <that major premise> is always implicitly presupposed, and precedes; yet it does not follow that I always expressly and explicitly know that it precedes and know it before my conclusion, because, that is, I only attend to what I experience within me, such as 'I think, therefore I am', but I do not attend in this way to that general notion: 'whatever thinks, exists'."
27. Descartes, *Med. III*, AT VII 45: "And consequently how there is present within me the perception of the infinite and the finite, that is, of God and of myself."
28. *Entretien avec Burman*, AT V 153: "For explicitly we can know our lack of perfection prior to God's perfection, because we can attend to ourselves before attending to God."
29. cf. Kobusch (2003, p. 432).
30. cf. AT VII 124 f. and p. 214.
31. Descartes, *Princ. Phil.* I 13, AT VIII/1 pp. 9–10.
32. As Rodis-Lewis (1993, 314f.) has shown, Descartes makes a strong terminological opposition between knowledge and conviction in the second *Responses*, the Fifth Meditation and in the *Principles*. In the *Letter to Regius* of May 24, 1640, AT III 65, this position is defined as follows: Mere "persuasion" still allows room for doubt, whereas "knowledge" is born from a justification so strong that it can never be shaken by any stronger ground. Those who do not know God cannot have such a justification.
33. Descartes, *Princ. Phil.* I 75, AT VIII/1 38: "One must attend in order to the notions which we have within us, all of them and them alone; those which we know clearly and distinctly when we attend to them in this way are to be judged true." Descartes, *Princ. Phil.* I 49, AT VIII/1 23: "Yet like some eternal truth [. . .] it is called a common notion or an axiom."
34. On the ancient understanding of philosophy as attention, see Hadot 2002, Kobusch 2006, 36–8, 143–4. On the role of attention in phenomenology, see Goldstein 2007, Waldenfels 2004.

35. Descartes to P. Mesland, May 2, 1644, AT IV 116–117.
36. cf., for instance, Richard of St. Victor, *Benjamin minor*, Chapter 87, p. 344: "For as far as general consideration is concerned, just as one may understand in Benjamin the grace of contemplation, so in Joseph we may understand that of meditation. In the proper sense, however, and more explicitly, it is pure intelligence that is designated by Benjamin, and true prudence by Joseph. By Benjamin, that is, that kind of contemplation that deals with invisible things; by Joseph, that kind of meditation that has its place in ethics. Indeed, the understanding of invisible things pertains to pure intelligence, whereas moral circumspection pertains to true prudence."
37. Descartes, *III. Resp.*, AT VII 191: "Yet I have assumed nothing here about freedom other than what we all feel within us"; cf. also *Med. IV*, AT VII 57 and AT VII 377.
38. Descartes, *Med. IV*, AT VII 58: "gradus libertatis";cf. *Letter to Mesland*, February 9, 1645, AT IV 173.
39. Descartes, *Med. IV*, AT VII 58 and 59: "Quod satis his diebus sum expertus, [. . .]."
40. Descartes, *Med. I*, AT VII 22: "Indeed, I am concerned here not with what is to be done, but merely with what is to be known."
41. Descartes, *Entretien avec Burman*, AT V 159: "In matters of good and evil, however, when the will is indifferent to both, it is in a state of vice, since it should seek only the good without any indifference, unlike in the theoretical domain."
42. To Mesland, February 9, 1645, AT IV 173.
43. Descartes, *Med. IV*, AT VII 58: "When I was examining these days whether anything existed in the world, and I noticed that from the very fact that I was examining this point, it followed evidently that I exist, I could not fail to judge that which I was thinking so clearly to be true [. . .] and thus I believed it all the more spontaneously and freely, the less I was indifferent to precisely this matter."
44. *To Mesland*, February 9, 1645, AT IV 174.
45. Descartes, *Med. V*, AT VII 69. cf. *Med. IV*, AT VII 53: "so that I am confident that nothing can be known by the human mind with more obviousness or certitude."
46. cf. *Letter to Mersenne*, December 24, 1640, AT III 266.
47. Hadot, Pierre. 1987. *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, 2nd ed. Paris: Albin Michel [Hadot, Pierre. 1995. *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. Oxford: Blackwell.]

11

Leading a Philosophical Life in Dark Times

The Case of Leonard Nelson and His Followers[1]

Fernando Leal

Pierre Hadot has almost single-handedly changed our perception of ancient philosophy. Far from being just a set of clever questions, dark answers, and subtle arguments and distinctions, he showed that it was, or at least could be for some ancient philosophers, a way of life. To take the most famous representative of this possibility, Socrates certainly wanted to ask and did ask everyone "how the soul could be best" (*Apol.* 29E) or "in which way one should live" (*Rsp.* 352D, *Grg.* 500C), but he also insisted that all this asking was a means to achieve a particular state of mind and actually to live in a certain way. Not only did he follow the argument wherever it led theoretically (*Crt.* 46B) but he also actually followed it wherever it led practically – to the very end.

It is easy for anybody who engages in philosophy in a more or less professional way to think that Hadot's demonstration has merely historical value. Doing philosophy today means obviously either studying its history (including Hadot's version) or participating in discussions and debates of a philosophical nature, arguing for or against this or that particular philosophical issue. Once upon a time philosophy may indeed have meant leading a philosophical life, yet it has probably not been that for quite a while and it certainly does not seem to be that here and now.

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Contemporary philosophers, even those who focus on ethical questions, are not supposed to live up to whatever their inquiries have concluded is the "right" thing or the "good" life. In fact, we do not particularly look up to any of our most celebrated philosophers in that specific sense that Hadot has shown us to be characteristic of ancient philosophy (see Hadot 2005). We may admire those ancient philosophers who had the courage and the mission to try and live a philosophical life as well as they could. We may feel nostalgia for this whole institution of philosophy as a way of life. It nevertheless appears to be something that belongs to the past – irredeemably gone and lost and done with. The days seem very distant when a Socrates would accept to die, to be executed by the State, rather than renounce the life he had chosen, the mission he was charged with. The reader beware – I am not saying that this is a bad thing, nor a good thing for that matter. That would be a completely different kind of argument, one way or the other. I am just describing what I see around me in the hope that the readers will sufficiently agree to my description as to open their minds and grasp the peculiar nature of the exception I want to talk about.

Before entering into any details, this is the gist of the story. As the nineteenth century approaches its end, a child is born into an affluent and highly cultured Berlin family with both Jewish and Protestant roots. His name is Leonard Nelson. As a boy, he discovers philosophy and is powerfully attracted to a particular brand of academic philosophy. He starts early and effectively to use his considerable talents to cultivate, enlarge, deepen, and develop the system of philosophy he is attracted to. He struggles in academia to find a niche and achieve recognition for his ideas. So far, this is a quite ordinary and common story. But then something unexpected happens. At some point, this young teacher finds that those of his students and colleagues who appreciate his ideas and methods consider the whole thing a mere intellectual game, having nothing whatsoever to do with their lives. These are dark times in Central Europe. A war of unimaginably violent proportions is taking place (World War I) at the end of which the two great German empires lie in ruins; political turmoil leads to a very unstable form of democracy; unemployment and inflation soar beyond anything people had imagined possible; the streets are filled with political bandits and charlatans.

Nelson is in his early thirties by then, and is so thoroughly disappointed at the passivity of life in the ivory tower that without completely relinquishing his university post, he embarks into a wholly new, very nonacademic career, which will end with his founding a political

movement and two pedagogic institutions (one for children, one for adults), whose avowed aim is to realize on earth the ideas reached by sheer thinking – both alone and together with a group of friends. His early death – in the aftermath of the Soviet revolution, while Italian Fascism had just begun to show its ugly face, and on the eve of the irresistible ascension of the Nazis – did not cause the movement to dissolve. On the contrary, his followers formed one of the most solid elements of the German resistance movement, some of them being killed in the process, all this by and for their philosophical ideals. Remember Socrates?

My contention is that this whole phenomenon is an extraordinary instance of philosophy as a way of life, very much in Hadot's sense. To prove this, is a task larger than what can reasonably be accomplished in a single paper. All I can hope to achieve is to sketch a few aspects of the Nelsonian movement, so that future scholars can someday complete the picture. Although Hadot has proved a master detective in finding out how different philosophical schools emerged and developed in ancient, especially Hellenistic times, the historical evidence is unavoidably spare and fragmentary. After reading him, many questions arise that will remain forever unanswered or the subject of speculation. In contrast, there is so much historical evidence about the Nelsonian movement, both published and lying around in archives, that there is ample room for a complete case study on how philosophy can become a way of life for a whole group of people. If I am right, then the general phenomenon of philosophy as a way of life can be better understood and historians can use it to know more about the many puzzles of how it worked in the past.

Nelson's Philosophy as a Way of Life

At first sight, Leonard Nelson looks like an ordinary specimen of a professional philosopher – a man who writes books and teaches college students. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Nelson arrived at conclusions not dissimilar to many other people before him, notably Immanuel Kant and Jakob Friedrich Fries, whose follower he declared himself to be – namely that ethics *demanded* changes in the way individuals lived and societies were arranged. He expounded his conclusions, and the arguments leading up to them, in lectures and seminars, like any professor of philosophy. He put his arguments in writing and then brought them to

the public in the shape of papers and books (posthumously collected in nine thick volumes). So far, so good. Just a common or garden philosopher. *But then* – and here is the crucial difference between Nelson and his fellow professors – *he proceeded to try to put the said ethical demands into practice*. To do so, Nelson saw that he needed to get organized with others. So he first tried to influence his students and colleagues by several means, including a modified version of the Socratic method. Seeing that very few joined him, he then started a political organization for the purpose of changing society. He also saw that it was necessary that people should be educated to be politically active and to become leaders of the movement and, eventually, of the new society. So he started an educational facility for the purpose of training the future leaders. All this in itself would be highly unusual for a professor of philosophy. But the real *crux* is that both the political organization and the educational facility were conceived as communities in which people lived a philosophical life. I argue that the individual and group life of Nelson and his followers constitute a case of philosophy as a way of life in the sense described by Pierre Hadot.

First, we should consider what we might call the imperative of consistency. Philosophy as a theoretical activity was for Nelson not enough; it had to have a practical effect. Thinking had to be followed by acting: a philosopher is somebody who does what he preaches. I want to argue that, insofar as a philosopher first tries to live according to his philosophy, and in that process looks for a transformation of his own life, we can say that this is a proper case of philosophy as a way of life. The first example of this is of course Socrates himself, who first refused to change his life when faced with accusations that might mean incarceration and execution, then refused to escape from prison, and finally accepted death at the hands of a henchman.

Now, the very concept of a philosophical school seems to imply a community of people, so that the individual form of life exemplified by Socrates in antiquity or Simone Weil in the twentieth century can only be the beginning of it – philosophy as a way of life in the first degree, as it were. Yet if the philosopher organizes other people as teachers in such a way that they, too, can live according to his philosophy, then this would be philosophy as a way of life in the second and fuller degree. This certainly seems to be the case in all ancient schools of philosophy. If I am right, Nelson fulfils both criteria; he definitely tried to live according to his philosophy and, on the strength of that, he created organizations for

other people to do the same. In fact, for Nelson these two degrees were never separated. For he saw the philosophical life as a struggle, and in a letter to a young friend who had asked him what were Nelson's demands of those who wanted to work with him, he wrote:[2]

> I can appreciate from experience the value of *comradeship* in the struggle to realize ideals in social life and I have always looked for comrades here, since I never thought I could sustain and win this struggle just on my own. [Eichler and Hart 1938, p. 223]

Already in 1903 – Nelson was only 21 – he founded a society for the study of Fries' philosophy, whose members were all academics from different fields (Franke, 1991, pp. 66–67). Together, they managed to rescue Fries from oblivion publishing many of his works and launching an outstanding philosophical journal.[3] When World War I started, making the regular meeting of the Fries society difficult, he wrote a couple of circular letters in order to keep in touch, but also to invite its members to make the transition from thought to action. I quote from the second one, dated July 21, 1917:

> The scholarly development of the members of our society by means of lectures and discussions was up to now a priority, whereas the practical tasks were limited to the work done by individual members in other organizations, especially in those one could expect to contribute to the prevention of war. But now that war has begun, in this time of extreme need we ought to do something else besides training in dialectical methods . . .
>
> I have from the very beginning tried to make clear to my disciples that theoretical understanding is not all that matters, even that there is a huge danger in reaching a relatively high intellectual level without at the same time striving to build one's character in equal measure . . .
>
> We must finally break with the idea that studying the Friesian philosophy is just a valuable form of entertainment, with the tendency to aestheticism, and especially with that skepticism, easily turned into a cheap excuse, that avoids acting by pointing out how difficult it is to apply our principles . . .
>
> (. . .) The spirit of Friesian philosophy can only come to life amongst us when each one carries inside that seriousness of conviction which can withstand the test of action. It is not the number of principles which we recognize as binding that matters, but making them true in our lives . . .

> (. . .) We have to build a philosophical school in the old Greek sense. It is only when the fear to act shall yield to a view of life that rejoices in action that we will claim the right to be called a philosophical school . . . [Eichler and Hart 1938, pp. 228–230]

We can see that Nelson understood as well as Hadot how ancient philosophy was not just a matter of thinking but also and ultimately a matter of living one's life in a certain way. The Fries society did not even reply to this letter of Nelson (Torbov 2005, pp. 137–138). In spite of the disappointment this meant for him, not least on account of the high academic quality of that circle's members, he was adamant – he suspended his work there and started to look for collaborators outside academic circles in the working classes. His philosophical school was thus reborn as a militant political organization – the International Youth League (*Internationaler Jugend-Bund*), later refounded as the Militant Socialist International (*Internationaler Sozialistischer Kampf-Bund*), with a British Section, which during the war became the Socialist Vanguard Group.

How did Nelson's philosophy as a way of life look in more detail? An inspection of the available facts shows that several of the external signs of a philosophical life in antiquity reemerge in the Nelsonian movement, although perhaps not all of them. This is the second part of my argument that philosophy in Nelson's sense – what he and all his followers, in the wake of Kant, called 'critical philosophy' – was a modern instance of philosophy as a way of life. In the following section, I shall use the available space to examine only the most obvious aspects of it. But before I do that, the question arises as to what the connection between the theory and practice in philosophy as a way of life in general is. Is it always the case that the decision to transform one's life and the concrete way to carry out that transformation, the particular practices constituting that life, are as it were the logical conclusion from a philosopheme or a series of philosophemes? We shall see that this is in fact the crucial question in Nelson's critical philosophy. For the time being, we can only say that in the case of ancient philosophy, the evidence is fragmentary; and it is an open question how the transition from thinking so to living so does or should take place according to ancient philosophers. We know from his celebrated *Seventh Letter* that Plato believed that familiarity and cultivation of dialectics among similarly minded people, eventually under the guidance of a master, might lead to a transformation of people. But apart from the model dialogues, we know little about how in detail the change was supposed to take place. Most Platonic dialogues rather

show what we may call a resistance to conversion. In other traditions, like Zen, we are told that certain abrupt actions on the part of one's master are supposed to effect important changes in the disciple. Was there something similar in Plato's academy or in other philosophical schools of antiquity? Is, say, Alcibiades' (ultimately failed) conversion, as described in the *Symposion*, a typical case? I leave the question for the specialists to answer. In the case of Nelson and his group, we know a little more, and I am sure research would unearth more details.

First of all, we have to consider the effect of Nelson's own life and personality. One of his followers, Erich Lewinski, explains that he did not acquiesce in the philosophical way of life neither because of Nelson's "scientific work," which he initially did not understand, nor because of Nelson's "political conviction," which was just not attractive and enthusing enough.[4] It was a kind of aura, the aura of an "awakened heart" and a "clean soul":

> When you met Nelson, when you saw his uncompromising attitude, not at all only towards others, but in the first place towards himself, then you were ashamed of your own tepidness, and you understood that his seemingly hard stance, his rigorism, which was not easy to stand, and many never could, was just one side of his being, whereas the other side was quite tender.
>
> Both sides were born out of a fervent love of justice, which utterly determined Nelson's being, his personal work and life. There was nothing abstract here, but the loving relationship to the living person, the appreciation of people's relation to other people and to the environment.
>
> What most mattered to Nelson was to bring order into the relations of people to each other, to help them to become right. From there, from this unconditional task, forth came – I believe – his huge paedagogical appeal. When you had talked to Nelson, it dawned on you, and you understood, without it being explicit, what he meant by 'human dignity'. That was also not abstract at all: It was somehow connected to the fulfilment of demands directed to the person, not arbitrary demands, put to one by other people or by Nelson himself, but rather demands which anybody could discover by himself with a little application, and which at bottom boiled down to nothing other than an insight, which Nelson's paedagogy meant to awake and managed to awake, the insight that one should respect other persons in the same way that one wanted to be respected by others.
>
> If you accepted that, then everything else followed: One's readiness to intervene grew, one's opportunistic tendencies became smaller. That didn't

> happen without renouncing many fond habits, without personal sacrifices. Yet what one gave up was compensated by the feeling of increased value. [Specht and Eichler 1953, pp. 271–272]

This is of course only the testimony of one person; and we cannot conclude that the "conversion" always happened in the same way. Yet other testimonies, both in writing and in personal communication, indicate that something similar happened quite often.

Lewinski speaks of fond habits a follower of Nelson had to relinquish, sacrifices one had to make. What were those? In a very thorough sociological study of Nelson's political organizations, two demands of a philosophical life in Nelson's sense are emphasized (Link 1964, pp 71–72, 106). One was vegetarianism, or the prohibition against eating meat. The history of philosophy affords many instances of such a prohibition, often defended on metaphysical grounds and sometimes on ethical ones. In the case of Nelson and his followers, vegetarianism was the direct conclusion of a long reasoning chain.[5] In a nutshell, the argument says that human beings have the duty not to cause unnecessary pain to any being that is capable of feeling it, which to the best of our knowledge includes animals as well as people. Vegetarianism would be one of the many normative consequences that follow from this statement.

Nelson's followers not only had to adapt to an unusual and uncomfortable diet, endure the ridicule of their socialist comrades, sustain losses in the potential membership of their group and be branded as a "sect,"[6] as Link explains, but they were also for a while afflicted by malnutrition while they learnt how to cook their meals without compromising their health (Rene Saran, personal communication). Zeko Torbov, a Bulgarian follower of Nelson, describes his conversion to vegetarianism in great detail:

> In the beginning I noticed that food among Nelson and his followers was always meat-free . . . At some point I was told that everyone here was a vegetarian. A few comments on meat consumption and on the rights of animals were made. What it was all about, however, I didn't understand . . . At first I ate the vegetarian fare, because I didn't want to talk about food, which had never been a problem in my life before. When Professor Nelson, however, over the next weeks directed conversation towards vegetarianism, something seemed to awake in me for the first time since my arrival. For a moment I was strangely disturbed. I sensed that for these people thoughts,

> words and actions agreed with each other. They did not talk without thinking through what they said, and what they said, that they did.
>
> The conversation with Professor Nelson was neither long nor profound. It started and finished in a relaxed and simple way. When asked what I thought of vegetarianism, I replied that worries about animals had to take second rank:
>
> 'More important and of current relevance is the struggle against injustice and people's exploitation of people. Once that struggle is finished, it will be the turn to think about the animals.'
>
> 'And yet, nobody prevents you from doing right by the animals, do they? Why should you not renounce meat consumption, given that no one is fighting your decision to become a vegetarian?'
>
> The problem of vegetarianism seemed to me so insignificant that I could not understand why we should talk about it. The whole idea I had of this problem was no more than what I knew about vegetarianism in Bulgaria, what its ethical foundations were, what Tolstoy taught . . .
>
> 'We want first to finish the greater work, later the rest can follow', I said finally.
>
> Nelson, however, didn't want to discuss with me about the foundations of vegetarianism in Bulgaria, nor did he want to explain at length his own position on this question. He insisted once more on his original idea.
>
> 'The struggle against people's exploitation by people is difficult and will take a long time yet. In that struggle you will have against you the defenders of the old order, who are still numerous and strong. Why won't you start with the smaller task, which does not demand so much . . . '
>
> For a while I hesitated. It was so simple: Before starting with the great task one should finish the small one; to begin the struggle against the injustice in public life by keeping an eye on one's own actions, so that one does not commit any injustice oneself. It became clear to me that the right thing to do was to become a vegetarian if I wanted to work for the victory of justice in society.
>
> And so I became a vegetarian out of conviction. [Torbov 2005, pp. 40–42]

This description shows three things: (1) how insignificant the detail of a way of life might appear to a newcomer; (2) how stubborn Nelson could be in insisting on its importance; (3) how a conversion could take place without entering into the philosophical reasoning that allegedly supported it. The reader should see that the conversion happens on the

strength of a relatively unphilosophical argument. Torbov himself says immediately after the quotation that it was only later that he came to understand the foundation (in the philosophy of law) underlying Nelson's vegetarianism and to see that it was completely different from the philosophical arguments he knew from Bulgaria. The philosophical way of life seems so far not to depend on the comprehension of a philosophical doctrine.[7]

Once the doctrine was understood and assimilated, however, it was probably branded in people's hearts and minds. A personal anecdote might help drive this point home. I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of Nelson's philosophical assistant, Grete Hermann, before she died. Just coincidentally, I had been reading *The Secret Life of Plants*, a mixed bag of science and fantasy, that reported some serious-sounding research suggesting that plants may be capable of feeling and thus of feeling pain, even in the absence of a nervous system. I did not have the knowledge or skill to check any of this, but the philosophical implications were pretty obvious. Nelson's argument about the prohibition not to cause unnecessary pain, being completely general, would have to include plants should it ever be proved that they are sentient beings just like people and animals. So, after explaining about this book, I asked Grete what she or any Nelsonian would do if by any chance such a claim should be substantiated. She listened to me intently, then looked at me with great seriousness and replied with her stern and wonderfully disciplined contralto voice: "We would eat stones." Although I did not quite know what to expect, the answer was anything but surprising. Grete was a trained mathematician and natural scientist, so it was not difficult to imagine her accepting and recommending a diet of thoroughly synthetic food. This is as complete an example of consistency in one's way of life as one could imagine.

This was then Nelson's demand of vegetarianism. The second demand he made of his followers was to resign from any church one might belong to. Popular and organized religion has been an object of philosophical suspicion ever since Xenophanes, and the range of reasons for such suspicion and even rejection of established religion is even wider than in the case of carnivorous practices. Nelson deploys a complex argument that is basically a legacy of classical Enlightenment.[8] In a nutshell, all churches are based on authority, and authority overrides the use of the individual's reasoning capacities. Additional pieces of the argument include the inducement to resignation, fatalism, and quietism in the face of social evils, as well as the active role the church would often have played

in maintaining the status quo (Link 1964 pp. 72–73). For these reasons, the political organizations created by Nelson actively pursued a campaign against the churches (Lemke-Müller 1988 pp. 72–79).

To return to the changes in people's way of life, leaving the church at the individual level could and sometimes did cause acute personal anguish and conflicts with one's family or community in some cases, as I have found both from personal communication and through reading of published and unpublished materials.[9] I have been told both by and of some Nelsonians that breaking with the church was the most difficult part of living the life demanded by critical philosophy. Of course, this was not always the case. Some came from an enlightened home, in which very little or no religious instruction was given (Susanne Miller's case; see Dertinger 2005, pp. 16–17); some were members of religious families but had broken with the church before encountering Nelson's philosophical demand (thus Mary Saran; see Saran 1976, pp. 18–22). When describing her first experience in reading Nelson's *Critique of Practical Reason* (*CW4*), Mary Saran writes she felt sure of having found

> something for which I had been groping in my revolt against the church: the basis for a view of life and the purposes which should guide it, a view not dependent on revelation and a supernatural force, nor tied to the fetters of any dogma, but giving free range to the mind searching for truth. [Saran 1976, pp. 42]

The demand to break with the church could sometimes become unreasonable, as we can see from a conversation Zeko Torbov had with one of Nelson's close collaborators, Nora Block:

> The question was whether somebody who respected himself and wanted to fight against people's exploitation of people, could be a member of a church, given that the church in that respect committed the greatest injustice. She [Nora] meant that there was no other organization in society that violated the human spirit, the human conscience more than the church . . .
>
> I agreed with Nora Block. I strove, however, to explain to her that in Bulgaria the church question was different. Everybody there is born, lives and dies as a member of the church, for there is no law that regulates the position of free-thinkers. It is not legally possible to have a civil marriage or to leave the church. No institution exists where one can apply, even provisionally, in order, for instance, to plan one's own burial without intervention of the church . . . [Torbov 2005, pp. 70–71]

Torbov was a lawyer, so he knew about and was eminently qualified to explain these and other peculiarities of Bulgaria's legal institutions, adding that the Orthodox church there had nothing like the influence the Catholic and the Protestant churches had in Germany at the time. All his explanations had no effect on Nora, so that Torbov had to promise to write back to Bulgaria and apply for a resignation from the church. The reply from an officer of the local church came predictably back stating that this was not legally possible. Although Nelson would probably not have doubted Torbov or surmised that he was evading the issue, this anecdote illustrates how important this decision was.

It is well known that Kant assigned an important philosophical role to religion (the conceptions of God and an afterlife were given pride of place in his critique of practical reason as well as in his system of ethics), and so did Fries. Neither philosopher had just any religion in mind; they clearly meant monotheism, and more specifically Christianity, and even more specifically some Protestant variety of it. This was not Nelson's idea. He certainly recognized the importance of religious feelings and aspirations, and not only wrote quite substantially about them but also introduced religious elements in his pedagogic projects (see especially *CW8:* 303–328). Yet he thought of all churches as inimical to reason, as somehow or other trying to replace reason with authority. He was not a rabid atheist and his enemy was not faith or mysticism as such, except if and when they falsified philosophical and especially moral reasoning. Although I have not been able to find exact evidence of this, I gather that quite a few of his followers were Christians and probably remained so after joining the movement, at least insofar as subjective faith and values were concerned; only their allegiance to an organized church, with all the theoretical and practical implications of such an allegiance, had to be renounced as a part of this philosophical way of life. One important consequence of the radical break with the church was that children born into the group and educated either in the communities in which members usually lived or in the various schools organized for that purpose were not given any religious instruction in the traditional sense.

These two fundamental conditions for membership in Nelson's groups and thus for entering the philosophical way of life were of course part of an overarching demand for active political participation to change society at large. The desire to fight for the ideals of social justice and against exploitation and other evils of the world was in fact what attracted many people in the first place. When these aspirations were

strong enough, they made it possible to break with organized religion at all levels and to change one's dietary habits, even in those cases where this caused physical or mental discomfort. Philosophy as a way of life demanded this, on the grounds that such changes were a part of the political struggle and ends in themselves. Other practices were encouraged that were not ends in themselves but whose justification was merely pragmatic. Thus, abstaining from alcohol and tobacco, austerity in food and dress, hard training in sport and mechanical skills, and even celibacy and pregnancy avoidance were a part and parcel of daily life. They were not considered ends in themselves, but vital elements in the building of one's character and in one's preparation for, or facilitation of, fighting for the common cause.[10] René Bertholet, a 21-year-old member of the workers' movement, wanted to be a professional revolutionary in Lenin's sense. He was invited to join the educational facility founded by Nelson at an old country mill in Northern Germany, the "Walkemühle." Young René was eager to "acquire the theoretical weapons with which he could interpret the world in order to change it," but he got something he had not bargained for: "instead of throwing ourselves into the study of theories and books," as all those prospective Nelsonian leaders and practical philosophers had expected and were anxious to do, "we had to work with wood and iron" in the two workshops of the mill (Bertholet 1960, pp. 323). There were two reasons for this. The first one is beautifully rendered by one of René's comrades, a young woman called Mascha Oettli:[11]

> The tendency, quite common in young enthusiastic people, to use inaccurate slogans and to support their assertions on halfways understood theories was countered, in the case of the newly arriving students, by practical work in the metalworking and carpentry shops. When you drill a hole inaccurately, this is more easily seen than when you make mistakes in promulgated theories. You learn to work with exactitude. [Horster and Krohn 1983, p. 84]

The second reason was explained to René, Mascha, and the others by the head of the school, Minna Specht, one of Nelson's earliest followers and closest collaborators:

> We should build a firm working team and learn to overcome the difficulties of living together for a work that didn't allow for any bluffing and whose organization required the collaboration of each individual . . . [Minna] drew

> a parallel: The transformation of our society requires an organization of devoted fighters, free of personal intrigues, built on perfect mutual trust. How can you prepare yourselves for such a mission, if you are not capable of working together? [Bertholet 1960, pp. 324]

The historical events proved how important this was. A few years after Nelson's death, when Hitler came to power, his followers distinguished themselves as underground fighters against the Nazis (Lemke-Müller 1996). The coherence of their actions depended vitally on the relationship of trust, which was so central a part of Nelson's ethical and pedagogical thinking and, therefore, to the philosophical way of life emanating from it.

Nelson's Spiritual Exercises

So far my initial argument yields *prima facie* evidence for saying that Nelson's groups, communities, and organizations exemplify philosophy as a way of life: they strove for consistency between thinking and acting, and such consistency demanded from them changes in their way of life that were radical and onerous. However, something is missing from this picture. In several of his essays, Pierre Hadot has given us an impressive exposition of the difference between ordinary and philosophical lives, as well as a detailed description of the "spiritual exercises" designed for the maintenance and deepening of the commitment to, and understanding of, philosophy as a way of life (see Hadot 1995, pp. 56–64, 82–109). To achieve a full demonstration of my thesis that Nelson actually managed to found a philosophical school very much like the ones that come alive in Hadot's writings, it would be necessary to follow Hadot step-by-step and to trace all the parallels between the "exercises" of the ancient philosophers and those of Nelson and his followers. I must here rest content with a few indications that I hope will make my case stronger.

The most obvious spiritual exercise of the Nelsonian school is the Socratic dialogue (SD), a discipline Nelson devised when he started to teach at the University of Göttingen, during if not before World War I. He employed this method in some of his seminars to the surprise, dismay, and scorn of his colleagues (Nelson *CW1:* 269–316). When he started his political organizations, he often came to use it with his comrades; and at the "Walkemühle," it had a central place in the process of teaching and learning (R. Bertholet 1960, p. 325; H. Bertholet 1960,

pp. 281–283; Nielsen 1985). After Nelson's death and during the underground resistance movement, it was used to strengthen his followers' convictions and resolve (Miller 2000; original in Lemke-Müller 1996: 32–45). After the war, one of the teachers at the "Walkemühle," Gustav Heckmann, used it to probe into the values of the German youth who had succumbed to the appeal of the Nazis, developed it in new ways, and applied it both in his college teaching and *extra muros* in small groups that met for several days in a secluded venue (Heckmann 1981; Heckman and Krohn 1988; see also Horster and Krohn 1983). Jos Kessels, a Dutch philosopher who learned the method with Heckmann, started to use it within organizations of the private sector (Kessels 1996, 2001). Today, Nelson's method is increasingly used in several parts of the world for educational, organizational, and general enlightenment purposes (Saran and Neisser 2004) and it continues to develop in many ways (Shipley and Mason 2004).

In spite of the changes, additions, and corrections introduced along the almost 100 years the SD has been practiced, it has kept a core that can be described in broad terms as follows:

(1) It is usually practiced by a small group, say 6–10 participants and a facilitator; the facilitator is not a participant, in that he or she is not allowed to contribute to the dialogue, but only to steer it in such a way that the special features of the SD are actually realized. It is guided by one question (which does not preclude other questions being asked); the spirit of inquiry dominates the proceedings; no free association of ideas is as such allowed; the question that guides the dialogue can be proposed by one of the participants or by the facilitator, but the important thing is that it has to be agreed upon by all participants as well worth asking.

