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... il monografico
Filosofia e arte della vita

Notes on the current state of PWL studies

by *Michael Chase**

Abstract

After a brief introduction, the paper surveys the history of the global development of “Philosophy as a Way of Life” (=PWL), followed by an account of the key features of this philosophical orientation. I then discuss some outstanding issues in current PWL studies, with particular emphasis on the central but problematic notion of objectivity on the thought of Pierre Hadot. I conclude with an introduction to and brief summary of the other contributions to this issue of the “Bollettino”.

Keywords: Pierre Hadot, PWL, Objectivity, Ecology, Philology, Philosophical Counseling.

Introduction

Since Pierre Hadot’s work began to become better known in the English-speaking world in the mid-1990s, the philosophical orientation that has come to be known as “Philosophy as a Way of Life” (PWL) has gradually taken shape. Initially more popular, at least in the English-speaking world, outside of Philosophy departments, in such fields as philosophical counseling, management studies, environmentalism, and the study of religion, among many others, it has now come to be a well-established field in academia. This issue of the “Bollettino della Società Filosofica Italiana” presents contributions that offer a representative sample of some of the main themes dealt with in PWL studies today.

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Global development of PWL

Over the past three decades, PWL has experienced significant development on the international philosophical scene. There are currently a number of centers devoted to its study distributed throughout the world, characterized by lively research activity and led by distinguished researchers. Recognition of the importance of PWL is evidenced, among other things, by the allocation of several national and international funding to projects focused on PWL¹; the inauguration of a monographic series of publications by a major academic publisher²; several recent international conferences and publications³; PhD dissertations and university courses devoted to PWL⁴, continuing English translations of works by Pierre Hadot (2020; 2023), and several important monographs on the subject (Horn, 1998; Ure, Sharpe, 2021; Gavray, Jeanmart, 2023).

It is not clear whether Pierre Hadot himself would have welcomed this increasing acceptance of PWL within an institutional academic context; or regarded it with suspicion; or else – and this is perhaps the most probable option – viewed it with a combination of both attitudes. After all, it was Hadot himself who largely blamed contemporary University instruction in philosophy – which he saw as the heir to medieval scholasticism, with its dictum that philosophy is the servant of theology – for the historical decline of Philosophy as a Way of Life. Indeed, for Hadot, University philosophy departments have largely become factories for producing more philosophy professors. There is certainly an unresolved tension between PWL and professional academia, touched upon in this issue in Harteloh's contribution.

What is PWL?

PWL takes as its starting point the idea that philosophy, rather than the development of a primarily theoretical discourse, must aim at the

1. *Philosophy as a Way of Life Network* (<https://philife.nd.edu/>), Project funded by the Mellon Initiative for Efficient Instruction USA; *Mapping Philosophy as a Way of Life: An Ancient Model, a Contemporary Approach* (<https://pwl.fcsh.unl.pt/>), directors M. Faustino, H. Telo, funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, Portugal.

2. *Philosophy as a Way of Life, texts and Studies*, ed. by M. Chase, E. Kramer, M. Sharpe (<https://brill.com/display/serial/PWL?language=en>); 3 volumes published, several more currently in press.

3. Testa, Faustino (2022); Faustino, Telo (forthcoming); Sharpe (forthcoming); International conference *On Asceticism: Crossing Traditions, New Perspectives*, École Normale Supérieure, Paris, organised by M. Li, M. Crépon, I. Kalinowski, May 16, 2023.

4. Arriola Acosta (2013); Kramer (2018); Crist (2020); Muruzabal Lamberti (2023); Comtois (2023); Rajagopalan (forthcoming).

transformation of the individual. It is mainly concerned with promoting a transformation in our way of seeing and perceiving the world, a transformation which, in the best-case scenario, is capable of enabling a change in the subject's very being, thus allowing her to live a life that is more autonomous, free, and happy. Pierre Hadot went so far as to claim that this approach to philosophy can help its practitioners to exist in a way that is more intense and authentic.

Pierre Hadot's initial formulation of this approach was, of course, based on his study of ancient Greco-Roman philosophy, and the importance of his philological background cannot be underestimated for a full understanding of Hadot's views, as we shall see a bit later. In Antiquity, Hadot argued, unlike today, the term "philosopher" was not restricted to those who "published" scholarly articles and tomes and/or earned their living as professors in institutions of learning. Instead, whoever lived her life in a philosophical way could be described as a philosopher.

One of Hadot's best-known and most controversial claims was that the most basic, foundational element in ancient philosophy consisted not so much in the complex metaphysical, epistemological, and physical doctrines that each philosophical school developed and expounded, as in a concrete series of practical exercises which Hadot called "spiritual", intended to help the practitioner realize her itinerary of self-transformation. This itinerary, and the exercises that corresponded to and facilitated it, could range from the modification of personal character defects to the more ambitious and comprehensive goal of what Hadot called "cosmic consciousness" (see Lamberti's contribution to this issue), a state which Hadot variously described as a perception of the individual's indissoluble unity with the whole of reality, or as access to a more universal Self, less obsessed with egocentric gratification and the satisfaction of personal desires than the default self with which most of us identify on a pre-philosophical level. At this level, one has achieved what Hadot often described as Objectivity: henceforth, freed from the limits imposed by our prejudices and selfishness, we are able to see the world, perhaps for the first time, as it is in itself.

Since the initial appearance of Hadot's works and their translation into many languages, the scope of PWL has enlarged considerably. Some have gone so far as to propose that it may constitute a kind of "third way" between so-called "analytic" and "continental" philosophy, which for many years have appeared in English-speaking Philosophy departments as virtually the only two methodologies available for doing philosophy. Some of the main features of this revised and expanded conception of PWL include:

- it addresses the traditional “big questions”: Who are we? What is the meaning of life? etc., questions too often dismissed as outside the domain of philosophy;
- it is democratic, in the sense that it maintains that philosophy should not be restricted to an intra-academic group of experts, but should be accessible to the widest possible audience, from all walks of life. This entails a de-emphasis of the use of philosophical jargon and an encouragement of clarity;
- it is multicultural, interdisciplinary and anti-Eurocentric, favoring dialogue with all philosophical and religious orientations. PWL has a particular affinity with certain Eastern modes of thought such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, but it has also been used in fruitful manner by scholars of Islamic and Jewish thought;
- it is open to collaboration with the so-called “hard sciences” in several areas: for example, the emerging discipline of contemplative studies, with its emphasis on the study of the neurophysiology of meditation;
- finally, PWL is deeply concerned by the sociological and psychological crises facing contemporary societies across the world today, from the threat of armed conflict to the crisis of democracy, the role of fake news, growing inequality, and the risks of social isolation. Among its most pressing challenges, as Lamberti’s contribution to this issue makes clear, is to deal with the existential threat posed by human-generated climate change and the distorted attitude to Nature which has enabled it and continues to prevent effective solutions. Although it does not claim to have the answers to these crises, PWL defends the principle according to which transforming the world presupposes transforming oneself. This in turn assumes, in accordance with ancient Greek tradition, that we come to know ourselves by means of rational inquiry. However, the possibility cannot be ruled out that what the West has traditionally defined as “reason” – based largely on the dubious premises of a radical separation between soul and body – may now be proving inadequate for dealing with the urgent crises the world currently faces. PWL therefore actively encourages alliances and dialogue with many other complementary paths of philosophical transformation, such as Foucauldian *souci-de-soi*, American pragmatism, Shustermanian somaesthetics, the philosophy of care, feminism, ecology, and decolonial studies.

Some outstanding issues in PWL studies

Although occasionally addressed by some recent publications, some of them extremely valuable, the following points seem to me to merit further study:

- is PWL really a philosophy? Given its (relative) de-emphasizing of rational argumentation and the construction of theoretical philosophical systems, does PWL not resemble religion or spirituality more than rigorous philosophy? Is PWL more than a convenient label for a hodgepodge of contemporary approaches that have little in common save the name?
- How well-founded is Pierre Hadot's claim that *all* ancient philosophies, from the pre-Socratics to the last Neoplatonists, conceived of philosophy as a way of life? How universal was the practice of spiritual exercises (see Crespo's contribution to this issue), and to what extent did they play such a crucial role in ancient philosophy? These questions have been the subject of lively debates. Despite some excellent work (see in particular Sharpe, 2023), however, they cannot yet be said to have been resolved;
- Pierre Hadot laid great stress on the notion of objectivity: in the study of the history of philosophy, he felt, there is such a thing as authorial intention, and it should be a main part of the historian's task to approximate it as closely as possible. Nietzsche was wrong on this point: not all interpretations are equally permissible, and some are simply erroneous. As the author of critical editions of both Greek and Latin texts, Hadot believed that the close study of ancient texts was a crucial part of what one might call the spiritual exercise of philological objectivity. To discover the meaning of an ancient text, Hadot believed, one must first ask oneself: what does this text mean? To determine this accurately, the philologist must bracket her own subjectivity, determine the best readings from the available manuscripts, and then mobilize all the auxiliary sciences (history, archaeology, paleography, epigraphy, art history, etc.) in order to establish the objective meaning of the text in question, situating it within the author's historical period with its specific socio-economic conditions, determining the work's literary genre and intended audience. Only after the text's objective meaning has been determined, says Hadot, do we then, in a second and quite distinct moment, ask: "what does this ancient text mean *to me*?" It is at this second stage that the difficult problems emerge of the need to update ancient texts by updating them to take account of current circumstances, occasionally bracketing or replacing elements that may no longer be relevant. From an epistemological perspective, Hadot was sympathetic to the Stoic view that there is such a thing as an "objective presentation", i.e., a mental impression of which we can be sure that it accurately represents an external state of the world. In ethics, one aspect of the Stoic Triple Discipline, best known from Marcus Aurelius, was what he called the "Discipline of Assent". It consisted in refraining from giving our assent to representations of things, persons and events from the external world until we have stripped them of all subjective distortions, and can therefore be sure that they reflect the way the world actually is.

Yet Barthes, Foucault and Derrida have taught us that the subject is dead, and that authorial intention is irrelevant if not chimerical. With regard to our ability to achieve an objective representation of reality as it is in itself, moreover, philosophers from the ancient Sceptics to Hume and Kant have doubted this, while more recently the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics might seem to have driven the final nail into the coffin of objectivity, by showing that, at least on the level of microphysics, the observer inevitably, albeit to an unquantifiable extent, affects and transforms the phenomena she is observing by the very act of observation itself. By the same token, the Copenhagen interpretation seems to endanger another key Hadotian idea: that of disinterestedness, as referred to in Lamberti's contribution to this issue. For a quantum physicist like Wolfgang Pauli, the ideal of the detached observer (*losgelöster Beobachter*) is a relic of classical physics, which quantum theory has rendered obsolete by its finding that every act of observation perturbs the observed system in a way that cannot be eliminated by theoretical calculations (cf. for instance Pauli, 1961, pp. 9, 15, 98);

– what does PWL have to say about the most critical issues facing humanity today, such as human-induced climate change, rapidly metamorphizing into a life-threatening global crisis; continuing ethnic and religious conflicts that threaten to escalate and cause incalculable human suffering; or the emergent global epistemological crisis caused by the dominance of social media and the concomitant propagation of ever more sophisticated “fake news” that currently threatens democracies around the world? How can we take concrete steps to alleviate these pressing issues, while attempting to maintain the physical, mental and spiritual balance that is an absolute prerequisite for efficacious action? How, in other words, can we maintain our inner freedom and peace of mind while striving to comply with the demands of ethics, that element of Marcus Aurelius' Triple Discipline that requires us to act always in the service of the human community?

It will be up to future research to determine whether, and to what extent, these and other tensions internal to PWL may or may not prove to be resolvable.

Contributions to this issue

The contributions to this issue of the “Bollettino della Società Filosofica Italiana” provide a representative sample of the variety of methodological approaches and issues dealt with in contemporary PWL studies.

In *On Being Atopos: Exploration of an Idea in a Philosophical Practice*, Peter Hartleloh provides a perspective from philosophical counseling, one of the first disciplines to take up and develop some of

the practical implications of Pierre Hadot's ideas. Focusing on Hadot's notion of Socrates as *atopos* ("unclassifiable"), Harteloh provides three case studies in which clients were successfully oriented to find their own "inner philosopher" and make productive and salutary decisions in their lives. These clients were able to become *atopoi* in the sense of liberating themselves from preconceived ideas about their social functions and turning toward reflexivity, a process that can also be described as a shift from function to existence. Harteloh's paper is an illuminating example of the tensions between philosophical counseling, viewed as a concrete implementation of PWL, and the abstract theorizing that often prevails in an academic setting.

In *Listening to Nature. An ecological encounter with Pierre Hadot*, Pablo Muruzabal Lamberti surveys the links between several of the most crucial notions in PWL studies: cosmic consciousness, ecology, and meditation, thus providing a crucial contribution to several of the most pressing issues for PWL which I outlined above. For Lamberti, the key factor in contemplating potential solutions to these issues is that of interconnection, which in turn presupposes a transformation of our notion of the Self. Here again, the problematic issue of objectivity proves to be key. Lamberti's paper provides an insightful discussion of the links between Stoic views on nature and causal consciousness, largely taken over by Hadot, and their possible links to a revised and revived conception of our relation to the environment, mediated by a suitably revised conception of the practice of meditation. However, Lamberti identifies another key problem here. Hadot's talk of a true Self, identification with which would be philosophy's main task, seems problematically essentialist. As a constructive modification of Hadot's thought on this point, Lamberti therefore recommends a more Buddhist-oriented approach, which leads us recognize, in the author's words, that «when looking for one's Self – i.e., the seat of attention, the centre of experience, the mind – there is, in fact, nothing or *no-thing* to find» (*infra*, p. 69). This discovery, arrived at through meditative practice, can deepen our awareness of our entanglement and co-identity with the world. Such an intensified feeling of co-identity may in turn lead us to renewed concern for social justice and the health of the environment.

Finally, Jordi Crespo's contribution provides a reminder of the fundamental importance of what I have called philological objectivity for the thought of Pierre Hadot. By a rigorous analysis of Galen's recently discovered *On Avoiding Distress*, and a close focus on a quotation from a lost work by Euripides that occurs in this text, as well as in several other Greek and Latin texts, Crespo is able to re-examine the question of the origin of the ancient spiritual exercise known as the *praemeditatio malorum*, or imaginative pre-representation of the worst-case scenario,

envisaged as a technique for fortifying oneself in advance against the eventual occurrence of misfortunes. He is thus able to question the *communis opinio* that this exercise is of Stoic origin, and to suggest that may go back to the Cyrenaic school, and perhaps as far back as the Presocratic thinker Anaxagoras. He thereby challenges the objection sometimes raised against Pierre Hadot's thesis of the importance and universality of spiritual exercises in ancient philosophy, to the effect that such exercises are exclusively a late Hellenistic development.

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Back to the Future: Galen's *De indolentia* from the Perspective of PWL

by Jordi Crespo*

Abstract

In 2005 A. Petrobelli made a discovery in the *Vlatadon* 14 manuscript that was to revolutionize the field of Classics, bringing to light *Avoiding Distress*, a long-lost writing with valuable information about Galen of Pergamon and his time. The pamphlet takes the form of a letter that Galen himself addressed to a friend who had asked him about the “method” he had followed so as to be able to go on with his life – without any apparent suffering – despite having lost almost all his property and works in the course of the great fire that broke out in Rome in 192 CE. Ever since the discovery of the text, there has been a marked increase in studies on Marcus Aurelius’ personal physician from an ethical and psychological angle, although very little has been said about *De indolentia* from a PWL perspective. By seeking to relieve humankind of bodily suffering, Galen provided a possible solution for avoiding pains of the soul. Therefore, the response given by Galen to his friend will prompt us to analyze the origins, nature, and implications of the “prefiguration of future evils” (*praemeditatio malorum*) as a *spiritual exercise*; as well as to reassess J. M. Cooper’s contention that «no one before late antiquity approached philosophy as a way of life». Moreover, *De indolentia* is worth examining because most of the issues that Galen tackles in the letter are still relevant and shed light on some of the secular values of contemporary society.

Keywords: Galen, *Avoiding Distress*, *Praemeditatio malorum*, Euripides, *Proendēmein*.

1. *In itinere*

The aim of this research paper is to approach the confluence between the *ars medendi* and the *ars vivendi* (Boudon-Millot, 2012, p. 175). This

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contribution is intended to shed light on a quotation that R. Sorabji (2002, p. 235, n. 44) and Ch. Gill (2010, p. 266, n. 94) made from a passage from the Greek tragedian Euripides¹, which, in the light of the discovery of Galen's *Avoiding Distress*, takes on relevant significance from the standpoint of Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWL henceforth): «I learned [...] from a wise man: I kept my mind turned to anxieties and misfortunes, presenting to myself exile from my fatherland, and untimely death, and other paths of misery, so that, should I suffer any of the things I imagine in my thoughts, nothing might befall me unexpectedly and hurt me the more» (fr. 964 Theseus, in Collard, Cropp, 2008, p. 555).

On the one hand, for chronological reasons, Sorabji could not have referred to the Galenic treatise before it was discovered. On the other hand, although Gill (2010, pp. 251-2) is aware of the find (Kotzia, 2012, p. 70), *Avoiding Distress* seems to have been too recent at that time. In his book, Gill therefore focuses on some broad aspects of the text, but his discussion is not comprehensive because it does not take into account later contributions to the issue at hand since the publication of the Galenic treatise – this including its translation into English –, nor does he grasp the Galenic writing from a perspective akin to PWL². The present article thus adheres to one of P. Hadot's programmatic lines of research when he took up his chair at the Collège de France (Hadot, 1999, p. 21). We therefore hope to fill in some of the lacunae that Sorabji and Gill may have left unaddressed. By so doing, we also hope to confirm Hadot's thesis that the origin of *spiritual exercises* occurred earlier than the Hellenistic period, and hence challenge the claims to the contrary made by P. Rabbow and J. M. Cooper.

Galen's *De indolentia* provides us with valuable information about Galen himself as author and individual (Roselli, 2012, pp. 95-6). The authorial self-deployed throughout the letter constitutes a unique role model among his contemporaries; more importantly, it also opens a window on the entanglement of philosophy with medicine in the imperial period, as well as on the diffusion of some practical exercises oriented toward the therapy of emotions – concretely, to the so-called “prefiguration of future evils” (*praemeditatio malorum*) – beyond the strictly philosophical sphere. The analysis of this *spiritual exercise* proves particularly interesting on two different levels: from the point of view of the history of the ancient thought, *De indolentia* raises a series of questions about the alleged Stoic origins of

1. Nauck (1964, p. 672, fr. 964); Kannicht (2004, pp. 963-4, fr. 964). Collard, Cropp (2008, p. 555, n. 1): «All the sources attribute the lines to “Theseus in Euripides”. *Aegeus*, *Hippolytus Veiled*, or *Pyrrhous* have been suggested».

2. Nor does Xenophon (2014, p. 597, n. 41).

the *praemeditatio*. At the level of the epistemological foundations of PWL, *Avoiding Distress* urges us to bracket a set of assumptions inherent to PWL. This paper will delve into precisely these two aspects.

2. Woe or treasure?

Avoiding Distress (*Peri alypias/De indolentia*) is a text by Galen of Pergamum, the court-physician (*archiatros*) of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (Tieleman, 2012, p. 294; Boudon-Millot, 2020a, p. 140), of which only a summary in Arabic (Gill, 2010, p. 243; Nutton, 2012, p. 28; Garofalo, 2013, p. 441) remained until the serendipitous (Hadot, 1999, pp. 19-20) discovery in 2005 of the complete manuscript *Vlatadon* 14 (fifteenth century; Rashed, 2011, p. 56). The renewed interest in Galen from a philosophical perspective is certainly connected to this unique find (Xenophontos, 2014, p. 586, n. 3).

In the context of the great fire (Galen, *De indol.*, 2, 13 = BJP, 2010, p. 2; Garofalo, Lami, 2012, pp. IV, IX) that broke out in Rome in early 192 CE, *Avoiding Distress* takes the format of a letter that Galen addresses to a fellow Pergamene³ in response to the latter's request for instruction on «what kind of training, what arguments or what considerations had prepared me never to be distressed» (Galen, *De indol.*, 1, 1-5 = BJP, 2010, p. 2; Nutton, 2013, p. 77), despite the fact that all Galen's property and works⁴ had been reduced to ashes. Since Galen's authority depended to a great extent on book-learning, the loss of his library would have caused him enormous grief, so he claimed, had not his philosophical training allowed him to maintain his composure even in the face of such a disaster (Nutton, 2012, p. 19).

Whether deliberately or not, in his missive Galen takes up once again a twofold topic – that of a destructive fire that causes great havoc, along with that of the philosopher who remains impassive in spite of having lost almost everything he owns. The precedents of this theme, judging by the

3. Nutton (2013, pp. 48-9). The sentence in *De indol.*, 51 «because you were brought up with me from the start and educated alongside me» – Nutton (2013, p. 92) – leads Boudon-Millot (2020b, p. 25) to believe that he could have been Galen's foster brother. Judging by the emphasis put on Peripatetic writings, Nutton (2012, p. 22, n. 20) is of the opinion that the anonymous addressee could have been a Peripatetic.

4. His losses, given in an ascending order from relatively minimal to more substantial, include the famous “theriac” to which Marcus Aurelius became semi-addicted; Hadot (2010, pp. 102-5); Boudon-Millot (2020a, pp. 139-42). The worst of all in the eyes of Galen is that there is no hope (*mede elpida*) of recovering the losses (Galen, *De indol.*, 12b, 15-6 = BJP, 2010, p. 5).

accounts of Plutarch, Seneca or Diogenes Laertius⁵, are well attested in the literature of the imperial period. There is no way to decide whether Galen drew from these authors to pen the answer to his friend, in which case the physician would not have been original but limited himself to making some slight changes in the arguments; or, taken to the other extreme, whether the two major elements in the argumental plot are just a matter of chance. More important is the fact that, as is shown by Montaigne's reflection on loneliness (Montaigne, *Essays*, I, 39, *On solitude*; Screech, 1991, pp. 269-70), the fortune of this literary *topos* went beyond the barriers of time to reach the Modern period.

3. *Explicatio semper simplificatio (et aliquando implicatio)*

The original title of the writing in question, *Peri alypias*, results from adding the letter alpha before the noun *lype*, whereby the compound is given a privative or negative meaning. The Greek noun *lype* is commonly translated in English as “pain, grief, or distress” and defined as “an irrational contraction of the soul” (Συστολή ἄλογος ψυχῆς, Suid., s.v. Λύπη [843], III; Marcovich, 1999, p. 53, 19). Along with fear, desire, and pleasure, *lype* is one of the passions of the soul; therefore, in the Stoic philosophical system (Kotzia, 2012, p. 69) it is one of the main kinds of affections/passions (*pathe, morbi, perturbationes*) that a living being, including a rational one, is liable to experience⁶. For the Stoics, animals are not able to experience emotions and their relevant pleasures and pains, since emotions are attendant upon, if not identical to, a belief of some kind: according to the majority of Stoics, above all to Chrysippus, emotions result from an act of judging what befalls us to be a good or an evil⁷. In humans, emotions such as anger or fear are accompanied by pleasures and pains, and human emotions might be thought to involve some kind of cognitive component, since they seem to involve “taking things to be” in a certain fashion.

For Galen (*De indol.*, 68; Becchi, 2012, p. 25) *alypia* consists in a *desideratum* which differs from both Stoic *apatheia*⁸, particularly as

5. Plutarch, *Demetr.*, IX, 5; *On Tranquillity of Mind*, LXXIV; Seneca, *Letters to Lucilius*, IX, 18; *On the Firmness of the Wise Man*, V, 6; Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, II, 115 (Stilpo); Long (1964, p. 106, lines 3-8); Nutton (2012, p. 32).

6. Epictetus, *Discourses*, IV, I, 84 (Oldfather, 1959, p. 270, lines 24-5). Galen was certainly acquainted with Epictetus' books; Tieleman (2012, p. 293).

7. This Chrysippean assumption was later criticized by Posidonius who, in so doing, introduced an important *démarche* in this school; Sorabji (2002, p. 93).

8. As regards the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*, Galen confesses to being unable to affirm whether there is anyone so wise as to be entirely impassive (Galen, *De indol.*, 71, 17-8 = BJP,

Chrysippus conceived of it, and from the *aochlesia* of Aristotle and the Epicureans⁹. The Stoics deemed pain to be a natural feeling (*pathos physikon*) which nobody can avoid, whereas they regarded affliction as a pain that has acquired a pathologic dimension after one has been deceived or due to following a void opinion (*kene doxa*). For that reason the first requirement for distress avoidance (*alypia*) is an optimal education (*ariste paideia*; Becchi, 2012, p. 26), which Galen gained after years of hard study (*philoponia*; Galen, *De indol.*, 50b, 15 = BJP, 2010, p. 16), and also confesses to having learned or “inherited” from his father (Hankinson, 1992, p. 3506; Becchi, 2012, p. 26; Xenophontos, 2014, p. 599; Gill, 2019, p. 137; Galen, *De libris propr.*, II = IXI, 2, p. 40, 6-8 K.; *De ord. libror. suor.*, 52 = IXI, 3, p. 59, 4-7 K.; *De propr. animi cuiusl. affect. dign. et cur.* 8 = V, 1, pp. 40, 15-41, II K.; Boudon-Millot, 2020b, pp. 22-3, 29).

Unlike Chrysippus, Galen did not define an affliction as the opinion about a current evil but as depending on the false opinion that what happens to us represents a misfortune. F. Becchi (2012, p. 27) affirms that in *De indolentia* Galen does not deal with affliction (*lype*) in general terms, but with *ania*, a particular type of affliction whose distinctive trait lies in incorporating reflection¹⁰. Galen attributed a double aetiology to errors: one internal, by nature, since it is present in us from birth; and one external, due to pernicious influences or to the lack of education. Galen draws a line between errors arising from the irrational passions of the soul (pain, anger, fear, desire, etc.), and the errors deriving from the rational faculty of the soul, which are brought about as a consequence of void opinions.

