

# Think Into the Place of the Other: The Crealectic Approach to Philosophical Health and Care

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**Abstract:** The present article introduces eight empirically-tested concepts that guide the crealectic practice of philosophical counseling: philosophical health, deep listening, the Creal, the possible, imparadisation, deep orientation, *eudynamia*, and mental heroism. The crealectic framework is grounded on a process-philosophy axiom of absolute possibility and continuous cosmological and cosmopolitical creation, termed “Creal”. The approach also posits that there are three complementary modes of intelligence, namely analytic, dialectic, and crealectic, the balance of which is necessary to live a healthy human life. Beyond what is physically possible and psychologically possible, an underestimated force of social and personal deployment is the *philosophical possible*. In a context of personal counseling and philosophical care, the crealectic approach endeavors to slowly connect the patient to a field of harmonious and generative potentiality termed *eudynamia*.

**Keywords:** philosophical health, counseling, deep listening, crealectics, care

## Introduction: The Philosophical Parlour

I began offering philosophical counseling sessions to individuals in February 2018, and named this possibility space *The Philosophical Parlour* (the word *parlour* being derived from the French *parler*, which means *to talk*). Centrally located near the Stockholm city hall in Sweden, the practice offers a large waiting room with worn out couches and five rooms in which different practitioners work, most of them, unlike me, offering cognitive behavioral therapy. The Philosophical Parlour completed its third anniversary in February 2021 and in the course of these years, I have offered hundreds of individual consultations to private visitors, to international counselees online or to employees and managers of institutions and corporations such as the Research and Development unit of the multinational Vattenfall.

Two decades ago, I trained in Lacanian psychoanalysis in France under the supervision of psychiatrist Patrick Landman, author of *Freud*<sup>1</sup> and president of the STOP-DSM association, a group of practitioners who opposed the psychiatric system of diagnosing based on the DSM manual (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*). I also collaborated with

Professor Hervé Castanet, a doctor in psychology and Lacanian psychoanalyst in Marseille, who prefaced my monograph on Lacan, which is an analysis of the connection between human individuation, the structure of desire and the capitalist model of production.<sup>2</sup> In February 2018, shortly after I completed my PhD in philosophy and history of ideas at the University of Edinburgh, which was transformed into the book *Ensemblance*,<sup>3</sup> I started practicing philosophical counseling in order to provide philosophical care within the framework of the *crealectic* process philosophy.

The crealectic framework is grounded on an axiom of absolute becoming and continuous **cosmological creation**, termed “Creal”,<sup>4</sup> of which more below. The approach also posits that there are three complementary modes of intelligence, namely analytic, dialectic, and crealectic,<sup>5</sup> the balance of which is necessary in order to enjoy a healthy life. Analytic focus discretizes reality into familiar and logical parts and is useful in order to facilitate communication and world-ordering. Dialectic interaction deals with dynamics of tension and dialogic intersubjectivity, needed in processes of elucidation or mediation. Crealectics is the study and practice of co-creating diverse and harmonious realities out of a ground of absolute possibility in which human desire for sublimity is respected.<sup>6</sup> In a context of counseling and care, the crealectic approach slowly connects the patient, via philosophical dialogue and deep listening, to a field of *eudynamia*, a beneficial and generative state of ever-renewed potentiality and blissful presence in the earth, in which our intellectual capacities are not smothered. In this context, the cultivation of a relation to the philosophical possible is generative. These terms will be explained in the present article, together with eight key concepts that guide the crealectic practice of philosophical counseling: philosophical health, deep listening, the Creal, the possible, imparadisation, deep orientation, *eudynamia*, and mental heroism.