(2) Although it can be and has been used to work through epistemological and mathematical questions, it is mainly concerned with ethical values, principles, and dilemmas; no special expertise is needed or required; participants just express their own convictions, ideals, and feelings as best they can; although the particular question, which guides any single dialogue, may be different, at bottom SDs are somehow or other ultimately related to Socrates' question: how we ought to live.

(3) SDs are open-ended: a slow progress is of the essence; no particular result is urged or expected; the important thing is for every participant to understand what is being said at all times.

(4) In an SD, people have to say what they think without quoting authorities, feigning hypothetical situations or speculating about mere possibilities. The statements produced by participants have to be based on experiences drawn from their own lives.

(5) SDs are not about words; even if very often the guiding question (say, "why do we need rules?" or "what are we fighting for?") leads within a particular dialogue to a question which seems to be asking for a definition ("what *is* a rule?," "what *is* a principle?"), the participants in such a dialogue are never really striving for a definition, but for a deeper sense of their values; in a dialogue we often struggle with words to express our innermost convictions and feelings, but words as such are not the important things, so any definition of terms would leave us cold; so when we ask "what is X?," what we really want to know is what is it about X that we really care for, why should we prefer one kind of X over another, and so on.

(6) SDs are dialogues in depth; although a robust sense of humor is never misplaced, an SD is not a battle of wits, which would remain on a superficial level; the deepest thoughts and the most serious convictions of the participants have to be probed; participants may be surprised to find that they run out of words or that they are not so sure any more of what they think or mean.

(7) An SD is completely free of jargon of any kind; no special knowledge or terminology is allowed, either philosophical, scientific, or technical; one does not "talk shop" here; participants have to use the plainest and the most ordinary kind of language they can muster; they have to express themselves with utmost clarity and make as few assumptions or presuppositions as they can, and be prepared to explain everything they say to any candid inquirer within the group.

(8) The SD has the ultimate purpose of allowing for self-transformation, that is, to be able to better understand and to strengthen one's own values, convictions, and ideals, and on the basis of this process to go out and change one's own life as well as the conditions of the world in which one lives (family, school, community, work, society in general) in such a way that those conditions can become more ethical, more decent, more humane.

(9) The SD consciously, explicitly, and deliberately presupposes that the truth about the questions it can be applied to, can be found – indeed that it can be found through this method (although perhaps not exclusively through this method).

I hope the reader will agree that SD is strikingly similar to the dialogues we find in Plato, although not all features just described are equally highlighted in all of them. Moreover, the historical evidence shows that the original use of SD was part of a series of practices that included all the features described by Hadot (1995, pp. 59–64, 82–93, 101–109):

Elaborating a system of principles and writing it up. This was the main theoretical task of Nelson's life. He dedicated a huge amount of time and energy to this. His writing was mainly directed to ethics, but he made remarkable contributions to philosophical methodology, general epistemology, formal logic, the philosophy of mathematics, the history of philosophy, and the philosophy of law, that earned the respect even of his enemies. Much of Nelson's writing is dedicated to refuting his adversaries, which is of course a common feature of all philosophical schools of antiquity. For Nelson refutation was a serious matter, with practical consequences; and while the same was the case of ancient philosophy, it was much less so for Nelson's contemporaries.

Indefatigably teaching that system. Although he had a very busy political life, Nelson never relinquished his hard-won positions as a reader in philosophy at the University of Göttingen since 1909, and he taught his system of critical philosophy in course after course until his death in 1927 (Franke 1991, pp. 102–103). His teaching covered all fields of philosophy: logic, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics, history of philosophy, and the philosophy of mathematics, natural science, religion, and law. Outside academia, he also organized and led courses for his political collaborators, although they were far less extensive than those destined for college students. In fact, all his books were developed from the courses he taught, and his essays were mostly lectures and addresses for different audiences. The preparation and delivery of his lectures and courses were as careful as the conversations and discussions afterwards; and the writing itself was subject to innumerable transcriptions and revisions (Torbov 2005, pp. 115–117, 177).

Reading the texts in which the system itself is expounded, or the authors considered as its predecessors and pioneers. Both in special intra- and extramural courses and by means of individual or group tutorials, Nelson encouraged his followers to study closely both the books he wrote and other significant works of the history of philosophy (see e.g., Blencke 1960, p. 36; Eichler and Hart 1938, pp. 244–268; Torbov 2005, pp. 83–91, 117–119, 123, 134–136, 143). The most important works to read,

apart from his own, were of course those of Kant, Fries, and the nineteenth century Friesians. In fact, one of the purposes of the Fries society was to find old editions and manuscripts by Fries and the Friesians, to reprint them, and to study and discuss them in groups (Franke 1991, pp. 67–68). He demanded that such reading be done slowly and meticulously as well as openly and fearlessly. Also, he made sure that his own writings were also approached with such a critical attitude.

Commenting on this or that part of the system, amplifying, deepening, and developing its content, scope, and range of applications. The whole intellectual movement from Kant through Fries to Nelson was based on the idea that a philosophical system had two parts, the "critical" part and the "doctrinal" part, the former laying the foundation for the latter. The "doctrine" (or "system" in the narrow sense) was naturally an extension and development of the "critical" part, and especially of its innermost core, what Nelson called the "deduction of the moral law." It seems that he struggled with this core for many years and only considered himself to have solved all the problems by 1915 (Blencke 1960, pp. 66–68). For Nelson everything depended on the core and, whatever difficulties may have emerged in the meantime, he never returned to revise his views. It is clear that, to use Hadot's words, "[t]his type of investigation is always reserved for the more advanced students, for whom it is an exercise of reason that strengthens them in their philosophical life" (1995, p. 61). During Nelson's life, the only such "advanced student" was Grete Hermann, who struggled all her life with the same questions – a kind of continuous dialogue in and with the spirit of Nelson (the most important products of her reflections and elaborations can be consulted in Hermann 1985, pp. 97–210). Another individual stands out who did not have the privilege of meeting Nelson and only knew him through his writings, Paul Branton, who actually decided to study psychology in order to better grapple with the unresolved questions in Nelson's philosophy (see a description of his work and a collection of some of his most important papers in Oborne *et al.*, 1993). In both Hermann and Branton, we can observe a long spiritual exercise consisting of careful reading, rereading, and commenting on Nelson's and other texts of the Friesian tradition over many years, as well as extensive studies of later developments in psychology and cognitive science, which promised to throw a light on the "deduction of the moral law" and its ramifications in the ethical doctrine.

Condensing its principles in shorter versions, which memory can store easily. Some of Nelson's finest writing efforts had precisely this purpose in

mind, and they were correspondingly read, discussed, and translated widely by his followers (see e.g., Torbov 2005, pp. 7–15, 104–105). These essays tried to summarize the main philosophical assertions, distinctions, and arguments in such a way that everyone could understand them. Hadot mentions the importance in the ancient philosophical schools of having "at hand" (*procheiron*) a rule of life (1995, pp. 84–85). Even in his most ponderous works, Nelson always strove for such clarity that his formulation of the categorical imperative (after all the corrections discussed in *CW8:* 27–192) could be used, and was actually used, by his followers as a *procheiron* to resort to in case of doubt, and a popular writing type was the "manual" and the "maxims" (compare Epictetus and Epicurus). Before and after his death, Nelson's followers understood the need for such materials and were very active in writing up, printing, and disseminating them. One particular "manual" was the series of short pamphlets written by Gerhard Kumleben in and after 1927 under the general title "Politics of Reason." In fact, the "programme" or rather declaration of principles of the German Social Democratic Party after the war was mainly conceived and written by some of the Nelsonians returning from exile; and one can recognize there the main tenets of the group. In a sense, it is a series of "maxims" for a whole nation to take to heart and have at hand.

Having discussions of various styles and in groups of various sizes. This was a permanent feature of Nelson and his followers. At first sight, one might think that meeting and discussing things is common to all radical groups, but the ethical and philosophical preparations and standards of the Nelsonians was truly outstanding (see descriptions in Eichler and Hart 1938, pp. 244–268; Specht and Eichler 1953, pp. 265–266; Torbov 2005, pp. 47–59, 175–176). The SD method was used very often both for instructional and inspirational purposes, but its application was not dogmatic – discussions, both during Nelson's life and afterwards, had to be conducted in different ways. Many of the materials published by the group during their struggles emerged from such meetings.

In all this, I have not mentioned "meditation," a central aspect of the ancient schools of philosophy (Hadot 1995, pp. 59–60, 85–86). Is there a strict limit separating the "communal spiritual exercise" of SD (Hadot 1995, p. 90) and individual meditation? Or is SD a form of meditation? Some practitioners of SD have suggested to me that it is the latter for them, but there still seems to be a difference between the two. I want to

argue that there is a place for meditation as such (and as distinct from dialogue) in Nelson's philosophy, but it is not so obvious.

We must begin with Descartes' project, which is also Bacon's, the project of modern European philosophy. That project contained two main parts. On the one hand, Bacon and Descartes thought the old Aristotelian and Scholastic logic was sterile, and so they were searching for a "new logic," one capable of making discoveries and extending human knowledge to new realms. On the other hand, they thought that the human mind had certain specific, "natural," characteristics, so that there was only so much it could actually know; beyond those limits, they believed, our particular inclinations and quirks would lead us to build castles in the air and mistake figments of our imagination for real knowledge. Theirs was thus a tempered optimism. Now, Descartes was convinced, as he explained to Princess Elisabeth, that to achieve the aforesaid double goal (a "new logic" and an exploration of the limits of the human mind) one needed to carry out four kinds of activities: mathematical discovery, empirical study, metaphysical meditation, and ordinary relaxed living. Whatever the textbooks say, only the combination of the four activities constitutes the Cartesian "method." Hadot has rightly argued that one of these, metaphysical meditation, was a spiritual exercise harking back to the ancient way via Ignatius of Loyola and the Fathers of the Church (Hadot 1995, p. 271; see Schneider 1996). An essential feature of a meditation in Descartes' sense is that all the author can do is to describe as faithfully as possible how he arranged his meditation and what he found. The Cartesian text cannot be just read and argued about, as most commentators and critics do. Ultimately, this is a waste of time. The text is an invitation for readers to perform in their own time and at their own risk the very same meditation, for which the text can only offer a guideline. Descartes' *Meditationes* are thus, in a sense, a how-to book. If you found what he said he found, well and good; if not, there is nothing to be said which is not a perversion of the exercise.

What I would like to add to all this is that this sadly neglected meditational element in the heart of modern European philosophy has parallels in all of the main works produced in that tradition. Hadot refers to Spinoza in this connection, but the important task would be to show *in detail* when and where the moment of meditation is present in any particular work. My guess with respect to *Kritizismus* is that meditation is synonymous with what Kant, using an old legal label, called "deduction." Tons of paper and ink have been spent to clarify what Kant meant with this label. Even in Anglo-Saxon philosophy, discussions of the so-called "transcendental arguments" have been for some time very much

in fashion. One important puzzle is whether this core of critique is part of philosophy or rather a "new science," to use Vico's expression. Fries' position is clear – critique in general and "deduction" in particular is and cannot help but be part of a new science of psychology or anthropology. Nelson agreed, and his updated "deduction of the moral law" is embedded in a "theory of practical reason," which claims to be scientific, in fact psychological.

However, this is not the whole story. "Deduction" should be a science, yes, but it is also in fact meditation. The scientific part of it was, as I said before, the object of investigation of Nelson's "advanced students," each in their own way. According to the best Friesian doctrine, the only way to lay the groundwork for ethics (the task of critique in Kant's sense) is to first carry out a "regressive analysis" of our ordinary ethical judgments in such a way as to see what the axioms (what Kant called the moral law or the categorical imperative) underlying such judgments are. But such an analysis is not enough. For we still do not know whether these axioms are mere conventions, a sort of convenient collective lie sedimented in the way we talk about moral issues. What is needed is to show that these axioms are active and alive in us, that they can actually preside over our decisions and motivate our actions. Such a proof would be the "deduction of the moral law." Nelson's text is, I claim, a description of his own meditation as well as a guide to others to try and carry out their own meditations along similar lines. If my interpretation of Nelson is correct, he reckoned that such a meditation would *first* reveal to the person who carried it out that the moral law was alive in his or her heart, in the deepest recesses, the innermost part of their being, that the moral law was thus a "fact" of that person's cognitive and affective makeup, and that, *secondly and most importantly*, it would give that person the strength to change his or her life according to the moral law as so revealed. Laying the ground for ethics would be nothing less than laying the foundation for that long educational process for which Nelson reserved the ancient label of "building one's character" (the subject of *CW5*). Without that foundation, there is no ethics, no practical philosophy, no building of character, in fact no philosophy as a way of life.

One year before Nelson died, he presented Grete Hermann with a copy of his *Critique* and said, "Take the deduction of the moral law under your wing. It hasn't been read by anyone yet." I submit Nelson was inviting Fräulein Hermann to carry out a meditation. Did she? Or did she misunderstand the invitation as a mere examination of philosophical *arguments?* Connoisseurs of Descartes know that he was deeply puzzled

by some of the objections to his *Meditations*. How could his readers not find what he did? Maybe the solution to the puzzle was that Descartes' readers did not carry out Descartes' meditations; maybe they did not try to *experience* what it might be to do what Descartes told them to do; maybe they were just trying to poke holes in the *words and sentences* Descartes used to express his experience. If I am right, logic chopping and argument analysis cannot act as substitutes for the living experience. The same question would apply, I submit, to Grete Hermann, the only one of Nelson's followers of whom we know that she actually tried to go through the "deduction of the moral law." She reports:

> After long attempts to follow through all the individual steps of this sequence of thoughts [*Gedankengang*, commonly translated as 'argument' or 'reasoning'] I told him in desperation: 'Of the deduction of the moral law I don't believe one word anymore!' He replied serenely: 'You are now on the right path'. [Hermann 1985, p. 199]

What on earth has happened there? What is the meaning of that "sequence of thoughts" and its "individual steps?" What does it mean, or rather: What *did* it mean for Hermann to try and repeat those steps? The one thing we can safely say is that this became a lifetime task for her. She first wrote an account of her version of critical philosophy in the shape of a "manual" (Hermann 1945); then, for the Nelson memorial volume published after the war, she contributed a close commentary on both the "deduction of the moral law" and its systematic ramifications for ethics and pedagogy (see Specht and Eichler 1953, pp. 25–111, reprinted in Hermann 1985, pp. 3–95). Finally she started to compose a gripping account of her continuing dialogues with herself, with Nelson, and with her comrades ("In Conversation with Leonard Nelson and the Comrades of the Academy," posthumously published in Hermann 1985, pp. 97–178), and she conducted a long correspondence with Gustav Heckmann on the foundations of critical philosophy, the doubts that kept nagging her, and the existential suffering it had caused her along the years (archival material, so far unpublished). The rest is silence.

Coda

Leonard Nelson is a forgotten figure of contemporary philosophy. His exclusion is in a certain sense justified, as I shall endeavor to explain presently. Some important analytic philosophers (Karl Popper,

Richard M. Hare, Stephan Körner, Roderick M. Chisholm and Paul Lorenzen *inter alios*) have as a matter of fact recognized, admired, and even imitated some of Nelson's techniques of analysis, yet they have seldom referred explicitly to him in their writing or actually wanted to be associated with him. In that, they were probably guided by a correct intuition. Nelson's philosophy was not (to use Hadot's words) an abstract, theoretical exercise, but aspired to a whole transformation of the person. Yet modern philosophers do not want to be transformed. They are quite content to teach students at universities, to read each other's papers, to publish in learned journals, to run philosophy departments, to organize philosophy conferences, and so on. In contrast, Nelson, like Epictetus, wanted people "to abandon their fatherland and their parents" and to give themselves to him, so that he could sculpt them, "chipping away from their statues what was a mere addition." Many people (students, colleagues, friends, both in philosophy and outside) who knew him admired Nelson's work and his spirit, but they stopped short of this transition from the theoretical to the practical. They were arrested and simultaneously repelled by the sheer *atopia* of this man and the demands that were an integral part of it. They were enthused by his sharp intellect, his uncompromising clarity of speech, his purity of heart, and his inexhaustible energy, but at some point they started wondering what they had let themselves in for, and left in disarray. It may even be the case that some of them never really understood what Nelson was up to with all his extracurricular activities.

Nelson himself often insisted that all he was doing was to try and realize Plato's Republic, a state ordered according to philosophical principles and ruled by the wisest citizens. His idea of a proper school (like the "Walkemühle") was that in it the pupils did not have any need to lie (*CW8:* 577–578). In a similar fashion, his philosophical state was such that in it citizens would not have any need to be unjust toward each other and in fact would have every incentive to behave justly. Now, the description of a philosophical life that Hadot has given us presents it rather as an individual ideal, complemented for the sake of friendship by a community of similarly inclined comrades, each one of them gripped by the same individual ideals. Clearly, Plato's Republic was much more than that; and the evidence of the *Seventh Letter* is that Plato actually strove to realize it. But what about his followers, indeed what about other philosophical schools? Plotinus certainly dreamt of a city – not just a close community of friends but a whole city – whose inhabitants would live according to the Platonic ideals and regulations; but, although the emperor Gallienus

offered him a site for this purpose, it never materialized (Hadot 1993, pp. 97–99). Other Neoplatonists seem to have pursued similar dreams, but nothing practical ever came of it, as far as we know (O'Meara 2003). As for other schools, the Epicureans were famous for preferring the "hidden life," while there were quite a few Stoics who were politically very active and even gave their lives in their struggle against tyrants; nevertheless, nothing like the radicality of goals so typical of Plato, and indeed Nelson, emerges from the evidence, rather in many ways the contrary (see Hadot 1998, pp. 296–306). In any case, I would like to insist that most of Hadot's descriptions of a philosophical life are rather distant from the kind of action Nelson pursued and promoted. Is there anything substantial to be said about the connection between a philosophical life and the causes of social reform and radical politics? This question – as indeed the whole issue of how far Nelson's philosophy represents a contemporary manifestation of the old ideals of philosophy as a way of life – is paramount for anyone who takes seriously Hadot's resurrection of the practical meaning of ancient philosophy.

I have made my case; further research would either confirm my findings or put them in doubt. Still, to be able to ask questions and do research of the sort I attempted here is something new, which we owe to the sheer force and originality of Pierre Hadot's vision of what philosophy can be or do.

Notes

1. I want to express my profound gratitude to Michael Chase both for introducing me to the work of Pierre Hadot, one of the truly great philosophers of our time, and for honoring me with the invitation to contribute to this volume. His comments and suggestions as well as those of Rene Saran, of the Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy (an offshoot of the Nelsonian movement in Britain), and later on of Stephen Clark, are warmly appreciated; they improved my text and prevented a few errors of fact. I am responsible for translating all the passages quoted.
2. From now on I shall often use verbatim quotes, for they uniquely give the flavor of the individual *experience* of hesitation and decision which precedes or accompanies the assumption of philosophy as a way of life – and to present that experience is an important part of my argument.
3. In 1847, the academic followers of Fries (not only philosophers but also natural scientists) had launched the *Abhandlungen der Fries'schen Schule*, which did not survive beyond its second issue because of political differences dividing the editors. Nelson's journal retained the name and called itself a new

series (*Neue Folge*) of the same journal. Six thick volumes, comprising three or four issues each, appeared in a somewhat irregular fashion, the last issue coming out just before WWII in 1937. After the war, in the late 1950s, the idea was continued through *Ratio*, published in English and German with the help of Stephan Körner and Karl Popper.

4. Compare Mary Saran's testimony: "Nelson was not a good platform speaker though he could be brilliant in debate. The appeal of his ideas was not instantaneous, not for crowds. In our organisation success always depended on persistent effort and hard work through which we attracted serious people." (Saran 1976, p. 47)
5. From now on I shall quote Nelson's works as *CW* (for the "collected works" in Nelson 1970–1977) followed by volume number. The main links of Nelson's argument for vegetarianism are in *CW4:* §93, §100; *CW5:* §23, §§65–67; *CW6:* §127, §187; for discussion see Frey (1979). Sorabji (1993) presents the form assumed by the general issue of animal minds and ethics in the beginnings of the European tradition.
6. Incidentally, Nelson was perfectly aware that his political organizations had some features of a sect, for as he himself explained to Torbov in one of his initial letters: "No movement in history has become great – least so when conditions were monstrously difficult – that was not prepared consciously to go through the phase of a sect. The more we insist on overcoming that phase, the firmer we must avoid rushing things and we must make ourselves immune against the seductive intoxication of momentary successes." (Letter from Nelson to Torbov, March 31, 1925, in Torbov 2005, p. 20.)
7. In fact, Nelson did not just rely on reason but also on intuition, for a condition of entry into the political organization was an accompanied visit to the local slaughterhouse. By observing in real life how cattle are mishandled, tortured, and killed in inhumane ways, the aspiring militant was induced to get a vivid impression to go with whatever abstract arguments one may also toss about. This appeal to experience is also important in the practice of the Socratic method, as we shall see presently.
8. The main passages are *CW4:* §§314–318; *CW5:* §6, §90, §95, §§127–129, §§151–163, §193, §196; *CW6:* §§81–86, §§185–205.
9. The demand to leave the church was sometimes unbelievably abrupt. Thus it is reported that after a course in which the reasons underlying that demand had been discussed and no objections raised, Nelson required of everyone that they immediately and without any further ado renounce their church membership (Franke 1991, p. 224).
10. In principle, there was no prohibition against marriage or having children in the sense there was a prohibition against eating meat or belonging to an established church. There was just a recommendation not to commit oneself in such a way as to endanger full participation in political activity. Nevertheless, it seems that celibacy was demanded of the inner circle of

Nelson's political organization. This was in part grounded on Nelson's philosophical objections to the marriage contract as such (see discussion in Lemke-Müller 1988, pp. 49–51). To avoid possible misunderstandings, Nelson's philosophy as a way of life was not in any way inimical to sexual love; in fact, some of Nelson's friends were among the first proponents of sexual education in Central Europe; and if anything, there was a spirit of freedom with respect to sex, which was in perfect agreement with the socialist movement at the time. I might add that quite a few members of Nelson's groups either married or had kids without necessarily leaving the work. In fact, the "Walkemühle" had a section in which some of these children received part of their education (for some details see Nielsen 1985).

11. It would be a worthwhile exercise to compare this with Socrates' admiration for, and inquisitiveness about, the accurate knowledge of Athenian artisans (see Plato, *Apol.*, 22c; Xenophon, *Mem.*, III, 10). Compare the above with what René Bertholet wrote to his parents: "I'm now making myself familiar with saw and hammer, my hands hurt from it. It reminds me of holidays with Granny, but now the purpose is different. I'm told this work contributes to building my character. I should get used to do well the tasks I'm charged with, no matter how small they are. This is sometimes hard." (Letter of June 28, 1928, quoted in Adant 1996, p. 34.)

12

Philosophy as a Way of Life and Anti-philosophy[1]

Gwenaëlle Aubry

The question I raise here echoes a conversation I had several years ago with Pierre Hadot. He had honored me by asking me to read the introduction to *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique*?,[2] which he had just completed. It so happens that I was attending Alain Badiou's seminar on contemporary anti-philosophy at the time. I was struck by the fact that some of Pierre Hadot's theses could be (mis)understood as tending in the same direction as anti-philosophy, in the sense that Badiou understands it. In short, could not the insistence on the practical dimension of philosophy, and of ancient philosophy in particular, be taken as participating in the anti-philosophical dismissal of philosophy as discourse? Here I am talking about interpretation, reception, or else about popularization, for there is no ambiguity in Pierre Hadot's work itself. Yet the theme of "philosophy as a way of life" has had so many effects, not only in the field of ancient philosophy, but of contemporary relations to philosophy, that it has sometimes been able to hide the fact that for Pierre Hadot, philosophy is also, and inseparably, a theoretical arrangement and a way of thinking.

It is therefore worth emphasizing what, in Pierre Hadot's suggestions, resists this kind of interpretation, and this may also provide the means for inquiring about what he understands when he talks about the "reciprocal causality" of philosophy and philosophical discourse, or again, when he says that they are "both inseparable and incommensurable."

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"Antiphilosophy"

Although the term "antiphilosophy" has recently been reactivated by Alain Badiou, in fact, it goes back to the eighteenth century. In 1767, a Jesuit, the Abbé Louis-Mayeul Chaudon, published a *Dictionnaire anti-philosophique pour servir de commentaire et de correctif au* Dictionnaire philosophique (de Voltaire) *et autres livres qui ont paru de nos jours contre le christianisme.*[3] The subtitle is just as eloquent as the title: *Ouvrage dans lequel on donne en abrégé les preuves de la Religion et la réponse aux objections de ses adversaires.*[4] There was nothing unusual about such a project at the time, but what singled it out was its adoption of the dictionary form.[5] The goal was to make it clear that genuine philosophy is religion. Voltaire, the encyclopedists, the atheists, and the "unbelievers" were characterized all together as "false philosophers." In general, according to Didier Masseau, we can classify "antiphilosophy" as a religious movement hostile to the Enlightenment, but without any genuine doctrinal or strategic unity (Masseau 2000).

Prior to Alain Badiou, the term was reactivated by Jacques Lacan. In an article entitled "Peut-être à Vincennes?" (Lacan 1975), Lacan defines the analyst's task with regard to academic sciences. "The goal," he wrote, "is not only to help analysts of the sciences propagated in the mode of the university, but that these sciences may find, in their experience, the opportunity to renew themselves." Among these sciences, Lacan cites linguistics, logic, topology, and anti-philosophy:

> Anti-philosophy is how I would like to entitle the investigation of what university discourse owes to its "educational" supposition. It is not the history of ideas, sad as it is, that will be able to face up to this challenge. A patient collection of the idiocy that characterizes it will, I hope, allow it to be pointed out in its indestructible root and its eternal dream.

As we can see, the meaning of the term is not the same. It no longer designates a historical trend, but a science, or at least an investigation, which is to be constituted. If, moreover, this science is still defined by reaction or by opposition, this time it is to "university discourse." We shall have to ask ourselves whether this Lacanian sense, unlike the first one, cannot be associated with the project of Pierre Hadot.

In Badiou's usage, it seems that the term must rather be understood in its first meaning. Badiou applied it successively to three philosophers

in his seminars of 1992–1995:[6] Nietzsche (1992–1993), Wittgenstein (1993–1994), and Lacan (1994–1995). As is well known, and this point will have to be investigated, the first two, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, had a decisive influence on Pierre Hadot. In the use Badiou makes of it, the notion of anti-philosophy varies as he applies it to one or another of these authors. Yet this variation is as it were constitutive of it, since according to him, all anti-philosophy has its own strategy of identifying philosophy, which is also a strategy of discredit. This is why, in a new twist, he calls for a new definition of or a new assignation for philosophy:

> Antiphilosophy is always that which, at the summit of itself, enunciates the new duty of philosophy, or its new possibility in the figure of a new duty (Badiou 1992, p. 25)

We can, however, identify three invariants (Badiou 1994, pp. 14–15):

(1) First, the dismissal of theory in favor of action. Thus, to say that Nietzsche is an anti-philosopher means, according to Badiou, that he "opposes the completely affirmative necessity of an act to the speculative nihilism of philosophy."[7] Here, in other words, an act is the reversal of all values, insofar as it is itself absolved from evaluation. Yet this operation can also be discerned in Wittgenstein, who proclaims that "philosophy is not a theory but an activity" (*Tractatus* 4, p. 112). Likewise, again, in Lacan, for whom certainty resides in the act (here, analytical) and in its effects, and who states that "the truth may fail to convince, while knowledge moves on to acts."

(2) This leads us to the second invariant of antiphilosophy: the destitution of the category of truth. "We have eliminated the world of truth," writes Nietzsche in the *Twilight of the Idols*. The regime of truth is replaced by that of meaning, or else by life as the unevaluable principle of evaluation. Hence there follows, according to Badiou, the destruction, in Nietzsche, of dialogism and the argumentative regime. It is replaced by "the poetic hypertension of the text," which derives from the fact that "the truth must be set forth as life, which amounts to setting it forth oneself."[8] Likewise, in Lacan, the category of truth is abolished in favor of that of knowledge, as exemplified by the matheme (and Badiou establishes a parallel between the Lacanian matheme and the mystical element of Wittgenstein: the matheme is silence, but a silence that is written). Finally, in Wittgenstein, the figure is somewhat different, because the point

is not so much to dismiss truth as to discredit it: antiphilosophy assumes the form of a therapeutic, no longer of a critique. Nevertheless, this movement is still accompanied by a promotion of meaning, and the affirmation of the supremacy of meaning over truth. For Wittgenstein, "there are two regimes of meaning": linguistic or propositional meaning, and ethical meaning or meaning-value. Yet "philosophy's absurdity results from the fact that it believes that it can force ineffable meaning (or God, if one prefers) to speak itself in the form of propositional meaning" (Badiou 1994, p. 33).

(3) Badiou characterizes the third operation characteristic of antiphilosophy as "the appeal, made against the philosophical act, to another act, radical in its novelty" which "surmounts it in an affirmative sense" (Badiou 1994, p. 15). In Nietzsche, this act would be called arch-political, in Wittgenstein arch-esthetic, and in Lacan, arch-scientific.

Of the three operations identified by Badiou, it is above all the first that will interest us, because it enables us to reformulate and specify our initial question: can Pierre Hadot's promotion of philosophy as a way of life be qualified as antiphilosophical, in the sense in which it would be accompanied by a dismissal of theory in favor of action?

Does Defining Philosophy as a Way of Life Mean Being an Antiphilosopher?

(a) At first glance, one might be tempted to answer yes: at first glance, that is, by reading the very beginning of *What is ancient philosophy*? The book opens with a series of epigraphs, two of which are quotes from Nietzsche. In some of them, we may indeed read such a dismissal of theory in favor of action, just as we may find, perhaps, a dismissal of truth in favor of meaning.

First, a dismissal of theory: this can be read in the quotation from Epictetus ("If philosophical theories seduce you, sit down and go over them again and again in your mind. But never call yourself a philosopher, and never allow yourself to be called a philosopher"), or else in the one from Nietzsche ("We will not hesitate to adopt a Stoic formula on the pretext that we have previously profited from Epicurean formulas").[9]

These two texts emphasize the insufficiency of theory as a conceptual game, but also as an autonomous, exclusive mechanism.

This form of critical reduction of theory is accompanied in other quotations by a promotion of action, which goes together with the subordination of the truth, if not to meaning, then at least to what could be called "practical interest." These are the quotations from Plotinus ("It is desire that engenders thought," and "Without virtue, God is a mere name"), and especially from Petrarch: "It is more important to want to do good than to know the truth."[10] Finally, the quotations from Pascal and Montaigne add the promotion of life as a value to the twofold subordination of theory to action and of theory to practical interest.[11]

At first, Pierre Hadot seems, in the *Introduction* to his book, to echo these texts in his own words. He begins by characterizing his project, his singular practice of the history of philosophy, in the following terms:

> The history of "philosophy" is not the same as the history of philosophies, if what we understand by "philosophies" are theoretical discourses and philosophers' systems. In addition to this history, however, there is room for the study of philosophical modes of life. (Hadot 2002, p. 1)

And it appears quite soon that the goal is not simply to constitute a history that is parallel to the official history – to write a history of practices in the margins of the history of doctrines, or a history of actions in the margins of the history of ideas – but indeed to affirm the primacy of the latter over the former. This primacy or anteriority could be described, in the manner of Aristotle, as simultaneously chronological, logical, and ontological:

- Chronological, because the choice of life precedes theoretical discourse: "philosophical discourse, then, originates in a choice of life and an existential option, and not vice versa" (Hadot 2002, p. 3);
- Logical, because one's way of life illuminates discourse: "philosophical discourse must be understood from the perspective of the way of life of which it is both the expression and the means" (Hadot 2002, pp. 3–4);
- Ontological (that is, teleological), since discourse itself is for the sake of action.

