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PIERRE HADOT'S HOLISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Jonathan Rawson Crist

May 2020

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Jonathan Rawson Crist

2020

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By

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ABSTRACT

PIERRE HADOT'S PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATION

By

Jonathan Rawson Crist

May 2020

Dissertation supervised by Pat Arneson, Ph.D.

Pierre Hadot's holistic philosophy of communication attends to the health of the self and community through practice of spiritual exercises for the transformation of one's entire being, working at the nexus of mind, body, soul, and cosmos. The task is ever-incomplete, works in an understanding of "human being as essentially an exposure that lacks a closed identity" and "keep[s] sight of the opening, wound, or lack that remains at the heart of any community and all communication" (Butchart 136). This is responsive to the present moment experiencing disjointed experience of time and space, increased anxiety, underdeveloped capacity for attention, and cultural forms that privilege stimuli over reflection. These conditions make it difficult to recognize and form responses to fundamental questions: How do I live a good life? What does death mean? What purpose is there in this life? This dissertation works through the

major themes in Hadot's work and demonstrates how it offers insight into adopting and adapting ancient philosophical attitudes, working toward inner peace in shifting existential conditions, gaining perspective by taking 'a view from above', and fostering a love of humankind all born through the understanding that we are fundamentally in relation with others in human communication.

DEDICATION

For my Mother and Brother.

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CHAPTER 1

Hadot on Interpretation: Or, the Revealing of Ancient Philosophy

*It is through Hellenistic and Roman thought, particularly that of late antiquity, that the renaissance was to perceive Greek tradition. This fact was to be of decisive importance for the birth of modern European thought and art. In another respect contemporary hermeneutic theories that, proclaiming the autonomy of the written text, have constructed a veritable tower of Babel of interpretations where all meanings become possible, come straight out of the practices of ancient exegesis. (Hadot, *Way of Life* 67)*

The centrality of interpretation in Pierre Hadot's work goes hand in hand with the primary question that guides his writing: "Can modern man understand and even live by ancient texts?" Hadot places 'understanding' as central to this project: "For all kinds of reasons, of which chronological distance is not the most important, our understanding of ancient works has grown more and more dim" (*Citadel* vii). While there are extant translations and printings and introductions of ancient philosophical works (e.g., Platonic dialogues, *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, the *Enneads* of Plotinus, Aristotle's *Nichomechean Ethics*)—what grows dim are our understandings of how the text in front of us has come to be and the conditions under which it was originally produced.

Michael Chase and Luc Brisson write that Hadot contributed to understanding philosophy in the present historical moment, "by reforming philosophical discourse to a way of life and resituating it within its original economic, social, political, and religious context—Hadot promoted a way of conceiving philosophy that was both very ancient and very new" (439). Hadot's philosophy is 'new' in that it runs counter to a conception of 'doing philosophy' as the

specialized activity of a professional group of people writing and teaching in universities.

Hadot's conception of philosophy has roots in his life experience.

The first section outlines Hadot's intellectual background including his formative years spent in seminary and the priesthood of the Catholic Church and his philological training. The second section turns to the major phenomenon in Hadot's work, *philosophia*. The final section reviews the practices of exegetical philosophy, specifically in the Neoplatonist tradition. This brings Hadot to focus on the centrality of interpretation and "creative mistakes" in understanding ancient philosophy and the task of the reader in the present historical moment (*Way of Life* 71, 75).

Intellectual Background

Hadot's development in his formative years, his primary education, and his interest in mysticism situated him uniquely to observe and address for his time and for ours the "great cultural event of the West, the emergence of a Latin philosophical language translated from the Greek" (*Way of Life* 54). This section introduces Pierre Hadot's intellectual background with attention to his education with Paul Henri and Pierre Courcelle.

Hadot was born in 1922 in Reims, France. He was born the youngest of three sons. His education began at an early age. He was directed toward the Catholic priesthood from the age of ten starting with his entry to the minor seminary in Reims. Hadot's early interactions with religious education and philosophical instruction would provide lasting direction for his life and scholarship. Hadot was the youngest of three sons to stay at home. His mother and his father worked at a champagne production business. He was exposed to a rigorous Catholic environment and social structure with the parish priest as the "absolute master" in the geographical area of the parish (Hadot, *Happiness* 1). Hadot anecdotally recalled this structure on display in his parents'

relationship; following his birth his mother had suffered an illness that would no longer allow her to have children. The parish priest told his parents they could no longer sleep together in accordance with the Church doctrine that procreation was the only purpose of conjugal relations. Without the possibility of conceiving children, Hadot's father grew apart from the Church and discontinued going to Mass for numerous years (3). Hadot's mother remained stalwart in the faith so much so that she restricted the vocational choices for her sons all of whom were to be ordained as priests. Hadot was then sent to the minor seminary in Reims when he was ten years old (4).

Hadot entered the *Grande Séminaire* in Reims at 15 where he was exposed further to Thomism as well as the heralded mystical authors of the Catholic Church such as Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) and Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-1897). At the time, Hadot also began his long interest in the work of Henri Bergson (1859-1941), whom Hadot said "had a considerable influence on the development of my thought, insofar as his philosophy is focused on the experience of a bursting forth of existence, of life, that we experience in ourselves in willing and in duration" (*Happiness* 9-10). Following Bergson, Hadot's conception of philosophy was less the construction of a rational system of discourse and more a way of life brought about through inner transformation (*Happiness* 10). Hadot situated his interest in Bergson at the time as part of the larger intellectual environment in 1939 that was grappling with the "problem of the essence of philosophy" (*Happiness* 10).

Hadot was ordained in 1944 at the early age of 22. This was due in part to the convergence of several factors. First was that the *Grande Séminaire* needed a philosophy teacher. Second was the discovery of a heart murmur that made him unfit for parish life. And

third was his noticeable intellectual development whereupon Hadot was sent to complete concurrent degrees at both the Sorbonne and the *Institut Catholique* (Hadot, *Happiness* 19).

Paul Henri (1906-1984) was a Jesuit and scholar working at the *Institut Catholique* at the time Hadot was a doctoral student there. Henri's focus was on the thought of Plotinus and on the development of Neoplatonic influences in Western thought, and heavily influenced Hadot's interpretation of ancient texts. Hadot notes from his time working with Henri on a critical edition of *Victorinus* (published 1960) that Henri served "as a model of scientific method" in investigating the meaning of texts (Hadot, *Way of Life* 51). Through Henri, Hadot explored the work of Plotinus (204-270 CE), who was a major influence in the flowering of Neoplatonic thought and practice. Hadot learned the rigors of the critical philological work of translation and commentary from Henri.

Henri and Hadot also worked together on a project providing commentary on the works of Marius Victorinus (*Way of Life* 279-280). Victorinus (early 4th century CE) was a Neoplatonic philosopher who was known as a translator of Aristotelian works from the Greek into Latin and, following a late conversion to Christianity, had considerable influence on the work of Augustine of Hippo. In this work on Victorinus, Hadot attributed a section of that work to Porphyry of Tyre, a prominent student of Plotinus and teacher of Victorinus's particular form of Neoplatonic spiritual and exegetical practices. This connection allowed Hadot to provide a context for another emergent Western cultural phenomenon at the time, the presentation of Christianity as a philosophy or way of life (*Way of Life* 280).

Pierre Courcelle was another colleague, mentor, and friend who also helped train Hadot in the scientific approach to interpretation and the comparison of texts (Hadot, *Way of Life* 50). In Hadot's inaugural lecture to the *Collège de France*, he remarked on Courcelle's influence on

his own approach to comparing ancient texts: “[A] text should be interpreted in light of the literary genre to which it belongs” (Hadot, *Way of Life* 52). Courcelle was the first to put this approach forth in the philological community. In this way Courcelle traced the formation and development of common phrases associated with the western intellectual patrimony such as “know thyself” (52).

The influence of Courcelle in placing the text in its literary genre and conditions of writing comes across in the whole of Hadot’s body of scholarship. On Courcelle’s influence Hadot wrote,

It was surprising to see a philologist [Courcelle] attack problems in the history of philosophy, showing the key influence exercised on Latin Christian thought by Greek and pagan Neoplatonism, not only Plotinus but—this was an important detail—by his disciple Porphyry as well. Even more surprising, this philologist based his conclusions on a rigorously philological method that did not rely solely on shining light on analogies. (Hadot, *Way of Life* 51)

Courcelle’s writings proved to be an important impetus for Hadot’s work. Hadot read ancient philosophical discourse in light of the genre and the environment, finding that the received canon of philosophical texts, primarily oral in construction and intent, is a support for the ‘art of living.’ The future of Hadot’s scholarship was thus set forth.

The period from 1949-1960 proved to be fruitful for the direction Hadot’s life and scholarship. Several events led Hadot out of the Church: the “Oath Against Modernism” he took on his ordination, *Humani Generis*; the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary (1950); and his own growing love for the woman who would become his wife for the next 11

years. He stepped further into his academic work at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS) where he was researching the works of Victorinus.

After leaving the priesthood, Hadot was a student at the *Sorbonne* for a year. He eventually graduated from the *École Pratique des Hautes Etudes*. During Hadot's years as a university professor he published his dissertation *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Fr. 1968); and *Plotinus, Or the Simplicity of Vision* (Fr. 1963, Eng. 1993). Hadot was appointed *directeur d'études* of the fifth section of the *École* in 1964 as the chair of Latin Patristics where he remained for twenty years. He was then nominated by Michel Foucault to a chair in the *Collège de France* and was elected in 1982 to the chair of History of Hellenistic and Roman Thought. He retired from that chair in 1991.

In addition to *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (1981), a collection of essays translated into English as *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (1995), Hadot's major works were written after his retirement when he was finally free "to write books that have been waiting for years to be written" (Hadot, *Happiness* 51). These works include *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (French, 1992, English 1998), *What is Ancient Philosophy?* (French 1995, English 2002), and *The Veil of Isis* (French 2004, English 2006).

Hadot was exposed early to the Catholic intellectual tradition in the form of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. Hadot's own work manages to be clear, detailed, and accessible to a broad range of readers. He credited his own writing style in part to his early exposure to Thomism as a rigorous, clear, and systematic philosophy (Hadot, *Way of Life* 277). Amid his education in the Catholic tradition of 1930's France, Hadot began to undergo experiences that he later identified as outside the Christian foundation (Hadot, *Happiness* 8). These experiences occurred in a pre-2nd Vatican Council environment and explanations or descriptions of these

experiences would previously have been found only in the mystics such as Therese of Lisieux or John of the Cross. In other words, having an experience that did not fit within his Christian worldview or knowledge was disturbing not only to him but also to the Church.

Hadot drew upon the work of Romain Rolland to describe the experience as “the pure happiness of existing” or “oceanic feeling” (8); “the oceanic feeling, as I’ve experienced it—which is different from the sentiment of nature—is foreign to Christianity because it does not involve either God or Christ. It is something situated at the level of the pure feeling of existing” (8). Hadot’s experiences were an “immersion in the ‘whole’” (9). The reoccurrence of this experience in various forms encompassed and directed Hadot’s personal and professional life in encounter and scholarship (6).

Philosophia as Starting Point

Philosophy as an embodied practice uproots our current assumptions about philosophy as the *result* of “theoretical activity” (*Ancient Philosophy* 3). A current and prominent view of studying philosophy is that one stores up knowledge of different systems of thought—Neo-Platonism, Scholasticism, Utilitarianism, Empiricism, Logical Positivism—and then leverages the relevant knowledge-pieces of the system that one has chosen to respond to questions that emerge such as What is a good life? What is death? How should I act in this situation? What laws am I bound to? What responsibility do I have toward others; toward *this* other? Hadot characterized this dominant theoretical version of ‘doing’ philosophy as a rarified activity reserved for the professional philosopher. Philosophy as a professional activity is primarily carried out under the aegis of universities, has a highly technical language, is transacted in print and at boutique conferences, and addresses issues (e.g., ethics, virtue, language) and their resolution as the problem of constructing a system that will hold in all circumstances. Hadot’s

interpretation of the ancient phenomenon *philosophia* resonates with Alasdair MacIntyre's questioning of the tasks of philosophy.

MacIntyre is interested in what occurs when existential questions are asked outside of the professional context of philosophy. Uttered in different contexts, the questions What is it to live a human life well or badly? or What law, if any has authority over us? or What is the significance of death in our lives? take on different significance (MacIntyre 125). In a social setting the questions are usually asked with a certain amount of passion and anguish that elicits an awkward silence or quick attempt by the other person to move to something else in the conversation (125). Uttered in the context of a professional setting in tones appropriate to an academic lecture hall the questions "no longer sound naïve, they no longer evoke embarrassment" (125).

MacIntyre further characterizes professional philosophical questioning and action as "self-alienating" (127). The activity of questioning only arrives with our figuratively stepping back from the immediate circumstances that instigated the questioning. What follows after attaining this distance shapes the activity. MacIntyre identifies two different routes a person may take after posing questions: first, the question and search may become a diversion along Pascalian lines, giving the illusion of activity; or second, the question demands a response by throwing the reader out back into one's life to confront the issue. MacIntyre points to John Stuart Mill and Thomas Aquinas as examples of philosophical discourses that throw the reader back into the existential exigencies that prompted the questioning (128, 131). When philosophical questioning and writing leads the reader down the second route, the technical points of writing and professional philosophical activity are subordinated to the ends of the conversation at hand with another person (130-131). MacIntyre suggests that "perhaps the point of doing philosophy is to enable people to lead, so far as it is within their powers, philosophical lives" (132).

Hadot's scholarship traces an understanding of *philosophia* as a way of life that comes about as an existential choice to carry out designated spiritual practices. A person's existential choice to practice *philosophia* is a response to a particular "vision of the world" (Hadot, *Ancient Philosophy* 3). The execution of the practices work with one's intention to change or "transform" how the practitioner orients oneself the lifeworld (3). This choice and these practices precede the learning and mastery of the texts. In other words, philosophic discourse—the received texts and fragments of the ancient world—is inextricably intertwined with the formation of the practitioner in *philosophia*.

The primary purpose of philosophic discourse for Hadot is to support one's existential choices and one's view of the cosmos, not necessarily the construction or defense of a coherent system (Hadot, *Ancient Philosophy* 3). "Theoretical philosophical discourse is thus 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 interlocuter*—it incites both masters and disciples to live in genuine conformity with their initial choice" (*Ancient Philosophy* 3, emphasis added). Hadot reopened a reading of ancient texts as he reshaped our understanding of the context and relationship between philosophic discourse and practitioner. What emerges when the received texts of ancient Western philosophy are placed in their literary tradition and in the context of their origins is a picture that privileges the needs of the practitioner in one's continued re-orienting of oneself in the lifeworld in accordance with a particular view of the cosmos that utilizes both rhetorical and logical means for one's chosen purpose. In other words, Hadot opened afresh the way in which ancient works are interpreted, read, and encountered by a contemporary reader.

Exegesis of Philosophical Texts

During Hadot's inaugural address on the occasion of his election to the chair of the History of Hellenistic and Roman Thought in the *College de France* in 1982, he gave a brief excursus on *excurses*. Beginning with the Alexander the Great's excursion and advent of Hellenistic culture, Hadot illuminated the "historical distance" between 1) Greek culture and thought and Hellenistic thought, 2) Roman engagement with Greek texts, and 3) contemporary readers and of both of the preceding phenomena (*Way of Life* 53).

Hadot explained, "We need to recognize from the outset that almost all of Hellenistic literature, principally its philosophical productions, has disappeared" (*Way of Life* 53). With the exception of several fragments from the 700 works of Chrysippus (c. 279- c.206 BCE), literature from that era has been lost to time (53). Due to this loss and historical distance, accessing ancient Greek thought requires "exploiting existing texts" of Greek philosophy and is inseparable from learning of the philosophical schools—Stoicism, Epicureanism, Platonism/Neoplatonism—through the Latin authors, such as Cicero, Lucretius, Marius Victorinus, Augustine, and Boethius—that preserved Greek texts by copying them and liberally quoting from those now lost sources (53). In other words, the phenomenon of Greek and Latin philosophy that comes through the Medieval period to the dawn of the Renaissance and the birth of "modern European thought and art" emerges through a complex web of environmental and interpretive conditions (67).

Hadot's understanding of this now distant event of original interpretation and translation, as well as subsequent interpretations of the phenomena *philosophia* and the texts of ancient philosophy, follows two broad interdependent lines. One is understanding the conditions of production of the phenomena. This includes an understanding of the life, teaching, and practices of the major schools as well as the exegetical practices that were to dominate Western

philosophy to the conclusion of the 16th century (*Ancient Philosophy* 55-171; *Way of Life* 71). Interwoven with the process of exegetical practices is the emergence of what Hadot terms “creative mistakes” (*Way of Life* 71, 75).

Creative mistakes emerge as a result of the process of interpretation, translation, and transcription by hand in copying and transmitting texts. These practices, combined with the ravages of time and circumstance (e.g. repeated fires in the Alexandrian library, the sacking of Athens by Sulla in 86 BCE), account for the emergence of mistranslations and deformations of the authoritative texts of a school and practice in both structure and meaning (e.g. Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations*). Likewise, those same mistakes were the creative gap through which came “the development of fresh ideas . . . new concepts, categories, arguments, and conclusions” (*Way of Life* 5).

With an understanding of philosophy as a way of life—*philosophia*—Hadot reshaped an understanding of the exegetical practices of the ancient schools of philosophy which then reopened “our image of the history of philosophy” (*Ancient* 95). Exegetical exercises in the practices of philosophy in late antiquity, through Medieval Scholasticism, and up through the mid-18th century began with an authoritative founder of the school. In the case of the Athenian schools, Plato founded the Academy and Aristotle founded the Lyceum, Epicurus founded the Garden and Zeno founded the Stoa. The schools took on the names where the masters and students met for instruction and to engage in the way of life demonstrated by the participants including the “spiritual exercises” of attention, meditation, dialogue, consideration of death and physics (*Ancient* 98-99). Exegesis and commentary on the texts of the founder of the school, Plato or Aristotle for example, are primary exercises of the school in supporting the ongoing

confirmation and choice of a way of practicing a way of life in congruity with a vision of the cosmos.

“Each philosophical or religious school or group believed itself to be in possession of a traditional truth, communicated from the beginning by the divinity to a few wise men” (*Way of Life* 74). The texts of the founder and their authority serve as the foundation of wisdom and that on which all other teaching in the schools is based (72). First and foremost, exegesis is an argument from authority. Not unlike a syllabus, there are references to a specific order in which the Platonic dialogues should be read by students so as to best prepare the way toward leading the life of the sage-exemplar (72). To that end the primary mode of instruction took place as commenting on the texts of the masters (72).

‘Truth’ was thus considered to be accessible in and through those texts considered by authorities to be authentic (*Way of Life* 73). Commentary on the texts of the founders had a specific intent: to reveal the ‘truth’ that is encapsulated in the works of the masters albeit they might not be stated explicitly. The sometimes obscure “authentic” texts were thought to be a deliberate technique of a master to point at the vast content of the truth that could be glimpsed in and through their specific formulation (74). In this exegetical tradition so long as an interpretation was considered coherent with the doctrine thought to be that of the original teacher or sage it was considered “authentic” in that it illuminated the pre-existing ‘truth’ in the text (74). So which texts—or authoritative translations of texts—are authentic?

Works by Plato and his student Aristotle (referred to as *the* Philosopher by Thomas Aquinas) were the most prominent philosophers in antiquity. By the sunset of antiquity this list grew exponentially to include those scholars who offered works of revelation for pagans, Christians, and Jews—the *Chaldaean Oracles*, the Bible, and the Torah respectively. “Both

Judaism and Christianity sought to present themselves to the Greek world as philosophies; they thus developed, in the persons of Philo and Origen respectively, a biblical exegesis analogous to the traditional pagan exegesis of Plato (*Way of Life* 72). Hadot here aligned the textual commentary of Medieval Scholasticism with exegetical practices of the ancient philosophical schools.

With the intention of finding the pre-given truth in a text, exegetical philosophy considers how the problems arising from those texts were posed. As an example, Hadot provided his own translation of the problem of evil as posed by Plotinus in his first *Ennead*: “We must try to find out in what sense Plato says that evils shall not pass away, and that their existence is necessary” (*Enneads I 8; Way of Life* 73). Plotinus’s response to the question of whether evils pass away proceeds from the first principles of Neoplatonism, namely that of the preeminence of the Good and knowledge through the ideal forms, to work through the truth based on the ‘truth’ already contained in the works of Plato. The structure of question and response working through and from the authentic texts is paralleled in the structure of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, a representative text of Medieval Scholastic philosophy.

Within a milieu of exegesis, errors in exegesis—those that were outside of the pale of the doctrine of the founder—were taken to be the result of “misunderstandings and mistranslations” of the authentic text (*Way of Life* 74). According to Hadot, modern scholars of the history of philosophy have been correct to critique “arbitrary systemizations” that ancient commentators would construct from the out-of-context passages from a single author or even the different and/or contradictory ideas from different schools. In the first example, Hadot points to one instance when a “four- or five-tiered hierarchy of being was extracted from various dialogues of Plato”; in the second example, there is evidence that in an exegesis of Aristotelian texts

commentators were employing notions from Stoicism and Platonism (75). What Hadot finds most interesting and most fruitful is when these ‘mistakes’ in translation supply the opening for new ideas to emerge.

Hadot’s description of “creative mistakes” is a primary contribution to the understanding of *philosophia* (*Way of Life* 71, 75) In paving the way for the examples in this section, it is important to first situate Hadot’s interpretive approach. The crux of his approach is what he terms a “*coincidentia oppositorum*,” that is, being beholden to two opposing demands that are equally incumbent (*Nietzsche* 76). The opposing interpretive demands involve objectivity and subjectivity. The interpreter, in coming to an understanding of the texts and the “historical reality” that comes in the encounter, is responding on one hand to the need for “a conscious and complete engagement of the ego, and, on the other, a complete detachment from the ego, a deliberate effort at impartial objectivity” (76). In this crux an “existential meaning” can be given (76).

In his writing, Hadot placed this position in the historical context of 19th and 20th century history and hermeneutics in an introduction to *Nietzsche: Attempt at Mythology Nietzsche: Attempt at Mythology* (1918/2008). Ernst Bertram’s (1884-1957) influential study on *Nietzsche* was originally published in 1918, was republished in French in 1990 with Hadot’s introduction, and then translated into English in 2008. In his introduction, Hadot outlined his hermeneutic approach to texts.

Textual translation was a topic that dominated the discussion of the circle of scholars around Stefan George (1868-1933). Hadot characterized the George Circle’s approach to historical research as a response to 19th century scholarship that privileged objectivity in the sense that the historian performing the research could remove themselves, their situatedness in

the lifeworld, from the historical picture they were putting on display (*Nietzsche* 74-75). The George Circle, which included Hans-Georg Gadamer, swung the pendulum back the other way by eschewing historical objectivity entirely (75).

The kind of “historical vision” that emerged from the George Circle is for the purpose of edification that acknowledges the historian’s situatedness in the present moment (*Nietzsche* 74-75). An approach to history that searches into the past is a formative experience for the historical/interpreter. This is not a novel approach. Hadot highlighted the *Lives* of Plutarch (46 AD-c. 120 AD) and the works of Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) and Johann von Goethe (1749-1832) as representative of this understanding. Formative ‘histories’ written in this vein can and did veer into hagiography, as in the versions of the lives of the Christian saints that emphasize the stories of miracles with the purpose of highlighting a specific practice or virtue, the imitation of which would be edifying to the emulator. Hadot characterized the 19th century development of a “rigorous historical method” as a response to the hagiographical tendency (*Nietzsche* 75). The pendulum thus swung back with the hermeneutic theories and practices of Nietzsche, George, Martin Heidegger, and Gadamer’s response to the “withering positivism of a purely scholarly attitude” (76).

Quoting Bertram’s *Nietzsche*, Hadot identified the phrase “One and the same text permits innumerable interpretations—there is no ‘correct’ interpretation” as the starting principle of the George Circle (*Nietzsche* 76). Identifying a starting point where historical objectivity is not possible, Hadot observed that methods of interpretation can lead to “genuine aberrations” by the dismissal of authorial intention (76). This is important for understanding and ignoring the situatedness of the text within its historical moment and conditions of production. Sharing the good intentions of his response to the developing historicism of 19th century historical critical

method, Hadot warned against dangers. “Nietzsche was wrong. We must firmly maintain the opposite principle: ‘the same text cannot license all interpretations. There are valid interpretations and inadmissible interpretations’” (76). Hadot situated his own position of the *coincidentia oppositorum* as a position that acknowledges the position for a philological and historical rigor when one interprets and comments on texts. In Hadot’s volume on the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, he briefly summarized this fluid starting point.

To be sure, it is fashionable nowadays to affirm that, in any case, we cannot know exactly what an author meant, and that moreover, this does not matter at all, for we can give the works any meaning we please. For my part, and without entering into this debate, I would say that before we discover ‘unintentional’ meanings, it seems to me both possible and necessary to discover the meaning with the author intended. It is absolutely indispensable to go in the direction of a basic meaning, to which we can then refer in order to uncover, if we should so wish, those meanings of which the author was perhaps not conscious. It is true, however, that this reconstitution is extremely difficult for us, because we project attitudes and intentions proper to our era into the past. (*Citadel* ix)

A reader cannot ‘know’ what the author meant, which allow creative unintentional meanings to arise in the interpretation of a text.

Hadot likened the project of interpretation to that of the Stoic spiritual exercise of considering a representation and then making a judgement and then ascribing value to a text (*Happiness* 68). The first requirement for Hadot is coming to an “adequate and objective judgment” of the text. This is achieved by having objectivity as a goal (68). Once an objective judgment is made, any meaning that may be found in one’s subjective life can then be discovered and applied to the text. Thus, “one can speak of a return to subjectivity, a subjectivity that,

moreover, attempts to elevate itself to a universal perspective” (68). The act of interpretation then becomes a spiritual exercise that is intended to transform the self. Using objectivity as a goal and placing the ancient text back in its originating “praxis” there emerges the possibility of revealing authorial intention (68). Hadot makes an important distinction between authorial intent and the revelation of an “historical psychology” (65).

Hadot’s framework ascribing an “historical psychology” to the works of an author emerged from his study of the Renaissance. In the Renaissance a work of art—a novel or painting for example—could be considered an unbounded expression of the ‘real’ individual (*Happiness* 65). Especially with regard to understanding ancient texts, ignoring the literary context in which the work was produced thus ignores the constraints placed on an author by the literary genre in which he was writing. The literary genre reveals those constraints and the purpose for which the author was writing.

In ancient philosophical schools there were rigorously codified rules for the presentation and use of terms in different literary genres. The author’s intention could be gleaned through the “way in which he has been able to play with all the rules that imposed themselves” on the author and his use of language (*Happiness* 65). One such constraint is the intimate intertwining of the written word and the efficaciousness of the spoken word with primacy given to the latter (*Way of Life* 61). In the case of the *de Rerum Natura* by Lucretius—a representative work in the Epicurean tradition—Hadot explained that the oral constraints of rhythm and meter prevented the full use of the technical vocabulary of the school that would otherwise have made an appearance in his work (*Way of Life* 62). This distinction in conjunction with the interpretive approach of *coincidentia oppositorum* and an understanding of creative mistakes locates the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius in their originating praxis as well as open the possibility of new meaning.

Hadot's work *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* can be understood as a book length exposition of a series of creative mistakes involving the reception of the content of the text, locating the literary genre in which the content was written, and the subsequent interpretations of the text.¹ The opening chapters of that work gives a glimpse into the operation of placing a text into its praxis, in turn paving the way for Hadot's understanding of creative mistakes.

In the opening chapters of the *Inner Citadel* Hadot categorizes the ways in which the present day reader faces difficulties in approaching the texts of antiquity. Before the printing press, texts were transcribed by hand. Through this copying words have been miscopied and sections lost. Fortunately, there has been a long continuous work to catalog 'errors' in the process. In the specific case of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* Hadot recounted the full recorded history of the text, the title and structure, and dominant assumptions of the literary genre up to the present moment. The text as contemporary readers have come to know it is broken into chapters. In the earliest extant text there are no divisions (*Citadel* 23).