## 1. Beyond Physical and Psychological Health: Philosophical Health

The phrase “physical health”, nowadays considered self-evident, became part of modern discourse in the nineteenth century only, along the publication of manuals such as *Health Made Easy for the People, or Physical training, to Make Their Lives, in This World, Long and Happy*.<sup>7</sup> The Victorian period saw a growing emphasis upon gymnastic instruction in Europe, for example via athletic programs in public schools.<sup>8</sup> In Sweden, for instance, Pehr Henrik Ling, appointed fencing master at the University of Uppsala in 1805, observed that a personal program of daily exercises (fencing, horse riding and swimming) completely restored his previously fragile health, and he was appointed in 1813 as Principal of the newly founded Royal Central Gymnastic teaching and training institute. Nowadays the access to physical health is not a luxury for the happy few anymore; it is rather considered to be a necessity for all. In recent decades, lifestyle-related citizen health has been increasingly monitored as a universal or standard program by governments, schools, institutions, organizations, corporations.<sup>9</sup> Physical health might not be fully forced upon citizens as compulsory, yet it is certainly perceived by many as a categorical imperative, an internalized duty.

The phrase “psychological health” has slowly become a trope of our social reality since the end of the nineteenth century and the establishment of the first psychology labs in European and American universities. Janet and Freud were notoriously influent in conveying the idea of psychological healing,<sup>10</sup> then again applying it firstly to a few more or less privileged patients in Paris or Vienna before the notion disseminated and became a general norm. In the USA, for instance, as part of the Mental Hygiene movement that emerged in the early twentieth century, Thomas W. Salmon proposed broadening the specialty of psychiatry beyond the traditional focus on institutional care toward the societal prevention of mental illnesses.<sup>11</sup> By applying it to communities and social preventive programs, the National Committee for Mental Hygiene secularized and democratized the idea of psychological health in the USA.<sup>12</sup> The slow rise in the western world of “the therapeutic culture” and the cult of the self-led to the perception of homosapiens as “psychological man”.<sup>13</sup> Psychological and mental care is today a ubiquitous licensed profession, certain forms of which are sponsored by nation-states, and “psychiatry, in the most general sense of the psydisciplines, has moved very powerfully into the ways in which people understand themselves, their self-technologies and into the ways in which people articulate and judge their mental states.”<sup>14</sup>

Compared to “physical health” and “psychological health”, the idea of “philosophical health” may still appear to be a curiosity: “The first thing to notice is that there does not seem to be anything such as philosophical health, or at least we do not often **speak that way**”.<sup>15</sup> Until recently, the phrase was mostly used as a metaphor to describe sound philosophical thinking versus faulty reasoning:

*“Perhaps the only discipline or method by which we can expect to improve our capacity to stand above the non-rational determinants of our philosophical beliefs and concerns is the exploration, with as much objectivity as we can muster, of the origins and antecedents of those beliefs and concerns. We need to know how we got where we are. The deeper the presupposition, the more valuable to our philosophical health is the activity of discovering how it was acquired.”<sup>16</sup>*

The author of such lines was not so much concerned with the layman, but rather with the professional and scholarly thinker, judged more or less capable of complete logical, rational or epistemological coherence. This somewhat restricted idea of healthy thinking is often associated with Wittgenstein’s insistence on logical or linguistic consistency and his early deflationist – if not nihilistic – stance about the limited possibilities of philosophical knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

However, Wittgenstein’s later insistence, in his *Investigations*,<sup>18</sup> on the idea of philosophy as a kind of therapy that may bring peace of mind may have been instrumental in the genealogy of how the idea of philosophical health is potentially becoming democratized. According to Wittgenstein and some of his followers, we should not indulge our temptation to ignorance if we are to cultivate a healthy mind: “Consistency between our ways of thinking and speaking and our

ways of acting eliminates, or at least reduces, the psychic tensions that acting against one's own allegiances will cause."<sup>19</sup>

A first step to understand that the idea of philosophical health is at least equally as important as physical and psychological health is to recognize that any human being possesses philosophical beliefs, intellectual allegiances and more or less rationalized concerns, often not yet fully explicit or compossible. Between the 1960s and the 1990s, the first contemporary "philosophical counselors" started to appear in Europe and the USA,<sup>20</sup> sometimes but not always equating "philosophical health" with "spiritual health": it was now admitted that "some people believe that good health also includes a feeling that one's behavior is in rhythm with one's basic values. This feeling may also include a sense that life has meaning and is worthwhile."<sup>21</sup> The cosmopolitical and practical idea of philosophy as democratic therapy was reborn from its Ancient Greek ashes: "The operative notion of philosophical health depends on a conception of the human good."<sup>22</sup> One is engaging in philosophical health when one's behavior is careful (and *care-full*) in considering not only the physical or psychological individual balance but also a certain idea of what the collective and holistic good of humans and all beings on earth might be, starting with one's own good. Trying to avoid dogmatic stances about unilateral directions, the crealectic approach defines this greater good as *eudynamia*, or good potentiality, of which more below.