> Theoretical philosophical discourse is born [. . .] from this initial existential option, and it leads back to it, insofar as – by means of its logical and

> persuasive force, and the action it tries to exert upon the interlocutor – it incites both masters and disciples to live in genuine conformity with their initial choice. In other words, it is, in a way, the application of a certain ideal of life (Hadot 2002, p. 3).

(b) However, and here I come to the essential point, this anteriority must not be understood as a strict subordination. Pierre Hadot prefers to speak of "reciprocal causality"[12]: if choice of life determines discourse, discourse in turn comes to found, justify, specify, and reinforce the choice of life. Here, one would have to take up the moments of the historical itinerary of *What is Ancient Philosophy?* one by one. The Socratic–Platonic dialogue is obviously equivalent to a model, insofar as its doctrinal content, or its informational dimension of information, are inseparable from a vital experience of training and transformation. Yet the demonstration also integrates modes of philosophical discourse that are more homogeneous with modernity. We should pay particular attention to what Pierre Hadot writes about systems, in which the accomplished and autarkic form of theories may be observed; for he shows that far from tending toward the autonomization of theoretical discourse, systematicity reinforces its integration,[13] and hence its application. This, for instance, is the case for the *tetrapharmakon*, the Epicurean "fourfold recipe" (Hadot 2002, p. 123), but also for the organic co-implication, in Stoicism, of the three parts of philosophy, logic, physics, and ethics. Not only does each of these parts have a practical dimension (logic as mastery of inner discourse, physics as elevation toward awareness of the all), but its unity is manifested by practice (Hadot 2002, p. 138).[14] "In general, one can say that the advantage of the systematic structure of the Stoic and Epicurean theories was that doctrinal refinements could be reserved for specialists, while the essential part of the doctrine remained accessible to a wider public" (Hadot 2002, p. 177).

What appears at the same time is that theory and practice cannot be opposed, any more than can discourse and choice of life. As Aristotelian philosophy shows, a way of life can be theoretical, and discourse can have a practical effect: "discourse always has, directly or indirectly, a function that is formative, educative, psychagogic, and therapeutic. It is always intended to produce an effect, to create a *habitus* within the soul,

to provoke a transformation of the self" (Hadot 2002, p. 176). Pierre Hadot illustrates this thesis by a very beautiful quote from Plutarch:

> Philosophical discourse does not sculpt immobile statues, but whatever it touches it wants to render active, efficacious, and alive. It inspires motive impulse, judgments that generate useful acts, and choices in favor of the good.[15]

The notion of "spiritual exercise" expresses this unity. Pierre Hadot uses it to denote practices that are "intended to effect a modification and a transformation in the subject who practiced them" (Hadot 2002, p. 6). Yet these practices are the application of a discourse, and discourse – we must insist on this point – is one of these practices:

> Despite my attempts to avoid it, some of what I have written about spiritual exercises in general may suggest that spiritual exercises are *added* to philosophical theory, to philosophical discourse, that they are a *practice* that merely complements theory and abstract discourse. In fact, all of philosophy is an exercise—instructional discourse no less than the inner discourse that orients our actions (Hadot 2011, p. 22)

Philosophy and philosophical discourse thus present themselves as inseparable. In the same breath, however, Pierre Hadot also calls them "incommensurable": "Philosophy and philosophical discourse thus appear to be simultaneously incommensurable and inseparable" (Hadot 2002, p. 172). Here, what this notion of incommensurability seems to designate is an excess of practice, and/or of life, over discourse. Pierre Hadot illustrates this excess by examples, which are also equivalent to limit cases. They tend to prove that in Antiquity, the epithet of "philosopher" could be authorized by a discourse that was minimal or even absent: minimal in the case of the Cynics, absent in the case of certain figures like the Stoics Cato and Rutilius Rufus, or else Rogatianus, the disciple of Plotinus (Hadot 2002, pp. 172–73). Another limit case might be that of Skepticism. In this school, writes Pierre Hadot, "the distinction between philosophy and philosophical discourse reaches an extreme point [. . .] sceptical philosophical discourse leads to its own suppression: it abandons the field in favor of a way of life" (Hadot 2002, p. 142). As he also specifies, however, "philosophical discourse is required in order to eliminate philosophical discourse" (Hadot 2002, p. 143).

Finally, among these limit cases one could range the mystics and the Neoplatonists, that is, philosophical discourse as distended by the impossible expression of what both exceeds it and acts as its foundation. Yet it is precisely discourse that is required to state this excess, both in order to postulate the necessity of the One, and to try to describe the experience of it (Hadot 2002, pp. 166–68). Pierre Hadot makes a very clear distinction between Plotinian Neoplatonism and post-Plotinian Neoplatonism, where practice – in this case theurgical – tends to replace discursivity.

Indeed, one might wonder if this Plotinian structure is not paradigmatic of ancient philosophy for him, and whether it does not provide the best illustration of what he understands by the notion "incommensurability" (likewise, the Stoic structure would give the best illustration of the notion of "inseparability," and this may be why Plotinus and the Stoics have, in the field of Antiquity, constituted privileged subjects of study for Pierre Hadot). Ultimately, the fact is that to justify this term, he writes: "The essential part of the philosophical life – the existential choice of a certain way of life, the experience of certain inner states and dispositions – wholly escapes expression by philosophical discourse" (Hadot 2002, pp. 173–74). This is true, he says, not only of the Platonic experience of love, the Aristotelian intuition of simple natures, or the Plotinian unitive experiences, but also "of the Epicurean, Stoic, and Cynic life experiences." The incommensurability of philosophy with regard to philosophical discourse must, therefore, be understood as the excess of a foundational experience over the discourse that explicates not only its nomination, but its justification and its conditions.

Can we detect an antiphilosophical feature or temptation in this structure? It seems to me that Pierre Hadot provides the answer to this question indirectly, when he speaks of Wittgenstein. Several times, he compares him to these two exemplary limit cases of the incommensurability between discourse and life represented by the Skeptics and the mystics. The Skeptics first, insofar as in both cases we have to do with therapeutic discourse, a discourse which, to this very extent, is self-destructive.[16] Then come the mystics: as is well known, the term "mystical" is found in the *Tractatus* (6.522, especially: "There is indeed the inexpressible. This *shows* itself; it is the mystical"). It is, moreover, the question of the relations between logic and mysticism in Wittgenstein that first inspired Pierre Hadot's interest (as he says, he saw in it a "fascinating enigma": Hadot 2004, p. 14).

In *The Present Alone is our Happiness*, however, Pierre Hadot also declares that the notion of language games had a decisive influence on that of

spiritual exercises (Hadot 2011, pp. 212–213). As he explains in the preface to *Wittgenstein ou Les limites du langage*, the idea of language games anchored in "a determinate activity," "a concrete situation," or "a form of life," helped him to solve the problem of the apparent incoherence of ancient texts. It derived from the fact that they were given as instructions for an exercise:

> One thus had to replace philosophical discourses within their language game, or the form of life that had engendered them, and therefore, within the concrete personal or social situation, within the *praxis* that conditioned them or with regard to the effect they sought to produce. It was from this perspective that I began to speak of spiritual exercises . . . (Hadot 2004, p. 11)

We can see that Hadot's debt (or at least his acknowledgement of debt) with regard to Wittgenstein is considerable, and is accompanied by the legacy of key notions from anti-philosophy, particularly those of act and of life.

However, the distance is also explicit: the affirmation of the necessary rootedness of philosophical discourse in a *praxis* and a vital experience does not amount to its dismissal in favor of the latter. Even if there is an element about which we can only keep silent, we must continue to speak (like Plotinus), ceaselessly inventing new images, new procedures, and new reasonings for enunciating the One-Good. Pierre Hadot points out the difference between the Plotinian Ineffable and the Wittgensteinian unspeakable.[17] "On a personal level," Pierre Hadot writes, "I do not really accept this silent attitude, because I think that philosophy must not stop just like that, after one book. There is no end to philosophy, and it always oscillates between two poles: discourse and decisions concerning one's way of life."[18] Likewise, in *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, he warns against a misunderstanding: "The point is not to oppose philosophy as a theoretical discourse, on the one hand, and on the other hand, wisdom as a silent way of life practiced from the moment when discourse achieves its completion and its perfection," according to the scheme proposed by Eric Weil and by Wittgenstein. In fact, discourse, like life, tends toward wisdom without ever achieving it (Hadot 2002, p. 20). It could also be said that it is the distance between philosophy and wisdom that posits the irreducible need for discourse.

From this (and Pierre Hadot's judgment on one of the antiphilosophers listed by Alain Badiou provides a precious indication in this regard),

we may conclude that the first operation characteristic of antiphilosophy as defined by Badiou, namely, the dismissal of theory in favor of action, does not apply to Hadot. We even find in him the inverse claim: "Another danger, the worst of all, would be to believe that it is possible to do without philosophical reflection" (Hadot 2002, p. 280).

What about the second operation, the dismissal of truth in favor of meaning? This question is more difficult, for unlike the notions of theory and praxis, those of truth and of meaning are not explicitly mobilized by Pierre Hadot. It seems to me, however, that here again, one cannot speak of dismissal. Again, we must keep together the two notions of inseparability *and* of incommensurability, or of reciprocal causality and of anteriority. There is indeed a primacy (or anteriority, or excess), if not of meaning over truth, then at least of practical interest over theoretical reason – or, because Pierre Hadot translates Kant into Plotinus, a primacy of desire over thought. (Yet Plutarch also said: of the good over the truth). The notion of "reciprocal causality," however, can also be applied to the relation between the will and the intelligence (Hadot 2002, p. 273).

Antiphilosophy or Archphilosophy?

The question that remains to be asked is whether the notion of antiphilosophy could not be applied to Pierre Hadot in its Lacanian sense, rather than in Badiou's sense. The fact is that we do indeed find in him a critique, lively, and explicit, of university philosophy, which seems comparable to the project announced by Lacan. As Pierre Hadot formulates it, this critique is based on a historical analysis, and includes several aspects, which I will simply enumerate without developing them:

(i) Confiding the teaching of philosophy to civil servants, a process that began as early as the second century BC, and was consecrated by Marcus Aurelius' foundation in 176 AD of four imperial chairs devoted to the teaching of the four great traditional doctrines, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism.

(ii) The increasing practice, since the first century BC, of commentary and of exegesis, which tends to replace dialogue and already inaugurates a form of Scholasticism: "Henceforth, one no longer discusses the problems themselves, one no longer speaks directly of things, but of what Plato and Aristotle said about the problems and the

things" (Hadot 2002, p. 151). It is nevertheless true, as Ilsetraut Hadot has shown,[19] that this practice still goes hand in hand with that of spiritual exercises, particularly in Neoplatonism.

(iii) Another feature, perhaps the most decisive in the view of Pierre Hadot, is the dissociation between teaching and the community of life between masters and disciples.

Although these various movements begin as early as Antiquity, Hadot nevertheless traces the fundamental break back to the Middle Ages and to Scholasticism. It is Scholasticism that reduces philosophy to the rank of mere "conceptual material," emptying it of all practical relevance (Hadot, Preface to Domański 1996, VIII). Yet, and this is the point on which I would like to insist, this movement of theorization of philosophy is accompanied by a transfer of practical interest and existential relevance to religion. For Christianity, the goal is no longer to inherit certain philosophical practices and certain spiritual exercises, but rather to appropriate them.[20] Pierre Hadot describes this process at the end of Hadot 2002, but we should also cite the crystal-clear little book by Juliusz Domański, for which Hadot provided a preface (Domański 1996). Domański shows how this movement began as early as the first centuries of Christianity, and resulted in the integration or reduction of philosophy to the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, dialectics). Philosophy could then be considered as no more than a mere theoretical tool in the service of theology (*ancilla theologiae*). The philosopher was no more than a technician, a commentator on Aristotle, and the question of meaning was abandoned to religion (Domański 1996, pp. 38–42; Hadot, Preface to Domański 1996, IX).

According to Dománski, the Renaissance tried to reintegrate the ancient concept of philosophy, and Pierre Hadot, for his part, finds it once again in Descartes, Malebranche, and Spinoza, in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, and then in Schopenhauer, Thoreau, Nietzsche, in Bergson, and in existentialism. Most of these references sketch a field that has nothing to do with that of antiphilosophy, including in the first meaning of the term, which played against the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Pierre Hadot's own project takes its place precisely in the will to give back to philosophy the existential weight and spiritual tension claimed by religion.

This is why, in its twofold desire to restore philosophy to its principal formula and to restore its supremacy, Hadot's approach seems to be best described not as anti-philosophical, but, on the contrary, as archphilosophical.[21]

Notes

1. Translated from the French by Michel Chase.
2. Paris and Gallimard 1995. (Henceforth reference will be made to the Engl. trans. Hadot 2002a (ed.)).
3. ("Anti-philosophical dictionary, to serve as a corrective and a commentary to (Voltaire's) *Philosophical Dictionary*, and other works which have appeared in our time against Christianity"(ed.)).
4. ("Work in which a summary of religion, and response to the objections of its adversaries are given" (ed.)). I thank Martine Groult for her comments on this text.
5. Three years later, in 1770, another Abbé, the Abbé Paulian, was to publish in his turn a *Dictionnaire philosophico-théologique portatif, contenant l'accord de la véritable philosophie avec la sainte théologie et la réfutation des faux principes établis par les philosophies modernes* ("Portable philosophical–theological dictionary, containing the agreement of genuine philosophy with holy theology and the refutation of the false principles established by modern philosophers" (ed.)).
6. Despite the reference to Lacan: "We shall designate what Nietzsche and Wittgenstein have in common by a term introduced by a third fascinated detractor, in this century, of philosophy: Jacques Lacan, 'antiphilosophy'" (Badiou 1994, p. 14).
7. Seminar of 1992–1993. See also Badiou (1992). My thanks go to Dimitra Panopoulos for pointing out these texts to me.
8. Badiou (1992). In general, "antiphilosophy demands that the antiphilosopher be constantly exhibited as an existential singularity [. . .] Why? Because, unlike the regulated anonymity of science, and in opposition to people who claim to speak in the name of the Universal, the antiphilosophical act, unprecedented and without guarantee, has only itself and its effects as an attestation of its value" (Badiou, 1994, p. 20).
9. Epictetus, *Discourses* III, 21, 23; Nietzsche, *Posthumous fragments, Fall* 1881, 15 (59). Both are cited in Hadot (2002a), XIII–XIV.
10. Plotinus, 24 (V, 6) 5, 9, and 33 (II, 9) 15, 39; Petrarch, *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia*, in *Prose*, a cura di G. Martellotti . . . , Milan, 1955, pp. 746–748, cited in Hadot (2002a), XIII–XIV.
11. Pascal, *Pensées*, Section 331 Brunschvicg (Classiques Hachette); Montaigne, *Essays* III, 13, Paris, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1962, p. 1088: "I did nothing today." "What? Did you not live? That is not only the most fundamental but the most illustrious of your occupations" (Hadot 2002a, XIII–XIV).
12. "We could say that through a kind of reciprocal causality, the choice of life determines discourse, and discourse determines our choice of life, as it justifies it theoretically" (Hadot 2002a, p. 175). See also Hadot 2002a, p. 273: "there is a kind of reciprocal interaction or causality between what the philosopher profoundly wants, what interests him in the strongest sense of the term, that

is, the answer to the question "How should I live?"—and what he tries to elucidate and illuminate by means of reflection." See, finally, Hadot (2011), p. 104: "One might say, in any case, that there is a reciprocal causality between theoretical reflection and choice of life. Theoretical reflection goes in a certain direction as a result of a fundamental orientation of inner life, and this tendency of inner life is specified and takes shape as a result of theoretical reflection (. . .), in other words, theoretical reflection already supposes a certain choice of life, but this choice of life can progress and specify itself only as a result of theoretical reflection."

13. This is what Pierre Hadot, following Cardinal Newman's *Grammar of Assent*, calls "real assent," as opposed to merely notional or abstract assent (Hadot, 2011, p. 180).
14. On this point, see also Hadot (1998), pp. 89–100.
15. Plutarch, *That the philosopher should converse primarily with the great*, 776c–d, quoted in Hadot (2002a), p. 176.
16. Hadot (2002a), p. 144. See also Hadot (2004), p. 20.
17. See Hadot (2004), p. 14, on the difference between the theological ineffable of the Neoplatonists, in traditional mystical experience, and in Wittgenstein. The former is the culmination of a rational method; the latter does not refer to the notion of Principle, but to the ecstatic experience itself. Finally, in Wittgenstein, the "mystical" is not related either to negative theology or to the experience of ecstasy, but to a fundamental feeling and experience, to which he himself bears witness in the following terms: "I am astonished at the existence of the world. See, in addition, "Apophatisme et théologie négative," Hadot (2002b), pp. 239–252.
18. "Qu'est-ce que l'éthique?" (What is ethics?), an interview with Sandra Laugier and Arnold Davidson republished at the end of Hadot (2002b), pp. 377–391, at 385. (See now Hadot (2011), pp. 175–185 (ed.)).
19. See I. Hadot (2004), and the Introduction (Chapter III) to I. Hadot (1996). Finally, see I. Hadot and P. Hadot (2004).
20. As is described, for instance, in "Ancient spiritual exercises and 'Christian Philosophy,'" in P. Hadot (1995), pp. 126–144.
21. I presented a first version of this text in June 2007, at a day-long conference devoted to "Pierre Hadot and contemporary French philosophy" organized by the Centre Internationale d'Étude de la Philosophie Française Contemporaine at the École Normale Supérieure and then published in A.I. Davidson and F. Worms, edds., *Pierre Hadot, l'enseignement des antiques, l'enseignement des modernes*, Éditions rue d'Ulm: Paris, 2010), pp. 81–94. My thanks to Frédéric Worms, Arnold Davidson, and the participants for their remarks and questions.

13

Philosophy and Gestalt Psychotherapy

Paul O'Grady

Introduction

Analytical philosophy does not seem to have much in common with psychotherapy. There are, of course, Wittgenstein's comments on philosophy as therapy, but the Wittgensteinians who take a therapeutic conception of philosophy are generally regarded with suspicion by those with a more systematic conception of the discipline. It is understood as a collaborative, piece-meal, minute, and modest way of doing philosophy. Historically, it has prided itself on avoiding the wide-angle lens, the sweeping worldview, the vapid vaticism of other kinds of philosophy.

I found myself enjoyably entangled in the minutiae of that world over ten years ago, but with an odd disjointedness between my philosophical work and most everything else I did. The "everything else" – family life, economic life, health, friendships, spiritual life (such as it was) – were rich, tangled, and frequently painful. I could escape from the difficulties into making sense of, for example, Quine's attack on modality, but

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little traffic moved in the opposite direction. With some dim sense that I wanted to live in a different way, I searched about and was recommended a psychotherapist. I entered a different world. The single biggest difference, it now seems to me, was to learn a way of acknowledging my emotions. Rather than having knowledge by description of them, I found a way of being consciously sad or angry or whatever it was. Learning to do this was slow and cut against my habitual, distancing, analytical tendencies. For example, I noticed the range of emotions present in me as I chaired a Joint Session slot and made a presentation to a formidable audience. I noticed that the daily impact of departmental life, my interactions with colleagues and students resulted in far more going on in me that I had hitherto realized.

I began to train as a psychotherapist, primarily from the desire to learn more. It seemed to me as if my world had enlarged, not by virtue of learning more facts, or by acquiring greater dialectical skills, but through a kind of acquaintance with my own states of being, cognitive, somatic, and affective. The particular form of psychotherapy I trained in is Gestalt psychotherapy. Along with a countercultural and anti-intellectual strand, it is also shot through with insights from philosophers as diverse as Aristotle, Buber, and Husserl. In this essay, I would like to engage in the reciprocal process of applying some philosophical reflection to the method of psychotherapy I have found useful for living. So, specifically in this essay I would like to explore, in the space available, the relationship of theory to practice in Gestalt therapy and the associated issue of the relationship of objectivity to subjectivity. I think the context of Gestalt psychotherapy is particularly fruitful for this exploration, given the competing tendencies evident in it of attempting to establish a philosophy of life on the one hand and to eschew theory altogether on the other.

There are five parts to this essay. Part one is a brief preliminary investigation of the nature and role of theory in psychotherapy in general. Part two introduces Gestalt therapy in an institutional and historical context. Part three outlines the distinctive theoretical tenets of Gestalt psychotherapy. Part four looks at some of the philosophical underpinnings of this theory and notes how such underpinnings tend toward subjectivism and an anti-theory stance, while suggesting some alternative underpinnings, which could lead to a more integrated outlook on the relation of theory to practice and a resolution of the objectivity–subjectivity tension.

Theory in Psychotherapy

The notion of "theory" is most at home in the context of physical science. A theory explains a set of phenomena in a way that systematizes them, yields predictions for future patterns of those phenomena and argues for underlying structures which explain those phenomena. Theories which otherwise fit the same data, compete with each other in their explanatory power – so Einsteinian theory incorporates Newtonian theory within itself, explains anomalies in that theory, makes new observational predictions and argues for a new theoretical understanding of the nature of space, time, and matter.

Whether this understanding of theory is appropriate in all circumstances is a matter of debate. Some think that theory operates in different ways in different contexts; others hold that there is a context-free core to what makes a theory. An empiricist critique of religion and psychoanalysis is rooted in the view that all theory is basically the same and what marks out theory as theory is openness to empirical testing (see Grunbaum 1984). Against this, some have argued that theory operates in a different way in different contexts, for example, in the social sciences (see Winch 1990). The same level of precision, especially in relation to prediction, is not possible in, for example, sociology, anthropology, and economics. This is because the task of theory in the social sciences is to explain, unify, and reveal meanings, rather than primarily to make predictions and allow for the manipulation of nature. Even more so in the case of psychology, there is a question whether theory operates in the same way as in the physical sciences. In psychology, the very object under scrutiny – the mind – is itself active in the process of theory formation. Is it possible to construct a self-reflective theory of mind in the manner of a Newtonian or Einsteinian theory of space? Many psychologists vigorously seek to answer this in the affirmative, but the divisions in the discipline (in contrast to the relative unity in physics) indicate otherwise. Indeed, one of the curious features of the science fetishism of twentieth century psychology was the complete writing out of the problem of consciousness for a lot of its history. Chomsky's famous critique of Skinner's behaviorism had less the character of a skillful refutation, than a pointing out of the blindingly obvious – mind has a subjective dimension which is not fully accessible to quantitative methods (see Chomsky 1959). So a desire to model psychology on physics led to a willful neglect of what

seems obvious to those not ensnared in the ideology of scientism. The foundational text of Gestalt therapy, Perls, Hefferline, and Goodman's *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality*, makes a mordant comment on this:

> It is the current prestige of the *word* 'science' that makes this tedious discussion necessary. What is 'scientifically established' *must* be believed and what is unscientific *must* be distrusted. (PHG, p. 37)

Given the degree of fragmentation in psychological theory in general, the situation in psychotherapy is even more fissiparous. Nowadays, there is a multiplicity of competing schools and approaches. All psychotherapy owes something to Freud. He articulated an account of the mind which sought to explain certain phenomena which had been discounted as irrelevant by other, earlier, psychologists. He observed and described behavior such as slips of the tongue, repetition compulsion, and dream reports in such a way that what had hitherto seemed random and accidental could now be seen as part of a deeper pattern. He articulated an account of the mind which contained a large unconscious element with deep structures. Such structures could explain such "accidental" mental phenomena, and furthermore, offer a means of treating unwanted behavior due to them. Freudian theory postulated ego, superego, and id; the censor; repression; the pleasure principle; the reality principle; and the primacy of infancy in the formation of mental life; and Freudian practice offered techniques for the manipulation of such unconscious structures and release from unwanted behavior.

Critics of Freud mainly focused on the lack of evidence for such grand theorizing. Based on a small number of case studies, Freud had launched a Copernican revolution in the study of mind, which critics dismissed as unfounded. Even alleged cases of "cure" would not satisfy such critics who argued that there were no statistical studies which ruled out spontaneous "cure," or other unknown factors, as distinct from Freudian treatment. Other critics argued that Freud's views were rooted in outmoded scientific views, with a mechanistic view of human nature and appealing to "drive" theory, which owed more to metaphysical speculation than sober observation. Yet despite these ongoing criticisms, the insights of Freud pervaded twentieth century culture, which indicates that the theories have been widely accepted in some sense, despite their evidential shortcomings. As a recent commentator has noted in examining the evidential status of psychoanalysis:

> None of this goes to demonstrate conclusively that the theory is correct and Grunbaum is therefore right to point to the possibility that other things might be true causes of the phenomena that psychoanalysis seeks to explain; but at the moment there is little by way of serious competition. Psychoanalysis is at least the best explanation that is currently on offer. (Segal 1998, p. 67)

Furthermore, PHG notes that the work of clinicians may be characterized as follows:

> Usually pressed for time, inured by necessity to playing hunches, often unaware or contemptuous of the experimentalist's passion for verification, he spun theories which were bizarre blendings of keen insight and ungrounded speculation. Nonetheless, his work has been so fruitful that it carries the present potential of freeing the species from man's age-long distortion of man. (PHG, p. 32)

If we restrict the term "psychoanalysis" strictly to Freud's own methods, various other schools of psychotherapy such as those of Adler, Jung, Klein, Winnicott, and so on offered modified approaches to the nature of the unconscious and techniques for accessing it and modifying it.

Gestalt psychotherapy is part of this lineage, offering a distinctive account of the nature of the human being, the role of the unconscious, the structures of function of the unconscious, and the means of accessing the unconscious realm. The role of theory in Gestalt therapy is primarily that of an applied theory. The theory does not generally spawn speculative quasi-philosophical ruminations on the nature of the mind and self, as with theorists such as Lacan, Bion, or Matte Blanco. Rather, theory only acquires meaning in allowing for practical interaction between therapist and client. However, this does not in any way gainsay the fact that Gestalt psychotherapeutic theory *is* a theory, it has a content, a distinctive style, and a core set of skills for intervention. These core theoretical commitments of Gestalt therapy are canvassed below in "**The Central Theoretical Commitments of Gestalt Psychotherapy**." But first, let's examine the historical origins of Gestalt psychotherapy.

The Origins of Gestalt Psychotherapy

Gestalt psychotherapy is inextricably linked to Fritz Perls. Born in 1893, he trained as a medical doctor, serving in the trenches in the First World

War and graduating in 1920 in Berlin. He worked as a neuropsychiatrist and embarked on a series of Freudian analyses, primarily under Karen Horney. While influenced by the bohemian environment of the Weimar republic, Perls developed an interest in academic psychology, specifically with the Gestalt school, and he worked as an assistant to Kurt Goldstein. They examined the nature of perceptual experience, studying the way in which wholes are more important than parts in perception, criticizing associationist and atomistic accounts of perception and remarking how there seems to be an innate tendency to compensate for unfinished wholes in human perception and behavior.

In relationship with Lore Posner (subsequently Laura Perls) in the 1920s, Perls was exposed to phenomenological and existential thought, especially that of Husserl, Buber, and Tillich. Notions such as freedom, authenticity, finitude, the creation of meaning, and human isolation, emphasized by these thinkers, were absorbed by Perls. He worked as a Freudian psychoanalyst in Berlin from 1928 to 1933, and due to the political situation emigrated to South Africa in 1934 (he was of Jewish ethnicity, though a devout atheist). He worked as a psychoanalyst in South Africa, although his one meeting with Freud at a European conference did not go well and his status as an "approved" Freudian trainer in South Africa was revoked.

In South Africa he was influenced by the evolutionary and developmental views of Jan Smuts. His first book *Ego, Hunger and Aggression* (1947) still reflects a residual sense of belonging to the Freudian fold, an allegiance which was steadily dissolving even as he wrote it. In 1946, he had moved to New York and there made contact with the psychologist Ralph Hefferline and the philosopher Paul Goodman. Perls produced a new book manuscript which he requested Hefferline and Goodman to help him with. It became *Gestalt Therapy: Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality* (1951). Part One of this book is more practical, drafted by Hefferline and Perls, and deals with means of manipulating one's experience in order to become more aware of the actual processes one is undergoing. It was originally planned to be the latter part of the book, but the publisher persuaded the authors that a practical opening would make it more marketable. The second half is a theoretical account of human growth, written by Goldman and Perls, which was originally supposed to open the book. Despite having some views adumbrated in *Ego, Hunger and Aggression*, this book is regarded as the main manifesto of Gestalt psychotherapy, and one can date the appearance of Gestalt psychotherapy to this work. Perhaps due to a triumvirate of authors, perhaps

due to undue publisher's interference, it is an ungainly volume. Verbose, in some ways overstructured, in some ways understructured, lacking a perspicuous overall *Gestalt*, it nevertheless is packed with insight and serves as the foundational text in Gestalt training.

The work reflects a wide range of influences – classical psychoanalysis, Reichean theory, Gestalt psychology, field theory, existentialism, phenomenology, blended together in a way which balances always on the edge of potential anarchy and dissipation, while retaining just enough centripetal force to hang together. Perls' own practice of psychotherapy in the 1950s used further resources such as psychodrama to augment the techniques available to the therapist, while he dabbled in eastern religion, specifically Zen (whose focus on mindfulness seemed close to his emphasis on awareness). The explosion of American counterculture in the 1960s was congenial to Perls' unconventional personality, and he set up camp at Esalen, California, where Gestalt psychotherapy came to reach a wide audience. Very much tied to the dramatic force of his own personality, Perls used various techniques in what amounted to public performances, to effect a popularization of Gestalt psychotherapy. However, his use of LSD led to increasing bouts of paranoia and his disregard of the prohibition on sexual relations between therapist and client issued in tensions. A number of his publications of the later 1960s were attempts to render earlier work more accessible. For example, *Gestalt Theory Verbatim* (1969), was characterized by slogans such as "lose your mind and come to your senses" – a sentiment which resonated with the Californian hippy Zeitgeist Perls found himself in, but which could also lead to mindless repetition. Perls produced an autobiography *In and Out of the Garbage Pail* in 1969, and at his death in 1970, Perls was working on two further works, which were posthumously published together as *The Gestalt Approach and Eye Witness to Therapy* (1973).

A sign of the strength of the therapy Perls devised is the fact that it survived the demise of his powerful personality. Associations of Gestalt therapists developed in numerous countries and a number of Gestalt journals appeared. Some of the techniques introduced by Perls have become part of the standard repertoire of many different kinds of therapists, so that Irvin Yalom can refer to resorting to the "old technique of the two chairs" in his book *Love's Executioner and Other Tales* (although there is debate about whether "techniques" can be properly taken out of a whole Gestaltist approach – see Clarkson and Mackewn 1993, 150 ff.).

Given that this has been the external story of the development of Gestalt therapy, what is the internal story, the chief theoretical

commitments and modes of intervention which mark out Gestalt as distinctive among other forms of therapy?

The Central Theoretical Commitments of Gestalt Psychotherapy

Gestalt psychotherapeutic theory is holistic in character. All the parts interconnect with each other and make sense in relation to each other. This makes for difficulties in exposition, as it is necessary to start *in medias res*, to dive in. Unlike other kinds of theory, which operate on a hierarchical structure and exhibit a *basic principle–extrapolation of those principles* dichotomy, Gestalt theory is more diffuse and does not operate on a hierarchical model. Hence the following exposition is structured around four clusters of concepts which are central to Gestalt theory, but which are not sharply separated from each other and which are not in any necessary logical order.

