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Philosophy as a Way of Life and Psychotherapy[1]

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1. Introduction

In ancient world, philosophy transcended mere academic study, embodying a mode of existence that aimed to transform the whole of the practitioner's life (Sharpe and Ure 2021). Philosophy was not only a discipline but also a way of life. More recently, the French philosopher Pierre Hadot (1992, 1995, 2002) has contributed to a resurgence of interest in ancient philosophies and reinvigorated the meta-philosophical concept of *philosophy as a way of life* (PWL). Hadot (1995) noted that many ancient philosophical schools, such as the Epicureans, Sceptics, and Stoics, viewed philosophy as 'the art of living' (*technē tou biou*).

In addition to ancient philosophy being an art of living, it also had a *therapeutic agenda*. Hadot (1995, 107) points out that ancient philosophy "presented itself as a therapeutic, intended to cure mankind's anguish." Scholars like Martha Nussbaum (1994) and Michael Foucault (1988) have also highlighted the Greco-Roman philosophical schools therapeutic practices, known as *therapeia tēs psuchē*, or 'cure of the soul,' and these ancient schools "all conceived of philosophy as a way of addressing the most painful problems of human life" (Nussbaum 1994, 3). The Greco-Roman therapeutic model of philosophy conceived of "the philosopher as a compassionate physician whose arts could heal many pervasive types of human suffering" (Nussbaum 1994, 3). According to Nussbaum (1994, 15) all of the three major Hellenistic schools, irrespective of their differences, would accept the Epicurean definition of philosophy as "an activity that secures the flourishing [*eudaimön*] life by arguments and reasonings."

The therapeutic agenda of these ancient schools aligns with the broader goals of modern psychotherapy *ante litteram*, and philosophy clearly predates psychotherapy as a way of addressing some of the most disturbing and painful problems of human life (Gill 1985; Robertson 2010; Radden 2001; Raabe 2014). Apart from the philosophical therapy of the ancients as a 'proto-psychotherapy,' and as a way of addressing the problems of human life, many contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches have been significantly informed by the writings of philosophers (both ancient and modern). For example, the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1865-1939) began his intellectual life with a passion for philosophy, and in a letter to a friend in 1885, he wrote that "under Brentano's fruitful influence" he had decided to take his PhD in philosophy and zoology (Boehlich 1990, 95). The influence of various philosophers on Freud's thoughts is far too vast to fully account for, however, some

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pertinent examples include Freud's debt to the German philosopher Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) 'transcendental logic,' which presents the claim that an individual's understanding is equipped with "a set of *a priori* concepts or categories… which are required for knowledge of an object or objective realm" (Honderich 1995, 878). For Freud, the investigation of the troubled mind of a patient would necessarily include a search for those *a priori* concepts or categories on which the client's thinking and behavior has come to be based. According to Peter Raabe (2014), in his book *Philosophy's Role in Counseling and Psychotherapy,* Freud borrowed the concepts of his tripartite divide of the mind from the ancient philosopher Plato (428-348 BCE). Freud's concepts of 'id, (*das Es*)' 'ego (*das Ich*),' and 'super ego (*das Über-Ich*)' coincide with Plato's much earlier conceptualization of 'appetitive,' 'rational,' and 'spirited' parts of the soul or mind. Freud was the originator of the concept of a dynamic unconscious, but he did not invent the concept of an unconscious *per se*. Prior to him, Herman von Helmhotz (1821–1894), Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Eduard von Hartman (1842–1906), and J. F. Herbart (1776–1841) have all argued for the unconscious (Raabe 2014). Freud is greatly indebted to variety of philosophers, however, by the 1920s, he had obscured his philosophical influences behind a natural scientific model.[3]

At the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, philosophical influences on the emerging field of psychology and psychiatric thought were numerous (Bergo 2001; Radden 2001; Raabe 2014). However, there was a distancing from philosophy after the Second World War, when psychotherapists "began to accept, with little question, medical constructions of distress and disorder. These two trends—the narrowing of epistemologies and the focus on disorder—have characterized mainstream psychology" (Ballou and Brown 2002, xix–xx).