4. *Fortis imaginatio generat casus*

Legend has it that the Greek hero Theseus, furious and angry, called on his father Poseidon to kill his son Hippolytus whom he mistakenly blamed for having raped Phaedra, the hero's wife and Hippolytus' stepmother. Poseidon granted Theseus' wish, and as a result Hippolytus died in a

2010, p. 21). Galen regards himself to be hardly capable to stand being tortured in the bull of Phalaris, to remain unperturbed if a friend of his were forced to exile, or to see the ruination of his homeland (Nutton, 2013, p. 96). In *Meth. med.*, VII, 1 (x, p. 457, 9-10 K.), Galen declares having been so distressed over a long period of time that he had been unable to touch a book; Xenophontos (2014, p. 600).

9. In his thorough study of the ties between Galen and Stoicism, Gill (2010, pp. 247, 255, 263, 265) distinguishes *apatheia* from *ataraxia*, as if the former were the goal pursued by the Stoics and the latter by the Epicureans; Warren (2014, pp. 6, 187).

10. Cicero, *Tusc.*, IV, 8, 18: *sollicitudo aegritudo cum cogitatione* (Pohlenz, 1918, p. 370, line 8); SVF, III, fr. 415 (von Arnim, 1964, p. 101, lines 14-5); King (1966, p. 347).

chariot accident while hunting. When Theseus realized that his wish had come true, he fell into the deepest and most inconsolable grief (Euripides, *Hipp.*, 1162-410; Kovacs, 1995, pp. 235-57; Cicero, *Off.*, I, X, 32, 14-9).

Galen claims to be shocked at the fact that Chrysippus – whose treatises on syllogisms he commented on (Galen, *De libris prop.*, XI, 46 = XIX, 2, p. 43, 4 K.; Hankinson, 1992, pp. 3513-4; Tieleman, 2012, p. 285) – filled his works with passages from the poets (Nutton, 2012, p. 24). Most of Galen's own quotations from tragedy are taken from Chrysippus just to show how worthless they are. As brought out in what follows, this does not hold true for the core passage in *De indolentia* around which the present article revolves:

[52] For you are well aware that observation of politics is a good teacher by reminding us of the actions of Fortune¹¹. What Euripides put into the mouth of Theseus somewhere is true above all, as you will recognize when you hear:

As I once learned from a wise man,
I fell to considering disasters constantly,
Adding for myself exile from my native land,
Untimely deaths and other ways of misfortune,
So that, should I ever suffer any of what I was imagining,
It might not gnaw at my soul because it was a novel arrival

[53] The wise man constantly reminds himself of everything that he might possibly suffer¹².

This prefatory extract contravenes Newman's claim (Newman, 1989, p. 1478) about the difficulty in finding actual examples of *meditatio*. Newman argues that the examples given in the sources are bound up together with the written text, which prevents us from distinguishing an actual *meditatio* from a simple rhetorical flourish communicating a certain thought.

Humans possess the ability to think about different possible future courses of action, to plan ahead in order to maximize pleasure and minimize pains. This ability allows us to stitch our lives together across

11. In general our translations rely on Nutton (2013), who follows the French edition of *De indolentia* in the Les Belles Lettres edition by BJP, 2010. However, here the word "Fortune/Fate" follows I. Garofalo's edition and his translation into Italian (Garofalo, Lami, 2012, pp. 37; 47-9). Garofalo's reading makes much more sense and does not call for a reconstruction of the text. Moreover, *De indol.*, 48, 1, makes explicit allusion to Fortune/Fate by means of the vocative ὦ τύχη. At *De indol.*, 23b, 12, the expression ἡ τύχη can perfectly take on the meaning of "what is not up to one", and Galen unmistakably affirms that Fate has ambushed him; Xenophon (2014, p. 584).

12. Nutton (2013, pp. 92-3). On one of the roof beams of Montaigne's library one can read the inscription extracted from Euripides: «How can you think yourself a great man, when the first accident that comes along can wipe you out completely?» (Bakewell, 2010, p. 29).

time and also to have some kind of access in the present to temporally remote parts of our lives. Memory and anticipation allow us to do things such as remember pains and pleasures or anticipate joy and sadness. The ability to look forward and backward to our future and past experiences allows us to generate further affective responses in the present. We can remember and anticipate with pleasure or with pain; we can remember our pleasures with pleasure and be pained when we anticipate pains (Warren, 2014, pp. 6-9). This unique human ability accounts for the origin of the *meditatio* as a universal psychological phenomenon. As P. Sloterdijk has signaled, in the course of man's mental and socio-cultural evolution a set of symbolic or psycho-immunological practices has developed in the form of imaginary anticipations and mental armor, intended for the pre-emptive processing of injuries. Humans have always relied on these practices to cope – with varying success – with their vulnerability to fate. By this Sloterdijk means the methods of mental and physical training by which humans from the most diverse cultures have attempted to optimize their immunological status in the face of vague risks of living (and acute certainties of death: Sloterdijk, 2013, pp. 9-10).

Now, does it make sense to assume that Galen's quotation from Euripides was taken from Chrysippus? Provisionally, the most sensible course of action seems to be to refrain from taking sides. In *Avoiding Distress* Galen makes mention of Zeno of Citium (Galen, *De indol.*, 48, 24 = BJP, 2010, p. 15), the founder of Stoicism; of Chrysippus (Galen, *De indol.*, 15, 20 = BJP, 2010, p. 6), who succeeded Cleanthes at the head of the ancient Stoa; and of Musonius Rufus (Galen, *De indol.*, 73, 7 = BJP, 2010, p. 22), Epictetus' teacher. Galen's interactions with Stoicism were extensive and long-standing, but the subject of his relation to Stoicism is as vast as it is complicated¹³, because the picture of the Stoic philosophy that one gets from Galen is so ambiguous that it becomes very difficult to make categorical statements in this regard; largely because to every point at issue is likely to be subject to rebuttal by a passage where the contrary is precisely affirmed. For instance, by means of arguments (*logoi*) and experimental evidence (*peira*; Hankinson, 1992, p. 3518) Galen rejects the cardiocentric view of the body that the majority of the Stoics (and previously Aristotle; van der Eijk, 2012, pp. 275-6, 280-1; Garofalo, 2013, p. 447) held; yet, in some other of his writings Galen seems to have Chrysippus in high esteem and assumes his principles (Tieleman, 2012, pp. 287-9, 292, n. 34). Elsewhere, however, Galen uses Posidonius' books to belabour Chrysippus (Frede, 1987, p. 131; Nutton, 2012, p. 29; van der

13. Tieleman (2012, pp. 282-4). For an extended view on the books of Stoic philosophers read by Galen it is worth consulting the appended list in Tieleman (2012, pp. 296-7).

Eijk, 2012, p. 261). Several studies and monographs on Galen present the physician of Pergamum as a bitter detractor of the Stoics, particularly of their psychological tenets (Tieleman, 2012, p. 299; Xenophontos, 2014, p. 597).

The rise of the Hellenistic philosophy was accompanied by new interpretations of the figure of Socrates and his deeds, as well as by an overt criticism of Plato's theory of the extramental reality/objectivity of the ideas, being the latter a trend in which the Stoics¹⁴ in particular took part. Nevertheless, Galen was very well acquainted with Plato. In fact, Galen's anatomical and psychological views of the body rely upon the medical sections of the *Timaeus* (Sorabji, 2002, pp. 94-5). This Platonic influence on Galen makes it hard to assess the extent of his philosophical indebtedness to Stoicism.

5. Second parts not always that bad

The verses from Euripides quoted above are repeated in *De indolentia*, 77-78a, where Galen explicitly recommends to his addressee that the only helpful exercise (*askesis*)¹⁵ that he knows for overcoming life's upheavals consists in imagining the occurrence of possible evils: «This is the only <training/exercise> I find helpful against painful bad turns» (Galen, *De indol.*, 78a, 14 = BJP, 2010, p. 23; Nutton, 2013, p. 97). Moreover, if the nub of Galen's response to his friend's request lies in the practice of the *praemeditatio* (Galen, *De indol.*, 54, 4-6 = BJP, 2010, p. 18)¹⁶, it is for two reasons: first, the quotation of the extract from Euripides has to do with a crucial element from the point of view of the material culture: the importance assumed by the distribution of the information on the available space (del Mastro, 2012, pp. 55-61). In repeating the extract from the tragedy, Galen makes clear to the addressee of his writing that the kernel of his response resides precisely in the words transmitted by Euripides.

14. The oldest and most important of these antiplatonic writings, *Sathon e Peri tou antilegein*, is attributed to Antisthenes. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, III, 35 (Plato) = Hicks, 1972, p. 308, lines 7-15. At *De stoicorum repugnantis*, XV, 1040d (Cherniss, 1976, p. 470, line 10) Plutarch makes reference to this Stoic invective against Plato's theory of the extramental reality of the ideas by way of an alleged Chrysippean treatise titled *Pros Platonan*; Alesse (2000, pp. 219-20, 222).

15. Beside λόγοι and δόγματα, ἄσκησις is the other term that Galen uses in the beginning of *De indol.* to describe the reasons that instigated his friend to write him for counsel against distress.

16. «So when I saw all of these things [sc. crimes] happening daily, I schooled my imagination to prepare for the total loss of everything that I had» (BJP, 2010, p. 93).

Secondly, the memorization (Warren, 2014, pp. 5, 185)/assimilation of the doctrinal tenets of a particular school of philosophy was a fundamental pillar of philosophical education in Antiquity (Hadot, 1999, pp. 35-7). This becomes plain in the case of the “fourfold remedy”¹⁷ (*tetrapharmakos*), a compendium of Epicurean ethics. These helpful items of information fall into the domain of the *paraskeue* (*instructio*): they are the subject matter of *logoi* (discourses, sayings, apophthegms, anecdotes, etc.) that are easy to memorize and available at any time in case of need. Technically known as *procheiron(a)* – a happy appellation, since they are a kind of remedies that are readily *at hand* (Pavie, 2012, pp. 72-3) – such “information tablets” with an evident transformative aim were used to handle a particular adverse situation by enabling the quick recall of short phrases or images at the moment of need (Newman, 1989, p. 1480). In a similar vein, among the adepts of the Cynic philosophy one finds the usage of the so-called *chreia* (Helmer, 2018, pp. 38-9, 45). These are anecdotes – oral or written – in which leading figures of Greek culture are said to have acted in this or that manner in a circumstance similar to the current one. To recap, they were models for action, proposed in order to be imitated (*imitatio*; Domański, 1996, pp. 98-9), and it is likely that the repetition of the Euripidean passage in *De indolentia* would have helped Galen to add persuasive value to the advice of rehearsing the representation of possible evils to come (Nutton, 2012, p. 32).

6. Of absences and presences

De indolentia also bears evidence of a cluster of well-known *spiritual exercises* generally linked to Roman Stoicism: techniques of mental control that secure happiness by way of regulating the passions (Garofalo, 2013, p. 445). Examples include avoiding desires which cannot be satisfied or beyond one's power and capabilities (Gill, 1994, p. 4611, n. 42); contenting oneself with what Fate may ordain; or training in the techniques most conducive to avoiding anguish at life's setbacks. Yet, nowhere, and at no moment in his writing does Galen even suggest that he learned the paramount advice that he gives to his addressee from the Stoics, or by

17. Hadot (2004, pp. 106, 122-3). Diogenes of Oenoanda called the principles of the Epicurean philosophy *pharmaka tes soterias*: «the gods are not to be feared, death is not to be dreaded and what is good is easy to acquire, what is bad is easy to bear»; Hammerstaedt (2015, p. 208, n. 43); Hadot (2004, p. 123). From *De indol.*, 64, 10-3; 68 = BJP, 2010, pp. 20-1, we learn that Galen was familiar with the Epicurean philosophy and its texts; Nutton (2013, p. 95, n. 108). The autobiographical notes in *De propr. animi cuiusl. affect. dign. et cur.*, I, 8 = V, p. 42, 2 K. confirm Galen's acquaintance with the Epicureans; Tieleman (2012, p. 284); Boudon-Millot (2020b, pp. 35-7).

witnessing some of these practices being performed by the Stoics; instead, Galen gives an account of the prefiguration of future evils by means of a quotation by Euripides. In addition to this, two other significant details need to be taken into consideration: the absence of a keyword in Stoic psychology such as *to hegemonikon*, and the remark that Galen himself makes in § 69.

In Stoicism the *hegemonikon* is a technical term (Epictetus, *Discourses*, IV, 5, 4 = Oldfather, 1959, p. 332, line 2; Alesse, 2000, p. 156) which designates the ruling part of the soul (*princeps animae facultas*)¹⁸. The Stoics attributed to the highest psychological part, i.e. the *hegemonikon*, the responsibility for discrimination (*krinein*), or determining whether representations and arguments are veridical, false, or ethically indifferent (*adiaphora*). However, arguments *ex silentio* tend to be far from watertight and neither cogent nor definitive for demonstrating what is intended. Moreover, despite the absence of the technical term in *De indolentia*, Galen certainly knew of this key term because he often mentions it (Gill, 2019, p. 136) in his *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, which transmits the key foundational Stoic text in the genre of the therapy of passions: Chrysippus' (otherwise lost) book *On Passions* (particularly Book 4; Xenophontos, 2014, p. 589, n. 13).

Much more than the omission of *to hegemonikon*, the remark that Galen adds at 69, 10-3 seems to be revealing: «Finally, while I believe I have responded completely to the question you raised about avoiding distress, I do hold the view, nevertheless, that this requires a further definition» (BJP, 2010, p. 21; Nutton, 2013, p. 95). On this occasion, Galen makes use of an Epicurean argument and alludes to one of his writings on how Epicurus conceived of pleasure, in which the notion of *aochlesia* (freedom from disturbance; capability to remain imperturbable) plays a role (Galen, *De animi cuiusl. pecc. dign. et cur.*, I = V, 2, p. 61, 2 K.; III = V, 2, p. 77, 10 K.). The point is that almost 550 years after the foundation of the Garden, Diogenes Laertius (*Vitae philosophorum*, II, 86-8 [Aristippus]; Long, 1964, p. 94, lines 1-18; Hicks, 1972, p. 217) always uses this term in reference to Epicurus – who considered it as the ultimate philosophical goal (Epicurus, *Epistle to Menoeceum*, 127, 12 = Usener, 1963, p. 62, line 12). The description provided by Diogenes Laertius offers some clues about the difficulties involved in the issue, for *aochlesia* seems to be a notion which plays a role in the systems of the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Cyrenaics.

18. Gill (2010, p. 37); Pseudo-Galen, *Def. med.*, II 3 = XIX, 8, p. 378, 4-6 K.; Marcus Aurelius, *Communings with Himself*, VIII, 48: «Therefore the Mind, unmastered by passions, is a very citadel» (Haines, 1961, p. 223); Gill (2010, p. 254).

If we were asked to search for arguments that would rule out the possibility that the Epicureans engaged in the practice of the *praemeditatio* – an exercise allegedly created and developed by the Stoics – one at least should be emphasized. On the grounds of the metaphysical assumption that the future does not exist (i.e., it is unreal *qua* lacking ontological existence), the Epicureans dismissed every concern about the future: as is evident from the title of one of Hadot's contributions, Epicurus took the *motto* «only the present is our happiness» to the letter. Consequently, there is no room for concern about the future in the Epicurean system: the future does not mean a thing, it amounts to nothingness and is devoid of every ontological consistency, because whereas the past is no longer, the future is not yet. From an epistemological/Canonical angle (Long, Sedley, 1987, p. 88; Warren, 2014, p. 183), the Epicureans believed that sense perception was the fundamental criterion (Epicurus, *Epistle to Herodotus*, 37-8; *Key doctrines*, 24; Usener, 1963, pp. 4-5; 76-7) for claiming the reality of anything whatsoever. Since the future is impossible to grasp by sense perception, but is only presented by the imagination, all worries about the future were, in the eyes of the Epicureans, utterly pointless and meaningless. However, the same holds true for the Cyrenaics' beliefs about future pleasures.

7. A telling apparition

It would be rather naive to underestimate the Epicurean viewpoint by claiming that concern about the future can just disappear by merely dismissing it. An additional reason for taking the Epicurean viewpoint seriously is the fact that scholars have shown the different philosophical schools made use of the same spiritual exercises¹⁹. When we look more closely at Posidonius' account of the *praemeditatio*, one realizes that both schools actually pursued the same goal – i.e., to minimize the (di) stress ensuing from changes of fortune –, although the Stoics did this in a somewhat more refined way than the Epicureans: whereas the latter denied ontological consistency to future time, the former canceled it by imagining it as if it were fully real. The Stoic *praemeditatio* consists of annulling the future, or obturating it as though it were completely present (Pavie, 2012, pp. 73-6). This becomes clear from the stress that Posidonius laid on the verb *proendemein* (Pohlenz, 1898a, p. 20; 1898b, p.

19. Sorabji (2002, p. 212): «ancient philosophical therapy relied heavily on exercises. Only some of the exercises presupposed the metaphysics, ethics, or epistemology of particular schools. [...] Many exercises were free of doctrinal presuppositions and were consequently interchangeable among schools».

553) as reported by Galen in his *De placitis*, where Galen also alludes to the extract from Euripides in question²⁰.

Contrary to his usual practice (Tieleman, 2012, p. 283), here Galen is not sparing with names and attributes the exercise of the *praemeditatio* to Posidonius (Edelstein, Kidd, 1989, p. 151, lines 28-43, fr. 165) – whom he exceptionally admired for his scientific spirit²¹. It is worth noting, nonetheless, that the extract brings the philosopher Anaxagoras of Klazomenai into the discussion (DK Anaxagoras 59[46] A 33; Diels, 1956, pp. 13, 37-14, 11; Collard, Cropp, 2008, p. 555, n. 1). Anaxagoras has passed into the history of philosophy for introducing the *nous*, an important theoretical innovation as compared, for instance, to the cosmological accounts by Empedocles or the atomists. The *nous* is a principle opposed to matter, which is responsible for the ordering and disposition of the material world (Curd, 2008, pp. 230-49). This innovation represented the inception of metaphysical spirituality in the explanation of the world in ancient thought, and the shift from a mechanistic and materialistic world view to a teleological one – which is why Anaxagoras was the target of Aristotle's criticism for resorting to a *deus ex machina* (Aristotle, *Metaph.*, I, 4, 985a18; Zuccante, 2022b, pp. 46-7; Aristotle, *Part. anim.*, IV, 10, 687a8-24; Hankinson, 1992, p. 3510).

According to the *De placitis*, Posidonius proposes an exercise that involves the rational (*logistikon*) part of the soul, and consists in a sort of *habituation* (*proendemein*). This *habituation* assumes two main meanings: either the sense of “dwelling, living”, where the infinitive *proendemein* suggests the idea of “living in advance” (foredwelling) the setbacks which life may hold in store; and a sense close to “habit” (*ethismos*; *habitus*), to “get accustomed, be familiar with, become familiar with”. Posidonian *proendemesis* consists in an exercise whereby something which eventually may appear as sinister (*unheimlich*), becomes familiar (*heimlich*) and in virtue of such transformation (*transfiguratio*) it ceases to be so.

Praemeditatio aims at the complete suppression of the excessive motion (*horme pleonazousa*; Alesse, 2013, p. 66, n. 17) by which the passions tend to be accompanied, or else, at playing such agitation down to the full. According to Posidonius, it is precisely the vividness of our memories which really contracts and causes affliction to the soul; so that

20. Galen, *De plac. Hipp. et Plat.*, IV, 7 = V, p. 418, 8-13 K.; CMG, V, 4, I, 2, p. 282, 417, 7, 10-419, 11, 29 De Lacy; De Lacy (2005, p. 283). This quotation to Euripides belies the claim by De Lacy (1966, p. 259): «In his treatise *De Placitis* Galen [...] only quotes to Euripides' *Medea*»; Nutton (2012, pp. 30-2).

21. Galen's *De placitis*, V, 5-6 happens to be almost the only extant source on Posidonius and his theory of the passions; Dillon (1996, p. 107). Posidonius studied medicine; Cherniss (1933, pp. 154-61); Frede (1987, p. 230); Tieleman (2012, p. 297); Van der Eijk (2012, p. 261).

grief and sorrow fade away as time wears on (*in processu temporis affectus mitigatur*), or at least, become softened to an extent that human beings can bear as time passes by (*chronos malaksei*)²². This is, therefore, how Posidonius explains the diminution of intensity of misfortunes: because they have already been presented and meditated upon, their potential negative impact is diminished when they are actually present, inasmuch as they are merely the repetition of an expected event about which a judgment already has been made. To Posidonius, the *proendemesis* is an exercise of self-formation in time (Sorabji, 2002, p. 97; Pigeaud, 2006, pp. 277-8): no adversity will disturb those who have put it into practice, because Fate will find them firmly accustomed to dealing with every sort of nasty eventuality that may befall.

In the *Poetics* (vi, 1449b24-6), Aristotle affirms that viewing a tragedy has a cathartic effect upon the onlooker, by confronting the emotion of compassion with that of fear. Analogously, dwelling on future evils has a relieving or purgative effect upon the individual. However, what is distinctive in this practice is that there is no need in it for either special settings or semidivine personages, but in *proendemesis* the person ultimately responsible for bringing about this self-transformation is the individual herself, who, by way of a radical exercise of inwardness/introversive anticipation (Warren, 2014, p. 7) deliberately promotes it.

8. All that glitters is not gold

In 1914 P. Rabbow began to analyze different forms of guidance of the soul, publishing a survey of practices for soul guidance in Plutarch (Rabbow, 1914). This aligns with the point raised by P. Hadot in his inaugural speech when he took over the Chaire d'Histoire de la pensée hellénistique et romaine at the Collège de France: Plutarch is, beside Galen, an obligatory author of reference with regard to the transmission of the ideas of the ancients (Hadot, 1999, p. 35) – although neither author had, prior to 1914, been studied from the perspective of *spiritual exercises*²³.

In Plutarch's *Moralia*, one finds the passage from Euripides (Pseudo-Plutarch, *A Letter of Condolence to Apollonius*, xxi, 112d20-112e2; Babbitt, 1928, pp. 163-5). This fragment from Pseudo-Plutarch²⁴ is relevant

22. The Cyrenaics confine pleasure to the present, pleasures are therefore unitemporal (*monochronos*) and can be enjoyed only in the present; Warren (2014, p. 193).

23. Although the consideration of Galen as a philosopher can be traced back as early as in 1848, when the French physician and historian of medicine Ch. Daremberg wrote an essay bearing the title *Galien considéré comme philosophe*; Boudon-Millot (2019, p. 109).

24. While some philologists assume the spurious character of the letter on the basis of the style and the length of the quotations, Babbitt finds these arguments not very com-

because Galen seems to have been more directly influenced by works such as Plutarch's *On Contentment* and *On Avoidance of Anger* than by Chrysippus' *On passions* book 4 (Gill, 2019, p. 136). Yet, in this section the literary genre of *De indolentia* will be discussed by addressing the original title of the Pseudo-Plutarchean that reproduces the quotation from Euripides: *Paramythetikos pros Apollonion*. By so doing we follow the hermeneutic principle that Hadot borrowed from his predecessor at the Collège de France: «La position de Pierre Courcelle était intéressante. Elle partait en effet du principe très simple selon lequel un texte doit s'interpréter en fonction du genre littéraire auquel il appartient» (Hadot, 1999, p. 14).

By Galen's time, Hellenistic-Roman writings on the therapy of the emotions formed a well-established genre intended to have direct application to the lives of a broader class of readers. Galen's *Avoiding Distress* was written when the consolatory writings by Seneca and Plutarch – with which it shows undisputed parallelisms with regard both to the general theme and to the structure of the contents – were already circulating (Xenophontos, 2014, p. 592). Despite these features of resemblance to the consolatory genre (*paramythia*; Sorabji, 2002, p. 18), *De indolentia* should not be taken as a representative sample of this genre. It differs in certain respects: it does not involve the loss of a beloved person or one's exile as the causes for grief, but rather material deprivation. Secondly, it is not addressed to the person who mourns the loss, but to a philosophically minded addressee who seeks remedies for regaining equanimity in case of need (Xenophontos, 2014, p. 589).

Though the motivation and the title of the writing might lead one to consider that *Avoiding Distress* belongs to the consolatory genre, it is rather to be considered as a contribution to the genre of the therapy of emotions (Gill, 2019, pp. 135-6). The fact that at the close of the letter Galen states that he sent to his addressee a book of his, now lost, bearing the title *On Wealthy Money-lovers* (Galen, *De indol.*, 84 = BJP, 2010, p. 26; Nutton, 2013, p. 99), where he reflects on the topic of love of wealth (*philoploutia*) – a traditional feature of the field of practical ethics (Xenophontos, 2014, p. 602; Cicero, *De off.*, I, 20, 68, 25-9) – may support the claim that *Avoiding Distress* does not belong to the consolatory genre. According to Diogenes Laertius, Chrysippus believed that love of money was a disease: «Chrysippus says that greed is the false belief that money is a good» (Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, VII, III: ὑπόληψις τοῦ τὸ ἀργύριον καλὸν

elling, to him the *Consolatio* reads as a rough draft drawn from Plutarch's personal notes (*hypomnemata*); Babbitt (1928, p. 105); Xenophontos (2014, p. 589, n. 14). I am thankful to M. Meeusen for his advice.

εἶναι). In the *Suda*, *philargyria* is defined as the supposition that money is a good, worthy and valuable (Suid., s.v. Φιλαργυρία [304] 111; Marcovich, 1999, p. 53, lines 16-7). It would be worthwhile to review *Avoiding Distress* for possible traces of additional evidence for Aristippus of Cyrene²⁵. Galen makes Aristippus' deeds a sort of moral benchmark, and the model for avoiding distress. The two anecdotes that Galen recounts about Aristippus in *De indolentia* point to the importance of self-sufficiency, hence the idea that the loss of wealth should not be a matter of grief. Furthermore, Galen intertwines the moral of Aristippus' anecdote with his own ethical voice, when he declares that he shares Aristippus' view (Xenophontos, 2014, p. 595): «[sc. Aristippus] showing very neatly what you have often heard me say, that one should not focus on what has been lost, but consider how those who have inherited three fields from their father will not abide looking at others with thirty» (Galen, *De indol.*, 42, 7-11 = BJP, 2010, p. 14; Nutton, 2013, p. 90).