Holism

Since the very structure of Gestalt theory exhibits holism, it seems illuminating to select it as a starting place. Holism is opposed to atomism. In atomism one can select free-standing elements or entities which are explicable in terms of themselves and with them clarified, build up a step-by-step structure. The identity of the elements is not affected by the fact that they enter into a larger whole. Holism, by contrast, claims that the relation of whole to part is very important and that the identity of parts is not available independently of consideration of their role in the whole. The implications of accepting holism are very broad. Elements of theory do not stand alone and are not evaluable alone – they only make sense as part of a larger whole. A general problem for holism is that it makes effective criticism of it difficult. If one criticizes any part, it is always possible to deflect that criticism by claiming that the whole has not been taken into account. This then can be used as a general dodge against genuine problems with a holistic position.

How does this general characterization of holism relate to Gestalt psychotherapy?

> The greatest value in the Gestalt approach perhaps lies in the insight that the *whole determines the parts*, which contrasts with the previous assumption that the whole is merely the sum of its elements (PHG, p. 19).

A fundamental holistic tenet of Gestalt is to assert a psychosomatic unity. It does not make sense to distinguish body and mind as separate and distinguishable elements. The human constitutes a whole, exhibiting both physical and mental features. Certain kinds of medical and psychological practices implicitly deny this and operate with various splits. Gestalt rejects this:

> When, however, we insist on the unitary thesis, on the creativity of structured wholes, and so forth, not in the uninteresting situations of laboratories but in the urgent situations of psychotherapy, pedagogy, personal and social relations, then suddenly we find ourselves going very far – drawn very far and driven very far – in rejecting as fundamentally inadmissible, as 'breaking into bits and annihilating the thing that it was intended to study,' many commonly accepted assumptions and divisions and categories. (PHG, p. 287)

However, just after this passage, PHG goes further to suggest that certain kinds of theoretical split are indeed neurotic in character (mind–body, self–external world, subjective–objective, biological–cultural, and so on) (PHG, pp. 288–290). This seems fundamentally flawed as a view. Apart from the dubious move of loosely attributing neurosis to anyone who disagrees with one's theoretical views, the position exhibits a basic conceptual error. A theoretical distinction may be useful or not, coherent or not, informative or not. However, it seems it is not the distinction itself, but the use to which it is put which may involve neurosis. To call a theoretical distinction neurotic seems to be a kind of category error – the use of distinctions by a person may be neurotic or not, the distinction itself is neutral in this respect.

Another aspect of holism, drawn from Gestalt psychology, is the tendency of individuals to construct wholes out of parts. This operates in perception, manifested in experiments which show how perceivers "complete" incomplete pictures in order to make sense of them (see PHG, p. 55). Kurt Lewin, under the label "Field Theory" took the lessons of the Gestalt approach to perception and applied it to lived situations, which influenced Perls in his extrapolation of this view to behavior in general. Perls held that there is a general tendency in individuals toward wholeness, completion – a view which operates as a fundamental axiom in Gestalt theory. Certain kinds of psychological disturbance can be understood as resulting from blocks to this, and Gestalt therapy offers means of achieving completion.

Theory of Growth

In applying this Gestalt psychology insight about wholes to lived human experience, Gestalt therapy is committing itself to a view about human growth and development. The notion of "Organismic Self-regulation" is basic to this. This holds that each individual strives toward whole and healthy living and will spontaneously regulate themselves, thus relinquishing the need for external curbs and checks. This probably reflects the influence of Goodman's general anarchistic political views, which held this view about society. The goal of the individual's striving is equilibrium, or "homeostasis," a state of well-being. This is

> . . . the original undistorted, natural approach to life; that is to man's thinking, acting feeling. The average person, having been raised in an atmosphere of splits, has lost his Wholeness, his Integrity. (PHG, p. 14)

Although this account is couched in terms of the "individual," the caveats of holism need to be remembered. The individual is never considered as an isolated entity. The general picture favored by Gestalt psychotherapy is that of process, a dynamic interplay of many aspects, all going together to form an integrated whole. The influence of Smuts, and also of general evolutionary views, is evident here. This is also akin to Buddhist views of the self, which deny that it is a stable fixed entity, but is rather constituted by a flow of changing factors. Central to PHG's views is the relationship between organism and environment. This is understood as being both biological and social. The locus of the meeting of organism and environment is the point of contact, but PHG emphasized the view that the point of contact does not serve to separate these two. It holds that "all contact is creative adjustment of the organism and environment" (PHG, p. 277) and that "psychology is the study of creative adjustment" (PHG, p. 277). Specifically, this is cashed out in terms of awareness, so the notion of consciousness enters the picture here. Not all contact requires awareness, but all awareness requires contact (PHG, p. 15). In awareness, there is a focus, which will be discussed below under the notion of Gestalt formation. Consciousness is viewed in a functional manner, as an increasing level of sophistication developing over more basic processes (e.g., "phototropism becomes conscious seeing and this becomes deliberate attending; or osmosis becomes eating and this becomes deliberate food-taking" (PHG, p. 308)). Note that this account of consciousness is radically non-Cartesian; rather than being a mysterious, separate inner

sight, consciousness is an emergent property, which arises from more basic biological functions.

Contact is central to Gestalt psychotherapy as it is what allows growth to happen in the individual. The process of contact is analyzed into a cycle and specific kinds of interruptions to contact are also catalogued. However, in order to understand this analysis it is necessary to grasp the crucial notion of Gestalt formation, to which I now turn.

Gestalt Formation

Gestalt psychology had developed a series of experiments in which a perceiver is presented with an image. The image can be viewed in two mutually incompatible ways. That is, one can only see one aspect at a time, both cannot be seen together. An example is a black and white image of either two faces or a vase (PHG, p. 52). Under one aspect it is a vase, under another it is two faces. The ideas of figure and ground are introduced to help explain these dual aspects. The figure is what is foregrounded, becoming the focus, while the rest becomes ground, or background. One aspect takes the white as figure and hence the vase becomes figure and the black becomes background. The other takes the black as figure and so the faces come to the fore, while the white becomes ground.

Gestalt psychotherapy uses these ideas from theory of perception to explain the notion of contact. When there is contact between the organism and the environment, some aspect of the environment becomes figure, while other aspects recede to become ground. It is clear that there is great possibility for diversity in this process (unlike the simple bipolar perceptual model above), and a great number of possible figures may emerge.

Contact is then analyzed using the notion of gestalt formation. Various different accounts of the cycle of contact are prevalent. Perls gave a six-part analysis in *Ego, Hunger and Aggression*, while PHG give a four-part account, which is the one I shall present here (PHG, pp. 459–60)]. Contact can be analyzed into fore-contact, contacting, final contact, and post-contact. Fore-contact involves some appetitive or environmental stimulation of the organism. In contacting, the appetite or irritation becomes ground and some figure emerges as the focus of that appetite or irritation. The organism marshals its resources in orientation to this figure, making choices, mobilizing itself. Final contact is the clear and spontaneous enjoyment of the object which is figure. Post-contact is a

state of satisfaction in which the figure recedes as figure and returns to being ground.

A simple example of this is bodily appetite. A feeling of hunger constitutes fore-contact, while contacting focuses the hunger onto an object in the environment – say an apple, and I ready myself to eat the apple. Final contact is the enjoyment of eating the apple, and post-contact is the cessation of hunger as a need and the cessation of the apple as a figure in my awareness. Gestalt seeks to bring this cycle into conscious awareness. In the case of simple appetite it may be reasonably clear (though, in fact, a great many of us eat without conscious awareness), but the cycle can apply much more subtly to other needs, for example, a feeling of loneliness. The Gestalt claim is that a healthy organism completes this cycle in a natural and spontaneous fashion and the organism creatively adjusts itself to its environment. However, in psychological disturbance, this cycle is not completed. What Freud has called "obsessive compulsive" behavior was renamed by Perls as "unfinished business," where someone keeps attempting to finish a cycle which is being thwarted in some way or other. One of the chief tasks of Gestalt psychotherapy is to identify the interruptions of the cycle. PHG lists a number of characteristic ways in which the cycle fails to complete itself.

How does identifying such interruptions help the individual? Does it not merely supply further depressing information on their level of dysfunctionality? The claim of Gestalt, in Beisser's well-known formulation, is that a paradoxical theory of change emerges from knowledge of these interruptions (Beisser 2001). Rather than seeking to force them to stop or to repress them, the task of Gestalt psychotherapy is to allow them to come to conscious awareness. If there is some way in which we characteristically stifle our needs, we let that happen with full awareness. The paradox is that precisely by leaving them alone, but letting them have full attention, they change by themselves. Beisser formulates this as "change occurs when one becomes what he is, not when he tries to become what he is not" (Beisser 2001, p. 88). What are these blocks which typically thwart the cycle of Gestalt formation?

Interruptions of Contact

A healthy organism exhibits elasticity in its adjustments to its environment (PHG, p. 16). However, one can get stuck. The organism tries to assimilate what it needs from the environment, but sometimes this fails. The failure can result in a hardening, where the attempt to assimilate

is repeated, but the fixed attitude is even less likely to succeed that the first time (PHG, p. 343). Neurosis, therefore, emerges as part of the self-regulation of the organism. It comes from a healthy impulse, a desire to satisfy its needs, but the needs are not being genuinely met and in repeat compulsion, there is a sign that what is unfinished in the past is unfinished in the present. PHG states "It is a basic tendency of the organism to complete any situation or transaction which for it is unfinished" (PHG, p. 109). So, the origins of psychological disturbance are healthy, but misplaced and ineffectual. It is important to recognize that the neurosis plays a role in the defense of the organism – "The ego is as defensive as Hitler's Ministry of Defense 1939" (PHG, p. 17). While defenses may have once played a useful role, the changing external environment now makes them redundant and harmful. And it is precisely their unacknowledged status which makes them most troublesome. A great deal of the task of the therapist is to bring these disturbances into conscious awareness. What these disturbances do is to thwart the process of contact between the organism and the environment. PHG lists four main ways in which contact is broken – introjection, projection, confluence, retroflection – and gives a taxonomy of where in the cycle of contact each is likely to arise (PHG, p. 509).[1]

Introjection

> "A good well-behaved type who swallows indiscriminately whatever is offered." (PHG, p. 62)

To introject is to take in something from the environment in a way that is unassimilated, so that it remains as a foreign body in the system. At a physiological level, undigested food can exemplify this process, but at deeper levels, beliefs, attitudes, and outlooks can be introjected. The key problem is the fact that they are unassimilated; they have not become genuinely a part of the organism. What marks them out as being unassimilated is the fact that they get in the way, they block the projects and onward path of the organism. For example, a common introject is that boys do not cry. For someone who has taken this in, it conflicts with the natural inclination to cry in situations of distress. So, this leads to a state of tension, often resulting in physical tension (Reichian body armor), where the body compensates for the inner conflict by contorting itself.

Projection A projection is a trait, attitude, feeling, or bit of behavior which actually belongs to your own personality but is not experienced as such; instead, it is attributed to objects or persons in the environment and then experienced as directed *toward* you by them instead of the other way around (PHG, p. 254).

Humans have the capacity to enter imaginatively into the world of others. To feel empathy or sympathy is to be able to put yourself in the situation of another person and imaginatively feel what it is like to be them. For certain ethical theorists, this innate psychological capacity is the basis of all morality, and Buddhists speak of compassion (feeling-with) as a fundamental attitude which needs to be fostered for all living things. However, this healthy attitude can also play a role as a kind of psychological disturbance. In projection, one attributes a disowned part of the self to the surrounding environment. The general reason for this is that disowning that part was a necessary defense at some stage in development. To acknowledge the existence of a feeling or trait was too threatening in certain circumstances (e.g., an infant may feel rage at not having his/her needs met, but is also incapable of dealing with the flood of emotion he/she feels. Thus he/she dissociates from the feeling and attributes it to someone or something outside of himself/herself). As with all such interruptions to contact, changing circumstances makes what was once a positive move subsequently a hindrance to further growth.

Confluence A sensing and the object sensed, an intention and its realization, one person and another, are confluent when there is no appreciation of the boundary between them, *when there is no discrimination of the points of difference or otherness that distinguish them* (PHG, p. 153).

Confluence occurs in a healthy cycle of contact after contact has been achieved. There is an assimilation by the organism of whatever is required, where it is absorbed into the organism and the associated need, Gestalt formation and mobilization have all receded. Confluence occurs as a problem when it blocks contact. In individuals, this happens when the boundary between self and other is not clear. Typically, one becomes confluent with another by falling in uncritically with their thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and desires in a way which is unreflective, habitual, and unconscious. Genuine contact is thereby blocked and genuine needs are not met. In therapy, a client may seek to please the therapist and in so doing is confluent, or the therapist may seek to collude with the client, not challenge them and "care for" them – also a form of confluence.

Retroflection

> To retroflect means literally "to turn sharply back against." When a person retroflects behaviour, he does to himself what originally he did or tried to do to other persons or objects. (PHG, p. 183)

In society, it is often necessary to stifle certain impulses, whether from decorum, or self-interest or a desire not to appear crazy. The capacity to exercise this kind of self-control is healthy. When such stifling occurs in a chronic and unaware fashion it is retroflection. An infant may desire to express frustration but has learnt that such expression leads to punishment. She then learns the behavior of doing to herself what she really wants to do to those about her, so perhaps she might begin to beat herself. In therapeutic sessions, one might find a client blocking their mouth as they speak, or clenching their muscles, in ways that prevent clear and full expression. However, it is important not to assume that such actions are always retroflective, in an automatic way, but to let the significance of the action emerge for the client. A different between Gestalt psychotherapy and classical psychoanalysis is that the therapist does not interpret for the client, is not in a superior cognitive position *vis-a-vis* the client's process.

Philosophical Reflection on Gestalt Psychotherapy

Despite his avowed anti-intellectualism, Perls was deeply, and perhaps uncritically, influenced by philosophy. His debts to existentialism and phenomenology are great. These debts manifest in the practice of Gestalt psychotherapy as the adoption of the I-Thou stance (Buber); the taking of the client's viewpoint at face value (phenomenological approach); the view that meanings do not exist prior to the construction of them by the client (Sartrean existentialism). In this section, I would like to reflect a little on the character of the philosophical influences on Perls.

Broadly speaking, twentieth century philosophy split into two main streams, the analytical and continental. Analytical philosophy, which dominates the English-speaking philosophical community, is concerned with conceptual precision, argumentative rigor, getting clear about specific issues, and fits well with a scientific view of reality. Continental philosophy is broader in scope, deals with issues which also concern literature, and privileges imagination, élan, and a comprehensive vision.

Whilst many exceptions exist to these generalizations, they are useful ways of orientating oneself to the multifaceted world of contemporary philosophy. Perls was heavily influenced by continental thinkers and seemed temperamentally disinclined to relate to analytical material (the dominant mode of philosophy in America from the 1950s onward).

The strengths of continental philosophy include creativity, reconfigurations of traditional debates, the supply of new concepts, and new conceptions of the self and the world. Buber supplied a new vocabulary for relationship, for how one relates to objects and persons. Phenomenology (although initially concerned in Husserl with scientific rigor and the provision of a skeptic-proof foundation for knowledge) allowed for an investigation of the structure of consciousness, an exploration of the dimensions of human subjectivity. Heidegger and Sartre both provided investigations of the human condition in a universe which offered no prefabricated answers to the problems of human existence and highlighted issues such as finitude, temporality, anxiety, authentic living. The existentialist concern with authentic existence, whether in Heidegger's impenetrable prose or Sartre's literary evocations, fitted well with the preoccupations of many in the twentieth century and Perls drank deeply from this well.

However, the weaknesses of continental philosophy are also clear. It often neglects detail in the search for the bigger picture, precision in terminology and argument can be lacking and a certain amount of posturing or spurious wordplay can creep in. (One suggested reason for this is pedagogical – the prevalence of tutorials in anglophone philosophical education where students are required to clarify and defend their work and the relative lack of this in French and German education). The corresponding vices of analytical philosophy are narrowness, lack of creativity, and a dissociation from any concerns other than the purely academic. And, of course, the split is breaking down as more philosophers write with familiarity of both traditions.

It seems that a one-sided diet of philosophy has affected Gestalt psychotherapy, in that the kinds of thinkers favored by Perls and by subsequent Gestalt psychotherapeutic thinkers are all from one side of the main divide. It is likely that some of the intellectual vices of that tradition have contributed to the kinds of structural confusion, repetition, loss of thematic unity, and plain clumsiness seen in PHG.

Taking two of the main thinkers of the analytic camp, Wittgenstein and Quine, I wish to briefly draw attention to features of their work which might be of interest to Gestalt psychotherapeutic theory (see O'Grady

2002). Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) famously spoke of language games and the need for attention to language. Indeed, as mentioned, he characterized his philosophical method as a kind of therapy, where one is weaned away from intellectually troublesome kinds of language usage. For Wittgenstein, the use of language is rooted in "forms of life," which are ultimately ways of acting in the world. All language, theorizing, and verbalization are rooted in more simple patterns of behavior. Attention to the diversity present in this word–world nexus is one of the main thrusts of Wittgenstein's later thought. It seems to me that this kind of attitude could complement that of the phenomenological attitude, as it exhibits the descriptiveness, attentiveness, and nonjudgmental aspects of the latter. As mentioned in the introduction, few enough endorse wholeheartedly Wittgenstein's therapeutic conception of philosophy. Yet Wittgenstein's work provides useful material for systematically thinking about the relation of language use to forms of life and the plurality which emerges from this (see O'Grady 2004).

W.V. Quine (1908–2000) was mentored by Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), who was one of the first philosophers to seriously take on board the results of Gestalt psychology for philosophy. Carnap's work exhibits a growing appreciation of holism and he is generally regarded as the founder of modern philosophy of science. Quine develops holism to a high degree in his work. In particular, he challenged dichotomies such as theory/practice, theory/observation, science/philosophy, analytic/synthetic, a priori/a posteriori. Though his work is far removed from the "problems of life" and remains steadfastly occupied with epistemology, philosophy of language, and ontology – this was also the case with the founder of phenomenology – Husserl. The point is that familiarity with work such as that of Wittgenstein and Quine could serve to complement the kind of impact the work of Buber, Husserl, and Sartre has already had on Gestalt psychotherapy and rebalance the theory–practice, objectivity–subjectivity dichotomies.

As a final note, it seems to me that a renewed look at Aristotle would also help with some of these issues. Paul Goodman was an Aristotelian scholar and the basic structural ideas of function, organism and self, articulated in PHG, are clearly Aristotelian (see Crocker (1999) for a useful discussion of the Aristotelianism of Gestalt Psychology, especially Chapter 4). At least two further resources available in Aristotle seem germane to thinking about Gestalt theory. The first is the notion of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. This is a kind of knowledge which is not simply theoretical knowledge, but not simply a skill either. It is primarily

associated with knowing how to live a good life. It requires life experience in order to acquire it and has something to do with being able to appropriately translate knowledge of general principle into individualized circumstances, with all the contextual variables that involve. It seems that trainee therapists are being instructed in a particular kind of *phronesis*. It is not simply a learning of technique or skill, but a complex composite of theory, reflection, awareness, and capacity to translate theory into appropriate action, emotional stability, empathy, and insight.

A second relevant feature of Aristotle's work is the notion of *arete*, or virtue. A virtue is a kind of excellence of character. It is built on innate tendencies, but is cultivated by education and environment. A virtue is a balanced middle between two opposed vices, so, for example, courage is between cowardice and rashness. There are intellectual virtues (e.g., practical wisdom – *phronesis*) and moral virtues (e.g., temperance). What is of interest here is the idea that a capacity exhibiting intellectual, emotional, social, educational, environmental, and biological features is the focus of study for Aristotle. To live a good life is to live a life in accordance with the virtues – to live excellently in accord with the contextual circumstances of one's own life. This could well be a way of reflecting more deeply on the general features of homeostasis, seeing whether it in fact corresponds to what Aristotle had called *eudaimonia* – happiness.

Note

1. PHG lists six forms of interruption, adding desensitization and egotism to the four discussed here. It also gives a taxonomy of where each interruption is likely to happen in the cycle of awareness. This taxonomy is not integrated into the rest of the text and does not actually seem applicable in the therapeutic context. The sixth form of interruption, egotism, seems demanded by the taxonomy for reasons of completion, but does not appear at all in the rest of the book, unlike the lengthy discussions of projection and so on. The fifth, desensitization is a form of limitation of awareness and has no systematic discussion in the main text, thought as a phenomenon it pervades the other forms of interruption. So I am restricting this discussion to just the four main forms of interruption.

14

Wittgenstein's Temple
Or How Cool is Philosophy?

Michael McGhee

Philosophers in the analytic tradition freely use the first-person singular in their work, but only rarely admit the relevance to it of the self or subjective position of the philosopher on the grounds, mainly, that our work should be "objective." How can the subjectivity of the philosopher be *relevant*, we may say, if we are dealing with objective matters that are *there* whatever our position – and how can it be *irrelevant*, someone may reply, if we can only see such "objective" matters from *here*? In our anxiety to avoid relativism, it is easy to neglect the origins of metaphors of perspective – position, aspect, vantage-point, point of view – which, after all, generally presuppose that we are all looking at the same terrain, even if we are sometimes puzzled by apparently conflicting accounts of its features – one of us, perhaps both, we feel, must in such a case have got it wrong. But we may faithfully describe the features of the terrain that fall within our vision and yet, fatally, not understand that though it may not be inaccurate, our description may still be *inadequate* – because other features remain concealed from view. But that, surely, implies a distinction between the truth (or falsity) of a description and its adequacy or inadequacy. What kind of distinction is this?

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I

There is no doubting the growing interest in the idea of "philosophy as a way of life" – or as a spiritual exercise or practice, or as a "guide to living" – but neither of these expressions is particularly clear, and nor are they interchangeable and there is surely some equivocation in the use of the term "philosophy." Thus it may be, and if this is an insight then it is an ancient one, that we need to live in a particular kind of way *already* (taking care of our souls) if we are to be in a position to see what would otherwise be concealed from us – but which, once seen, would cause us to change or redirect our lives. It may be, further, that we *then* require some kind of practice or *ascesis* to achieve a sustained and stable awareness of what we have seen, and learn how to conform our dispositions to what we thus sometimes know and acknowledge. But so far nothing has been said about what we are likely to take as crucial to "philosophy," namely, dialogue, argument, analysis, *writing* – the representation of what we sometimes know and acknowledge.

In that case we can see the possibility, perhaps, of a larger conception of "philosophy," one in which a certain way of life is its condition, but a *constitutive* condition, so that philosophy both requires and encompasses the spiritual exercises upon which the possibility of knowledge and the development of wisdom depend, where wisdom is conceived as a harmony between knowledge, disposition, and conduct. This larger conception would not involve the familiar fragmentation or dichotomy between reason and feeling that is so woundingly embedded in our institutions of higher education, but would imply a philosophical practice that addressed and educated the whole person.[1]

Some will think that this sort of conception has long since foundered on the critical reefs of anti-Platonism, and is now only of historical interest. But the question is whether this ancient conception is in some way more authentically "philosophical" than other activities that come under that name in the world of what we call without irony "academic philosophy," and whether, therefore, the contrast is illustrated in the difference between those manacled prisoners who acutely describe the shadows, and the liberated prisoner who, while he can see or at least recall the shadows well enough, also talks, admittedly with incomplete clarity, of his experience of a contrasting reality, so that, to return to the distinction between accuracy and adequacy, the descriptions by the prisoners of the play of shadows on the wall are accurate enough but are invincibly inadequate to

the larger surrounding reality that includes the causal mechanisms that determine that what they see are precisely only the shadows of the more substantial things that they cannot see.

No doubt the liberated prisoner will speak dispassionately about the distinctions he feels obliged to point out. He may claim that he speaks as a neutral and objective observer of what he has undergone. But that he undertakes to enlighten the other prisoners, to let the fly out of the fly-bottle, makes it difficult to see how we can avoid thinking of him as a sort of disruptive and unruly *guide*, whose methods will sometimes seem both undermining and offensive, but who nevertheless describes as best he can the path he was forced to take – and that is a kind of guidance – even as he seeks to precipitate in others the experience he himself underwent: as a condition of attaining the position from which the distinctions he draws come into clear view. The released prisoner makes a journey that brings him back into the Cave with the aim of enlightening the other prisoners, and the disturbing premise that I seek to elaborate in this paper is that philosophy arises out of an experience of moral or spiritual change, and that this fact gives significance to the subjectivity of the philosopher. The communication of this change, against the resistance of our refusal of self-knowledge and the rhetorical devices of its political enemies, are the ethical motivations for the emancipatory ends of the peculiar activities of dialectic and the *elenchus*.

II

The Socratic image of letting the fly out of the fly-bottle – and until help comes the fly's own efforts are both frantic and futile – belongs, of course, to Wittgenstein, who was, however, more interested in some of the issues raised here than is perhaps well known. Thus in a 1929 notebook (Wittgenstein 1977) he wrote down the following thought:

> My ideal is a certain coolness. A temple that serves as a surrounding for the passions, without meddling with them.[2]

This remark is quoted in the frontispiece and alluded to in the title of D. Z. Phillips' (1999) *Philosophy's Cool Place* to indicate, as he says, a certain "contemplative" conception of philosophy that he believes to be "central in Wittgenstein's work and in critical extensions of it by Rush

Rhees." A contemplative conception of philosophy, he tells us – though it is unclear how it differs in this from philosophy *tout court* – "raises fundamental questions about the nature of reality and the possibility of discourse."

The "coolness" of this "contemplative" philosophy advocated by Phillips, in phrasing that derives from Wittgenstein's note, consists, he says, in giving "a certain kind of attention to our surroundings *without meddling with them*" (p. ix, my italics) – presumably "contemplative" highlights a contrast with a philosophy that somehow "meddles," and it is true that "not meddling" seems to echo the remark in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* that philosophy leaves everything as it is. But "contemplative" does other work for Phillips, as a way of insisting that philosophy is "neutral" and not a "guide to living," though as we have seen there is no obvious *conflict* in the idea that a neutral account of some terrain may guide someone on a necessary journey. In any event, the attention to our surroundings that Phillips describes is something that "we are reluctant to give . . . because of the hold which certain ways of thinking have on us. These ways of thinking have us captive, not against our wills, but because of them" (p. 2). I take it that Phillips is making a connection here between particular ways of thinking and *particular directions* of the will, rather than about the presence of the will as such.

But although this last sentence expresses an important thought to which we shall return – it looks like an accurate description of the prisoners in the Cave – Phillips seems both to move too fast and in the wrong direction when he connects Wittgenstein's remark with his own "contemplative" conception of philosophy, or indeed with philosophy at all. The remark about "a certain coolness" is not, after all, obviously *about philosophy*, nor about "an attention to our surroundings" that does not "meddle" with them. It is the expression of an ideal of how to conduct one's life, and it requires a further step to connect it with philosophy. This may become clearer if we reflect on the reference to *not meddling* ("*hineinreden*"). Despite the admittedly obscure context of an isolated saying, Wittgenstein does not obviously offer a prescription or make a recommendation. He appears, rather, to describe a desired but fugitive *condition of mind*, whose image is a *temple* – a temple whose form, setting, and cool airy spaces – and, no doubt, the felt presence of the god – naturally quieten and elevate the mind and silence the passions.[3] These then lose their central place as the determinants of our attention, as though the temple walls have quietly risen around them, and the

direction and quality of our attention have been altered and refined with this enhancement of our dwelling. This, it seems, is Wittgenstein's desideratum: a state in which we do not need to *interfere* in the affairs of the passions, fruitlessly take them up, argue with them, or reason them out of existence – the real meaning here of "meddled with" (*hineinreden*) – but one in which they are naturally diminished in their efficacy by the power of their new *mental* surroundings. *They* no longer provide the dominant perspective, which is supplied instead by states of mind which are the objective correlative of the image, states of mind which surround, and circumscribe (*Umgebung*) the passions – but which must also, of course, if they are to command our rational allegiance – and otherwise, we might only be in the presence of a weary and questionable quietism – inform us in a way that the passions cannot of the nature of the world we live in.

This is the suppressed premise that needs to be added if we are to connect "coolness" with philosophy: philosophy would only be "cool" if its practice depended upon (the cultivation of) states of mind which illumine what remains obscure in their absence – illumine, that is to say, that "reality" which it is the task of philosophy to "raise questions about." "Reality" here is hardly in upper case, but refers merely to whatever remains invisible when we are under the influence of the passions or the "will" – the attention to our surroundings that Phillips recommends depends upon such *ascesis* or discipline as is involved in the overcoming of "ways of thinking that have us captive . . . because of our wills," but these must also be shown, as I said, to impede or obscure what it is the task of philosophy to make plain.

Wittgenstein's aspiration toward "a certain coolness" might simply reflect a practical desire to deal with the turmoil of disturbing passions, the ideal of a troubled man at the mercy of strong feelings, and we might well question the aspiration if it merely reflected the desire to be rid of feelings rather than passionately to ride and resolve them, in the anguished spirit of Beethoven, for instance. But it might also, and more interestingly, be *ethically* motivated, by the remorseful recognition of their destructive power, say. But even this does not connect Wittgenstein's aspiration toward "a certain coolness" with *philosophy*. Or at least, one may be tempted to think that the connection depends upon a convergence of the task of philosophy with some "cognitive" aspect[4] of this "coolness," namely, a more adequate apprehension or awareness of "reality." When the passions become quiet in the surroundings of the temple, there must be some significant revelation of what was previously hidden, significant

"realities" must swim into view. But we can hardly leave it there: the question must arise about the nature of the "realities" that emerge from the shadows as well as about the nature of what obscures it. What obscure it are the passions, and the clue to what emerges may lie, unexpectedly, in the idea of a *moral motivation*. I suggest that what is initially required of the philosopher is an account, not of a decontextualized, unitary notion of "Reality," but of the plural "realities" of the *moral life* that are precisely obscured by the communal or egocentric self-enclosure of destructive passions and the will.

III

It is striking how closely Wittgenstein's use of the temple image coincides with Rilke's, from whom, indeed, it may possibly derive: the poet suggests just such a turning around or reversal of dominance between center and periphery when he uses the metaphor in his first sonnet to Orpheus.[5] Orpheus is the figure of a singer or poet whose music precisely quietens the passions in favor of "ways of thinking" that are normally only poorly housed ("*kaum eine Hütte*") in consciousness, for which, under the influence of esthetic experience, a temple can now be raised ("*da schufst du inhnen Tempel im Gehör*"[6]): – A temple rather than a hut to house what were previously known only as the "obscurest longings" ("*dunkelsten Verlangen*"), but which come into clearer view under the sway of art, which silences the passions. Wittgenstein's ideal of "coolness" seems to be represented by the idea of a temple which provides a larger perspective than those of the passions, which remain present but untroubling. Rilke's thought seems to be that this perspective may arise through the calming power of art: the attention is redirected and refined. And precisely the same question arises: what thus comes into clearer view? Neither Wittgenstein nor Rilke is explicit about this, though the latter does refer to "longings." What kind of account should we give of these once obscure longings that allegedly emerge as significant "realities"? In any case we are not talking merely of a vacuum to replace the silenced passions. My claim that what is referred to are the realities of the moral life requires some account of what those realities are, though my further claim is that they remain relatively obscure and have only slowly emerged through the tradition, and that this slow emergence is part of my theme. I suggest that Rilke's "obscurest longings" intimate a revelatory experience of moral transformation or love, an achieved distance from the immediacy

and pressure of self-regarding desire, which allows space for the possibility of a passion for justice founded in solidarity rather than calculation, that is to say, for a Socratic rather than Thrasymachian conception of justice.