The influence of philosophy on psychology and contemporary psychotherapy is both substantial and well documented (Radden 2004; Fulford et al. 2013; Raabe 2014). However, there is a *distinction*, though not a clearly drawn demarcation, between the broader influence of philosophy on psychotherapy, and the notion of '*philosophy as therapy*' in the context of modern psychotherapy. The notion of philosophy *as* therapy, viz. as 'an art of life' (as comparable to other techniques or arts of life) constitutes the view that 'doing' philosophy is an art that is about the pursuit of logical validity, intellectual coherence, and truth—that delivers freedom from the tyranny of custom and convention, creating a community of beings who can take charge of their own life story, as well as exercise command over their own thought (Nussbaum 1994).

In this presentation I will focus on the notion of 'philosophy as therapy' and explore the relationship between Hadot's meta-philosophical concept of PWL and modern psychotherapy. It is beyond the scope of this presentation to provide an overview of the substantive influence of philosophy on psychotherapy. For the purpose of this presentation, I will primarily focus on Hadot's (1995, 2002) view of ancient philosophy being a PWL and its therapeutic agenda, as well as Martha Nussbaum's (1994) argument, presented in her book *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics,* that ancient philosophy principally constitutes a form of therapy, as well as the position offered by Michel Foucault (1988), who suggested that we ought conceptualize Socrates along with Hellenistic and Roman thought in the context of self-care or 'care of the self.'[4]

This presentation is divided into three parts. After the introduction, the second part examines Hadot's notion of 'spiritual exercises.' The third part surveys the view of philosophy as a distinct form of therapy or *therapeia*, as a *thread* that runs through ancient, classical and modern philosophy (the aim is not to be

[3] Many contemporary psychotherapists assume that Freud was essentially the first psychotherapist. Yet, Freud not only contended with contemporaneous figures such as Paul Dubois (1909), but also underwent training in hypnotic psychotherapy. Hypnotic psychotherapy itself can be traced back over fifty years prior to the advent of psychoanalysis, specifically in 1841, when the Scottish surgeon James Braid first endeavored to adapt the therapeutic methodologies of Mesmerism through the lens of Scottish realist philosophy of mind (Robertson 2009).

[4] A meta-philosophical study by John Sellars (2009) together with a therapeutic model developed by Konrad Baninki (2015) has been suggested to provide a framework for potential reconciliation between the three accounts of ancient philosophy offered by Hadot, Nussbaum and Foucault.

comprehensive but merely to highlight the continuity). The conclusion, and final part, explores how the meta-philosophy of PWL, when applied as a meta-therapeutic and a meta-paradigmatic framework, can inform contemporary psychotherapy, as part of an interdisciplinary approach, which as I will suggest may be beneficial to both the emerging field of PWL and psychotherapy theory and practice—in addressing *perennial* issues of human suffering and how to live the good life.

In the next part, I will discuss Hadot's notion of 'spiritual exercises' as being central to the *therapeutic agenda* of ancient philosophy and his conceptualization of PWL. This will be helpful in our exploration and analysis of the relationship between the meta-philosophical construct of PWL and contemporary psychotherapy theory and practice. The risk in such an analysis would be to oversimplify the relationship by adopting too broad a definition of PWL and doggedly transpose the insights of ancient philosophers onto present-day discourses and therapeutic interventions. As Konrad Baniki (2015) observes any unambiguous transference of ancient philosophical paradigms to modern contexts is an assumption that is far from being self-evident.[5]

2. Philosophy as a Way of Life and Spiritual Exercises

The emergence of the meta-philosophical concept of PWL can be traced back to Hadot's hermeneutic program, which aims to interpret ancient philosophical texts.[6] Hadot (1995, 83) states that in the ancient world the "philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level, but on that of the self and of being." Hadot argued that many sections of these ancient texts, such as Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, may seem puzzling when approached with contemporary meta-philosophical assumptions that prioritize argumentation or knowledge acquisition. Yet, Hadot (1995, 2002) suggests that these texts reveal their insights when understood as incorporating what he terms "spiritual exercises" (*exercitia spiritualia*).