Sections 65, 14-5-66, 22 in the Galenic pamphlet make it clear that for Galen the true kernel of the answer to the question raised by the addressee resides in being able to shift one's perspective and reevaluate their true value. This is the attitude toward life which, as Galen confesses, he learned as began to grow old (Galen, *De indol.*, 61, 15-6 = BJP, 2010, p. 19). Affliction and preoccupation is the natural consequence for those who regard themselves as deprived of something, whereas those who are able to minimize their losses will never fall prey to anxiety.

In *De placitis*, Galen clearly states that the goal of the physician *qua* physician is not fame or profit, but the majority of ancient physicians – Diocles, Hippocrates, Empedocles – treated men through love of mankind (*dia philanthropian etherapeuon tous anthropous/ob humanitatem benignitatemque naturae aegrotis medebantur*; Galen, *De plac. Hipp. et Plat.*, IX, 5 = V, pp. 751, 15-752, 1 K.; CMG, V, 4, 2, 1, p. 564, 26-30 De Lacy): as far as medical art is concerned, philanthropy is the opposite to love of money. Along the same lines, in *The best doctor is also a philosopher* Galen expounds that the difference between his contemporaries and Hippocrates does not lie in their capability but in their (wrong) will (βούλησις): such wrong *boulesis* embraces both love of money and pernicious habits, a disordered life, since these are incompatible with

25. The anecdote in Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, II, 77 (Aristippus; Long, 1964, p. 89, lines 13-7) dates from the third century CE, several decades after Galen's *De indolentia*: «[sc. Aristippus] was taking a sea trip once upon a time, and discovered that he was on a pirate ship. So he took out his money and began to count it, let it fall overboard as if by accident and then bewailed his loss. Some say that he remarked afterward that it was better for the money to perish because of Aristippus than for Aristippus to perish because of the money»; Hicks (1972, p. 205-7).

learning and the virtuous life (Galen, *Quod opt. med. sit etiam philos.*, III; CMG, p. 6, 4-10 Müller). Contrary to a disordered life is the love of and devotion to work and effort (*philoponia*).

In the second chapter of the aforementioned booklet, Galen claims that there is a contradiction between the love of money and the practice of the art (Galen, *Quod opt. med. sit etiam philos.*, II; CMG, p. 4, 18-21 Müller). However, Galen apparently failed to notice that Hippocrates taught his art for money (Plato, *Prot.*, 311b-c; Jouanna, 1997, p. 234). This is also true of Aristippus, who in Athens came in contact with the sophists, from whom he learned their art, and ended up teaching philosophy for money. Hence, Xenophon reproached Aristippus for selling for a very high price what he had learned for free from Socrates²⁶.

9. *Cicero dixit*

The fragment from Euripides whose traces we have been pursuing so far is also transmitted by Cicero in the *Tusculan disputations*. Since the “theory of the four *personae*” in the Ciceronian *De officiis* is explicitly based on Panaetius’ *Peri kathekontos* (Cicero, *Off.*, I, 2; 7, 9-10; Gill, 1994, pp. 4602-5), this gives us a clue about how the Euripidean fragment might have come to Cicero’s attention. Panaetius was Posidonius’ teacher, and for this reason Posidonius established his school in Rhodes, the homeland of his teacher, rather than in his native Apamea. Cicero moved to the island of Rhodes to study with Posidonius²⁷. F. Babbitt, the editor and translator of the Pseudo-Plutarchean letter into English, explains the striking similarities between that letter and Cicero’s *Tusculan Disputations* by derivation from a common source, and this source was in large part the works of the Academic philosopher Crantor (Babbitt, 1928, p. 106).

The context of the *Tusculan disputations* is Cicero’s sojourn in his estate at Tusculum, where he decided to retire looking for calm after the unexpected death of his daughter Tullia. The text reads as follows:

[...] The Cyrenaics consider that distress is not caused by every evil but by an unlooked for and unexpected evil [...]. This anticipation therefore of the future mitigates the approach of evils whose coming one has long foreseen. And so the

26. Xenophon, *Mem.*, I, 2, 60. While A. Nehamas (1998, p. 101) refers to Xenophon as a person with «modest philosophical gifts», he admits that, as opposed to Plato’s magisterial absence from his work, Xenophon was himself present at many of the conversations he reports.

27. «Cicero, der 78 in Rhodos studierte, kann in einem Dialoge voraussetzen, dass alle Gesprächsteilnehmer in persönlicher Fühlung mit Poseidonios gestanden haben» (Polenz, 1948, p. 210).

words Euripides has put into the mouth of Theseus are praised [...]»²⁸. By the lesson which Theseus says he learnt from a wise man, Euripides means a lesson which he had learnt himself. For he had been a pupil of Anaxagoras, who, according to the story, said when he heard of his son's death, "I knew that I had begotten a mortal". This saying shows that such events are cruel for those who have not reflected upon them. Therefore it does not admit of doubt that everything which is thought evil is more grievous if it comes unexpectedly. And so, though this is not the cause of the greatest distress, yet as foresight and anticipation have considerable effect in lessening pain, a human being should ponder all the vicissitudes that fall to man's lot (Cicero, *Tusc.*, III, 13, 28-14, 30; Pohlenz, 1918, pp. 331, 26-333, 7; King, 1966, pp. 259-63).

As to the origins of the *praemeditatio*, the *Tusculan disputations* bring the Cyrenaics into the discussion, who, according to Cicero, were the first to undertake the preparatory practice of the *praemeditatio malorum* (*futuras mecum commentabar miseras; meditabar mali*) and it was they who included it in the philosophical agenda for the first time²⁹. On the other hand, Cicero again partners Anaxagoras with Euripides, as Galen did in *De placitis*.

The Cyrenaics claimed that it was the unexpected and the sudden nature (*inesperato et necopinato*; Cicero, *Tusc.*, III, 22, 52; Pohlenz, 1918, p. 343, line 25; SVF, III, fr. 417; von Arnim, 1964, p. 102, line 8) of the events that constituted the real element that disrupted the soul and made it lose control of the situation. Consequently, the Cyrenaics sought to soften the impact of evil events by reducing the surprise factor in them; by this *praemeditatio futuri mali* they taught that the sting of approaching evil can be reduced by ridding it of the element of surprise. Hence the recommendation of a sort of strategic pessimism: by representing to ourselves the worst-case scenario, the misfortune that actually occurs will not affect us so badly when it befalls us because, they argued, it will not catch us unawares (*imparatum*).

The *praemeditatio* is mostly known in its Latin form; yet, if according to the Ciceronian report the *praemeditatio* had been already put in practice by the ancient Greeks, what was it called in Greek? This is no minor question if we bear in mind the thesis that P. Rabbow set forth «we have no books on spiritual exercises from antiquity» («eine Tatsache...»: Rabbow, 1954, pp. 21, 132), and which drove Hadot to look for evidence

28. At this point Cicero repeats the fragment from Euripides and also attributes it first to Anaxagoras.

29. Rabbow (1954, p. 306, n. 37) seems to dismiss Cicero's testimony to a Cyrenaic theory of *meditatio* in favor of stressing it as something typically Stoic. The length of Cicero's description of the Cyrenaic practice and his defense of their system seem rather to indicate that he is following a Cyrenaic source; Newman (1989, p. 1477, n. 9).

of such exercises earlier back in time, to the philosophy of the classical period. Apart from the noun *meletai* – usually translated into Latin as *meditationes* and into English as *meditations* – there seems to be no original Greek word for *praemeditatio* in the way it is understood among the Stoics and later on. Neither does it occur in the two lists provided by Philo Judaeus upon which P. Hadot drew when expounding what such exercises actually consisted in³⁰. However, Philo was acquainted with the *praemeditatio malorum*. In *On the Special Laws* Philo wrote apropos of all them who practice wisdom:

never swerving under the blows of fortune because they have calculated beforehand the force of its assaults, since the heaviest adversities are lightened by anticipation, when the mind ceases to find anything strange in the event and apprehends it but dully as it might some stale and familiar story – such men, we say, in the delight of their virtues, naturally make their whole life a feast³¹.

The Greek verb used by the Jewish Alexandrian writer (*proeklelogisthai*; “to be calculated beforehand”/“to have reflected on beforehand”) could be perfectly taken as the homologous Greek form of the Latin *praemeditare*³². Lexicological research reveals that, as regards the Greek form, the preposition “pro” in the compound is very seldom attested; in fact, it constitutes a *hapax* in the Philonian corpus, and the rest of its occurrences in the whole of the Greek literature are very infrequent and come after Philo³³. Therefore, it seems that strictly speaking there was no Greek term to designate the activity of imagining or prefiguring future evils before the turn of the Christian era, when Philo Judaeus was active.

10. Never a gap had been so good

In *Pursuits of Wisdom* (2012), the recently departed specialist in ancient philosophy J. M. Cooper contended that:

30. Philo Judaeus, *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, 253 (Colson, Whitaker, 1932, p. 412, lines 7-10); *Allegorica Interpretatione Legum allegoria*, III, 6, 18 (Colson, Whitaker, 1981, p. 312, lines 8-12). Hadot (1995, p. 84; 2004, p. 255).

31. Philo of Alexandria, *De spec. leg.*, II, 13, 46. Colson (1937, p. 337). I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. M. Chase for bringing this passage to my attention.

32. In the Appendix of this volume, the Latin substantive *praemeditatio* is considered equivalent to the Greek *prolepsis*. Colson (1937, p. 624, § 46). To our mind, *prolepsis* assumes a moregnoseological meaning than *praemeditatio* and rules out a good deal of what is really meant by *praemeditatio malorum* in the context of the spiritual exercises.

33. Liddell, Scott (1996, p. 1477). The form *proeklelogismene* is attested in the *Commentary on the Pythagorean Golden Verses*, XII, 8 by Hierocles of Alexandria (midst fifth century CE); Köhler (1974, p. 58, line 11).

No one before late antiquity [...], and no one before then had developed theories of salvation on that basis [...]. Even much later, after the tradition of philosophy as a way of life had long been well established, some [*sc.* Cicero and Galen] who valued philosophy highly, studied it assiduously and recommended it to others, did not approach the subject in that spirit [*sc.* the spirit Hadot endorses] (Cooper, 2012, p. 27).

If one were to be indulgent, one could suggest that Cooper was not aware of the repercussions of the Galenic booklet discovered in 2005 but edited and published in 2010: it is highly likely that the bulk of Cooper's essay was almost printed and ready to be published in 2010. This charitable interpretation of Cooper cannot be applied to the case of Cicero, whose texts were widely edited and available. Our contribution to this issue is in agreement with the (anonymous) criticism that appeared in the *Supplément Budé* in 1929, where R. Joly³⁴ opposed Jaeger's take on the solely Platonic origin of PWL. Joly therefore assigned himself the task of showing that, from a textual standpoint, Jaeger's hypothesis was ill-founded and easily proven false because the question of the choice of life was prior to Plato and, Joly argued, could be traced back to Pythagoras and to Pythagoreanism.

II. *Elimatus fuit*

After contrasting the two quotations from Euripides in *De indolentia* with their very same occurrences in Galen's *De placitis*, in the *Consolatio ad Appollonium* by Pseudo-Plutarch, and in the Ciceronian *Tusculanae disputationes*, these texts give evidence in support of the transmission of a *spiritual exercise* – the prefiguration of the future evils – in a context alien to any religious tradition³⁵, and dating from classical antiquity and the Hellenistic period to the end of the second century CE. As far as we are able to conjecture, the exercise of the *praemeditatio* can be attributed to Euripides' teacher, the Pre-Socratic Anaxagoras, who incarnates the wise man (*sophos*, *sapiens/doctus vir*) referred to in the quotation from Euripides by Galen and Cicero.

34. «Nous dirons bientôt nos raisons de croire que cette théorie est d'origine pythagoricienne» (Joly, 1956, pp. 25-30, 33, esp. p. 27).

35. On the role played by some premonitory dreams in Galen's life, see *Meth. med.*, IX, 4 = X, p. 609, 8 K.; *De praecogn.*, 2 = XIV, p. 608 K.; Daremberg (1848, p. 23); Hankinson (1992, p. 3506); Boudon-Millot (2020b, p. 41). At *De indol.*, 73, 7-II = BJP, 2010, p. 22, Galen spells out that he praises the gods for not sending him setbacks so terrible that he cannot cope with them. Compared to the saying by Musonius Rufus: «Zeus, send me any eventuality» Galen comes up with a more realistic counterpoint, for he praises Zeus as follows: «Zeus, do not send me an eventuality that can cause me to become grieved» (Nutton, 2013, p. 96); Gill (2010, pp. 264-5); Xenophonotos (2014, p. 601).

The adduced texts hitherto also bolster the thesis that the *praemeditatio* was practiced by two different schools of philosophy: the Cyrenaics, almost coeval to Socrates (Zuccante, 2022a, pp. 4-6)³⁶ if one considers that its founder Aristippus of Cyrene – whom Galen mentions twice in *De indolentia*³⁷ – was a friend and disciple of Plato’s master; and by the Stoics of the BCE first century, on account of Cicero’s transfer to Rhodes to study with Posidonius of Apamea.

Finally, a set of consistent textual arguments on the origin of the *spiritual exercises* come to endorse Hadot’s view and to reject, complementarily, the theses defended by Rabbow and Cooper.

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36. In his monograph assembling the remnant fragments on the Cyrenaics, Giannantoni (1958) strikingly does not include any passage in reference to the anecdote starring Aristippus which Galen reports.

37. Galen, *De indol.*, 38, 4-45, 7 = BJP, 2010, pp. 13-5; Nutton (2013, pp. 89-91).

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On Being *Atopos*: Exploration of an Idea in a Philosophical Practice

by *Peter Harteloh**

Abstract

The work of the French philosopher Pierre Hadot (1922-2010) is a source of philosophical practice. In his studies on ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, Hadot rediscovered philosophy as a way of life. Different forms of current philosophical practice, such as philosophical consultations, Socratic group dialogues, and philosophy with children or business advice, support philosophy as a way of life. They enable individuals, groups, kids or companies to integrate philosophy in everyday life. Hadot presents Socrates as an example for living in a philosophical way and points at the Greek term *atopos*, i.e. “out of place” (strange, absurd, unclassifiable), to capture his character. In this paper, I want to study the application of this concept in philosophical practice. In line with the Socratic tradition, I will do this by some examples. I will present three consultations out of my own philosophical practice and examine what it means to be *atopos*, i.e. what it means to live the concept for me as counselor and for my clients as counselees. This will enable us to draw some conclusions on “being *atopos*” in philosophical practice.

Keywords: Philosophical Practice, Philosophical Consultations, Pierre Hadot, *atopos*, Reflexivity, Being.

1. Introduction

The work of the French philosopher Pierre Hadot (1922-2010) is a source of philosophical practice. In his studies on ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, Hadot rediscovered philosophy as a way of life. Hadot’s idea of philosophy as a way of life is grounded in ancient Western

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philosophy in general and in the figures of Socrates and Marcus Aurelius in particular (Hadot, 1995; 1998). To focus on the figure of a person means a comprehensive and creative interpretation of his life and work, an interpretation more aimed at (contemporary) meaning than at historical facts¹. It is an acknowledgement of the close entanglement between life, personal biography and philosophy. Hadot presents Socrates as an example of this and points at the Greek term *atopos*, i.e. “out of place” (strange, absurd, unclassifiable), to capture his character. In this paper, I want to study the application of this concept in a philosophical practice. In line with the Socratic tradition, I will do this by some examples. I will present three consultations out of my own philosophical practice and examine what it means to be *atopos* for me as counselor and for my clients as counselees. In line with Hadot’s work, the aim is not to construct a theory *about* a concept, but to examine what it means to live a concept². This will enable us to draw some conclusions on “being *atopos*” in philosophical practice.

2. Hadot and philosophical practice

Hadot’s book on philosophy as a way of life offered a new perspective on philosophy as originally not being just a study of physics, ethics or logic, but as a way to *live* physics, ethics or logic, i.e. a way to be³. Today, such a philosophical way of life is supported by philosophers performing individual consultations, Socratic group dialogues, philosophical exercises for children, or giving business advice, i.e. by philosophical practices. In a variety of ways, these practices enable individuals, groups, kids or companies to integrate philosophical thoughts or principles in their everyday life. Philosophical practice has become a paradigm in philosophy with established examples, like Achenbach, Marinoff, Brenifier or Lahav, textbooks and journals, trainings and courses, and last but not least professional organizations for certification and quality assurance (Harteloh, 2013a). These social characteristics of a paradigm follow from a specific way of looking at philosophy⁴. Philosophy is considered a natural

1. It is also in line with philosophical practice, where for example the Socratic Method is not something to be found literally in Plato’s dialogues, but is a reconstruction out of principles exemplified by the figure of Socrates (Nelson, 1965).

2. So, this paper is not a critical review of Hadot’s work on the concept *atopos*, but a further extension (*Erweiterung*) of the concept in philosophical practice.

3. For instance, Socrates taught Alcibiades not to define justice, in fact he defies every attempt to define the concept, but to live a just life in order to become a politician (Jowett, 2020).

4. The ongoing discussion among philosophical practitioners on the fundamental question *What is philosophical practice?* makes the characterization as a new paradigm complete

phenomenon – everyone is philosophizing now and then – intrinsically connected with who you are, and not only an academic discipline, not only a laboratory of thoughts or history of thinking. Just like in medicine, where there is a medical practice and a laboratory, philosophy harbors a thought laboratory (academy) and a practice in real life and society. Compare, for example, the study of justice in ethics by examples (case studies), called practical philosophy, with a life according to the principles of justice in practice, i.e., a philosophical practice. Philosophical practice completes the theoretical and practical philosophy of current university programs (Harteloh, 2013a).

In his study of ancient Greek texts, Hadot pointed out several concepts relevant for philosophical practice today. In this paper, I want to focus on the term *atopos*. Hadot used this term for understanding the character of Socrates. From Epictetus, Hadot learned the living of logic, physics and ethics as parts of philosophy, and he noticed the word *topos* (gr. τόπος: place, physical or mental)⁵ to indicate the «three lived exercises that are in a certain way the putting into practice of the three parts of the philosophical discourse» (Hadot, 1995, p. 12). Hadot calls these three *topoi* (topics or subjects) spiritual exercises. “Spiritual” refers to a conversion of a person to philosophy through which the person transcends herself and attains autonomy and an equilibrium of the mind. The life of Socrates is an example of this. Hadot followed Kierkegaard in using the ancient Greek term *atopos*, literally “out-of-place-ness”, to capture the character of Socrates as the prototype of a philosopher. The term indicates someone or something strange, extravagant, absurd, unclassifiable and disconcerting (Hadot, 1995, p. 158). The term could apply both to a person wandering around without a fixed home and to a person who cannot be classified in a fixed category (e.g., Erasmus)⁶. The philosopher is slippery as an eel, changing during every interaction like a chameleon, and cannot be caught in words or fixed by categories. That is the philosopher in practice. The image of the philosopher as scholar, studying and teaching, writing (difficult) papers and books for other scholars, is perhaps more

(see Kuhn, 1970). Philosophical practice is a new way to look at philosophy. Considering philosophy as a way of life is incommensurable with philosophy as an academic discipline, a science to be practiced without any involvement of what the student is as a person (Hadot, 1995, p. 271).

5. Also, a technical term in Stoic logic. *Topos*: a standard form of rhetorical argumentation or a variably expressible literary commonplace; a common theme, topic. In modern Greek: *atopos* = absurd.

6. Erasmus (1469-1536) was travelling most of his life, his date of birth and birthplace (Gouda or Rotterdam?) are disputed and his position with regard to religion (reform or catholic?) or politics (pacifist or not?) are ambiguous.

common nowadays, but according to Hadot in no way in accordance with the origins of Western philosophy in ancient Greece. Since the 1980s, philosophers have taken up this idea, gone out into the market place (again) and grounded philosophical practices outside the realm of academies and universities to consult or counsel people on issues in life.

3. Philosophical consultations

Philosophical consultations or counseling are both a part of philosophical practice as well as a technique to support individuals in reaching or maintaining a philosophical way of life (Schuster, 1999; Raabe, 2001). We can define a philosophical consultation as a one-to-one conversation of a philosopher with a person not necessarily trained in philosophy in order to philosophize about issues in life, work, family, relationships, etc. (Harteloh, 2013b). A philosophical counselor offers a translation of the counselee's theme – i.e., recurring thoughts or patterns of thinking – in philosophical terms and exercises to put philosophy into practice in everyday life (Harteloh, 2013b; 2014). Examples can be found in ancient philosophy, for instance Socrates, Seneca or Marcus Aurelius, but in our times it was the German philosopher Gerd B. Achenbach who first started a *philosophical* practice for counseling in 1981, Bergisch Gladbach, Germany (Achenbach, 2001). He considered philosophical practice an alternative to psychotherapy. He rejected method and considered philosophical practice equal with philosophy as such. He emphasized the role of the philosopher. «The philosopher is philosophical practice» is one of his theses (Achenbach, 2010). He founded the international association for philosophical practice (Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Philosophische Praxis, IGPP) and his example was soon followed by philosophers all over the world. They became philosophical counselors available to the general public instead of withdrawn academical scholars.

The three general criteria for counseling (professional relationship, empowerment of the client, goal in terms of health or wellbeing) hold for philosophical counseling too. The working model is stated in Plato's dialogue *Phaedrus* where Socrates enables his interlocutor to discover the philosopher in himself⁷. The philosophical practitioner establishes

7. This is not a kind of externalization or transference (Freud) as in psychotherapy, because it works in a different direction. It is also deeper than just mirroring the client (Rogers). It is an inner investigation of a part of the self that is being discovered in a reflexive way by the other. We could call this part the inner philosopher. Some clients may indeed first call this inner philosopher by the name of their counselor, but as it operates outside the counseling as well, in real life situations where the counselor has no part in, eventually they recognize it as part of their own self.

a professional relationship with a counselee – the person visiting the philosopher – enabling the counselee to discover his or her inner philosopher in order to philosophize autonomously apart from the counseling sessions and thus realize a philosophical empowerment. The goals of philosophical counseling are stated in philosophical terms, like autonomy, equilibrium, happiness, truth, justice, beauty or wisdom, and are applied to everyday situations and actions.

4. Three examples of philosophical consultations

Since 2007, I conduct a philosophical practice in the city of Rotterdam, The Netherlands. The focus is on individual philosophical consultations, Socratic group dialogue and philosophical walks. The aim is to support philosophy as a way of life. Let us look at some examples of philosophical consultations that took place in my philosophical practice⁸.

a) Study and wisdom

A 23 year old student visited my practice. His initial question was how to continue his study of history. He had problems concentrating and did not progress in writing his final (graduation) thesis. He consulted the psychologist for students of his university. The psychologist thought of an attention deficit disorder and indicated psychotherapy, but my client preferred philosophical counseling over psychotherapy. I asked him for examples of situations in which he lost his concentration. We tried to describe such situations in a phenomenological way (pure descriptions without judgement) and capture their essence in a concept (conceptualisation). My client could give examples when a loss of concentration occurred, but he was not able to capture their essence. After a while, I noticed he had no difficulty in concentrating during the (weekly, one hour) consultations and confronted him with this. How was this possible? My client said he liked the philosophizing. He felt attracted to it and eventually described his situations of loss of concentration as pure existence. He managed to create room for such moments of pure existence so that they did not interfere with his study anymore. He took up philosophy as a minor and was able to finish his doctoral thesis on time. He summarized our consultations as an exercise in accepting existence. He called this wisdom.

8. For reasons of privacy, details of the counselee have been omitted or changed and the case is actually a reconstruction of several consultations on the same theme (a vignette): study, relationships and work.

b) Divorce and justice

A 45 year old female visited my practice. She had been married for 23 years and faced a divorce with her husband. Love was gone and they had grown far apart. Her initial question was how to distribute the material goods acquired during their marriage equally. She thought about it in terms of fairness and used counterfactual reasoning: «if she had not taken care for the household and the kids, her husband would not have been able to earn so much money by working as a lawyer». So, she deserved a fair share of their wealth, but what was fair in this situation? I questioned her about fairness and noticed she actually could not point out the amount of money corresponding to her effort during the marriage. We explored fairness as a kind of justice and I distinguished the notion of retributive and distributive justice. She realised that actually “retribution” could not be applied to her situation and distribution lacked reasonable grounds. She decided to demand an amount of money sufficient for living on her own, which she could point out very well, be satisfied with it, and took up a job as secretary after the divorce, something she had always wanted to do and which would enable her to become independent from her husband’s alimony in the near future. She summarized our consultations as a transition from the role of a married wife to an autonomous person. The philosophizing about fairness and justice helped her in this. She could find justice in being the way-you-are yourself and transcend retributive or distribute notions that had bothered her and actually kept her attached to her husband.

c) Retirement and freedom

A 65 year old man visited my practice. He was reaching the age of retirement and he liked to discuss the question of what to do with the rest of his life. He had always been a hard-working man without many hobbies and was actually afraid of a future without work (“emptiness”). We explored his reasons and motivations for working as a manager in a large company and realised his work involved a lot of creativity in dealing with customers and providers. This creativity required freedom to improvise and act. He noticed that this competence could be used after his retirement as well to shape his life in a realm of freedom. He took a course in painting and started to study the history of arts, something he always had wanted to do. The creative competence used for functioning as a manager now merged with his existence as a person. He left my practice with the idea of emptiness as a necessary condition (i.e. space) for freedom of expression and the possibilities it offered for shaping his life with already acquired competences.

These three examples show the consultations as a process in which the counselee (1) establishes a relationship with a philosopher, (2)

philosophizes about a theme by contemplating preconceived notions in a reflexive way, (3) turns towards a philosophical concept for understanding (i.e., deepening and change), and (4) discovers a way to live. They also show the working of the notion of *atopos*. The counselee becomes “out of place” by freeing him or herself from fixed concepts (the *topos*) and turns towards reflexivity, as a process that is not attached to any place or particular concept (*atopos*).