If we ask what kind of "attention to our surroundings" must be demanded by philosophy if we accept that it should be judged in the light of Wittgenstein's ideal of "coolness," then the answer is actually quite startling, and not entirely coincident with Phillips' conception of it as "contemplative." Wittgenstein's temple is the image of a powerful condition of mind with an intentional, cognitive content whose saliencies contrast with those of the passions, which are not so much restrained by a contrary and coercive force as subdued precisely by a transfer of power to another and therefore strengthened form of attention, a form of attention, I suggest, that belongs to the Greek virtue of *sōphrosunē*, a virtue which is, I submit, the "coolness" toward which Wittgenstein aspires.

IV

If this seems a slightly surprising turn then it may be of interest that Wittgenstein (1967) once[7] took the trouble to copy out several sentences of Plato's *Charmides*, a passage that deals precisely with *sōphrosunē*:

> 454. Plato: " – What? he said, *it* be of no use? If *sōphrosunē* is the knowledge of knowledge and is prior to other knowledges, then it must also be prior to that knowledge which relates to the good and in that way must be of use to us. Does *it* make us healthy, I said, and not medicine? And similarly with the rest of the arts; does *it* direct their business and not rather each of them its own? Again, have we not long since allowed that it would only be the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance and not of any other matter? – We have indeed. – So it will not produce health in us? – Presumably not. – Because health belongs to a different art? – Yes. – Then, friend, neither will it produce utility for us. For this is a business we have too assigned to another art – of course – so how can *sōphrosunē* be useful, if it does not bring us any utility?[8]

Immediately after Section 454, there comes the well-known parenthetical comment:

> 455. (The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas ("*Denkgemeinde*").[9] That is what makes him into a philosopher.)

Even if this Sections 454/455 juxtaposition is editorial rather than authorial (apparently we cannot now know), we have in these two paragraphs of *Zettel* an intriguing return of the preoccupation with "coolness," on the one hand, in the form, this time, of *sōphrosunē*, and, on the other, the idea of an essentially Socratic attitude of critical distance that echoes the notion of a "knowledge of knowledge" at the center of the passage Wittgenstein has copied out. The key word in the *Charmides* is *sōphrosunē*, which the *Zettel* editors, Anscombe and von Wright, perhaps, following Jowett, misleadingly translate as "wisdom,"[10] which obscures the connection with Wittgenstein's interest in "*eine gewisse Kühle*": his more accurate German text has "*Besonnenheit*." *Sōphrosunē* has an unfortunate translation history. Alongside "wisdom," we can place "self-control" (favored by Watt), which obscures the distinction between *enkrateia* and *sōphrosunē*.[11] My own preference would be something like "self-possession," on the grounds that it offers a better picture of an unagitated moral demeanor ("cool"). The translations Watt refers to and discards – moderation, soberness, temperateness, (self-)restraint, self-discipline, and so on (see p.166) – all reflect an understandable practical interest in a particular aspect of *sōphrosunē*, a calm demeanor toward desire ("temperance") that has a practical outcome in the form of *phronēsis*. But the virtue is a complex phenomenon not all of whose elements can easily be held together for scrutiny, and it has an experiential and cognitive, as well as a practical aspect. Aristotle's treatment distinguishes it as a condition that surpasses *enkrateia* as a virtue of conduct, as a temperateness undistressed by the absence of pleasure that enables action in the light of sound and undistorted judgment.[12] The further point, however, if we take the Temple metaphor seriously, is whether it opens up *possibilities* of judgment not available in its absence, possibilities of judgment, that is to say, that reflect an expanded moral landscape.

V

In a spirit that sounds both Platonic and proto-Wittgensteinian, John Henry Newman (1909, p. 55) once tellingly and helpfully observed that

> We conceive by means of definition or description; whole objects do not create in the intellect whole ideas, but are, to use a mathematical phrase, thrown into series, into a number of statements, strengthening, interpreting, correcting each other . . . We cannot teach except by aspects or views, which are not identical with the thing itself which we are teaching . . .

The "whole object" of *sōphrosunē* in its complexity has to be presented to us under its *several* aspects if we are to attain to the "whole idea," beginning in limited or sporadic views. We may remain unaware of the interconnectedness of these aspects at first – like the child of Book III of Locke's *Essay*, who knows gold only under the superficial aspect of "shininess," and who goes on to misread what else is to count as "gold" by using that feature as its sole criterion of identity.

Wittgenstein refers to two aspects of *sōphrosunē*, to a certain demeanor and its causal condition. It is possible, of course, to be aware of the demeanor without being aware of its causal condition, and thus be like Locke's child, similarly liable to misread what else belongs to the concept. Such a person's use of the expression "coolness" would reveal only a limited idea of the object referred to, an understanding of the phenomenon only under a particular, limited description, a failure to see the role that aspect has in causal relation to other aspects.

Now, this notion of a limited grasp or understanding seems to imply the possibility of a more comprehensive one, something closer perhaps to Newman's "whole idea." But when is an idea a "whole idea"? This skeptical question opens the way to a radical point that is crucial to my thesis: that the meaning of a term like *sōphrosunē* may not (yet) be finally determined but remain under construction and capable of development through further discovery.

This allows us to make what might seem at first a strange distinction, between a (narrower) notion of "the world" and a (wider) notion of "reality," where the former is constituted by our ideas and their objects as they are expressed in the sense of our language, and where the latter includes not only this assimilated ground but also *what still remains unconceptualized*, beyond the scope of our language, what presently transcends world and language. It is just here that we can insert Phillips' thought that philosophers deal with "reality" – they do so by working at this interface on the growth of language in the further disclosure or revelation of "realities" that have remained unassimilated or unrecognized as aspects of the "world." But if philosophers deal with "reality," then we need to clarify what is within their competence. Of course they are concerned with the truth or falsity of premises, the validity of arguments, but there is a stranger and less recognized task, which is to be sensitive to the possible *inadequacies* of sense. This is precisely *not* a matter of reaching out to "satisfy ourselves of the *correctness* of our concepts," since it is already within the framework of how we *conceive* reality that questions of truth and falsity arise. It is a matter rather of *antennae*, of a disciplined sense of

unease about what still eludes us, a sense that there *is* something that *does* elude us, the sense that our understanding is inadequate to something we are still only half aware of. This very particular *poiesis*, the activity of making new sense, is a point of intersection between philosophy and poetry.[13]

The use of the Temple metaphor by Wittgenstein and Rilke is *itself* an example of this distinctively philosophical work, namely, that of making new sense, and it is not an accident that we are talking here of a metaphor. The same kind of work is already present in Plato's play of definitions in *Charmides*, at first superficial, and then dealing with profounder causalities. The array of definitions holds different aspects of the virtue together in a tension which serves, in Newman's words, to strengthen, interpret, and correct each other. There is some truth in each of the definitions, and yet their rejection (on more or less spurious grounds) establishes their *inadequacy* as an account of "the whole object," forces further reflection and puts pressure on the imagination. This work is also present in that moment of breakthrough when Aristotle makes the distinction between *sōphrosunē* and *enkrateia*, finally seeing and articulating more clearly than was available before a fugitive but distinctive reality, namely, that such an attitude to desire is available to us. Rilke's work discloses a further insight into the inner topography of the virtue, in his representation of a movement from periphery to center. In other words, a concept like that of *sōphrosunē* has a history, a no doubt checkered one, in which distinctions are made and then lost sight of, and then regained – always recalling that some first humans, as it were, drew them in language and images handed down to us – and the role of the philosopher is to push back the limits of our understanding – of our world – by assimilating into the language realities that were previously beyond it or only imperfectly or fitfully discerned or conceptualized.

VI

What attracts Wittgenstein's attention in the *Charmides* – it is the focus of the passage he copied out – is the idea of *sōphrosunē* in an interior, "cognitive" aspect, as "the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance," the idea of a kind of knowledge that in some way "governs" or "presides over" the other kinds of knowledge which are its object.[14] So what kind of knowledge might this "meta-knowledge" be, that governs other

kinds of knowledge and depends upon, is even definitive of, the virtue of *sōphrosunē*?

A more pertinent question would be, what can we *do* with this suggestive Platonic formulation that has caught the eye of a Wittgenstein pursuing an interest in *Besonnenheit*? Critias offers it in his discussion with Socrates of *sōphrosunē* as "self-knowledge," which is rendered, by an apparent conjuring trick, into "knowledge of itself" and thence to "knowledge of knowledge" and further refined to "knowledge of knowledge and ignorance,"[15] and one fairly pedestrian example is discussed, that of medical knowledge. It is reasonable to assume that Wittgenstein's interest was not a scholarly one. However, we have an interesting set of connections. We have the idea of a temple which surrounds the passions and does not meddle with them and, if we recall that *sōphrosunē* is defined here as "self-knowledge," we can generate an important philosophical idea – that despite the logical sleight of hand, self-knowledge can be understood both in the terms provided by the temple image *and* in the terms of Critias's "knowledge of knowledge and ignorance," though to do this we need to be able to associate "knowledge and ignorance" not with medical knowledge and "other arts" but with the perspectives provided by the passions. As Jonathan Bennett once forcefully pointed out, it is an error to believe that the passions are founded on delusion or false belief about their objects: in our anger, for instance, we can know particular things to the exclusion from consciousness of everything else. The passions have their own objects of knowledge. It might be claimed that such passions do after all involve a false belief, a view which gives us a good reason for calling them passions in the first place, as for example, "this injury deserves revenge."[16] But it is not clear that this represents a false belief so much as a way of thinking that gives expression to the passion, is the energized thought of the passion that is dissolved in the dissolution of the passion – at which point we no longer think in those terms: it is not a category we invoke.

The further, mediating image that will perhaps clarify the connection between self-knowledge and the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance is that of Plato's Cave, the great metaphor of ignorance and delusion and, in the liberated prisoner, of a presiding and liberated knowledge of the *conditions and limits* of (other forms[17] of) knowledge and ignorance. There are structural similarities between the Cave and temple metaphors. The "Temple" perspective is that of the liberated prisoner who can see the larger surroundings within and beyond the cave, including the mechanisms that limit the vision of the others; the perspectives afforded by

the passions are those of the still manacled prisoners, but also those of the beasts of the forest in Rilke's sonnet before their attention is caught by the sound of Orpheus singing. There is an asymmetrical relation between the presiding knowledge and the other knowledges – the presiding knowledge must, as it were, know or comprehend the other knowledges without their knowing or comprehending *it*. There is another feature, that in the possession of such knowledge, one is in some way undeceived, liberated from a confining ignorance or delusion without withdrawing from the thought that these "other knowledges" are for all that, forms of *knowledge* – notwithstanding the Platonic conception of the scope of true knowledge over against opinion. There is reason to say that *pace* Plato his still-manacled prisoners *knew* things about the shadow play on the walls of their Cave, even if they are ignorant that it was precisely a play of shadows that they saw, or are deluded into the belief that this is all there is.

VII

Since Wittgenstein and Rilke both use the image of the temple, and Wittgenstein was reading *Charmides*, it is intriguing that a few paragraphs earlier than the lines he copied out Critias appeals to the famous "Know Thyself" inscription above the entrance to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (164d–e). The Wittgenstein/Rilke trope gives us some reason to associate self-knowledge with the image. It is, after all, the image of a form of consciousness in which we are not only free of the passions and their determinations of the will, but are aware of their effect on our power of action. It is a kind of knowledge which *includes* knowledge of the knowledge and ignorance that belongs to the passions (whose saliencies blind us to what else is there), just as the liberated prisoner in his wider knowledge also knows the mechanisms that earlier restricted him. The Temple as an image of self-knowledge is the image of the arising of a presiding knowledge, in which we come to know what is obscure or invisible to us when we lack it, and the Cave is an image of its absence.

But this presiding knowledge is an obvious candidate for a distinctively philosophical knowledge, that of the freed prisoner looking on from a vantage point unavailable to the others, from which he can see what limits their knowledge, while he himself remains uncomprehended or *atopos*. But, to follow a Winchian[18] gloss on Sartre, the freed prisoner *is* the vantage point, in the sense that the form of his subjectivity is, as it

were, an articulation or expression of that position. By the same token, the subjectivity of the manacled prisoners is closed to these possibilities: opening them is the traditional task of the *elenchus*, an enterprise that seeks, as it were, to make heads turn.

If philosophy requires "coolness" or *sōphrosunē*, then it requires self-knowledge in the form of knowledge of knowledge and ignorance. This fits well enough with, and is indeed exemplified by, Phillips's remarks about "ways of thinking that hold us captive because of our wills" – a diagnosis on his part that itself requires self-knowledge. Such a position invites the philosopher to a Socratic critique or dialectic. This latter interrogates the failure of self-knowledge revealed in those unconscious or unwary assumptions that indicate the captivating action of the will *and* seeks to give conceptual expression to the still indeterminate moral landscape that starts to become visible when "the will," or better, a particular direction of the will, is in abeyance. This tells us something further about philosophy. Why should we consider the liberated prisoner, standing on the threshold between the Cave and the outside world, as an image of the *philosopher* and not that of any other seeker (after the truth)? What is implied in the Platonic account is that the term is reserved for those who seek to *return* – with an emancipatory and, therefore, moral interest in releasing the fly from the fly-bottle, the worthy Burghers of the *Denkgemeinde* from their Cave, instilling Socratic doubt in assumptions to which our subjectivity holds anxiously fast. However, if we take the Winchian point seriously, the prisoners and the ex-prisoner now have neither a common language nor common form of subjectivity. The prisoners cannot appreciate that they are prisoners looking at shadows – and so the communication has to be "indirect," in the perplexing form of *koan* and the shock of *aporia*. And what is critical here is that they do not simply dismiss the freed prisoner as deranged, but kill him. There is more than a poignant reading into the myth of the death of Socrates here: the murder makes a difference to how we read the situation of the prisoners and reveals an interesting tension in the narrative: what fits the murder is a condition, not of ignorance, but of bad faith.

VIII

This necessity for "indirect communication" is a further aspect of the claim that philosophers are distinctively concerned with *what is* or, as

Phillips puts it, with the nature of reality and the possibility of discourse – the picture of the freed prisoner is also a picture of the development of sense or meaning, of conceptual growth by which previously undiscerned realities are brought into focus. As I said earlier, the image of the temple in Wittgenstein and Rilke itself illustrates this kind of growth of meaning. The ideal toward which Wittgenstein aspires is pictured in the image of the temple that surrounds the passions – and we are prompted to apply the picture and thereby recognize something that isomorphically corresponds to it within our own experience – and we may well initially deny that anything answers to it there. The isomorphism is important, though, since the structure of the image provides us with bearings, a standard of comparison by which we can start to discern something we had not previously been aware of. Wittgenstein's ideal could scarcely be pictured at all if there were not, at least for him, sometimes lucid or calm intervals, as one might say, in which the reversal, or turning around, the movement from periphery to center, from hut to temple, actually occurred. That this alleged possibility is presented to us in the form of *imagery* precisely indicates that it is neither familiar nor well understood, that it is on the margins, a form of experience identified as though for the first time, by reference to an iconic instance or context: the image of the temple which surrounds and quietens the passions provides us with a new expression in the language, by whose means we can be drawn toward or start to notice this fugitive experience. We may deny any such experience, fugitive or otherwise, and here it is significant that the way such an image works is that the very act of attending to it draws us into the condition that it symbolizes. Such images work as intimations, representations, of forms of experience not fully assimilated or articulated, offer a provisional "name," indicate a threshold not quite distinctly discerned. This suggests that the emancipatory task is one in which the philosopher helps to develop and extend the sense of language, revealing the "before unapprehended relations of things," rendering them a sensible aspect of 'the world – altering the ratio between *cosmos* and *chaos* – what is ordered and what is not yet ordered. There is a critical distinction, in other words, between what we have assimilated of *what is*, what we have incorporated into the "world" of our experience, and what lies in wait, unassimilated and unknown. The philosopher operates in the space of this threshold.

But why should the prisoners kill rather than merely dismiss as mad someone whose claims cannot even be assessed in the terms available to them? The evidence is only available when the conditions that determine

what they do know is radically altered, it is not available in their "world." I suggest it only makes sense if there is some reason on their part for viewing the freed prisoner as a threat or danger, as someone who needs to be resisted or silenced. The tension in the narrative suggests that the prisoners are more aware of their situation than its terms strictly allow for. We need to understand that what chains them to their bench and restricts their vision is the force of their passions, their desires, and appetites, and that what we are dealing with is the projection of a conflict within a divided and unequal self, one that is reflected in Rilke's image, a self formed by and habituated to attachment to the appetites and desires, and the much more precarious self of Rilke's obscure longings. The Cave scene highlights by contrast the significance of Rilke's Orpheus. The music of Orpheus quietens the passions, lulls the appetites of the beasts of the forest, and does not confront or threaten them, but they must be assumed to be subliminally aware of the secret life that opposes their domination.

IX

I want now to relate the idea of an emergent moral self which stands in an antagonistic relationship to the passions to the distinction I have sought to draw between "the world" and "reality." The best picture of this distinction may well be that of the freed prisoner witnessing the conditions of those still chained to their bench. He has discovered realities that lie outside the purview of the prisoners, whose world represents the assimilation of aspects of reality or *what is* which are, however, the *product* of realities that remain beyond their apprehension, the apprehension of which would involve the dismantling of that world and the self-formation, the ego, that belongs to it, a kind of "unworlding" that leads to Matthew Arnold's condition of "wandering between two worlds." It is important to emphasize that there is no reason to deny that in one way this is also the situation of the freed prisoner, who also lives in a "world" that may turn out also to be narrow and confined by contrast to further emergent possibilities. However, there is one common usage of "the world" in which this is not obviously true of the freed prisoner, since it has an ethical as well as epistemological significance and in some contexts these come together, as is evident, for instance, in expressions like "in the world but not of it." Here, "the world appears to signify the perspective of those who have a particular self-interested motivational set, who scan

their surroundings with an attention focused exclusively on features that are salient for that self-interest. This is the great Platonic spiritual divide represented by the figures of Gyges and Socrates and their conceptions of justice.

But there is a "container" metaphor at work in the use of "the world": it can be entered or left, there can be irruptions into it, eruptions out of it[19] – there is an inside and an outside of a world, an internal and external aspect,[20] and it can be destroyed[21] – a sense in which "the world" can be left or abandoned, surpassed or transcended, as the freed prisoner transcends the world of the Cave. What is invisible to us when we are immersed in this "world" is not just the subjective conditions that determine what our attention is directed toward within our visual field, but also what falls outside the scope of that habitual attention. The ultimately dividing premise upon which philosophy is founded is the reality of the moral conversion or turning around of consciousness represented by Wittgenstein and Rilke's temple, and by Plato's returned prisoner, the condition for the possibility of which seems to depend upon some suspension of the dominance of appetency. If human kind cannot bear very much reality, then the "world" is our porous accommodation with the reality we are able to bear; but it is not totally efficient: the house we live in has a leaking roof and lets in draughts, and the outside temperature and climatic conditions affect changes within whose causes remain unknown to us.

The ethical and epistemological aspects of our use of the term "world" are widely acknowledged in common usage. Here, for example, is some broadsheet political comment found almost at random:

> In the world of Bin Laden and George Bush, fear is the key . . . Inexorably, the peoples of the globe are being pushed into a dangerously simplistic world where there are only absolutely hateful enemies and totally loyal friends, good gods and bad gods, the chosen and the damned. (Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Independent 04.11.04)

This "world" allegedly shared by these two figures is a representation of reality constituted by false dichotomies and generalizations which, although they do have some purchase in reality – there *are* hateful enemies and loyal friends – nevertheless conceal distinctions that would otherwise be available for the practical reasoning of a human sensibility whose emergence depends precisely on the availability of the realities that would

engage it if they were not concealed. Alibhai-Brown cites a passage from the Egyptian novelist Ahdaf Soueif:

> The identification of Islam as "the enemy" is particularly dangerous . . . The ideologues and propagandists need only revive old colonialist and orientalist ideas of Islam as an inherently fanatical, violent, ideological system which rejects modernity' (*Mezzaterra: Fragments from the Common Ground*)

Alibhai-Brown appeals to a notion of "world" as constituted by a web of implicitly evaluative descriptions or "ideas" that inform our perceptions as well as our self-image. In the present case, the claim is that they conceal and mystify – in that sense a "world" is vulnerable to critical scrutiny. A "world" is saturated by evaluative thought, ideas, general descriptions – hence the primal, deeply uncomfortable, and now somewhat abandoned role of the philosopher as the critic of the ideas that inform the world we inhabit, the uncomfortable role of the philosopher, therefore, as the undermining critic of the unconscious function of our self-images.

Now, it could be objected that this talk of "world" is loose, overwrought, and rhetorical, that we could equally well and with greater lucidity have talked in terms of the (allegedly false) *beliefs* of bin Laden and Bush. But this misses a point captured by the use of the term "world," which implies an ordered *system* of beliefs, in which, however, *false* beliefs may well have the status, not just of unexamined, but of *unexaminable* preconceptions. They are unavailable for inspection because they are the assumed background which determines the possible directions of "inspection." Although it is true that they are by no means unquestionable, they are functionally unquestionable in the place they occupy: they do not play the role of empirical propositions that can be tested, to echo *On Certainty*. It is only when that "world" is surpassed that their falsity can be seen. What is especially significant about propositions that play this role, some of which can express and articulate an unacknowledged direction of the will, is that precisely where empirical investigation ends – because these are the source and not the object of investigation – they are surrounded by a dignified aura of gravity and respect that allows the solemn enunciation of the most risible propositions, an atmosphere of respectful affirmation not uncommon near seats of power.

But if we focus our attention on the truth or falsity of unexamined core beliefs, as in the case of the vicious and self-serving generalities described

by Soueif, we may fail to see something deeper about them, which is that they are a symptom of a procedure which more systematically conceals the truth from us. Thus, there is an alternative way of conceiving how "the world" can be confronted by reality – not by reference to the *truth value* of propositions but to the *inadequacy* of the relevant system of propositions as a representation of reality. Here the Socratic enterprise is not simply to draw attention to error but to find means of drawing attention to what is obscured to consciousness by the habits of the will. I use "representation" in what I hope will be taken in an nontechnical way, as when I (mis-)represent you by drawing attention to real aspects of your character, but as though to the totality, in a way that distracts from aspects I may wish to conceal. It may be that there is nothing false in our representation, but it may also be inadequate to aspects of reality that can be seen from another vantage-point, a possibility that remains unrecognized or acknowledged. This is a significant aspect of the Cave. The prisoners may be more than simply ignorant, they may have a (second-order) false view of the status of what they know as coextensive with reality; they represent it to themselves as the totality of what is. Similarly, in the grip of Heidegger's *Gestell*, the untempered, unexamined impulse to mastery and control, we represent our environment to ourselves as constituted by such and such features and characteristics, features and characteristics that are undoubtedly there, but the representation is totalizing, and obscuring of other things that are also there, and we fail to see what lies outside what is essentially a self-preserving perspective: until we occupy another from which we can see the arising and cessation of the mechanisms involved. It is precisely here, I suggest, that we can make sense of the idea of "going beyond the world" or standing outside it. We do not stand outside reality, but see the limitations of a particular representation of it, crucially, one determined by a particular project of the will. What is neglected, overlooked, unseen, unnoticed, concealed, disregarded, peripheral, and marginal, in terms of that representation of reality may turn out, in interludes of release, to be things that an unawakened but emergent self is sensitive and responsive to, and, evanescently, sees – for example, from the position of "a certain coolness."

X

Wittgenstein's ideal in 1929 was "a certain coolness." This does not seem immediately to represent a philosophical ideal, "contemplative" or

otherwise, but it has interesting implications for how we conceive the philosophical enterprise if we take seriously the thought that under the condition of that "coolness," when "the passions" and "the will" are in abeyance, what was previously obscure or concealed becomes apparent. I have suggested, in terms, that this is best understood as the disclosure of an emergent moral sensibility in the revelation of the natural objects of its attention. In other words, the eclipse of "the passions" does not imply an absence of *moral passion*, even if "coolness" is a condition of its emergence. As I indicated earlier (see Note 4) what makes an emotion a "passion" is its moral destructiveness and tendency to engulf us and undermine our power of action – obscuring from consciousness the moral sentiments it thus stifles and overlays. In that case, philosophers need to cultivate and at least fitfully embody the virtue of *sōphrosunē* upon which such revelation would seem to depend. I noticed at the beginning that there has been much recent interest in the idea of philosophy as "a way of life" or as a "spiritual practice" or "exercise," and it may seem a natural conclusion to claim that it is in the cultivation of "coolness" that such conceptions are to be embodied. But the point is that the ideal seems to be a condition of philosophy rather than a constituent element, though no doubt the struggle to see that goes with its acquisition will be a natural part of a philosophical life. But there is something much more fundamental and obvious as a candidate for what makes philosophy a way of life, and this is the necessity for a certain kind of essentially "agonistic" community that allows philosophy to happen at all. I also suggested early on that at least for the ancient conception philosophy begins in the moral or spiritual conversion or transformation that is imaged forth in the figure of the released prisoner whose emancipatory agenda is then the task of returning to enlighten those still in their chains. This is the myth by which we identify the crucial relationship – between "teacher" and "pupil" – that defines the philosophical community. It seems to imply a double task on the part of the philosophical exemplar, to find a means to disclose what is now becoming apparent to them, and to find ways to dislodge and undermine the inner obstructions to its reception, though why would they want to do that? This is both visceral and dangerous ground, and it is anyway difficult to see how such a communal life can be embodied under the conditions of our contemporary higher education industry, though to say this is rather like complaining about the conditions in the Cave. But the vision is also far too seductive, both for those who would too readily be teachers and those who would too readily be pupils in such a community: the teachers need to be subtle and surly, the

pupils unruly and skeptical, the friendship between them only genuinely profound when it is genuinely "cool."

Notes

1. For a further discussion of this theme of educating the whole person, see McGhee (2009).
2. *Mein Ideal ist eine gewisse Kühle. Eine Tempel, der den Leidenschaften als Umgebung dient, ohne in sie hineinzureden*. My translation, substituting "surroundings" for Winch's 'setting': "setting" suggests some element of display, whereas "surrounding" suggests that the passions are circumscribed.
3. Questions about the nature of the passions are complex, for example, we have the Humean distinction between the calm and violent passions. But I take it that Wittgenstein is using the term "*Leidenschaft*" in the *negative* sense as referring largely to destructive and engulfing states of mind, and that "destructive" here implies morally destructive, and destructive of the capacity for moral action. I also take it that analogous uses of "the will," such as that quoted above from Phillips, refer to the wayward "*Willkür*" rather than to "*Wille*."
4. I shall be assuming that talk of an "aspect" of an object fuses together a feature and the position from which that feature is "visible."
5. *Die Sonnette an Orpheus* appeared in 1923, six years before Wittgenstein's notebook entry: Rilke was a financial beneficiary of Wittgenstein's famous disbursement of his inheritance before the Great War. The Sonnets appeared in the same year as the *Duino Elegien*. Wittgenstein's use of the temple metaphor for a state of mind to be contrasted with the passions seems to provide some evidence that he was familiar with the sonnet. Monk informs us that Wittgenstein "started to dislike" Rilke's later work (Monk 1991, p. 110), which suggests that at least at some point the opening sonnet of the sequence could have had some influence on a man who also had an interest in Schopenhauer.
6. I have dealt with this elsewhere (McGhee 2000, p. 168).
7. I do not know the year in which he did this. Von Wright places the "coolness" remark in 1929, Anscombe and von Wright say of the pieces in *Zettel* that the earliest are from 1929 and the latest from 1948, but make no further comment about individual paragraphs.
8. *Charmides* 174d–e in Plato (1987). I am grateful to David Bates for identifying this passage, and am indebted to him for the following shrewd comments: "(a) . . . 'is prior' in the Wittgenstein English version (lines 2 and 3 of the paragraph) represents in the first occurrence a Greek word meaning 'is in charge of' and in the second a word meaning 'rule' (*epistatein* and *archein*); (b) the German text uses *vorstehen* in both places, which seems a better

translation of the Greek than 'is prior.'" (Donald Watt's (1987) translation uses "presides" and "governs").

9. "*local* community of ideas" seems better to capture the surely slightly derogatory *Denkgemeinde*.
10. This was pointed out to me by David Bates.
11. cf. McGhee (2000, p. 52)
12. cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1118b28–1119a20 and 1140b11, where Aristotle tells us that this virtue is so named "because it preserves wisdom."
13. The poet Ted Hughes's (1994, p. 270) comments on Eliot and the impact of the First World War are relevant here: "That desacralised landscape had never been seen before. Or if it had been glimpsed, it had never before been real. Eliot found it, explored it, gave it a name and a human voice. And almost immediately, everybody recognised it as their own."
14. No doubt he would also have registered the possible irony of the claim that *sōphrosunē* is useless.
15. Charmides 165c et seq.
16. A point made in correspondence by Stephen Clark.
17. That is, not knowledge of knowledge as such with its attendant problems of self-reference.
18. See his "Moral Integrity" in Winch (1972).
19. —'. . . into the dangerous world I leapt'; 'that I might fade/And leave this world unseen', 'wandering between two worlds, one dead/The other powerless to be born'—.
20. This usage is exploited to great affect of course in John's *Gospel*: the Word comes into the world and the world does not recognize it.
21. cf. Byron's "wreck of a demolish'd world" in *Manfred*.

15

Observations on Pierre Hadot's Conception of Philosophy as a Way of Life

Michael Chase

We live in an age of epigones who have persuaded themselves that the death of the master-builders is equivalent to their own originality. The message that I infer from the history of the last two centuries is that philosophy is necessarily the asking and answering of "the big questions." The answers may be defective in every case, but this does not invalidate the necessity of the questions [. . .]. So long as we scorn these big questions, our insistence that we live in a post-philosophical age will validate itself (Rosen 2001, p. 348).

Introduction

In the interview published at the end of our translation of *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Hadot 1995, pp. 277–286), I had the opportunity to ask Pierre Hadot some of the more pressing questions that had occurred to me as I worked on making his thought comprehensible to an English-speaking audience. Most urgent among these, it seemed to me, for a philosophy that stressed the importance of applying theory to real-life situations, was the following: is the practice of philosophy as described by Hadot, consisting as it does in a series of spiritual exercises, still an option for us today? Are these ideas, thought up by dead white men in a vastly different environment more than two thousand years ago, still relevant to life at the beginning of the third millennium?

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We recall Hadot's answer: yes, as long as we are willing to separate the wheat from the chaff. To speak very roughly, the great metaphysical constructions of ancient philosophy such as Plato's theory of ideas, Epicurean atoms and the void, and the all-pervading fiery Stoic *pneuma* or *logos*, are, according to Hadot, secondary accretions upon a few basic central insights and a few key techniques – which he calls "spiritual exercises" – aimed at increasing our happiness by transforming the way we see the world, and consequently, our very way of being or existing. We can, therefore, if we wish, scour these ancient systems for all that is valuable and relevant to our present life situation, while discarding as outmoded whatever mythic or philosophical assumptions we can no longer accept. By modifying the superstructure of these philosophical constructions, we are not altering their fundamental bases. For instance, both Epicureanism and Stoicism advise us to concentrate on enjoying the present, to the exclusion of worries about the future and the past; and the fact that this spiritual technique recurs among the doctrines of two such opposed philosophical schools suggests that it is in some sense fundamental. We can therefore, if we choose, disregard the theoretical considerations each school later devised to justify the importance of this concentration on the present, precisely because they are, in Hadot's view, secondary and nonessential accretions to a fundamental insight.