The aim of these ancient texts is to promote "a conversion, a transformation of one's way of being and living, and a quest for wisdom" (Hadot 1995, 275). This conversion is facilitated through spiritual exercises that characterize the fundamentals of ancient philosophy as *a way of life*. Spiritual exercises, as defined by Hadot, and later elaborated upon by Foucault (1988) in his conception of 'technologies of the self,' involve various cognitive, mnemonic, imaginative, rhetorical, or physical activities consciously selected by an individual for the purpose of bringing about transformative changes in perception, desire, emotions, or thought. Ancient philosophers used a broad toolbox, or *armamentarium*, of philosophical–psychotherapeutic practices resembling those found in modern psychotherapy (Cavanna 2019).

For the ancient Greeks and Romans, engaging in philosophy involved selecting a particular philosophical school and embracing its way of life. Hadot (2002, 3) writes; "The philosophical school…demands from the individual a total change of lifestyle, a conversion of one's entire being, and…a…desire to be and live in a certain way." Each school (such as the Academy, Lyceum, Stoic porch, and Epicurean Garden) offered a distinct set of spiritual exercises that aligned with their respective concepts of wisdom, under the guidance of mentors who provided pedagogical support (Sharpe and Ure 2021). In most of these philosophical traditions, the concept of a cosmic arrangement served as the foundation for spiritual exercises, where these exercises aimed to align the soul with this universal order. However, the Epicureans diverged significantly from this view, as they rejected the notion of a universal rationale or cosmic structure, however the Epicureans did make use of spiritual

[5] Baniki (2015) observes that the feasibility to which ancient philosophical insights are applicable to contemporary discussions, pertains to the fundamental definitional attributes of what we collectively designate as 'philosophy,' and involves inquiry into whether the entire spectrum of phenomena encompassed by our philosophical heritage can be regarded as a cohesive entity or rather as a diverse array of occasionally conflicting projects. The prevailing normative lens through which ancient thought is presently perceived is of taken to be of interest to the extent that it can function as a repository of philosophical propositions and doctrines. However, this prevailing perspective on ancient philosophy is not by any means singular. There exist philosophers (like those in this Handbook) that engage in earnest with ancient meta-philosophical concepts to deliberate on the pragmatic essence of ancient philosophy.

[6] Matthew Sharpe and Micheal Ure (2021) observe that Hadot's historical analysis of ancient philosophy increasingly critiques not modern philosophy or 'modernity' per se, but the way philosophy, since the medieval era, has forsaken its original aim of nurturing a *bios,* or way of life.

exercises, but as Hadot (1995, 208) noted that "these practices are not based on the norms of nature or universal reason."

Any current attempt to *revive* these ancient spiritual exercises faces a significant obstacle in the absence of a shared belief in a cosmos. Unlike the Stoics and Platonists, who saw the universe as infused with reason and something to imitate, contemporary society perceives the universe as random, lacking any purpose or order—the cosmos is now disenchanted. As the physicist Steven Weinberg (1993, 154) reasons, the "more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless." In many ways, contemporary psychotherapy, especially existential psychotherapy (Cooper 2003), presents an attempt to confront this disenchantment—and techniques of modern psychotherapy now constitute our spiritual exercises. While Hadot (2002) acknowledges the continued relevance of spiritual exercises in the modern era, he laments that something has been lost—pointing to a loss of connection with something greater.

To understand the essence of spiritual exercises, and to gain insight into the relationship between meta-philosophical construct of PWL and contemporary psychotherapeutic interventions, we can explore two central themes in Hadot's (1995) work *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. The first theme revolves around the importance of focusing on the present moment, which Hadot (1995, 84) identifies as the "key to spiritual exercises." The second, concerns adopting a broader perspective on the world, where "philosophy signified the attempt to raise up mankind from individuality and particularity to universality and objectivity" (Hadot 1995, 242). Both belong to a single conception, being one of a 'return to the self.' Hadot (1995, 103) states that "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."