The consultations also show that being *atopos* is not always easy. Belonging to some kind of group or being classified as student, doctor or housewife is attached to social status, confirmation or rewards. However, underlying this function is an existence that can make people uneasy with their role as student, doctor, housewife, etc. A student may turn towards a philosophical practice, because she feels she *is* actually not a student, the doctor may feel she actually *is* not a doctor, the housewife may feel she actually *is* not a housewife. Such general classifications fail to satisfy personal meaning. By philosophical counseling the focus shifts from functioning as student, doctor or housewife to existence as such. Such a shift requires courage and an immunity to opinions of others who will consider it strange or out of place as the figure of Socrates already showed (Yonezawa, 2012).

5. Being *atopos*

Atopos is not only connected to words, but also to life itself. In the *Symposium* (221d) Socrates is called a man out of place by himself as well as in his words. Socrates lives the idea of *atopos*, in line with Hadot’s thesis that philosophy is a way of life. So, what does it mean *to be atopos*?

As we are physically located in the world by occupying a place with our body, the meaning of the concept must be sought in a metaphor. «Etymologically, *atopos* means “out of place”, hence strange, extravagant, absurd, unclassifiable, and disconcerting» (Hadot, 1995, p. 158). This applies to philosophical consultations. Actually, it is a strange thing for people to visit a philosophical practice. Usually, one turns to a psychologist for discussing problems in work, study or relationships. However, some people are attracted to philosophy and visit a philosophical practice. They feel healthy, but bothered by a theme, and search for a deeper meaning instead of instrumental answers (Marinoff, 1999; Schuster, 1999). They reject the labelling by a diagnostic framework (Raabe, 2001) as, for example, attention deficit disorder (first example), obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (second example) or mild depression (third example). In fact, they have a natural tendency to philosophize in their character which makes them different from other people; a tendency which is

addressed and reinforced by the philosophical counselor during the philosophical consultations. Literally, the term *atopos* means *a* (without or no), *topos* (place). And this seems to apply to a philosophical practice too. There is no fixed societal embedding, like that of a medical or psychological practice, and in a philosophical practice the counselor and the counselee are without a (fixed) place. This is a necessary condition for being or becoming a philosopher as Hadot learned from his study of ancient Greek philosophy.

Hadot (1995, p. 57) noticed the use of the word *atopos* to capture the character of Socrates, as *the* prototype of a philosopher:

By the time of the Platonic dialogues Socrates was called *atopos*, that is, “unclassifiable”. What makes him *atopos* is precisely the fact that he is a “philosopher” in the etymological sense of the word; that is, he is in love with wisdom. For wisdom, says Diotima in Plato’s *Symposium*, is not a human state, it is a state of perfection of being and knowledge that can only be divine. It is the love of this wisdom, which is foreign to the world, that makes the philosopher a stranger in it.

So, being a philosopher means being *atopos*. Note, Plato plays with the meaning of the word by extending “strange” to “strang-er”. The philosopher is a stranger, because he loves wisdom instead of usual material things (home, partner, job) while the knowledge of wisdom is not something for mortals. The philosopher is in love with something unattainable, something without a (particular) place. Just like Socrates, he finds himself in a reflection on this process of loving the unattainable («knowing that you do not know») and by this also becomes without a (particular) place as reflexivity is a process without any place.

This discovery is not captured by words, but by an experience: «In the *Theaetetus*, for instance, Socrates declares: “They say I am *atopotatos*, and all I create is *aporia*”» (Hadot, 1995, p. 158). Note that Socrates refers to what is being said *about* him. The term *atopotatos* is used in the context of a relationship. Partners in dialogue interact with Socrates and experience a strangeness, which underlies the *aporia*, “the not-knowing”. Socrates’ character – the philosopher – is hidden, not known to his partners in dialogue⁹. However, they will experience this and can only think of it as strange, a kind of surprise making them perplexed¹⁰.

9. «But you must not tell everyone else about me, my friend, as they are unaware that I have this skill. And since they do not know this about me they never say it; but they do say that I am very strange (*atopotatos*) and that I make men perplexed» (Plato, *Theaetetus*, 149a, trans. Waterfield, 1987).

10. As I think the first sentence of a Socratic dialogue is usually very important, note the *Theaetetus* opens with: «Oh Terpsion, been in town long, or have you just arrived?» (Plato,

This experience of strange-ness points the way to the discovery of what can now be called their “inner philosopher” underlying their tendency to philosophize.

Looking at the three examples of philosophical counseling in the preceding paragraph, the experience of being *atopos* is the moment of realization that there is no lack of attention (first example), there is no need for a fair distribution (second example), or there is no “rest of your life” (third example). These are reflexive moments, like the strange experience of strangeness, by which a discussion *about* a topic is turned into the topic *itself*. The topic is present in the consultation room now and can be investigated by the counselor and counselee together. The philosophical counselor is facilitating the reflexive moment: we do not discuss attention, but aim our attention at the attention present in the consultation room (first example), we do not discuss the will for a fair distribution, but aim our will at the conditions for willing itself in the consultation room (second example), and we do not discuss future life, but live the present life itself in the consultation room (third example). Reflexivity marks the shift from *topos* to *a-topia* and is a process without any place or position in time-space. This experience opens the way for a new look at present problems, themes or future actions.

For the philosophical counselor, being *atopos* means first and for all being a philosopher, and investigate a topic with the counselee in a reflexive way (Achenbach, 2001). This is fundamental for building a professional relationship with the counselee. The philosophical counselor is not a teacher or a scientist. He is a thinker, just like the counselee; thinking along with the counselee. The aim is not to define concepts such as concentration, distribution or pension, but to investigate the concentration of concentration (concentration-ness), the distribution of distribution (distribution-ness) or the life of a life (life-ness). For this, the counselor has to be free of qualifications (e.g., as teacher or scientist), practice reflexivity, and hold up a mirror for the counselee so that she can discover the reflexive attitude in herself (Harteloh, 2010). As who-you-are is in first instance bound to fixed categories, it means going beyond those categories or a shift from function (e.g., as student, mother or manager) to existence (e.g., as learner, caretaker or worker); a going beyond the “who-you-are”¹¹. The philosophical counselor is facilitating this transition from function to existence.

Theaetetus, 142a, trans. Waterfield, 1987), a reference to being in a particular place (*topos*). The dialogue is a move from *topos* to *atopos*.

11. See Hadot (1995, p. 93 and further) on “learning to die”: a spiritual exercise in philosophical practice.

For the counselee, being *atopos* means first and for all to accept the philosophical counselor as philosopher. A Socratic questioning (i.e., the what – actually – is x? question, repeated *ad infinitum*) has to be coped with. A client expecting deep answers as wisdom will soon leave the philosophical practice. Patience and keeping up with the questioning are essential (Brenifier, 2006). Concepts discovered by the questioning are investigated with regard to their philosophical content by questioning, again and again, and so the process repeats itself. By following the example of the counselor, the counselee is developing a reflexive attitude. The rather general application of that attitude makes people call the counselee philosophical and unclassifiable, i.e. *atopos*. Although the three examples of consultations might look like a shift in concepts, respectively towards wisdom (first example), justice (second example) and freedom (third example), it is the reflexive process that is the actual gain of the consultations. It enables a counselee to shift from concept again in future life by himself as philosopher. The concept as an apparent outcome of a consultation is just like an ice floe for the counselee to float on for a while in the sea of life, while being able to abandon it when it offers insufficient ground under one's feet.

To conclude. To be *atopos* means transcending who-you-are. It is a transition from concept to (reflexive) process. Attachment to a concept means attachment to a place in the order of speech. However, by living a reflexive process, a capacity is gained to transcend any place. It is a move from functioning (e.g., as student, worker, partner or mother) to an existence as such. It is also a moment in time-space during a philosophical consultation in the consultation room that is transferred to everyday life and enables the counselee to transform and shape herself in a new way. This requires courage to change, a reflexivity that is recognized as philosophical, and an immunity to the opinion or critique of others who will consider you strange or out of place, i.e. *atopos*.

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Listening to Nature. An ecological encounter with Pierre Hadot**

by *Pablo Muruzabal Lamberti**

Abstract

This paper is about Hadot's notion of "cosmic consciousness", the relation it bears to nature in general and today's ecological crisis more specifically, and finally the transformative practice of meditation. Although closely related to nature, the notion of cosmic consciousness has not often been explicitly linked to the ecological crisis. This is somewhat surprising, given that early warnings of the ecological crisis already date back to the early 1960s. Since Hadot's passing in 2010, the crisis has accelerated rapidly with biologists and climate scientists from around the world issuing warning after warning about the dire ecological consequences we face if we fail to meet sustainable goals. The existential threats posed by mass species extinction and climate change heighten the need to investigate the ecological and transformative potential of Philosophy as a Way of Life (PWL). Given the complex and interdisciplinary scale of the climate crisis, there are clearly no easy or straightforward solutions that address the problem in its entirety. But as I will argue, any attempt to transform ourselves should start from the idea that the universe is a system of interconnectedness. After all, we clearly live in a milieu of living beings whose lives overlap with ours, and this demands a revitalised cosmological consciousness and approach to philosophical spirituality. What cosmic consciousness demands of us today is a different relationship with the idea of the Self, other beings and the world.

Keywords: Cosmic Consciousness, Ecology, Nature, Listening, Meditation.

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I. Introduction

As Guess notes, «responses to the ecological crisis need to go further than renewable technology and emissions policy to embrace deeper and wider changes in ideas, attitudes and behaviour and more broadly cultivate an art of ecological living» (Guess, 2022, p. 321). In the service of inspiring contemporary transformative practices, I have recently attempted to relate PWL and the spiritual exercise of listening to the field of “ecosophy” through the work of Dutch philosopher Henk Oosterling (Muruzabal Lamberti, 2023; Oosterling, 2015; 2020)¹.

However, apart from the writings of Arne Naess, this movement is strongly embedded in the post-modern and post-structuralist French tradition, associated with philosophers such as Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari and Derrida. The explicit rejection of universal concepts such as “truth” and “objectivity” by authors in these traditions continues to be challenging to reconcile with PWL, which in its historiographic-hermeneutic approach presupposes and builds on these concepts². At the same time, the status of objectivity and universality within PWL merits further research. Such an undertaking, however, lies beyond the scope of this paper.

As I have also previously suggested (Muruzabal Lamberti, 2023, pp. 262-3), an intercultural approach to ecology and spiritual exercises that focuses on transformative experience and not so much on the intellect, might not only make a recourse to the French continental tradition redundant, but it may also prove helpful for inspiring contemporary philosophical practices. In relation to Buddhism and meditation, Chase and others in the field of PWL have already started to make valuable contributions (e.g., Chase, 2022; in press b; Fiordalis, 2018). In this paper, I will attempt to further expand on those endeavours.

As a contemporary spiritual exercise for cultivating cosmic consciousness, Hadot advocated focusing our attention on the present (Chase, in press b, p. 21). But in exercise form, this is by no means straightforward. As neuroscientist, philosopher, and long-time exponent of meditation Sam Harris notes, there is a difference between being lost in thought and paying clear attention to objects of attention in the present (e.g., the breath, sounds, our thoughts). I will elaborate on this difference further on.

1. See Pittaway (2017) and Guess (2022) for approaches of relating cosmic consciousness to ecology.

2. See, for instance, Hadot (1998, p. ix). See also Muruzabal Lamberti (2023, chapter 2) for an elaborate discussion on the different epistemologies employed by Foucault and Hadot.

In what follows, I explore the meaning of nature and cosmic consciousness according to Hadot and the Stoics, and subsequently relate these themes to the spiritual exercise of listening and the environmental crisis. I will then suggest that the experience of “coidentity with the world”, which can be exercised without problematising or presupposing the existence of an inner Self or essence, can play a crucial role in order to transform ourselves ecologically.

Let us begin with a brief overview of the different uses of nature and attitudes towards nature in antiquity, to later understand the relation nature bears to cosmic consciousness.

1.1. Uses of the term “nature”

According to Hadot, the first usage of *physis* occurs in Homer’s *Odyssey* (x, 287-92), in which it designates the result of a certain growth or development – in this case of “the herb of life”. Some commentators have argued that there is no reference to growth or process in the specific passage referred to by Hadot; Hermes simply shows the plant in its natural form. Others, however, noted that there is a connotation of giving instruction in the process of “showing” (*deiknunai*: Naddaf, 2005, p. 14).

In contexts where the result of a certain growth or development is implied, *physis* is usually accompanied by a genitive: «It is the birth *of* or the aspect *of* something» (Hadot, 2006, p. 18). With the Sophistic and Hippocratic movement from the fifth century onwards, absolute uses of *physis* start to appear. In such contexts, it points towards a process or result of formation (e.g., causality), instead of a form *of* something.

This is also how Plato uses the word in reference to the work of the pre-Socratics. Contrary to the pre-Socratics, however, Plato does not agree with the idea that *physis* as a primary element – water, fire, etc. – that engenders the universe, corresponds to material elements, or causes. For Plato, the most ancient and original of existences is the soul, which is «the movement that moves itself». As the Athenian says:

By “nature” they intend to indicate production of things primary; but if soul shall be shown to have been produced first (not fire or air), but soul first and foremost, – it would most truly be described as a superlatively “natural” existence. Such is the state of the case, provided that one can prove that soul is older than body, but not otherwise (Plato, *Laws*, x, 892c, transl. Bury, 1968).

The Athenian then goes on to prove that the soul is older than «things hard and soft and heavy and light» (*ibid.*). In other words, material elements such as fire, water, air, and earth are secondary phenomena. Whereas nature for the pre-Socratics is akin to a blind and spontaneous process,

for Plato it is an intelligent force, and as such, a divine art that acts on the world from outside as a Demiurge (Hadot, 2006, pp. 22-3).

Aristotle adopts and adapts the idea of nature as art, adding an opposition to it. In his teleological cosmology, the end of nature is nature itself. This is different from the work of an artist, who (violently) introduces something foreign into a matter to create a certain form. In workings of nature, the form imposed on the matter was already immanent and immediate; it becomes from within what it fundamentally was. As such, nature acts like a craftsman – *Demiourgos* – who proceeds, without reasoning, in a rational way.

The Stoics hark back to the pre-Socratics and assume the genesis of all things is a material element, in this case, fire. The world consists of two aspects: one is the formative aspect, associated with the *physis* that produces, which is identical to Nature, God, Providence, and universal *Logos*. The formative aspect is, as it were, tasked with deploying and setting in motion the cosmic process. The other aspect is the immanent and periodic *becoming* of the world. The original fire condenses into the other elements, and through the inner workings of an invisible power, Nature becomes matter³.

But the Stoics also agree with Aristotle that there is an immanent, non-reasoning but rational principle of motion in everything. And they agree with both Plato and Aristotle that *physis* is artistically endowed. Accordingly, they define *physis* as «an artistic fire that proceeds systematically and methodically to engender all things» (Hadot, 2006, p. 25). In the *Veil of Isis*⁴, Hadot explains how this artistic aspect of nature is also part of one of two fundamental attitudes towards nature, called the Orphic attitude.

1.2. Attitudes towards nature

Contrary to what one may initially assume, ecological concerns and fears already existed in the ancient world. Such affects were caused not only by the relentless desire to tear away the veil from Nature, but also by the forceful and violent treatment of the planet through mining. Both Ovid and Seneca pointed towards the immorality of mining specifically, and technological progress more generally.

3. Although this is not the occasion for comparative research, there is a noteworthy similarity in the cyclic nature of Stoic cosmology and that of non-Abrahamic traditions such as Buddhism and Hinduism.

4. With the emergence of the philosophical meaning of nature, Hadot describes how Nature became personified by a fusion between the figure of Artemis and that of Isis, characterised by her ontological tendency to conceal herself.

The attitude that drives such behaviour is termed by Hadot “Promethean”: an attitude that wishes to discover the secrets of (divine) nature by means of “tricks” and “violence”. The Greek word *mechane*, which signifies “trick”, articulates this attitude. For the ancients, mechanics initially emerged as a method to trick or outsmart the natural order. It involved generating actions that seemed to defy nature and compelling nature to perform tasks it would not carry out independently. This was accomplished using ingeniously crafted tools and devices, commonly referred to as “machines”. Ancient machines encompassed a wide array of contraptions, such as scales, winches, levers, pulleys, wedges, screws, and gears, which found applications in activities like constructing warfare engines (Hadot, 2006, p. 94)⁵.

In line with the benefits Prometheus brought civilisation, first and foremost among which was fire, the ethical impetus behind the Promethean stance stems from the desire to operate in the service of humanity. Put more aggressively, and arguably, more environmentally consequential, the Promethean attitude is one in which «man demands the right of domination over nature» (Hadot, 2006, pp. 95, 98).

Radically opposed to, yet not strictly separated from the Promethean⁶, is the aforementioned Orphic attitude, or “mode” of interacting with nature (Chase, 2022b). In the spirit of the musical hero Orpheus, this attitude seeks rapprochement with the mysteries of nature not through force, but through the enchantment provoked by hearing melody, rhythm, and harmony. While the Promethean approach is a quest for domination, and the pursuit of utility is driven by audacity, insatiable curiosity, the Orphic perspective, in contrast, is fuelled by reverence for «mystery and disinterestedness» (Hadot, 2006, p. 96).

As an exemplary illustration of the Orphic attitude, Hadot brings up Plato’s *Timaeus*. After all, the *Timaeus* is presented as a *poiesis*, a form of artistic creation, resembling the artistic endeavour undertaken by the divine poet of the cosmos in the form of an oral discourse (Hadot, 2006, p. 156; Muruzabal Lamberti, 2023, pp. 94-6). In addition, the objective of the *Timaeus* is not solely to compose a mythical hymn but to live the virtuous life that the gods present to humanity, both in the present and the future. This way of life involves «contemplating the universe, thinking

5. Various authors, whether pagan or Christian, also referred to nature as a mechanism to hint at the intricate and harmonious order found within nature (Hadot, 2006, p. 127).

6. While Hadot is radically opposing two attitudes, he is not opposing in terms of “good” and “bad”. His objective is «to attract attention to these two orientations that can be manifested in the relations between man and nature» (Hadot, 2006, p. 97). In addition, both attitudes cannot be strictly separated but rather represent our ambiguous relation to nature.

of the All, and harmonising oneself with its movements» (Hadot, 2006, p. 183). Here, the emphasis is on a contemplative lifestyle, coupled with the endeavour of disinterestedness which serves to free oneself from individual desires.

Seneca is also presented as a proponent and representative of the Orphic attitude in the Platonic tradition. As Hadot shows, Seneca in *Natural Questions* acknowledges that the exploration of earthquakes might hold practical benefits, but he expounds on his perspective by framing understanding of Nature as the greatest gain of all. The most remarkable aspect of delving into the subject of earthquakes in this instance is that its sheer “sublimity” engrosses humanity. Indeed «[it] is practiced not for the sake of the profit we might derive from it but because of the wonder we admire» (Seneca in Hadot, 2006, p. 186).

Having outlined some meanings of nature and the two Hadotian attitudes towards nature, let us now proceed with a discussion of the term “cosmic consciousness” before looking at the Stoics in a bit more detail and relate their Orphically-oriented practices more explicitly to our theme of cosmic consciousness and listening.

1.3. Cosmic consciousness and the view from above

One of Hadot’s great achievements is his characterisation of ancient philosophy in terms of spiritual exercises. Thanks to this characterisation, ancient philosophy today has become something modern humans can relate to as an existential practice. The transformation spiritual exercises try to invoke is «an event provoked in the listener’s soul by the speech of a philosopher» (Hadot, 2020, p. 95), something we will interpret through the Stoics as a call to think and act rationally.

In his endeavours to revitalise and actualise ancient philosophy, Hadot went to great lengths to emphasise that spiritual exercises and existential philosophy in general are not some kind of self-help, which is something popular authors are often keen to have their audiences believe. One of the key terms that makes insightful why ancient philosophy is not the same as self-help is the notion of “cosmic consciousness” or “the view from above” (Hadot, 1995, pp. 210-2; 1998, p. 173; 2011, pp. 137, 167).

The Greek term *kosmos* means (worldly) “order”⁷. What we, moderns, usually mean when we use the word “cosmos” are the heavenly bodies we observe from earth. However, drawing inspiration from ancient philosophical exercises, Hadot encourages us to do the opposite; imaginatively place

7. In a secondary sense, it also refers to “adornment” or “ornament”, which has a connotation of that which is aesthetically pleasing.

ourselves on one of the celestial bodies – e.g., the moon, Sirius – and look at life on earth from there to show how insignificant the world is from a cosmic perspective, while simultaneously making us aware of the «sublime spectacle of the earth» of which we are part (Hadot, 2004, pp. 205-6; 2023, p. 72).

This top-down perspective was important to philosophers such as Plato, Epicurus, Philo of Alexandria, and Marcus Aurelius because, being embedded in a mythical or religious consciousness, they were interested in seeking greater awareness and contemplating the totality of reality. Cosmic contemplation inevitably transcends the individual level by activating a non-egoistical manner of thinking and enabling the discovery of certain “eternal” values such as respect for our planet, and life in general.

In exercise form, one «situates events in the perspective of what they bring to the universe, of the collaboration that we give to the balance and harmony of the universe» (Hadot, 2011, p. 137). The spiritual exercises Hadot writes about can be divided in different categories (Hadot, 1995, pp. 90, 105; see for a discussion of the different categories Muruzabal Lamberti, 2023, pp. 22-9). The cosmic aspect of these exercises roughly consists of both a move inward – an “inner struggle” – and a move outward – an externalisation – which promotes an altered relationship with the world.

Put differently, in developing cosmic consciousness, one aims for objectivity and impartiality, while at the same time changing the object of one’s aspirations and identifications from the “lesser” individual self to the “greater”, universal Self. In *The Inner Citadel*, Hadot (1998, p. 173) explains the «cosmic flight of the soul» serves to make one aware of the larger scheme of things – which he also refers to as “the Whole” – *both* outside and inside oneself. Elsewhere, Hadot writes:

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

As Chase (in press a, p. 8) points out, this “self” is not what we would claim it to be in an everyday, intuitive sense⁸. It is not what we identify with, or what we would others like to think it is; it is rather that which remains after transcending all imaginary and illusionary aspects of selfhood. In addition, Hadot notes that hard transformative work is needed to gain access to the higher self (Chase, in press a, p. 7)⁹.

8. See Chase (in press a, p. 2) for the different accounts of cosmic consciousness Hadot has offered in his writings.

9. Cf. Nietzsche’s suggestion to rise high enough in order to be struck by thunder in

For the ancients, the point was not to “forge” some kind of new identity, «but rather to liberate oneself from one’s individuality, in order to raise oneself up to universality» (Hadot, 1995, p. 210). By engaging in transformative spiritual exercises, one could “accede” to the universality of the *Logos*. In a certain sense then, the boundaries between interior and exterior are dissolved, as one, as it were, “becomes” the universe. Let us explore the meaning of becoming the universe in a bit more detail.

2. The universe is us

In his recently published book *Beyond the Individual*, Will Johncock interprets and explains Stoicism as a philosophy that is chiefly about «teaching us how we are inherently bound to each other and to an entire world» (Johncock, 2023, p. 23)¹⁰. As Johncock elucidates, for the Stoics, being rational demanded a cosmic awareness of the fact that one’s mind is always entangled with the entire universe. The rationality of the universe is responsible for ordering and interconnecting all parts of our planet, including its ecological characteristics (Johncock, 2023, pp. 60, 67)¹¹. In technical terms, this position amounts to ontological relationism: the view that everything in the universe exists per se in connection to something else, and that these relationships are fundamental to the nature of existence itself¹².

When used without a qualifier, *physis* for the Stoics can also refer to the faculty of growth which is unique to each organism, including plants. But contrary to plants, human beings possess not only the inherent capacity for growth, but also the capacity for sensation, and finally a faculty of

Also sprach Zarathustra. Hadot linked the idea of transcending the self to Nietzsche’s notion of the Dionysian, which Nietzsche describes as «an [affirmative] impulse toward unity» and «a transcendence of the person» (Hadot, 2023, p. 136). For Nietzsche, the Dionysian is always related to the Stoic attitude of *amor fati*, which, as Hadot shows, can also be embodied by Nietzsche’s doctrine of the eternal return of each instant (Hadot, 2023, p. 137).

10. This is not a new theme; Hadot had already written about Stoicism and Marcus Aurelius specifically in relation to acting in conformity with nature and therefore, the service of the human community. But given the strict focus on community and interconnectiveness, it will prove helpful to further reveal the relationship between nature and cosmic consciousness.

11. Cf. Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, v, 1 «Can you not see plants, birds, ants, spiders, bees all doing their own work, each helping in their own way to order the world?». All Marcus Aurelius translations are from the 2006 Martin Hammond translation, published by Penguin Books (Hammond, 2006).

12. Cf. C. Rovelli, *Helgoland*, especially Chapter IV, *The Web of Relations that Weaves Reality* (Rovelli, 2021), and J. Lent, *The Web of Meaning. Integrating science and traditional wisdom to find our place in the universe* (Lent, 2021). From an intercultural perspective we could also consider the metaphor of Indra’s net.

reason (Hadot, 1998, p. 184). So, although human beings are attributed a special place in the hierarchy, animals, plants, and even inanimate entities including the moon and the sun also contribute to the well-orderedness of the universe. The *Logos* is omnipresent and therefore, it does not stand outside of the universe but rather is the source of all coherence *in* it.

In sharing rationality with the universe, human beings are capable of reasoning. We owe our rational capacities to the universe of which we are a part, and acting reasonably means acting in conformity with nature (Hadot, 1998, p. 202). Indeed, rationality for the Stoics is a feature of the universe, and by being part of the universe and acting in accordance with it, we exercise our rationality. In other words, thinking and acting rationally bears the traces of the entire cosmos itself.

Such accounts of rationality may not seem very intuitive, but the meaning of rationality should not be interpreted along conventional (“enlightened”) lines here. Firstly, claiming that the universe is rational does not mean that it is a conscious entity of some sort, with the mental capacities that we would attribute to rational beings (e.g., systematic and logical thought). What the Stoics mean when they describe the universe as rational is that the universe is indeed “ordered”, which brings us back to the etymology of *kosmos* as described earlier.