In addition, the title *Meditations* was a later attribution, not one given by Aurelius. The work has been referenced by various titles throughout history including "Exhortations," "Writings Concerning Himself," "Private Writing," "About Himself and to Himself," "Notes which He Wrote for Himself," "Moral Thoughts," "To Myself," "Conversations with Himself," and "Paths toward Himself" (*Citadel* 24-25). Hadot located the literary genre of Marcus's writings as *hypomnēmata*, or notes taken for himself. In this ancient literary genre, notes of this sort were to be on hand for regular use in exhorting oneself. In the Stoic tradition, these notes

¹ The bulk of Hadot's work on Marcus will be treated in the chapter on spiritual exercise.

were written according to formulas and language that were provocative and used the three part Stoic system for conditioning one's inner discourse. By this way then Marcus aimed,

to strive to always have the essential rules of life present in one's mind, and to keep placing oneself in the fundamental disposition of the philosopher, which consists essentially in controlling one's inner discourse, in doing only that which is of benefit to the human community, and in accepting the events brought to us by the course of the Nature of the All. (*Citadel* 31)

One can benefit oneself as well as the all of humankind by controlling one's inner discourse in the face of daily occurrences.

While written to adhere to a Stoic system, *hypomnēmata* as a literary genre assists the philosopher practitioner in cultivating an inner attitude and an external response to the existential demands of life in the manner of the school and its cosmic vision. Thus classified, Hadot pointed out the mistake of approaching the apparently disorderly texts as either broken fragments in what otherwise would have been a systematic treatise, or as a recording of the "outpourings of one's heart," an interpretation prominent to 19th century Romanticism (*Citadel* 25-27). Replacing the texts within their literary genre, especially with regard to ancient texts, reveals what an author was constrained to say by the rhetorical rules and intentions of the genre.

Hadot placed the utmost importance on understanding that the ancient literary rules of production were much more codified than a modern reader's current approach. Arnold Davidson succinctly summarizes Hadot's approach:

Hadot's studies of the history of ancient philosophy and theology have always included the analysis of 'the rules, the forms, the models of discourse,' the framework of the literary genre whose rules are often rigorously codified, in which the thoughts of the

ancient author are expressed. Such analysis is necessary in order to understand both the details of the work, the exact import of particular statements as well as the general meaning of the work as a whole. Literary structure and conceptual structure must never be separated. (7)

Situating the text in its original praxis in conjunction with a rigorous philological approach to texts brings Hadot to identify creative mistakes.

Translation errors occurred in exegesis. Mistranslations and misunderstandings emerged through a number of factors, both environmental and exegetical. Having completed the rigorous work to establish that errors occurred in translation and exegesis across historical moments, Hadot's question became How do we understand the interpretations and exegesis that follows from those errors? Hadot characterized his position in response to a dominant attitude in historical research that considered all exegetical thought to be rooted in mistakes. However, rooted in misunderstanding, the exegetical edifice built from a mistake does not meet modern standards of reasoning (*Way of Life* 75). Based in error the exegesis could be dismissed as faulty. Regardless of the judgment, Hadot reasoned the researcher is also "forced to admit one fact: very often, mistakes and misunderstandings have brought about important evolutions in the history of philosophy. In particular they have caused new ideas to appear" (75). One such new idea emerging from Neoplatonic exegesis is the development of the distinction between an infinitive "being" and participle "being" (75).

Hadot traced this distinction to Porphyry of Tyre's (a student of Plotinus) exegesis of section 142b of the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*.

Plato had asked: 'if the One *is*, is it possible that it should not participate in being [*ousia*]?' For the Neoplatonist Porphyry, the One in question here is the second One. If

this second One participates in *ousia*, he reasons, we must assume that *ousia* is prior to the second One. Now, the only thing prior to the second One is the first One, and this latter is not in any sense *ousia*. Thus, Porphyry concludes that, in this passage, the word *ousia* designates the first One in an enigmatic symbolical way. The first One is not *ousia* in the sense of ‘substance’; rather, it is being (*être*) in the sense of a pure, transcendent act, prior to being as a substantial object (*étant*). *L’étant*, then, is the first substance and the first determination of *l’être*. (*Way of Life* 75)

The consequences of this exegesis by Porphyry would reverberate throughout the Middle Ages in Scholastic theological exegesis on the nature and ‘substance’ of the Trinity and the Eucharist. Heidegger would then again take up the question of *being* in the monumental volume *Being and Time* (1927). Hadot devoted his final book to another fruitful creative mistake, the Heraclitan fragment “Nature loves to hide.”

The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature (Fr. 2004, Eng. 2006) was Hadot’s final published volume. In that work he traced interpretations of the Heraclitan aphorism “Nature loves to hide” through historical moments. This became the jumping off point for Hadot’s description and analysis of the two broad attitudes that humankind has taken in relation to nature, the Promethean and the Orphic. In broad strokes the Promethean attitude understands nature as a keeper of secrets. The secrets are those that undergird the operation of the cosmos. The means to discovering these secrets is through experiments that force nature to disrobe herself, thus revealing the logic of its operations. These operations are thought to be a repeatable logic that can be expressed in mathematical or mechanical terms. The logic of nature can then be harnessed for humankind’s use. The Orphic model understands the secrets of nature to be best understood as a song, discourse, poem whose proper reception comes by way of contemplation.

Integral to this final work is Hadot's execution of the principle of 'creative mistakes' in interpretation. An illustrative example of this comes in a chapter on the personification of Nature in imagery of Isis and Diana of Ephesus (*Veil* 233). Hadot noted that the statuary of Nature has been adorned with what appear to be multiple breasts. He elaborated,

According to some modern scholars, what the ancients took to be breasts might in fact, like the rest of the goddess's attributes, be the sculpted reproduction of the clothes and decorations with which the goddess's state was adorned. The statue would have been made of wood and covered with adornment. It was the custom in Asia Minor and Greece, to dress goddesses; in fact, this was an essential part of daily worship. On this hypothesis, the form of the statues corresponds to the sculpted representation of the adornments that covered the wood statue. What had been assumed to be breasts would thus be jewels, or chains with pendants. Alternatively, they could be the testicles of bulls offered to the goddess on the occasion of the sacrifices that took place in her honor. It would thus be a mistaken interpretation—once again, a creative misunderstanding—that led people to see a personification of Nature in Artemis of the many breasts. (*Veil* 235)

Hadot's interest was with how interpretation is framed by assumptions within a particular historical moment.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the life and work of Pierre Hadot. Hadot asks the question, "is modern man still able to understand the texts of antiquity, and live according to them" (*Way of Life* 278). As we have seen, Hadot's formative years in the Catholic culture and seminary coupled with his later philological training under Paul Henri and Pierre Courcelle uniquely situate Hadot to ask and pose responses to the question. Through this education Hadot was

exposed early to the systematic work of Thomas Aquinas and the great mystics of the Catholic Intellectual tradition. This put him in a position to read ancient texts within their own context to revisit the phenomenon of ancient philosophy, or *philosophia*.

The second section introduced *philosophia* the central phenomenon of Hadot's scholarship. *Philosophia* is an embodied way of life, lived out in community of practitioners, that has attendant spiritual practices for the intention of forming the "inner attitude" and orienting the practitioner in the life-world (*Way of Life* 59). This way of life is an existential choice and is rooted in a particular understanding and view of the cosmos (*Ancient* 3). In the present historical moment, the texts that have come to be understood as the texts of philosophy were produced for the support of this initial choice of a way of life and living by it in response to the many and various existential exigencies of the day. Hadot finds therefore that ancient philosophical texts are not constrained by the purpose of the creation of a fully coherent system of thought. Rather they serve in the always ongoing formation of the human being.

Central in responding to the primary question is his inquiry into the received texts of ancient antiquity. The final section detailed Hadot's re-shaping of our current understanding of *how* the current forms and interpretations of ancient philosophical texts have come to be. Hadot's understanding and practice of interpretation affirms the goal of working toward objectivity in the process of interpretation. A person engaging with the text is certainly situated in their own moment, however they can, with rigor, place the text in question back in its literary genre, environment, and culture in working out what the author intended to convey. Approaching this becomes more possible, Hadot explains, because the rules of production for ancient authors are rigid, much more so than the contemporary moment. The *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius being a significant example. Placing it in context exposes the various additions (such as the familiar

chapter division) and errors in translation of the *Meditations* throughout the years. Replacing it in its literary genre and context of Stoic *philosophia* displays the *Meditations* as *hypomnēmata* or a support in exhorting Marcus to live by the tripartite Stoic life of ethics, physics, and logic.

While some mistakes are errors there are some that have been shown to be fruitful in opening up gaps for new meaning. Hadot regards these errors as “Creative mistakes” (*Way of Life* 71, 75). are those mistranslations, misinterpretations, and deformation/losses of the texts that, while mistakes, are what allowed for the emergence and work of exegetical philosophy (*Way of Life* 71, 75). Perhaps the most consequential example of the result of a creative mistake is the emergence of the distinction between infinitive “being” and participle “being” from Plato’s *Parmenides* (*Way of Life* 75).

CHAPTER 2

The Philosopher and the Sage

*“In Greece, the Archaic and Classical periods instead marked a time when training was broad, when arts were intricately interwoven, and when mind and body moved and thought together.”
(Hawhee 4)*

In her book *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece* Debra Hawhee works on the premise that a mind-body division is a lens later placed on understanding the habits and practices of ancient Greek rhetoric, athletics, philosophy and politics. Hawhee’s project and Hadot’s project run parallel with one another in outlining the interconnections of the arts—philosophy, rhetoric, athletics, politics, drama, poetry—in Ancient Greece for the purpose of practicing the good as a member of a city and community. This chapter gives attention to how Hadot traces the shifting understanding of wisdom, knowledge and the figure of the person of wisdom and the seeker of wisdom, the sage and the philosopher respectively, in the overall project of unearthing philosophy understood as a way of life.

Hadot’s understanding and interpretation of *sophia* and *sophos* has reconnected the received texts of philosophical discourse and the way of life as practiced within a philosophical school. This way of life is habituated through spiritual exercises in accord with a vision of the cosmos. Common to the various schools this meant living in accord with universal Reason or Logos. Hadot brings his readers to question what is being highlighted and learned in reading the ancient discourses. If the reader is taking philosophical discourse as a dialogic mode of expressing a system of thought that is coherent, constructed in the abstract, and can withstand scrutiny of all circumstances, then what will be brought to the foreground is the conceptual

content of the interlocutors. In other words, the content and actions of the participants in the dialogue are separated wherein each could be treated as separate entities. Working out of the construct that *philosophia* is a way of life that is practiced in the “customs and conventions of everyday life” Hadot traces philosophy as embodied action oriented toward achieving a state of wisdom (*Way of Life* 58).

Working through a detailed explication of Socrates as he appears in the Platonic dialogues and other descriptions by Xenophon and Plutarch, Hadot brought out the inextricable nature of conceptual conversation and dialogue embodied in the interlocutors. In the actions, words, and content of the dialogue is highlighted the primary purpose of *philosophia*: to transform the “inner attitude” of the practitioner (*Way of Life* 59). This, in turn feeds from and forms the spiritual exercises (dialogue is a common spiritual exercise in the Greek schools) and engaging with the existential exigencies that confront personal and communal life. In this explication we see Hadot practicing philosophy as a way of life as he brings in a regular object of everyday life in his own historical moment in describing the movement of theory and existential choice—the lamp on a bicycle:

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 the night one needs a light that illuminates and allows one to guide oneself (this is theoretical reflection), but in order to have light, the generator has to turn by the movement of the wheel. The movement of the wheel is the choice of life. . . 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. (*Happiness* 104)

Hadot's work contributes to an understanding of philosophy as fundamentally communicative involving philosophical discourse, individual formation, and primacy of human communication between practitioners for effecting the conversion of the self.

The first section introduces Hadot's clarification of the ideal of the sage and the generative relationship with the situatedness of the *philo-sophos* in everyday life. The section also reviews his discussion on the words *sophia* and *philo-sophos* or lover of wisdom. The second section turns to the figure of Socrates as the pre-eminent model of the *philo-sophos* in the Western Intellectual Tradition. Through irony, dialectic and erotic, Socrates brought about the birth of a consciousness awake to its present state of lack of wisdom and innate desire toward the good. The final section situates Hadot's distinction between philosophy and philosophical discourse in an environment of primary orality.

The Philosopher and the Sage

The Heraclitan fragment "Men who love wisdom must be good inquirers into many things indeed," according to Charles Kahn, may be the first utterance of *philosophos* or "men who love wisdom" (105). In Kahn's seminal interpretation and commentary on the fragments he elaborates: "*philosophoi andres* admits a secondary reading: 'men who want to become sages' . . . It would be in character for him [Heraclitus] to introduce the theme of wisdom in the compound *philo-sophos*, as the object of ardent desire" (105). As something desired, wisdom is not yet achieved and may not be achieved in the lifetime of the practitioner (*Way of Life* 58). The desire and practice toward wisdom is what sets the philosophers in tension with the "customs and conventions of daily life" (58). 'Wisdom' or *sophia* in Hadot's account of *philosophia* does not admit of a strict delineation between theoretical and practical aspects of life (*Ancient Philosophy* 18; *Way of Life* 60).

Hadot ties *philosophia* to a pre-Socratic notion of *paideia*. *Paideia* is the “desire to form and educate” and, according to Hadot, is “a fundamental demand of the Greek mentality” (*Ancient Philosophy* 11). The lover of wisdom is *atopos*: disconnected from the common habits of the everyday, “strange, extravagant, absurd, unclassifiable, disturbing” (*Ancient Philosophy* 30). Each philosophical school identified an ideal way of living in this productive tension with the everyday. This way of life was exemplified in the figure of the sage. The sage takes on different characteristics depending on the school – Socratic, Neo-Platonic, Stoic – of which one is a part. Though in slightly different ways the commonalities of the sage across schools include cultivating an inner disposition and living in a state in accord with the creation-principle of that school, e.g. Stoic Reason. These raise the sage out of subjection to the “customs and conventions of daily life” (*Way of Life* 58).

Throughout his body of work Hadot produced two book-length studies on individual practitioners in the model of the *philo-sophos* in different schools with variations in the model of the sage toward which they practiced: the Neo-Platonist Plotinus (204–270 CE) and the Stoic Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–160 CE). The Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius is indebted to Epictetus (50–135 CE) who exemplified and exhorted a way of life that holds the choice of the moral good as absolute (*Citadel* 73). For the Stoic, choosing the moral good would put a person in complete accord with Reason and the Cosmos (*Way of Life* 58). For Plotinus, the sage is the one that progresses through the levels of reality by means of ascetic physical and spiritual practices toward becoming the Intellect (*Ancient* 166). Once reached the practitioner is fully transparent and subsumed back into the All from which all distinctions initially derived. “To become Intellect is thus to see ourselves, and all things, within the totalizing perspective of the Divine Spirit” (*Ancient* 166). Common to both the Stoic and the Neo-Platonist is that the sage

rarely occurs if at all. The Stoics thought that perhaps there were one or two sages that appeared (*Citadel* 76). For Plotinian Neo-Platonism the state of identification with the All is a rare and fleeting experience (*Ancient* 160). Both schools admitted to this possibility of achieving this state, thus allowing for the possibility of progress toward wisdom. Being on the path is the middle way of the *philo-sophos*, not a sage but awakened to their lack of wisdom and their desire to live a life in practice and preparation toward wisdom. Socrates is the pre-eminent example and influence of the middle way of the *philo-sophos* in the Western Intellectual Tradition.

Common to both models of the sage and associated ways of life is the figure of Socrates and the coincidence of virtue and knowledge. Hadot's research into the figure of the sage, that is those that have reached the ideal form of life, as in living in complete accord with the logos, leads immediately to the figure of Socrates wherein the model of the sage, the wise-person, becomes consistent with the *philo-sophos*, a person who is lacking wisdom, knows they are lacking wisdom, and desires toward wisdom. As part of understanding the notion of the sage and the philosopher, Hadot traces the development of the concept and occurrences of *sophia* (*Ancient* 17-20). Hadot brings to life a picture wherein practices in knowledge in all fields—politics, art, music, nature, cosmos, biology—are combined efforts in practice toward wisdom. In other words, knowledge for the sake of knowledge was a goal only insofar as it assisted the person and community in *being* good. The fundamental *philo-sophos* as sage in the Western tradition is the figure of Socrates.

Of “knowing how to do good” Hadot asks:

Was the person who was *Sophos* one who knew and had seen many things, had traveled a great deal, and was broadly cultured, or was he rather the person who knew how to conduct himself in life and who lived in happiness? . . . these two notions are not at all

mutually exclusive. In the last analysis, real knowledge is know-how, and true-know-how is knowing how to do good. (*Ancient* 18)

In *What is Ancient Philosophy?* Hadot goes further in discussing the type of knowledge and the change this presents to the understanding of *sophos*. In particular, the shift expands to include the Socratic imperative on moral intent. Knowledge is intrinsically tied to moral action, which includes human communication, which is the goal and desire of the *philo-sophos*. This comes out in the spiritual exercises practiced by the schools of philosophy. More will be said on the spiritual exercises in later sections.

Hadot wrote that the call of philosophy is misunderstood generally and particularly in the figure of Socrates. The desire to live a life in accord with the logos and the response are the central and flourishing tensions of the way of life that is portrayed as the philosophical life. The desire for wisdom assumes one does not have wisdom. The sage—the ideal life that admits of varying levels of attainment across the schools—is removed from the burdens and conventions of daily public life. The *philo-sophos* on the other hand remains continually in the world aware of the desire to be outside of it. The “call and possibility” of Socrates to step aside and examine oneself could, to a portion of Athenians, therefore be considered a decision to disengage from public life and the duties of a citizen, and worse, encourage the youth to do so as the accusers of Socrates do in the Platonic dialogues (*Way of Life* 162; *Ancient* 37). Coming from the *atopos* figure of Socrates who stands seemingly outside the city, Hadot ventured, “Might not Socrates be the prototype for that image of the philosopher—so widespread, yet so false—who flees the difficulties of life in order to take refuge within his good conscience” (*Ancient* 37)? The figure of Socrates brings out the question, are the pursuit of wisdom and care for the public life, separated?

Hadot returned to the words and actions of Socrates in showing that these two pursuits are not mutually exclusive. “Care for the self is thus, indissolubly, care for the city and for others” (*Ancient* 37). On the eve of the emergence of Socrates onto the Greek stage the words *sophia* and *sophos* indicate an array of meanings (*Ancient* 18-19). Prior to the emergence of Socrates, Hadot outlined two approaches to knowledge, identified as aristocratic and democratic. By the aristocratic variety Hadot painted a picture of knowledge and wisdom as possessed or accessed by only a select few people and was decidedly separate from and set against the ignorance of the “mob” (*Ancient* 26). Associated with the aristocratic variety are fragments such as those of “Parmenides, Empedocles, and Heraclitus” (26). On the other hand, the Sophists were associated with the democratic approach to knowledge in that it was available and able to be taught to anyone that could afford the fees, collectively represented by the Sophists (26). As was the custom, to witness wisdom meant to associate with a master and begin participating in the physical and spiritual exercises of the community (school) that formed around the master.

In each school, students are striving and practicing toward that ideal form of wisdom that is modeled in the figure of the sage (*Way of Life* 57). Students work toward a life defined by the ideal of wisdom as expressed by the sage. “Each school . . . has its corresponding fundamental inner attitude . . . and its own manner of speaking. . . But above all every school practices 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” (*Way of Life* 59). “Knowing how to do good” is the constant theme Hadot identifies as the goal and practice of *philosophia*.

Through his recovery of the *philo-sophos* Hadot repeatedly brought his readers back to the interdependent modes of the theoretical and the existential reflection in the dialogues and

actions of ancient authors. *Philosophia* indicates a mode of life and the practices, physical and spiritual, that a practitioner strives to achieve in a productive tension amidst the “customs and conventions of daily life” (*Way of Life* 58). That ideal life was given shape in the model of the sage, particularly the influential and mythical figure of Socrates. “It is true that this transcendent ideal will be deemed almost inaccessible” (*Way of Life* 57). As previously mentioned, for some schools sagacity is an achievable moment that is both fleeting and rare, for other schools those who have achieved it have been limited to one or two, and then in other schools, no one yet has lived the ideal (*Way of Life* 57).

Socrates as Model *Philo-sophos*

The sage who fit no model of the sage before him was Socrates. When referencing Socrates, Hadot is doing so not to call attention to any so-called historical Socrates but instead to the image of the sage as received in the Platonic dialogues and other descriptions set forth in the discourses such as Xenophon and Plutarch (*Ancient Philosophy* 22). As the Western model of the sage Socrates refuses to be classified into a specific category, e.g. sophist, poet, dramatist, and as Hadot points out, even the sage. “Although philosophy is a tearing away from this everyday life, it nevertheless remains inseparable from this everyday life” (*Happiness* 179). As the preeminent image of the *atopos philo-sophos* in the Western philosophical tradition, Socrates is intimately enmeshed in the everyday life of the city. *Philosophia* and the philosopher are immediately identifiable by a way of life that sets them apart but is definitely a part of the community. Philosophy is a way of life that is both *practice* of and preparation for wisdom (*Ancient Philosophy* 4).

At the crux of *philosophia* is the practice of a life that is integrally communicative in nature. A later chapter will delve into Hadot’s tracing and understanding of the spiritual

exercises associated with the different schools. Preparing the way for that discussion is an understanding the role of the figure, or myth, of the sage and the way in which ‘philosophical discourse’ is understood within the context of *philosophia*. At the core of the Western tradition of philosophy lies the myth of a man that never wrote anything down and whose historical figure remains elusive yet enduringly impressed as an event in Western thought. Hadot comes to an understanding of the sage as *philo-sophos* that seizes on the example of his life that comes through what is received as the myth of Socrates (*Happiness* 124).

Hadot often points to Plutarch’s illustrative description of Socrates. This description highlights the relationship between wisdom, the philosopher, and the “customs and conventions of daily life” (*Way of Life* 58).

“Socrates at any rate was a philosopher, although he did not set out benches or seat himself in an armchair or observe a fixed hour for conversing or promenading with his pupils, but jested with them, when it so happened, and drank with them, served in the army or lounged in the market-place with some of them, and finally was imprisoned and drank the poison. He was the first to show that life at all times and in all parts, in all experiences and activities, universally admits philosophy.” (*Plutarch* 26d)

In the example of Socrates in the *Apology* responding to a question about the morality of acting in such a way that put him in danger of death he responds that this is of no matter because he is not in a position to know about the goodness or badness of death. Not knowing about death, Socrates does know about actions, “committing injustice and disobeying my betters, whether God or man, is bad and shameful. Therefore, I shall never fear or flee something whose badness or goodness I am ignorant of, as opposed to those evils which I know are bad” (*Apology* 29a-b in

Ancient Philosophy 33). What one does not know one cannot fear; when one knows one can, and perhaps should, fear.

For Hadot, Socrates' position on wisdom accepts first that all people are capable of wisdom, and second that all humans have a desire to wisdom or to do the good. The "innate desire" for wisdom in and through good actions in the "Socratic mission" within each person must be cultivated. This cultivation brings meaning to life; "at the basis of Socratic knowledge is love of the good" (*Ancient Philosophy* 34). This love of the good simultaneously forms the "inner attitude" of the practitioner and identifies that toward which the practitioner strives. As the case of Alcibiades in the *Symposium* the choice to do good is one that can be ignored while attending to the work of everyday affairs. This is also a question that afflicts him bodily and intellectually when he encounters Socrates (*Symposium* 216a-c). "And there is only one good and one value: the will to do good. This implies that we must not avoid constantly and rigorously examining the way we live, in order to see if it is always guided and inspired by this will to do good" (*Ancient Philosophy* 35). In wisdom—considered as "knowing-how-to-do-good"—moral intent is brought to the forefront.

The relationship between the theoretical reflection and the existential choice to do good in the face of the demands of everyday life is interdependent with the way in which one acts in the face of existential demands, including death. In the *Phaedo* as Socrates is nearing the time to drink the hemlock Crito asks what arrangements should be made regarding to his children and other affairs and especially, "What can we do that would please you most?" (*Phaedo* 115b). To which Socrates responds,

Nothing new, Crito . . . but what I am always saying, that you will please me and mine and yourselves by taking good care of your own selves in whatever you do, even if you

do not agree with me now, but if you neglect your own selves, and are unwilling to live following the tracks, as it were, of what we have said now and on previous occasions, you will achieve nothing even if you strongly agree with me at this moment.” (115b-c)

Socrates exhorts his death-bed companions to continue to live as they have—conversing, drinking, wrestling, soldiering—and to continue to take care of themselves. Hadot puts front and center that taking care of oneself is caught up in the constant rigor of questioning the self. The choice of a life must be renewed. Taking care of oneself, that is continuing to make the existential choice to live by a certain way of life, involves nothing new and is an ever present event. Socrates as the model *philo-sophos* demonstrates *philosophia* as an inextricable intertwining of reason and passion, life and death, Dionysus and Eros.

Socratic irony is at play for understanding the figure of Socrates as the primary and generative model of the *philo-sophos* in the Western philosophical tradition. Hadot undertook to describe Socratic irony, dialectic, and erotic, and their relation to the “movements of consciousness” in dialogue with Socrates’ dialogue partner. The figure of Socrates as a lover of wisdom seems at once at odds with his buffoon-like physical appearance and his repeated claims to ignorance (*Way of Life* 148). “It is a paradox of highly Socratic irony that Socrates was not a sage, but a “philo-sopher”: that is, a lover of wisdom” (147). In other words, the premier example of wisdom is a figure who was aware of the fact that he knew nothing, who looked like a buffoon, talked about earthly subjects, and refused to answer questions. This is a radical reshaping of knowledge in Greek culture at the time (*Ancient* 26).

In Hadot’s reading this reshaping moves the abstract understanding of concepts to the background of what is understood as being knowledgeable. Prior to Socrates, the idea of knowledge foregrounded the shaky foundations for actions or practical knowledge in the

everyday life of the city—administering justice, honoring the gods (piety), educating the youth—and the poor state of the interlocutor and his need to address himself in order to administer public life. The figure of Socrates altered this understanding. He worked as a mediator and midwife at the only place where knowledge—that one is aware that one knows nothing—is rooted, in reflection on the self and constant choices one makes about what one knows and how one acts. The irony of Socrates is at play in the generation of the soul of his interlocutor.

Hadot described Socratic irony as a rhetorical speech strategy that is at work in the dialogue within the soul of the interlocutor themselves, as well as the vehicle of coming to wisdom—becoming aware that one knows nothing—for the interlocutor (*Way of Life* 153-154). *Eironeia* is the Greek word for the rhetorical figure of irony. Hadot characterized *eironeia* both as a psychological mood and as a discursive action. Socratic dialectic irony combined “false” self-deprecation and making the argument of one’s opponent for him (*Way of Life* 152). The direction of Socrates in his ironic engagement of others through questioning is to bring them to a conversation wherein one would be forced to confront their own ignorance. Hadot pointed to Alcibiades in the *Symposium* as expositor of this disturbing yet attractive experience. “I was in such a state that it did not seem possible to live while behaving as I was behaving. . . . He forces me to admit to myself that I do not take care for myself” (qtd. in *Ancient* 31). Rather than achieving a certain literary effect or an intentionally false position-taking to achieve some sort of upper hand in the dialogue, Socratic irony is a form of humor that cuts to the core of Socrates’ mission. This irony is in play in the language and topics of discussion Socrates used in a dialogue. Socrates investigated the highest of ideals such as courage and justice through the actions of earthly forms of action, such as soldiering, tanning, blacksmithing, shoemaking, and cooking (*Ancient* 31). This is just one way in which the figure of Socrates and his actions

resemble or are used as a mask to conceal his true purpose—talking with others the principles of living a good life and Socrates’ mission to bring his interlocuter to awareness and desire for wisdom.

Alcibiades compared Socrates to the image of the *Sileni* (*Way of Life* 148). According to Hadot, the *Sileni* were emblems of the opposite of civilization. They appeared in a buffoon-like manner and were concomitant with acting in accord with the instincts in opposition to reason (148). Likened to the *Sileni*, Socrates is a disturbing sight and dialogue partner. But, just like the small figures of these creatures which once broken through revealed a smaller statue of a god, Socrates’ humor and questions were also a mask. “Socrates pulled off his enterprise of dissimulation so well that he succeeded in definitively masking himself from history. He wrote nothing, engaging only in dialogue. All the testimonies we possess about him hide him from us more that they reveal him, precisely because Socrates has always been used as a mask by those who have spoken about him” (*Way of Life* 148). Socrates goes after the interlocutor, someone who is beautiful as in the case of Alcibiades in the *Symposium*, and is at first shown to approach the interlocutor as a lover would approach a beloved.