Joseph Sen (1995, 24) noted in his analysis of the aesthetic analogy of additive versus subtractive sculpture in ancient ethics, that Plotinus views the inner self as the result of a process of subtraction, where the "ideal psychic state is not something to be newly made or created but is experienced with the removal of those accretions which have hidden and thus prevented a realization of the self which we already are." According to Hadot, Plotinus compared this inward reflection of subtraction to the work of a sculptor, the sculpting away at a block of marble to reveal the hidden statue within.

For this reason, Hadot (1992) criticizes Foucault's (1988) interpretation of ancient exercises as the cultivation of the self through techniques. Hadot claims Foucault misunderstands the Plotinian metaphor, seeing it as promoting an exaggerated aestheticism by means of which one might construct the personality, by way of the same sculptural metaphor, additively. Moreover, Hadot also criticized Foucault for limiting his interpretation of the ancient spiritual exercises to self-improvement techniques, rather than understanding them as a quest for the universal. It is "difficult to accept that the philosophical practice of the Stoics and Platonists was nothing but a relationship to one's self…the feeling of belonging to a whole is an essential element…Such a cosmic perspective transforms the feeling one has of oneself" (Hadot 1995, 208). According to Hadot, the philosophical practices of ancient schools emphasized a sense of belonging to a greater whole, which necessarily holds profound sway over one's own self-concept.[7]

The concept of the returning to the self is not exclusive to Western philosophy, but also finds significance in the spiritual practices of Eastern philosophy. Wilhelm Halbfass (1991) noted that philosophers in the Vedānta use the term *svāsthya* to refer to a soteriological goal involving the removal of obstacles that distance us from an appreciation of our underlying self.

[7] The notion of how one's self-concept is positively altered by the sense of belonging to a greater whole is a central tenant of the philosophy of the Twelve-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous (Du Plessis 2022).

The part to follow considers the notion of philosophy as a distinct form of therapy or *therapeia* as a *thread* that runs through ancient, classical and modern philosophy. My aim is not to be comprehensive but merely to highlight the continuity.

3. Philosophy as *Therapeia*

The idea of viewing philosophy as in some way therapeutic is not unfamiliar to contemporary philosophers, as it was famously advocated for by Ludwig Wittgenstein in the twentieth century. In his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953, §133) he describes the role of philosophy as akin to providing therapy for itself, or at the very least, acted as a therapy for confused thoughts. Yet the ancient notion of philosophy *as therapy* is quite different from the Wittgensteinian model. Before Wittgenstein, a series of philosophers viewed philosophy as a form of psychological therapy; not therapy for the activity of philosophy itself, but rather as a means to address mental disturbances and improve our lives.[8]

Epicurus (341–271 BCE) famously expressed his therapeutic conception of philosophy as a remedy for the troubles of the human soul in the following way: "Empty are the words of that philosopher who offers therapy for no human suffering. For just as there is no use in medical expertise if it does not give therapy for bodily diseases, so too there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the suffering of the soul" (cited in Long and Sedley, 1987,155). Richard Sorabji (2000) reasons that this therapeutic concept of philosophy can be found across a vast spectrum of Western philosophical traditions, including medieval scholasticism. Similarly, Matthew Sharpe and Michael Ure (2021) in their book *Philosophy as a Way of Life: History, Dimensions, Directions* highlights that the therapeutic agenda of PWL is an idea that can be found through the history Western philosophy, from the Socrates and other Hellenistic philosophers, via the medievals, to the Renaissance and Enlightenment philosophers, to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Foucault and Hadot. Embracing the idea of philosophy as *therapeia* provides a new perspective on the history of philosophy, revealing hidden continuities between ancient, medieval, and modern philosophical thought that may have been overlooked (Sorabji 2000).