I founded in 2019 the Philosophical health International (PHI) movement in order to unite in an open global network those who believe that the concept of philosophical health is as important as physical and psychological health. Philosophical health is a state of fruitful coherence between a person's ways of **thinking and speaking and their ways of acting**, such that the possibilities for a sublime life are increased and the need for self- and intersubjective flourishing satisfied. A philosophically healthy individual, group, system or protocol ensures that the goals and purposes of the whole are pragmatically aligned with its highest ideals while respecting the regenerative, plural and possibilizing future of multiple forms of life.

## 2. Beyond Dialectics: Deep Listening

A dialectic approach to intersubjective conversation, in the Socratic sense, is the common denominator of most philosophical counseling practices.<sup>23</sup> In this context, a capacity for inquisitive listening is the first essential quality I became aware of as a philosophical counselor. This was certainly facilitated by my training in Lacanian psychoanalysis, a practice in which a particular attention is given to language and words as *signifiers*, signs potentially conveying various *signifieds* or meanings.<sup>24</sup> I can offer here the example of Indira [the names of patients have been changed in this article for the sake of anonymity], who in the first seconds of her first philosophical counseling session **told me**: "I don't know why I am here... my life is without problems. I have a great life... For example, I love plants... I love looking at plants grow, and especially their leaves... the shape of the leaves, the color of the leaves... I really find leaves fascinating; I could look at leaves forever..." Indira paused and I asked: "Is there someone you would like to *leave*?" **The expression of her face changed**, tears surfaced in her eyes, and she

answered: “Yes, my husband.” Indeed, words sometimes speak through us, and while not all slips of the tongue should be made significant in the context of philosophical care, a good balance needs to be established between the excessive distrust regarding what the patient says that may be the downside of Freudian approaches, and the fact that we cannot take everything that the patient tells us at face value.

Deep listening is needed in several forms of care and human interaction, but it is not often practiced systematically. The surgeon Robert Swendiman writes how he tries in his medical practice, against the habit of indifference imposed by institutional routines, to frequently apply **the precept enunciated by Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh: “Deep listening and loving speech are wonderful instruments to help us arrive at the kind of understanding we all need as a basis for appropriate action.”**<sup>25</sup> As a **conceptual and methodological model**, “deep listening” was first introduced by composer and researcher Pauline Oliveros, who described it as a form of listening that **“involves going below the surface of what is heard [...] unlocking layer after layer of imagination, meaning, and memory down to the cellular level of human experience.”**<sup>26</sup> This practice is difficult and takes concentration and time: this is partly why I sometimes call my counsees *patients*, listening here less to the etymology of the word, which means suffering (*pathos*), and more to the idea of *patience* that it suggests. There is not philosophical health without patience and a commitment to slow growth; in the course of this process, deep listening allows the caregiver to be able to refresh the anticipations **one might have regarding a person’s** personality.

The crealectic approach uses deep listening in order to avoid the rigid or hasty application of a predetermined taxonomy of understanding, so frequent in diagnostical psychology; the philosophical counselor remains open to possibility, to new forms of thinking and neuro-diversity, rather than molding all patients or counsees into a homogenous type, a fantasized ideal of **“philosophical man”**: **“The *deep listening* stance holds diversity and seeks to balance the familiar with the unfamiliar, holding tensions and frictions rather than ‘resolving’ and creating ‘inauthentic’ homogeneity for the sake of imposed health and well-being currencies.”**<sup>27</sup> Health itself must be a possibilizing concept rather than a normative one. Unfortunately, physical health and psychological health have become extremely normative over the decades, conveying universalizing and reifying ideas of standard, optimal or typical states of mind. Via deep listening, the practice of philosophical care attempts to avoid dogmatism and the idea that there is only one neurotypical way of thinking healthily.