Socrates is a figure that clearly does not fit with any of the Greek models of beauty, whether physical and/or heroic, that were sung about in poems or immortalized in speeches. And it is exactly his *atopos*, his disconnection from everyday life, that is attractive and desirable and draws the interlocutor to Socrates both intellectually and physically. Hadot identified Socrates the *philo-sophos*, as presented in Platonic dialogues most notably in the *Symposium*, with the characteristics of *Eros* and Dionysus. Hadot marked the importance of noting that the love presented is homosexual love as fits in the context of being a formative love (*Way of Life* 158). The relationships between older men and younger men remained in Socrates’ setting as an

institution formed in “archaic warrior education” (158). This kind of “virile friendship” took place in order to teach the young man the noble virtues (158). Hadot pointed out that the master-disciple relationship of the Sophist period is also modeled on this same example and similarly described erotically (158). In the dialogues Socrates is displayed as seeking after love and wisdom from his youthful and beautiful interlocutor. *Eros* is at play on the levels of both a personal relationship and in the form of dialogue as in the case of dialectical irony.

Through his questioning and refusing to answer questions Socrates remains seductively just out of reach of the interlocuter (*Way of Life* 149). Simultaneously the interlocuter remains in the dialogue and grows more disquieted by the path down which he is being led (*Way of Life* 149). The interlocuter is slowly led to the point of crisis—the point in an illness after which the body moves toward health or toward death. The interlocuter becomes bereft of confidence and the dialogue is in danger of moving toward decline. In this moment, the crisis point, Socrates becomes the mask *for* the reader. Socrates takes on the mantle of following the path and thus the responsibility of keeping up the dialogue. Through Socrates the interlocuter receives a picture of oneself. Socrates takes up the doubts and hesitations thereby returning the interlocuter to “confidence in the dialectical research and in the logos itself” (149). The primary purpose is not to ‘win’ the dialogue or even to be right but to continue and further the practice of an interlocuter’s way of life and continue to bring them toward health, i.e., practicing the philosophic life in private and in the community thus confirming or improving their initial way of life.

As seen in the previous segment, dialectical irony involves a splitting of the self for the purpose of reflecting on the self. Socrates comes in as one that will take on the risk and responsibility of continuing the questioning; in other words, he takes on the role of the self of the

interlocutor questioning one's own self. The dialogue partner thus hides behind Socrates as the investigation into one's way of life and the reasoning on which this way of life rests. Once one's own ignorance is revealed Socrates as mask is removed. Once the dialogue partner is converted to Socrates' understanding of wisdom and love, the interlocutor finds oneself not in love with Socrates himself but with the same lack of knowledge and pursuit of wisdom in which Socrates is engaged. The roles of lover and beloved have shifted so that the beloved is now the lover. As lover the interlocutor becomes keenly aware of his lack as they simultaneously suffer the pangs of desire for the beloved. As Hadot summarized, the interlocutor's beloved is shown to no longer be Socrates, but wisdom:

“He suffers from being deprived of the plenitude of being, and he strives to attain it.

When other men fall in love with Socrates/Eros—that is, when they fall in love with love, such as Socrates reveals it to them—what they love in Socrates is his love for, and aspiration toward, beauty and the perfection of being. In Socrates, they find the path toward their own perfection” (*Way of Life* 162).

As in dialectic irony so too in erotic irony; Socrates as the mask and lover steps aside revealing the state of being of the interlocutor. Socrates brings his dialogue partner to the point of love with the pursuit of wisdom and the way of life that best fits his partner (*Way of Life* 163).

The process—the practice of dialogue—is what is creative and generative for those engaged with Socrates. Much less important is the construction of a coherent system of thought than the formation of the “fundamental inner attitude” of the practitioner (*Way of Life* 59). This philosophical life is not separated from the body and the irrationality of desire, which carries with it not only the desire to attain the beloved but also to participate in generation of a *philosophos* (*Ancient* 55). The identification of Socrates and Eros acknowledges the inextricable

nature of the irrational element in existence. This element, which Hadot identified as the *daimon* or the *demonic* or passion finds a description in Johann von Goethe as the “motor force indispensable for all creation; it is the blind inexorable dynamic which we cannot escape, but must rather know how to use” (quoted in *Way of Life* 164). In the figure of Socrates, the generation of wisdom is of a way of life.

The *daimon* is inextricable and of itself is neither good nor ill. In describing the *daimonic* element in Socrates, Hadot winds his way through the works of both Friedrich Nietzsche and Goethe in contextualizing the *daimonic* as an “ambiguous and ambivalent” element (*Way of life* 164). Without being of intrinsic value, the individual must take action in response to the existential communal demands of a life that give outline to this otherwise irrational element. Hadot brings into view the “absolute value of moral intent” of Socrates as *philo-sophos* (*Ancient* 32). Forming moral intent is then what becomes the primary pedagogical operation of the irony of Socrates/Eros.

The moral intent must be generative in the way of life of the practitioner. The point, then, is not to be able to define what justice/piety/love is or is not in language, but for the person to experience and *practice* justice/piety/love. At this point Hadot marks out the limit of language in philosophy and the relationship between philosophy and philosophical discourse (*Way of Life* 155, *Ancient* 173). At a certain point in Socratic questioning, “The individual thus finds himself called into question in the most fundamental bases of his action, and he becomes aware of the living problem he himself represents for himself” (*Way of Life* 155). The dialogue as a spiritual exercise must bring the interlocutor through the play of dialectic and erotic irony to the awakening of their inherent desire toward the good. The interlocutor is formed in dialogue, in and through speech: “at the end of the discussion, he has experienced true activity of the mind.

Better yet, he has *been* Socrates himself. And Socrates is interrogation, questioning, and stepping back to take a look at oneself; to take a look at, in a word, his consciousness” (*Way of Life* 154). Acting as a midwife Socrates guides the interlocutor as the interactants split into two and reflect on their current approach to life and actions and recognize what should be guiding their actions. In closing this section I quote Hadot at length and follow the lead of Arnold Davidson who introduced Hadot to the English speaking world, as a lifelong friend and dialogue partner in Hadot’s final published volume of interviews. In the introduction to *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* Davidson resorts to quoting Hadot at length “because they [his writings] brilliantly articulate the major concepts and stages of Plotinus’s spiritual itinerary” (Davidson, *Introduction to Plotinus* 5). The following lengthy quote is no less brilliant in portraying the middle way of the *philo-sophos*:

“[The philosopher] knows that the normal, natural state of men should be wisdom, for wisdom is nothing more than the vision of things as they are, the vision of the cosmos as it is in the light of reason, and wisdom is also nothing more than the mode of being and living that should correspond to this vision. But the philosopher also knows that this wisdom is an ideal state, almost inaccessible. For such a man, daily life, as it is organized and lived by other men, must necessarily appear abnormal, like a state of madness, unconsciousness, and ignorance of reality. And nonetheless he must live this life every day, in this world in which he feels himself a stranger and in which others perceive him to be one as well. And it is precisely in this daily life that he must seek to attain that way of life which is utterly foreign to the everyday world. The result is a perpetual conflict between the philosopher’s effort to see things as they are from the standpoint of universal nature and the conventional vision of things underlying human society, a conflict

between the life one should live and the customs and conventions of daily life. This conflict can never be totally resolved” (*Way of Life* 58).

The philosopher’s efforts are guided along by a teacher and lived and practiced within a community of practitioners. The philosopher also had the aid of philosophical discourse, and the writings and notes regarding the way of life of philosophy that aids in re-confirming and justifying the existential choices of his way of life. The two are not the same nor are they able to be considered apart from one another.

Philosophical Discourse and Orality

Hadot again and again brought his readers back to the existential choice and consequent way of living as the definitive mark of a *philo-sophos* who is *atopos*, that is outside the order of everyday life. There are numerous examples of people recognized as philosophers that wrote little or nothing. In addition to the Platonic and Aristotelian tradition, Hadot identified the Cynics, Roman statesmen Cato of Utica, Rutilius Rufus and Quintus Mucius Scaevola Pontifex, Marcus Aurelius (this was before his *Meditations* had come to be widely circulated), and Plotinus (*Ancient* 173). Hadot borrowed the Stoic distinction between philosophy and philosophical discourse as example of the general understanding of the relationship between the “incommensurable and inseparable” phenomena (*Ancient* 172).

The Stoics had a three-part system of ethics, virtue, and logic. These three parts had corresponding discourses written in question and answer format that were presented to students in a particular manner—of which there were several theories—that was thought to be the best for taking on the habituation of these practices by the student (*Citadel* 80-81). Discourses written on the theories tended toward explanations about the movement of the cosmos (physics) and of proper conduct in life (ethics) that were carried out in dialogue (logic) and with the use of

abstractions. The latter were examples of “discourse *concerning* philosophy” (*Citadel* 81, original emphasis). “In philosophy itself . . . the exercise of wisdom, physics, ethics, and logic are mutually implicated within and interior to one another, in that act—at once multiple and unique—which is the exercise of physical virtue, ethical virtue, and logical virtue” (*Citadel* 82). Theory production was put at the service of acting when circumstances called for a communicative response. Primary orality as the environment of production helps further highlight the purpose of philosophy and the supportive role of philosophical discourse.

Eric Havelock (1903-1988 CE), a Cambridge trained classicist, along with Walter Ong (1912-2003 CE) and Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980 CE), is one of the foundational scholars associated with the field of media ecology. Havelock’s work gives emphasis and clarity to the organizational capacity and force of orality in ancient Greece. His writing opens the way and supports Hadot’s distinction between philosophy and philosophical discourse.

Eric Havelock in *Preface to Plato* (1963) describes the extent to which the experience of orality was organized and embodied. Orality, being the primary carrier of tradition and of Greek experience, required the ‘content’ of the tradition and the act of teaching/learning to adhere to established forms of rhythm and meter which privileged regularized categories of organization (e.g., hero, orator, blacksmith, shipbuilder) for easy recall. Havelock identified this process with the *poetic*. Transmission of the tradition called for *mimesis*, which required full bodily and physical capacities to be taken over or hypnotized, in order to be able to take on and recall (imitate) the content for future performances (Havelock 26-27). Havelock points out, through Plato, that the poetic requires a disposition of mind and body that could not provide the consistency necessary for scientific precision in any field, be it technical or moral (6-27). Running parallel to Hadot’s work, Havelock characterizes the emergence of Socrates as a

philosophos and model of wisdom in the *Republic* as a “shock” (281). Havelock described this person in similar terms as Hadot, “Phil- is the label of a psychic urge, a drive, a thirst, an all-consuming desire. The ‘philosoph’ then is a man of special instincts and energies” (281). Sophia, that which is sought after, is “a cognition of those identities which ‘are’, and ‘are forever’, and are ‘imperceptible’; these are the Forms” which requires a different psychological method utilizing a capacity for abstraction (282). Havelock’s account of Socrates only adds to his *atopos* nature (302-303).

Socrates required his interlocuters to think in constructs so as to respond to questions such as ‘what is justice?’ In Havelock’s description, Socrates’ method is both stretching the Greek psychological activity into abstract thought while simultaneously remaining “fully embedded in oral methodology, never writing a word so far as we know, and exploiting the give and take of the market place” (Havelock 303). The primacy of orality in learning and forming the practitioner is the central distinction for Hadot in clarifying the relationship between *philosophia* and philosophical discourse. Hadot moved written discourse to the background, considering how philosophical discourse, or the received writings and fragments of Antiquity, fit within the goal of living a way of life and interior formation in preparation for wisdom.

Hadot recalled that his initial engagement with this subject began as a question of coherence. “Why do ancient philosophical writings generally give the impression of being incoherent? Why is it so difficult to recognize their plan” (*Happiness* 59)? Having located the genre and environment of production of the texts in question, the questions open onto the relationship of orality and written discourse. Hadot remarked that in the current understanding of philosophy dominated by philosophical discourse “there is the partial but very real loss of the conception of philosophy as a mode of life, as a choice of life, as a therapy as well. We have lost

the personal and the communal aspect of philosophy” (*Happiness* 56). The therapeutic, the personal, and the communal aspects were all an inherent part of philosophy as it was carried out in the spoken word.

Responding to this question then Hadot focused on two points. First, that orality is privileged in learning and practice and, second, that the philosophical experience cannot be expressed in words. The conversion and ongoing formation of the “inner attitude” is the primary purpose of practicing philosophy (*Way of Life* 59). Hadot is influenced in his understanding of the movement the practitioner takes in that formation as he is influenced by John Henry Newman’s notion of “real assent”—a movement of one’s whole being in agreement to a proposition in such a way that one’s way of life would be changed (quoted in *Happiness* 58).

As Socrates showed in words and action, the formation of the inner attitude is akin to birthing the soul, involving the inextricable workings of both logical reasoning and irrational passionate desire. Instruction in the ways of philosophy were primarily oral, for it is only through oral speech that the dialogue is possible. As in the model of Socrates, the irrational embodied desire is inextricable with the reasoned question and answer process. Only the spoken word in a living conversation brings dialogue to its full pedagogical potential (*Happiness* 54). The spoken word is living and is part of an extended conversation between the teacher and his auditors, who could respond in a manner consistent with the doctrine of the school. The interlocutor’s reply is also a situated response, which could be more or less vivid according to the needs of the practitioner (*Happiness* 53-54). For Hadot, then, philosophical discourse is tied to the question and answer format and is written with the presumption of an ongoing living conversation. This approach helps to explain parts of ancient texts (*Way of Life* 62). Quite often the work proceeds by the associations of ideas, without systematic rigor. The work retains the starts and stops, the

hesitations, and the repetitions of spoken discourse. Or else, after re-reading what he has written, the author introduces a somewhat forced systematization by adding transitions, introductions, or conclusions to different parts of the text. (*Way of Life* 62) Hadot, in explicating the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, pointed out the inherent orality in the composition of written discourse, which extends even to temporal considerations. Presenting and teaching the discourses on a particular point of theory (ethics, physics, logic) took a period of time. Arguments were posed, questions were asked, and chains of reasoning reviewed; this all took place in “logical time” (*Citadel* 80). However, the goal was the inner formation of the practitioner and the shaping of his life in accord with Stoic ethics, logic, and physics. Hadot remarked that this stage of learning brought into consideration the student’s “spiritual progress” (80). This time was different for each student as he took on “inwardly and spiritually” the doctrine at hand. Hadot referred to this time as “psychological time” (80).

Philosophy in antiquity upends the contemporary historical moment’s understanding of the relationship between philosophical discourse and the distinctive activities that mark one as being a philosopher: choosing and following a way of life and taking part in the accompanying spiritual exercises. In several examples Hadot showed that the experience of philosophy runs up against the limits of language in which philosophical content can be expressed. Following in the manner of Socrates in the *Symposium* the purpose of studying philosophy was to prepare the student to live a way of life in preparation for an experience of wisdom that was incommunicable in language. For example, the Plotinian unity with the One and Phaedrus’ viewing of the forms.

Setting aside the primacy of orality in all of ancient discourse, Hadot identified two trends that could be understood as two opposing poles of philosophy (*Happiness* 60). At the one end is the activity of creating and continuing philosophical discourse for the sake of itself

(*Happiness* 56). This takes the shape of a discourse that aims at “originality” or the production of a novel system of thought (56). This pole of philosophy has become increasingly formalized and specialized (*Ancient* 260). For an illustrative example of this pole Hadot observed this formality especially in the current state of philosophy in university education. This course of study involves the preparation for a narrow set of skills to be utilized in a narrow range of careers: “to train them [university students] for careers as clerks or professors—that is to say, as specialists, theoreticians, and retainers of specific items of more or less esoteric knowledge” (*Ancient* 260). Similarly, the Sophists in antiquity sought to make themselves known through elegant displays of their capacities in order to attract paying students (*Happiness* 60). The other pole is *philosophia* and the way of the *philo-sophos* wherein “pleasure in talking” can happen but is rather oriented toward the end or goal of choosing and practicing a way of life (*Happiness* 60).

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the distinction between those who love wisdom (philosopher) and those who have achieved a state of wisdom (sage). Hadot revealed this distinction in two book-length studies of philosophers; Plotinus (Neoplatonism) in *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* (1993) and Marcus Aurelius (Stoic) in *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (1998). For Plotinus the sage-experience is fleeting and rare. For Marcus Aurelius and the Stoics sage status had been achieved but only by one or maybe two people. However, both schools admitted that achieving the wisdom of the sage was possible and so likewise was spiritual progress. The person on this middle way between ignorance and wisdom could be readily identified by their existence as disturbing or outside of the conventions and customs of daily life (*Way of Life* 58). In the state of desiring, one is aware of his lack and his desire to attain to

wisdom. This middle-way of lack, desire, and *atopos* way of living is most vivid in the received figure of Socrates.

The figure of Socrates as the prototypical *philo-soph* in the Western intellectual tradition. The historical Socrates eschewed writing, choosing rather to be both embedded in the everyday life of the city—fulfilling obligations, the religious rites, soldiering, drinking, and being in conversation with friends as Plutarch's definition attests. As an individual, Socrates' actions and ideas were considered dangerous for the development of the youth, leading them astray from care of the city. Hadot drew attention to Socrates' words and actions to show that care for the soul and care for the public life are not mutually exclusive tasks. Care for the soul takes place in the conversations that happened at celebrations and in the markets of Athens that occurred in the usual realm of conducting life in the city. Socrates' search for wisdom was to engender souls that were awake to their own lack of knowledge. The figure of Socrates is revealed and hidden in the play of dialectic and erotic irony. This irony is at play in bringing the soul of the interlocutor to life.

For Hadot the figure of knowledge that comes through the descriptions and dialogues of Socrates is that the desire for the good; to perform the good is a latent possibility for all people. A defining role of Socrates then is to act as a midwife and help birth the soul into awareness by reshaping knowledge that foregrounds one's reflection of self. The use of irony in conversation was a mask and a vehicle for bringing the soul to its latent desire for the good and to perform the good. Hadot showed irony at work in the execution of the dialogue along a logical line of reasoning and in the impassioned seduction that Socrates builds and finally re-directs in his speech and actions. As dialogue partner, Socrates takes on the role of risk and responsibility of continuing the questioning at the point of crisis. In the erotic sphere Socrates shifts from being

the lover pursuing the young boy, to the beloved as the boy chases after him. In both cases the interlocutor hides behind the mask of Socrates as both pursuits continue simultaneously. At the point of revelation, Socrates stepped aside, revealing at once the interlocutor's lack of knowledge and their love for the pursuit of wisdom (*Way of Life* 162).

The dual identification of Socrates with Eros and Logos points to the inextricable nature of reasoned speech and irrational bodily desire. The irrational plays a role in the primary purpose of forming the "inner attitude" of the practitioner (*Way of Life* 59). Hadot introduces the *daimon* or the *demonic* as the creative and generative force at play in the figure of Socrates and the dialogue. The *daimon* force is neither good nor bad and cannot be ignored (*Way of Life* 64). What gives shape to the *daimonic* force is one's moral intent. Thus, Hadot brings us around to the formation of the moral intent motivating one's actions and words via dialogue and seduction as Socrates' primary pedagogical mission. Working through Hadot's understanding of the mission of Socrates as aimed at the transformation of one's whole being opens up a distinction between *philosophia* and philosophical discourse that is fundamental in Hadot's work.

The final section reviewed Hadot's understanding of primary orality in antiquity and the structure and format of written philosophical discourse. Hadot noted in an interview with Arnold Davidson that he had approached the problem from a literary perspective, wondering why it is that philosophical writings appeared to be incoherent and lacking a specific plan (*Happiness* 59)? Placing the fragments back in the context of the demands of the structure and forces of primary orality and in the context of the overall purpose of practicing a way of life, Hadot's work could then be said to reframe the question as follows: how does philosophical discourse serve the purpose of the formation of the "inner attitude" and actions in preparing for wisdom (*Way of Life* 59)? Words make dialogue possible, but the experience cannot be fully contained within the

limits of language. There is a presumption of an ongoing and living conversation between teacher and students. This helped explain the question and answer format, word choice, and temporal considerations. The final part of this section introduced Hadot's analogy of two opposing poles to identify two trends in the history of philosophy. On one side is the formalization of philosophical writing and discourse done for the sake of itself or that aims at originality or the explicit production of a new system of thought (*Happiness* 56). Hadot ventures that formalization enters in the 17th and 18th centuries in the Western world. On the other side is *philosophia* and the way of the *philo-sophos* and the aim of living a way of life in concert with a vision of the cosmos (*Happiness* 60).

CHAPTER 3

Spiritual Exercises

“Ancient philosophers thus developed many varieties of therapy of the soul, which were practiced by means of various forms of discourse: exhortation, reprimands, consolation, instruction. . . philosophical spiritual guidance utilized rhetorical techniques in order to provoke conversion and bring about conviction.” (Ancient 217)

The purpose for practicing spiritual exercises is to transcend the “egoist self” and cohere with the universal principle and/or residing in and/or experiencing the state of wisdom as defined by that school (*Happiness* 86). Guiding the practitioner toward wisdom is the ideal embodied in the figure of the sage. The existential choice of a way of life that responds to and with a vision of the cosmos is lived out in and through the spiritual exercises. A life of ‘exercise’ is a life of philosophy.

“Equanimity of soul, absence of need, and indifference to indifferent things” are habits common to the various models of the sage that mark him as acting in accord with logos or Reason (*Ancient* 222). As recounted in the preceding chapter the middle way of the *philo-sophos* and the life of exercise is exemplified in the myth/figure of Socrates. This way calls upon both reason and passion and begins in the simultaneous realization that one both lacks wisdom and carries an innate desire for the good (*Ancient* 34). The life of the *philo-sophos* is lived in a productive tension between desiring to live out the life of the sage while remaining enmeshed as member of the city taking part in its daily life and habits (*Way of Life* 58). Pierre Hadot repeatedly turned to the description of Socrates as given by Plutarch as exemplar of the *philo-sophos*.

Socrates took part in functions of the city, even to the point of submitting to the judgement and sentence of death by the city but was also recognized by all as outside the city, or *atopos*. The philosopher is both embedded and *atopos*. He is part of the city but also strange and “unclassifiable” (*Ancient* 37). The strangeness of Socrates was in part due to the adherence to a regime of spiritual exercises. Identifying the habits of the philosopher as *atopos* also points to those phenomena with which the philosopher wrestled: The habituated fabric of city-life, the fear and anguish that can come from the uncertainties of war, political upheaval, natural disasters, worry over the future or the past, etc. with which each person struggles (*Way of Life* 221-222). This is contrary to a tendency to view ancient society as less fraught and uncertain than the present one. Hadot remarked on this tendency: “It does seem, then, that the Greeks paid particular attention to the present moment. This, however, does not justify us in imagining—as did Winckelmann, Goethe, and Hölderlin—the existence of an idealized Greece, the citizens of which, because they lived in the present moment, were perpetually bathed in beauty and serenity” (*Way of Life* 221). Hadot subtly but firmly applied a corrective in conceptualizing ancient societies—the Greeks and Romans in particular—while explicating the phenomena of the spiritual exercise of attending to the present moment. This corrective coincides with his striving for objectivity in coming to re-situate philosophical discourse within the environment and genre of its production. Hadot did not advocate that contemporary readers should “slavishly imitate” the “spiritual itinerary” of the ancients (*Plotinus* 113). Rather, the combination of interpretation and explication of philosophical discourse and spiritual exercises are attentive to the “original economic, social, political, and religious context” of the historical moment that opens up the possibility for a contemporary reader to encounter and engage the resources of ancient philosophy in preparing to meet and respond to the untimely and disturbing questions of

meaning such as ‘What is the significance of death in our lives?’ (Brisson and Chase 439; MacIntyre 125).

This chapter fills out a picture of the practice of *philosophia* that weaves together body and the spoken word, the irrational passions and reasoned logos, internal and external discourse, and the personal and communal. This first section in this chapter reviews Hadot’s definition of the spiritual exercises, their therapeutic function, and brings further emphasis on their being embodied exercises lived through internal and external discourse and dialogue in the assumption and interactions of community. The next section is a review of the major common points of spiritual exercises across all the schools. Throughout Hadot’s scholarship the phenomenon of spiritual exercises has been presented with variations that serve to emphasize different aspects of the general phenomenon.

Hadot’s most recent organization of the spiritual exercises presented them as two “opposed but complementary” ways of training the soul: “concentration of the self” and “expansion of the self” (*Ancient* 189; *Citadel* 118). For example, exercises such as examination of conscience and meditation has as their focus bringing attention to the self. Exercises such as contemplation of death, and physics expanded the soul to be able to move beyond themselves toward a union/immersion with the cosmos (*Ancient* 193). Each of the common ‘movements’ assume and assist the practitioner’s progress via exercise of the other. For example, examination of conscience and meditation—concentration movements—are also preparatory exercises for attaining a cosmic viewpoint. In turn, this “cosmic consciousness” nourishes one’s exercise of meditation as it brings an increasingly clearer picture of oneself and it’s integral and humble part of the cosmos. Striving toward objectivity in understanding ancient phenomena itself becomes a task

Spiritual Exercises

Hadot has given several versions of the definition for spiritual exercises: “voluntary, personal practices intended to cause a transformation of the self” (*Ancient* 179-180), and again, though slightly different in *The Present Alone is Our Happiness*, “voluntary, personal practices intended to bring about a transformation of the individual, a transformation of the self,” (87), and “By this term [spiritual exercises], I mean practices which could be physical, as in dietary regimes, or discursive as in dialogue and meditation, or intuitive, as in contemplation, but which were all intended to effect a modification and a transformation in the subject who practiced them” (*Ancient* 6) and another variation on the theme, “But above all every school practices 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” (*Way of Life* 59). And, from *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, “the word ‘spiritual’ is quite apt to make us understand that these exercises are the result, not merely of thought, but of the individual’s entire psychism” (82). Arnold Davidson gives a poignant summary that relays the totality of the phenomenon:

“Spiritual exercises were *exercises* because they were practical, required effort and training, and were lived; they were *spiritual* because they involved the entire spirit, one’s whole way of being. The art of living demanded by philosophy was a lived exercise exhibited in every aspect of one’s existence.” (*Introduction* 21, original emphasis)

Spiritual exercises are undertaken out of an already-made choice to live a certain way of life, they privilege the spoken word, they are embodied and the practitioner had the intention to undergo a transformation of the self. The exercises were undertaken for the purpose of the

formation of the whole self, they were to continue to bring the person to ‘health’ and to constantly practice the philosophical way of life on the model of the sage.

Associated with the figure of the sage are the possibility of mystical experiences. This experience was generally considered to be one of transcendence beyond the boundaries of the self, such as in Platonic transcendence to the vision of the forms, Plotinian union with the Intellect, or Stoic coherence of human reason with universal Reason, played a role in orienting the path of the *philo-sophos* (*Happiness* 81; *Citadel* 73; *Way of Life* 59). Aware that one simultaneously lacks wisdom and desires it, one practices spiritual exercises in working toward wisdom which one may potentially communicate to others. Situated as a North Star, a mystical experience may occur or be attained but it is not the experience by which one’s progress is validated. “If . . . [mystical/ecstatic experiences] occur, in one form another, it is true that they can open perspectives on the mystery of existence for the philosopher, but they cannot be an end in itself, and seeking to provoke them would be useless” (*Happiness* 82). In Neoplatonism the state of wisdom is not sustainable and in the Stoic and Epicurean *philosophia* the vagaries of life in the body and in the sensible world will draw one’s reason away from coherence with universal Reason. The life of self-consciousness and engagement of the exercises was the path of the *philo-sophos* (81).

One’s striving to live the philosophical life can be frustrated by the physical, cognitive, social, political vagaries part of the human condition. With “equanimity of soul, absence of need, and indifference to indifferent things” as a general mark of the sage who has achieved perfect coherence with the Intellect or Universal Reason exhibiting thereby identical judgements, desires and actions of the same then the things which bring potential for “suffering, disorder, and unconsciousness” needed to be guarded against (*Citadel* 76; *Way of Life* 83). The soul could be

disturbed through external and environmental interactions such as city politics, war, and sickness (*Way of Life* 221). However, the primary causes of disturbance were generally considered the passions which manifested in overgrown desires and fears (*Way of Life* 83). Regular practice of spiritual? exercises helped to bring the soul back to health.

In *Philosophy as a Way of Life* Hadot has provided a list of the various spiritual exercises practiced in the ancient world combined from several ancient references to the practices. They include the following:

“research (*zetesis*), through investigation (*skepsis*), reading (*anagnosis*), listening (*akroasis*), attention (*prosoche*), self-mastery (*enkrateia*), and indifference to indifferent things. . . reading, meditations (*meletai*), therapies of the passions, remembrance of good things, self-mastery (*enkrateia*), and the accomplishment of duties.” (*Way of Life* 84).