Nussbaum (1994) notes that initially the term *therapeia* pertained more to tending to the mind, often referred to as the 'soul' by ancient thinkers, rather than physical therapy for the body, a longstanding notion that philosophical discourse serves as a remedy for soul ailments, akin to medical treatment for bodily afflictions. Ancient philosophy's assertion as the therapeutic 'art of life' suggests its *unique* therapeutic ability to address the suffering of individuals more comprehensively than other approaches. Nussbaum (1994, 78) further highlights that the three Hellenistic schools, the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Sceptics, "see the goal of philosophy as a transformation of the inner world of belief and desire through the use of rational argument." Despite their disagreements these schools shared a fundamental belief, namely a "compassionate 'medical' philosophy"—that is, philosophy's unique ability applied therapeutically specifically to the alleviation of human mental suffering (Nussbaum 1994, 40).

Medical comparisons are frequently utilized both in Buddhist dharma and Hellenistic philosophy, the most fundamental form can be articulated as follows: just as medicine treats physical ailments and fosters bodily well-being, Buddhist dharma or Hellenistic philosophy addresses mental ailments and promotes mental well-being.[9] Within the Pāli Canon, *nirvana* is depicted as a form of health, with the Buddha being likened to a doctor aiding individuals in achieving it (Halbfass 1991).

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[8] For a collection of studies on this topic see Clare Carlisle and Jonardon Ganeri, eds, *Philosophy as Therapeia*, Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 66 (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[9] Hellenistic and Buddhist philosophies are briefly compared in Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* (Allsworth Press, 2002), 596–7.

3.1 Historical Overview

The part to follow provides a brief historical overview of philosophy as *therapeia* as an idea that runs through ancient, classical, and modern Western philosophy. Although this lies beyond scope, it is necessary to highlight the continuity of this idea, starting with modern philosophy by providing some brief examples of philosophers who viewed 'doing' philosophy as therapeutic.

We find the idea of philosophy having a therapeutic role throughout the work of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) 'middle-period' (1872-1882) writings. Horst Hutter (2006), who articulates Nietzsche's philosophy through the lens of Hadot's account of Hellenistic philosophies as arts of living, in his book *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and its Ascetic Practices*, argues that by understanding Nietzsche's books as a means of self-transformation, we can make sense of his philosophy. He notes that Nietzsche philosophical project can be viewed 'as therapy,' and as an ensemble of spiritual exercises and techniques of *askesis* (self-transformation).[10] This is based on the premise that Nietzsche's philosophy "is a kind of eudaimonistic teaching that aims at a healing of individuals and the cultures they inhabit" and that he "believed that philosophy is something to be lived rather than to be stated and thought" (Hutter 2006, 16). Michael Ure (2008, 4), in his book *Nietzsche's Therapy: Self-cultivation in the Middle Works*, succinctly articulates the Nietzschean view of philosophy's import, stating that it "is a way of transforming one's life, and so it is how one lives and dies that is the measure of the value of philosophy." Moreover, Ure (2008) notes that Foucault viewed Nietzsche as part of a group of nineteenth-century German philosophers whose goal was to revive the Greco-Roman model of philosophy as an art of living.

Herman De Dijn (2010) notes that the notion of philosophy as therapy shapes the philosophical project of the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza's (1623-1677) *Ethics*, and articulated in his earlier text, the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. Spinoza posits that unhappiness arises from a misinterpretation of what is good or bad, and that a remedy is necessary for this, similar to the way in which a physically ill individual requires a remedy. He suggests that this remedy commences with the study of philosophy, particularly focusing on the philosophy of nature.

The concept of philosophy as therapy was also significant in the Renaissance, with Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374) providing a detailed analysis in his work *Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul* (1991). Petrarch warns that we should be wary of both good and bad fortune, a position borrowed from the Stoic Seneca. In the introduction to his work, Petrarch suggests that human suffering is not caused by external circumstances, but by our own perceptions of events. Moreover, he dismisses the 'sterility' of scholasticism and argues that true philosophy teaches the steps and path to well-being (Panizza 1991, 39-65).