### 3. Beyond Creativity: The Creal

The term “crealectics” is a compound of “Creal” (from “creative” and “Real”) and of two possible suffixes: “logos” (from the Greek word designating a unifying discourse) and “ektos” (from the Greek root meaning “towards the outside”, “outer” or “external”).<sup>28</sup> The word Creal (French *Créal*) was coined in 2008 in the French science-fiction novel *Paridaiza*,<sup>29</sup> in which the characters are immersed in a totalitarian duplication of the Earth created through virtual reality

and AI technologies, an addictive simulation that maintains humanity in a state of sensual dependence and philosophical-political immaturity.

A group of rebels manages however to create a liberating virus that may free the alienated users of Paridaiza. **The first insurgent who benefits from the treatment has the vision of “a world he has spontaneously named the Creal.”**<sup>30</sup>

“There was a kind of explosion, and I found myself in the corner of a sort of cloister, with a garden and a fountain.”

“Did it look like a place you’d seen before?” asks Clara<sup>x</sup>.

“Nothing was familiar, not even the smells, but at the same time I felt at home. I felt like I was inside a living kaleidoscope that would obey my commands. And it was as if there was honey flowing in my veins, an intense flow of desire. The path leading to the fountain formed a kind of maze that shifted and changed with every step I took. Shining, brightly-colored shapes were transforming constantly. I looked up and realized that the cloister didn’t have any walls, only peristyle columns. How can I describe it? I felt like this world was my own creation in a way, but at the same time I was only the instrument of a divine harmony.” [...]

“But why Creal? Why did that neologism come to you so suddenly out of nowhere?”

“I don’t know. I felt like I was entering the very depths of imagination and the heart of reality at the same time.”

“And you felt good?”

He concentrates, searching for the right words.

“Yes, it was truly a feeling of joy and confidence. I felt powerful, too, but with a gentle, harmonious kind of power.”

“Was that the effect of a series of coincidences? Of synchronicity?”

“It was like I’d touched the very essence of my own being. I felt like everything was connected.”

Gagarina’s face lights up.

“This magical cloister with a fountain in the center... that exactly matches the description of what people called Paridaiza in the time of the prophet Zoroaster. The true Paridaiza, the one represented on my Persian rug, and not a gilded prison filled with greedy avatars. That is your Creal: the secret of the original Paridaiza.”

“What secret?”

“None other than our spiritual roots. The yearning creativity that is the very essence of life. The imaginative desire that triumphs over our sinking, our collapse. The ancients called it the Poem of the Cosmos.”<sup>31</sup>

From the context of the fictional birth of the signifier, the Creal possibility points to a harmonious unification of the subjective and objective experiences of the world. The idea that creation or creativity is a trans-immanent rather than only transcendent cosmological principle is common in process philosophies since Heraclitus.<sup>32</sup> For Whitehead, “Creativity is the universal of universals characterizing ultimate matter of fact.”<sup>33</sup> This onto-generative<sup>34</sup> notion of creative becoming can be seen as a becoming-world of sublimity or absolute possibility.<sup>35</sup> The object of crealectic intelligence is thus the possibilization and realization of possibility,<sup>36</sup> the constant becoming real, biological and social of “hypernatural” creation,<sup>37</sup> a multimodal externalization and adunation of the multiple.

#### 4. The Possible

We may think of the crealectic feeling as the opposite of depression. In the latter experience, one may feel disheartened, like the earth is an empty rock, devoid of anything but cardboard illusions. In the crealectic experience of the world, we are not looking at reality as a static and scarce resource but as a compossible and moving manifestation and interpretation among many others of an invisible source of felt abundance, a co-creation in which we are dynamically engaged. Crealectics is a program of harmonisation of our collective capacity to feel, imagine, envision, realize and co-actualize a world emerging from the cosmological source of the Real as a metaphysical and practical “possibility of possibility”.<sup>38</sup> Crealectic intelligence deals with processing realities and imaginaries of novelty and plurality rather than mere contradiction of binary polarities or analytic operation of known bits; its ontological core is the philosophical idea of creation understood ontologically as ubiquitous stream of potentiality, an idea shared among others by Bergson,<sup>39</sup> Whitehead,<sup>40</sup> and Deleuze-Guattari.<sup>41</sup>