“Beneath this apparent diversity, however, there is a profound unity, both in the means employed and in the ends pursued. The means employed are the rhetorical and dialectical techniques of persuasion, the attempts at mastering one’s inner dialogue, and mental concentration” (*Way of Life* 102). Hadot has identified the common undergirding characteristics of the exercises constituting *philosophia*. In ancient philosophy they are cultivating attention (*prosoche*), meditation, conditioning of inner discourse, dialogue, contemplation of death, and focus on the present moment. In considering the interconnection and interrelatedness of these elements in practicing a life, it is well to keep in mind that the contemporary vantage point retains resonances of Cartesian dualism. The separation of the mind and the body had not yet occurred as contemporary readers understand it. As Debra Hawhee notes, the “arts were intricately

interwoven, and when mind and body moved and thought together” (4).² So too Hadot repeatedly points out that *philosophia* comes to full pedagogical efficacy in the embodied interaction of reason and passion carried out in and through the spoken word (*Ancient* 56). In this interaction and spoken word the “inner attitude” is conditioned (*Way of Life* 59). Through the embodied spoken word the practitioner gives one’s full “real assent” to the originary choice of a way of life through the always ongoing process of transformation (J. H. Newman qtd. in *Happiness* 58). The spiritual exercises were situated in this context as they called upon the resources of reason as in the case of dialogue or logic, sensibility in the case of lived physics, and imagination as in the case of meditation, and the practice of considering one’s death (*Way of Life* 82). For the purposes of this project the next section discusses the underlying elements as resources that work together for the purposes of conditioning the practitioner to meet the precipitous moment in each of “life’s difficulties” (*Way of Life* 85). In an attempt at a contemporary analogy we could think these exercises in a similar fashion of emergency service/military/fire personnel carrying out ‘live’ training exercises for the purpose of existing in a state of ‘readiness’ to meet the ‘call’ if and when it arrives.

As Hadot reminded his readers, the existence of the spiritual exercises in ancient culture presuppose that each person lives in “a state of unhappy disquiet” or a condition of “alienation, dispersion and unhappiness” before one makes the existential choice of living out the philosophical life. This condition has its roots in the common embodied human passions of life.

² Albeit Descartes’ *Discourse on Method* is generally referred to as the entry point in the Western tradition of the mind/body split Hadot asserts the same text was constructed in the form of a spiritual exercise akin to the ancient philosophical practices (*Ancient* 264). Additionally, Hadot had found the understanding of philosophy as involving a choice of a way of life in Descartes’ *Letters to Princess Elisabeth* insofar as they exhibit “spiritual guidance” between a master and a student (*Ancient* 265).

“The origins of the soul’s worries can be highly diverse. For Plato it is the body, which through its desires and passions, brings disorder and worry to the soul. Yet there are also the cares of private life, and especially of political life. Xenocrates is supposed to have said that ‘philosophy was invented in order to erase the worries that caused the cares of life.’ The Aristotelian contemplative life, which remains far from the business of politics and the uncertainties of action, brings serenity. According to Epicurus, people’s worries are caused by vain terrors...” (*Ancient* 224-225).

The overabundance of the passions and the exaggeration of fear and worry that fueled the formation of inadequate value judgments through inadequate representations lead to living an inauthentic life that is “darkened by unconsciousness” (*Citadel* 101, 54; *Way of Life* 83).

Philosophy was the “method” by which one’s fears and desires could be regulated (83). These could be regulated through the spiritual exercises as their practice effected “a profound transformation of the individual’s mode of seeing and being” (*Way of Life* 83). In this way the practice of the spiritual exercises are considered to be a form of therapy.

The Epicureans and the Stoics likened the exercises, especially meditation, to a “healing of the soul” (*Way of Life* 87). As we have seen, *philosophia* is an intricate intertwining of body and speech, reason and passion, the internal and external, and the personal and communal. Hadot has pointed out that this also shows up in the language and approach of the spiritual exercises in ancient *philosophia*. The name of the school founded by Plato, the Academy, was adopted from the location where they met, the *gymnasion*. For athletes the transformation of body was achieved through continual conditioning of the body through training exercises for the purpose of completing the specific task—wrestling or running, for example—with increasing mastery built on the foundation of habit (*Way of Life* 102). So, too, the practitioner of philosophy engages

the spiritual exercises wherein he, “develops his strength of soul, modifies his inner climate, transforms his vision of the world, and, finally, his entire being” (*Way of Life* 102). Just like Socrates at the end of the *Symposium* whom without sleep and having bested all of his companions in drinking proceeds, “into the Lyceum, washed up, spent the rest of the day just as he always did, and only then, as evening was falling, went home to rest” so too does the philosopher spend their days as Socrates by continuing to awaken self-consciousness through the practice of spiritual exercises (*Symposium* 223d).

Attention and Meditation

Various practices have been classified by Hadot as constituting a concentration on the self, as the first movement of consciousness. Hadot used the term *examination of conscience* as a general umbrella term of which *attention* and *meditation* are the primary exercises (*Ancient* 198). This term is a familiar concept in Christian spiritual progress that was borrowed from ancient philosophical exercise. Examination one’s conscience is the exercise perhaps most associated with Socrates – looking at oneself and coming to the awareness that one knows nothing – and is the starting point for philosophy as a way of life (198). In the healing process it is easy to focus on what remains to be accomplished to return to health, however, as the exercises of meditation and attention show, they are also to be used to become aware of one’s progress (199).

Meditation works in conjunction with the cultivation of one’s attention to the present moment, and is a common spiritual exercise connected to ancient philosophy as a way of life. “The exercise of meditation is an attempt to control inner discourse, in an effort to render it coherent” (*Way of Life* 85). Attention to the present moment was a way to liberate one from fear and worry of the past and the future (*Way of Life* 85). These two ‘times’ should not worry us; neither are dependent upon us. However, the, “minuscule present moment, which, in its exiguity,

is always bearable and controllable” (85). The mode of attention (*prosoche*) was a pillar for both the Stoic and the Epicurean way of life. In ‘attention’ the practitioner was ever self-conscious (87). Hadot pointed out a critical distinction within the definition of ‘present moment’ for the Stoics. In one sense the present moment could be theorized to function as a line of demarcation between the future and the past (*Ancient* 192). The second approach is experiential and ties the present moment to “human consciousness; it then represented a certain thickness and duration, corresponding to the attention of lived consciousness” (192). ‘Attention’ as a spiritual exercise should be carried out in this second approach. The Epicurean exercise of attention is also taken up in relation to the exaggerated fears and desires in regard to phenomena that should not be feared and “desiring things which it is not necessary to desire, and which are beyond their control” (*Way of Life* 87). For the Epicurean, attention is brought to bear on distinguishing the desires in their categories as natural-necessary, natural-unnecessary, or not-natural-not-necessary. This would bring one back to the present moment and the pleasure of existing in that moment (87).

Thus, attuned to the present moment the philosopher is able to form “appropriate” responses to life’s situations by keeping the fundamental Stoic principle of distinguishing between what does and does not depend on us “constantly in view” and always “at hand” (*Citadel* 35; *Way of Life* 84). This knowledge, as discussed in chapter two, is “knowing how to do good” (*Ancient* 18). With the attempt to transform one’s “personality,” the exercise of keeping this knowledge to hand recruits all those techniques of reason, logic, and rhetoric to form the whole being (*Way of Life* 85). This recruitment happens in the exercises of meditation (*melete*) and memorization (*mneme*) (85).

In the practice of meditation (*praemeditatio malorum*) the practitioner presents to himself the various sufferings of life such as flooding, disease, social/financial/family ruin, poverty, and death. All of these events can happen and when they do, they will occur as part of the regular course of universal Reason, as is everything in the Stoic system. Bringing these to mind habituates the self to practice choosing how it will present the event and how it will *choose* how to judge, desire, and act (*Way of Life* 85). To change one's vision of the events occurring to them a Stoic will call on the use of "striking maxims" in the form of dogmas (85). Dogmas are shortened and imaginative formulas of the fundamental principle(s) of a school (*Citadel* 37). Bringing these maxims or dogmas to bear on the imagined situation guides one in achieving an "adequate representation" of the situation, thus attuning one's judgement of it, desires for the situation, and one's responsive actions (101). Memorization and meditation combined to train the person to understand the fundamental principles of the school and to bring them continually to hand for the purpose of transformation and preparedness for the moment of existential need. Hadot turned to the formulations in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius are representative:

"From all eternity, all things have identical contents, and pass through the same cycles (II, 14, 1).

Everything is of the same kind, and of identical contents (VI, 37).

From all eternity, all things are produced with identical contents, and for all infinity there will be other things of this kind (IX, 35).

In a sense, a man of forty—if he is not devoid of intelligence—has seen all that has been and all that shall be, once he recognizes that all things have identical contents (XI, 1, 3)."
(qtd. in *Citadel* 41, Hadot's translation)

Here Aurelius has taken the fundamental principle of the eternal return of the universe – that all things in the universe and the universe itself are brought into being, unfold in existence, and return to the originary fire in period cycles – and formulated several different versions of dogmas that are striking and bring to hand the way in which he should live his life in the moment he is confronting (*Citadel* 41).

The exercises of reading/listening, research and investigation were supportive exercises as they nourished the meditation and memorization (*Way of Life* 86). Reading/listening was an umbrella term that could cover the practices of private reading (typically done aloud) of supportive philosophical discourses and the practice of listening to an exegesis from a master on a certain point. The two terms of research and investigation covered practices of employing the language of the school in the act of describing phenomena, e.g., Aristotelian biology and the description of the cosmos in the *Timmeaus* (*Way of Life* 85; *Ancient* 82-83). The exercises were prescribed for the purpose of daily practice for one’s concentration on the self. With attention to the present moment the inexhaustible value of the present moment begins to lead one to “cosmic consciousness” (*Way of Life* 85). The expansion of consciousness in the cosmic vision allows one to bring their vision in line with nature or the universal view (*Way of Life* 85).³ The “opposed but complementary” movements are also exercised through inner discourse and dialogue.

Dialogue and Internal Discourse

“To find a very simple example of discourse, it is enough to remember an essential point for the Stoics: there is no good but moral good, and there is no evil but moral evil. . .

³ This is closely linked to physics, understood as a spiritual exercise, and will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.

Once [these formulas] . . . are received [in external discourse], however, they must be realized and applied, and this is where internal discourse comes in. The goal was to interiorize or to assimilate the teaching. To achieve this, it is not enough to remember that there is no good but moral good, and no evil but moral evil, but this formulation must really become attractive, so that it induces one to say, for example, ‘I am suffering, but it is nothing compared to moral evil; it is not an evil compared to moral evil.’ (*Happiness* 180).

Living out the Stoic philosophical life the maxims and dogmas initially embodied in the instructional conversation between master and student were intended to be regularly re-embodied in the student’s training. The best-known examples of a student’s training via the spiritual exercise of re-embodiment of speech are the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

In the published interviews conducted near the end of his life, Hadot confirmed and clarified the essential intertwining of philosophical discourse, spiritual exercises, and living out an existential choice of a way of life in concert with a vision of the cosmos. “In fact, all of philosophy is an exercise—instructional discourse no less than the inner discourse that orients our actions” (*Happiness* 88). In Hadot’s rendering of ancient philosophy ‘inner discourse’ is understood simply as the internal dialogue of an individual—the words said to oneself. Inner discourse is associated with the spiritual exercises through which one acts on oneself, such as short maxims or dogmas that are repeated to oneself to habituate one’s disposition (*Happiness* 88; *Citadel* 38). Hadot has located the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius in the literary genre of *hypomnēmata* or notes to oneself (*Citadel* 31).

Hadot pointed out that ancient dialogue, philosophical discourse, and exegesis were much more codified than with what contemporary readers are familiar. The model and the language of

the school were beholden to the argument from authority, tradition and the requirements of primary orality. Hadot pointed to the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius as a primary example – the oral and the poetic play as much of an important role in forming the discourse that the Epicurean technical vocabulary could not be employed to its furthest extent (*Way of Life* 62). In other words, the formation toward a way of life was the dominate purpose in the formation of the models and use of language. “Each *logos* [discourse/performance of a discourse] is a ‘system,’ but the totality of *logoi* written by an author does *not* constitute a system” (*Way of Life* 105, original emphasis). Written philosophical discourse always assumed the requirements of embodied conversation between author and reader, the tempo, tone, context and specific relationship of author and audience (105). This is reflected in the formulaic construction of Stoic dogmas in the *Meditations*.

In Hadot’s explication of the *Meditations* he asserted, with the exception of the first book, (I) the entire work is dedicated to the imaginative, striking, formulaic repeating of the fundamental principles of living the Stoic life. Each rendering is concise and imaginative and “in the form of a simple proposition” (*Citadel* 37). Marcus’ formulations presume that in the course of his philosophical instruction that the truth and efficacy of the dogmas have been sufficiently demonstrated. The contents of the *Meditations* were constructed so that the psychagogic effect of that demonstration could again be evoked, not necessarily the demonstration itself (37). For instance in Book II, I, 3, “The nature of the good, he says there, is moral good (*to kalon*); while that of evil is moral evil (*to aischron*)” Marcus during the act of writing itself is evoking within himself again the “resolution to do good” (38). While Aurelius could not choose what occurs in the course of the unfolding of the universe, he could choose his *intention* to judge, desire, and act in coherence with universal Reason. The choice of working to bring one’s own human reason in

coherence with Universal reason, of which human reason is a part, is *the* uniquely human exercise for the Stoic: “voluntary accord with oneself coincides with the tendencies of universal Reason, which not only makes each living being into a being in accord with itself, but makes the entire world as well a being in accord with itself” (*Citadel* 75). As with Socratic dialogue or Aristotelian “discussion of problems” the Stoic process of formulating and writing out the dogmas were considered more efficacious than any of the perceived results of the dialogue. The purpose was in practicing, thus forming the intention to do good (*Ancient* 88).

The exercise of dialogue was an experience itself as it was an embodied participation in the *logos* carried out in the spoken word as well as the practice of reasoning itself. The general prescriptions of dialogue in the schools were:

“(1) recognize the other’s right to self-expression; (2) to recognize that if something is obviously true, one gives one’s assent to it, which is often difficult when one is wrong; and (3) recognize the norm, above the interlocutors, of what the Greeks call *logos*—an objective discourse, or at least one that aims to be objective.” (*Happiness* 89)

Attention, meditation, dialogue, and the formation of inner discourse overlapped in the practice of a fundamental attitude of being in “authentic presence, to oneself and to others” (*Way of Life* 91). For authentic self in dialogue was only possible for someone who could be authentically present to themselves, i.e., cultivates attention and meditation. Hadot has noted that meditation was considered as “dialogue with oneself” (91). Conversely an authentic encounter with oneself was only possible for the person who could bring authentic presence to dialogue with an interlocuter (91). Socrates again serves as the example of the relationship between internal meditation and external dialogue. He arrived late to the party in the *Symposium* having been

caught up in himself in meditation on the neighbor's portico fully present to himself. He then entered and is the honored guest and speaker fully present to his interlocuters.

Authentic embodied present was essential for the practice of dialogue. Ancient *philosophia* acknowledged and leveraged the efficacy of the spoken word in the formation of the "inner attitude" (*Way of Life* 50). Insofar as Socratic and Platonic dialogue was an "itinerary of thought" with "circles, detours, endless divisions, digressions, and subtleties," dialogue eventually comes together on a single track of guiding the interlocuter to the cultivation of an attitude (92). Socrates often brought his interlocuters to a point of crisis in coming to the point where his dialogue partner consented to look at themselves and their positions such as Alcibiades "[Socrates] makes me admit . . . I am neglecting all the things that are crying for attention in myself" (*Symposium* qtd in *Way of Life* 90). Socrates gave help by stepping in as a mask, yet for the essential change to occur the dialogue had to function as a dialectic. As mentioned above for dialogue, as for all the other spiritual exercises, to be efficacious the transformation must occur at the level of being, it cannot be 'forced' from a distance (92, 93). The interlocutor must give consent – must "*desire*" – the change from within. Externally, or with another person, one is "battling" the soul of the interlocutor. This also took place within the soul of the individual. The philosopher brings attention to his soul and meditates, or rather dialogues, thus doing battle with himself (91-92). The movement toward wisdom in the Socratic and Neoplatonic tradition was the separation of the soul from the body, separation of the eternal and incorruptible from the temporal and corrupt. A criticism of the Neoplatonic tradition is that it is a philosophy of escape from the duties and obligations of daily life. Yet, Hadot has severally noted that the model of wisdom in each school – the sage – is shown through his actions to be more intensely present in

dwelling with others (*Plotinus* 111). The ‘death’ constituted by this separation is another exercise in “lucidity” and expansion of the self.

Training for Death

In both the Platonic and Neoplatonic context contemplation of death brings clarity. Death is the detachment of the soul from the body. Contemplating this moment accomplishes the Socratic task of bringing the *philo-sophos* to a realization of all to which he is currently attached. Those attachments are what keep the soul from realizing oneself. The exercises of attention to the present moment, to others, to the self, meditation, and dialogue in the Platonic and Neoplatonic context are also concurrently a spiritual exercise of contemplating death. The spiritual exercise of death was also practiced to re-align one’s soul to the ever-fruitful value of the present moment (*Ancient* 190-191).

Contemplating death was also a practice in liberation from two attachments already mentioned, worry of the future and worry of the past. For the Stoic and the Epicurean, though differently, the only time in which we live is the “infinitely small” present (*Meditations* qtd in *Ancient* 192). “...[O]ne instant of happiness is equivalent to an eternity of happiness, and that happiness can and must be found immediately” (*Way of Life* 222). To evoke the possibility heightened the “value and seriousness” of each moment (*Ancient* 193). The Stoic overlapped the exercises of attention, meditation (dialogue with oneself) and exercise of death in the form of a constant tension or vigilance of one’s actions. For the Stoic the soul was a part of the cosmos and was birthed, existed, and returned to the original fire (*Veil* 25-26). The activity of choice was to voluntarily exercise the soul to cohere in and with the universal Reason. For the Stoic, then, happiness resides in the present moment, because in all of the cosmos it is that which “depends upon us” (*Way of Life* 227). In other words, the Stoic was liberated from the dual worries of past

and future through the exercise of the choice in the present moment. “Act, speak, and always thin like one who might depart from life at any moment” and “Accomplish each of life’s actions as if it were your last, keeping yourself far from all frivolity” (*Meditations* qtd in *Ancient* 193). The Epicurean philosophy of ‘pleasure’ also engages the exercise of death in heightening awareness of the present moment.

For the Epicureans liberation from the worries of future and past occurred in relaxing and suppressing the worries and fears (*Way of Life* 222). The spiritual exercise of death thus worked to clear away the fears as opposed to trying to place them within a conception of universal Reason. “Epicureanism asserts that the soul does not survive the body, and the death is not an event within life” (222). Pleasure in the Epicurean sense is not associated with hedonism. Rather, spiritual and physical exercises work to clear away and cause of anguish. Those things that cause us anguish are fear of the gods, unsatisfied desires, and “the moral uneasiness caused by the concern to act out of perfect purity of intention” (222). Thus, the most pleasurable orientation to time is going to be the present moment which carries the least worry. As Hadot rendered it, Epicureanism stripped down the priority of desires to those that “are indispensable for the continuation of our existence” culminating in the three categories mentioned above – natural-necessary, natural-unnecessary, and not-natural-not-necessary (222). The sense of the primacy of the present moment was developed in Epicureanism to such a degree that the experience of pleasure was understood to stand outside of the constrictions of time (222).

This is different from the example of the Stoics, the Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophies of striving. Epicureanism held that the experience of pleasure is itself perfect and attainable in the present moment. Happiness is the antidote to the two primary causes of anguish in the ancient world, worry of the past, and worry of the future. Happiness can only be found in

the present moment and the Epicurean has certain methods for achieving happiness; satisfaction of desires. The exercise of death both imparts the urgency and brings attention to the possibility of immeasurable pleasure in the present moment (*Way of Life* 224-225). With this perspective of death, life and a moment of pleasure seems to be of “infinite value” (226). Epicurean spiritual exercise of death thus revealed the infinite and complete value of the present moment and learned to live as if it were the last and welcome pleasure as if it were the first experience (225-226). As with the Stoic exercises, striking maxims were used to keep the knowledge to hand, cultivate attention, and further meditative practice

“While we were talking, jealous time has fled. So seize the day” (Horace qtd in *Way of Life* 224).

“Believe that each new day that dawns will be the last for you: Then each unexpected hour shall come to you as a delightful gift” (Horace qtd in *Way of Life* 225)

“I have had all the pleasure I could have expected” (Horace qtd in *Way of Life* 225).
Happiness 162, 104-105

The exercise of death, like examination, attention, meditation, and dialogue, concentrates and expands the soul in an exercise of wisdom.

Hadot has explicated other spiritual exercise in his scholarship, such as “reading” and “accomplishment of duties” and given detailed accounts of the exercises of the Stoicism of Marcus Aurelius in the *Inner Citadel* and of Neoplatonic exercises through the life of Plotinus in *Plotinus or The Simplicity of Vision*. The exercises highlighted here, along with physics (addressed in the next chapter), are those to which Hadot repeatedly returned as the underlying commonalities across all the schools, thus further contextualizing a contemporary reading and engagement of ancient philosophical discourse. Continuing to situate an understanding of the

phenomena of spiritual exercises, Hadot addressed the links between ancient philosophical spiritual exercises and spiritual exercises of Christianity.

Christianity and Spiritual Exercises

Hadot's scholarship is subtle and complex exhibiting both depth and breadth. Arnold Davidson broadly characterized Hadot's scholarship as possessing that "rare combination of prodigious historical scholarship and rigorous philosophical argumentation that upsets any preconceived distinction between the history of philosophy and philosophy proper" (*Introduction* 1). This quality of Hadot's scholarship is on display as he outlines the fate of ancient *philosophia*—the inextricable intertwining of an existential choice of a way of life, the practice of spiritual exercises, and philosophical discourse—as it enters the Middle Ages and encounters an emerging Christianity being presented as a way of life (*Ancient* 253). Though tenuous the attitude of philosophy as a way of life has not gone completely dormant. This section does not provide an exhaustive review of the history of philosophy and Christianity. This section marks the major touchpoints in Hadot's account that furthers an understanding of how the phenomenon of spiritual exercises became more commonly associated with religion, specifically Christianity in the West.

Christianity presented itself in its infancy as, "a way and a choice of life—a life according to Christ—which implied a specific discourse" (*Ancient* 253). Not the least of those presentations being the flexibility of meaning with the word *logos* (*Ancient* 238). Christianity was able to define *logos* as a mediator between the eternal and the temporal, "between God and the World" (*Ancient* 237). Being able to define Christianity as a philosophy had the benefit of being able to be understood within the Greco-Roman environment. In the Christian deployment of the term, the *Logos* of reason and discourse became incarnate in the person of Jesus the Christ.

Living a way of life in accord with reason became living a way of life in accord with the life and teachings of Christ (*Ancient* 239). The exegetical explication of texts following the argument from authority is another example.

The schools of Christian philosophy engaged in similar exercises and in similar contexts as the schools of ancient philosophy. For example, consider the interaction between a master and disciples working toward wisdom engaging exercises such as dialogue, meditation, attention, and the exercise of death. Christianity as a way of life borrowed much from ancient philosophy. However, Christianity becomes distinct in the monastic phenomenon wherein a person or group of persons drew away from the community to “attain Christian perfection through the heroic practice of Christ’s evangelical advice and the imitation of his life” (*Ancient* 242). In the monastic exercises rigorous dietary restrictions were practiced along with emphasis is placed on being attentive to one’s self and the relation to the overarching order of the universe, i.e., God’s Kingdom. Hadot set out a detailed account of the heavy influence exerted on the way of life of Christianity by the practices of the schools, especially those of the Neoplatonic. Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 CE) is perhaps the most well-known example of the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy influencing the early formation of Christian philosophy and theology (*Ancient* 250-252). The rise of the universities and a thriving Christianity the Middle Ages saw the decoupling of philosophy as a way of life and philosophical discourse.

In the Middle Ages as in antiquity, the social structures and the philosophical schools were intimately interrelated (*Ancient* 259). The philosophical schools shaped the “conception of philosophy” in a social structure by delimiting its place and purpose (259). By the Middle Ages the ways of life particular to the ancient schools, such as Epicureanism, had mostly fallen out of practice while others, such as the Stoic and Platonic practices were adapted and “absorbed by the

Christian way of life” (*Ancient* 254). Yet the philosophical discourse remained and continued to be widely used in helping to reconcile human reason with the revealed truths and doctrine of Christianity. This reconciliation occurred in the newly formed universities and cathedral schools in the 13th century CE whose primary purpose was to train young men for service in the Church. Philosophy, then, became associated with the exercise of philosophical discourse and dialectic for the purpose of preparing a monk for theological study, and a life lived in the spiritual exercises of the Church regulated and codified in the liturgy. From this Hadot has located the beginning of a conception of philosophy as a manipulation of discourse undertaken in a professional environment (*Ancient* 260).

Conclusion

This chapter has extended the discussion begun in chapter two by further examining Hadot’s understanding of spiritual exercises practiced in the different schools and their fundamental commonalities. Chapter two grounded the discussion on philosophy as a way of life of the *philo-sophos* guided by the model of the man of wisdom, the sage. This chapter turned to Hadot’s explication of the lived exercises of the practitioner.

This review of the phenomenon of spiritual exercises began by further situating them in the context of *philosophia*. In that context practicing spiritual exercises was identical to living a philosophical life. This is consistent with the practice of acknowledging those as philosophers who did not write any ‘philosophy’, e.g. Socrates, Plotinus, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius before his *Meditations* were widely available.

Hadot has given several definitions for spiritual exercises. The two definitions of “voluntary personal practices intended to cause a transformation of the self,” and “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" highlight the voluntary, transformative, and therapeutic function of the spiritual exercises with the ancient historical moment (*Ancient* 179-180; *Way of Life* 59). The spiritual exercises functioned as a therapeutic by responding to the human condition—"a state of unhappy disquiet" or of "alienation, dispersion and unhappiness" (*Way of Life* 102; *Ancient* 198). The disruption of the soul's movement toward wisdom was continually hampered through the human condition, especially one's passions. The transformative potential of the exercises could be realized only through daily practice. Preceding taking up these practices was the already-made existential choice of a way of life. The exercises confirmed this presence in their practice.

The next section reviewed the commonalities of exercises across the schools: attention, meditation, dialogue, inner discourse, and training for death. The exercises overlap with each other in exercising two movements soul in coming to self-consciousness: bringing attention to itself and to expanding the self toward a "cosmic consciousness" (*Way of Life* 85). For example, as meditation brings attention to the present moment—a concentration of the self—the inexhaustible value of the present moment opens onto a cosmic view—an expansion of the self.

The final section addresses a potential issue in understanding spiritual practices from a contemporary historical moment: the close association of spiritual exercises with religion, specifically Christianity in the Western Tradition. Hadot provides a subtle and complex treatment of the de-coupling of philosophical discourse and philosophy as a way of life through the rise of universities and a burgeoning Christianity. As the way of life practiced fell away or was subsumed in Christian spiritual exercises the philosophical discourse remained becoming the handmaiden to theology in the university structure of courses. Through his rendering of spiritual exercises Hadot brought his readers to an awareness "of philosophy not only as a concrete,

practical activity but also as a transformation of our way of inhabiting and perceiving the world” and to highlight the recurrences of this attitude throughout the history of philosophy (*Ancient* 270).

CHAPTER 4

Nature Loves to Hide

Dark-matter physicists work at the boundary of the measurable and the imaginable. They seek the traces that dark matter leaves in the perceptible world. Theirs is hard, philosophical work, requiring patience and something like faith: 'As if' – in the analogy of the poet and dark-matter physicist Rebecca Elson – 'all there were, were fireflies / And from them you could infer the meadow.' (Macfarlane 57-58)

For the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, the ever-incomplete task of orienting oneself in the lifeworld and social complex is intertwined with an understanding of his relation to nature and the cosmos (Arneson 77). Garnet Butchart argues that “communication . . . is the mode and means through which human being makes sense of the experience of having-to-be, its ontological abandonment to language as sovereign” (12). As people are abandoned to language so they are also abandoned to inhabitation of the terrestrial and celestial universe.