Moreover, the wide variety of ancient philosophical schools, which correspond to various personality types or attitudes, increases our chances of finding the elements of a philosophical life that is congenial to us. If we are naturally inclined to give importance to vigilance, duty, and the tension of spiritual striving, we may find Stoicism suitable as a guide for our modern lives; if we emphasize the importance of relaxation, friendship, and relishing the pure pleasures of existence, then Epicureanism may be our cup of tea. Finally, since ancient philosophy in its most fundamental nature is not a systematic theoretical construct, but consists in a series of practical exercises destined to transform our perception and our being, we are justified in picking and choosing elements of doctrines and techniques from the entire gamut of ancient philosophical schools. The point of Hadot's concept of Philosophy as a Way of Life is neither, as in Foucault's adaptation of Hadot's thought, merely to fashion a self that is esthetically pleasing – this is what Hadot stigmatizes as a "New Dandyism" – nor, as Alexander Nehamas (1998) seems to suggest,[1] merely to fashion an interesting literary persona for oneself. Instead, by changing our way of looking at the world, we are to transform ourselves to the point of becoming fully integrated beings, mastering our internal discourse in

the way a rhetorician masters external discourse in his speeches, harmonizing our will and desires with the course of Nature, and recognizing and fulfilling the social obligations placed upon us by the demand for Justice. By all these means, Hadot argues, we can achieve a cosmic consciousness that raises us above the petty concerns of our individualistic lives, and makes us aware that we are parts of the All. This final goal is equivalent to happiness, in the sense given to this concept in Hellenistic philosophy: freedom from anxiety, anguish, worries, and despair.

All this, of course, seems very far removed from philosophy as it is taught today in most University philosophy departments, be they of the Analytic or the Continental persuasion. Such ideas may have motivated Marcus Aurelius, as Hadot has shown (1998), but can they still be relevant today, in a world where we take for granted technological advances so great that Marcus could never have dreamed of them?

By way of a possible answer to this question, I'd like to propose a brief case study, in which we can observe the impact of Hadot's ideas on a person not far removed from us in terms of space, time, and aspirations.

The Philosophy of Martin O'Hagan

The case I have in mind is that of Martin O'Hagan, who grew up in Ulster in the 1960s, receiving a strict, pre-Vatican II Catholic education. Dissatisfied with what he had been taught, in his twenties he turned to radical Marxism, joined the military wing of the IRA, and served several years in jail for gunrunning in the early 1970s. He had left school at 15, but while in jail as a "political prisoner," he began to study philosophy through the Open University, studies which he later continued at the University of Ulster. Upon his release from prison, O'Hagan began to work as a reporter, covering the seamy world of the Belfast underground. He eventually got a job with the newspaper *Sunday World*, where he gained a reputation as an investigative reporter who often surprised his colleagues with a determination and courage that sometimes bordered on foolhardiness. As he continued to unveil the racketeering and drug-dealing activities of both Catholic and Protestant extremists, O'Hagan managed to make himself unpopular with some factions of the IRA: he was expelled from the group for his "disruptive attitude" after thirteen years of membership, and in 1989, he was abducted, bound, and hooded, by the IRA and subjected to lengthy interrogation. At the opposite end of the political and religious spectrum, he also incurred the anger of

paramilitary Protestant Loyalist forces. O'Hagan had written a series of articles exposing the illegal activities of the notorious Billy Wright, leader of the hard-core group LVF (Loyalist Volunteer Force), for whom O'Hagan had coined the nickname "King Rat." Threats from Wright forced O'Hagan to leave Ulster and move first to Dublin and then to Cork, before Wright's murder in prison in 1998 put a temporary end to O'Hagan's worries. Or so it seemed.

In March 1998, O'Hagan submitted a study project to Geoffrey Klempner at the distance-learning philosophy institute Pathways, in which he sketched his own philosophical development and spoke of his plans for future study (O'Hagan 2001a). A few excerpts from this project will give us an idea of his philosophical orientation:

> "I came across the Stoics and the rest of the Greeks, whose approach to philosophy flew in the face of the discourse that was being promoted. Philosophy as a way of life interested me. It was a mode of existing in the world that should transform my mediocre being.
>
> In *Symposium*, Plato had shown that Socrates could be identified with Eros, the son of Poros (expedient) and Penia (poverty). Eros lacked wisdom but he did know how to acquire it. Philosophy took on the form of an exercise of thought, will and the totality of being. Its goal is wisdom.
>
> The search was for a way of life that brought peace of mind, inner freedom, and cosmic consciousness. [. . .] Epicurus [. . .] said, "We must not suppose that any other object is to be gained from the knowledge of the phenomena of the sky [. . .] than peace of mind and a sure confidence."
>
> During the Middle Ages the scholastic university was dominated by theology. Here professionals trained other professionals. Education was no longer directed towards people with the sole purpose of becoming fully developed beings. It is no accident that between the 16th and the 18th centuries genuine philosophical advances were made outside the universities. We have just to look at Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, and Leibniz.
>
> Schopenhauer wrote that university philosophy was mere fencing in front of a mirror. He claimed its goal was to give students opinions that suit the local establishment. He wrote 'and yet if there is one thing desirable in the world, it is to see a ray of light fall onto the darkness of our lives, shedding some of the light on the mysterious enigma of our existence'.
>
> [. . .] I discovered a Stoic practice that embodied an art of living to be found in Epictetus, Roman slave and philosopher. There should not be a separation between theory and praxis. For the first time Marx's words that

> philosophers only interpret the world [. . .] etc. took on a new meaning. It was the beginning of a return to Ancient philosophy as a philosophy of practical wisdom.
>
> I went in search of meaning and discovered a potential for morality and inner peace. Marxism is no longer the be-all and end-all but a tool to help cope and understand a world rapidly changing in several respects. My model, if that is the proper term, is Augustine who by philosophically re-examining his life came to his own conclusions. His wisdom did not merely make him know it made him 'be' in a certain way."

Although he does not state his source, there can be no doubt that O'Hagan draws his inspiration here from Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life*. We easily recognize many of Hadot's favorite themes: the myth of Poros and Penia from Plato's *Symposium* (cf. Hadot 1995, p. 160); the idea of ancient philosophy as an exercise not only of thought, but also of will and one's entire being (Hadot 1995, pp. 81–82); philosophy's goal as peace of mind, inner freedom, and cosmic consciousness (Hadot 1995, p. 242 *et saepe*); the historical process by which philosophy as a way of life was de-emphasized during the Middle Ages as a result of its co-optation, first by Christianity and then by Scholasticism and the concomitant rise of the University (Hadot 1995, pp. 269–270); and its gradual reemergence, after the Renaissance, in the work of such extra-Academic thinkers as Descartes, Spinoza, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche (Hadot 1995, pp. 271–272). Above all, what O'Hagan seems to have found in Hadot's work is the idea of a philosophy that is no longer just theoretical, but that can be practically applied. Unlike the study of philosophy as typically carried out in the University, Philosophy as a way of life seemed to O'Hagan to be able to offer a promise of morality and inner peace. It promised a "wisdom" that could be achieved by a philosophical program of self-improvement and development, beginning with self-examination and self-understanding.[2] In a word, Philosophy as a Way of Life promised not just an accumulation of knowledge or a display of cleverness, but a process of genuine transformation, whose goal was to enable the practitioner first to change his or her way of looking at the world, and then, as a consequence, to *be* in a new and different way.

A number of O'Hagan's other philosophical essays from this period also display Hadot's influence. This is especially clear at the end of his short paper entitled "Epictetus and Stoicism" (O'Hagan 2002):

> In short, what ancient philosophy proposed was an art of living. By contrast, modern philosophy appears as structured technical jargon in the positive sense reserved for an elite inside the hallowed walls of Academia [. . .]

> Today, the professors of philosophy have abandoned the big questions that once gave their discipline its point and meaning. Philosophy now finds itself in the midst of a self-imposed crisis. This calls for a radical avant gardism that won't be a return to some religious formula but one that helps us mortals find meaning in an increasingly disenchanted and alienated universe.

In a paper entitled "Ancient and modern philosophy" (O'Hagan 2001b), O'Hagan expands on what he sees as the decadent condition of University philosophy studies. He had come to philosophy, he writes, moved by "The notion that maybe I would find that my otherwise meaningless existence would make sense to me." Yet this hope was soon disappointed:

> It now appears no longer fashionable to consider the big questions of why we are here or what is this life all about [. . .] The desire to try and find an answer to haunting questions is branded romantic nostalgia and a longing for a world that is gone and never to return.
>
> Anglo-American philosophy has perfected an academicism in which issues that matter to most human beings are largely ignored. English language philosophy rarely amounts to anything more than an exhibition of the masterly and often dazzling skill that is the devil in the small detail of form. Nowhere does this undoubted ability seek to *inform.*[3]

In the letter that accompanied his study project, O'Hagan wrote to his supervisor: " . . . the notion of philosophy as a way of life could [. . .] be [. . .] a subject for serious academic study. Let me know what you think. I'm anxious to get started."

Unfortunately, O'Hagan did not have time to pursue research on his project. On September 21, 2001, while he was walking home with his wife from a pub on a Friday night, a car pulled up beside the couple and opened fire. O'Hagan barely had time to push his wife to safety in a nearby hedge before he took two bullets, killing him instantly. He was 51 years old.

An Innocent in Vancouver: My Encounter with Analytic Philosophy

> The chief danger to our philosophy, apart from laziness and wooliness, is *scholasticism*, the essence of which is treating what is vague as if it were precise and trying to fit it into an exact logical category. (Ramsey 1931, p. 269)

We have just seen that Pierre Hadot's concept of "Philosophy as a Way of Life" could provide an option for a person who, excluded from and/or disillusioned by Academic philosophy, still felt the need to search for answers to a few centrally important questions that had direct impact on his life.

My own itinerary was much less dramatic than O'Hagan's, and I certainly do not want to equate it with his courageous pursuit of truth. My story may perhaps be of interest, however, simply because in its very ordinariness, it illustrates the experience of a large number of philosophy students over the last couple of generations or so (cf. May 2000).

Like O'Hagan, I was a bit rebellious as a teenager. In high school I had what are now referred to as "authority issues" with my teachers, which led to a mutually beneficial separation between myself and the small-town high school in Duncan, Vancouver Island, and Canada, which I attended for a grand total of a couple of months. At the time, the school seemed to me like a concentration camp: I was interested in learning, whereas the teachers and school administrators seemed mainly concerned about keeping me and my fellow students or inmates off the streets and out of trouble for a few hours each day.[4] Things went much better when I was able to take my last two years of high school by correspondence: I traveled, read, and argued long distance with my teachers, none of whom I ever met, and began to get good marks. By the time I entered my first year at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, I knew that what mattered to me was studying and discussing a certain number of "big questions": What is the meaning of life? How should I live? What is happiness, and how can I attain it? What is the nature of the mystical experience, and is it completely illusory or does it reveal something of the actual nature of reality? My need to discuss these questions found a propitious environment in my first year of university studies, where I entered a kind of Great books program at UBC called Arts One, led by some gifted and dedicated professors.[5] Here I enjoyed a taste of what I had always believed genuine education must be: sincere, widely read professors guiding their students in a relaxed, nonhierarchical atmosphere in the discussion and consideration of ideas that really matter, and that have a direct bearing and impact on the way we live our lives.

When, after my first year, I had to decide on a major, it was a no-brainer: I chose philosophy. Where better, I thought, could I pursue my quest for discovering the Meaning of Life?

It did not take long for disillusionment to set in, as it did in other circumstances for O'Hagan. Most lower level courses in UBC's philosophy

program consisted in sitting with dozens of other students in cavernous amphitheaters, and taking notes while a professor, or often one of his assistants, read from the textbook he had either already published or was soon to publish. There were also smaller philosophical seminars, of course, but here I was introduced to reading some of the most boring material I had ever encountered. There were endless technical discussions of whether one could be mistaken about one's own sensory presentations, whether a private language was possible, whether sensations were identical with electrochemical impulses in the brain, and similar arcane matters, most of them stated in bizarre-looking pseudomathematical formal symbolic language. Many professors seemed primarily interested in punching holes in the arid and scarcely comprehensible reasoning of one of their colleagues by means of even more arid and less comprehensible considerations.[6] The mode of argumentation was often about as far removed from actual life experience as could be imagined: when examining a philosophical thesis, we were often advised to consider hypotheses of bizarre and highly unlikely alternate possible worlds.[7] In ethics, where the dominant theory was a particularly dry variety of utilitarianism, our professor enthusiastically set forth his latest theory, according which, if you were walking down the street and saw a person get hit by a car, you could justify *not* going over to help him or her on the grounds that, in the same time you would have taken to do so, you could have maximized the total quantity of human happiness in any number of much more efficient ways. Here, as often, sophisticated philosophical reasoning was being applied for the purpose of *not doing anything at all*, or rather for the justification of continuing to live precisely the way one is living now.

I gradually became aware of what was going on: UBC's philosophy department was in the grip of a philosophical style or method that had dominated Anglo-Saxon philosophy since the early 1900s: analytic philosophy. A great deal of ink has been spilled on the characteristics of analytic philosophy, and we will return to the subject a little later on. For the moment, I understand it in the terms specified by Reiter in *The Philosophical Gourmet* (Leiter 2012):[8]

> Analytic philosophers, crudely speaking, aim for argumentative clarity and precision; draw freely on the tools of logic; and often identify, professionally and intellectually, more closely with the sciences and mathematics, than with the humanities.

Clearly, there is nothing wrong with clarity and precision,[9] and I found some aspects of the analytic program both useful and interesting. Logic,

for instance, provided the usefulness of being able to analyze arguments, identify theses, and recognize foggy thought and invalid inferences when one came across them. Yet I found other aspects of the analytic approach, at least as I experienced it at UBC, less interesting or downright antipathetic. They are alluded to by some other current definitions of analytic philosophy. For Michael Dummett, analytic philosophy is characterized by

> [. . .] the belief, first, that a philosophical account of thought can be attained through a philosophical account of language, and, secondly, that a comprehensive account can *only* be so attained (my emphasis).[10]

For John Skorupski, it manifests

> [. . .] a deflationary conception of philosophy – a conception according to which philosophical problems are pseudo-problems, problems to be dissolved not solved.[11]

Statements like these troubled me in their reductionism and exclusivity: could it really be the case that questions like that of the meaning of life, that had obsessed the hearts and minds of geniuses and simple working stiffs alike since the beginnings of recorded history were in fact simple *mistakes*? Many of the greatest creations of art, literature, and religion have arisen, throughout the ages, in response to such questions: were they all based on fairly obvious misunderstandings? Had all human beings prior to Frege really been that stupid?

I had by now developed an interest in Ancient thought, particularly Plato and Aristotle. Nagel (1936) had already pointed to analytic philosophy's lack of interest in the history of philosophy, and I found the situation at UBC still reflected this attitude. Western philosophy prior to the nineteenth century was often dismissed with smug contempt. Ancient thinkers – or rather Plato, Aristotle, and a few Pre-Socratics, who were the only ones studied – were often treated, sometimes with indulgence, sometimes with impatience, as obtuse philosophical debutants or picturesque primitives, who were to be praised only when they stumbled across ideas that adumbrated our current philosophical beliefs (the only correct ones, needless to say). I did not think then, and I do not think now, that Plato and Aristotle, for instance, are infallible. I do feel, however, that a body of thought that has inspired mankind for millennia,

from their successors in the Academy and the Peripatos to their continuations and transformations in the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, their Neoplatonist commentators first in Late Antiquity, and then in Medieval Arabic, Jewish, and Byzantine thought, not to mention the generations of scribes and illuminators who copied their manuscripts with excruciating care – deserves our respect. Instead, ancient philosophy was often dismissed with a patronizing pat on the head, as if we had to do with inept schoolchildren who meant well, of course, but were utterly incapable of generating valuable philosophical ideas because they lacked our own twentieth century sophistication. I could not help but believe there was more depth to the thought of the Ancients than met the eye at first glance. It also seemed to me that in order to criticize, much less dismiss, a body of thought, one ought to understand it first. But it was far from clear that my professors actually understood Plato and Aristotle; or if they did, they failed to communicate that understanding to us students. I was later to discover that one can easily spend a lifetime studying Plato, Aristotle, or any one of a number of other ancient philosophers, without exhausting the wealth of their thought, and without even achieving the certainty that one has definitively understood everything they have to say. Admittedly, this insight is perhaps not one professors should choose to emphasize before their undergraduate students.

Way back in 1936, Ernst Nagel spoke of the emerging trend of analytic philosophy as committed to a "common-sense naturalism" that accepts the discoveries of the natural sciences as matters of fact:

> [. . .] the men with whom I have talked are impatient with philosophical systems built in the traditional grand manner [. . . T]hey take for granted an authentic knowledge acquired by the special sciences and are concerned with [. . .] clarifying its meaning and implications.[12]

Nagel was, of course, referring to people like Moore and Wittgenstein at Cambridge, Schlick in Vienna, Carnap in Prague, and Łukasiewicz in Warsaw, all of whom were concerned with methods of scientific analysis. To be sure, things had changed since the 1930s, but it still seemed to me that analytic philosophy in the 1980s was still enamored of the macho, no-nonsense "hard sciences," and anxious to imitate them in every aspect, perhaps in the belief that if all one did was to manipulate logical symbols and produce quasi-scientific studies of perception and brain physiology, then one's "hard scientific" colleagues – and, not incidentally, one's deans, evaluating committees, and grant-distributing

organizations – would at last take one *seriously*. Analytic philosophers often seemed slightly embarrassed about being "philosophers" at all, to the point that their goal, sometimes implicitly and sometimes avowedly, was the elimination of philosophy itself.[13]

It was not that I thought *nobody* should study the kinds of logical, linguistic, and epistemological issues that made up the UBC philosophical curriculum. Most of these interests struck me as inherently worthy of study, and some, like logic, as being pretty well indispensable, at least as a tool and training device. Yet this curriculum was presented to me and to the other students as *all there was to philosophy*: other philosophical options were somehow illegitimate, or at least sub-philosophical. Once, sensing my discontent, the kindhearted chairman of the Philosophy Department called me into his office to encourage me to enroll in the course that was going to be offered on Hegel by a visiting Professor.[14] I ought not to miss this opportunity, he told me, "because you're never going to get another chance to study something like that here."

In a nutshell, I was struck by what I perceived as an all-pervading reductionism in current philosophical studies. Materialism, I was told, had shown that the mind and/or soul, like all so-called "mental" phenomena, were in fact just brain waves; Wittgenstein and above all his Logical Positivist successors had shown that all talk of metaphysical entities and sublime ethical ideals, being unverifiable, was in the strict sense meaningless.[15] As far as my thirst for answers to the "big questions,"[16] such as "What is the meaning of life?" was concerned: well, it turns out that they were simply ill-phrased questions and/or "category mistakes"; that is, questions which, arising out of misinterpretations of language, have no answer, and should not even be asked.[17] It did not take long for me to get the impression that philosophy as studied at the University level was monumentally *boring*: dry, abstract, far removed from the questions that haunted me and many of my friends. This was especially true of the study of ancient philosophy, which in fact meant a few works by Plato and Aristotle, read in dry translations that offered little by way of context or explanation. One came away from reading such translations with the impression that the authors of these works were probably insane, but insane in a singularly uninteresting way. Seldom were we told how all this hung together: what was the author's purpose in pursuing such abstract speculations? Why did Socrates' interlocutors limit themselves to answering with a simple "yes" or "no," often swallowing what our Professors told us were fallacious arguments? How could one account for the differences in emphasis and even outright contradictions that appeared

within the writings of a single author, like Plato or Aristotle? The standard explanation was that both these thinkers started out professing certain simple beliefs, and then revised them as they grew more philosophically sophisticated. In fact, the works and thought of Aristotle, and especially Plato, could be divided into early, middle, and late periods on the basis of the sophistication they displayed, and these divisions could then be used to date their works and explain the evolution of their thought. Yet this reasoning seemed circular, and somehow too facile and artificial: Plato and Aristotle were treated exactly as if they were contemporary thinkers, rushing off to publish, as quickly as possible every new idea that entered their heads in the Ancient Greek equivalent of *Mind* or *The Philosophical Quarterly*. Was there no underlying unity to their thought, no unifying, nonanachronistic explanation of the seemingly bizarre form and content of their works?

After a couple of years of suffering, I left UBC and joined the philosophy program at the University of Victoria, also in Canada. Here matters were less depressing, mainly because of the presence of a maverick professor who offered courses outside of the analytic tradition.[18] I thus became aware that philosophy did not consist exclusively in breaking down arguments, manipulating logical symbols, and in general fussing about esoteric details that could be of interest only to initiates and specialists. At Victoria, I was at last able to begin to read such nineteenth-century philosophers as Hegel and Nietzsche, and contemporaries like Foucault and Habermas. I was finally being initiated into the other branch of the Great Philosophical Divide between Analytics and Continentals: if I had been disillusioned with the likes of Quine and Ayer, Max Black and J.J.C. Smart, then I had better hope these Continentals would be more to my liking, because they were, I was told, the only other game in town. The more I advanced in my studies, the more philosophy was presented to me as a mutually exclusive dilemma: there was analytic philosophy, and then there was Continental philosophy: *tertium non datur*, and never the twain shall meet.

Continental thinkers like Foucault and Habermas seemed, at least initially, more relevant to my life and my interests than the clever reasonings of most contemporary Analytic philosophers. For one thing, they seemed aware that philosophy is not done in a vacuum, but is the product of history; here, then, was the realization that to understand the philosophical thought of any period – including today's – it was necessary to understand the social and cultural *context* in which that thought was expressed. In the study of ancient philosophy, Continental thinkers had

progressed beyond the anachronistic isolation of arguments and their dismissal on the grounds that they do not always correspond to our current philosophical likes and dislikes. Yet these "Continental" thinkers also had their off-putting aspects. The idea that all philosophical statements are historically conditioned could easily lead to a kind of facile relativism that, among students, often resulted in the conviction that any and all of any student's beliefs were equally valid as those of any philosophical author. The ideas, expounded by the early Foucault and the Frankfurt school, that knowledge is power and that all intellectual productions are conditioned by forces beyond the control of individual agents seemed to lead to a kind of determinism which, if one accepted the doctrine hook, line, and sinker, seemed to lead to a fatalistic quietism and acceptance of the *status quo*; or else, if one approached the doctrines critically, to be self-refuting, for how did Foucault – or, for that matter, Marx and Freud – themselves manage to escape this universal determinism and write whatever they chose?

Perhaps, the most off-putting aspect of this initial exposure to Continental thinkers was the fact that they expressed themselves in what seemed to be an unnecessarily recondite jargon; of course, it did not help matters that we read these authors only in translation. Often, when I had expended tremendous efforts on deciphering the meaning of a meandering phrase from the *Archaeology of Knowledge*, I came away with the feeling that the basic point the author was trying to make was either dubious or banal, and in much of the secondary literature on postmodernism, this jargon seemed to become an end in itself. Elegant or recondite verbal pyrotechnics and etymological puns often seemed to be all there was to it, without it being obvious that the author actually had anything of substance to say. I was reminded of my first year in University residence at UBC: as a group of 18 and 19 year olds, most of us away from home for the first time, one of the first things the kids in each residence did, as they formed themselves into cohesive groups, was spontaneously to form their own jargon, in which they could carry on a conversation that could not be understood by outsiders. It seemed to me that much analytic and postmodern philosophy was just that: a closed society whose members were periodically called upon to give a demonstration, by giving lectures and/or publishing articles, that they could successfully manipulate the group's respective jargon. Successful manipulation of the jargon could, of course, be judged only by the members of the group, since no outsider or layperson could have a clue what they were talking about. Analytic philosophy's fondness for formal languages seemed to fulfill the same function: if one could not manipulate logical symbols with dexterity, one

was left on the doorstep of the inner sanctum of analytic philosophy, as if one had showed up for dinner at the Old Boys' Club without a tie.[19]

I did manage to finish my Bachelor's degree in Philosophy at Victoria, but it was with a sense of disillusionment. I had had a taste of both Analytic and Continental philosophy, the two mutually exclusive branches of the discipline, and neither had satisfied me. Neither seemed able to speak to my thirst for the honest, jargon-free discussions of philosophical issues that genuinely mattered to my life. When it came to pursuing Graduate Studies, therefore, I switched disciplines, and took a Master's Degree in Classical Studies. By studying Greek and Latin, I thought, I would be able to read Plato and Aristotle in the original, thereby bypassing the distorting intermediaries of translators, anthologists, and commentators, be they of the Analytic or the Continental persuasion. In the course of my studies, I became interested in the thought of the Neoplatonist Porphyry of Tyre, and this led me to encounter the writings of Pierre Hadot, and in particular his masterly study of Porphyry's thought, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris 1968). Impressed by this work, I went on to read other works by Hadot, including the little book on Plotinus he had written back in 1963.[20]

Here was a book on ancient philosophy that was quite unlike any other I had read. For Hadot, Plotinus' philosophy consisted in a call for us to change our lives and transform ourselves, and Hadot seemed to take this claim very seriously. He wrote in a style that seemed equally distant from the pseudoscientific objectivity of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, and the pretentiousness of much of what passed as Continental scholarship. His chapters spoke of topics like Love, Presence, and Gentleness, yet this was no facile New Age gobbledygook: on the contrary, Hadot's discussion was based on the most solid grounding in Greek and Latin philology and the history of Greco-Roman philosophy. Hadot illuminatingly discussed the problems that had frustrated me on the occasion of my first contact with the works of ancient philosophers: if they seemed strange to us, it was not, I now read, because these authors were childish or stupid, but because they had a conception of the acts of writing and philosophizing as spiritual exercises that was worlds away from our own. Finally, the scales fell from my eyes, as it were, when I read Hadot's brief postface to the 1973 edition of his book on Plotinus:[21]

> I have tried to speak simply, without using too many technical terms, following in this the advice of Marcus Aurelius: "the work of philosophy is simple and discreet. Let us not get carried away by the swollen puffiness of solemn affectation." (*Meditations*, 9, p. 29)

> I sincerely believe that our most urgent and difficult task today is, as Goethe said, to "learn to believe in simplicity." Might it not be the case that the greatest lesson which the philosophers of Antiquity [. . .] have to teach us is that philosophy is not the complicated, pretentious, and artificial construction of a learned system of discourse, but the transformation of perception and of life, which lends inexhaustible meaning to the formula – seemingly so banal – of the love of the Good?

When I read this, I thought the same thing Plotinus is supposed to have said when he met his future mentor Ammonius Saccas: *touton ezêtoun*, this is the one I had been searching for.[22] When, in 1988, a grant from the Canadian government unexpectedly allowed me to pursue doctoral studies in philosophy anywhere I pleased, I did not hesitate to hightail it to Paris, to study at the feet of Pierre Hadot.

Hadot, Analytic Philosophy, and the Big Questions

> I began studying philosophy, like many of you, because I wanted to answer some big questions that haunted me. In my case, the most important of those questions were whether there was a God and, relatedly, what the point of my being alive was [. . .] how it was that I should go about living [. . .] At some point in my graduate school education I began to develop different motivations for my involvement in philosophy [. . .] It's not that the big questions just went away. Instead, they moved into the background, their urgency replaced by the urgency of more mature philosophical concerns: getting articles accepted for publication, receiving tenure, making an academic name for myself. Now, however, the wheel has turned again. In some ways, it has turned back [. . .] perhaps the most important cause is this. I have arrived at an age where the far shore of my life is one that I can see as clearly as – or perhaps more clearly than – the shore from which I set out. I know, more viscerally than I have known before, that sooner or later I will arrive at that far shore, and that when I do the journals that I have published in [. . .] will not mean much to me. It is only the big questions, and the answers that I am able to give to those questions that will matter. And those big questions are, as they have always been, questions about how I am to lead my life. (May 2000, p. 223)

In the preceding section of this paper, I gave an impressionistic sketch of my encounter with Analytic philosophy, and the way in which I found it to contrast rather violently with what I had assumed, no doubt naively, philosophy was, or at any rate should be. We have already seen that the

question of the nature and structure of analytic philosophy have been the subject of a great deal of discussion over the past few years, and that experts do not appear to be able to agree in the descriptions of it they propose. In its origins, analytic philosophy has been claimed to be a continuation or vestige of Aristotelianism (Capaldi 1998), or Platonism, or British Empiricism; it has been claimed to begin with the work of Frege, Moore, Russell, or Wittgenstein.[23] Its differences from its adversary Continental philosophy have been claimed to consist in a difference in style, in choice of subject matter and questions discussed, in clarity versus the lack of clarity,[24] or in the reliance on or avoidance of rational argument. In an interesting paper published in 2000, the Dutch philosopher Jeanne Peijnenburg (2000) drew up a list of eight defining characteristics of analytic philosophy. They included a concentration on language and meaning and analysis as the decomposition or the breaking down of wholes; a clear style and the precise definition of terms; the prevalent use of logical symbols and formulae; the avoidance of metaphysical, social, and religious questions; the lack of interest in the history of philosophy,[25] and a proximity to and respect for the natural sciences. Peijnenburg goes on to argue that while these features characterized analytic philosophy in its origin and heyday, they have all been replaced in the recent history of the discipline by their *opposites*. There is certainly some truth to these observations: clarity, as we have seen, no longer seems to be an exemplary virtue of much analytic thought; the exclusive concern for language and meaning has now been supplemented, if not replaced, by interests in cognitive science, artificial intelligence, and other fashionable fields. It is also true that analytic philosophers have begun to pay attention to fields they used to eschew, such as metaphysics (Simons 2001, p. 307; Nef 2004), religion, and the history of philosophy, although it could be claimed that when they do venture into these fields, analytic philosophers often retain many characteristic features that separate them from their "continental" colleagues. In the history of philosophy, for instance, we often find them concentrating on the "arguments" used by ancient thinkers, which are sometimes torn from their original context and translated into the formal language of symbolic logic, a procedure that runs the risk of anachronism.[26]

Peijnenburg's argument that analytic philosophy now displays the *opposite* features to those that characterized it in its heyday seems less convincing when it comes to the importance of logic and the natural sciences. The study of logic[27] continues to flourish in analytic philosophy departments, and the so-called "hard sciences" continue to provide

the methodological model, implicitly or explicitly, for a great many contemporary analytic philosophers (Rosen 2001, p. 344; Simons 2011, p. 303). In a recent paper, Richard Rorty (2003) has argued that "The biggest difference in self-image (i.e., between analytic and continental philosophers – MC) is that the model of the natural sciences remains much more important for most analytic philosophers than it is for most continental philosophers." In fact, as I mentioned earlier, many analytic philosophers still seem to be so impressed by what they perceive as the success and prestige of the "hard sciences" that they would like nothing better than to be "scientific" themselves. They like to project an image of themselves as hard-nosed investigators, practical men (and a few women) who deal with hard facts and objective reality, avoiding the study of anything that smacks of "metaphysics" as though it somehow cast doubt on their virility. What is ironic is that many of these authors still work within a nineteenth-century paradigm of science as the study of "objective," quantifiable and measurable reality, a world rather distant from that revealed by such modern scientific developments[28] as relativity, quantum mechanics with its Uncertainty Principle, String Theory, or, in general, such various new approaches to science as the theories of complexity, emergent properties, and nonlinear dynamics.

In fact, so close is the relationship between analytic philosophy and modern science that it has recently been claimed than many features of the former can be explained by the structure of the latter. The Australian philosopher Neil Levy (2003) has argued persuasively that many features of Thomas Kuhn's description of "normal science" are strikingly reflected in analytic philosophy. In both cases, researchers agree on goals, assumptions, and methodology, which allow them to concentrate on solving increasingly technical puzzles or problems. Instead of publishing books capable of interesting the educated public at large, normal scientists and analytic philosophers publish articles in specialized journals which no one but their colleagues can understand.[29] Standard analytic philosophy has a limited interest in the history of its discipline, and when it does show such interest – as in the textbooks used to familiarize students with the currently reigning paradigm – the presentation it gives of the thought of its ancient predecessors is often selective and anachronistic. Similarly, according to Thomas Kuhn (1996, p. 137), the textbooks of normal science refer only to that part of the work of past scientists that can be easily viewed as contributions to the statement and solution of the texts' paradigm problems. Partly by selection and partly by distortion, the scientists of an earlier age are implicitly represented as having worked

upon the same set of fixed problems and in accordance with the same set of fixed canons that the most recent revolution in scientific theory and method has made seem scientific.