As was also understood by existentialist philosophers, chief among them Sartre and Heidegger, the universe is a possibilization furnace. The simultaneously immanent and transcendent – “transimmanent”<sup>42</sup> – ground of ever-emerging possibilization (*Ermöglichung*) is conceived as *opening for the making-possible*.<sup>43</sup> This cosmological opening may be summarised in a simple modal formula: “It is possible”, in which *It* designates the ultimate being-becoming: “There is a practical consciousness, an ‘I can’ that underlies and precedes the reflective self-consciousness of the ‘I think’, but the ‘I can’ is given and coeval with an ‘it can’”.<sup>44</sup> The Surrealists for instance trusted this source of co-creation as they produced their works of art based on letting go of the obsession of controlling consciousness analytically.

When one embodied living being says and feels, of a desired situation or idea for instance, that *it’s possible*, they are connecting with the modal creal spacetime. The embodied formula is – at least asymptotically – performative: it begins to produce something, it is a potential gateway in the hazardous process of transforming a virtuality into a reality. The felt experience of possibility

creates a bridge between the imaginary and the real. Human instances of this generative feeling abound: think of any founder slowly manifesting, day after day, the metamorphosis and growth of an impression or ideal into a real space of experience. This is not done without analytic and dialectic skills, given the several realistic obstacles, but such skills are not sufficient to understand the cosmopolitical process of world-making.

In order to express the interdependence not only of all things but also of the physical, the psychological and the spiritual realms, the crealectic approach distinguishes three modes of possibility: the *physical possible*, the *psychological possible*, and the *philosophical possible*. The physical possible relates to initial conditions in the analytic realisation of discretizable things and effects via material causality. The psychological possible relates to the dialectic realm and its movements of tensions, dualities, degrees of liberty, alterity or alienation. The third mode, the philosophical possible, originates in the crealectic intelligence process by which ideation as a spiritual property of the universe transmutes (into) coherent, regenerative and eudynamic realities. I believe that attempts at explaining how this transmutation might be brought about constitutes the very history of philosophy itself, from Plato to Hegel et al., from hermeticism to process philosophy. Indeed, for a crealectician, philosophy is not the mere logical analysis of truth conditions, but the self-questioning process of thought regarding its own possibilising and world-making power.

## 5. Beyond Self-Actualization: Imparadisation

The idea of self-actualization has become a trope in the theory and practice of self-development, highlighted in most of psychology textbooks. The concept is usually attributed to Maslow, for whom self-actualizing people are developing the full stature of what they are capable, motivated by self-chosen internal goals and values.<sup>45</sup> Contrary to people who are gratified by rewards that “come from outside the person, not from within”,<sup>46</sup> self-actualizers “no longer strive in the ordinary sense, but rather develop [...]. For them motivation is just character growth, character expression, maturation, and development.”<sup>47</sup> Maslow only considered that self-actualization deserved to be at the top of his famous pyramid of needs if it implied a “transcendence of the ego”: to “see the sacredness in all things”, to be drawn to “mystery and awe”.<sup>48</sup>

The problem with self-transcendence or self-actualization is that these ideas may be dualistic in the sense that society may be dismissed as an irrelevant illusion or a material of secondary order. One of my patients, Oscar, aged 29, started his consultations with already a high sense of the sacred and of spiritual awe, but precisely his problem was that he was too withdrawn from “real life”, finding everyday existence somewhat unreal and unnecessary compared to the divine realm. As a consequence, he was living in a state of disengaged semi-bliss, doing a job that was neither unpleasant, neither fulfilling, incapable of engaging with “normal people” or long-term mundane projects, which he considered unstimulating and unreal. Oscar did feel somewhat “lonely”, “turning in circles” and “lacking creativity”, but he did not really suffer from it (yet),



given what he called his daily access to “It” (the divine). My work with Oscar was to help him become aware that the Real is an important part of the Creal, and that a destiny remains abstract and somewhat adynamic if one does not take the responsibility of engaging with the world. Doing something in the world that reflects a personal ideal allows us to actualize not only the self but also a certain idea of *paradise on earth*. The Crealectic approach is not a mystical (and ultimately illusory) form of withdrawal away from society, but rather a reality-transformation practice. It concerns active and engaged citizens and practitioners rather than meditative solipsists.