To the Stoics, the order of the universe consists of endless cause and effect chains that exists as a kind of natural law. Everything happens for a reason, which means events are regular, predictable, and understandable – i.e., ordered. Since the universe is ordered in that way, we can think and reason rationally as well. The important presupposition here, to which we will return later, is that the universe is a system of interconnection.

In addition, we have to appreciate the fact that the Stoics interpret the cosmos to be a rational being – also referred to as God or Zeus – that operates accordingly¹³. God too should be interpreted unconventionally and separately from all Abrahamic connotations. In the ancient Stoic context, God can be read and interpreted as a synonym for the world, the cosmos, Nature, the Universe, the Whole and Rationality itself – all coincide. Also, instead of identifying the different divinities of the ancient world with the physical elements, the Stoics attributed to the various gods the successive forms assumed by the same force: Zeus. This is why Hadot notes: «For the Stoics, physics is theology: it has as its object the divine, that is, the universal Reason of the All, and the particular rational principles present within the All, and it uses a single method» (Hadot, 2006, p. 56).

13. The idea that the source of order in the universe is God is an idea which arguably originated with Plato and Aristotle, who also saw the universe as rationally ordered.

It follows that God is not a transcendent deity that created and subsequently oversees the world; God *is* the world itself and as such, it is part of the physical order of the world. In a certain sense, we can even “see” God, because we can perceive the world as an ordered, organised, and interconnected system. To the ancients, this order in the world cannot be the outcome of mere chance or randomness. The order we perceive can only come from what is intelligent and reasoned and God is the culmination of such rationality (Johncock, 2023, p. 36).

Since the world as a singular entity, consisting of collectively ordered parts, embodies this divine mind or rationality (*koinos logos*), the rational world and God coincide. Our individually ordered mind and rationality is therefore a divine trace of something greater. What is more, our *logos*, which constitutes our deepest self, is “consubstantial” with the cosmic *Logos* that can also be called Zeus, Fate, or Nature. This is the sense in which we are, according to Marcus Aurelius, “fragments” (*apospasma*) of God (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, v, 27).

Whereas plants and animals only embody rationality in their interconnected physical behaviours, human beings are free to decide whether they behave rationally and live as interconnected beings. In the Stoic sense, it is clear what one should do: wanting the same as what divine goodness wants, which is the wellbeing of other rational beings, is what the sage would choose to do (Hadot, 1998, p. 200). Indeed, «what lunacy to prefer to be dragged than to follow!», writes Seneca in reference to Cleanthes’ analogy of the cart and the dog (see *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, II, 284, 5-9; Epictetus, *Encheiridion*, 53). Not thinking and behaving rationally is an expression of irrationality. In the words of Marcus Aurelius:

Have you ever seen a lopped-off hand, foot, or head, lying separated from the rest of the body? That is what one does when he does not accept what happens, and thereby separates himself from the All, or who commits any act inspired by egotism. You yourself have excluded yourself from the unity of Nature, for you had grown within the Whole like a part, and now you have cut yourself off from it (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, VIII, 34).

Put differently, caring for yourself only and lacking this awareness of our fundamental interconnectedness – our shared rational nature – is the same as acting and living irrationally (Johncock, 2023, p. 151). Let us untangle the meaning of being rational a bit further by taking a look at its source.

2.1. The source of our rationality

Questioning what it means to be rational is the same as posing the question of how we rationally interconnect with other humans and non-humans,

i.e., the universe. After all, given the interconnected order of the universe, rationality must involve interpersonal shared ends and outcomes, which implies a certain responsibility to our fellow human and non-human planetary inhabitants.

Our quest to be rational presupposes we connect to the universe, and this begins by finding our internal rationality, which is simultaneously interwoven with the rationally ordered universe. In line with the Orphic attitude of a contemplative lifestyle, the Stoics call on us to focus our attention inwards. What we then find is the source of our rationality.

According to the Stoics our source of rationality is the *daimon* or *hegemonikon* we each embody, and all rationally endowed individuals have access to God – universal rationality – through their *daimon*¹⁴. Stoics such as Epictetus draw from the Socratic meaning of a *daimon*, already prominently present in the writings of Chrysippus (Hadot, 1998, p. 123), in that it represents some sort of divine guiding voice and caretaker (e.g., *Apology*, 31c-d, 40a-c, 41c-d; *Republic*, VI, 496c). The guardian role of the *daimon* is important because it means we are confronted with a benevolent kind of guardian which “steers” us toward truth when we are prepared to listen. It acts as a kind of interpreter between us and God, and the guidance it provides comes from a rational source, which *ipso facto* transcends our individuality.

In other words, our *daimon* is the divine part of our individuality; it represents God – our rationality. It is also what makes us interconnected, as *daimons* are not exclusively internal; we all share in the greater whole. Johncock (2023, p. 50) observes: «Your internality is out there in a world, where the word “out” does not designate what is external or peripheral to you but rather is an indication of how dispersed we each are. Our internal self is the rational universe and order».

With Marcus Aurelius we can get an idea of what this interaction with our *daimons* looks like.

2.2. Listening to our *daimon*

When Marcus directs his attention inward, he *listens* to his *daimon*. He frames listening as a kind of “adherence to commands” or simply “obedience” to the will of the *daimon* (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, v, 27). Epictetus frames this obedience as swearing an oath to Zeus

14. Hadot shows how old the notion of the *daimon* is in the *Inner Citadel*, already appearing in Homeric poems (Hadot, 1998, p. 123). He explains it as «individual destiny» (ivi, p. 222), but also as «guiding principle» and «faculty of reflection» (Hadot, 1998, pp. 120, 264).

(*Discourses*, I, 14, 11-7). In both cases, obeying the will of the daimon to the Stoics amounts to paying heed to one's rational mind, or honouring one's own rationality¹⁵.

Obeying usually has negative connotations, in the sense that we do something which is not what we might do given the liberty to choose freely. When listening to our daimon, however, it is not some entity outside ourselves which we are obeying but the very «interconnecting ordering thread among all things in the universe» (Johncock, 2023, p. 52; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, II, 16, 6).

Instead of being concerned with what happens to us individually, listening to our daimon – i.e., being rational – requires us to be mindful of our entanglement with others. It is in this sense that we must understand Marcus Aurelius advice to live with a view from above which initially suggests a certain disconnecting:

Take a view from above – look at the thousands of flocks and herds, the thousands of human ceremonies, every sort of voyage in storm or calm, the range of creation, combination, and extinction. Consider too the lives once lived by others long before you, the lives that will be lived after you, the lives lived now among foreign tribes; and how many have never even heard your name, how many will very soon forget it, how many may praise you now but quickly turn to blame. Reflect that neither memory nor fame, nor anything else at all, has any importance worth thinking of (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, IX, 30).

This view requires of us that we transcend our personal interests in everything we do. To the extent that we live rationally, then, we do so by virtue of listening and obeying to the greater “will” of the universe, which is a guiding force that transcends our personal interests. When we listen to nature, we let the overall universal order resonate in us as our individual rationality (Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, IV, 24; VI, 58; VII, 55, 1; XI, 13, 4; XII, 32, 3; V, 13, 32; Hadot, 1998, p. 187). Instead of identifying with our individual concerns and self-image, we connect to the other.

It follows that doing things within cosmic consciousness is not an afterthought but the fundamental issue for the Stoics. Rational individuals are collectively oriented and constituted individuals (Johncock, 2023, p. 53). As far as the Stoics care about individual ends, these always are «mutually beneficial ends» (Johncock, 2023, p. 208; see also Seneca, *Letter XLVIII*, 1-6, which today, as I will argue in continuation, would involve

15. The question remains whether the daimon is indeed “rational”, or rather hyper- or supra-rational. A Stoic would probably say “yes, it is rational”, but a Neoplatonist like Plotinus might say “no, it’s that part of the intellect (*nous*) that remains within the intelligible world”.

taking care of our shared planet. After all, what could be more mutually beneficial than protecting and conserving our planet?

3. Cosmic consciousness through concentration on the present

Although he never offers an extensive account of his ecological fears, there is little doubt about the fact that Hadot was aware of the destructive behaviour of humanity and its technology. For instance:

[We] must indeed admit that mankind, far from having mastered this situation, finds itself, on the contrary, faced with still more serious dangers. Technology is engendering a way of life and ways of thinking that have as their consequence the ever increasing mechanization of human beings themselves. It is impossible, however, to stop the implacable progress of this kind of civilization. In the process, mankind risks losing its soul as well as its body (Hadot, 2006, p. 151).

In his last book, Hadot goes to great lengths to demonstrate how ancient writers such as Homer, Pindar, Plato, Epicurus, the Cynics and the Stoics, and later writers such as Pascal, Voltaire, and Goethe sought (imaginary and dream-like) elevated points including mountaintops and saw this ascension as a “vital necessity” to resituate oneself within the Whole (Hadot, 2023, pp. 42-8).

It makes the soul understand the pettiness of human affairs, the vanity of glory, and the true meaning of the destiny of human beings, who are called upon to live not on earth but in the immensity of the cosmos (Hadot, 2023, p. 48).

We have seen that cosmic consciousness requires one to transcend the self. As an example of an Orphic attitude, profound knowledge of nature and its finite contents can help one achieve an inner state of calm and consolation (Hadot, 2023, p. 50)¹⁶.

Hadot not only adopts but also recognises the need to adapt ancient cosmology in so far as the philosophical and mythical discourse no longer fits our modern context. Given the historical and scientific differences between the ancients and us, today, we rely on very different kinds of conceptions of nature and the universe. Since the scientific revolution, modern cosmology no longer presupposes the existence of a rational universe, let alone the existence of inner daimons. Given the many different cosmologies we have today, including those derived from chaos theory and quantum mechanics (Yankofsky, 2013, p. 201; Lent, 2021;

16. There have been many neurophysiological studies of the benefits of contact with nature: see for instance Bratman, Hamilton, Daily (2012); Brown, Barton, Gladwell (2013).

Capra, Luisi, 2014), it is challenging to summarise what “contemporary cosmology” presupposes instead.

However, perhaps it would not be too much of a stretch to suppose that modern cosmologies often presuppose a world of objects and subjects that are somehow compartmentalised and detached from each other. Despite all the technological and scientific achievements, we seem to know intuitively that this dominant way of thinking and relating falls short in the sense that it has detrimental environmental consequences. This is the warning Meadows *et al.* (1972) gave more than fifty years ago in their report *The Limits to Growth*, and it is still the message we read in the latest IPCC reports. As Hadot notes in relation to modern science, technology, and corporate capitalisation:

Modern science is more and more in danger of being closely linked to industrial technology, the demands of corporations, and the will to power and profit. By the will of states themselves, scientific research must orient itself as a function of the usefulness it can have for technical and commercial progress. Basic and disinterested research becomes more and more precarious (Hadot, 2006, pp. 188-9).

Indeed, the disastrous climate condition is the consequence of human intervention which co-exists well within a world view of commercial usefulness and thus indifference toward ecology. What such cosmologies fail to acknowledge is the very ontological interconnectedness Hadot is aiming at¹⁷.

In addition to modern science which can teach about the delicate complexity and interconnectedness of ecosystems, the Stoic idea that Nature is a principle that can guide us in our daily lives, as long as we listen and interact with it remains appealing. But the question is: how can we accomplish this? How can we listen to nature in a way that provokes “a transformative event in our souls” after we have listened to it? What ways of exercising cosmic consciousness exist, that strongly promote the need to protect the planet? Realising that the Stoic proposals need to be adapted to modern times, Hadot offers two “methods” to achieve cosmic consciousness today: concentration on the present and a form of aesthetic perception (Chase, in press b, p. 10). Due to practical constraints, this paper cannot provide a comprehensive review of both methods, however, so we will focus on the former and leave the latter for another occasion.

17. Cf. Loy (2019, p. 35): «Today, however, our market economy knows no such restraints, because any idea of a reciprocal relationship with nonhuman beings is an outdated myth that we have outgrown. Or so we believe».

3.1. The realisation of coidentity with the world

As a contemporary spiritual exercise, among a wide variety of spiritual exercises, for cultivating cosmic consciousness, Hadot advocated focusing our attention on the present (Chase, in press b, p. 21). The crucial element of this exercise could be characterised as a process of becoming aware of the present moment by listening from a state of inner serenity.

However, in exercise form, this is by no means straightforward. In addition, Chase acknowledges that Hadot is not always clear in distinguishing between the forms of contemplation he suggests, causing Chase to speculate about the role Eastern philosophy might have played, had Hadot had the chance to develop this interest further towards the end of his life. I will come back to this suggestion in a moment.

In his reconstruction of the Hadotian approach towards cosmic consciousness, Chase suggests that there might be a tension between the recommendation to concentrate on the Self – or a return to the Self – and the opposite movement of transcending the Self to rise to the level of cosmic consciousness (Chase, in press a, p. 15). The former might instil in the practitioner a kind of obsessive navel-gazing. Alternatively, he suggests, there might be a certain progression, not a contrast, between these two elements: focus and transcendence, concentration and transcendence, introspection, and self-transformation. If this is the case, a philosopher could embark on a journey of self-improvement by starting to concentrate on one's Self, initially stripping away the layers of "Self" and detaching from all that is secondary, extraneous, or incidental in order to distinguish our genuine selves from the often superficial, socially influenced perceptions we hold of ourselves, often shaped by concepts of propriety, social status, and class (*ibid.*).

Drawing from texts like Plato's *Alcibiades* 1 and the *Symposium*, Hadot contends that through careful introspection, we can catch a glimpse of an essential core within us, something fundamental without which our identity would be incomplete (Chase, in press a, p. 16). In Hadot's perspective, which explicitly aligns with the rationalist Greco-Roman tradition, this core can be none other than Reason, which as we have seen, is linked to our inner daimon.

Chase introduces "neural Buddhism" as a current that shows striking similarities with Hadot's suggestion of focusing attention on the present moment, and discusses two styles of meditation: concentrative and receptive meditation. He characterises these, in accordance with neurologist James Austin, as "top-down" and "egocentric", versus "bottom-up" and "allocentric" or "other-related":

By gradually quieting the chattering, word-oriented, self-centered dorsal attention network and activating the pre-linguistic, bottom-up, other-related ventral attention stream, we may facilitate access to a peak experience that is deeper and more transformative than the mere “internal absorptions” that can be triggered by focused attention alone. In Austin’s words, such an experience “combines the total absence of the old psychic Self with [...] the stunning realization of coidentity with the world” (Chase, in press a, p. 19).

This (arguably) universal and cross-cultural experience of realising our coidentity with the world is what Chase expects Hadot would agree to coincide with cosmic consciousness (Chase, in press a, pp. 18-9; see also Chase, 2022). I am in full agreement with Chase, that an experience of coidentity with the world is crucial to the cultivation of cosmic consciousness.

Yet, when it comes to the employed terminology by Hadot, especially in relation to the Self (“higher Self”, “true Self”, “authentic Self”), I have some hesitations. These terms seem to presuppose some kind of inner essence or core, akin to the Stoic inner daimon. But by resorting to this sort of essentialist terminology, however, I worry we might run the risk of falling prey to a kind of intellectual dualism that does not necessarily align with the actual experiences we can have in mediation. Let me therefore suggest an alternative way of framing the exercise and experience of coidentity. One which, to my mind, remains truthful to Hadot, while expanding on Chase’s suggestion of proposing meditation as an adequate approach for becoming aware of the present.

3.2. The experience of coidentity

As ninth-century Zen master Kyōgen (Chinese: Xiangyan) is believed to have said, «a painted rice cake does not satisfy hunger» (in Tanahashi, Levitt, 2013, p. XXII). What Kyōgen suggests is that words (painted rice cakes) are somehow insufficient for achieving enlightenment (satisfying hunger).

However, one could also argue that words expressing enlightenment cannot be entirely separated from enlightenment itself – such a distinction would imply an artificial, dualistic separation. Thus, for Zen master Dōgen (1200-1253), a painted rice cake is, in fact, an expression of enlightenment too (Muruzabal Lamberti, 2021, pp. 29-30; Tanahashi, Levitt, 2013, p. XXII). Despite their apparent differences, Kyōgen and Dōgen are ultimately referring to the same principle: confusion dissipates once we overcome the “addiction” to discursive thought (Greek: *dianoia*), or the usual mental chatter we carry out within ourselves. I claim that this is an insight that can be verified through experience.

In his meditation app *Waking Up*, named after his book with the same title from 2014, Harris offers guided meditations and theory lessons

which draw from all sorts of Buddhist traditions, including the Mahayana tradition, Tibetan Dzogchen, and Zen or Chan-Buddhism.

In most of these exercises, Harris invites practitioners to look for one's "Self" by simply paying close attention to one's immediate experience. Strikingly, in the act of looking for the looker, one comes to realise that there is in fact not a seer of things seen (a true Self); one is simply seeing. In other words, when looking for one's Self – i.e., the seat of attention, the centre of experience, the mind – there is, in fact, nothing or *no-thing* to find.

Any idea or experience of an "essence" in the form of a Self must appear within consciousness to be known. The implication is that what we perceive to be the essence of something, is nothing other than a perception itself. Selfhood in that sense, be it superficial or profound, is nothing more than a thought among other thoughts that as such can be experienced. In experience, it is not necessary to presuppose a subject with awareness; there is just awareness of and in the here and now.

Yet, as Harris explains, the discovery of finding nothing, still feels like something. In a sense, not finding coincides with finding something. In Buddhist terms, what one finds is *nothingness* (Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*, Japanese: *ku* or *mū*), which can also be characterised as "formless potential" (Loy, 2019, p. 56). In other words, what remains in the absence of the Self, is the world. We look for a centre or an essence, and instead of locating something, we become aware of our entanglement with the world: our coidentity with it¹⁸.

The above is ultimately not a metaphysical argument. It can be tested in experience by simply investigating how thoughts come and go beyond our control. Harris offers the example of asking oneself what one's favourite movie or music is. Do we control the possibilities from which to choose? If so, we would first have to think them before they are thought, that is, before they arise in consciousness. We could subsequently ask ourselves: why did we choose one over the other option? Again, whatever the answer is, if there was some sort of inner rational kernel, we would have to first think about our reasoning. But thinking is just another experience in consciousness. How we think and what we think may or may not ultimately be completely explained, but that is not the point here.

In meditation, one can discover that there is no being at the foundation of thinking or experiencing. Everything arises spontaneously: thoughts, intentions, emotions, and everything also naturally dissipates. In this experience of consciousness, there is no "Self". In experience, there is no

18. Realising that everything is "empty" coincides with the Buddhist meaning of wisdom (Sanskrit: *prajñā*, Japanese: *hannya*).

controlling body that directs our thoughts. There is no thinker of thoughts, or “experiencer” of experience, and therefore, there is no place outside experience from which to look at experience; there is only experience in the form of awareness. The feeling of having a Self is itself an experience in consciousness, or one of the ways in which consciousness manifests (Harris, 2023; Loy, 2019, p. 116).

The moment we look for our Self, we are not engaging in the intellectual, rational act of argumentative and articulated thinking; our only focus is to recognise and experience whatever happens within us and without us. Perhaps that is what Hadot was pointing towards when he wrote: «[Becoming] aware of his being within the All, as a minuscule point of brief duration, but capable of dilating into the immense field of infinite space and of seizing the whole of reality in a single intuition» (Hadot, 2004, p. 205).

In the beginning, these glimpses may be very brief, as Austin acknowledges (Chase, in press b, p. 16), but according to Harris, one may gain more stability the longer one practices, causing these episodes to last for longer periods of time.

The final question to address is: what might this “Orphic” exercise of contemplation and disinterestedness mean in the context of the ecological crisis?

3.3. Ecological interconnectedness

As one practices mediation, Harris argues, one’s experiences of coidentity with the world may become a counterpoint to ordinary dualistic experience. Does this experience of interconnectedness on a deeper level ultimately help us to cultivate more ecological lifestyles?

Loy is right to assert that a certain awareness or “awakening” to the constructed Self does not automatically transform how we relate to other people, other beings, and the world. What we also need is a «gradual *reconstruction* of how we actually live in the world» (Loy, 2019, p. 71). According to Loy, such a reconstruction or reconditioning would entail more than just personal involvement in aiding others; it also involves seeking solutions to the flawed economic and political systems that play a significant role in the environmental crisis and the social justice challenges we currently face (Loy, 2019, pp. 73, 152). While it may not be enough to realise transformation and reconstruction, focusing our attention on the present, discovering the nature of our mind and therefore, our coidentity with the world, is a potent first step towards further engagement.

As Hadot argues, nature serves as a captivating spectacle that both enthralls us and occasionally causes fear. Yet, the Orphic perspective,

characterised by its reverence for nature, endeavours to maintain a deep, existential appreciation of the natural world (Hadot, 2006, p. 98)¹⁹. In line with Hadot, Guess notes that everyday aspects of life can serve as both the context where one can attain spiritual or religious insights and a space for exercises, i.e., for carrying out straightforward and sustainable activities like (perma-)farming, crafting, cooking, and aiding the local community. Deepening our awareness through meditation can play a central role in the practitioner's personal evolution, as it may redirect one's entire way of life, shifting it away from self-centeredness and distraction, and guiding one toward a more interconnected existence. The cosmic consciousness nurtured through contemplative exercises could empower individuals to develop an affection for the environment, and better grasp the degree to which we are inherently interconnected with, and reliant upon it (Guess, 2022).

In meditation, the practice of seeking the Self reveals that there is no inherent essence or Self to be found in experience. Instead, there is awareness, embedding a unity of consciousness with its contents. This realisation challenges the notion of a core "I" or "Self". When the Self dissolves, or is forgotten, what remains is not the Other – still oppositional and dualistic – but the relations, i.e., the world itself. Put differently, «to say that we are the self-consciousness *of* the universe means that the self that's conscious is the universe itself» (Loy, 2019, p. 116).

This shift in perspective might encourage individuals to perceive themselves as an integral part of the world, fostering a sense of ecological interconnectedness and compassionate acting. The experience of our coidentity with the world might prompt practitioners to recognise that their actions have a direct impact on the environment. Reflection and action are then no longer oppositional; they supplement each other (cf. "reflection", see Oosterling, 2015; Muruzabal Lamberti, 2023, p. 228).

The transformation described here occurs not through intellectual or rational thinking but through direct experiential awareness. As such, it aligns with Hadot's concept of recognising one's existence within the vastness of the All, perceiving the whole of reality through meditative experience. These glimpses may start as brief moments but can become more stable with continued practice, leading individuals to live in harmony with the world and adopt ecological values and behaviours.

19. Cf. Thich Nhat Hanh's recommendation in *A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency* (in Stanley, Loy, Dorje, 2009), where he advocates we should learn how to touch eternity in the present moment though the breath, and realise we are one with the environment and the earth.

4. Conclusion

Nature can manifest itself in two contrasting ways, Hadot states. On one hand, it may appear as a threat, necessitating our protection, and on the other hand, as a vital resource to be harnessed for survival. Today, the biggest threat coming from the environment is us. Should we wish to facilitate our survival, we need protection from ourselves.

Through our consumer behaviour we are violating our ecological interconnectedness on an unprecedented scale. More than ever, we must realise that the complex balance in which the different ecosystems of the planet cohere, is under severe threat. From a cosmology of ontological relationism, the behaviours that we need to cultivate should include all living creatures, not just human beings.

There is much to learn from the Stoics about our entanglement with the universe and its inhabitants. However, in order to exercise listening, nowadays we no longer need to presuppose the existence of a daimon, nor the voice of our consciousness. Today, listening to our daimon amounts to giving a voice to non-human participants – i.e., caring for our entanglement with all other beings, which requires us to turn a deaf ear to our individual concerns. As a potential way to cultivate disinterestedness for our individual desires and concerns, Hadot and Johncock, following the Stoics, point at the philosophical requirement of living in service of human beings (Hadot, 2023, pp. 144-5; Hadot, 1998, pp. 183-231). In the current Anthropocene this goes for all other beings as well.

For the Stoics, the view from above is the same as the view from within. After all, virtue has a cosmic dimension, and the Stoics harmonise their reason with universal Reason, «and the entire cosmos is present to them» (Hadot, 2023, p. 24). Hadot also acknowledges that we already possess the totality of the universe in the present instant (Hadot, 2023, p. 24).

However, what one will find when focusing on the present moment, is not an inner daimon, nor a true Self, but the world; the universe as it presents itself to us in a given moment in time and space. It could be inferred that there is no world inside or outside, above or below, or left or right of us. We *are* the world and we embody the cosmos.

A comprehensive ecological philosophy is closely aligned with, and possibly reliant on, spiritual practices that emphasise a profound sense of interconnectedness and personal transformation (Guess, 2022). Once we realise that we and the world are not separate through the experience of coidentity with the world, we can begin to think about the implications of our destructive behaviour, and more importantly, start to transform ourselves. After the death of God, Nietzsche wrote, sacrilege against the earth has become the most terrible thing.

A way forward in the absence of God, should perhaps start with a deep, Orphic reverence for the mysteries and complexities of existence, by listening to mother earth and its past, present, and future inhabitants.

Take off the fetters from your ears: listen! For I will hear you! Up! Up! Here is thunder enough that even graves will learn to listen! And wipe away sleep and all that is stupid and blind from your eyes! Now hear me with your eyes as well: my voice is a healing potion even for those born blind. And once you are awake you shall stay awake eternally.

Also Sprach Zarathustra, 13. *The Convalescent*

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Didattica della filosofia

Antigone a Nonantola. Suggerimenti per un percorso interdisciplinare di didattica orientativa di *Maria Laura Marescalchi**

Abstract

During the Second World War, 73 young Jewish refugees were hosted at Villa Emma in Nonantola, near Modena. The study of this episode confronts students with the difficult task of making a decision in difficult circumstances and with the discovery of the “other”. These themes can also be important for the development of guidance skills, which are especially required in Italian school. The article ends by introducing the Villa Emma Foundation, its educational proposals and the forthcoming museum.

Keywords: Jewish Children of Villa Emma, Welcome, Rescue, Decision, Guidance Skills.