Finally, even the characteristic that has returned like a Leitmotif throughout this paper – analytic philosophy's tendency to ignore the so-called Big Questions, such as that of the meaning of life – can be illuminated by means of Kuhn's theories. As Kuhn notes (Kuhn 1996, p. 170), scientific revolutions like the one that brought current normal science and analytic philosophy to power

> [. . .] narrow the scope of the community's professional concerns, increase the extent of its specialization, and attenuate (their) communication with other groups, both scientific and lay.

The end result is that normal science and analytic philosophy concentrate almost exclusively on solving individual problems of detail, in highly technical articles published in specialized journals. In the words of Levy (2003, pp. 299–300):

> With the acquisition of a paradigm, AP [analytic philosophy – MC] acquired a set of relatively well-delineated problems or puzzles, upon which it was able to focus almost all its attention and thus to make great progress in solving them. As a result, however, it came [. . .] to be seen as less and less relevant to the kinds of questions that often drive people to philosophy in the first place [. . .] AP tends to channel its students away from those questions, and in the directions of detailed work on its puzzles.

The unfortunate result of these tendencies is, as we have seen, that people like Martin O'Hagan, who long for the opportunity to discuss these fundamental questions in the search for something to have practical impact upon and give meaning to their lives, are left high and dry by most contemporary analytic philosophy. Yet since the need to address these questions is a perennial characteristic of human beings, other tendencies are quick to occupy the field thus abandoned by philosophy: self-help, New Age, and every imaginable variety of esoteric quackery step in to supply quick and easy answers.

What does all this have to do with Pierre Hadot and his conception of Philosophy as a Way of Life? Several things, I think. In the first place, it provides at least a partial explanation of the current state of analytic philosophy. As we all know, Hadot has explained how ancient philosophy,

which originally consisted in a program of spiritual exercises intended to change our way of seeing, and consequently our mode of being, with a view to reducing our unhappiness, lost these characteristics when, on the occasion of the triumph of Scholasticism and the concomitant rise of the University, it was subjugated to theology, and henceforth allowed only to serve as its handmaid. I would argue that a similar phenomenon explains analytic philosophy's continuing neglect of the philosophic questions that matter most to most people. This time, however, instead of the handmaid of theology, analytic philosophy has become the handmaid of science, or rather of a rather limited, positivistic, and dated conception of what it is to do science.

Second, Hadot's conception of Philosophy as a Way of Life, which does not fit neatly into the usual two-pronged division of philosophy into Analytic and Continental, may provide indications of a third way as an alternative to them both. Unlike analytic philosophy, it does not shun the Big Questions in an attempt to appear scientific, but deals with issues that interest and affect the lives of people everywhere, both within and outside the Academy. It does not, of course, propose a readymade list of answers in dogmatic fashion, but it gives people access to a wide variety of solutions that ancient philosophers have proposed, as models and guides for further reflection. Yet since Hadot's conception of philosophy is anchored in the philologically based study of Greek and Latin literature and the historical comprehension of ancient thought within its context, it is free from the arbitrariness, superficiality, and subjectivity of much New Age thought. Since it tries to express itself in clear, jargon-free language, it avoids the hermeticism of Continental thought and the impenetrable forests of logico-mathematical symbols favored by many Analytics. Yet if it is unconcerned with being fashionably scientistic, it also lacks an interest in coinciding with the typical features of many Continental philosophers. It is neither skeptical, ironic, nor relativistic, but upholds the values of social concern and action in defense of justice, as well as the importance of transcending our limited, individualistic viewpoint in the direction of universality. As Hadot himself has eloquently pointed out, it is this concern with universalization, and the concomitant sense of ourselves as integral parts of the cosmos, that separates his thought from that of Foucault, for instance, whose ideal of self-culture often comes dangerously close to solipsistic and/or narcissistic navel-gazing.[30]

Hadot's comparative clarity and accessibility has already had an effect that I find quite gratifying: people from a wide variety of disciplines, methodological approaches, and walks of life have used his work and

found it helpful. One would expect him to be used by students of the history of philosophy, and indeed he is: one often finds him mentioned in the same breath as people like Martha Nussbaum, Julia Annas, and Alexander Nehamas. Hadot's work is also quite often mentioned in the context of contemporary philosophy, in proximity to the work of such contemporary Pragmatists as Stanley Cavell and Hilary Putnam. Yet I think M. Hadot would have been especially pleased to learn that his audience is not restricted to professional philosophers: one finds him cited in studies on management, nursing, and education; his views are cited with varying degrees of approval by clerics, Randian objectivists, feminists, and ecologists.

Finally, Hadot's work is appreciated by people involved in the movements of practical philosophy and philosophical counseling, groups I have come to know in the context of the London-based *Society for the Furtherance of the Critical Philosophy.*[31] This movement has a wide variety of manifestations, and like all movements it has its positive and negative aspects. Nothing in Hadot's work justifies confusing the study and practice of philosophy with masquerading as a psychoanalyst, and practical philosophy must exercise great care not to claim to treat mental illnesses that are best left to trained medical professionals. That said, the de-professionalization of philosophy strikes me as a positive development, and one that is in accord with Hadot's conception of Philosophy as a Way of Life. The SFCP, for instance, together with its affiliated organizations in Holland and Germany, carries out Socratic dialogues for people from all walks of life, thereby providing a useful counterbalance to the professionalization and academicization of philosophy that has characterized the last two or three centuries in the West.

As far as future directions of research are concerned, much work remains to be done. We need to study more carefully the difficult transition from theory to practice: precisely how can we integrate a set of philosophical beliefs into our day-to-day behavior, in order to make them a natural, organic part of our lives? In this regard, the Neoplatonist Porphyry hit the nail on the head, it seems to me, back around the turn of the fourth century AD:[32]

> The contemplation that leads us to happiness does not consist in the accumulation of discourses and the multiplicity of subject matter we learn, as one might think, nor can its progress be measured by the quantity of discourse; for if this were the case, there would be nothing to prevent those who have accumulated knowledge of every subject-matter from

> being happy. In fact, however, not only is it not the case that every item of knowledge contributes substantially to contemplation, but not even the knowledge of true existents so contributes, unless we make it part of our nature and our life.

According to Pierre Hadot, of course, this integration of the fundamental doctrines is the role of the various spiritual exercises. Yet we need a typology of these exercises, as well as contributions from psychologists, education theorists, cognitive scientists, and physiologists of the brain, so that we can understand precisely how this process can take place, and consequently, how it can be promoted and optimized. It might also be useful to compare the French orientalist Henry Corbin's theory (1971, esp. 200 ff.) of the internalization of legendary or sacred stories in Islamic literature by means of recitation or *hikâyat*, by means of which the person who recites a story, the story being recited, and the hero of the story all become one. Late in his life, Pierre Hadot himself gradually became interested in Eastern parallels to the notion of philosophy as way of life, and other scholars have already noted illuminating parallels in this regard.[33] On the historical front, more attention needs to be paid to Hadot's thesis of the decline of Philosophy as a Way of Life as a result of Medieval Scholasticism, Christianity, and the rise of the University. Predictably enough, these views have been bitterly contested by some Christian scholars,[34] and Hadot himself modified his views later in his life, particularly as a result of the work of Juliusz Domański, who has shown that tendencies akin to PWL survived throughout the Middle Ages, albeit often in subterranean form, as for instance in the so-called "Averroism" of Boethius of Dacia (See Hadot's Preface to Domański 1996). It would be interesting, from this perspective, to study how the ideal of "intellectual felicity" that characterizes the thought of Latin "Averroism," reminiscent as it is of Aristotle's doctrine at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, was transmitted to the West by Islamic thought, particularly al-Fārābī. As Alain de Libera has shown (de Libera 1990, pp. 242–266; 1993, 402 ff.; 2003, pp. 299–351; 2005, pp. 265–328), such notions led to a kind of renaissance of PWL in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which can be observed in the work of Albert the Great and Meister Eckhardt.

In conclusion, I can only hope that the interest in Pierre Hadot's concept of PWL will contribute to the rehabilitation of philosophy as it was before its takeover by Academic philosophy and its latest incarnation of Analytic philosophy. It can be hoped that philosophy will no longer

abdicate its responsibility to discuss the so-called big questions: What's the meaning of life? How can I be happy? What's the best way to live? and hosts of others. For, as we have seen, if philosophy neglects these questions, out of some desire to ape what it wrongly thinks to be the methods of the "hard sciences," it will abandon its proper field to the hucksters and mass marketers, facile esotericists, and obscurantists. Two thousand years ago, philosophers had the courage to ask hard questions that actually had an impact on the way we all – including even professors of Philosophy – live our lives, and some of the answers they came up with provided help, encouragement, and inspirations for real-life human beings in actual life situations for centuries thereafter. This is no small accomplishment, and it's still, I believe, a goal well worth pursuing.

Notes

1. See the reviews of this work in Anderson and Landy (2001), Nussbaum (1999). Robert Nozick seems to offer an approach to what has been called the "personal tradition of philosophy" that is less esthetic and, therefore, closer to Hadot's views. To quote Elijah Millgram (2002, p. 179), although Nozick "is aware that constructed figures can have 'artistic impact' and be 'artistically interesting' (Nozick, *The examined life*, p. 255), becoming more real is not primarily an aesthetic process, because aesthetic qualities like beauty are [. . .] only some dimensions of the many along which one's reality can be augmented." Yet while Nozick's goal of "increasing reality" seems very close to Hadot's goal of "causing us to be to a greater extent," Nozick still seems to remain within the Foucaultian–Nehamasian terms of "persona construction," and the very term "persona" has connotations of artificiality and lack of authenticity that I believe Hadot would wish to avoid. Hadot's project is not to modify or increase the reality of our persona, but of our self: that which we are at the deepest, most authentic level.
2. As Hadot notes (1995, p. 90), the Greek dictum "Know thyself" is the presupposition for any further spiritual exercises, insofar as it invites us to establish the requisite relations of our self to our self. cf. Chase (2008, 26 ff.).
3. This last remark seems to be a slightly garbled allusion to one of Hadot's favorite quotes: Victor Goldschmidt's statement that the goal of the Platonic dialogue is more to form than to inform. cf., for instance, Hadot (1995, 119 n. p. 101), and A. Davidson, 1995, p. 20.
4. I emphasize "seemed" here. In actual fact I am sure the great majority of my high school teachers were honorable men and women trying to do the best job they could in difficult circumstances.

5. The program still exists: see http://arts1.arts.ubc.ca/.
6. cf. Swartz (1994): "[. . .] while the exposing of error is an essential part of the doing of philosophy, it is not all there is to doing philosophy. Far too much of the practice of philosophy, both written and dialogical, has become one-sided: finding what is wrong in someone else's work and failing to find what is right, useful, and meritorious in that work [. . .] it is possible to do philosophy extremely well without savagery [. . .] But, by and large, or at any rate, to a greater extent than is warranted, philosophy has a vicious streak. If we really care about our profession, we need to reverse its destructive tendencies [. . .]."
7. Compare the list of "exotic thought experiments" given by Peijnenburg (2000, pp. 370–371): "Searle's 'Chinese room', Block's 'Chinese robot', Putnam's 'twin earth', Block's 'inverted earth', Lewis' 'counterpart world', Quine's 'radical translation', Putnam's 'brains in a vat', Dennett's 'cranes and skyhooks', Nagel's 'identification with a bat', Jackson's 'Mary, the blind colour scientist', and so on." Thought experiments do, of course, have a long philosophical pedigree, going back at least to Avicenna, while in the sciences they constituted one of Einstein's preferred methods (Davies 1995, pp. 92–96).
8. Needless to say, there is a vast number of other definitions of analytic philosophy, many of them mutually contradictory. Some other elements that seem to me important: analytic philosophy is "primarily concerned with the analysis of meaning" (Searle 1996); the most recent and up-to-date analytic philosophers "think and write in the analytic spirit, respectful of science, both as a paradigm of reasonable belief and in conformity with its argumentative rigor, its clarity and its determination to be objective" (Quinton 1995). It would, of course be wrong to give the impression that analytic philosophy is either monolithic or exempt from historical evolution, but an accurate portrayal of all its historical manifestations is beyond the scope of the present paper.
9. Is analytic philosophy really all that clear? Most of the papers published in analytically oriented journals are rigorously incomprehensible to the uninitiated; perhaps what is meant by "clarity" might be better stated as "expressed in terms of predicate logic." Note, however, Reiter's caveat, which he adds to the above quotation: "It is fair to say that 'clarity' is, regrettably, becoming less and less a distinguishing feature of 'analytic' philosophy."
10. Dummett 1993, p. 4. cf. Rorty (1967).
11. Skorupski 1996, p. 77.
12. Nagel 1936, pp. 6; 9, quoted by Sluga (1998, p. 100).
13. Richard Rorty began his 1999 paper as follows: "Many analytic philosophers do not like to think of their discipline as one of the humanities. They regard their own brand of philosophy as the disciplined pursuit of objective knowledge, and thus as resembling the natural sciences [. . .] Philosophers of this

sort prefer to be placed, for administrative purposes, as far as possible from professors of literature and as close as possible to professors of physics."

14. A young Robert Solomon.
15. "All statements belonging to Metaphysics, regulative Ethics, and (metaphysical) Epistemology have this defect, are in fact unverifiable, and, therefore, unscientific. In the Viennese Circle, we are accustomed to describe such statements as nonsense [. . .]," Carnap (1934, pp. 26–27), quoted by Putnam (2002, p. 18).
16. On the "big questions," Rosen (2001, p. 345) remarks: "it is very striking that, by and large, contemporary philosophers do not pose 'the big questions,' whereas some natural scientists, in particular cosmologists, are very much engaged in speculations that could only be called 'metaphysical' [. . .] we may be dependent upon theoretical physicists and cosmologists for the preservation of a genuinely speculative, and indeed, synthetic or universal philosophical tradition. This is especially interesting in view of the fact that the loss of interest by philosophers in 'big questions' is due in large part to the influence of modern science." As an example of the kinds of "big questions" addressed by contemporary scientists, one might adduce the Leibnizian query "Why is there something rather than nothing?": compare the treatments of this theme by such contemporary scientists as, for instance, Prigogine (1997, p. 175); and Smolin (1997, p. 198) *et passim*.
17. cf. Dummett (1978b, p. 438): "Philosophy is concerned, not to establish truths of a very general kind, not even truths which can be arrived at by ratiocination alone, but to rectify certain kinds of misunderstanding, the misunderstandings we have of our concepts."
18. John Michelsen.
19. Compare, in the field of economics, the following observation by Brian Arthur (cited in Waldrop 1992, p. 49): "Theoretical economists use their mathematical prowess the way the great stags of the forest use their antlers: to do battle with one another and to establish dominance. A stag who doesn't use his antlers is nothing."
20. *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard*, Paris (1963); cf. Hadot (1993).
21. I quoted this text in my Preface to Hadot (1993, p. xi).
22. Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, p. 3, 13.
23. For a good survey, cf. Roy (2010, pp. 7–31).
24. cf. Searle's "principle of expressivity," affirming that whatever can be thought can be expressed clearly and precisely (Dascal 2001, p. 319).
25. Describing his experience as a recent graduate looking for a philosophy job in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Richard Rorty (1999, p. 3) writes: "If you were hoping to get tenure, as I was, there was little percentage in being historically minded."
26. cf. Sluga (1998, p. 103): "The arena of history has been widely neglected by analytic philosophers [. . .] this lack of historical consciousness has led

to curious distortions and limitations in analytic discussions of historical phenomena. Past philosophers are read as if they were writing today [. . .].” Rosen (2001, p. 342) goes so far as to speak of the history of philosophy as being “assimilated into the methods and presuppositions of the opposing camps (sc. Analytic and Continental). There will be a rewriting of history in the style predicted by George Orwell, where the ‘old thinkers’ are transformed from respected if outmoded ancestors into prophets who anticipated our currently fashionable prejudices.”

27. For a survey of the differences in the evaluation of logic in analytic and continental philosophy, see D’Agostini (2001).
28. Without endorsing their somewhat intemperate formulation, one may cite the remarks of the Italian historian of science Giorgio Israel (1996, p. 220), who speaks of “ . . . cette grotesque parodie de la science qu’est la philosophie analytique.”
29. cf. Rorty (1999, p. 9): “analytic philosophy has few readers outside Anglophone philosophy departments (this is certainly not true today, if it ever was: Analytic philosophy is now quite popular in philosophy departments world-wide, and represents the dominant orientation in more than a few nations – MC). Most of the other professors in Anglophone universities neither know nor care what goes on in the philosophy department. Insofar as they think about it at all, they dismiss that department as having been taken over by ‘technicians’ whose work is of no interest to non-specialists.”
30. cf. Miller (1998), quoting Foucault (1994, pp. 712–713). Recent work by Arnold Davidson (2008, 2010) has shown, however, that Foucault’s last lectures at the Collège de France, published after Hadot’s early work, show Foucault coming increasingly close to some of Hadot’s views, particularly with regard to the importance of “cosmic consciousness.”
31. See www.sfcp.org.uk/. The society was originally established to promote Leonard Nelson’s ideas and techniques (see Leal’s paper in this volume).
32. Porphyry *De abstinentia*, I, p. 29. My translation from the Greek.
33. cf. Hadot (2002, Chapter 12, 27 ff.). For an example of recent studies comparing PWL with Zen Buddhism, see Preston (2003), and for a comparison with some aspects of Confucianism, see Bai (2006).
34. See, for instance, Shiffman (2003); Balint (2002). For a ferocious attack on Hadot’s views, see Hochschild (2003). No doubt the most eloquent and prolific of Hadot’s Christian critics is Wayne Hankey of Dalhousie University; see, for instance, Hankey (2003) with the response of Chase (2008).

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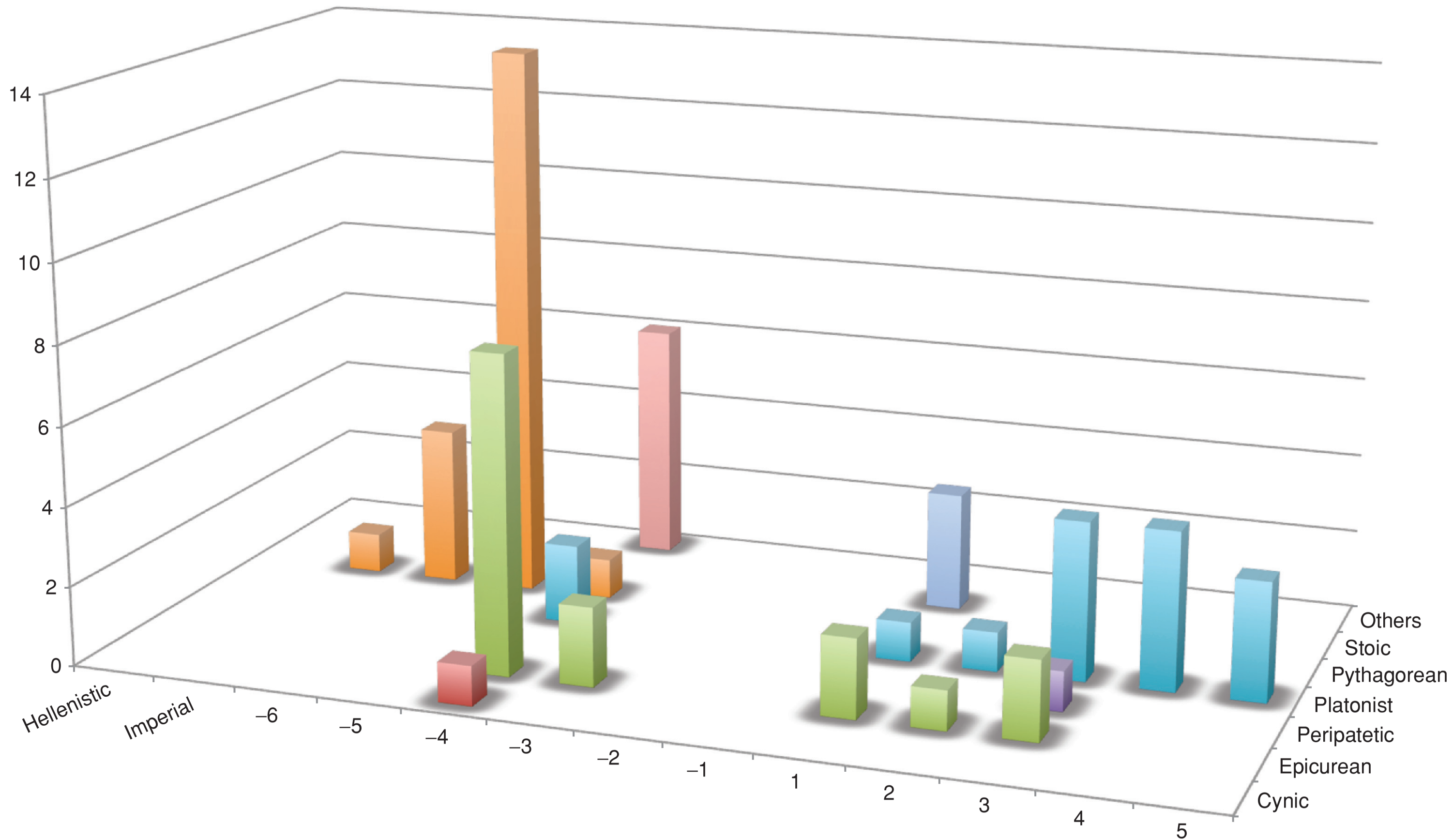

Plate 1 Women philosophers by schools and centuries

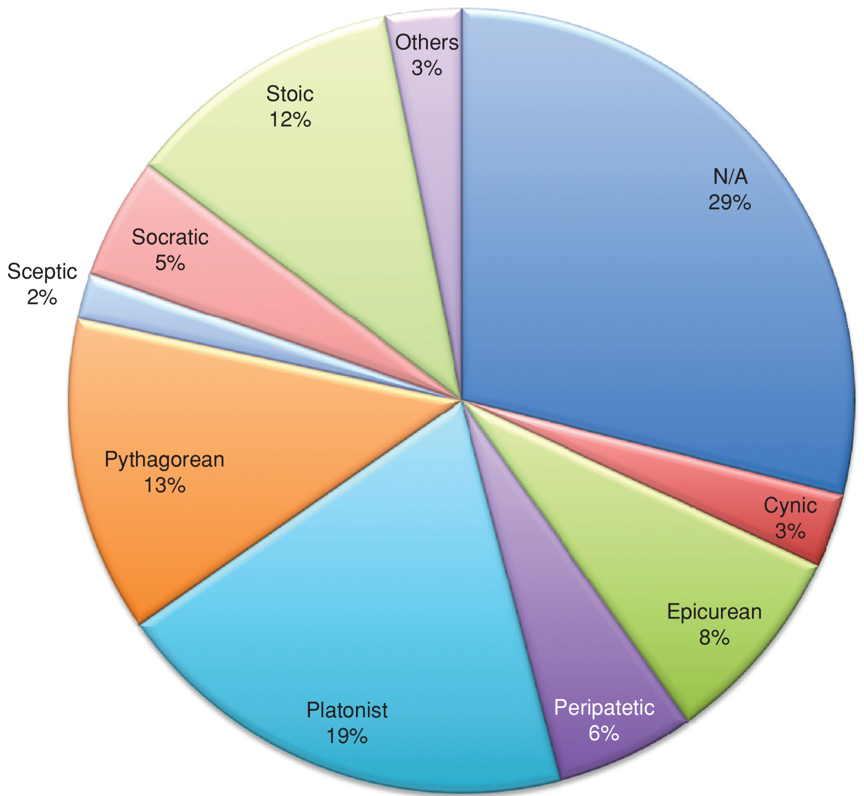

Plate 2 Philosophers by schools (simplified version)

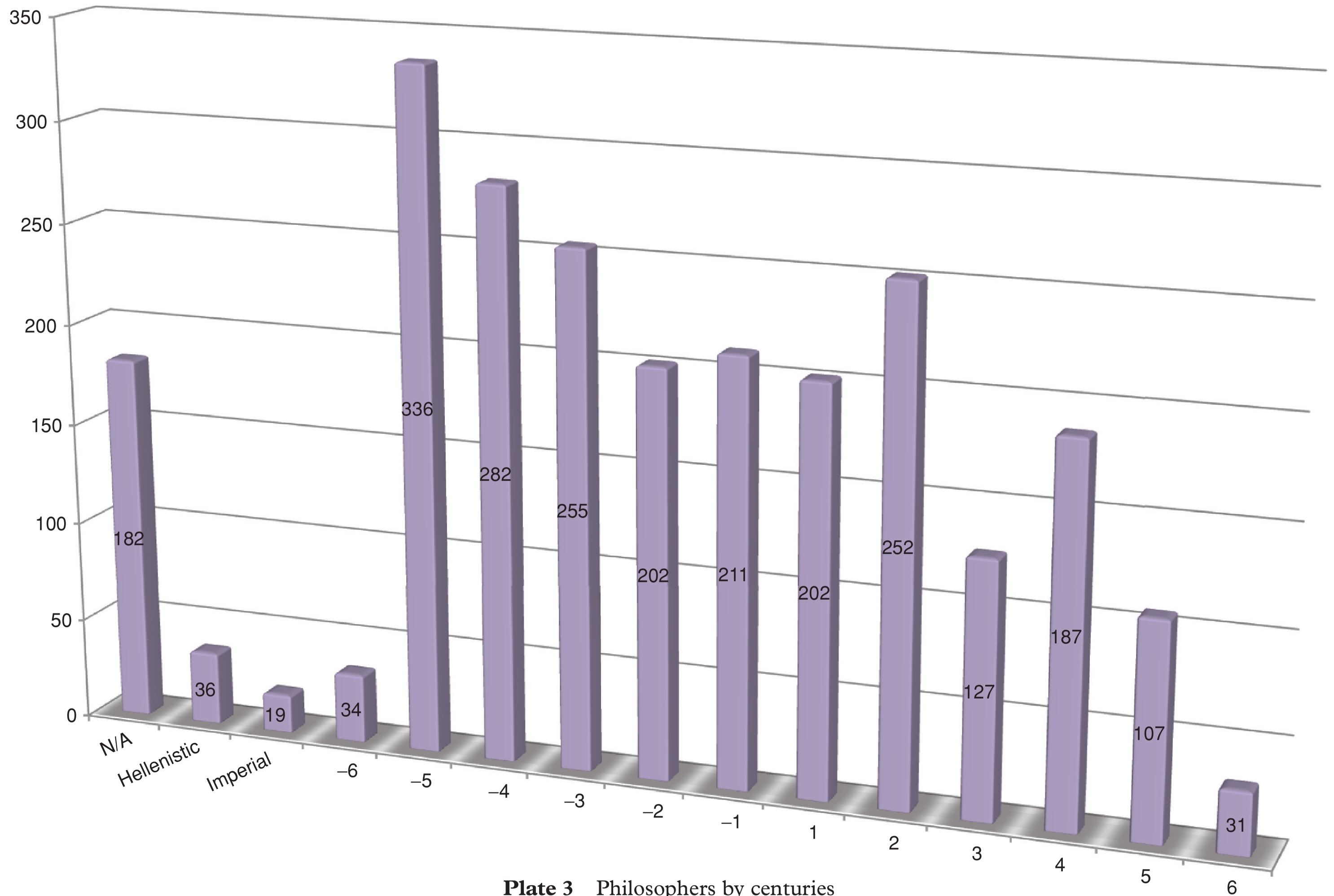

Plate 3 Philosophers by centuries

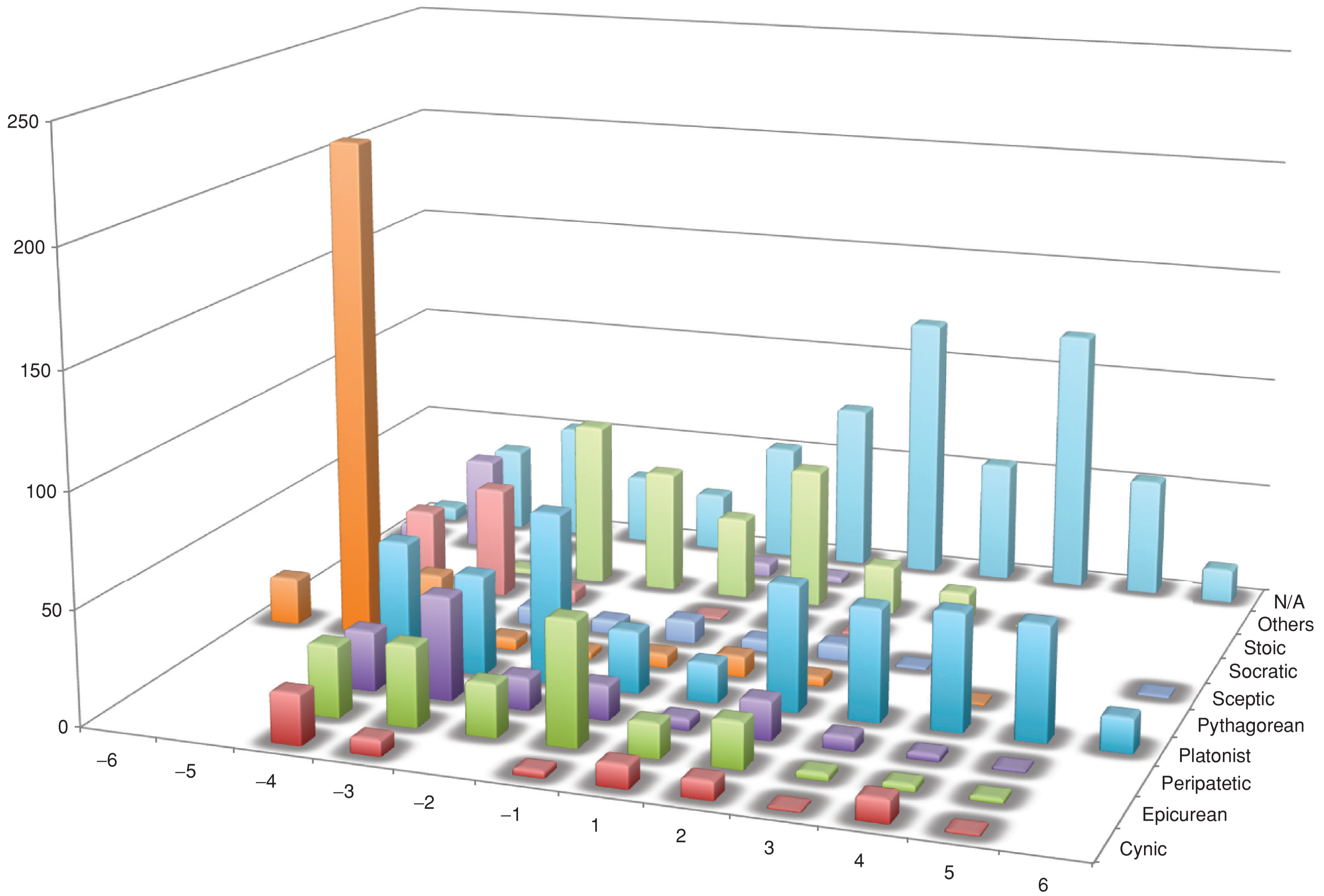

Plate 4a Philosophers by schools and centuries (simplified version)