Humankind’s relationship to nature and the cosmos is mutually formative. Robert Macfarlane describes the mutually formative relationship in the context of the vast terrain beneath the surface of the earth, “The underland is vital to the material structures of contemporary existence, as well as to our memories, myths and metaphors. It is terrain with which we daily reckon and by which we are daily shaped” (Macfarlane 13). The Earth epoch of the Anthropocene is characterized by the formative impact that human action has on the contours of the Earth contributing to experiences of disjointed time and place (75). Nature and cosmos thus influence human discourse as personal and social ways of life change to respond to shifting ground that was once thought to be permanent raising questions, anxieties and fears over past, present and future (13-15).

Spiritual exercises and their efficacy as therapeutics work to bring peace to the philosopher's dispersed thoughts through training of inner discourse (and dialogue) in practice for the moment of action/interaction with others as part of a field of terrain and as a part of the larger cosmos. As meditation and attention to the present moment work to concentrate the soul, both practices simultaneously lead to the soul's expansion, transcending the ego achieving a view from above (*Ancient* 189; *Citadel* 118).

Taking a view from above opens the philosopher to see the grand context against which his actions seem infinitely small. However, this view also opens him up to see himself and others as part and expression of the Whole. For the Stoic especially his existential choice to exercise his uniquely human capacity for choice to bring his reason in accord with universal Reason is motivated by a love for humankind as his perceptions, desires, and actions, as well as his inner and external discourse, are framed in recognition of and for interaction with the expression of universal reason in others (*Happiness* 117-119; *Citadel* 311-312).

Coming to the view from above is supported by an understanding of the philosopher's place in and the operations of nature and the cosmos. Physics, or inquiry of nature and the cosmos, was itself considered a spiritual exercise insofar as it aided the formation of the "inner attitude" (*Way of Life* 59). Pierre Hadot has shown that the philosopher assumes the human person in the whole, the mind and body is part of nature and the cosmos and part of the process of becoming, or what generally is referred to with the Greek word *phusis*.

A study of the cosmos and of humankind's relationship to it are inextricably intertwined in Hadot's rendering of philosophy as a way of life. Hadot works this theme throughout his scholarship, especially in the volumes on Plotinus (*Plotinus*) and Marcus Aurelius (*The Inner Citadel*). However, he provides a full-scale exercise of his approach to the phenomenon of

philosophy as a way of life in *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature* (2004, English 2006). *The Veil of Isis* traces the Heraclitan aphorism “Nature loves to hide” through historical moments. This becomes the jumping off point for Hadot’s description of the two attitudes that humankind has taken in relation to nature: The Promethean and the Orphic.

In broad strokes the Promethean attitude understands nature to be a keeper of secrets. Nature’s secrets are those that undergird its operations. These operations are thought to work from a repeatable logic that can be expressed in mathematical or mechanical terms. Experiments force nature to reveal its logic so it can be harnessed for humankind’s use. The Orphic model on the other hand understands the secrets of nature to be best understood as a song, discourse, and/or poem whose proper reception comes by way of contemplation. “Nature’s language is not a discourse in which the words are separate from one another. What natural phenomena reveal to us are not the maxims or formulas of Nature but configurations, sketches, or emblems, which require only to be perceived” (*Veil* 203). Both approaches to humankind’s relationship to nature agree that nature and the cosmos held an unknowable aspect that could be revealed. The only difference being the process of witnessing that aspect. With the physical sciences increasingly taking on the role of observing, measuring, predicting, and explaining the appearance and operations of physical phenomena, “poets and philosophers” turned—rather re-turned—their attention to understanding the “mystery of being” that tracks more closely with an ancient concept of *phusis* (*Veil* 318, 314).

Coming to an understanding of the mystery of being, nature and the cosmos is integral to the formation of the inner attitude as it supports the philosopher in transcending his individual egoist perspective coming to a view from above. From a view from above the concerns and actions of routine life are placed into the perspective of the whole and universal Reason.

Meanings of those interactions can then be renegotiated in the mode of communication in humility with others also abandoned to the terrestrial and celestial realms.

The Development of *Phusis*

Phusis underwent a transformation from a mixture of meanings to being associated with an absolute that “designates the process of formation or its result, taken in general or an abstract way” (*Veil* 19). Plato made the shift and designated the pre-Socratic “investigations on nature,” which took into account the convergence of the elements—earth, fire, water, air—that occur “spontaneously” or “without the intervention of thought” in their processes, for instance the changing of the seasons (32). In the Platonic vision of the universe the Soul was primary as “the movement that moves itself” (22). The “blind” processes of nature, of which the result may be visible but not the process itself, are not the primary and are subject to the process of *phusis* (22).

Hadot credited Plato with making the distinction that was to have everlasting consequences for understanding the relationship between nature, art and human-being. “For [Plato], *phusis* is precisely an art as well, but one that is divine: ‘I would suppose that the works said to be of nature are the works of a divine art, and those that men compose with them are the work of a human art’” (*Veil* 22; Plato *Sophist* 265e3). As the processes of *phusis* are not disclosed and are of the order of transformation they cannot amount to a science for Plato (*Veil* 23). Human art—shipbuilding, pottery, metal work, etc.—is also a movement that transforms the materials that is initiated by the artist and imposed on the materials, a process which can be known. The tensions in the analogy of understanding nature as the “art of nature” and its relation to human art is a constant theme throughout all historical moments. The relationship has ranged from one of opposition to one another to a (return) to identification of human art with the “art of

nature” (23). Hadot situated Aristotle’s understanding of nature and art as a guiding analogy while simultaneously setting out clear boundaries of how nature and art are unlike.

Nature and art were similar for Aristotle insofar as both nature and art are processes by which “matter” is “molded and formed” (*Veil* 24). Significant differences emerge quickly in further trying to compare the two. These differences are in the initiation of motion, the ‘location’ of the form toward which the process strives, relationship with reason, and the force with which the process works. For the work of art, the process of transformation is initiated and imposed on the materials, the form is ‘located’ in the thoughts of the artist, thus external to the matter being molded. Bringing his form toward its end the artist stops and reasons his way through the operations and any obstacles or unforeseen movements that arise in that process. Matthew Crawford in *The World Outside Your Head* describes the complex planning and visualizing sessions of glassblowers, which can here serve as an example of the Aristotelian description of the process of art. The glassblowers undergo a detailed planning session on the intended movements of each artist and the overall form to be achieved before they begin to mold the glass. Throughout the process they continue to communicate and reason together with one another as they work in giving shape, in accord with their already agreed upon vision, to the constantly moving materials (131-134). The work of human art involves a certain amount of force to bring about the transformation to meet the model: “Art is imposed on matter with violence” (*Veil* 24). According to Aristotle the processes of nature work differently

Hadot described Aristotle’s definition of nature as “a principle of inner motion inside each thing. Each concrete individual has within it a concrete nature that is proper to its species and is the principle of its natural motion” (*Veil* 23). In nature, then, the transformation of matter—person/animal/plant—is not imposed by an external force, but rather is initiated and

brought to the its proper telos, to which the matter is already oriented, by virtue of the fact that that movement is proper to the form (*Veil* 24). What is initiated in the philosophical discourses of Aristotle is the analogy of nature as the “more perfect art” as it perfectly performs all the steps in the method of the artist (25). Hadot marked these steps as the emergence of the idea that nature behaves according to a method. “This idea of a method proper to nature was to play a very important role in the scientific representations of all of Western thought” (25). The Stoics, for Hadot, drew from the exercises and discourses of the Greek schools in coming to a guiding vision of the cosmos.

Hadot wrote, “One can say that Stoicism was born of the fusion of three traditions: the Socratic ethical tradition, the Heraclitean physical and ‘materialistic’ tradition, and the dialectical tradition of the Megareans and of Aristotle” (*Citadel* 73). These three parts are interdependent in the Stoic philosophical way of life—understanding one’s place in the cosmos and one’s relationship to nature and to others was integral in acting ‘appropriately’ in that moment when called upon to do so. That moment is, “at once multiple and unique—which is the exercise of physical virtue, ethical virtue, and logical virtue” (*Citadel* 80-81). Stoic philosophy posits a universe that is in constant and continuous transformation that has its beginning and end in the “original fire” (*Citadel* 74; *Veil* 25). All things are located in the original fire and are “engendered” in the direction of *phusis* which “proceeds systematically and methodically” in the cyclical return to the original fire (*Veil* 25).

As with Aristotle the Stoic vision of the cosmos locates the “principle of motion” to be both a part of the larger reality of things and within each thing (*Veil* 25). The universe goes through periodic cycles, emerging from and returning to the original fire. Hadot showed the continuing transformation of the meaning of *phusis* as an “invisible power” that initiates and

directs transformation and the coming to be of all things (26). *Phusis* along with “Nature, God, Providence, and divine Reason” are all present and identical in and with the original fire (26). Once the cycle of the universe is begun again, Nature—*phusis*—sets about its work, a work that is brought about from within and always directed toward the continuation of the cycle of the universe in accord with Universal Reason (*Veil* 26; *Citadel* 75). *Phusis* in the Stoic vision is identified with both the original formation of the universe and with every point in its transformation and return to the original fire (*Veil* 26). The Stoic with this vision of the movements of the Whole could understand himself and others as part and expression of the Whole. He was better able to gain more ‘adequate’ representations of phenomena—physical, cosmic, other people—as he discerned what actions would be good for himself and the community insofar as they were in accord with universal Reason.

The Secrets of Nature and the Mystery of Being

Contemplation of nature and the cosmos, taking the view from above, or in Aristotle’s school the observation of, reflection on, and discussion of the observations had a formative purpose (*Ancient* 88). As with Socratic dialogue “for Aristotle the discussion of problems was ultimately more formative than their solution” (88). The same problem discussed from different perspectives was a training and practice of collaborative research in seeking knowledge as part of a community. This itself was living the philosophical life of Aristotle’s school (87-88).

A key moment in Hadot’s development of the transformation of meaning of the relationship between humankind and nature was the identification of nature as *phusis*. This prepared the way for the personification and divinization of nature (*Veil* 26-27). Accompanying this shift is a decline in the formative purpose of collaborative research as a spiritual exercise as part of a community/communicative way of life.

Hadot traced the twists and turns in meanings of *phusis* and the aphorism “Nature loves to hide” throughout historical moments. On the tail end of the ancient moment the idea of the secrets of nature begun to take hold. Explanations of nature that identify the gods as the causes of visible phenomena—such as earthquakes, thunderstorms, the changing of the seasons—meant that these events were at the mercy of the capricious directives of the divine. Already within antiquity the meaning of *phusis* had been identified with the invisible, yet regular and methodical force behind and/or guiding the transformation. The invisible force of *phusis* understood in Antiquity morphed into the concept that nature had secrets to withhold or reveal. Evidence of this emerges in late antiquity but becomes widespread in the Medieval moment. That nature held secrets sets up an opposition between humankind and nature. “the idea of secrets of nature always presupposes an opposition between the visible, what appears, or the phenomenon, and what is hidden beyond that appearance, or the invisible” (*Veil* 33). The “idea of secrets of nature” as a guiding construct for interpreting and understanding our collective terrestrial and celestial habitation is built on this fundamental opposition between the invisible secrets of nature and humankind (33).

Hadot identified the tradition of the secrets of nature as integral to the processes and methods by which those secrets could be revealed. Here is marked a transition in the understanding of *phusis* as being divine and unknowable for Plato, and invisible yet regular for Aristotle. For example, the Platonic understanding that nature had mysterious properties that were carried in each physical phenomenon.

In the Middle Ages the process of revealing took place by the human hand with the help of the “pseudo-sciences” of magic and alchemy (*Veil* 35). “As the objects [the secrets of nature] of philosophical physics, but also of the pseudo-sciences in antiquity and the Middle Ages, they

were to become in this way the object of the new physics, mathematics, and mechanics” (35). Since Nature has the prerogative to hide or veil its secrets, philosophers have taken two approaches. One was to ignore the invisible secrets of nature as beyond our understanding and therefore of no concern. Hadot associated this with Socrates and the Skeptical Platonic tradition notably of Arcesilas (315-240 BCE) (91). In this tradition, turning away from these concerns was a simultaneous turning toward the affairs of the *philo-sophos* the administration of the city and conducting a moral life (91). For these schools “there is no ‘physical’ part of philosophy, since physics is precisely the study of nature (*phusis*)” (91-92). The other approach believed the secrets could be revealed and were the purposes of the sciences and philosophy. In the ancient tradition this is seen in the philosophy of Antiochus of Ascalon (125-68 BCE) for whom the inquiry of physical philosophy included “nature and secret things” (92). The Promethean and the Orphic approaches to the secrets of nature were both developed within the latter general approach.

The Promethean and the Orphic attitude held a pre-understanding of the relationship between humankind and nature:

“If man feels nature to be an enemy, hostile and jealous, which resists him by hiding its secrets, there will then be opposition between nature and human art, based on human reason and will. Man will seek, through technology, to affirm his power, domination, and rights over nature.

If, on the contrary, people consider themselves a part of nature because art is already present in it, there will no longer be opposition between nature and art; instead, human art, especially in its aesthetic aspect, will be in a sense the prolongation of nature, and then there will no longer be any relation of dominance between nature and mankind.

The occultation of nature will be perceived not as a resistance that must be conquered but as a mystery into which human beings can gradually be initiated.” (*Veil* 92)

Hadot placed Prometheus as the patron of this attitude. In Greek mythology Prometheus stole fire from the gods giving it to humankind bringing along with it the improvements of “technology and civilization” (95). The Orphic approach considers humans already a part of nature. The latter approach Hadot placed under the ‘patronage’ of Orpheus, whom in Greek mythology seduced and coerced all things, human and otherwise, through music and song (96). Hadot cautioned readers to understand the distinction between the Promethean and the Orphic in similar terms as the Stoics undertook the distinction between philosophic discourse and the moment of acting philosophically (*Citadel* 80-82). While the two orientations are opposed to each other they are only separated for Hadot’s overall purpose of setting out the progression of humankind’s relation with nature. Hadot made clear that the two orientations are both “equally essential” and often found to co-appear—comingled or appear successively—in the same person or in the same experiment or discourse (*Veil* 98).

For Hadot the Orphic and Promethean continue to co-appear up to the present moment. The Promethean and the Orphic are both frameworks for orienting oneself in the lifeworld and social complex (Arnett and Holba 9; Arneson 77). The Promethean framework privileges ‘power’ and ‘dominance’ as interpretive framework for relations between human being, nature and the cosmos. The Orphic model privileges ‘community’ and ‘collaboration’ for relations between human being, nature and the cosmos.

Promethean

Within the Promethean framework knowledge is gained through power in the form of mechanical and technological tools used to extract nature’s secrets. Knowledge is considered of

itself to be power in the sense that knowledge of the secrets of nature allows one to bend nature to the will and purposes of humankind (*Veil* 101). The Promethean approach to all of nature carries with it the potential for an interpretation of all of nature, including other people, as potential tools for use in some end, be that end knowledge for knowledge's sake or for a political, militaristic, or economic end..

Consistent with the nature-as-hostile approach is the presence of mechanics in ancient Greece, the model of which experimental sciences are the inheritor (102-103). Situated in this approach, the object of mechanics is to “trick” or divert the normal course of affairs to benefit the practical needs of humankind and otherwise alleviate ever-present human suffering (102). Mechanics in antiquity rested on the assumptions or “*logoi* of nature” itself—in other words the means by which to trick nature to give up her secrets were inherent in the reasoning of nature itself (103). For example, the construction of an aqueduct that diverts the course of nature or the construction of a siege machine that is used as an instrument of power, to work, requires the deployment of knowledge based on mathematics and physics. Hadot noted that mathematics and mechanics flourished across ancient Greece and Rome; most closely associated with these developments was the Pythagorean school—especially Archytas of Tarentum (428-347 BCE)—and under the patronage of the Ptolemies in Alexandria (104). In addition to ‘tricking’ nature by using nature via mechanics is ‘tricking’ as the phenomenon of magic.

Tricks of magic shared the endpoint of mechanics; to force nature to reveal its secrets in order to act on nature for the purposes of benefitting or satisfying human interests (*Veil* 106-107). In the magical approach to manipulating nature, the fundamental position was “that natural phenomena are brought about by the invisible powers—gods or demons—and that it is therefore possible to modify natural phenomena by forcing the god or demon to do what one wants to

accomplish” (107). Other natural phenomena were used such as plants or animals in rituals that were intended to in some way influence the god or demon by calling on it by its particular name (107). The tradition of magic continues into the Middle Ages under the phenomenon of natural magic. Natural magic differs from magic in that it holds that the “occult virtues” of natural phenomena are capable of being known by humankind (109). In other words, no demons/gods were required. The secrets of nature were thought to be extracted or put into motion through an understanding of the occult properties/qualities/movements of the plants/animals/cosmos and their interactions (109).

A primary example and culmination of this literature is the work of Roger Bacon (1219/20-1292 CE) in *On the Secret Works of Art and Nature* (1260). Hadot painted Bacon as a figure that lies at the intersection of the traditions of natural magic and mechanics as forebearers of contemporary experimental science in one sense and completely removed from that intersection in another. On the one hand Bacon “sketched the program of an ‘art that uses nature like an instrument,’” that would garner much better results than the magic of the demons/gods (*Veil* 115; Bacon qtd in *Veil*). Bacon could also be thought of as that employing an art of nature to “transform [the world] and place it in the service of mankind” (*Veil* 116). On the other hand, Bacon’s vision and assessment of the tools of natural magic have to be situated within his environment and context as an Oxford professor and Franciscan working on the assumption that the appearance of the Antichrist was near, thus the transformation of the world was “to hasten the conversion of the entire world to Christianity” (115). This particular understanding of *phusis* allows for an understanding of the purpose of all inquiries into nature and the cosmos as participatory in *phusis* as God’s plan for the world. This understanding aligns with an

interpretation of interactions with others in a community as essentially missionary that is coherent with a Christian worldview. In the 16th and 17th centuries magic gave way to machine.

With the advent of the work of “Francis Bacon, Descartes, Galileo and Newton” (all working in the late 16th to 17th century CE) the Promethean attitude of dominating the earth was to experience a decisive move in the concretization of the scientific method and rigorous analysis of sensible data (*Veil* 123). The development of mechanics allowed for further observation and exploration, for example, the development of lenses and the microscope and the telescope. This moment of the late 16th through 17th centuries saw the scientific revolution flourish with three trends that bolstered and extended the metaphor of nature as a machine.

First, knowledge was now limited to the demonstrable and repeatable and constituted a turn away from using ancient authors as authorities to support one’s conclusions. This in turn was closely linked to the second trend in this moment, which was the “democratization of knowledge” (*Veil* 124-125). Access to knowledge no longer required years of study of ancient manuscripts or initiation into magical rituals. This democratization also accomplished a division of labor as observation and experimentation could be carried out by groups of researchers working together (124-125). To wit, “Francis Bacon in his *Novum Organum* and Descartes in his *Discourse on Method* consider that the method they propose is an instrument that enables *any mind* to accede to scientific knowledge” (125, emphasis added). The third trend Hadot attributed largely to Galileo made mechanics—the study of the movements and/or workings of natural phenomena—synonymous with mathematics (*Veil* 125).

As mechanics was the model and practice of putting the laws of nature to work for human purposes, Galileo’s instruments that were used for the further observation of nature were developed using the mathematical descriptions of the ancients (125-126). “Beginning with this

decisive turn toward the mathematization of nature, the way was open for the possibility of the evolution of science toward modern physics” and, “The scientist therefore operated like an engineer, who had to reconstruct the gears and functions of the machine known as nature” (128, 126). In this vein the invisible forces of nature, identified with *phusis* as the invisible force that is part of or consistent with the engendering and formation of the natural phenomena of the visible world came to be identified with nature having secrets. The secrets are discoverable and can be represented in mathematical form which in turn can be used to recreate through the fabrication of artificial machines the natural ‘mechanics’ of the “great machine of the world” for service to the interests of humankind (129).

Orphic

The Orphic framework privileges ‘community’ and ‘collaboration’ over ‘power’ and ‘opposition’ for understanding and practicing in and through communication the relationships between human beings, nature and the cosmos. The question remains the same in the Orphic model, ‘how is knowledge, or rather the secrets, of nature to be understood?’ In this model knowledge takes shape as a “physics of contemplation” represented through the modalities such as painting or other “pictorial arts,” philosophical discourse, or the poetic discourse (Lenoble qtd. in *Veil* 95,155). As the Promethean model developed tools useful in coming to know the secrets of nature, the Orphic model is equally limiting; the only ‘tool’ is the faculty of perception (*Veil* 155). The Orphic model approaches the secrets of nature in the understanding that one is already a part of it, interpreting or re-presenting nature through various modalities of the human arts is participation in the secrets of nature. This “physics of contemplation” is consistent with physics practiced as a spiritual exercise as in the case of Plato, Aristotle, and the Epicureans and the Stoics as its end was to support the philosopher in living a good life. Within this approach, much

more so than the Promethean, is emphasized “mankind’s existential and ethical relation to nature and to existence” (*Veil* 95, 200). This model and approach begin with the positions of Plato, Aristotle, the Neoplatonists and the Stoics all of whom affirm that the secret processes that bring the universe into being are not able to be known; “Whether in the domain of terrestrial bodies, which are subject to becoming, or of celestial bodies, we must be content with what is approximate, for we reside very far away and very low within the universe” (*Veil* 161). What was most important was engaging in spiritual exercises, in the cultivation of “equanimity of soul, absence of need, and indifference to indifferent things” assisting the philosopher in orienting himself in the cosmos (*Ancient* 222). This orientation in the cosmos aided him in acting morally in the face of the existential demands of the “customs and conventions of daily life” (*Way of Life* 58).

Ancient physics was conceived and constructed in the exegetical model working out of the argument from authority (*Veil* 163). For example, Hadot looked to the early descriptions of the movement of the stars. Believing the movement of the stars to be of divine origin they had to be circular because that shape is regular and perfect (163). Yet the appearance of their movement was irregular and seemingly without reason. This model allows for the emergence and engagement of simultaneous and varying explanations of a single phenomenon that would resolve at the intersection of the theoretical and sensible (162). Contemplation as opposed to extraction is the mode of access to nature unveiled. “In this case, the truth under discussion is a determinate truth that is unveiled: the enigma is solved, and there is no longer anything to search for” (178). Important to note that this is not opposed to research and investigation. Rather, within the Orphic mode of approach research took place within the context of a spiritual exercise.

As a spiritual exercise in Stoic philosophy physics was a practice of understanding and contemplating the cosmos so to better align oneself with the movement of universal Reason. This helped one to cultivate a disinterestedness in those matters over which the practitioner had no influence—such as the engendering, creation, and movement of the universe. In Plato and Aristotle this is a pleasurable exercise. For Stoicism and Epicureanism (though differently) contemplation of the cosmos helps the practitioner bring serenity to the soul (*Veil* 184-186; *Way of Life* 222). An ethics of objectivity and disinterestedness becomes definitional of the Orphic attitude of contemplation of nature. “Just as ethics in not choosing any other end than virtue, and in wanting to be a good person without seeking any particular interest, so science demands that we not choose any end other than knowledge, and that we seek knowledge for itself, without any other utilitarian consideration” (*Veil* 185-186). Whereas the Promethean model broadly understands nature to act in a rational, economical, and logical manner the Orphic model generally understands nature as “joyful, prodigal, and exuberant” therefore privileging aesthetic perception (200).⁴

Aesthetic perception was a favored model for understanding, representing, and participating in the secretes of nature in the Orphic approach. When the burdens of utilitarian use and the “conventions and customs of daily life” are stripped away from one’s perception the practitioner is then able to perceive the secret of nature that has itself has always been “in broad daylight” which is “the movement by which nature makes itself visible” (*Veil* 215). In the Orphic model the distinction between art and nature is closed; nature is thereby able to be known through the aesthetic experience as it occurs in various forms—philosophic discourse, poetry,

⁴ The Orphic and Promethean, while opposed, cross and co-appear at many times throughout historical moments. Thus while Aristotle and the Stoics acknowledge a universal Reason that guides the purposes of nature, they both also acknowledge that appearances are sometimes without reason. Thus, “Nature did not always aim at usefulness, for instance, when she produced the peacock’s extravagant tail” (*Veil* 196).

art, music, etc. (218). Aesthetic vision and participation unveils the secrets of nature in allowing the artist/poet/philosopher to view the apparent “forms”—such as “polarity and ascent,” and “spiral and serpentine line” by which nature operates and also by opening up a chance at becoming “immersed within Nature’s creative impulse” which would allow entry into the secrets through identification with Nature (220, 222, 218). Hadot identified the work of Goethe as both central to understanding the Orphic model and as a turning point in the transformation of nature as the ‘mystery of being.’

The philosophers and the poets of the present moment are the inheritors of the Orphic approach to understanding the secrets of nature. Hadot marked Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as the beginning of a trend to understand the secrets of nature as “mysteries in broad daylight” (*Veil* 260). For Goethe, all that can be discovered of natural phenomena is in plain sight, all that is needed to see it is to train the senses and to remove the mistaken belief that there is a ‘reality’ behind the appearance (253).

“For Schelling, Heraclitus’ aphorism ‘Nature loves to hide’ means that Nature originally represents a resistance to evolution, insofar as it is a will to remain within itself. ‘Nature’s modesty’ was to become the mystery of being, and this mystery was distressing and terrifying. Goethe and Schelling thus seem to [Hadot] to be at the origin of a tradition in which there is an impenetrable mystery of existence that provokes anguish. The goal is no longer to vanquish the difficulties and obstacles that Nature opposes to our knowledge but to recognize that it is inherent in nature—or the world, or being-in-the-world, or Being—to be inexplicable, so that one of the essential dimensions of human existence will henceforth be both wonder and anguish, the ‘sacred shudder,’ as Goethe and Kant would say, in the face of unfathomable mystery and enigma.” (*Veil* 303)

The general effort and project of observing and explaining physical/material/natural or visible phenomena has been given to the technology and experimentation of science and could be considered the inheritors of the Promethean tradition of unveiling nature (*Veil* 318). Astronomy is an example of this is the field-switch. Astronomy—the study of the movements of the stars and planets—was initially a conjectural science on which the discourses were probable based in the understanding that the secret processes were not able to be known by humans, such as in the *Timaeus*. Hadot posited that with Galileo and Kepler “Astronomy and physics met” combined under ‘nature’ and thus the province of “verifiable experimental science” (164). On the same token, the philosophers and poets of his contemporary moment—Hadot included Schelling, Goethe, Rilke, Merleau-Ponty and Wittgenstein in his account—are re-turning in their discourse and poetry to paths new and ancient in experiencing *phusis* as the “inexplicable surging forth of reality” (314).

The Orphic and the Promethean frameworks function together “in that act—at once multiple and unique” which is the moment of living out a vision of the cosmos as part of the social complex (*Citadel* 82). Physics as the coming to awareness that one and others are part and expressions of the Whole, and what that means for self and others, is negotiated through relations of communication (*Happiness* 96). For example, Robert Macfarlane’s *Underland* (2019) opens a new understanding of the cosmos through investigations into the world beneath our feet. Macfarlane’s insights are gained from Promethean observations and experiments conducted in tunnels built and sites excavated for the purpose of mining precious metals and other elements. As well, his insights are combined with Orphic descriptions of the root systems that connect all trees in a forest—the “wood wide web”—that can be used to gather and deliver nutrients from other trees to nurse a failing one back to health (87). Macfarlane’s relationships with self, others,

place and time are renegotiated in embodied communication as he and those with him gain a contemporary ‘view from above’ by going low.⁵

Physics as a Spiritual Exercise

Arnold Davidson captured the depth and breadth of spiritual exercises when he stated, “The art of living demanded by philosophy was a *lived* exercise exhibited in every aspect of one’s *existence*” (*Introduction* 21, emphasis added). This includes the human conditions of being abandoned to language and to terrestrial and celestial habitation (Butchart 12). Philosophy as a way of life was a life of exercise.

Physics as a spiritual exercise or “the realization of the presence of the world and of our belonging to the world” of, with, and for others in relations of communication assisted the philosopher in taking the view from above. This allows for the renegotiation of meanings of actions and interactions within an interpretive framework of a universal belonging (*Happiness* 96).