Closely tied to the invention of philosophy is the ideal of political flourishing, which seems to be related to the Ancient Greek historical moment where humanity started aspiring to free itself from uncontrolled beliefs, fears, wars, dogmas and lack of mastery over its destiny. With the historical advent of philosophical thinking, humanity potentially ceases to be preoccupied with reactive survival or bliss in some hardly attainable promised land. **Philosophy’s political gift to humanity is the idea of a possible and rational paradise on earth: “Perhaps the most significant heritage Plato left to utopian thought was the conviction that an ideal society was in some measure feasible”.**<sup>49</sup>

I call *imparadising* the individual or collective movement of actualizing a certain idea or desire of paradise on earth. The neologism was invented by Dante in the Canto XXVIII of his poem *Paradiso*, in which the beloved Beatrice engulfs his mind in heaven.<sup>50</sup>

“After the truth against the present life  
Of miserable mortals was unfolded  
By her who doth imparadise my mind<sup>51</sup>

Crealectic imparadisation means that philosophical health is an engaged and active stance which slowly deploys, self-demonstrates and manifests the ideal of an embodied and socially-embedded subject animated by a deep orientation.

## 6. Beyond Meditation and Contemplation: Deep Orientation

Some people might judge that philosophical counseling is a sophisticated form of meditation for argumentative and intellectual westerners. I often ask my patients (who are not all westerners), in between sessions, to contemplate certain ideas or to meditate on certain text; I believe that speculative flights of fancy are healthy for the ecology of the mind, but they are not sufficient in the cultivation of philosophical health. In order to allow for the possibility of a grateful, intersubjective and passionate biography, philosophy as a way of life encourages the individual to define a fundamental orientation.

The highest courage, beyond daily mental liberating exercises, is to define and remain faithful to an overarching existential and spiritual horizon that can guide the embodied person towards her highest destiny.<sup>52</sup> Hadot’s notion of “profound orientation”<sup>53</sup> echoes Kant’s idea of orientation in thinking.<sup>54</sup> My praxis as philosophical counselor also tends to help the patient to

feel less disoriented and slowly approach the verbalized intuition of a personal fundamental direction in life. The very idea of a *way* of life, as well as the notion of orientation, presupposes a future destination, an ideal or vocation to be realized. To be faithful to a deep orientation means not to disregard the future but to act upon it with trust, a form of actualized confidence rather than anxiety, fear or passive hope. The deep orientation of philosophical health is an active care that is anticipatory of the future as well as informed by the past – above all, it is oriented towards the present as a form of attentive engagement with life via a few overarching ideas or values, such as justice, intelligence, harmony, integrity, beauty or understanding.

Deep orientation means participative trust in what we admire. Deep orientation is actively idealistic rather than reductively realistic. Any vision regarding the future of humanity that claims to be grounded on mere realism – whether it is Marxism or current technocracies relying on statistics and artificial intelligence –, not only abolishes the future as open horizon of possibility but also the present as co-creative realm. The philosophical principle of deep orientation calls for co-creation in agency, an involvement with time that generates a desired future that is never detached from the care of practice and the practice of care. A philosophical life-orientation means that we think about the future as co-creative horizon, in which the domestic realm and the cosmological realm are in harmony and correspondence. Yet a profound orientation towards an ideal does not abolish the possibility of creative freedom and improvisation. It is a possibility of wholeness that engages us here and now, conjugates our being in the present tense: we care about our healthy belonging to a universal meta-human and infra-human process and we feel a longing for a grateful expanding, a non-fragmented nor diminished existence blessed with an expanded feeling of possibility. Hadot here also quotes Epicurus: “Life is wasted in procrastination.”<sup>55</sup>

One might be tempted to feel that this crealectic task is overly ambitious: can I ever define clearly what my profound orientation is and if so, why is philosophy a privileged access to it? Philosophical thinking seems to have been a feature of the human species for only three millennia, while life on earth appeared more than three billion years ago, and an evolutionary biologist might conclude that philosophizing is not hardwired in the human brain in the way survivalist, competitive, aggressive, opportunistic or fearful behavior are. What if our so-called profound orientation was simply reproduction or invasion? One answer to such reductionism is simply to observe that humans make decisions that are not directly favoring a reproductive or imperialist agenda, but can be grounded on a transformative search for meaning and awe: “**Such is the human condition. In order to live, mankind must ‘humanize’ the world**”.<sup>56</sup>