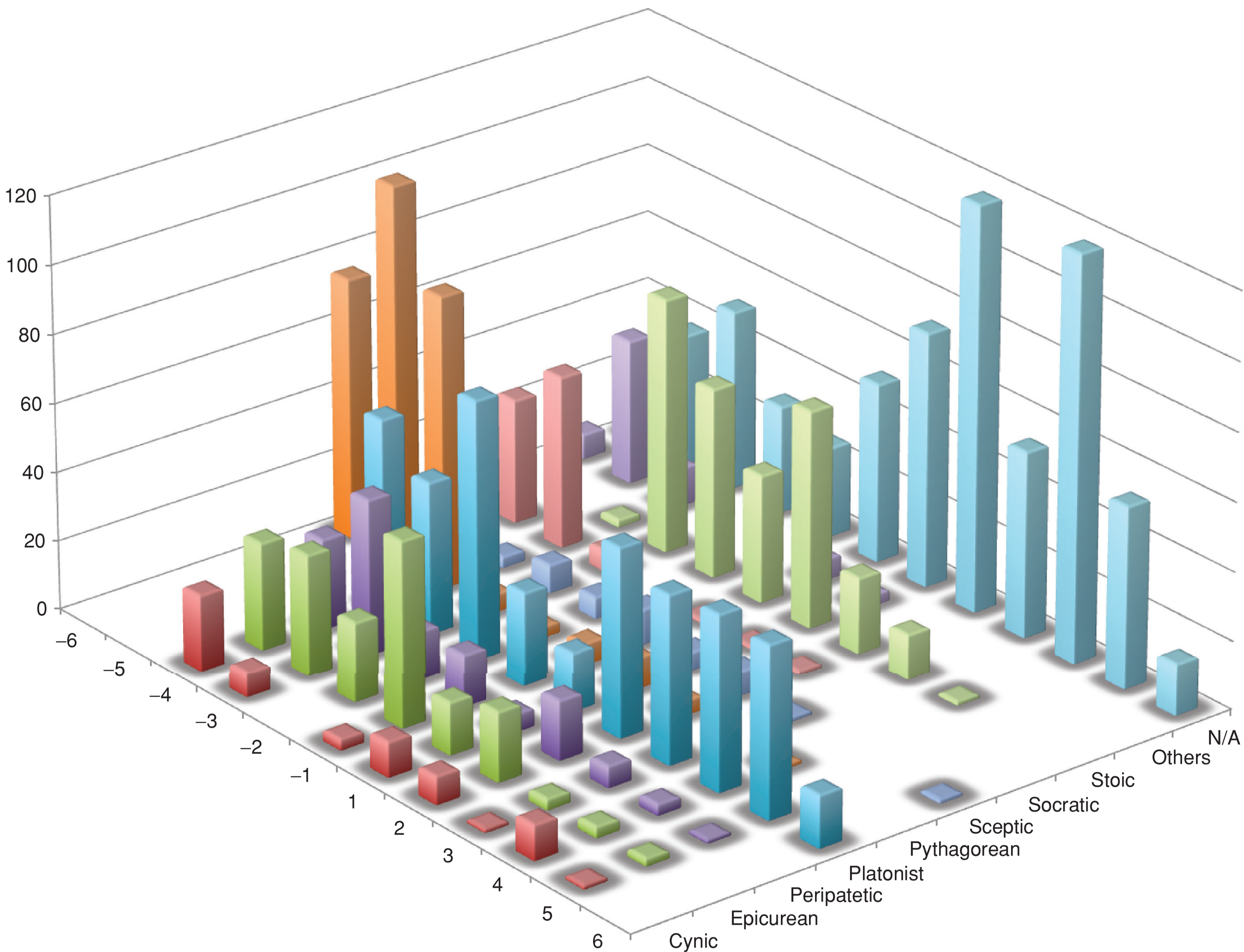

Plate 4b Philosophers by schools and centuries (simplified version)

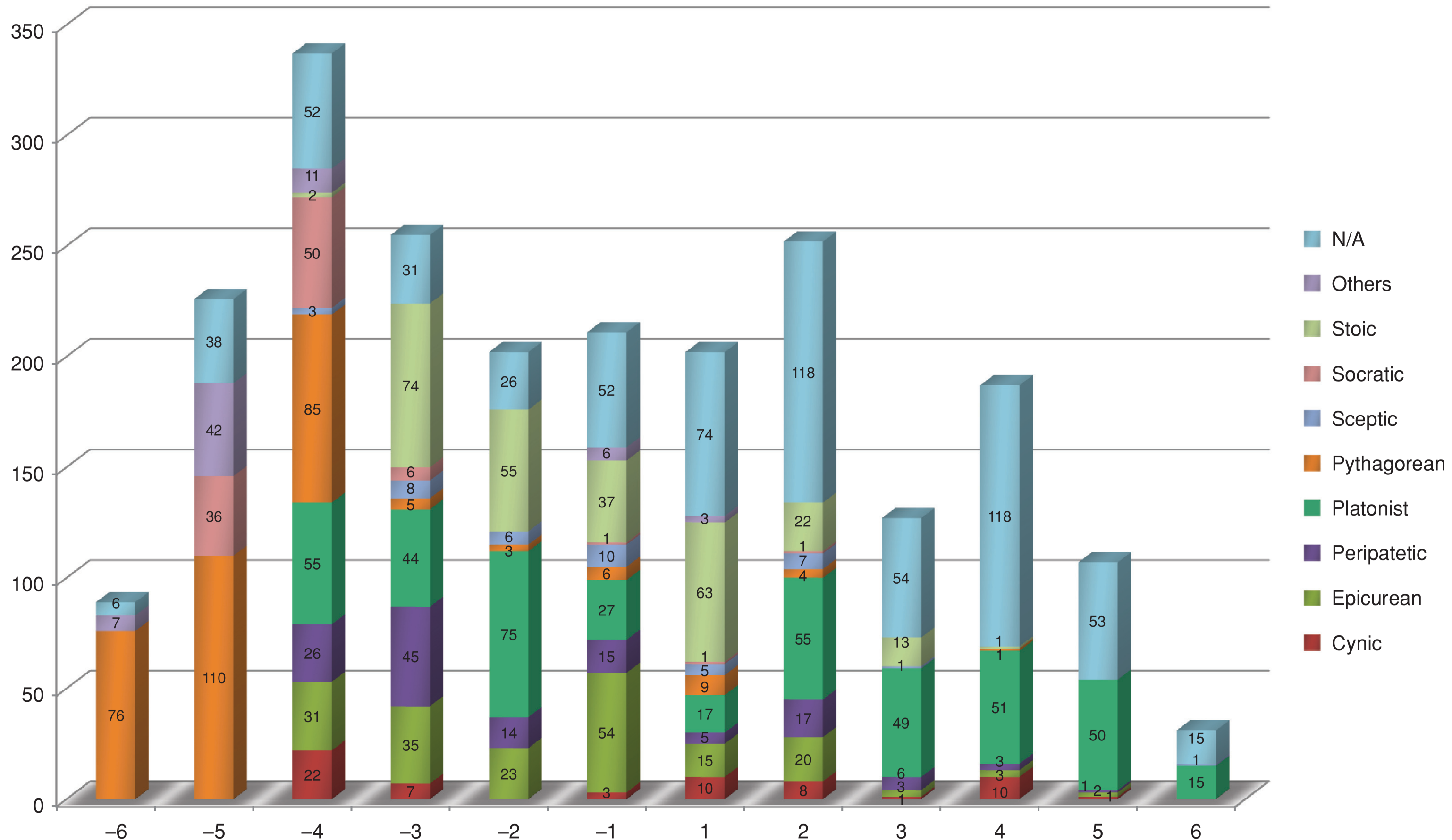

Plate 5 Philosophers by schools and centuries – stacked column chart

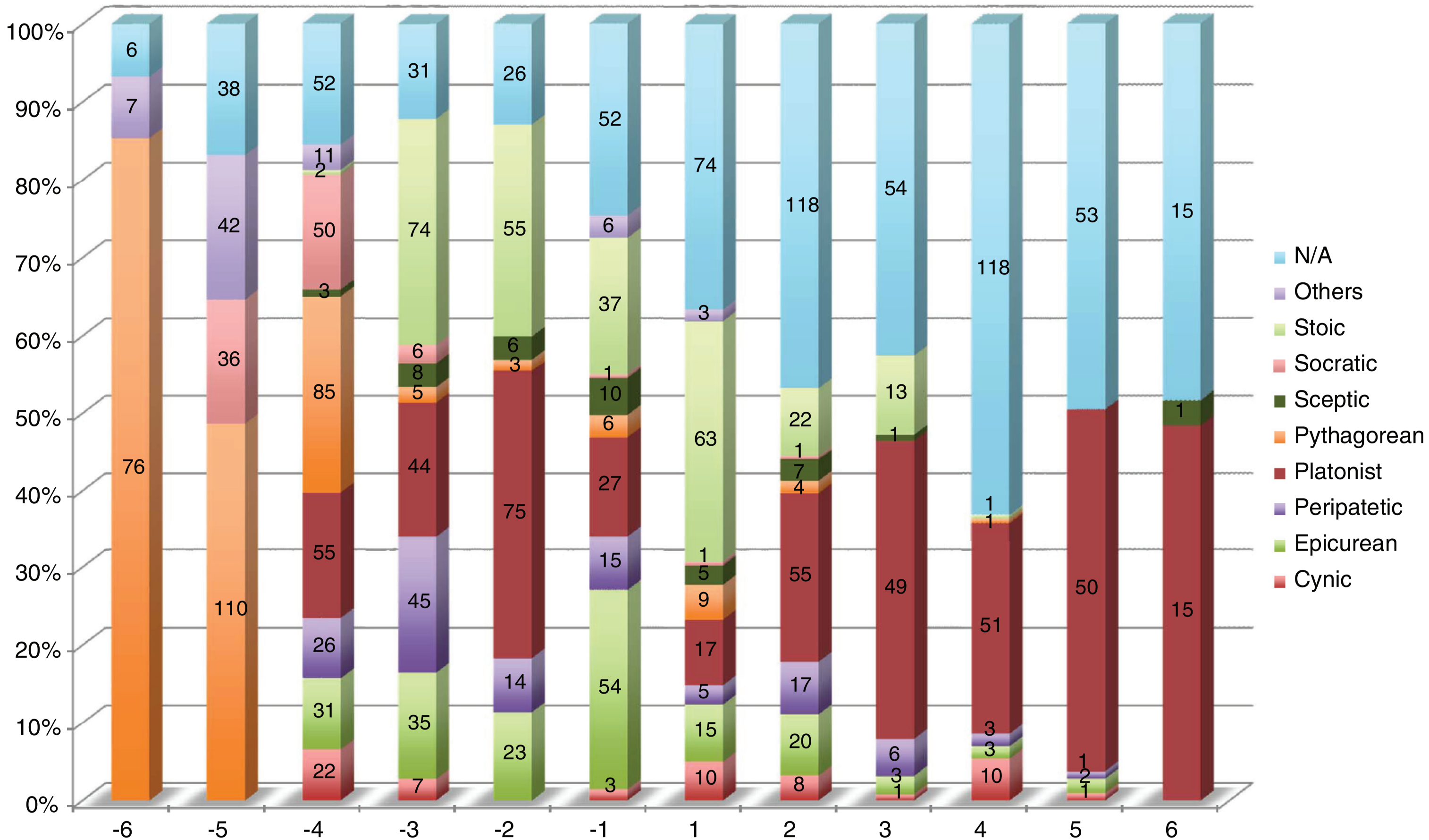

Plate 6 Philosophers by schools and centuries – 100% stacked column chart

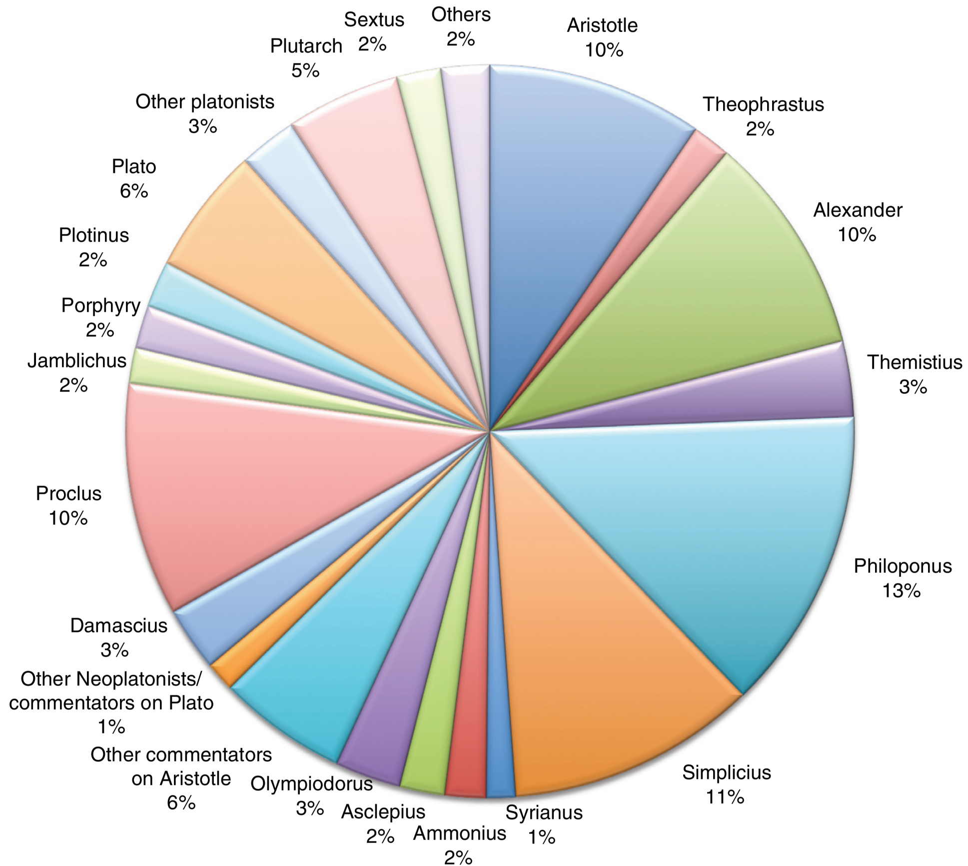

Plate 7 Philosophical texts saved by direct transmission

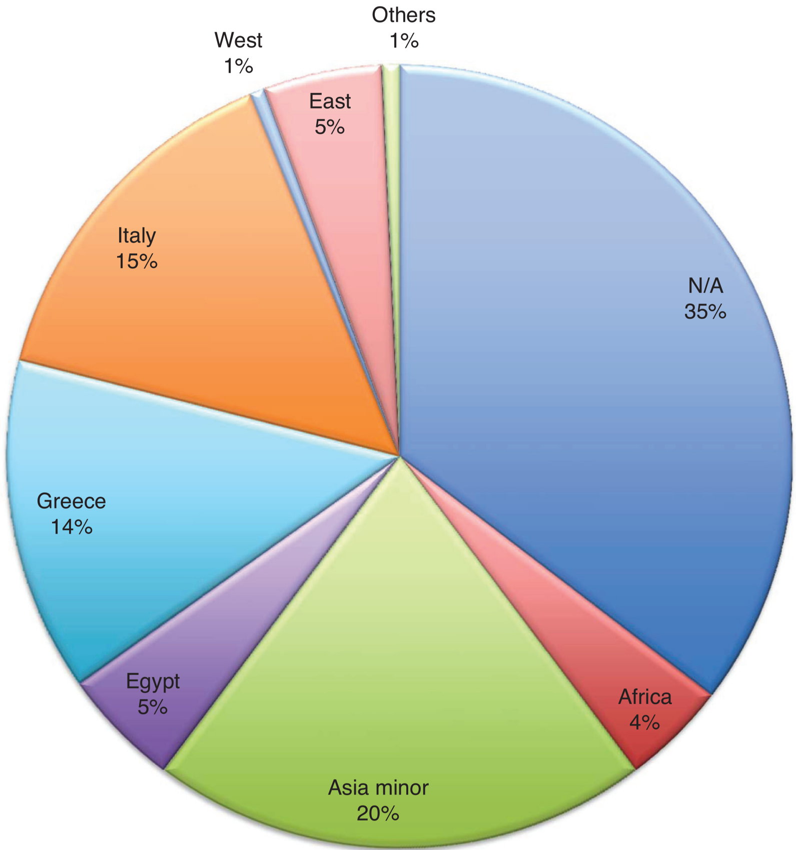

Plate 8 Areas of origin of the philosophers

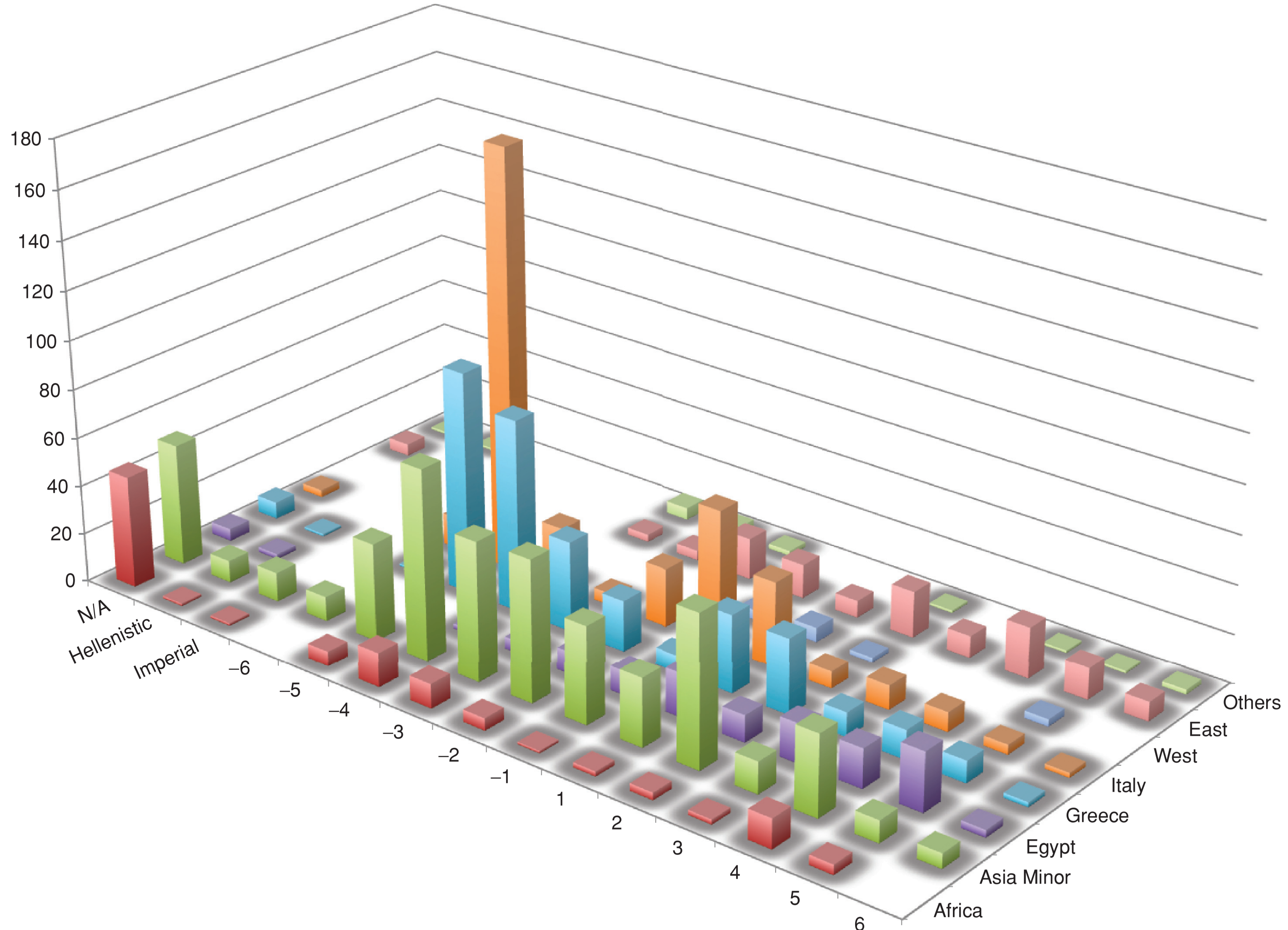

Plate 9 Areas of origin of philosophers by centuries

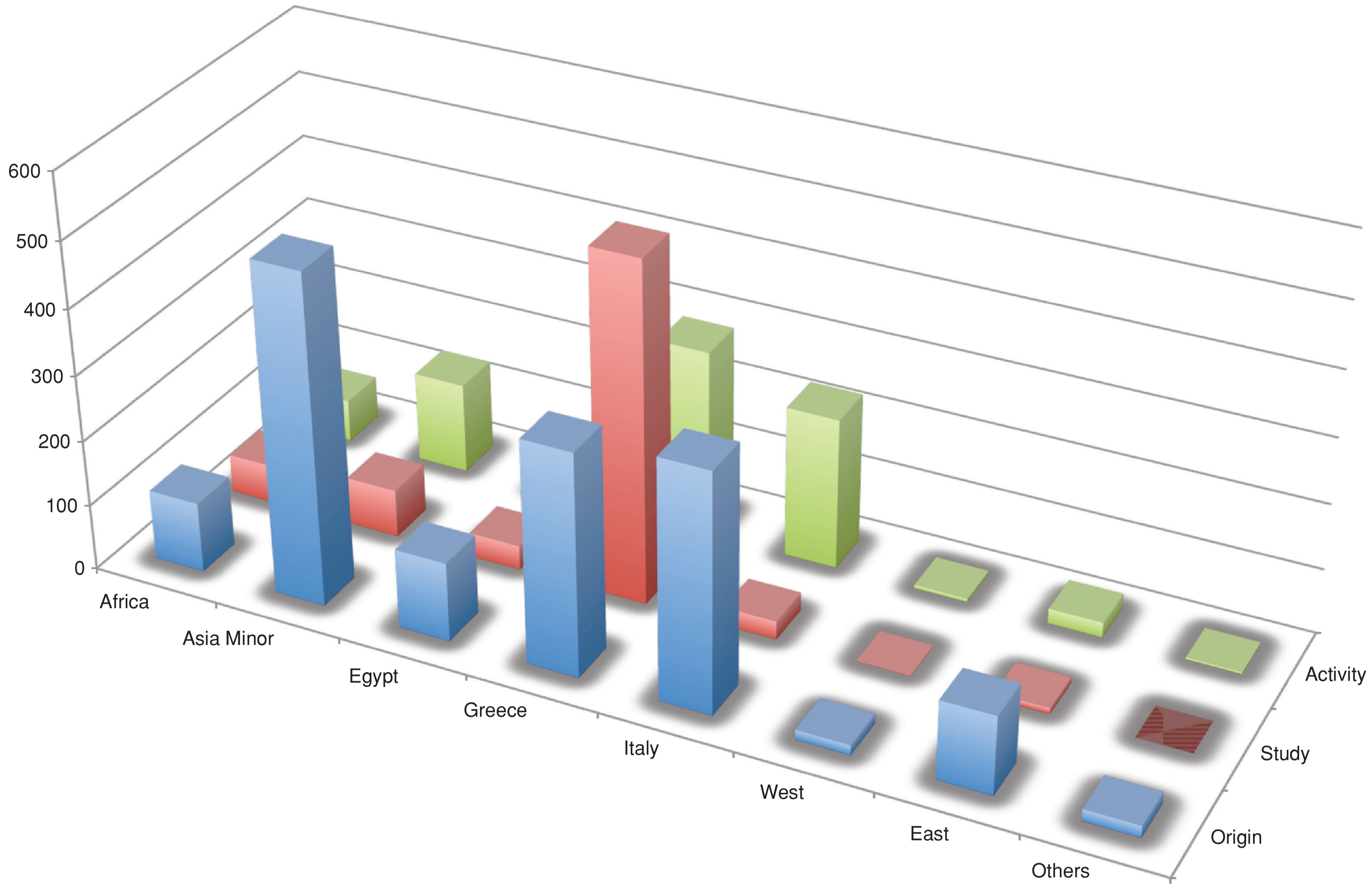

Plate 10 Areas of origin, study, and activity

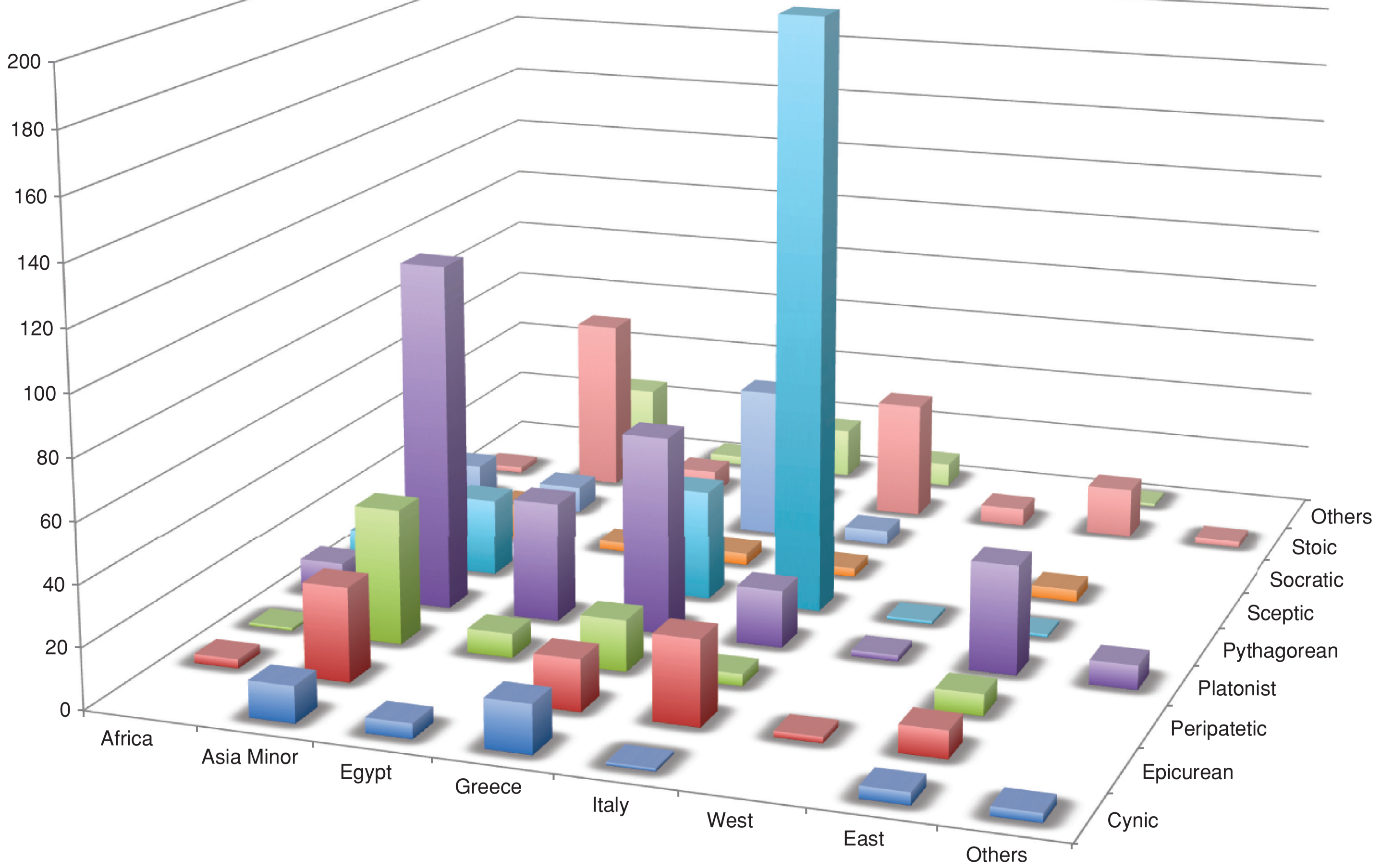

Plate 11 Philosophers by schools and by geographical areas of their place of origin (simplified version)

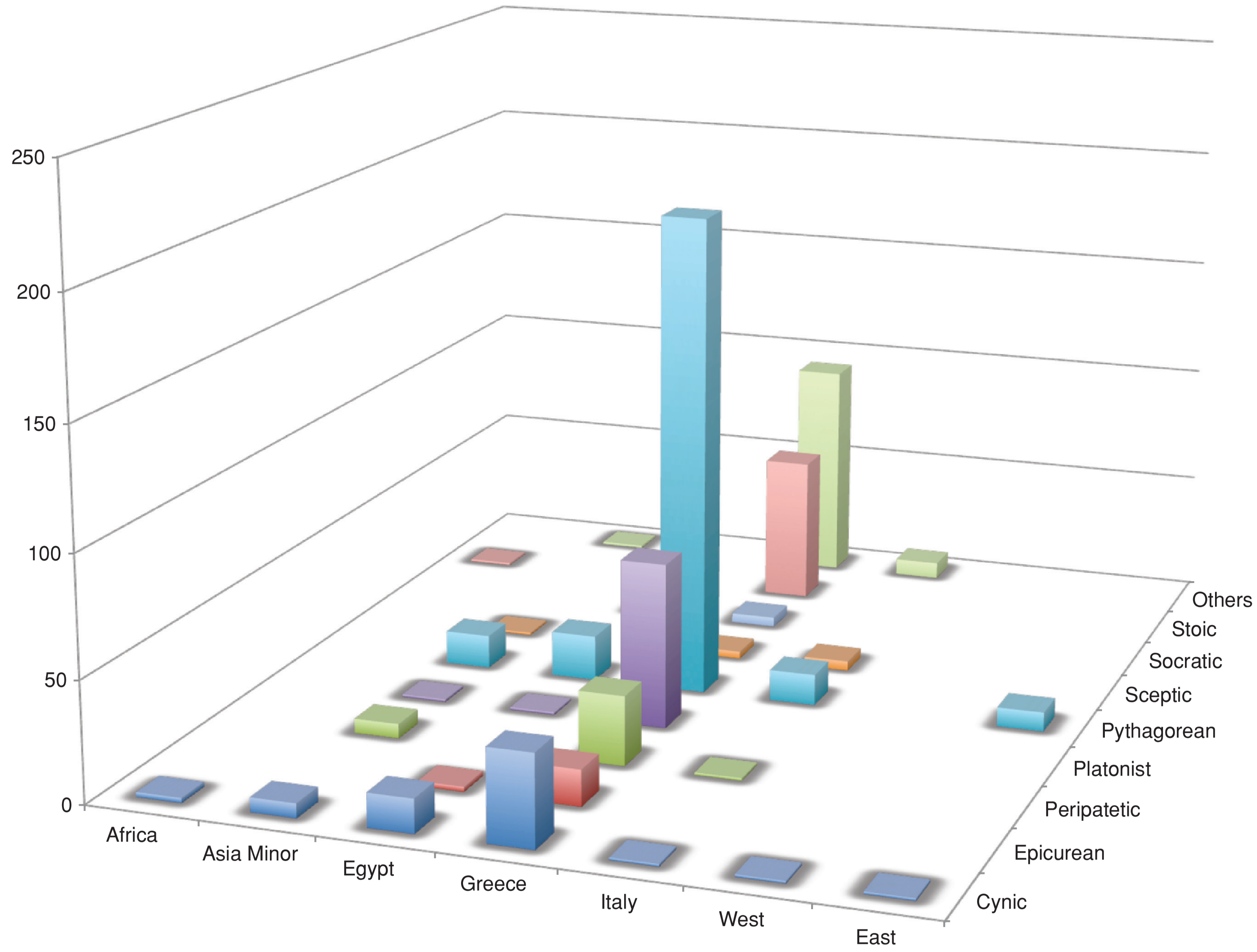

Plate 12 Philosophers by schools and by geographical areas of study (simplified version)