1. Una storia di accoglienza e salvezza

Il borgo di Nonantola, in provincia di Modena, noto per una delle prime fondazioni benedettine del Nord Italia, durante la Seconda guerra mondiale è stato teatro di un episodio straordinario di accoglienza e salvataggio di un gruppo di settantatré ragazzi/e ebrei/e provenienti da Germania, Austria e Jugoslavia, insieme agli adulti che li accompagnavano. Per molti di loro Nonantola è stata soltanto una tappa nel corso di un viaggio durato alcuni anni, che li ha visti fuggire dalla Germania nazista, attraverso l'Europa in guerra, diretti verso la Palestina che raggiungeranno soltanto al termine del conflitto. Tuttavia, nella memoria di tutti/e il soggiorno a Nonantola, durato dal luglio del 1942 (dall'aprile 1943 per il gruppo jugo-

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slavo) alla metà di ottobre 1943, ha lasciato un segno molto forte, anche perché ha coinciso con uno snodo decisivo della loro vicenda.

I ragazzi di Villa Emma, così chiamati dal grande edificio ai margini del paese in cui furono ospitati, sono i protagonisti di quello che oggi ci appare come un caso di studio ideale: una microstoria che si sviluppa in un tempo e in uno spazio limitati, ma che intercetta molte delle principali direttrici di studio della storia del periodo, in una dimensione europea: nazismo, fascismo, persecuzione e sterminio degli ebrei, reti ebraiche nazionali (la DELASEM¹) e internazionali di soccorso, sionismo, guerra, resistenza civile.

Giunto a Nonantola, il gruppo è bene accolto dalla popolazione locale con cui intreccia rapporti economici ma anche amicali. I nonantolani sono incuriositi da questi stranieri; ne percepiscono la sofferenza, il distacco dalle famiglie, la precarietà delle vite e questo genera in molti, specie antifascisti, un moto di simpatia, che in alcuni casi diventa vera e propria amicizia, sia tra ragazzi/e sia tra adulti che scoprono affinità, come nel caso del medico condotto Giuseppe Moreali e del musicista Georg Bories. Questi legami di amicizia diventeranno fondamentali quando, all'indomani dell'8 settembre, gli ebrei capiscono di non essere più al sicuro e si rivolgono a Moreali e a don Arrigo Beccari, parroco di una frazione e insegnante al seminario, in cerca di un aiuto che finirà per coinvolgere una parte significativa della popolazione locale, dando luogo a uno dei primi episodi di resistenza civile² che si ricordino: una parte del gruppo viene nascosta nel seminario, mentre gli altri e le altre trovano rifugio presso famiglie nonantolane. Intanto si progetta la fuga in Svizzera, che avverrà con successo anche grazie a un ulteriore aiuto fornito dalla popolazione, che procurerà al gruppo il necessario per il viaggio, dai documenti ai cappotti.

Di questa vicenda, che offre innumerevoli spunti di analisi e approfondimento sul piano storiografico di cui non ci è possibile dare conto in questa sede, vogliamo mettere qui in evidenza lo spessore filosofico e formativo.

2. Il dilemma etico e le virtù dei soccorritori

Al centro della storia dei ragazzi di Villa Emma sta sicuramente la dimensione della *scelta*: la scelta dei ragazzi e delle ragazze più grandi (dei

1. Delegazione assistenza agli emigranti. Organizzazione ebraica nata nel 1939, con sede a Genova, per prestare assistenza ai numerosi ebrei emigrati in Italia, soprattutto dal Terzo Reich.

2. Il fecondo paradigma di resistenza civile, elaborato dallo storico francese Jacques Sémelin (cfr. Sémelin, 2013a; 2013b), è stato poi ripreso e sviluppato in una direzione interessante, che nell'ultima opera investe anche consolidate abitudini storiografiche e scolastiche, da Anna Bravo (cfr. Bravo, 2013).

famigliari o altri adulti di riferimento per i più piccoli) di sottrarsi alle deportazioni, la scelta degli accompagnatori e anche della DELASEM di impegnarsi in un compito difficile e dall'esito incerto, e, soprattutto, la scelta della popolazione nonantolana di accogliere benevolmente gli stranieri e di prestare loro soccorso nel momento del bisogno mettendo a rischio la propria sicurezza – o, quanto meno, la scelta di non denunciare ai nazisti divenuti forza d'occupazione la presenza degli ebrei a tutti nota.

Questo aspetto può agevolmente essere inquadrato nella trattazione delle filosofie dell'esistenza; pensiamo qui in particolare a Jean-Paul Sartre, che proprio in quegli anni metteva alla prova il suo pensiero misurandolo con eventi quali la guerra e la Resistenza: la storia dei ragazzi di Villa Emma offre l'occasione di soffermarsi sull'infinito ventaglio di possibilità che, aprendosi in una situazione data, interpella la libertà del singolo che, «scegliendosi, sceglie per tutti gli uomini» (Sartre, 1978, p. 53), dunque chiama in causa anche la nozione di responsabilità e, in generale, la condizione umana: «Questa responsabilità totale nella solitudine totale, non è la rivelazione stessa della nostra libertà?» (Sartre, 1961, p. 249).

Si possono segnalare tuttavia alcuni testi di confine che, accanto a quelli sartriani citati sopra, ben si prestano ad affrontare in classe, magari attraverso lavori di gruppo, il tema della scelta in situazioni estreme. Primo fra tutti il libro di Pierre Bayard, *Sarei stato carnefice o ribelle?* (Bayard, 2018), che esamina con grande finezza il dilemma etico che si presenta al potenziale soccorritore, passando in rassegna una serie di esempi tratti anch'essi dalla Seconda guerra mondiale o da eventi più recenti, in cui tale dilemma assume diverse declinazioni che aiutano ad affinare le capacità di analisi e a sviluppare empatia, intesa in quella che riteniamo l'accezione più corretta, ben indagata da Laura Boella, di «scoperta dell'altro»³ (Boella, 2018, p. 14). In direzione analoga va Tzvetan Todorov, quando analizza la virtù dei soccorritori, il cui comportamento «si colloca a mezza strada tra gli atti quotidiani e gli atti eroici», aprendo la strada a una forma di resistenza non violenta che evita, insieme, «l'imitazione del nemico e la rassegnazione al male» (Todorov, 2011, p. 234):

In linea di massima, i soccorritori non sono dei conformisti, ossia esseri che regolano la loro condotta in base all'opinione dei vicini oppure in base alle leggi. Sono semmai persone che si sentono come emarginate e per temperamento restie all'ubbidienza, pur essendo ben lontane dal rifiutare ogni legge. Al contrario, sono perfettamente capaci di distinguere fra bene e male, oltretutto dotate di una coscienza molto sensibile che detta il loro comportamento. Al tempo stesso non sono persone innamorate dei principi, che si limitino a prediligere le astrazioni.

3. E parlando di «scoperta dell'altro», un altro filo che possiamo dipanare a partire da questa storia porta alla filosofia dell'alterità di Emmanuel Lévinas (cfr. Lévinas, 1998).

Sono esseri portati all'universalizzazione, in quanto pronti ad aiutare degli sconosciuti riconoscendo loro, senza esitare, il diritto di appartenere alla comune specie umana, e nel contempo esseri inclini all'individualizzazione, in quanto non difendono degli ideali, ma delle persone concrete (ivi, p. 238).

E per tornare alla storia dei ragazzi di Villa Emma, crediamo che queste parole contribuiscano a far luce sulle caratteristiche dei due mediatori tra gli stranieri e i nonantolani, il dottor Moreali e don Beccari, i quali sono stati insigniti del titolo di "Giusti tra le Nazioni" già nel 1964, a seguito di un'azione tempestivamente intrapresa dai salvati, a riprova della centralità dell'esperienza nonantolana anche nell'ottica dei suoi protagonisti.

3. Per una didattica orientativa

Se con Laura Boella pensiamo che «l'io sperimenta se stesso, la propria capacità di apertura e i suoi limiti, attraverso l'esperienza dell'altro» (Boella, 2018, p. 103), allora approfondire in classe la conoscenza di vicende come quella occorsa ai ragazzi di Villa Emma, le biografie di alcuni dei protagonisti e altri casi analoghi dove si presenta l'inevitabilità di prendere una decisione in cui ne va della vita nostra o altrui può costituire un buon punto di partenza per un percorso di didattica orientativa.

La didattica orientativa [...] mira a valorizzare e a esplicitare l'aspetto formativo delle discipline negli interventi quotidiani in classe e a realizzare percorsi di studio multidisciplinari [...] incentiva la riflessione su di sé: vuole generare stimoli, rielaborazioni, estensioni dell'esperienza personale, capacità di autovalutazione e dunque assunzione di responsabilità (Batini, 2015, p. 29).

Come è noto, dal corrente anno scolastico tutte le scuole secondarie sono tenute ad attivare moduli di orientamento formativo degli studenti e delle studentesse, di almeno trenta ore annuali, da intendersi come «strumento essenziale per aiutare gli studenti a fare sintesi unitaria, riflessiva e interdisciplinare della loro esperienza scolastica e formativa, in vista della costruzione in itinere del personale progetto di vita culturale e professionale, per sua natura sempre in evoluzione»⁴. A tal fine diventa molto importante misurarsi con il racconto delle esperienze altrui da cui prendere «materiali per costruire comportamenti adeguati, interpretazioni e reazioni agli eventi, per gestire le emozioni e dare loro un nome, per dotare di senso, in generale, quello che facciamo e che ci accade» (ivi, p. 34).

4. Ciò è stabilito dal D.M. 22 dicembre 2022, n. 328, cui segue l'allegato *Linee guida per l'orientamento* da cui è tratta la citazione (p. 4).

Se, come probabilmente sarà richiesto, vogliamo inquadrare questa attività in una cornice che specifichi a quali competenze fare riferimento, possiamo attingere al modello europeo *LifeComp*, che

si compone di tre aree di competenza interconnesse: “Personale”, “Sociale” e “Imparare a imparare”. Ogni area comprende tre competenze: Autoregolazione, Flessibilità, Benessere (Area personale), Empatia, Comunicazione, Collaborazione (Area sociale), Mentalità di crescita, Pensiero critico e Gestione dell’apprendimento (Area imparare a imparare). Ogni competenza ha, a sua volta, tre descrittori che generalmente corrispondono al modello “*consapevolezza, comprensione, azione*” (INAPP, 2021, p. 3)⁵.

In questo modo si andrebbero a sviluppare le tre dimensioni fondamentali di un percorso formativo, specie se attinente alla storia e alla memoria della *Shoah* come quello che proponiamo: cognitiva, socio-emotiva, comportamentale (Corradini, 2022, pp. 23-4)⁶. Inutile aggiungere che si tratta di aspetti che soddisfano anche i requisiti dell’Educazione civica.

4. Dare un luogo a questa storia

La storia dei ragazzi di Villa Emma, nonostante il largo coinvolgimento locale e il precoce riconoscimento internazionale, ha avuto un andamento carsico nella memoria pubblica di Nonantola, affiorando a più riprese per poi nuovamente inabissarsi. Solo alla metà degli anni Novanta, in occasione del cinquantesimo anniversario della liberazione, un giovane sindaco, Stefano Vaccari, ha fatto la mossa decisiva affidando una ricerca allo storico tedesco Klaus Voigt, che già si era occupato di profughi ebrei dalla Germania in Italia (Voigt, 1993-96); ne è scaturito un lavoro che ha permesso di riprendere la questione poggiandola su basi solide (Voigt, 2002). Contestualmente, ha organizzato visite degli ex ragazzi al vecchio luogo di accoglienza dove hanno incontrato gli amici di un tempo e, nel 2004, ha dato vita alla Fondazione Villa Emma di cui è a tutt’oggi presidente, che, sotto la direzione di Fausto Ciuffi, ha sviluppato ulteriori linee di ricerca e un’estesa rete di rapporti internazionali, senza trascurare di porsi domande sul presente, così come prevede la sua *mission*.

5. Il corsivo è nostro. Per il rapporto completo cfr. https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/lifecomp_en.

6. Il discorso, affrontato in questi termini da Matteo Corradini in *Tu sei memoria*, un manuale di didattica pensato per la scuola primaria ma che presenta riflessioni utili anche per gli altri ordini di scuola, fa riferimento alle linee tracciate dall’UNESCO nel 2015, in *Education about the Holocaust and preventing genocide: a policy guide*.

Le è però, finora, mancata una sede, in quanto la villa era già stata acquisita da privati, dunque la vita della Fondazione si è sviluppata essenzialmente attraverso convegni, seminari, pubblicazioni⁷ e due siti web nei quali si possono rinvenire molte informazioni utili per progettare attività scolastiche sul tema: il sito istituzionale e il più recente *Davanti a Villa Emma*.

Il primo presenta la Fondazione e i suoi collaboratori e collaboratrici, una sintetica storia della vicenda dei ragazzi, l'attività editoriale e convegnistica, l'archivio audiovisivo delle interviste ai testimoni nonantolani realizzate in questi anni da Guido Pisi e altri materiali.

Il secondo è nato per seguire passo dopo passo lo sviluppo del progetto che darà finalmente un luogo a questa storia; è infatti in via di realizzazione, esattamente di fronte a Villa Emma, il centro che narrerà la storia dei ragazzi e delle ragazze che in quella villa trovarono ospitalità e degli/delle abitanti di Nonantola che stabilirono rapporti con loro, per cui, a partire indicativamente dal 2025, l'attività che qui proponiamo potrà essere arricchita dalla visita di un allestimento che si prevede almeno parzialmente interattivo e dalla partecipazione a laboratori condotti sul posto dalle operatrici della Fondazione. Allo stato attuale, è possibile richiedere una visita guidata del paese, che tocca i luoghi significativi per la vicenda, anche attraverso un *urban game* ideato e condotto da Sara Ferrari; anche quando sarà completato l'edificio, il rapporto tra lo spazio interno e quello esterno resterà fondamentale, tanto che il progetto architettonico – affidato allo Studio Bianchini & Lusiardi Associati di Cremona, vincitore del concorso internazionale bandito nel 2018 – prevede di segnare con un elemento artistico, una sedia intesa come simbolo di accoglienza, i luoghi del paese legati a questa storia.

Il sito *Davanti a Villa Emma* presenta, inoltre, vari materiali, tra cui alcuni percorsi didattici; due, in particolare, indirizzati al triennio della scuola secondaria di secondo grado, sono serviti come riferimento per questo articolo: *Cosa avrei fatto io?*, basato sul libro citato di Pierre Bayard, e *La decisione di Antigone*, che analizza il tema della scelta individuandone quattro componenti fondamentali (autonomia, coraggio, intransigenza, ribellione), ciascuna delle quali viene sviluppata in un'ampia ottica interdisciplinare e con un costante riferimento alla tragedia di So-

7. Mentre delle pubblicazioni direttamente promosse dalla Fondazione si può trovare notizia nei siti web della stessa, crediamo opportuno segnalare il numero de "La rassegna mensile di Israel" curato da Liliana Picciotto e Adachia Zevi (n. 86 del 2020), che dedica largo spazio alla Fondazione Villa Emma; si segnalano, in particolare, alcuni brevi saggi che possono fornire un quadro un po' più articolato delle attività condotte dalla Fondazione nel corso degli anni: quelli di Fausto Ciuffi (2020, pp. 117-38), di Guido Pisi (2020, pp. 97-115) e di Maria Bacchi (2020, 157-78).

focle, archetipo della disobbedienza a chi detiene il potere, in nome di un più alto ideale:

CREONTE: [...] sapevi che era stato proibito per mio decreto di farlo?

ANTIGONE: Lo sapevo. Come potevo non saperlo? Era bando pubblico.

CREONTE: E hai osato ugualmente trasgredire la mia legge?

ANTIGONE: Non veniva da Zeus la tua legge; né la Giustizia che convive con gli dèi di sotterra l'aveva stabilita per i mortali. Né credevo che i tuoi decreti potessero avere tanta forza da abrogare quella delle leggi non scritte degli dèi, quelle leggi che non solo oggi o ieri, ma sempre vivono e nessuno sa quando apparvero (vv. 447-57, trad. Cacciari, 2007, p. 15).

Probabilmente solo pochissimi tra i nonantolani e le nonantolane che hanno anteposto il soccorso agli ebrei alla propria personale sicurezza avevano letto l'autore greco, ma in tutti loro ha agito un imperativo etico che li ha resi spontaneamente capaci di distinguere il bene dal male, di porsi in un'attitudine critica di fronte a un potere ingiusto⁸, che è forse la competenza più importante per la vita che la scuola può consegnare.

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* Ultima data di consultazione dei siti qui elencati: 29 settembre 2023.

... in memoriam

Ricordo di Maurizio Migliori***

di Elisabetta Cattanei*, Arianna Fermani**

Il 10 novembre 2023 è venuto a mancare Maurizio Migliori, studioso internazionalmente noto nell'ambito della storia della filosofia antica, con particolare riguardo a Platone. Ricordarlo significa soprattutto capire come Migliori sia stato parte di una "scuola" e a sua volta abbia "fatto scuola".

I. Maurizio Migliori e la sua posizione "dialettica" nella Scuola di "Tubinga-Milano"

Primo laureato di Giovanni Reale all'Università Cattolica di Milano nel 1967, Migliori ha sempre mantenuto con il suo maestro un rapporto di autentico discepolato, che è diventato presto di stretta collaborazione scientifica. Il centro degli interessi di Migliori è stato costituito dalla dialettica antica, nella molteplicità delle sue manifestazioni, che includono fin da principio autori anche diversi da Platone, come Zenone di Elea e Aristotele¹.

A partire dalla seconda metà degli Ottanta del Novecento, Migliori ha partecipato all'energica ripresa in Italia, proprio da parte di Reale, dell'interpretazione di Platone sostenuta dalla cosiddetta *Tuebingen Schule*, rap-

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1. Cfr. Migliori (1984), i cui risultati sono stati ripresi di recente nel volume a cura di Palpacelli (2022); la prima edizione della traduzione introdotta e commentata da Migliori del *De gen. et corr.* di Aristotele (cfr. Migliori, 2013a), compare per Loffredo, Napoli, nel 1976, e il costante interesse di Migliori verso il confronto dialettico di Aristotele con Platone trova un significativo esempio nel volume a sua cura Migliori (2022), oltre che nel volume Migliori, Fermani (2008).

presentata in Germania da Hans Joachim Kraemer e da Konrad Gaiser². Chi ha memoria dei seminari avanzati organizzati da Reale in quegli anni, ai quali Migliori partecipava “da esterno” poiché insegnava alla scuola media superiore, di tutto può mantenere impressione tranne che di un “dogmatismo” gerarchicamente imposto dall’alto: si leggeva ogni cosa uscisse sull’argomento (particolare interesse suscitavano gli studi di Thomas Alexander Szlezák sulla “struttura di soccorso” dei dialoghi platonici, introdotti in Italia da Gabriele Giannantoni), ci si confrontava a partire da competenze diverse e più di ogni altra cosa si metteva il “paradigma” tubinghese alla prova dei testi³. Così matura il lavoro di Maurizio Migliori sui dialoghi dialettici, che lo ha portato ad essere uno degli studiosi di Platone più riconosciuti a livello internazionale⁴.

Per parafrasare un’immagine proposta dal Socrate platonico, Migliori non ha mai scelto le scorciatoie, ma ha sempre preferito il “giro molto più lungo”, per affrontare la lettura di Platone: la strada del commentario, parte per parte, argomento per argomento, parola per parola, di singoli dialoghi (non di rado tradotti *ex novo*), che solo se inizialmente sottoposti a commento analitico possono essere interrelati fra di loro, con un controllo pieno della letteratura primaria e secondaria; i risultati più cospicui di questo tipo di lavoro sono tre grandi volumi di commento, dedicati rispettivamente a *Parmenide*, *Politico* e *Filebo*⁵. Con questo tipo di approccio, i lavori di Migliori su “tutto Platone” non compaiono presto, però si presentano come miniere ricchissime di informazione e discussione⁶. In quello che egli stesso ha definito “il libro di una vita” – i due tomi de *Il Disordine ordinato. La filosofia dialettica di Platone*, usciti l’anno precedente alla scomparsa di Giovanni Reale – può forse stupire che alla questione delle “dottrine non scritte” di Platone, centrale per la “Scuola di Tubinga-Milano”, siano dedicate ben poche pagine, per lo più in Appendice (cfr. Migliori, 2013b, spec. vol. II, pp. 1285-94). Molto

2. Il manifesto della “Scuola di Tubinga-Milano” può essere considerata la monografia di Reale (2010), la cui prima edizione, presso Vita e Pensiero (Milano), risale al 1987.

3. Il libro di Szlezák (1992), è la traduzione dell’originale tedesco pubblicato presso De Gruyter nel 1985; il fortunato opuscolo dello stesso autore (1991) è stato invece pubblicato per la prima volta in italiano, contestualmente all’uscita di numerosi articoli dell’autore sulla cosiddetta *Boetheia-Struktur* dei dialoghi platonici.

4. Migliori è stato per più di un trentennio membro attivo della IPS (“International Plato Society”), facendo parte del suo Comitato Direttivo; uno dei frutti più interessanti di questa sua attività internazionale è il volume Migliori, Napolitano-Valditara, Del Forno (2003), insieme a Migliori, Napolitano-Valditara (2012).

5. Cfr. Migliori (2000; 1998; 1996); a questi tre importanti commentari aggiungerei anche il volume Migliori (2018a).

6. Rimando al libro di sintesi, di più facile consultazione per i non specialisti, Migliori (2022).

esplicito, anzi, è il rifiuto, da parte di Migliori, dell’“esoterismo” in Platone:

Non è un vezzo, ma il rifiuto di un termine ambiguo perché induce *a pensare a una setta, a una dottrina diversa da quella scritta per tutti e comunicata all'interno della scuola in segreto*. Non c'è nulla del genere nella filosofia di Platone, anche se molto è rimasto, purtroppo, non scritto [...]. Solo l'amore per il vero e la sua convinzione educativa, rafforzata dall'esempio di Socrate, lo hanno spinto a trasferire, *per quanto possibile*, il suo insegnamento nello scritto, mettendolo a disposizione di tutti coloro che sarebbero venuti dopo, sul suo stesso cammino (ivi, vol. I, p. 169).

Anche nel caso del rapporto fra scrittura e oralità il filosofare platonico, al quale il lettore attento viene esortato immergendosi nelle pagine dei dialoghi, esclude una logica dell'*aut-aut*, ma è attraversato da una “dialettica intero-parti”, che secondo Migliori costituisce una sorta di “teoria dei sistemi”; si tratta di una logica inclusiva delle opposizioni, che vige anche sul piano metafisico, però agisce su tutti i piani della realtà, pur nei limiti del “disordine” che la storia, segnata dal conflitto, e la vita umana, segnata dalla morte, comportano irrimediabilmente.

2. Maurizio Migliori e la “Scuola di Macerata”

«Io, per voi, sono solo un’opportunità. Potete scegliere di coglierla oppure no». Sono le parole con cui Maurizio Migliori si rivolgeva spesso ai suoi studenti e alle sue studentesse dell’Università di Macerata, dove prese servizio nel novembre del 1991, e dove insegnò dapprima come Professore Associato e poi, dal 2001, come docente Ordinario.

Da allora, sotto la sua guida, si sono formate intere generazioni di giovani, per molti dei quali Migliori ha rappresentato un incontro letteralmente decisivo.

Ebbe la lucida consapevolezza di dedicarsi, per usare le sue stesse parole, «ad un mestiere insieme bellissimo e impossibile», sempre condotto all’insegna dell’assoluto rispetto e al servizio del testo, che lo storico della filosofia deve considerare per così dire “sacro” e ritenere come imprescindibile punto di riferimento; al rigore combinò costantemente passione, cura e assoluta onestà, sul piano intellettuale e morale.

In tutti gli anni dell’insegnamento universitario, continuato peraltro anche dopo il 2015 (anno del suo pensionamento), in qualità di docente a contratto (per nulla scoraggiato dalla lunghezza del viaggio da Cantù, dove risiedeva, a Macerata), egli ha incarnato magnificamente le parole di don Lorenzo Milani secondo cui «il sapere serve solo per essere dato».

Di sé amava spesso denunciare, con la sua nota e consueta ironia, la “stranezza”, che altro non era se non l’espressione di una feconda *a-topia*, capace di esprimersi soprattutto nelle trame di una vita complessa e straordinariamente ricca, in grado di unire all’altissimo impegno dal punto di vista teorico, il vibrante e appassionato impegno politico, lo “stile”, l’umanità e la generosità: «Le tante tracce lasciate – con una generosità debordante – da Maurizio Migliori dentro l’Università segnalano la sua piena consapevolezza delle trasformazioni in atto e, al contempo, una coraggiosa capacità di non abdicare alla responsabilità intellettuale della verità» (Labate, in corso di pubblicazione).

Infaticabile anche la sua attività di organizzatore di convegni che hanno richiamato a Macerata, per decenni, studiosi da tutto il mondo, avviando dibattiti, dando origine a importanti reti di collaborazione e a pubblicazioni di grande rilievo sul piano nazionale e internazionale, anche in riferimento all’attività della locale Sezione della Società Filosofica Italiana, di cui era Presidente onorario.

All’interno della cosiddetta “scuola di Macerata”, costituitasi negli anni grazie al suo magistero, viene elaborato quello che è stato chiamato il paradigma del *Multifocal Approach*, paradigma che nasce dagli Antichi ma che risulta straordinariamente illuminante e fecondo ancora oggi, visto che si configura come una esigenza di fedeltà alla realtà e come un tentativo di lettura del reale stesso al fine di salvaguardarne la ricchezza e la polivocità.

Il *Multifocal Approach*, a cui la “scuola di Macerata” ha dedicato vari convegni⁷ e varie pubblicazioni (Migliori, 2020a; Mauri, Migliori, 2022), oltre ad essere stato verificato rispetto al pensiero di Platone (Cattanei, Fermani, Migliori, 2016; Migliori, 2017; 2018b), ha trovato conferme significative e puntuali anche in Aristotele (Migliori, 2016; Eustacchi, Migliori, 2017; Migliori, 2013a; Migliori, Fermani, Palpacelli, Bernardini, 2010; Migliori, Fermani, 2009; Fermani, 2008) e, più in generale, nel pensiero antico, come attesta anche il manuale *Filosofia antica. Una prospettiva multifocale* (Migliori, 2020b), di cui Migliori stesso è stato curatore e coordinatore.