The idea of philosophy as a remedy for the soul, derived from Socrates of Athens (470–399 BCE), became widely accepted during the Hellenistic era. Upon entering Roman society, Hellenistic philosophies introduced a series of psychological methods designed to maintain or restore mental well-being, for example, the Stoic *armamentarium* resonated particularly well with the Roman ethos, spreading across the Roman domain (Sellars, 2009). Socrates established the groundwork for the subsequent philosophical schools and philosophical-psychotherapeutics. In contrast to those that came before him, he primarily concentrated on ethics, rather than the study of nature. According to Socrates, the central focus of philosophy was the behavior and choices of human existence, and how can we live a good human life (Sharpe and Ure 2021; Kramer 2021). Let us now turn to the main three Hellenistic schools.

Epicurus is well-known for highlighting in this regard that the utterances of a philosopher are devoid of significance if they fail to alleviate any human distress. While one of the later Epicureans, Philodemus, providing his own precis of the Epicurean method of attaining happiness as the fourfold remedy (*tetrapharmakos*) that captured the essence of Epicurean philosophy (Annas 2000). In Epicurean philosophy, the focus is placed

[10] For a more comprehensive discussion and as well as a critique of this position see Faustino, Marta, 2017. "Nietzsche's Therapy of Therapy," *Nietzsche-Studien* 46 (1): 82-104.

not merely on the seeking of pleasure; rather, the primary concern instead lies in the avoidance of pain, where psychological suffering has a significantly more detrimental impact than does physical suffering. The primary objective of Epicurean philosophy is to provide solutions to or healing for mental suffering, particularly addressing anxiety, which must be conquered to achieve the Epicurean objective of tranquility (*ataraxia*). This objective was to be accomplished through the practical comprehension of nature that would diminish our fear of death and the deities, demonstrating that the agony of unmet desires could be eased by limiting ourselves to more easily fulfilled natural and essential desires (Long and Sedley 1987).

The fundamental ethical assertion of the Stoics revolved around the idea that one should align one's life with the natural world. It promoted the idea that the possession of 'externals' such as good health or wealth constitutes no prerequisite for happiness (Stephens 2007). Given that the cosmos operates under the governance of reason, every manner of occurrence is indeed deemed to be ultimately beneficial (Cavanna 2019). Consequently, whether an individual achieves these 'externals' or not ought to be embraced as being in their own best interest. While there is typically a rationale for pursuing these 'externals', their loss should not instill neither fear or distress. Conventional emotions, such as fear, anger, and sorrow are considered erroneous assumptions, respectively of an external good, and its absence as bad. Individuals who are entirely rational and virtuous would not fall into these misconceptions, and consequently, would be devoid of emotions such as anger; instead leading a tranquil existence (Sellars 2009). Some of these ideas indeed laid the foundation for modern psychotherapy.[11]

As expounded by Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrhonian Scepticism posited that for every conceivable belief, there exists an equally cogent argument in its favor, as well as against it. Upon realization of this, the natural consequence is the suspension of all beliefs leading to a state of tranquility. Among these beliefs are considerations regarding the moral value of things. By abstaining from labeling anything as good or bad, it is possible to avoid distress over unattained goods or unwanted possessions (Gill 1985). Consequently, while upholding the suspension of beliefs concerning the doctrines of 'dogmatic' philosophers such as the Epicureans and Stoics, the Pyrrhonian Sceptics asserted that they accomplish what these dogmatists merely pledge, viz. a

[11] At the beginning of the twentieth century a rational approach to psychotherapy began emerging, which held that many emotional and psychosomatic problems were caused by negative self-talk or autosuggestions, that may be amenable to rational disputation. Its leading proponent, the Swiss neuropathologist Paul Dubois (1848-1919), employed Socratic questioning with his patients and taught them the basic principles of a Socratic and Stoic philosophy of life (Raabe 2014). Indeed, he declared that if "we eliminate from ancient writings a few allusions that gave them local colour, we shall find the ideas of Socrates, Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius absolutely modern and applicable to our times" (Dubois 1909, 108–109). However, by the middle of the 20th century, rational psychotherapy was temporarily eclipsed in popularity by Freudian psychoanalysis.