Hadot summarized this relationship of the spiritual exercise of physics with the Stoic way of life exhibited in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius:

“We must, then, not only act in conformity with the theorems of the art of living and the fundamental dogmas, but also keep present to consciousness the theoretical foundations which justify them. This is the ‘science of Nature,’ because, in the final analysis, all of life’s principles merge in the knowledge of nature. Without this, the formulations of dogmas will become devoid of sense, no matter how often they are repeated.” (*Citadel* 42)

⁵ Macfarlane recounts his personal conversations with researchers, guides, and friends as he visited and explored the sites.

In other words, the efficacy of the spiritual exercises, thus the philosophical way of life of the school are dependent on an operative vision of the cosmos, the formation and continual imagining of which is itself a participation in the *Logos* or the All. This section turns to Hadot's oft utilized examples in explicating physics in this manner. The first example is Plato's *Timaeus* and the second is the Stoic example in which Hadot found the most fully developed and practiced form of physics as a spiritual exercise (210).

Plato's Timaeus

The approach of the Orphic model was in the understanding that one was already embedded within nature thus providing a framework for interpreting relations with nature and the cosmos privileging 'community' and 'collaboration' (Arnett and Holba 9; Arneson 77). Across the schools and in varying degrees, human art was understood as both representation and participation as one becomes "immersed within Nature's creative impulse" (*Veil* 218). One such development of the orphic model was in the conception of the universe as a poem (205). Participation in the universe is a recruitment of one's full being as he recruits the rational and the irrational in and through relations of embodied communication with the purpose of orienting self with others in nature and the cosmos. In other words, this interpreting and participating in poetic creation was a spiritual exercise.

Within the framework of a spiritual exercise Hadot characterized the *Timaeus* as "an artistic game that imitates the artistic game of the poet of the universe known as the divinity" (*Veil* 201). The state of wisdom for the Platonist was achieved in the separation of the eternal part from the temporal part, the soul from the body. Socrates again served as the model in choosing the authentic life in death over the continued existence of the body (*Way of Life* 94). What was called for in the life of practice was a quelling of the passions and shedding one's

individuality in and through an identification with the *Logos* (95). Practicing this in the spiritual exercises of inner discourse, dialogue, and especially of death, the practitioner achieves a lucid vision from the universal perspective, and “greatness of soul” (95,97). “[T]he whole of the philosopher’s speculative and contemplative effort becomes a spiritual exercise, insofar as he raises his thought up to the perspective of the Whole and liberates it from the illusions of individuality” (97). Contemplation becomes participation as through human art the philosopher imitates the creative force and rhythm of the cosmos.

Hadot placed Plato’s *Timaeus* under the category of “theological physics” (*Veil* 39). Remember that for Plato the study of the natural processes of development, or *phusis*, did not reach the rigors of a science because the causes and movements of it were only known to the gods, and because it dealt with subjects and processes that were in “perpetual transformation” (23). The starting points of physics then, were observations that were not able to be proven as in hypotheses, engaging in descriptions of the cosmos was an attempt at presenting a “likely” and “reasonable” demonstration (159,160). “Whether in the domain of the terrestrial bodies, which are subject to becoming, or of celestial bodies, we must be content with what is approximate, for we reside very far away and very low within the universe” (161). As noted above, this perpetual transformation allowed for the flourishing of several explanations for a single phenomenon, such as the creation of the world (161).

The closest thing we have to achieving knowledge in this arena is in discourse. The discourse must match the subject. The Socratic dialectic had the following features: question and answer, requiring assent of one’s partner to a proposition before proceeding to search for clarity, and the inclusion of a crisis point. These all had their purpose for Socrates to bring his dialogue partner’s soul to the twofold awareness of the *philo-sophos*. However, an essay of the origins of

humankind in the *Timaeus* finds appropriate the discourse of myth or “likely fables” that bring a diversionary joy to the *philo-sophos* and his partners. The setting for the *Timaeus* takes place in the setting of a festival for Athena and in praise of the city (*Veil* 182). In this type of discourse, inextricably linked were, “play, celebration, and the search for divine secrets . . . For Plato, at any rate, human play responds to divine play” (183). The play of conjectural discourse carried out in the spoken word on the origins of the cosmos and humankind is an imitation and a participation,

“But a man who has given his heart to learning and true wisdom and exercised that part of himself is surely bound, if he attains to truth, to have immortal and divine thoughts, and cannot fail to achieve immortality as fully as is permitted to human nature. . . There is of course only one way to look after anything and that is to give it its proper food and motions. And the motions that are akin to the divine in us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe . . . When that is done we shall have achieved the goal set us by the gods, the life that is best for this present time and for all time to come.” (*Timaeus* 90d)

The *Timaeus* then is both a discourse and a poem, and is *poiētic*, or a participation in the creative force of the play of the universe imitated in the poetic form in this case. The secrets of nature can be known in matching the divine part of one’s self through discourse suited to match the divine dance. Hadot has noted the similarity in the Stoic practice of physics insofar as it displays the theme of identifying with that which is beyond the egoist self.

The Stoic Discipline of Desire

Hadot illumined the Stoic vision and practice of the philosophical way of life in his translation and interpretation of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius in Hadot’s book *The Inner*

Citadel (1998). In that work Hadot situates Marcus' Stoic practice in the teaching of Epictetus (50?–135 CE) who was highly regarded as a philosopher in his own time (*Citadel* 59). The four volumes of the *Discourses* of Epictetus that have made their way through to the present historical moment were recorded by his student/disciple Arrian of Nicomedia, for Epictetus himself had not written anything (60). It is through Epictetus' vision, practice and exposition of the disciplines of the Stoic system that the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius makes sense as a way of life (59). "Human reason is an emanation or part of this Universal Reason. It can, however, become obscured and deformed as a result of life within the body, owing in particular to the attractions of pleasure" (76). The exercise of Stoic philosophy was an exercise in a way of life aiming to bring back into coherence one's human reason with universal Reason (76).

Physics as spiritual exercise takes shape within the Stoic distinction of the "fundamental principle" between what is and is not within our sphere of influence (*Way of Life* 85). What humans can influence are what are designated "acts of our soul" as they are not dependent on other constraints and are considered acts of free choice (*Citadel* 83). Coming to awareness of the fundamental distinction between what does and does not depend on us illumines in the self the *hēgimonikon*, "the guiding principle," or "the principle which directs all being. This is that principle of thought and judgment which makes us independent of the body, and the principle of liberty" (49). The *hēgimonikon* is that within the self that both resembles and participates as part of the All.

The acts of the soul are consistent with the three actions that do depend on the person: to judge or not judge, to desire or not, and the impulse to act (*Citadel* 83). Outside of these actions of the soul are those things which are not dependent upon us. "Epictetus lists our body, honors, riches, and high positions of authority—is everything that depends upon the general course of

nature” (83). The three disciplines of assent, desire, and action work together to bring “equanimity to the soul” by training perception/judgements, desire, and the impulse to act (*Ancient* 222).

The disciplines of assent, desire, and action each had a purpose in habituating the individual toward *living* a good life. With the majority of what occurs in the universe out of the reach of influence of the human person, the good toward which the Stoic could work was in forming the inner attitude to *intend* to do the good in all situations (*Citadel* 179). The study of physics, then, has as its end a moral purpose. Briefly, the discipline of assent corresponded to the faculty of judgement as it assents, or not, to the images that occur to our soul that come through the senses (84). This in part forms the inner discourse, so the exercise of discerning and clearing away the influence of the passions on those representations assisted in forming the inner attitude of detachment or objectivity (44). The discipline of desire works to discipline one’s reason to come aware of, and to cohere and consent to the will and actions of universal Reason (141). Within the human realm—“the customs and conventions of daily life”—demand one to act in relation with other human beings, who in due course will provoke the passions (183). The discipline of action is to keep to-hand the vision of the “common Reason” of “human Nature” at home in all of us and act in its service in interactions with others, thus maintain the coherence of the All (183).

The human desires can be exaggerated beyond the boundaries of what depends on us, causing us frustration and disruption of the soul (*Citadel* 137-138). Remembering that for the Stoic the only good is moral good, the only evil is moral evil. Therefore, that which should be desired is the good. With those things that do not depend on us we must remain indifferent which takes shape in neither desiring nor fleeing from the magnitude of indifferent things (138). The

three disciplines approach the whole human being in the overall endeavor to choose the moral good by choosing to perceive, desire, and act in coherence with universal Reason (138). “Above all, the discipline of desire in Marcus is related first and foremost to the way in which we are to greet the events which result from the overall movement of universal Nature, which are produced by what Marcus calls the ‘exterior cause’” (*Citadel* 138; *Meditations* VIII, 7 qtd. in *Citadel* 138). The exercise of the discipline of desire works to cohere human reason through acceptance and consent to the occurrences in the realm of those phenomena which are indifferent to us, the cause of which comes from outside the self. The discipline of desire in Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations* works to accept and work to desire the conditions and events that are occurring to himself in a particular existential moment. This emerges out of a principle of Stoic physics that “the cosmos is but a single living entity, endowed with a unique consciousness and will” (*Citadel* 141). All events which we encounter—“whether I am ill, or lose my child, or am the victim of an accident”—occur and implicate the whole of the cosmos (141). This is because all phenomena and events have been interwoven with the All since “the most ancient of causes” (*Meditations* qtd. in *Citadel* 140). The current moment can be understood as Destiny insofar as this moment is occurring as a result of the unfolding of the pattern of causes which *are* the cosmos (140). This assumes a universal Reason that guides this process, of which the human “guiding principle” is a reflection and takes its place as part of the pattern.

For the Stoic philosopher there is a fundamental principle that all of reality coheres with itself. Following on this intuition the philosopher is able to “perceive love of self and accord with oneself in each movement of a living being as much as in the movement of the universe as a whole, or in the perfection of the sage” (*Citadel* 141). The Stoic love that Hadot described here is characterized in a relationship of mutuality: the Whole (or All) loves each of the parts (nature,

animals, humans, celestial phenomena, etc.), each of the parts loves the other, and the parts love the Whole (142). Continuing with the image of interwoven patterns, Hadot places “to love” in context of everyday language use in the ancient world as carrying the meaning “to be accustomed to” indicating a sense of ‘fittingness’ or ‘habituation’ between each of the parts (142). In the relations between parts and the All there is “harmony” such that all that happens to the parts benefits the All, while “everything that is ‘prescribed’ for each part is, almost in the medical sense of the term, ‘prescribed’ ([*Meditations*] V, 8) for the health of the Whole, and consequently for all the other parts as well” (142). Disciplining desire means to re-place the moment or event occurring in the present moment within the perspective of the All or the Whole. In the same movement the philosopher also becomes aware of the presence of the Whole within that moment or event (142). In refusing to accept the moment or event as given in the Whole, the philosopher breaks up ‘the cohesion’ of the All. On the contrary, accepting these circumstances means to accept this event as being present and an exhibition of the will and the love of universal Reason (the All) has for its part—the philosopher. Bringing one’s reason into coherence with the All—bringing oneself and the All to health—means to identify one’s will with that of the All and to will the events as they are (142). Through the ever-growing self’s awareness of itself—“that infinitesimal point within the immensity”—through the discipline of desire transformed through and becomes identical with universal Reason (182).

Conclusion

This chapter addressed how inquiries into nature and the cosmos are integral in the formation of frameworks for orienting oneself in the lifeworld and social complex (Arnett and Holba 9; Arneson 77). Physics when practiced as a spiritual exercise brought about “the realization of the presence of the world and of our belonging to the world” of, with, and for

others in relations of communication (*Happiness* 96). With physics supporting the spiritual practice of taking a view from above, routine concerns and interactions were brought into the perspective of being parts and expressions of the Whole wherein meanings of the human condition abandoned to this place and time can be renegotiated with others. In Hadot's scholarship this theme had been present throughout all his works. However, a full-scale excursus took shape in his final published book, *The Veil of Isis: An essay on the History of the Idea of Nature* (2006). In the image of Pierre Courcelle, one of Hadot's mentors, Hadot framed the work by tracing the development of meanings of the Heraclitean aphorism "Nature loves to hide" (x, Kahn 33). This began with the evolution of the meaning of the Greek work *phusis* to the 'secrets of nature' and up through the present moment to the 'the mystery of being.'

Phusis began as a general term for Pre-Socratic "investigations of nature" that marked the conception of a process of development or formation/transformation (*Veil* 32). With Plato, the meaning of *phusis* became aligned with that of a divine art (22). Thus formed the relationship between nature and art that framed humankind's relationship to nature throughout historical moments. For Plato, *phusis* or the operations and development of nature were a divine art that could not be known. Aristotle marked a significant distinction between human art and nature. In human art the principle of transformation is external to the material. Transformation involves "violence" insofar as it is forced upon materials (24). *Phusis* in nature is initiated and directed by an "inner motion" and form (23). In both cases the processes of *phusis* were invisible, regular and methodical. Hadot traced this to the development of the idea that nature held secrets.

The idea that nature held secrets also involves an opposition. Secrets are held back from others and are tightly guarded. This led to the development of the personification and divination of nature that was concurrent with attempts at getting nature to reveal those secrets. Revealing

these secrets was the purview of philosophy and science. Hadot characterizes the attempts at revealing the secrets of nature as Promethean or Orphic. The two attitudes are not a strict division, but rather “equally essential” in the investigations of nature and are often found together in the same person and attempts at understanding (*Veil* 98).

The Promethean attitude is based in an understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature to be generally hostile. Through technological and mechanical means the researcher will force nature to give up its secrets so they can be used for the purposes of humankind. The Orphic attitude is based in the idea that humanity is a part of nature. The secrets of nature can be known through human art insofar as human art – the poem, the painting, the philosophical discourse – is a participation in the same creative and generative process of nature (*Veil* 92). Hadot found that in the current moment the function of observing, explaining and theorizing regarding natural and visible phenomena has been largely co-opted to the inheritors of the Promethean attitude, the ‘hard’ sciences. The poets and the philosophers of the present moment are the inheritors of the existential aspect of the cosmos that gives witness and participates in the “the inexplicable surging forth of reality” (*Veil* 314). The Promethean and the Orphic continue to co-appear as frameworks of interpretation for orienting oneself in the lifeworld and social complex (Arnett and Holba 9; Arneson 77). The Promethean framework privileges ‘power’ and ‘dominance’ whereas the Orphic privileges ‘communal’ and ‘collaborative’ for understanding the communicative relations between human beings and nature and cosmos.

The final section of this chapter expands on the phenomena of physics practiced as a spiritual exercise. This section reviewed Hadot’s explication of how physics functioned as a spiritual exercise through his two most used examples, the Platonic dialogue *Timaeus* and

Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*. In the *Timaeus* the practice of physics was highlighted as conjectural exercise that brought a diversionary pleasure in the shape of *poiētic* play and participation in the creative impulse of the universe through the spoken word thus forming and re-forming the inner attitude of all participants.

Through the *Meditations* the discipline of desire was closely associated with the development of the inner attitude of being indifferent to indifferent things, which facilitated the Stoic in re-placing his actions in the context of the Whole. Macfarlane displays a contemporary understanding and practice that resonates with this Stoic attitude. In Macfarlane the metaphorical view from above is taken from 'below' and is integral in negotiating meaning in and through the mode of human communication in the Anthropocene moment.

As Macfarlane demonstrates in *Underland* (2019) human relationships of/in communication are influenced by the contours of the earth and cosmos we inhabit. As the contours of the earth are transformed in the Anthropocene epoch humans undergo disjointed experiences of place and time. (75). Negotiation of meaning and formulating responses in human communication to the present terrestrial conditions involves understandings of our relationship with nature and the cosmos. In re-placing the current circumstances with the perspective of the All the philosopher becomes aware of the vastness of the All present in the world and others. Human communication is thus (re)oriented toward the expression of the All in others.

CHAPTER 5

Pierre Hadot's Philosophy of Communication

“That there would be room once again in our contemporary world for philo-sophers in the etymological sense of the word, that is, seekers of wisdom. They would . . . search not for happiness—it seems that that is no longer fashionable—but for a life that is more conscious, more rational, and more open to others and the immensity of the world.” (Happiness 112)

Pierre Hadot has repeatedly pointed out that philosophy as a way of life is inextricable from the existential conditions of the person, the community, and the cosmos. As such, his work is directly connected to human communication. A guiding question and theme, “Is modern man still able to understand the texts of antiquity and live according to them?” runs throughout Hadot’s engagement with ancient philosophy (*Way of Life* 278). Throughout his writings Hadot reveals a holistic philosophy of communication: it is a discourse that leverages ideas and practices from ancient philosophy for the formation of “interpretive frameworks” for navigating meaning in the present historical moment (Arnett and Holba 9). The philosopher—a seeker of wisdom—engages in spiritual exercises for the purpose of transforming his entire being—mind, body, soul—toward the model of wisdom as embodied in the model of the sage. The sage model as ideal guides the philosopher in the ever-incomplete task of orienting themselves in the social complex to include a vision of the cosmos (Arneson 77).

In explicating Hadot’s philosophy of communication, the first section of this chapter is dedicated to setting a picture of the contemporary conditions of human communication. The ‘big’ questions of meaning in life emerge in and through the banal conditions of everyday life, to live is to be “embodied, to be in community, and for that reason, to be communicative” (Butchart

5). Questions such as “how do I live?” “What does death mean for me and for my loved ones?” emerge at inconvenient times demanding a human response (MacIntyre 125).

The second section of this chapter outlines Hadot’s holistic philosophy of communication in four elements framed as Hadot’s response to his own question, “Is modern man still able to understand the text of antiquity and live according to them?” (*Way of Life* 278). The four elements for a *philosophia* of the present moment include: 1) an enduring philosophical attitude of eclecticism, 2) an updated model of a sage, 3) the spiritual exercise of being in the present moment, and 4) recognition of corporeal/linguistic expressivity as the condition(s) for/of philosophy as a way of life.

To conclude the 2nd section, I outline a holistic communication ethics drawn from the works of Hadot. Hadot understood ethics to be inextricable from the broader existential phenomenon of philosophy as a way of life. The practice of spiritual exercises as philosophy involves the transformation of the practitioner’s being in working toward the level of being of the sage (*Happiness* 177). *Philosophia*, in other words, was a practice of self-transformation at the level of being. To outline a holistic communication ethics of self-transformation I turn to Hadot’s critique of Michel Foucault’s rendering of aesthetics of existence. The section concludes by turning to Arnold Davidson and the beginnings of an extended conversation between Foucault and Hadot.

Describing the Contemporary Historical Moment

Hadot interpreted ancient philosophical discourse in the context of production. His contributions to understanding human communication in the contemporary moment must be situated in the conditions of the present historical moment (Arnett and Holba 12). This section approaches the conditions of the contemporary moment in their anthropological, cultural,

communicative and terrestrial aspects. The work of Matthew Crawford on the human capacity for attention, Zygmunt Bauman on a culture of the ‘hunter,’ and Robert Macfarlane serve to paint a picture of the conditions of the contemporary human communicator attempting to orient himself and find meaning in the “multidimensional composition of human relationships” that is the social complex (Arneson 77).

Attention

Crawford is the author of *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work* (2009) and followed up that work with *The World beyond Your Head: On Becoming an Individual in an Age of Distraction* (2015). Crawford’s project in *The World beyond Your Head* is an exercise in philosophical anthropology aimed at tracing the scaffolding undergirding the current “age of distraction” (8). In the “age of distraction,” the human faculty of ‘attention’ is difficult to develop (8). Yet, attention is precisely that faculty which “joins us to the world” (131). Where attention is placed indicates what a person values. Crawford observes that the content of the attention is nearly irrelevant. Rather, “Our distractibility seems to indicate that we are agnostic on the question of what is *worth* paying attention to—that is, what to value” (5 original emphasis). In other words, the stimulation itself is of value and not the content. This leads to a situation of persons perceiving that they have gained liberation from traditional societal structures (religious, geographical, and civic) awash in choices with a “cognitive environment” characterized as “by turns anxious, put-upon, distracted, exhausted, enthralled, ecstatic, self-forgetting” (*World* 8). Autonomy values freedom and removes us from the authority structures that help us navigate that freedom.

Responding to the question “How should I live?” involves asking how the ideal person (e.g., Socrates, Machiavelli’s prince, the saints, the rugged American male, the perfect picture of

femininity, etc.) takes action in this situation/life. Crawford identifies a tension in the present historical moment between the ideal Western autonomous self and objects that are external to the mind including other people (*World* 26). The autonomous self strives “to secure its freedom by rendering the external world fully pliable to its will . . . this [is] accomplished by treating objects as projections of the mind” that are duly pliable to the will of the mind (Crawford, *World* 26). On the other hand, objects external to the mind are perceived as restraints to the freedom of the autonomous self (26).

The primary objects that constrain the ideal of Western self are “things,” “inheritance,” and “other people,” as Crawford identifies in the major divisions of his book (*World* 26). Crawford identifies the self in the present historical moment as being “saturated” in the mental projections carrying out the business of life in a “highly mediated existence” (26). In Crawford the pliability of mental projections has folded back on the self so that “we *ourselves* have been rendered pliable—to whoever has the power to craft the most bewitching representations or to control the portals of public space through which we must pass to conduct the business of life” (27). Crawford notes that these two states of existence, a pliable self and the enlightenment ideal of autonomy, are at odds with our fundamental “situatedness” in the world (26).

We are born into a world, environment, culture, cosmos, and language that is always already in existence. To learn and to attain freedom is to allow oneself to be “led out” (*World* 127) under the authority of linguistic structures, social structures, and the knowledge to hand of the long-time practitioners (e.g., masters of a craft, elders, educators). In an environment saturated with enticing projections, there is little time to develop one’s capacity for attention (127–128).

A fundamental problem for human communication in the present moment emerges in this tension between learning new things and autonomy. Attention is developed through learning which requires acknowledgement of our linguistic situatedness with others in the world. The ability to attend to things is a faculty that is both developed through and required for human communication. The autonomous self does not value this self-discipline, and the world of enticements can keep this fundamental activity of being human severely underdeveloped. With a severely reduced capacity of shared narrative ground for being in communication, responding to questions such as “How should I live?” becomes an exhausting task (Crawford 127; Butchart 10-11). In this situation, is it any wonder that people attempt to move on quickly when the passion and abrupt intrusion of questions about the meaning in life emerge in daily interactions (MacIntyre 125)?

Bauman’s construct of “liquid modernity” resonates with Crawford’s description of the tensions in both freedom and attention. For Bauman, ‘culture’ refers to “a set of preferences suggested, recommended and imposed on account of their correctness, goodness or beauty” (5). At the beginning of the historical moment of the Enlightenment, culture was “missionary” in the service of guiding all of humanity toward an ‘enlightened’ universal condition where people of the lowest classes were to be freed from the rule of “prejudice and superstition” for the purpose of continuing the advancement of society(6). Missionary culture soon assumed an educational mode and relationship that was:

“a planned and expected agreement between those possessing knowledge (or at least confident of being in possession of it) and ignoramuses (or those thus described by the confident aspirants to their education); an agreement furnished, incidentally with only one signature, unilaterally endorsed, and realized under the exclusive directorship of the

newly formed ‘educated class,’ seeking the right to fashion the ‘new and improved’ order rising from the ashes of the ancient régime.” (Bauman 9)

The missionary culture soon brought new life and dimensions by spreading through colonization in the United States coupled with new social evolutionary theories. The burden of the cultured was to “convert the rest of the inhabitants of the globe” to the social order and ‘enlightened’ culture of the Western developed nation, e.g. Great Britain (9). Institutions and bureaucracies were duly set up in the new territories to assist the mission and establish “the intended product (a populace turned into a ‘civic body’)” (10). After a missionary culture is in place, a nation’s culture then shifts from a missionary agent—in the form of educators, priests—to a conservative force to maintain the “civic body”—such as a justice system (10).

The Enlightenment project and the conservative maintenance stages of culture are characterized by societal assumptions about the task. Bauman offers the transition to “‘liquid modernity’ alongside ‘postmodernity’, ‘late modernity’, [and] ‘second’ or ‘hyper’ modernity” (11). Liquid modernity is marked by open-ended stimulation for the purpose of occupying a person’s attention. Culture is marked not by the *content* of the cultural products, but rather how wide one’s *tastes* are and how much one can consume (Bauman 1-3). “Liquid modernity” describes the condition of “compulsive and obsessive ‘modernization’, as a result of which, like liquid, none of the consecutive forms of social life is able to maintain its shape for long” (Bauman 11). The impetus of culture then is moved from the societal task to the realm of personal choice and personal responsibility, thus making choice the central and “unavoidable duty of life” (12).

For an individual living in a “liquid modern” culture this condition of “constant change” becomes the norm. During the Enlightenment, the ‘good’ rested in achieving a state of refinement or education for all human beings across cultures. Mission work and forced education

were judged to be necessary for the process of creating an ‘enlightened’ civic body. The goal in liquid modernity is people’s continual participation in the never-ending hunt for stimulation and constant access to another choice (Bauman 23). Bauman here points to the constant shifting norms of fashion, be it clothing, art, or digital platforms of interaction. The person in the hunt—each of us—must constantly track the ever-shifting symbols denoting belonging. This moves persons to acquire and consume the ‘next’ before the current pursuit comes to an end. The thrill of the hunt through the constant stimulation must be kept up. Movement becomes essential, and the game becomes one not of societal action taken toward an “enlightened” condition, but of keeping up or surviving in an ever-changing environment (24). The self as hunter in liquid modernity is in “the pursuit of constantly elusive fashion” (Bauman 30). The continual hunt “does not give sense to life. . . . It merely helps to banish the question of life’s meaning from our minds” (30). Reflection on these questions takes one away from the hunt and arrests one from moving on to the next stimulation: reflection is a death sentence.

Intermittently, an event momentarily sidelines the hunter—a significant injury, loss of income, death of a loved one, etc. Filling the vacuum left by the hunt and its stimulation are the questions of meaning of a life, primarily, “How should I live?” Bauman paints a bleak picture of this space:

When such an opportunity finally presents itself, that is at moments of dropping out of, or being excluded from the hunter’s way of life, it is as a rule too late for reflection to influence the course of one’s life and the life of those around. It is too late to object to the ‘actually existing’ shape of one’s life, and certainly for any questioning of its sense to bring practical results. (30)

The problem for human communication is that learning to live in liquid modernity prizes the individual hunter's way of life in which the persistent questions of meaning are constantly kept at bay. As Macfarlane explains, "untimely surfacings" mark and present experiences of disjointed time and place.

Untimely Surfacings

Macfarlane's work displays a combination of analytic and poetic ways of understanding one's lived-experience. Macfarlane's most recent work, *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* (2019) sees the Orphic and Promethean attitudes intertwine as he writes in an attempt to approach the Anthropocene epoch (13).

"[T]he Anthropocene should be considered a new Earth epoch, on the ground that 'mankind will remain a major geological force for many millennia, maybe millions of years to come.' As the Pleistocene was defined by the action of ice, and the Holocene by a period of relative climatic stability allowing the flourishing of life, so the Anthropocene is seen to be defined by the action of *Anthropos*: human beings, shaping the Earth at a global scale." (*Underland* 75)

Characteristic of the Anthropocene is the occurrence of disturbing change at the planetary level where both time and place are disrupted. "[C]risis' exists not as an ever-deferred apocalypse but rather as an ongoing occurrence" (14).

Examples that mark disjointed time and place are the phenomena Macfarlane terms "untimely surfacings" (*Beneath*). For example, the appearance of Arctic methane deposits emerge with the thawing of the permafrost, "the imprints of ancient structures—Roman watchtowers, Neolithic enclosures" come into view in Britain from aerial views, and a Cold War era American military site in Greenland that was once thought to be safely enclosed beneath the

ice cap is emerging with its “hundreds of thousands of gallons of chemical contaminants” is re-emerging (*Underland* 14). As the ground under our feet is displaced so emerges the immense sense of “deep time” (15).

Macfarlane describes “deep time” as the “dizzying expanses of Earth history that stretch away from the present moment” and is “measured in units that humble the human instant: epochs and aeons, instead of minutes and years” (*Underland* 15). Rather than freezing action in the face of a vast picture of time Macfarlane argues that engaging “deep time” spurs us onto “re-imagining [the present moment]; countermanding its quick greeds and furies with older, slower stories of making and unmaking . . . bringing us to consider what we are leaving behind for the epochs and beings that will follow us” (15). The urgent disjointed present condition appears in the illustrative example of sealing and storing “radioactive uranium pellets encased in iron, then encased in copper” in Yucca Mountain above a fault named Ghost Dance (7). The half-lives of the uranium are projected to be millions of years:

“The timescale of the hazard is such that those responsible for entombing this waste must now face the question of how to communicate its danger to the distant future. This is a risk that will outlast not only the life of its makers but perhaps also the species of its makers. How to mark this site? How to tell whatever beings will come to this desert place that what is kept in this rock sarcophagus is desperately harmful, is *not* of value, *must never be disturbed?*” (7, original emphasis)

Macfarlane gives voice to Hadot’s rendering of a lived physics. As those responsible for the Yucca Mountain site are working out the problem of marking meaning for the future they are simultaneously working out the meaning of this site in and through communication for the present moment at the exposed/opening lines of self, other, community, and cosmos (Butchart

136). Macfarlane dives beneath the surface investigating the ‘underlands’ of the earth, vivifying the Anthropocene epoch in a way that opens the possibility of orienting ourselves corporeally/linguistically in the life world with others in accord with a renewed vision of the cosmos.