To achieve well-being, one cannot be merely preoccupied with reproductive survival, territorial conquest or posthumous bliss in an otherworldly paradise. From Plato to Nietzsche, philosophers tend to suggest that philosophy could help us to realize a joyful, meaningful and fulfilling social life, here on our planet, among humans and not in a post-mortem heaven. Civic paradise on earth for the many can in fact be seen as the collective orientation of philosophy. This has to do with the drive to understand social life *sub specie aeternitatis*. Philosophy is “held to be

an exercise consisting in learning to regard both society and the individuals who comprise it from the point of view of universality.”<sup>57</sup>

Yet, philosophizing as a way of life, by definition, means to be constantly engaged in particular worlds and not only in the eternal or universal; our orientation is confronted with what may be interpreted as obstacles or situations of crisis, in which a critical assessment needs to be combined with a capacity for renewal or regeneration, in order to avoid disorientation (which is too often labelled *depression*). I sometimes work with my patients on the tailoring of a personal motto, a formulation that encapsulates their deep orientation in a sentence or a few words. For instance, Joan of Arc’s notorious motto was “in the name of the King in the Sky”. This personal mantra gave her the strength to shape a historic biography in which she was able to challenge or lead earthly kings toward her sense of imparadisation. Through philosophy, the universal – a higher conceptual power, value, idea or ideal – shapes our experience of the particular, while the particular – the empirical tests and challenges of life – may in turn give flesh and autobiographical consistency to a worldview. In other words, orientation in life and in thinking must become one. As above, so below.

## 7. Beyond Hedonia and Eudaimonia: Eudynamia

Current approaches to well-being can be divided into two overarching streams: subjective well-being (SWB) and philosophy as a way of life (PWL). For the sake of simplicity, we may label the first current *hedonic* and the second *eudaimonic*. “Subjective well-being”<sup>58</sup> is often interpreted to mean “experiencing a high level of positive affect, a low level of negative affect, and a high degree of satisfaction.”<sup>59</sup> Because people’s reports of being happy and feeling satisfaction or following pleasures in life does not imply that their life is psychically, psychologically and philosophically balanced, the philosophical health perspective is often concerned with actualizing one’s highest virtues, in the notorious spirit of what Aristotle called *eudaimonia* in Book 1 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

*Eudaimonia* is “an activity (*energeia*) that engages and deploys the excellence (*arete*) of a being capable of thought.”<sup>60</sup> This means that human flourishing cannot be only sensual, a feeling of bliss, but needs to be accompanied by *theoria* or philosophical contemplation. For the Greeks, this meant to be inspired by a divine power (*daimon*), described by Plato in the *Republic* as “the guardian of a man’s life” or “the fulfiller of a man’s choices”.<sup>61</sup> The Greek concept of *eudaimonia* suggested that the connection between a human and a personal divinity is necessary in the conduct of a good life, in a way that seems to anticipate later Christian doctrines of predestination. However, from the Crealectic point of view, a polytheist or animist multiplication of personal divinities seems unnecessarily complicated. A relation to the sublime or metaphysical divine is indeed an important aspect of crealectic philosophical health, but the monism of the Creal as absolute possibility seems sufficient to provide for an element of immanent multiplicity and an element of transcendence. This is why in my practice I prefer to refer, rather than *eudaimonia*, to the principle of *eudynamia*, which is based on the Greek term *dynamis* signifying power, potential,

virtual, and possible. If *eudaimonia* means to have a good relationship with our personal daimon, *eudynamia* means to have a good relationship with the possible.