«In tutto ciò che facciamo dobbiamo sempre metterci studio, cuore e cervello». Può essere sintetizzato con le sue stesse parole il lascito straordinario del suo insegnamento, frutto di un pensiero profondamente “saturato di vita”, dono immortale di un vero Maestro, che ha saputo costantemente porsi all’altezza del proprio compito:

7. Si ricordino, tra gli altri, i due convegni internazionali: *La realtà... ama nascondersi? Il “Multifocal Approach” come valorizzazione dei profili visibili e invisibili di una realtà complessa* (28 febbraio-3 marzo 2018); *Al di qua del bene e del male. Gli Antichi e la complessità del reale alla luce del “Multifocal Approach”* (5-6 dicembre 2018).

Spesso gli amici mi chiedono come faccio a far scuola e come faccio ad averla piena. Insistono perché io scriva per loro un metodo, che io precisi i programmi, le materie, la tecnica didattica. Sbagliano la domanda. Non dovrebbero preoccuparsi di come bisogna fare scuola, ma solo *di come bisogna essere per poter far scuola*⁸.

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Spazio recensioni

Recensioni

G. Mosconi, *Il consigliere segreto di Pericle. Damone e i meccanismi della democrazia ateniese*, ETS, Pisa 2022, 216 pp., € 24,00.

Il volume è diviso in tre capitoli, preceduti da un'utile introduzione. Dopo bibliografia e ringraziamenti si trovano un riassunto in italiano e in inglese, un indice dei passi discussi e un indice delle cose notevoli. Lo stile è chiaro ed efficace. Le note sono a volte molto ampie e si vorrebbe che parte della discussione fosse svolta nel corpo del testo. La bibliografia è ricca e aggiornata. Lo studio è una rassegna di ciò che si conosce allo stato attuale su Damone, musico e consigliere politico di Pericle. L'impostazione è dichiarata: si lascia da parte, senza trascurarla, l'attività fondamentale di Damone, quella musicale, per concentrarsi sul ruolo politico all'ombra di Pericle.

Il saggio ha alcuni meriti indubbi: riporta in forma chiara e aggiornata lo stato della questione su Damone, figura enigmatica per noi; ribadisce la centralità del motto damoniano διδόναι τοῖς πολλοῖς τὰ αὐτῶν (dare alla maggioranza ciò che le appartiene), di cui propone una lettura originale; mette in luce alcuni meccanismi della democrazia ateniese. L'A. ha frequentazione ventennale con l'argomento, fin dai saggi pubblicati negli anni duemila; nel volume dunque convergono riflessioni di lungo periodo.

Nel I capitolo si ragiona sul senso del rapporto tra Damone e Pericle, presentato dalle fonti in modo a volte favorevole (apprezzamento dello stratego illuminato) a volte polemico (segno di incapacità o di tendenza tirannica). L'A. evidenzia la complessità delle fonti, eterogenee per generi, finalità, orientamento politico, cronologia, e le discute con competenza e sensibilità. Nel II capitolo ci si concentra sul motto già menzionato. È l'autore della pseudo-aristotelica *Costituzione degli Ateniesi* (XXVII, 4) ad attri-

buirlo a Damone, aggiungendo che questi «sembrava essere il promotore della maggior parte delle iniziative di Pericle». Damone ha contribuito più per lo *slogan*, sostiene l'A., che per il provvedimento in sé, svolgendo il ruolo di consigliere segreto, attento soprattutto alla comunicazione politica. Un solo provvedimento è attribuito a Damone ma l'A. opportunamente ne mette in evidenza la centralità: l'indennità sarà estesa anche ad altre categorie ed è caratterizzante l'ideologia democratica, inoltre è fondamentale per il primato pericleo, fondato sul consenso. Grazie all'indennità Pericle può misurarsi nell'agone politico con i grandi aristocratici come Cimone.

Il III capitolo è il più originale e problematico. Dopo Cimone, Pericle dovette affrontare Tucidide di Melesia, in occasione della ricostruzione sull'Acropoli e delle relative spese a carico degli alleati. Secondo l'A. il discorso tenuto da Pericle in risposta a Tucidide (Plut., *Per.*, XII, 14) sarebbe una riutilizzazione dell'antico motto di Damone. Per Pericle «il denaro non è di chi lo dà ma di chi lo riceve, se questi fornisce i servizi per cui lo riceve» (χρήματα [...], ἃ τῶν διδόντων οὐκ ἔστιν, ἀλλὰ τῶν λαμβανόντων, ἃν παρέχωνσιν ἀνθ' οὗ λαμβάνουσι: Plut., *Per.*, XII, 3), quindi gli Ateniesi non dovevano rendere conto agli alleati del denaro ricevuto, dal momento che li difendevano. Appropriato il rilievo dell'A., per cui non è rilevante se le spese fossero effettivamente a carico degli alleati; era sufficiente che apparissero tali, perché Pericle fosse attaccato. Non sembra però indispensabile evocare Damone per la replica di Pericle; in essa soprattutto manca l'idea diretta di restituzione, centrale invece nel motto damoniano. Come l'A. stesso ricorda, nessuna fonte riporta il nome di Damone per questa circostanza. Più certa sembra l'assonanza con altri discorsi periclei, che pure l'A. riconosce. Il discorso indiretto attribuito da Tucidide a Pericle (Thuc., II, 13) ha tratti che ricordano Plut., *Per.*, XII, 14, ritenuto giustamente affidabile. L'affinità di Plut., *Per.*, XII, 14 con Thuc., II, 13 in realtà indebolisce l'ipotesi della dipendenza da Damone e rimanda piuttosto alla personalità di Pericle, in particolare per l'insistenza sui χρήματα, tema ricorrente in Tucidide. Forse il ricordo del motto damoniano è presente anche nel Pericle tucidideo? È un'ipotesi conseguente ma non adeguatamente analizzata.

Si ribadisce inoltre la storicità dell'ostracizzazione di Damone, sulla scorta di Robert Wallace, *Reconstructing Damon. Music, Wisdom Teaching, and Politics in Perikles' Athens*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2015, pp. 51-64) ma non si chiarisce – né sarebbe facile farlo – quale sia il vero rapporto tra il musico e il consigliere politico, limitandosi a riportare Plut., *Per.*, IV, 2-3, per cui la musica fu il velo dell'attività politica. L'A. non nega che Damone sia assimilabile ai sofisti ma non si comprende quale sia la sua vera competenza professionale, lasciando in

ombra la relazione rivelata a noi da Plat., *Resp.*, 424c5-6, per cui non vi sono mutamenti nei modi musicali senza mutamenti nelle leggi. Sembra una direzione che andava investigata maggiormente. Uno spunto utile era già in un articolo di Charles Segal, *Gorgias and the psychology of logos*, in "HSCPH", 66, 1962, pp. 99-155, pp. 127-35, che mette in relazione Damone e Gorgia (mai menzionato). Peraltro Damone era solo uno dei componenti della cosiddetta "cerchia periclea"; una maggiore contestualizzazione in tal senso avrebbe forse giovato a un più preciso apprezzamento del suo contributo all'attività politica e alla formazione intellettuale di Pericle.

Nell'insieme si tratta di uno studio consigliabile per un'informazione approfondita, aggiornata e accessibile, condotta in modo originale e meditato, su una figura complessa e sfuggente quale quella di Damone, certamente più importante di quanto le fonti lascino intravedere. Il volume è ben curato dal punto di vista editoriale, piacevole al tatto e alla vista, consistente e maneggevole. Ho notato pochi refusi (*sophi<s>tike*, p. 24; sarebbe [di] una, p. 30; attacchi politica a, p. 195).

Marco Gemin

A. Fermani, *Aristotele. Il giudizio etico. Imparare a distinguere il bene e il male per vivere felici*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2023, 180 pp., € 16,00.

Arianna Fermani torna, ancora una volta, con questo libro, a studiare una angolatura nuova dell'etica aristotelica, dopo i molti volumi già pubblicati su questo specifico e assai produttivo campo di indagine, posta la complessità ermeneutica delle Etiche aristoteliche. Con il presente saggio l'autrice, docente di Storia della filosofia antica all'università di Macerata, esplora un ambito di ricerche non ancora dissodato dagli studiosi, quello riguardante il modo in cui il filosofo di Stagira ritiene debba configurarsi il giudizio morale, il cui fine è, per lui, non quello di giudicare, sentenziare, dividere in buoni e cattivi ma, al contrario, saper riconoscere il buono e il bello per vivere bene. E vivere bene, per lui, significa cercare di essere felici.

È per questa predisposizione positiva verso l'umano che, tra le molte etiche proposte dagli Antichi, l'etica di Aristotele è quella che ha avuto maggiore successo sino ai nostri giorni, perché è un'etica che mostra di saper capire l'essere umano nei suoi caratteri più complessi e anche contraddittori; e verso queste contraddizioni – fa presente l'autrice (p. 15 e pp. 84 ss.) – il Filosofo si dimostra indulgente, pur senza mai fare sconti, una indulgenza che fa capo all'acuta consapevolezza dell'innata debolezza umana, per comprendere la quale occorre una adeguata capacità di giu-

dizio (*Etica Nicomachea*, VII, 1145b36-1146a2), per saper guardare la realtà con giusta indulgenza.

Questa sembra essere la necessaria premessa che consente di raggiungere nella vita, se possibile, una sufficiente condizione di εὐδαιμονία, il modo tipicamente greco di dire felicità e così, forse, si comprende meglio perché lo Stagirita ha composto addirittura tre Trattati di etica (nella sua ricca presentazione alla traduzione di *Aristotele. Le tre Etiche*, Bompiani, Milano 2018, la Fermani discute a lungo sulla autenticità anche dell'*Etica Eudemia* e della *Grande Etica*). Infatti già all'inizio della sua opera tra le più famose, l'*Etica Nicomachea*, Aristotele osserva che c'è un fine a cui tendono tutti gli esseri umani quando agiscono; questo fine è il bene supremo, ἄριστον, l'ottimo cui tutti aspirano nelle proprie azioni, che è appunto la felicità e l'etica è la dottrina filosofica che riflette su come sia possibile per gli esseri umani realizzare la felicità.

Per i Greci, infatti, se l'essere umano non aspira a una qualche felicità che motivazione può avere nel compiere il suo ἔργον, l'attività, il ruolo che è proprio per ciascuno? Ed è esaminando questo τέλος desiderativo, questa ὁρεξις, che la Fermani propone una suggestiva riflessione sulla nozione di ἔργον, sia sul piano linguistico sia concettuale, che rinvia alla discussione aristotelica sulla corrispondenza tra l'operare di un individuo e le sue qualità morali, cioè tra vita vissuta e felicità (pp. 73-4). L'essere umano, così pensa il Filosofo, ha un compito, un ἔργον preciso nella sua vita, che è costitutivo della sua natura, di realizzare, cioè, le potenzialità (le δυνάμεις) di cui è dotato; si tratta delle disposizioni che sono insite in quella che i Greci chiamavano la sua ἕξις, nelle disposizioni naturali, che ne guidano l'*habitus* morale. Alcune di queste disposizioni l'essere umano le condivide con gli altri esseri viventi, ma vi sono capacità che sono proprie dell'uomo e si compendiano nella parola λόγος, che significa appunto parola, linguaggio, in quanto l'essere umano è l'unico vivente dotato di parola. Ma λόγος, oltre che parola, vuol dire anche ragione, pensiero, e quindi la capacità peculiare dell'essere umano è esercitare il λόγος e tutto ciò che è connesso al λόγος, ed è partendo da queste osservazioni che Aristotele introduce il concetto di virtù, ma non solo nel senso generico di ciò che è contrario del vizio, anche perché – come precisa già nella pagina iniziale Arianna Fermani – Aristotele non è un moralista, non giudica, la sua non è un'etica giudicante. E il motivo è dato dal modo specificamente greco e aristotelico di concepire la virtù: esercitare nel modo migliore possibile le capacità che sono peculiari dell'essere umano; e che cosa è la felicità, dice Aristotele, se non questo? Cioè realizzare pienamente le proprie capacità, dunque con ἀρετή.

Aristotele, dunque, ci propone una concezione molto elevata dell'essere umano, che deve cercare di essere se stesso nel modo migliore possibile, deve dare il meglio di sé ed è in questa ἕξις, in questa disposizione otti-

male, che il giudizio etico raggiunge il più alto grado di equilibrio intellettuale e spirituale, anche se l'etica aristotelica non considera solo l'ottimale, ma guarda la realtà e il dinamismo umano nella sua varietà e complessità e proprio l'essere umano è caratterizzato soprattutto dalle sue debolezze, dai suoi limiti, anche dal male e dai vizi, l'essere umano si dice in molti modi (πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον) e in molti modi si caratterizza la sua capacità di giudizio anche in campo etico e anzi non sempre è capace di giudizio o, quanto meno, di giudizio all'altezza del suo valore umano. L'etica aristotelica è allora una βοήθεια, è un soccorso, un aiuto a questo limite umano strutturale, così che si comprende meglio «perché il possesso della virtù risulti essere salvifico (σώζει) per l'esistenza umana» (p. 17) grazie alla φρόνησις, alla saggezza ben dosata nelle situazioni, per saper distinguere bene e valutare di volta in volta; perciò la φρόνησις richiede la giusta dose di conoscenza, di sapere, non nel senso che bisogna essere per forza filosofi o intellettuali raffinati; la φρόνησις infatti è parte della natura umana qualora se ne raggiunga il possesso, cioè quando, qualunque ruolo si abbia e qualunque livello di cultura si posseda, si prende la vita con serietà, cioè con razionalità. Senza questo λόγος non ci può essere giudizio etico; ecco perché la φρόνησις è anche λογιστικόν (p. 42), la parte calcolatrice dell'anima razionale, quella che sa calcolare, sa valutare nelle circostanze, sapendo distinguere e perciò sapendo orientarsi verso la scelta giusta, quella che per Aristotele è la προαίρεσις, la scelta ben calcolata, che è una delle parole del lessico fondamentale che l'autrice dedica alla grammatica del giudizio (pp. 23-42), nella convinzione che non c'è possibilità di riuscire a distinguere il bene dal male, cioè a giudicare, senza la capacità razionale di calcolare. «E se il pensiero» – scrive l'autrice – «è la fondamentale εὐπορία, ovvero la risorsa più preziosa e la vera ricchezza della nostra vita, d'altro canto occorre ancora ribadire come, per il Filosofo, questo pensiero non è qualcosa di “altro” o di distante dalla vita, ma è la vita stessa» (p. 152).

Mino Ianne

B. Demulder, *Plutarch's Cosmological Ethics*, Leuven University Press, Leuven 2022, 440 pp., open access.

Plutarch's Cosmological Ethics, pubblicato nel 2022, con il sostegno di KU Leuven, è una versione rivisitata della tesi di dottorato di Bram Demulder. Come si intuisce dal titolo, il testo si propone di analizzare il modo in cui l'etica di Plutarco derivi dalla sua particolare esegesi del *Timeo* di Platone. Secondo questa visione, essendo l'anima cosmica parallela a quella umana, in quanto entrambe costituite da parti razionali e irrazionali, le affermazioni cosmologiche possono essere applicate direttamente al com-

portamento umano e, viceversa, gli atti umani possono essere più facilmente confrontati con il modello cosmico. Nei sei capitoli in cui il testo è organizzato, Demulder fa luce sul legame profondo tra esegesi del *Timeo* e i diversi aspetti dell'etica in Plutarco. Il primo capitolo, che si concentra principalmente sugli scritti *De animae procreatione in Timeo* e *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet*, presenta il *Timeo* e le *Leggi* di Platone come le basi testuali che permisero a Plutarco stesso di teorizzare l'esistenza di un'anima pre-cosmica irrazionale che sarebbe l'origine del male. Nel secondo capitolo si indaga il rapporto tra musica e cosmologia, dove la prima è considerata come un fenomeno razionale che può rappresentare la struttura del divino in termini di rapporti sottostanti, piuttosto che descrivere semplicemente tale struttura a parole. Così come l'osservazione del cosmo visibile, l'ascolto della musica è un primo cruciale passo verso ciò che si trova al di là: la musica porta indirettamente all'armonia divina, che spiega la bellezza e la bontà del cosmo in cui viviamo e ci offre la possibilità di agire come imitatori del demiurgo esprimendo noi stessi un'immagine di questa armonia. Il terzo capitolo propone un parallelo tra l'immagine del cosmo e quella del simposio: si tenta perciò di portare avanti la visione per cui, secondo Plutarco, un buon simposio debba rispecchiare l'immagine del cosmo e, di conseguenza, un buon simposiarca debba comportarsi come un platonico demiurgo, trasformando il caos in ordine. Il testo maggiormente esaminato in questo capitolo è senza dubbio le *Quaestiones convivales*, in cui i protagonisti (Plutarco, suo padre e suo fratello Lampria), all'inizio di un simposio, discutono su quale sia il criterio da seguire per stabilire la disposizione dei posti. Così Lampria, attingendo a Empedocle e al *Timeo*, mostra che la separazione degli elementi è caratteristica dello stato pre-cosmico e caotico dell'universo, che manca della *πρόνοια* demiurgica. L'*ἄριστοτέχνας* di Pindaro ed Empedocle (fr. 76 DK) viene citato per ribadire che il cosmo non è separazione ma mescolanza e disposizione razionale. Anche nella discussione simposiale, Lampria confuta la dottrina della collocazione naturale stoica e, collegandola al disordine, la contrappone all'opera dell'*ἄριστοτέχνας* e a quella dell'uomo che è *τακτικός* e *ἁρμονικός*, cioè capace di provvidenza (*προϊδέσθαι*). Il quarto capitolo si occupa della politica e, più precisamente, di come il politico sia per la città ciò che il demiurgo è per il cosmo: «Like the demiurge when forging the cosmic soul, the statesman should mix things that are hard to mix (*δύσμεικτον*)» (p. 135). Per questo motivo, secondo Plutarco, la mancanza di conoscenze cosmologiche si traduce in un atteggiamento superstizioso, che ha conseguenze politiche negative. Il quinto capitolo è dedicato al *De tranquillitate animi*, opera in cui Plutarco fornisce a Paccio le indicazioni necessarie per acquisire l'*εὐθυμία*. Plutarco spiega che l'inquietudine dell'uomo sparirà quando imparerà a gestire la *τύχη*, cosa che avverrà solo quando conoscerà la cosmologia. La *τύχη* è in-

fatti la totalità di quelle fasi della causalità che sconcertano la nostra logica e sono, in una parola, al di là di noi perché derivano dalla parte irrazionale dell'anima cosmica. Il sesto e ultimo capitolo è dedicato all'*Amatorius*, nel quale Plutarco offre un'inaspettata versione dell'amore platonico. Attingendo alle tradizioni della teologia civica (preplatonica), filosofica (in particolare Empedocle) e poetica (in particolare Esiodo), egli identifica Eros con il demiurgo platonico e propone un cosmo amoroso e amabile che si contrappone a quello raffigurato nell'*Ippolito* di Euripide, anti-erotico e caotico. Attraverso una riscrittura dell'immagine della caverna di Platone adattata alle intuizioni del *Timeo*, egli continua a mostrare come dobbiamo avere un amore sensibile e corporeo per entrare in contatto mediato con questo bene supremo e intelligibile che è Eros. Dopotutto il sensibile è un riflesso dell'intelligibile, come mostra in particolare la storia d'amore di Iside e Osiride. Demulder riesce efficacemente a mostrare quanto il *Timeo* stia alle fondamenta della teorizzazione del pensiero etico di Plutarco, anche negli aspetti che si immaginano più distanti dalla cosmologia, come ad esempio la politica. Il testo ha una struttura lineare, in cui, in ogni capitolo, l'autore preannuncia quali saranno le tesi discusse, le sviluppa, le problematizza, per poi confrontarsi con le posizioni di altri studiosi, al fine di arrivare alla conclusione che quasi sempre riconosce coerenza al filosofo di Cheronea. Molto utili sono i «concluding remarks» alla fine di ciascun capitolo, che danno modo al lettore di ripercorrere brevemente gli snodi teorici più significativi presentati, permettendogli quindi di avere sempre la traiettoria concettuale percorsa ben chiara. Decisamente acute e dettagliate sono le ricostruzioni delle posizioni del filosofo attraverso sottili distinzioni rispetto alle altre correnti filosofiche, soprattutto quella epicurea e stoica. Apprezzabile inoltre l'approccio intertestuale che facilita il lettore a cogliere, da una parte, il legame interno ai testi plutarchei, dall'altra, quello esterno con i testi platonici. Infine, particolarmente generosa da parte della casa editrice è la scelta di fornire ai lettori il vantaggio di poter reperire il testo in open access.

Chiara Lalli

Y. Halper, *Jewish Socratic Questions in an Age without Plato. Permitting and Forbidding Open Inquiry in 12-15th Century Europe and North Africa*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2021, 266 pp., € 132,50.

Il bel libro di Yehuda Halper apre la collana Brill "Maimonides Library for Philosophy and Religion", diretta da Giuseppe Veltri. Il volume si divide in due parti: la prima (*Socrates among Medieval Jews*), composta da tre saggi, di cui il primo, *Was Socrates a Wise, Ascetic Monotheist or a Vocal Sceptic?*, e il terzo, *Socratic Scepticism and the Problem of Akrasia according to Averro-*

es, sono inediti; mentre il secondo, dedicato all'interpretazione della figura di Socrate nel *Kuzari* di Judah Halevi, era stato edito nel 2017. La seconda parte del volume (*Socratic Problems without Socrates*) contiene quattro saggi, di cui uno inedito ("Keep Your Sons from Logic": Jacob Anatoli on Separating Science and Torah) e tre già editi in precedenza (*Does Maimonides's Mishneh Torah Forbid Reading the Guide of the Perplexed?*; *The Sex Life of a Metaphysical Sceptic: Platonic Themes in Gersonides's Commentary on the Song of Songs*; *Philosophical Allegory in [Abraham] Bibago*).

La ricerca di Halper muove dalla constatazione, in parte provocatoria, che il ritratto di Socrate offertoci da Platone, in particolare nell'*Apologia*, si fonda su un paradosso: sollecitato dal comando divino, Socrate è costretto a mettere in questione ogni sapere, fino al punto di dubitare delle credenze religiose tradizionali, che costituivano il collante politico e ideologico della società ateniese. In altre parole, la negazione o il dubbio sul divino, in Socrate, era il possibile esito estremo di una ricerca messa in moto dalla divinità stessa, dal *daimonion*. Si pensi, ad esempio, al fatto che Socrate mette alla prova l'oracolo, non credendo fideisticamente al responso di essere l'uomo più sapiente (cfr. Plat., *Apol.*, 21b-c): come aveva giustamente affermato Gabriele Giannantoni, in un'intervista, «l'atteggiamento di Socrate verso la divinità non consiste nel riconoscerle la ragione perché è divinità, ma, paradossalmente, nel riconoscerne la divinità per il fatto che ha ragione» (si veda, inoltre, di Giannantoni, la nuova edizione di *Che cosa ha veramente detto Socrate*, a cura di E. Spinelli e F. Verde, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2022). La ricerca filosofica nasce dunque come attività, potremmo dire, religiosa; anzi, come la più alta forma di devozione religiosa, e *nello stesso tempo* come attività potenzialmente "irreligiosa" e pericolosa per la *polis* (cfr. p. 5). Secondo Halper, questo paradosso socratico continua a essere operante in diversi filosofi ebrei che hanno continuato tra il XII e il XV secolo la lezione dei *falāsifa*. Questo aspetto radicale insito nel comando, divinamente ispirato, di intraprendere la ricerca filosofica restituirebbe un'immagine più autentica del socratismo nella filosofia islamica ed ebraica medievale rispetto all'immagine edulcorata di un Socrate come prefigurazione di Cristo o santo protocristiano, datane dal pensiero umanistico-rinascimentale. Su questo e altri punti credo di rilevare un'affinità tra l'interpretazione di Halper e quella avanzata da Leo Strauss in *Philosophie und Gesetz* (1935) e in altri saggi.

Nonostante la continuità del paradosso socratico della «divinely commanded inquiry» (p. 4) nella filosofia ebraica, la conoscenza del Socrate platonico nel mondo ebraico – rileva Halper – è stata sostanzialmente indiretta, frammentaria e spesso fondata su materiale leggendario stratificatosi nei vari passaggi di *translatio studiorum* dal greco all'arabo. Nel collo di bottiglia della trasmissione e traduzione dei testi dall'arabo all'ebraico, avvenuta

tra XIII e XIV secolo, il mondo ebraico non avrà più un contatto diretto, per quanto distorto, con i dialoghi di Platone e quindi con la figura di Socrate. Rimarrà maggioritaria la rappresentazione stereotipata di un Socrate saggio, asceta e monoteista. Ma Halper sembra preferire la rappresentazione alternativa, seppur minoritaria, di un Socrate “scettico”, che si rifiuta di speculare su questioni metafisiche; che preferisce concentrarsi sulle faccende umane, in un continuo confronto dialogico con i suoi interlocutori (pp. 44-5). Tale immagine si fonda principalmente su un passo celebre dell'*Apologia* (20d-e), in cui Socrate afferma di possedere soltanto una sapienza umana, un'*anthropine sophia*: sintagma che trova fedele riscontro nell'arabo di al-Fārābī e nel giudeo-arabo di Judah Halevi (*ḥikmah insāniyyah*, pp. 69 e 71) e nelle traduzioni ebraiche di Averroè (*ḥokhmah 'enoshit*, p. 85, n. 7).