The picture Crawford, Bauman, and Macfarlane paint of the current historical moment is that the questions continue to emerge but contemporary communicators are left without personal motivation and competence for reaching out to others, stimulation is valued over content, and people find themselves without time and without models for how to reflect and engage the ongoing and inherent process of responsivity in a situation and responsibility to others in the social complex (Arneson 30). Hadot’s holistic philosophy of communication assists present-day communicators in finding resources to develop attention and respond to the questions of the human condition corporeally and linguistically in the lifeworld.

Pierre Hadot’s Philosophy of Communication

Hadot’s philosophy of communication is holistic as he attends to the health of one’s whole being. By ‘whole being’ he means that philosophy practiced as a way of life in the ancient model was therapeutic for the inextricably intertwined body, mind, soul, cosmos, and community. Debra Hawhee reminds us that the now perceived hard lines between ‘segments’ of this whole was a later introduction by scholars. In the ancient practice, these were more fluid in the ancient practice such that philosophical instruction at Plato’s Academy took place in the gymnasium (Hawhee 4). *Philosophia*, then, was the result and the ongoing confirmation of an existential choice to live in a particular way of life defined by the practice (*askēsis*) of spiritual exercises.

The spiritual exercises, such as meditation on death, attentiveness to the present moment, achieving a view from above, and dialogue, are educative. As such, spiritual exercises are intended to form the practitioner to the “fundamental inner attitude” and required the “entire spirit, one’s whole way of being” (*Way of Life* 59, 21). As in the example of Alcibiades and Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium*, the experience of wisdom—coming to the awareness of one’s unknowledgeable state, incoherence of personal and communal action, and desire toward wisdom—calls for the application of reasoned logos, passionate desire and formative potential of persuasive speech carried in and through the spoken word.

Socrates was a midwife whose dialectical and erotic irony opened his dialogue partner to the risk and fear of exposure of one’s own lack of wisdom. Going forward in the conversation, Socrates took on the responsibility for his partner by bringing his dialogue partner to the point of crisis—the point at which the person becomes a living problem for himself—which for Socrates marked the beginning of awareness and health.

Socrates, as well as many others recognized as philosophers during antiquity, were recognized for their way of life, not for any works, if at all, they wrote. The relationship between written philosophical discourse and *philosophia* is a Stoic distinction that Hadot revealed is exemplified in the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. As *hypomnēmata* (notes written to and for himself) they were specially and vividly formulated ‘dogmas’ of the fundamental Stoic principles by which Marcus lived his life. In writing them and in speaking them he re-embodied them, thus rekindling his intention and choice of life to judge, desire, and act on himself and with others in a way that was coherent with universal Reason. Philosophy as a way of life was a corporeal/linguistic interweaving of the therapeutic, the personal, and the communal expressed in the lifeworld and social complex (Arneson 25).

Hadot's philosophy of communication is holistic. He approaches philosophy as therapeutic because embodied practice is rooted in a choice made in response to existential conditions and the recognition of a lack of wisdom—a response to 'how do I live well?'—motivated in a desire toward an ideal wisdom in practice. Hadot relies on the model of the sage for the purpose of engaging the incomplete and therefore possible task of orienting oneself in the social complex as part of and an expression of the cosmos.

Living and Communicating Philosophically

Hadot's philosophy of communication is brought to life as a *philosophia* for the present moment. This is outlined in four characteristics: the fate of the philosophical attitude up to and including the current historical moment, a sage model for 2020, attention of the present moment, and task of the philosopher. To live philosophically is to exhibit linguistic/corporeal expressivity of the dense tenets of communicative engagement enmeshed in the everyday life of the social complex. This incomplete task is made possible as one lives in and through the "meaning-full experience" of human communication (Arneson 25).

Enduring Philosophical Attitude and Practice

The phenomenon of 'philosophy' has been one of the primary phenomena associated with wisdom or knowledge in the Western tradition. Hadot's investigation of the contours of philosophy's context of production brings into relief the bonds of philosophical discourse that in the ancient context were tethered to philosophy as a way of life that was carried out in a context of primary orality. In other words, philosophy as embodied was essentially communicative. On several occasions Hadot explained the phenomenon of philosophy as occurring between two poles: one that privileges the creation and shaping of philosophical discourse for the sake of itself as the primary purpose, the other one privileges living a good life placing philosophical

discourse in service of this purpose (*Happiness* 56-60; *Ancient* 260). In explicating *philosophia* Hadot pointed to the disconnect in the present moment between the phenomenon of ‘philosophy’ and the capacity to offer a way of living or at least resources for responding to 21st century conditions as presented above. This picture is furthered in the disparity between “philosophy and the teaching of philosophy” that Hadot experienced in his own education (*Way of Life* 278). This led Hadot to wonder whether or not philosophy as a phenomenon has become perceived to be a luxury.

The luxury of philosophy is the perception that in the face of human “concerns, their sufferings, their anguishes, the perspective of death that awaits them, and awaits those they love” philosophical discourse of the present moment appears as “vain chatter and ridiculous luxury” (*Happiness* 188). Though moved to the side in Hadot’s rendering of the development of the phenomenon of systemizing discourse philosophy and the concurrent emergence of the university, the attitude of philosophy as a way of life has remained present throughout his works (*Ancient* 254-255; *Happiness* 55-56). Using *askēsis*, or a transformational practice, as a marker Hadot frequently comments that the works of Soren Kierkegaard, Michel de Montaigne, Friedrich Nietzsche, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Henri Bergson, Michel Foucault, and Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein display the continuance of the concept of *philosophia*. Hadot read ancient philosophical discourse as an integration of the ideas and the literary genre, and he read Wittgenstein—a philosopher whose works are most associated with analytic philosophy—as practicing the same integration (*Introduction* 17).

Hadot associated the apparent structureless form of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) as functioning therapeutically. “Wittgenstein continues [from the *Tractatus* to the *Investigations*] . . . to devote himself to the same mission: to bring a radical and definitive

peace to metaphysical worry. . . [*Philosophical Investigations*] wished to act little by little on our spirit, like a cure, like a medical treatment. The work therefore does not have a systematic structure, strictly speaking” (*Wittgenstein* 973 qtd. in Davidson *Introduction* 17-18 emphasis added). Hadot found Wittgenstein’s investigation of language games helpful as Hadot himself investigated the language games—rules and structures of meaning in context of production/utterance—of philosophical discourse in ancient philosophy as “ways of life”:

“[I]t was in relation to language games that I first had the idea that philosophy is also a spiritual exercise because, ultimately, spiritual exercises are often language games, in which one tells oneself a phrase to provoke an effect, whether on others or on oneself, hence under certain circumstances and with a certain goal. Moreover, in the same context, Wittgenstein also used the expression ‘form of life.’ This also inspired me to understand philosophy as a form or way of life.” (*Happiness* 135)

With the help of Hadot’s approach to interpretation, and the recognition of the philosophical attitude embodied by scholars mentioned above, we have come to a richer understanding of ancient philosophical discourse and its practice within the context of the contemporary moment. The philosophical attitude continues, so what of practicing the spiritual exercises bereft of the context and community of the schools of antiquity.

The Sage in 2020

The community of practitioners, the philosopher’s school, was essential for the spiritual development of the individual *philo-sophos* in the ancient context. As discussed in chapters two and three, this format acknowledged the primacy of the formative capacity of the embodied spoken word for the spiritual progress of the practitioner, which is the primary goal of philosophy. Bereft of the ancient schools and masters of philosophy, how can one “hasten to the

philosopher to hear him speak, question him, and carry on discussions with him and other disciples in a community that always serves as a place of discussion”? (*Way of Life* 62). Reading ‘alone’ the contemporary seeker of wisdom will become aware of his lack of wisdom and desire for it by following the models of those mentioned above who continued the philosophical attitude in their historical moment. “Montaigne, Goethe, Nietzsche . . . too, were alone, but in accordance with their circumstances and innermost needs, they chose the ways of life of ancient philosophy as their models” (*Ancient* 277). In other words, the essentials are available and can be adaptable to meet current conditions of the need to train the capacity of attention and to address the ever-emergent questions of meaning in life.

Borrowing from Nietzsche, Hadot gained the view that the schools and subsequent traditions of philosophical discourse act for the present-day reader as “experimental laboratories” of the experiences and consequences that the various ancient ways of life have to offer (Nietzsche qtd. in *Ancient* 277-278). Hadot encouraged contemporary readers to adopt the attitude of eclecticism, in other words, students are able to benefit simultaneously from both an Epicurean and/or Stoic model in approaching the conditions of the present moment (*Ancient* 277). This is so because conditions change and philosophy as embodied is therapeutic insofar as it addresses the conditions of the lived-body in the lifeworld and social complex (Arneson 77). Experiments of the ancients provide time-tested and honed models for practicing stepping away from the hunt (Bauman), developing attention (Crawford) to the moment, and in communication with others develop responses to the questions of meaning. In and through communication one orients oneself in the life world and social complex through internal and external discourse and dialogue. The Cynic, Neoplatonic, and especially Stoic and Epicurean approaches to wisdom are

found outside the ancient context of the schools and are practicable for seeking wisdom in the present moment.

When the outdated “cosmological and mythical elements” of the schools are “transcended” the fundamental attitude of approaching the search for wisdom becomes primary (*Ancient* 278; *Citadel* 309). Hadot posited, “these models [Cynic, Neoplatonic, Stoic, Epicurean] correspond to fundamental attitudes which all human beings find necessary when they set about seeking wisdom” (*Ancient* 278). The models are finite and universal, “which are found in various forms, in every civilization, throughout the various culture zones of humanity” (278). As we have seen, the attitude, existential choice, and consequent way of life of a school was modeled in the figure of the sage.

According to Hadot the model of the sage for the present moment must model and inspire the ongoing orientation of the practitioner’s embodied, therefore communicative and communal, way of life (*Happiness* 117). Hadot’s own attempts at living the Neoplatonic maxims of Plotinus as he was writing the book on Plotinus (*Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* 1963) allowed him to come away acknowledging that an emphasis on separation of the soul and body did not meet the needs of the present day. Rather, “Since 1970 on, I have felt very strongly that it was Epicureanism and Stoicism which could nourish the spiritual life of men and women of our times, as well as my own” (*Way of Life* 280).

Stripping the model of the sage down to the essential characteristics and responsive to the current conditions Hadot outlined a contemporary sage-model characterized by “cosmic consciousness,” “inner peace,” and an increased capacity for the “love of mankind” (*Happiness* 117). The “love of mankind” is the motivation in all the schools to make and re-make the choice of a way of life (*Ancient* 220). The second marker of the sage is an audacious cosmic vision that

keeps the All or the Whole or universal Reason in mind (*Happiness* 117). Motivated with a vision, the sage reaches out to others to attempt to relieve them from the two primary anguishes of life—anxiety and fear—by guiding them to contemplation of the same cosmic vision which motivates him. Keeping the vision of the whole in mind, the sage has transcended a partial ego-oriented vision as he attains a view from above that puts his actions and life in a humbling perspective that likewise births in the soul a freedom from those fears which equates to an inner peace (117-118).

Hadot wrote that the love of mankind and inner peace must contend with “revolt grumbling inside” as the contemporary philosopher (*philo-sophos*)—the one seeking wisdom following the example of the sage—views the full landscape of human suffering, such as human trafficking, the opioid crisis in the United States, war-torn regions and oppressed populations, and the effects of the Anthropocene epoch on current and future generations (*Happiness* 119). In love the philosopher cannot turn away from the human suffering all the while struck by his “powerlessness to reform anything” (119). For in the Stoic sense, the love of mankind refers to the realization that “no being is alone, but that we are parts of a Whole, constituted by the totality of human beings as well as by the totality of the cosmos” (*Citadel* 311). In other words, the fundamental human condition is not isolation, but rather we are in-relation with others and are thus already communicative (Butchart 134).

Loving mankind and the cosmos and bringing our intention into coherence with universal, Reason is also loving the part of the whole that we are. Thus, bringing inner peace to oneself through the spiritual exercises of attention, dialogue, and meditation is inseparable from bringing other beings into coherence with reason because all are already in an affective, formative, thus communicative relationship with and as the Whole (Butchart 136). Differently

than the road of detachment or indifference as in the ancient era to bring peace of mind, the modern philosopher must be concerned “to act well without being misled by hatred, anger, or pity” (119). Hadot was adamant on this point, “I nevertheless believe that without inner peace, no action can ultimately be effective” (*Happiness* 119). For only the person or persons who have formed the inner attitude in the spiritual exercises of being authentically present to oneself—meditation and attention—can bring their whole being to be present with others in dialogue and in living philosophically (*Way of Life* 91).

The Present Moment

Hadot had several conversations with Jeannie Carlier and Arnold Davidson and they ended up being some of his final conversations on his own thought, as he died shortly thereafter on April 24, 2010 in Orsay, France. The published collection of these conversations appeared under the title *The Present Alone is Our Happiness* (2011) indicating the prominent position this universal spiritual attitude figured in ancient philosophy and in Hadot’s diagnosis and prescription for philosophers (*philo-sophos*) in the present moment. As seen in chapter three of this project the spiritual exercise of being attentive to the present moment was fundamental to living philosophically. Attentiveness to the present moment was intimately tied to the therapeutic function of the spiritual exercises for both gathering and focusing the self and its expansion (*Ancient* 189; *Citadel* 118). Attention to the present moment—a pillar of practice for the Epicureans and the Stoics—was deployed to overcome the fear and anxiety of the future and the past (*Way of Life* 87).

Tied to this exercise in coming to realize the abundance of the present moment was the exercise of meditation on one’s own death which brought one to realize the “value and seriousness” to the moments in a life (*Ancient* 193). The ancient philosophy as a way of life

responded to a conventional life that was “inauthentic” and “darkened by unconsciousness and harassed by worry” as one’s inner discourse was dispersed (*Way of Life* 83). As it was then so it is now: “Today, we are even more inwardly divided than was Plotinian man” (*Plotinus* 113). What we might call ‘routine’ concerns of the daily life—having food, shelter, work, health care, concern for children and/or parents—are compounded in the present moment by conditions to which both Crawford and Bauman give voice. Particularly the valuation of stimulation over content and an underdeveloped capacity for attention, and of being responsive to the corporeal/linguistic expressivity of/with others in human communication amidst a ‘liquid modern’ culture of the hunter that disincentivizes reflection. Hadot’s description is consistent with theirs as he relays in closing out an essay on the present moment,

“[I]t was not in order to satisfy some historical or literary curiosity, but to describe a spiritual attitude: an attitude which, for ourselves and for modern man in general, hypnotized as we are by language, images, information, and the myth of the future, seemed to us to provide one of the best means of access to this wisdom [of the present moment], so misunderstood and yet so necessary. The call of Socrates speaks to us more now than ever before: ‘Take care for yourself.’ This call is echoed by Nietzsche’s remark: ‘Is it not the case that all human institutions’ – to which we might add: ‘as well as the whole of modern life’ – are intended to prevent mankind from feeling their life by means of the constant dispersion of their thoughts.’” (*Way of Life* 235)

Philosophy as a way of life exercised in attention to the present moment (e.g. in meditation), or in the exercise of contemplation on death, opens for present day readers a way to “train ourselves for that unique act of wisdom”—doing the good with and for others—as one moves through the routine concerns of daily life to those that concern one’s *whole being*. A being that is abandoned

to language, embedded as part of the cosmos and is *in* communication “the mode and means through which human being makes sense of its experience of having-to-be” (Butchart 12-13). For the ancient and the modern *philo-sophos* the task carried out in communication is never complete.

*Philosophy as a Way of Life:
The Incomplete Task of Corporeal/Linguistic Expressivity*

Transformation of the practitioner’s “whole way of being” begins in a lack of wisdom which opens and keeps open the possibility for seeking wisdom, i.e., living philosophically as a way of life (Davidson 21). The completion of the philosophical task as modeled in the myth/figures of sages is deemed by all philosophical models as nearly unattainable. The impossibility of the task of becoming a sage, thus a perpetual *philo-sophos*, secures the ground of transformation—or the ‘space’ where the task of philosophy is worked out and lived—as the “lived-body” tethered to the life-world that is the “site of communicative tasks to be performed by the embodied subject” (Arneson 24).

The philosophical task (seeking wisdom) is indivisible from the lived-body. As embodied, philosophy as a way of life—seeking wisdom through spiritual exercises that form and reform an embodied self in concert with an operative understanding of nature, the cosmos, and self-in-relation with all—is communicative engagement in and through corporeal/linguistic expressivity (Arneson 25; Butchart 5). For Hadot philosophy is learning “how to live a human life” which is inextricable from the human condition (*Happiness* 188).

Philosophy as a way of life in the ancient world took shape as a “living conversation” occurring “person to person” and “was not cut off from daily life” (*Happiness* 188). In other words, philosophy as a way of life relied on and was carried out in and through a lived-body—the ground for corporeal and linguistic expressivity (Arneson 23). Arneson articulates that,

“Without a body-lived and a lived-body there is no communication—no self, no meaning, no discourse, no community, no culture” (27). “Human communication” continues Arneson, “intertwines the body with thought/language/expressivity in a phenomenal field. . . Meaning arises in lived experience, which is created, negotiated, and shared with others in embodied linguistic expressivity” (27). “Embodied linguistic expressivity” enmeshed in the life-world with others is the condition of possibility for living philosophically, i.e seeking wisdom in the “living conversation” of everyday life. For living philosophically in the present moment, it is a necessary condition that philosophy as a way of life remain incomplete.

Hadot has variously noted the generative and inherent contradiction of the perfection of the philosophical life/philosophy *in* daily life. “The drama of the human condition is that it is impossible not to philosophize, and at the same time it is impossible to philosophize,” and again, “it is precisely in this daily life that [the philosopher] . . . must seek to attain that way of life which is utterly foreign to the everyday world” (*Happiness* 189, *Way of life* 58). For example, experiencing a moment of corporeal/linguistic expressivity appearing to be in coherence with universal Reason and the Whole while in the next moment confronted by the necessities, passions, fears and anxieties that are inherent to embodiment. These remind and re-embody the philosopher’s lack of wisdom.

A lack of wisdom, or a lack of identity with the corporeal/linguistic expressivity embodied in the sage-model, is the opening revealing that “human essence is *with*” and that “Com-*muni*-cation” indicates relation with other people as ontologically primary (Butchart 134). A lack of wisdom is the necessary condition for living and communicating philosophically. Socrates again serves as a model for ancient and the present moment.

Aware of his own lack of wisdom Socrates turned to others in his search. His conversations occurred as he walked in the city, rested outside the walls, in battle, at drinking parties, and just before he drank the hemlock. Socrates and his dialogue partner(s) are in-relation on the condition of the experience and awareness of a lack of wisdom and the desire toward wisdom both of which are corporeally and linguistically expressed on the “terrain” of the lived-body as meaning is negotiated and renegotiated in and through human communication (Arneson 25). Following the conversation in Plato’s *Symposium* Socrates, to continue his search for wisdom, turns again, necessarily, to the banalities of everyday life—washing himself and conversing with others in the city—the communicative ground and means of the search for wisdom.

Toward a Holistic Communication Ethics of the Present Moment

“As far as lived ethics is concerned, the point is obviously not to be content with an ethical theory, but to practice it. For the Stoics, what matters is above all what they call the duties, that is, the duties of everyday life. We thus have to deal with spiritual exercises, or with what I call spiritual exercises, that is, practices intended to transform the self, and make it reach a higher level and a universal perspective, thanks in particular to physics, the awareness of one’s relation to the world, or thanks to the awareness of one’s relation with the whole of humanity, which implies the duty of taking the common good into account.” (*Happiness* 177)

Pierre Hadot preferred to situate his conception of ethics within what he calls a general “existential interest” in ancient philosophy and philosophy as a way of life in the present moment (*Happiness* 175). “[E]thical implies an evaluation concerning good and bad in actions, or in

people, or in things” (*Happiness* 175). Hadot considered ‘ethical’ or ‘ethics’ to be inextricable from the practice of philosophy as a way of life, and too limited a descriptor for the phenomenon that was ancient philosophy and the concept of living it for the present moment. Pat Arneson’s description resonates with Hadot’s understanding of the inextricable intertwining of ethics and embodiment: “A person cannot separate herself from the ethical dimension of life; one’s ethics are always learned and communicated both corporeally and linguistically with the power dynamics of the social complex” (80). Ethics lived and “communicated corporeally and linguistically” took shape as the spiritual exercises (chapter three) as they called on and (trans)formed the practitioner and community at the level of *being* (80).

Chapter one reviewed Hadot’s historical context and intellectual development as he came to the question, “is modern man still able to understand the texts of antiquity and live according to them?” (*Way of life* 278). Hadot’s scholarship can be viewed as a sustained response to that question. To that end his scholarship assists an understanding of ancient Greek and Roman philosophical texts as support for exercising philosophy through embodied spiritual exercises. Spiritual exercises, such as attention, meditation, and dialogue were inseparable from an operable theory and vision of nature and the cosmos. This situated the philosopher and others as members of the larger human community and as parts and expressions of the cosmos. Ethical considerations are part of existential transformation of the self and others as members of the human and cosmic whole.

For adopting and adapting ancient practices for the present Hadot prescribed an eclectic approach. For example, a person in the present moment has access to and can choose from the various models of philosophical life and attitudes toward wisdom—Stoic, Epicurean, Neoplatonic, Buddhist, Christian, etc.—each addressing the present human condition—inflicted

with anxiety and fear—bringing peace to the soul, acknowledging oneself and others as parts and expressions of the All or Whole, and by attaining consciousness of the present moment and thereby a consciousness of one's own lack of knowledge and desire for it (chapter 5).

In chapter five I argued that Hadot's philosophy of communication is holistic as it addresses the embodied incomplete task of orienting oneself in the social complex and the lifeworld through the therapeutic spiritual exercises that act in and through one's corporeal/linguistic expressivity attentive to temporal and terrestrial conditions. (Arneson 25).

Arnett, Fritz, and Bell present a figure of communication ethics that is a pragmatic necessity in the contemporary historical moment (1). Their model of communication ethics asserts that communicative practices protect and promote a construct of the 'good.' In a liquid modern historical moment the many and various forms of the good are ever shifting and in contention revealed in and practiced and expressed in human communication (Bauman 30). Arnett, Fritz, and Bell foreground the necessity of engaging others in learning as minimal agreement is worked out to meet, together, the needs of the existential moment (Arnett, Fritz, and Bell (xi-xvii)). This allows for a multiplicity of appropriate responses to existential conditions. In the present moment this is poignantly demonstrated in the patchwork of responses to the pandemic by the different states and communities in the United States. With a minimal agreement of curbing the rate of the spread and protecting the national economy the responses, the timing and specific restrictions of travel and prescriptions for cover have varied. Organizations such as schools and other community organizations (e.g. athletic/health clubs) are navigating instruction and interaction in the digital/online communicative environment—most for the first time. In navigating emergent historical conditions Hadot contributes to a communication ethics that learns from ancient models of *philosophia*.

The ideal of the philosopher was filled-out in the myth/figure of the sage. In chapter 2, I reviewed Hadot's distinction between the philosopher and the sage. The sage is considered the model of the school. For example, in the Stoic understanding the sage's corporeal/linguistic expressivity were part of the production of "all the events of the universe" because in complete coherence with universal reason (*Citadel* 76). The sage was at a different and "higher level" of *being* than that of the philosopher (*Happiness* 177). Coherent, thus already in accordance with, without the possibility of presenting corporeal/linguistic expressivity other than universal Reason (in the Stoic sense). However, the existence or attainment of the sage is an ideal that was considered to be unattainable because unlike the sage the philosopher was subject, as we all are, to the human condition of the passions and the responsibility of the everyday existence of life as part of a community. Hadot identified the philosopher as the person that is simultaneously aware of, 1) his lack of wisdom, and 2) his innate desire for wisdom (chapter 2). The way toward wisdom was in the practice of the spiritual exercises which were expressed corporeally/linguistically and worked to transform the practitioner's level of being, in other words, the transformation of the self.

In Hadot's rendering of the differences between philosophical discourse and philosophy lived as a way of life—*philosophia*—the existential exercise of the choice to live philosophically gives birth to philosophical discourse which in turn leads back to the existential choice, as, "by means of its logical *and persuasive force, and the action it tries to exert upon the interlocuter*—[philosophical discourse] incites both masters and disciples to live in genuine conformity with their initial choice" (*Ancient* 3, emphasis added). A theme central to self-transformation for Hadot is the issue of cosmic consciousness and transcendent wisdom embodied/modeled in the figure of the sage. Michel Foucault (1926-1984 CE) was similarly working with understanding

ancient models of life in understanding self-formation. Unfortunately, Foucault's premature death did not allow for an extended conversation between he and Hadot. Hadot did write a short piece on the convergences and divergences between Foucault's aesthetics of existence and his own understanding of philosophy as a way of life.

Hadot critiques Foucault's conception of the spiritual exercises and techniques of the self as "focused far too much on the 'self,' or at least on a specific conception of the self" (*Way of Life* 207). Hadot couches his critique of Foucault's description of the practitioner finding a certain amount of pleasure in the self in a mistranslation of the Greek based on the understanding of the Stoic principle of joy. On Hadot's interpretation, joy for the Stoic is not 'found' in the self, rather it is found through virtue, which may or may not be pleasurable for the self. Referring to the same letter of Seneca Hadot articulates that the text supports a reading that the Stoic finds joy not in the self, but rather in "the best portion of the self,' in 'the true good'" (*Seneca* qtd. in *Way of Life* 207). This is consistent with the Stoic view of the coherence of human reason with Universal reason and each human being as part and expression of the Whole or the All. "The 'best portion of oneself,' then, is, in the last analysis, a transcendent self. Seneca does not find his joy in 'Seneca,' but by transcending 'Seneca'; by discovering that there is within him – within all human beings, that is and within the cosmos itself – a reason which is a part of universal reason" (*Way of Life* 207). We see here again, Hadot's emphasis on the Stoic 'way of life' as perhaps best suited for adaptation to the present historical moment. However, even an Epicurean ethics called for physics as a spiritual exercise in combatting the fear of death and the 'gods' (208).

Hadot's point of departure from Foucault's conception of the "aesthetics of existence" is the latter's lack of connection through embodiment to the broader human community and the

cosmos (*Way of Life* 208). “Such a cosmic perspective radically transforms the feeling one has of oneself” (208). For Hadot the “psychic content” then of the “aesthetics of existence” and the practice of spiritual exercises within a sense of the whole of the cosmos is going to be different. Hadot’s critique includes also Foucault’s concept of “writing of the self” derived from the spiritual exercise of writing down notions to give pleasure to the soul by recording the notes of wisdom of the past. This would relieve the soul of its worries over the future by enjoying the “possession of a past” collected in the “spiritual notebooks”—the genre of *hypomnemata* which Hadot discusses as the same genre of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius (*Citadel* 24-25). This point of departure is minor, yet influential for the practitioner’s understanding of the practice.

Hadot focused on the practices of the self in bringing attention to the present moment. In chapter 3 I reviewed Hadot’s understanding of the spiritual exercises as bringing relief from the fears and anxieties brought on through considerations of both the past and the future. Hadot’s critique of Foucault’s interpretation of the spiritual exercise of writing “what-has-already-been-said” has two points. The first is that Foucault’s rendering of the practice opens the way for a (re)turn to a pleasurable past that simultaneously covers over the “fundamental philosophic attitude” and purpose of being in the present moment (209). Second, Foucault’s rendering of writing misses the specificity of what was written down in the ancient practice. “In other words, when one writes or notes something down, it is not an alien thought one is making one’s own. Rather, one is utilizing formulae considered as apt to actualize what is already present within the reason of the person writing, and bring it to life” (210). These point to the fundamental difference between Hadot and Foucault on the spiritual exercises for the present moment.