Yet, psychotherapists began to rediscover Stoic principles from the 1950s onward through the writings of Albert Ellis (1958, 1962), through what would become known as rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT). Despite the similarity of his approach to that of early rational psychotherapists such as Dubois, Ellis was initially unaware of their writings. In Ellis' (1962) book, *Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy,* he famously explained the central premise of this emerging cognitive approach to psychotherapy, namely that emotional disturbances, and associated symptoms, are not caused by external events, as people tend to assume, but mainly by our irrational beliefs about such events. However, Ellis (1962, 54) also explained that it was far from being a new idea: "This principle, which I have inducted from many psychotherapeutic sessions with scores of patients during the last several years, was originally discovered and stated by the ancient Stoic philosophers, especially Zeno of Citium (the founder of the school), Chrysippus, Panaetius of Rhodes (who introduced Stoicism into Rome), Cicero [sic], Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius."

Mainly through Ellis' writings, Stoic principles continued to influence Aaron T. Beck, the founder of cognitive therapy. Beck (1973) opened his first book on cognitive therapy, *Cognitive Therapy and The Emotional Disorders,* by describing how his new style of therapy was founded upon the emerging consensus among researchers that cognitions play a central role in determining our emotions. Then, like Ellis, he added: "Nevertheless, the philosophical underpinnings go back thousands of years, certainly to the time of the Stoics, who considered man's conceptions (or misconceptions) of events rather than the events themselves as the key to his emotional turmoil" (Beck 1976, 3). Nearly two decades after Ellis had first raised the foundational claim, Beck and colleagues, in their groundbreaking treatment manual for clinical depression, *Cognitive Therapy for Depression,* restated this claim: "The philosophical origins of cognitive therapy can be traced back to the Stoic philosophers, particularly Zeno of Citium (fourth century B.C.), Chrysippus, Cicero [sic], Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius" (Beck et al. 1979, 8).

peaceful existence. When questioned about how to live while holding all beliefs in abeyance, the Sceptics provided a simple answer: this is done by adhering to 'everyday observances,' regardless of their truth (Annas 2000).

4. Conclusion: Philosophy as a Way of Life as a Meta-therapeutic Framework

As discussed, philosophy predates psychotherapy as a means of addressing human problems, and a substantive and well-document number of psychotherapeutic approaches are influenced by philosophical writing. However, there is a distinction, if not a clear demarcation, between the influence of philosophy on psychotherapy and the notion of 'philosophy as therapy.'

There are current forms of psychotherapy that promote elements of the meta-philosophy of PWL and that are explicitly philosophical, some examples are, rational emotive behavior therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, existential therapy, Viktor Frankl's logotherapy, Medard Boss' Daseinsanalysis, and Otto Rank's will therapy, but not many, to the best of my knowledge, that promote a *way of being* for their *clients* that are aligned with PWL principles and offers a supportive community, rather than merely informing therapeutic techniques.

In the final part, I will look at some ways and potential benefits of the meta-philosophical construct of PWL applied to modern psychotherapy theory and practice as part of an interdisciplinary project. This is by no means comprehensive but aims at highlight conceivable future research on the topic. I will briefly explore how PWL may provide a meta-paradigmatic and meta-therapeutic framework, (1) which can inform psychotherapeutic techniques that address irrational beliefs, mitigating fragmentation anxiety, and may assist in developing novel philosophical-oriented psychotherapies, (2) as well as developing classification systems for various form of philosophical therapies; (3) and could can assist with normative questions often raised in psychotherapy that science cannot adequately answer, like how to live the good life.