Nella seconda parte del volume si distinguono, per acume e godibilità, i saggi dedicati a Maimonide e Jacob Anatoli. Nel primo, l'autore argomenta in modo consapevolmente provocatorio che la lettura della *Guida dei perplessi* può essere stata pensata come una punizione platonica per i liberi pensatori che violano il divieto, espresso dallo stesso Maimonide nell'opera giuridica *Mishneh Torah*, di indagare alcuni principi fondamentali dell'ebraismo, come l'esistenza di Dio e la profezia. Nel secondo, mostra che Anatoli accorda valore legale alla proibizione talmudica di studiare la filosofia (secondo l'interpretazione della massima «tieni lontani i tuoi figli da *higgayon*»), ma restringe tale proibizione ai soli giovani, nei quali un'esposizione non graduale al sapere può provocare gravi danni per sé stessi e per la comunità di appartenenza. Il corretto percorso educativo, che va dalle credenze tradizionali alla filosofia (in altri termini: dal mito alla scienza), non può essere rovesciato.

In conclusione, *Jewish Socratic Questions* è un libro molto originale, teoreticamente stimolante e filologicamente accurato, che affronta da un punto di vista particolare alcuni temi centrali della filosofia ebraica medievale, valorizzando, anche per l'oggi, la capacità di alcuni pensatori ebrei «to bring doubts, questions, and uncertainty into the very centre of Jewish thought» (p. 6).

Giovanni Licata

A. Labriola, *Filosofia della storia. Lezioni e appunti*, a cura di D. Bondi, F. Ghezzi, A. Savorelli, Bibliopolis, Napoli 2023, 522 pp., € 50,00.

L'intreccio tra filosofia, storia e politica costituisce il motivo fondamentale degli scritti di Antonio Labriola pubblicati nel volume XIII dell'Edizione nazionale col titolo *Filosofia della storia. Lezioni e appunti*, a cura di Davide Bondi, Francesca Ghezzi e Alessandro Savorelli. Il volume, che

raccoglie alcuni testi preparatori ai corsi di Filosofia della storia tenuti all'Università Sapienza di Roma tra il 1888 e il 1899, consente di entrare nell'officina filosofica dello studioso e di apprezzarne l'acribia metodologica nonché la cura riservata allo studio delle fonti e della letteratura del tema che di volta in volta costituisce l'oggetto delle sue ricerche.

Il volume si apre con una dissertazione intitolata *Se l'idea sia il fondamento della storia*, redatta da Labriola nel 1871 per ottenere la libera docenza in Filosofia della storia all'Università di Napoli. Lo scritto testimonia la necessità di prendere le distanze dall'impostazione storiografica idealistica e dalla lezione del maestro Bertrando Spaventa. Il limite del modello hegeliano viene individuato nel «concetto dialettico del necessario passaggio da una sfera ad un'altra», abbandonato in favore di un «concetto genetico» (p. 12) capace di includere anche le altre scienze nel processo fondativo della filosofia della storia. Sono già tutti qui gli ingredienti di quella teoria morfologica che, nella prospettiva di Labriola, consente di pensare i fenomeni storici attraverso una dialettica concreta, che separa, nel metodo hegeliano, il nocciolo razionale dalla corteccia mistica.

Gli scritti raccolti in questo volume consentono, inoltre, di seguire la genesi e la struttura della concezione materialistica della storia elaborata da Labriola attraverso la celebre formula «filosofia della *praxis*», che troviamo nel saggio *Discorrendo di socialismo e di filosofia*. Tra i testi più significativi, in tal senso, vi sono quelli raccolti sotto il titolo *Monografie*, che rappresentano dei casi di applicazione del materialismo storico proposti a lezione. Da questi appunti, allestiti da Ghezzi e Savorelli con grande cura, traspare la minuziosa analisi delle vicende umane e intellettuali di figure storiche di primo piano come Fra Dolcino, Rousseau, Jean-Baptist Drouet, Carlotta Cordey e Babeuf, ma anche la distanza da una certa interpretazione del metodo materialistico, dal momento che Labriola non interpreta i fenomeni storici in un senso deterministico ma attraverso una più complessa chiave di lettura.

Un esempio di ciò si trova negli appunti dedicati a Fra Dolcino, dove Labriola rettifica lo schema di una storia universale, secondo il quale vi sarebbe una linea ininterrotta di lotta fra borghesia e masse popolari che dal Medioevo giunge all'età moderna, e mostra piuttosto come la storia italiana del XIII secolo si svolge attraverso la contrapposizione tra la borghesia cittadina e l'aristocrazia feudale che relega ai margini dei comuni un popolo di straccioni. Nessun *Vorläufer*, dunque, poiché nella «fisionomia sociale dell'Italia una *classe di contadini* [...] non c'è mai stata» (p. 158). Questa capacità di dischiudere uno sguardo critico sull'interpretazione del materialismo storico si coglie, dunque, nelle applicazioni del «metodo» a singoli casi. Come rilevato nella pregevole Nota al testo di Bondi, se Babeuf «spicca come il caso più idoneo a mostrare il vincolo tra gli eventi e il contesto socio-economico di riferimento», nelle altre biografie

«vengono invece in primo piano ora l'elasticità psichica del protagonista (Rousseau), ora le sue rappresentazioni culturali o identitarie (Corday), in ultimo, il nesso tra biografia e mero caso o accidente» (p. 399).

Queste diverse linee narrative confluiscono poi nel racconto della Rivoluzione francese, che rappresenta uno dei temi principali di questi appunti. Il primo corso sulla Rivoluzione fu tenuto nell'anno accademico 1888-89, quando ne ricorreva il centenario. Fu proprio grazie a questo corso che l'insegnamento di Labriola cominciò ad avere una certa risonanza, vedendo la partecipazione non solo degli studenti, ma anche del pubblico colto della città. Egli fu persino costretto a interrompere le lezioni per via delle proteste di alcuni studenti conservatori e accusato di professare in università idee politiche d'impronta socialista. Questo episodio testimonia della rilevanza che la trattazione della storia aveva per il presente, che, come accennato in apertura, costituisce il motivo portante di questi scritti. Labriola, che nella sua giovinezza aveva vissuto in prima persona le vicende dell'hegelismo napoletano, si interrogava sulle ragioni che avevano portato al fallimento di quella stagione culturale e politica. E alla domanda sui motivi che avevano condotto alla decadenza del nostro paese rispondeva: «all'Italia era mancata l'unità politica – cioè lo stato e le armi (concezione di Machiavelli e di Guicciardini)» (p. 77).

La necessità di mediare il principio del materialismo storico con la storia nazionale italiana fu all'origine del carattere isolato e, per certi aspetti, "eretico" della filosofia di Labriola, con importanti conseguenze anche sulla ricezione del suo pensiero nel Novecento. Tuttavia l'analisi del rapporto fra dimensione nazionale e dimensione internazionale, che attraversa gli scritti di filosofia della storia raccolti in questo volume, rappresenta un punto critico che merita ancora un'attenta discussione, in un'epoca come la nostra segnata, per un verso, dalla rinascita dei nazionalismi e, per un altro, da fenomeni sempre più estesi di globalizzazione. Per tale ragione, questo bel volume può rappresentare un utile strumento di riflessione non solo per gli specialisti, ma anche per coloro che desiderano approfondire le vicende del marxismo teorico italiano e il suo legame con la storia politica del nostro paese.

Federica Pitillo

M. Croce, A. Salvatore, *Carl Schmitt's Institutional Theory: The Political Power of Normality*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2022, 158 pp., £ 85,00.

What the sulphurous Carl Schmitt was, it is difficult to define once and for all. Certainly, at least in his own narrative, he was fundamentally a jurist;

Mariano Croce and Andrea Salvatore's book reminds us, ten years after their first English monograph on Schmitt (M. Croce, A. Salvatore, *The Legal Theory of Carl Schmitt*, Routledge, London 2013), that his specifically *juridical* production must be reckoned with. Recovering a hermeneutic line that had not yet received its full specialist dignity (C. Mortati, *Brevi note sul rapporto fra costituzione e politica nel pensiero di Carl Schmitt*, in "Quaderni Fiorentini", 2, 1973, pp. 511-32; M. Fioravanti, *Kelsen, Schmitt e la tradizione giuridica dell'Ottocento*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1987, pp. 51-104), the Authors offer the international reader an extended version of *L'indecisionista* (Quodlibet, Macerata 2020) and reaffirm the need to accommodate Schmitt *within* the broader debate on Institutionalism (pp. 106-24).

Schmitt realises that the "decisionism" formalised in *Politische Theologie* and *Der Begriff des Politischen* (one of the author's best known and most studied aspects) simply *does not work* properly. It does not propose a setback to liberal «entmilitarisierten und entpolitisierten Begriffe» (C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen*, Duncker & Humblot, Berlin 2018, p. 216) aimed at defining social ties in an impolitic sense, not neutralising properly the Political (the purpose of sovereign labour around and through the *Entscheidung*), leading from the Political to the *politesse* (ivi, pp. 41-2; 167). Unsatisfied with the theological-political side, Schmitt's parallel work on law (a «fundamental oscillation», pp. 25-6), which makes a strong case for the partially justified *J'accuse* of pure theories of law, is transformed into a scrutiny of the risky deactivation of the effectiveness of law *within* the Juridical. Only by working on the institutions in which people act every day can *Rechtsbestimmtheit* be understood. So, the jurist insists on an *alternative* reconnaissance of the origin of the legal system – an alternative to the exceptionalism of *Politische Theologie* more pressing than the, albeit necessary, genealogy of the modern political form found there, since Schmitt allows an answer as to *why* certain institutions *survive* others.

Following a path already present in the *Verfassungslehre*, the Authors criticise the view that sees Schmitt's great contribution only in the decision on the exception: rather, what is at stake here is the reactivation the juspolitical activity starting *ernsthaft* from legal praxis regardless of the *ubi consistam* of the exception (pp. 81-3). If the decision leaves the field "to indecision" *cum grano salis* – as it is a decision within the devices of norms, a «punctuated equilibrium decisionism» –, it gives a glimpse of what an unbreakable vision of sovereign decision is blind to. The work of law (and of Institutionalism) becomes more concrete and effective when it is thought as the catalyst of "pluralism" of the social points of organisation, though not of *plurality* – which in Schmitt, as a

disciple of Hobbes, is feared and subject to the most pressing scrutiny. Law's praxeology cannot but be a kind of rule immanent to social groups, a norm of existence and their manifestation. Certainly, Schmitt was never an institutionalist *tout court* like his sources (Romano and Hauriou *in primis*, pp. 106-20). That feared plurality from which to start to rediscover the articulation of the social is certainly made explicit by the juridical moment but held firmly by the reins of its application that verges on biopolitics. The quality of practices will be resolved, in the 1930s, in their necessary submission to the racial homogeneity envisaged by Nazism. The old spontaneist motto *Ubi Societas ibi Ius* would seem to take less root here, even in Schmitt's preoccupation with institutional concreteness: but the Authors see it clearly, especially in Schmitt's later works such as *Die Lage der europäischen Rechtswissenschaft* (perhaps a late attempt to "straighten out" and ennoble the task entrusted to jurists in texts such as *Staat, Bewegung, Volk*). The need for a *certain* law, as well as a law that *is certain*, is sanctified and hypostatized against the rampant technique, and «the compositional activity of the jurists is taken to be the guarantor of the unity of a political space no longer confined within territorial borders. The territory is now a political space that overlaps perfectly, without any friction, with a porous and elastic legal context, exclusively bounded by jurisprudence» (p. 134).

However blinkered, this "appeal" to the judges' decision nevertheless indicates how difficult it is for the sovereign decision to shape a composite reality, i.e. to make those under it fully docile from a vertical perspective. The *coup de grace* comes with the reflections on the *Nomos*, which serve to take leave of Schmitt: the path illustrated aimed to show how decision is not monolithic, but protean, and finally finds its proper place in Schmitt as a filter of competing institutional practices. Since there must be some form of order, political sovereignty *does not decide* but *selects* certain practices to be woven together, elevates them to a legal recognition and, thus, legitimises them (after all, the *Nomos* is a mythical *Urwort* that summarises these activities). A personal variant of Institutionalism (starting with the rejection of the *language* of the institution in favour of *Konkrete Ordnungen*), which poses urgent challenges to "classical" Institutionalism: is it possible to think of institutional pluralism without a hierarchy of normative sources? How can the formation of political groups at the basis of institutions be justified?

Croce and Salvatore's book is important, because it touches on a path that goes from the construction of a theory of the State to one of constitutional theory. A path that should not be stereotyped as reactionary and illiberal, however much it evidently suffers from Schmitt's great personal and theoretical opportunism: *Si cela va sans dire, ça ira encore*

mieux en le disant, not only because Schmitt is a liberal (Leo Strauss *docuit*); not only because a Schmitt “devotee of the emergence” (a conceptual character unluckily born in the last twenty years due to *more or less conscious* misinterpretations of the jurist) is *not relevant* from a historical-conceptual and philosophical-political point of view (but only from a journalistic one); but above all because, in doing so, one would lose the great contributions Schmitt made to political philosophy: in addition to what Croce and Salvatore have pertinently pointed out, these include the analysis of the original structure of the modern political form, the identity-representation binomial, the reopening of the debate on political theology. Schmitt, as a *classic*, is still a threshold to cross in order, if possible, to go *beyond* the political reflection he reconstructed.

Alvise Capria

M. Dal Pra, *Pascal averroista? Appunti per un corso inedito*, a cura di Alberto Frigo, Morcelliana, Brescia 2022, 128 pp., € 11,00.

A trent'anni dalla sua scomparsa, l'interesse per la figura di Mario Dal Pra, indimenticato docente di Storia della filosofia dell'Università degli studi di Milano, non accenna a esaurirsi. Oltre ai diversi convegni a lui dedicati nel corso dell'ultimo decennio, compare ora, per i tipi della casa editrice Morcelliana, il testo di un inedito manoscritto, conservato presso il suo Archivio, affidato alle cure della Biblioteca di filosofia dell'Ateneo milanese. Nella brillante *Introduzione*, Alberto Frigo ne ricostruisce genesi e destinazione. Si tratta degli appunti stesi in vista di un corso su Blaise Pascal, da tenersi nell'anno accademico 1977-78 (*Pascal nel momento scientifico e nella crisi politico-religiosa dell'assolutismo in Francia*), contenuti in due quaderni e in alcuni fogli sciolti, diligentemente redatti da Dal Pra, a partire dal 1974. La prospettiva storiografica entro cui si colloca la lettura dalpraiana del *problema Pascal* è documentata nel XXIV capitolo (*Pascal e il Giansenismo*) del settimo volume della *Storia della filosofia* curata dall'autore per l'editore Vallardi, dato alle stampe nel 1976. Una prospettiva che si caratterizza per il rifiuto di operare una lettura dicotomica dell'itinerario filosofico di Pascal, che separi in modo manicheo le due fisionomie dell'autore (quella dello scienziato e quella del polemist e pensatore religioso), secondo l'antica *vulgata* invalsa a partire dalla biografia della sorella Gilberte Périer. Ma il superamento della dicotomia non si risolve in un indebito continuismo, bensì rimanda a una tensione dialettica dei due termini in gioco (fede e ragione), risolvibile soltanto mediante il richiamo alla più generale temperie storica e culturale, di cui Pascal è testimone privilegiato.

È il tema – come documenta l'accurato scandaglio documentario del curatore del volumetto – che tormenta Dal Pra fin dal 1947, dalla conferenza tenuta all'Associazione Giosué Carducci di Como nel novembre di quell'anno, sul tema *Pascal e i gesuiti: la morale cristiana e il mondo moderno*. Come può la *dialettica del cristianesimo*, sia nella versione accomodante dei Gesuiti, che in quella radicale pascaliana, essere posta all'origine della *cultura moderna*? Come può condurre all'Illuminismo un pensiero la cui «parola d'ordine [...] è l'umiliazione della ragione, la denuncia della sua insufficienza?». Come osserva Alberto Frigo, non si trattava soltanto di «unificare, superando un vecchio cliché storiografico, il Pascal *savant* e il Pascal *croyant*, e nemmeno di minimizzare la cesura che egli stesso istituisce tra ambiti eterogenei dell'esperienza umana» (pp. 10-1). La posta in gioco era quella di una ridefinizione dei termini stessi di *ragione* e *cristianesimo*, in una prospettiva moderna, senza fare sconti agli aspetti di continuità e a quelli di discontinuità e di salto, ugualmente importanti.

È quanto Dal Pra si accingeva a fare nel corso del 1977-78, di cui gli inediti ora disponibili forniscono il metatesto imprescindibile. Alberto Frigo indica precisamente le fonti principali (a loro modo datate) della disamina dalpraiana: da un lato, il *Pascal* di Paolo Serini (Einaudi, Torino 1942), col quale Dal Pra instaura – nel primo dei quaderni ora pubblicati – «una sorta di commento – o quasi un dialogo» (p. 13) e i lavori di Giulio Preti (riferimento generalmente imprescindibile di Dal Pra). Dall'altro, le classiche interpretazioni di Goldmann, Trevor-Roper, Porchnev e Mandrou: «un Pascal riletto alla luce della sua posizione politico-sociale, e dunque in quanto esponente di una *noblesse de robe* in crisi e di un movimento spirituale ma politicamente centrale come quello di Port-Royal» (p. 19), pur con le riserve espresse nei riguardi della storiografia marxistica. Dal Pra individua una alternativa, nella possibile declinazione del rapporto fede-ragione, storicamente caratterizzabili come *averroista* e *occamista*. Entrambe preoccupate di garantire l'autonomia relativa di ciascun termine, ma con diversa finalità. Se l'occamismo rende autonoma la ragione per garantire l'autonomia della fede, l'averroismo «si rassegna a riconoscere l'autonomia della fede in quanto così garantisce l'autonomia della ragione» (p. 17). Di qui la formula, applicata dubitativamente al caso di Pascal in uno dei quaderni di Dal Pra, scelta dal curatore come titolazione del volumetto. La soluzione finale, peraltro adottata dal filosofo vicentino, presuppone in realtà una «triangolazione», al posto di questa dicotomia. Sembra esserci infatti in Pascal una «terza dimensione umana, al di là della scienza e della vita religiosa: è la dimensione del sentimento e del persuasivo, la dimensione della *honnêteté*, della moralità, in cui gli sono di guida Epitteto e Montaigne» (p. 18). È da questa comune radice, nutrita di passione e sentimenti, che germogliano, modernamente, la vita della

società e della religione, ma anche la morale, l'estetica e la scienza. A essa si riferiscono gli sfuggenti concetti pascaliani di *coeur* ed *esprit de finesse*.

Da ultimo, il volume curato da Frigo intende essere anche un omaggio, oltre che al professore, all'uomo Dal Pra, che viene evocato attraverso le pagine, insieme ironiche e affettuose, dello scrittore vicentino Luigi Meneghello. Egli fu allievo di Dal Pra negli anni di Liceo e, in una pagina dei suoi *Fiori italiani*, ne dipinge un simpatico ritratto, deformandone il cognome in quello di *Dal Piaz*. Dal confronto tra il Dal Piaz della memoria e il Dal Pra della critica, emerge la fisionomia di un maestro che brillava, oltre che per la competenza, per la sottigliezza di «mettere in discussione tutto», senza peraltro «nascondere un fondo d'inquietudine, che ne rendeva sempre più problematiche e aperte le conclusioni» (p. 23).

Amedeo Vigorelli

A. Tagliapietra, *La musica del caso. Ricerche sull'azzardo e il senso del gioco*, a cura di E. Maglione, Mimesis, Milano 2022, 198 pp., € 16,00.

Questo volume, che inaugura la collana "Atlante delle idee", diretta da Andrea Tagliapietra, affronta una delle questioni più lungamente ignorate dalla tradizione filosofica occidentale, vale a dire: quale ruolo ricoprono il gioco, l'azzardo, e più in generale l'esposizione al caso, nella vita umana? Gioco, azzardo e caso, come Tagliapietra mostra attraverso una disamina storico-filosofica che va dalla preistoria all'età moderna, sono infatti idee strettamente legate tra loro. Nel gioco, a differenza di quanto accade nei nostri quotidiani commerci col mondo, ricerchiamo attivamente l'esposizione al rischio e all'ignoto. La stessa accettazione delle procedure previste da ogni gioco è finalizzata a stimolare l'incontro col caso, incontro che tuttavia non esclude la creatività e la libera iniziativa.

Non vi è dunque antitesi tra caso e libertà, come vuole un antico pregiudizio alimentato dal pensiero filosofico. Da Aristotele a Hegel, la linea maestra della filosofia occidentale ha confinato il caso e l'accidentale dalla parte dell'ignoranza e dell'errore. Per Tagliapietra, al contrario, proprio «in questo spazio di *non sapere* che resiste alla pretesa di spiegazione della ragione, sta una riserva attiva che impedisce lo scivolamento dell'agire umano nel determinismo delle spiegazioni e della macchina ben oliata della necessità. Se siamo liberi, forse, lo siamo per caso» (p. 20). Perché se di fronte al caso siamo esposti e indifesi non meno che davanti alla necessità, tra la passività della necessità e quella del caso corre una differenza sostanziale: la prima non lascia spazio che alla semplice accettazione, la seconda, al contrario, «ci capita e non si configura come inevitabile. Di conseguenza essa stimola la nostra capacità di reazione», come rivela ap-

punto il gioco, e in particolare il gioco d'azzardo, dove «pur presi dal caso cerchiamo comunque di volgerlo a nostro favore» (p. 25).

Proprio perché non esclude l'iniziativa del singolo ma addirittura la incentiva, anche nelle circostanze più avverse, il gioco iscrive la realtà nel registro della *libera casualità*, spogliandola, seppur per brevi e irripetibili istanti, della sua indiscutibilità. Per questo il gioco è stato a lungo considerato un argomento di scarso interesse filosofico. Perché il caso spaventa, inquieta, destabilizza, vanifica la deduzione degli effetti dalle cause ponendosi per ciò stesso al di fuori del dominio della prevedibilità e, quindi, di ciò su cui possiamo fare affidamento. Se però è vero che lo sviluppo delle culture umane verso la complessità è definibile in termini di incremento delle procedure di calcolo e di razionalizzazione del caso, la cultura, ricorda Tagliapietra riprendendo la definizione di Northrop Frye, prima ancora di essere un sistema di riferimenti che predeterminano l'incontro dell'individuo con il suo ambiente, è «un organico complesso di ipotesi immaginative all'interno di una società e delle sue tradizioni». Così, nelle culture umane le strategie di addomesticamento e razionalizzazione del caso hanno sempre convissuto con un altro modo di fronteggiare l'ambiguità del reale, quello del simbolo. Nel simbolo il limite del non-senso del mondo non è trattato come un problema da risolvere con una risposta universale, valida per ognuno, ma come un «enigma» che mette ciascuno alla prova singolarmente (p. 78), misurandolo col metro degli *eventi* che, puntualizza Tagliapietra, si distinguono dai *fatti* proprio perché «*capitano a "x"*, e non *sono* a prescindere dal loro esser accaduti in una situazione, in un determinato contesto». Il mondo è così, nella prospettiva del simbolo, «una continua matrice di eventi ed evento esso stesso, divenire che si differenzia» (p. 14). Il simbolo, infatti, «a differenza del concetto, non cerca di anticipare il possibile esito letale dell'evento nel rassicurante schermo intellettuale e cognitivo che isola e neutralizza l'oggetto dalla variabilità della vita e ne fa mero spettacolo, ma piuttosto disegnando *figure di azioni e reazioni possibili*, cioè generando *trame di vita*» (*ibid.*).

È sulla base dell'appartenenza del gioco al modo del simbolo, approfondita lungo tutto il volume, che Tagliapietra invita a ravvisare nell'intreccio di azzardo, gioco e caso, non un «rumore» di fondo rispetto alle questioni e ai temi rilevanti e degni di nota, ma, per citare il titolo del romanzo di Paul Auster che è stato scelto per raccogliere le ricerche contenute nel volume, una «musica», ossia «una forma liminare del senso» (p. 7). Perché se giocare significa *fare finta che*, immaginare e muoversi all'interno di mondi possibili tenendo ferma la consapevolezza del loro carattere finzionale, non per questo il gioco è privo di ricadute nel mondo «reale». Nel gioco, argomenta infatti Tagliapietra, si tratta da un lato di possibilizzare la realtà, di rinunciare al primato del reale, alla sua im-

nenza, alla sua indiscutibilità; dall'altro di realizzare la possibilità, di togliere alla possibilità la sua vaghezza, per farne apparire l'ibridazione con la realtà. L'esistenza di questa dialettica è provata dal fatto che i rapporti tra sfera ludica e vita politica si sono modificati nel corso del tempo; l'una ha influenzato l'altra e viceversa, come si evince dall'*excursus* storico che è ricavabile dai saggi presenti nel volume. Attraverso un percorso che intreccia filosofia, storia delle idee e cultura materiale, l'autore comincia infatti col prendere in esame le radici rituali del gioco per arrivare a indagare, nell'ultimo saggio, la funzione che lo sport ricopre nella società contemporanea. L'*excursus* trova quindi una traduzione visiva nell'apparato iconografico curato da Alessandro Rossi, che raccoglie e mette in relazione alcune tra le più significative rappresentazioni artistiche del gioco dall'antichità sino al xx secolo.

Il volume si chiude con un saggio di Erminio Maglione dove i dati sul gioco d'azzardo in Italia vengono letti alla luce delle tesi dei principali teorici del gioco del secolo scorso (Huizinga, Fink e Callois), con l'obiettivo di pervenire a una comprensione del senso del gioco d'alea lontana dalle prese di posizione dal sapore moralistico che da tempo infiammano il dibattito pubblico. Maglione arriva a suggerire un modello teorico utile a identificare il giocatore «responsabile», e mettere così al riparo da derive patologiche una dimensione tanto connaturata al fare umano. Se infatti il gioco implica immedesimazione cosciente e temporanea in un ruolo, nel cosiddetto *disturbo del gioco d'azzardo* (DGA) la libera iniziativa del giocatore è ridotta al minimo in favore di un affidamento incondizionato al potere del caso, e il gioco diventa una dimensione univoca e totalizzante, perdendo così quella funzione «eliminare» che lo ha reso, e al netto dei pregiudizi continua a renderlo, una delle modalità precipue con cui quegli esseri simbolici che siamo riscrivono continuamente i confini tra possibile e reale dando vita al palcoscenico cangiante della storia.

Giordano Ghirelli