Hadot’s critique of Foucault serves to highlight Hadot’s conception of the holistic and therapeutic value of the spiritual exercises, i.e. the embodied exercise of philosophical life.

“Writing, like the other spiritual exercises, *changes the level of the self*, and universalizes it” (*Way of Life* 211, emphasis added). Therapeutic, as the practices exercised and thus changed one’s *being*; holistic insofar as the self recognizes itself and others as part of the whole of humankind and the cosmos. “This is a new way of being-in-the-world, which consists in becoming aware of oneself as a part of nature, and a portion of universal reason” (211)

“In this way, one identifies oneself with an ‘Other’: nature, or universal reason, as it is present within each individual. This implies a radical transformation of perspective, and contains a universalist, cosmic dimension, upon which, it seems to me, M. Foucault did not sufficiently insist. Interiorization is a going beyond oneself; it is universalization.” (211)

This discussion hinges on Hadot’s understanding of the ‘movement’ of self-transformation occurring as an interior-to-exterior movement that is clearly characterized in ancient Stoic spiritual exercise of taking the view from above (chapters 4 and 5). Briefly, the philosopher brings attention to the self—reflecting on actions, reflection on death—in so doing coming to the simultaneous awareness of her or his lack of wisdom and desire for wisdom. Simultaneous with this awareness is the realization that one is but a part and expression of the All or the Whole. Thus, the philosopher proceeds to a view from above with an operative vision of the cosmos and his and other’s place in it. Cosmic consciousness and the transcendent myth/figure of the sage are dimensions of practice of philosophy in the present moment for Hadot which is a divergence from Foucault’s aesthetics of existence. Though significant, the differences between the concepts of self-transformation only serve to highlight a shared project approached differently. Hadot remarked,

“To summarize: what Foucault calls ‘practices of the self’ do indeed correspond, for the Platonists as well as for the Stoics, to a movement of conversion toward the self. One frees oneself from exteriority, from personal attachment to exterior objects, and from the pleasures they may provide. One observes oneself, to determine whether one has made progress in this exercise. One seeks to be one’s own master, to possess oneself, and find one’s happiness and freedom in inner independence. I concur on all these points.” (*Way of Life* 211)

This shared project could be characterized as turning, again, to ancient models of life in help for navigating the conditions of the present historical moment. With that in mind Arnold Davidson approaches the beginnings of a dialogue.

Arnold Davidson poses a question at the intersection of Hadot and Foucault on the mobilizing force of transcendent wisdom. “Is there an imminent equivalent of transcendent wisdom? Can you have a relationship with yourself that has the strength and mobility of wisdom, but without being transcendent?” (*La Repubblica*). Davidson’s question is thought provoking in two ways. Firstly, in human communication scholarship Davidson’s question presents an opening to extended conversation between Foucault and Hadot on philosophy, communication, embodiment, ethics, practice and/or *habitus*, and community. For this project, Davidson’s question raises the issue of motivation or mobility for choosing, over and again, to practice the spiritual exercises toward the model of the sage.

In response to the question posed, Davidson looks to Foucault’s aesthetics of existence as a path forward for living contemporary philosophy as a way of life. Echoing Hadot’s critique from *Philosophy as a Way of Life* Davidson points out that Foucault’s aesthetics of existence can readily be interpreted as self-aggrandizement—“the Californian cult of the self”(*La Repubblica*).

Rather, Davidson points out that Foucault notes that this conception of the self-transformative practices are intended to be married to a critical dimension that is not juridical. “According to Foucault, the need for an aesthetic of existence is related to the need for a technique of the self, a life technique that involves a new attitude towards ourselves, a critical attitude” (*La Repubblica*). Disabused of the cult of the self, Davidson concludes that “our task is to rediscover history and to invent the exercises for ourselves” (*La Repubblica*). The contemporary task outlined by Davidson is helped along by Hadot’s rediscovery of *philosophia* and the corporeal/linguistic practice of the spiritual exercises.

In posing the question Davidson noted Hadot’s continual reminders that *philosophia* is only viable insofar as it addresses therapeutically human conditions of the present moment—embodied thus subject to the passions, communal thus communicative and embedded in relations of communication, lacking wisdom, and abandoned to temporal and terrestrial conditions. As the conditions change so do the models of the sage, “I want to remind you that Hadot himself says that a correct conception of the sage must take into account the new historical conditions” (*La Repubblica*). In my reading of Davidson ‘the sage’ of Hadot in the contemporary moment functions as a symbol for the attraction-force of transcendent wisdom in Hadot’s rendering of ancient philosophical practice.

Motivation, or the desire to change is inextricable with awareness, love for humankind, and cosmic consciousness (*Ancient* 220; *Citadel* 311). Ethics lived and “communicated corporeally and linguistically” took shape as the spiritual exercises (chapter three) as they called on and (trans)formed the practitioner and community at the level of *being*.

Corporeal/linguistic expressivity, awareness in/of the present moment, love for humankind, and cosmic consciousness, as well as being at the core of Hadot’s holistic

philosophy of communication, also serve to form an opening for an extended conversation and development of a holistic communication ethics in our time. In my reading of Hadot an adapted cosmic consciousness (via physics as a spiritual exercises) for the present moment does not necessarily need to be tied transcendent wisdom—as in God, or gods—but rather a functioning view from above that transcends the limits of self, but immanent in that it’s mobility factor is in being responsive and responsible to one’s terrestrial surroundings and the larger world and the community.

Conclusion

This chapter set forth Pierre Hadot’s holistic philosophy of communication that attends to the health of the individual and the community through the practice of spiritual exercises that recruit and transform one’s entire being. A holistic philosophy of communication works at the nexus of mind, body, soul, and cosmos; is ever-incomplete; and works with and in an understanding of “human being as essentially an exposure that lacks a closed identity” and “keep[s] sight of the opening, wound, or lack that remains at the heart of any community and all communication” (Butchart 136). A holistic philosophy of communication is responsive to the present moment that experiences increased levels of anxiety, with underdeveloped capacity of attention for relational development with anything and anyone ‘outside our head’ in cultural forms that privilege the hunt over reflection, and disjointed conditions of time and space. These conditions make it difficult to recognize and form responses to the fundamental questions that confront each of us: How do I live a good life? What does death mean? What purpose is there in this life? Hadot’s work offers insight into adopting and adapting ancient philosophical attitudes, working toward inner peace, attaining a view from above, and fostering a love of mankind all born in the understanding that we are fundamentally in relation with others in human

communication. The conclusion of this section outlined the beginnings of a holistic communication ethics that foregrounds minimal agreement, love for humankind, cosmic consciousness and attention to the present moment. Practiced together these are intended to therapeutically exercise self and other in the uncertain conditions of the current moment.

So how do we practice? As simple and cliché as it sounds, we learn from Hadot that living philosophy as a way of life in the present moment involves reading the ancients (of any wisdom tradition), reflecting on one's own communicative engagement in one's relations, form the intent to 'do the good' for oneself and for/with others, and acknowledging the presence of others as we talk with them and work out meaning in the everyday embodied and earthly situations of life.

Michael Chase, student, translator, and friend of Hadot wrote a memorial article on the occasion of Hadot's death in 2010. In it, he recounted several instances of Hadot's own engagements with students, friends, and strangers: "friendly, non-condescending" and "simple", "self-deprecating" and "humorous" (Chase). One instance that stood out to Chase is a banal and everyday example of living philosophy as a way of life.

"On one occasion, he invited Isabel [Chase's wife] 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' guest to twiddle their thumbs." (Chase)

The search for wisdom, or responses to the questions above, occurs with others by risking the uncertainty of communication in the everyday “living conversations” in line at the coffee shop, at the farmer’s market, with colleagues and classmates, at the ballgame, at athletic practices (*Happiness* 188). Reading Hadot is an invitation to live and communicate philosophically.

Arnold I. Davidson introduces Hadot’s book on Plotinus by framing the experience as “Reading Hadot Reading Plotinus” (*Plotinus* 1). In reading Hadot’s work one is aware of two ongoing and simultaneous processes. The first process is Hadot’s engagement of ancient philosophical discourse as he practices writing and reading as a spiritual exercise for nourishing his own spiritual progress. Reading Hadot is similar to what he says of reading the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, “it is extremely rare to find a person training himself to live and to think like a human being. . . Marcus is talking to himself, but we get the impression that he is talking to each one of us” (*Citadel* 313). The second process is the ongoing invitation for us, his readers, to step out of the hunt and, with others in and through human communication respond to the questions of life.

EPILOGUE

Practicing a Holistic Philosophy of Communication & Communication Ethics

The first section of this epilogue provides a review of the chapters. The closing section functions as an opening for future research and practice in human communication.

Review of Chapters

This chapter has introduced the life and work of Pierre Hadot. Hadot asks the question, “is modern man still able to understand the texts of antiquity, and live according to them” (*Way of Life* 278). Through this education under Paul Henri and Pierre Courcelle Hadot was exposed early to the systematic work of Thomas Aquinas and the great mystics of the Catholic Intellectual tradition. This put him in a position to read ancient texts within their own context to revisit the phenomenon of ancient philosophy, or *philosophia*. *Philosophia* is an embodied way of life, lived out in community of practitioners, that has attendant spiritual practices for the intention of forming the “inner attitude” and orienting the practitioner in the life-world (*Way of Life* 59). This way of life is an existential choice rooted in a view of the cosmos (*Ancient* 3). In the present historical moment, the texts that have come to be understood as the texts of philosophy were produced for the support of this initial choice of a way of life situated and were not constrained by the purpose of the creation of a fully coherent system of thought.

Hadot’s understanding and practice of interpretation affirms the goal of working toward objectivity in the process of interpretation. A person engaging with the text is certainly situated in their own moment, however they can, with rigor, place the text in question back in its literary genre, environment, and culture in working out what the author intended to convey aided by the understanding that ancient rules of literary production were more codified than present, e.g. Marcus Aurelius’ *Meditations* follow the guidelines for “notes for oneself” or the genre

hypomnēmata as notes for support in practice (see ch. 3). While some mistakes are errors there are some that have been shown to be fruitful in opening up gaps for new meaning. Hadot regards these errors as “Creative mistakes” (*Way of Life* 71, 75). Perhaps the most consequential example of the result of a creative mistake is the emergence of the distinction between infinitive “being” and participle “being” from Plato’s *Parmenides* (*Way of Life* 75).

Chapter two reviewed the distinction between those who love wisdom (philosopher) and those who have achieved a state of wisdom (sage). Hadot discusses this distinction in two book-length studies of philosophers; Plotinus (Neoplatonism) in *Plotinus or the Simplicity of Vision* (1993) and Marcus Aurelius (Stoic) in *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* (1998). For Plotinus the sage-experience is fleeting and rare. For Marcus Aurelius and the Stoics sage status had been achieved but only by one or maybe two people. However, progress toward wisdom was possible as a condition of desiring. In the middle-way of lack, desire, and *atopos*—“strange, extravagant, absurd, unclassifiable, disturbing” (*Ancient Philosophy* 30)—way of living is most vivid in the received myth/figure of Socrates, the prototypical *philo-soph* of the Western tradition.

Hadot drew attention to Socrates’ words and actions to show that care for the soul and care for the public life are not mutually exclusive tasks. Socrates’ search for wisdom was to engender souls that were awake to their own lack of knowledge. For Socrates, latent in all of us is the desire to know and do the good. Socrates’s task then is to act as a midwife and help birth the soul into awareness that one doesn’t know what one thought. As dialogue partner, Socrates takes on the role of risk and responsibility of continuing the questioning at the point of crisis. In the erotic sphere Socrates shifts from being the lover pursuing the young boy, to the beloved as the boy chases after him. In both cases the interlocutor hides behind the mask of Socrates as both

pursuits continue simultaneously. At the point of revelation, Socrates stepped aside, revealing at once the interlocutor's lack of knowledge and their love for the pursuit of wisdom (*Way of Life* 162).

Chapter three turned to Hadot's explication of the lived exercises of the practitioner. This review of the phenomenon of spiritual exercises began by further situating them in the context of *philosophia*. In that context practicing spiritual exercises was identical to living a philosophical life. This is consistent with the practice of acknowledging those as philosophers who did not write any 'philosophy', e.g. Socrates, Plotinus, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius before his *Meditations* were widely available.

The spiritual exercises functioned as therapeutic practices by responding to the human condition—"a state of unhappy disquiet" or of "alienation, dispersion and unhappiness"—emergent especially in the passions, e.g. wealth, power, food, sex, etc. (*Way of Life* 102; *Ancient* 198). The exercises confirmed the already formed choice to live a way of life. The exercises common to the ancient schools of philosophy were: attention, meditation, dialogue, inner discourse, training for death and physics (more in chapter 4). The exercises overlap with each other in exercising two movements soul in coming to self-consciousness: bringing attention to itself and to expanding the self toward a "cosmic consciousness" (*Way of Life* 85). Through his rendering of spiritual exercises Hadot brought his readers to an awareness "of philosophy not only as a concrete, practical activity but also as a transformation of our way of inhabiting and perceiving the world" and to highlight the recurrences of this attitude throughout the history of philosophy (*Ancient* 270).

Chapter four addressed how inquiries into nature and the cosmos are integral in the formation of frameworks for orienting oneself in the lifeworld and social complex (Arnett and

Holba 9; Arneson 77). Physics when practiced as a spiritual exercise brought about “the realization of the presence of the world and of our belonging to the world” of, with, and for others in relations of communication (*Happiness* 96). With physics supporting the spiritual practice of taking a view from above, routine concerns and interactions were brought into the perspective of being parts and expressions of the Whole wherein meanings of the human condition abandoned to this place and time can be renegotiated with others. Hadot outlined the relationship between humans, nature, and the cosmos by tracing the development of meanings of the Heraclitean aphorism “Nature loves to hide” (x, Kahn 33; *Veil of Isis*).

Emergent from the aphorism is the idea that nature held secrets, which sets up an opposition between humans and nature. Revealing the secretes was the purview of philosophy and the sciences. Hadot characterizes the attempts at revealing the secrets of nature as Promethean or Orphic. The two attitudes are not a strict division, but rather “equally essential” in the investigations of nature and are often found together (*Veil* 98). The Promethean attitude is based in an understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature to be generally hostile. Through technological and mechanical means the researcher will forces nature to give up its secrets so they can be used for the purposes of humankind. The Orphic attitude is based in the idea that humanity is a part of nature. The secrets of nature can be known through human art insofar as human art—the poem, the painting, the philosophical discourse—is a participation in the same creative and generative process of nature (*Veil* 92). Negotiation of meaning and formulating responses in human communication to the present terrestrial conditions involves understandings of our relationship with nature and the cosmos. In re-placing the current circumstances with the perspective of the All (Stoic understanding of cosmos) the philosopher

becomes aware of the vastness of the All present in the world and others. Human communication is thus (re)oriented toward the expression of the All in others.

Chapter five set forth Pierre Hadot's holistic philosophy of communication that attends to the health of the individual and the community through the practice of spiritual exercises that recruit and transform one's entire being. A holistic philosophy of communication works at the nexus of mind, body, soul, and cosmos; is ever-incomplete; and works with and in an understanding of "human being as essentially an exposure that lacks a closed identity" and "keep[s] sight of the opening, wound, or lack that remains at the heart of any community and all communication" (Butchart 136). A holistic philosophy of communication is responsive to the present moment that experiences increased levels of anxiety, with underdeveloped capacity of attention for relational development in cultural forms that privilege the hunt over reflection, and disjointed conditions of time and space. These conditions make it difficult to recognize and form responses to the fundamental questions that confront each of us: How do I live a good life? What does death mean? What purpose is there in this life? Hadot's work offers insight into adopting and adapting ancient philosophical attitudes, working toward inner peace, attaining a view from above, and fostering a love of mankind all born in the understanding that we are fundamentally in relation with others in human communication.

As simple and cliché as it sounds, we learn from Hadot that living philosophy as a way of life in the present moment involves reading the ancients (of any wisdom tradition), reflecting on one's own communicative engagement in one's relations, form the intent to 'do the good' for oneself and for/with others, and acknowledging the presence of others as we talk with them and work out meaning in the everyday embodied and earthly situations of life. Reading Hadot is an invitation to live and communicate philosophically.

Practicing Holistic Communication Ethics: An Opening

Across the United States most communities are now required to practice—out of necessity—a form of social distancing that calls us to avoid gathering together. The necessity is for protection of self and others in the uncertain conditions of a global pandemic to which 80,000 deaths worldwide are already attributed. The nature of COVID-19 is highly contagious and is able to persist on surfaces for far longer than other viruses of similar genetic construction such as influenza (World Health Organization). We are put in the position of having to practice a form of ‘social distancing’ in order to stop the spread or ‘flatten the curve’ of the infection rate. Other restrictions include wearing a face covering in public and frequent hand sanitizing/washing.

‘Social distancing’ restrictions include maintaining a distance of six feet or two meters apart from individuals which has necessarily caused the shutdown (or limited to take-out and delivery service) of all locations that could be environments where the virus could easily spread. This includes all schools, restaurants, bars/pubs, movie-theatres, barber shops/hair salons, and community health organizations such as the YMCA and any business that is ‘non-essential.’ All organized athletics and especially team sports, are considered non-essential and they certainly qualify as places of potential spread of the virus. As a lead coach for a smaller community rowing club that services a range of programs and people from middle school up to people in their 70’s (there is one woman in her 90’s) I and the coaching staff (four people) are navigating the uncharted virtual environment to find ways of practicing community in a time when the primary purpose for gathering—rowing—is not able to happen.

Navigating the current moment through a holistic communication ethics begins in the “minimal agreement” of responsibility for slowing the infection rate of COVID-19 and brings the task of learning to the forefront (Arnett, Fritz, and Bell xiv). Combining this minimal

agreement with the task of learning and a holistic communication ethics brings the spiritual exercises of cosmic consciousness and attention to the present moment as therapeutics for self and community as we attempt to meet the conditions of the current moment.

In the present moment questions arise that combine financial pragmatic concerns and questions for philosophical reflection with human communication and *philosophia* as an entry point. The rowing club currently has programming and is able to employ two full-time coaches whose responsibilities include among others, facility and equipment maintenance, creation and staffing of all programs, and recruitment.⁶ All of these activities are born out of the organizing activity of rowing on the water, travelling, and competing against other clubs in the region. The financial uncertainty comes with the possibility of not being able to generate income through summer rowing opportunities. Income from the summer programming serves as the backbone for the annual budget.⁷ Without the income from summer programming it is a possibility that the club might not be able to support the same level of programming or coaching once the state and then club deems it safe to gather again.

Coexistent with the financial uncertainty are the questions that resonate with individuals and with the community of the rowing club; “What is the form of a club without its primary reason for organizing?” “How do we practice *this* community virtually?” “What is best for the organization and its members?” as a coach I ask, “What is my purpose?”. The personal and community questions come out of an acknowledgement that for many, if not all, of our club members rowing is a practice that is an exercise in human flourishing.

⁶ The rowing club is just one of numerous organizations experiencing similar conditions, so I will speak of the club at which I coach as a specific example of a general situation in hope that it contributes to learning and responding to the current conditions.

⁷ This financial setup is common to most rowing clubs throughout the United States.

Rowing is an embodied, thus communicative and communal practice that brings people together in nature and a common purpose. Thus considered, rowing *can* be a contemporary form of a spiritual exercise when practiced with intent: it is therapeutic as it exercises one's whole being, it is communal, brings attention to the present moment, and exercises one's relation to nature and the cosmos. As with the spiritual exercises as outlined by Hadot the exercises are interwoven with each other and overlap in practice.

Firstly, to achieve the purpose of rowing well with others an individual rower must take care for herself. She must perform the technical aspects of the rowing stroke well, she must take responsibility for her physical health—hydration, nutrition, weather appropriate clothing, etc.—and the equipment and seat assigned to her in the boat. However, she is only one part of the whole. Moving a boat well together the personal care and awareness must open up to an awareness of the whole. Once aware, she recognizes others in the boat calling forth both responsibility and responsivity with and for others in and through corporeal/linguistic expression (Arneson 29).

Secondly, rowing well together calls for attention to the present moment. Rowing is a sport that is done outside on a body of water in narrow boats (about hip-width from gunwale to gunwale), In addition to being responsive to her teammates in the boat the rower and the boat is responding to the natural conditions. Wind, water, sun, rain, snow, temperature are all conditions the boat and the rowers toward which the boat and the rower must be responsive. Recreational and commercial boat-traffic creating wake, debris floating in the water, the speed and direction of the flow of the river, and other obstacles such as navigational buoys and bridge abutments are all a part of the 'field' that rower is interacting with. To be able to respond and row well, the rower must *be present* with herself and the others in the boat. She must set aside the anxieties

and fears of the past and the future—work, school, family, financial—that will call her attention away from exercising her whole embodied being in this moment with others. The third way in which rowing can be practiced as a contemporary spiritual exercise is potentially as an opening into understanding and exercising one’s being in relation to the cosmos.

Hadot notes that the practice of philosophy in the lived spiritual exercises is a, “transformation of our way of inhabiting and perceiving the world” and to highlight the recurrences of this attitude throughout the history of philosophy (*Ancient* 270). In the contemporary moment Robert Macfarlane demonstrates and documents this in *Underland* (2019). Visiting spaces and witnessing phenomena in the structures deep in the earth beneath our feet with others Macfarlane shows how the relations of human communication and societal practices shift in response to our engagement with nature and the cosmos (13-15). The rower changes surfaces as she steps into the boat and helps shove the boat off the dock. With the change in the ‘ground’ under her feet, her perceptions change. In combination with others, in the present moment, physical exertion, and inhabiting the world differently on the water therapeutically exercises her being in self and community transformation.

In chapter 5, I presented an outline of what a holistic communication ethics in the present moment could look like. The outline started is based in the idea that ethics are inseparable from corporeal/linguistic expressivity. Ethics is lived and worked out in the lifeworld and social complex. To that end, Hadot addressed ethics as intricately a part of lived philosophy as an exercise of being. Practicing a holistic communication ethics in the present moment understands that human being, as embodied is communal and communicative. Practicing ethics then, is a fundamentally a therapeutic exercise of being in an through corporeal/linguistic expressivity. A holistic communication ethics protects and promotes living and doing the good with and for

others through self-transformation on the model of a sage. This includes an expanding love for humankind and cosmic consciousness. This in mind, questions emerge; how do we practice a holistic communication ethics in the present moment that necessitates physical distance from each other and separation from the therapeutic spiritual exercise of rowing and the organizing principle that brings club members together?

At this moment, the coaches and club members have more questions and uncertainties than responses to the conditions. What I offer here is a picture of our attempts at a response through the perspective of a holistic communication ethics that protects and promotes the 'good' of embodied community, attention to the present moment, and cosmic consciousness. It is an ever-incomplete task that acknowledges multiple possibility as the conditions shift daily.

Similar to other rowing clubs across the country the coaches and the club are offering times for meetings through video conferencing, such as Zoom and Google Hangouts. In the boat the rower learns to take of herself through attention and practice of the responsibilities of her position in the boat. This brings her to an awareness that she is only part of the boat and that her practices move her to awareness, responsibility, and responsivity with other practitioners attempting to practice a similar life.

We have held two styles of online meetings. The first is where we have each other on the screen while we complete a communal workout. The second is a lecture/discussion on rowing technique, nutrition, college recruiting, and other points. Without the spatio-temporal-communicative feedback from others and the conditions of rowing together in the boat, we attempt through online meetings to recreate the personal-to-communal movement, though differently.

The capacity for practicing attention to the present moment in the form of rowing is what suffers most in the virtual environment. Though different for each rower the practices of rowing physically call the rower to attention, assisting in coming to the realization of the inexhaustible of the present moment—the walk into the boathouse, the warmup run, or shoving-off from the dock combined with that first stroke of the day. Our attempts at a partial response have been to schedule individual meetings with all the junior (ages 14-18) rowers and those of the adults that want them. The purpose here is to check-in on training questions, and how each is handling the transitions in school and family/home life. These check-ins serve functionally to bring attention to the absence of the practice in the present moment and talk about it with each other. In place of the usually practice, in the current time the conversation about the absence is a linguistic expression that acknowledges the corporeal absence of the practice.

For Hadot, cosmic consciousness occurs through practicing the spiritual exercise of physics, or inquiries into nature and a practitioner's relationship to it. The practitioner is able to reorient his interpretive frameworks in perceiving others as parts and expressions of the whole—the whole of the human community, and the whole of the cosmos. This, again, happens as one begins with attention on the self as he recognizes the part of himself that is and participates in the all or whole of nature and the cosmos. This realization expands as it recognizes in others the same part of the whole, community and cosmos.

As the rower steps into the boat and shoves-off onto the water, her relationship to the surrounding area is changed. By exercising this different perspective the rowers can see herself and others as part of a bigger picture in the terrain they usually inhabit. Though shutting down the club meant keeping us away from rowing as a spiritual exercise it was the appropriate action to take. Simply, taking the view from above, the risk was too great and if being closed helps the

spread in even a small way, it is the appropriate action to take for the good of the whole club, community, and cosmos.

Implications for continued research

The sketch above is a short sketch of directions for future human communication research. Hadot's work can bring additive insight to the ongoing scholarly conversations in communication and hermeneutics, organizational communication, and interpersonal communication.

Hadot's unique approach to the interpretation of texts was reviewed in chapter one. Hadot revealed 'philosophy as a way of life' by re-placing texts in their own historical moment, literary genre and environment/culture of production. In referencing the rhetorical and literary rules of composition with an understanding of the practices of the philosophical school of which it was a part, Hadot gains a perspective on the limits that bound the author. These includes a society that continued to privilege orality. Approaching texts of philosophical discourse Hadot argues that jettisoning objectivity as such from historical method has allow for the development of interpretive practices resulting in "genuine aberrations" pointing to Hans-Georg Gadamer specifically (*Nietzsche* 76). Starting with Gadamer's description of Gadamer's description of hermeneutics as, "understanding and interpretation . . . have to do with the basic relationships of human beings to each other and to the world" and that *philosophia* is grounded in the "living words and daily interchanges" drawing out an extended conversation between Hadot and Gadamer on hermeneutics and historical consciousness has potential to contribute to issues of interpretation, human communication, and understanding (Gadamer 157).⁸

⁸ A consequence of this specific discussion would be to develop further the human communication-ontology relationship in Hadot.

Definitions of ‘community’ in Hadot’s work are specific to the Greek and Hellenistic schools (see *Ancient*) and general when referring to a ‘community of practitioners’ when referring to small groups of master and students (such as the Stoics and Neoplatonist instruction at the tail end of the ancient historical moment. However, the general concept of human community and/or the cosmos is integral to the practice of the spiritual exercises. Developing Hadot’s concept of ‘community of practitioners’ can be fruitfully put into conversation with organizational communication scholarship, particularly literature of the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) paradigm.⁹ For example, a fruitful project would be a continuation of the sketch above on the intersection of a holistic communication ethics and questions of the shifting contours of a ‘community of practitioners’—a rowing club—from the perspective of the communicative constitution of organization.

Hadot’s description of dialogue as a spiritual exercise may contribute to the conversation in interpersonal communication. In the ancient practice of *philosophia*, dialogue was a specific practice. Dialogue was entered into between master and student or between two students. Importantly dialogue could only occur if both interlocuters agreed to undergo the process. For Hadot, Socrates serves as the model as he first gains the assent of his interlocuters before leading them to awareness of their own lack of wisdom. As a spiritual practice dialogue and “inner discourse” (simply for Hadot the words one says to oneself) were intertwined with practicing “authentic presence, to oneself and to others” (*Way of Life* 91). Authentic presence with others was conditioned through practicing authentic presence in dialogue with others, and conversely being able to be present with others in dialogue resulted from practicing authentic presence with

⁹ For example see François Cooren. *Action and Agency in Dialogue: Passion, Incarnation and Ventriloquism* (2010).

oneself by training one's inner discourse (91). In the ancient model of life embodied presence was assumed as the primary mode of interaction between people. Hadot's scholarship could contribute to ongoing conversations regarding intersubjective intentionality and authenticity in a communicative environment saturated with digital technology.¹⁰ This conversation would be especially timely as interpersonal interactions are expressed through digital/virtual media so as to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

¹⁰ See for example Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why we Expect More from Technology and Less From Each Other* (2012) and *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age* (2016) and Jeff Bogaczyk, "Intersubjective intentionality, moral consciousness, and media ecology." *Review of Communication*, vol. 17 (4), 2017, pp. 342-356.

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