The word *eudynamia* appeared sporadically in the German medical corpus of the first half of the eighteenth century, for example in the encyclopaedia of medicine published by Georg Friedrich Most, where it is defined as “good health, good mixture of fluids”.<sup>62</sup> In 1843, a dictionary of Medicine published in Vienna explains the entry Eudynamia with a one-word definition: *Wohlkräftigkeit*.<sup>63</sup> The German compound *Wohlkräftigkeit* can be translated into English as good health, well-being, and powerfulness. *Eudynamie* was also used in eighteenth-century French to describe the physiological and vitalist equilibrium of physical functions. However, this lexicology is two hundred years old, and the eudynamic signifier has been since the second half of the nineteenth century abandoned by medical language; I propose to resuscitate *eudynamia* from the cemetery of words in order to reinvest it with a more holistic meaning, that of a healthy access to the realm of ultimate possibility. A eudynamic system or individual is one that grows and unfolds in such a way that its creative relationship to the possible remains open, meaningful and joyful.

## Conclusion: From Mental Health to Mental Heroism

Far from the popular cliché of the philosophizing person as one who renounces social life and fully represses passion or ambition, philosophy can revitalize our way of life, make it thriving and multidimensional, an eudynamic adventure toward a **fulfilling of one’s highest destiny**. This path necessitates a form of courage that ancient philosophers compared to a heroic realization of wisdom:

The sage would thus be the man capable of living on both planes: inserted perfectly into daily life, like Pyrrho, and yet immersed in the cosmos; dedicated to the service of men, and yet perfectly free in his interior life; conscious and yet peaceful; never forgetting the unique essential; and finally, and above all, faithful to the point of heroism to the purity of moral conscience, without which life would no longer be worth living. This is what the philosopher must try to actualize [*réaliser*].<sup>64</sup>

Such an ideal was according to Hadot best exemplified in a historical and philosophical model, Socrates. The Socratic “unique essential” is the philosophical “freedom” of the “soul” in its respect for a spiritual principle that can guide the secular self.<sup>65</sup>

The Socratic ethos remains an inspiring model in our fragmented and contradictory global environments, Plato’s cave still being filled with a cacophony of contradictory (digital) opinions and illusions, while social networks amplify the emotional contagion of humanity’s “sad passions”. In order to actualize its heroic program of healthy living, philosophy needs to engage with its desire to be both spiritual and practical; yet “healthy reason”<sup>66</sup> cannot be only common sense: it takes extreme individual courage to think and henceforth act as independently, rationally, creatively and coherently as possible on a daily basis. The philosophical path to healthy wisdom

pertains to mental heroism because, as exemplified by Socrates, truth is never achieved once and for all; it is a process that demands a daily personal effort above normality.<sup>67</sup>

Kant, in his *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*, formulated the heroic ideal of philosophical health along three maxims:

*Wisdom*, as the idea of a practical use of reason that is perfectly law-like, is no doubt too much to demand of human beings. But also, not even the slightest degree of wisdom can be poured into a man by others; rather he must bring it forth from himself. The precept for reaching it contains three leading maxims: (1) Think for oneself, (2) Think into the place of the other (in communication with human beings), (3) Always think consistently with oneself.<sup>68</sup>

Such was according to Kant the heroic ideal of the Enlightenment, also expressed in his famous imperative against mental “cowardice” and existential “immaturity”: “*sapere aude!*”, dare to know.<sup>69</sup> This *dare to know* suggests a *dare to act* (or to refrain from reaction in some circumstances).

Despite the seductive and eminently useful aspect of formulating the ethos of philosophical heroism in the form of law-like maxims or mottos, it is however important to remember that philosophy cannot merely consist of a collection of imperatives facilitating the avoidance of being corrupted by, for example, foolishness, cowardice, adversity, immaturity, greed, resentment or social mimicry. The healthy crealectician is dedicated to the service of beings (**inclusive of one’s own being**), which means that personal philosophical health goes along with an encouraging attitude towards the other, notwithstanding the momentary bad influences and sporadic mental contagions that such a practice of care may imply. Mental heroism is not only about being able to resist resiliently and inflexibly, it also about intersubjective attention, hence **the need for Kant’s maxim of intellectual empathy**: Think into the place of the other. To which crealectics would add: Think into the place of the *Other* with a capital *O(h)!*, that creative cosmic sublimity, the awe-inspiring Creal. Both attitudes require not only courage and imagination, but also a certain solidity of character, which means that philosophical practice is not a sinecure that can be improvised but a difficult profession, one that needs persistent theoretical and practical training.

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