The notion of PWL as meta-paradigmatic and meta-therapeutic framework may have the potential to inform psychotherapeutic techniques that address irrational beliefs in mitigation of fragmentation anxiety, when in a process of giving up maladaptive belief systems. According to Heinz Kohut (1971, 1977), a psychoanalyst best known for his development of 'self psychology' (an influential school of thought within psychodynamic and psychoanalytic theory), fragmentation anxiety may emerge at crucial moments of psychic change, when an existing maladaptive self-object organization is about to be relinquished. Irrational systems of belief may be tenaciously retained because it structures the person's experience, where a threat to the coherence of their worldview is experienced as a direct attack on their self-concept and identity, conjuring up powerful archaic fears of psychic fragmentation and annihilation. It must be noted that the fear of psychic fragmentation and annihilation is a universal human phenomenon, experienced unconsciously as a constant threat. Taking into consideration the self-object functions provided by irrational belief systems and the role these play in maintaining psychological homeostasis of the self, it becomes apparent that *more* is needed in interventionary terms than merely dismantling the flawed logic of an individual's belief system. In short, psychotherapies informed by PWL may provide a new sources of self-object experiences, for example, by providing guiding virtues and supportive philosophical framework or *Weltanschauung*—thus irrational beliefs are slowly 'replaced' by new self-object experiences that are informed by guiding virtues and a supportive philosophy, that may assist clients slowly change maladaptive beliefs for more adaptive beliefs without significant threat to the stability of the self.[12] Thus, PWL as a meta-paradigmatic and meta-therapeutic framework could assist in developing novel philosophically-oriented psychotherapies that address the flawed logic of irrational beliefs.

[12] An example of such an intervention is logic-based therapy (LBT), a philosophical version of REBT, which is not a psychotherapy, but a philosophical counseling modality developed by American philosopher Elliot Cohen (2021). LBT focuses on the refutation of logical fallacies, like other cognitive-behavioral approaches, but it is differentiated from these approaches by its uniquely philosophical approach. In LBT methodology, fallacies have an associated guiding virtue which serves as an antidote to irrational premises in practical reasoning. This then points the way for choosing a philosophical perspective or uplifting philosophy for promoting the guiding virtue—which provide a rational framework for adressing problems of living.

In his article, "Philosophy as Therapy: Towards a Conceptual Model," Baniki (2014) advances a comprehensive model applicable to all manifestations of philosophical therapy. He posits that the restoration of well-being through a philosophical approach to treatment—where well-being is defined as an individual's capacity to attain his or her 'vital goals'—serves as a general elucidation of philosophical therapy. Historically, the discipline of philosophy has undertaken significant journeys towards 'vital goals,' particularly when it engaged in a soteriological endeavor that was often intricately linked with religious frameworks. Consequently, one can delineate, albeit in a very rudimentary classification, there are two contradictory goals of philosophical therapy: (1) A strategy which upgrades vital goals/human flourishing and attempts to cope with suffering; and (2) a strategy which, conversely, devaluates earthly life and aims at the liberation from suffering. Philosophical traditions such as Buddhism, Platonism, and Gnosticism exemplify this latter strategy, collectively they disparage materialistic desires.[13] Baniki (2014) employ the term 'retreat-oriented' philosophical therapies to describe this modality of therapy, in contrast to 'life-affirming' philosophical therapies. Bruno Contestabile (2014) points out that life-affirming and retreat-oriented philosophies engage in a continuous struggle for interpretative dominance—with life-affirmation possessing a discernible advantage for evident reasons. Yet, both life-affirming and retreat-oriented therapies converge on the shared objective of alleviating or diminishing suffering. The imperative to survive and the struggle against suffering not only contend across cultures but also within the individual psyche. There exists a historical trajectory from normative therapies (such as Buddhism and Stoicism) to more individualized therapeutic approaches (as seen in the works of Freud). It is evident that in antiquity, the primary peril lay in being led astray by passion, whereas therapeutic paradigms proposed by Freud and other depth-psychologists elucidate that the suppression of 'passion' also poses significant risks. Contemporary psychotherapy boasts a diverse array of disparate (and even contradictory) methodologies that can be tailored to align with the patient's unique context and risk profile. Thus, a benefit of PWL as a hermeneutic and meta-paradigmatic framework applied to modern psychotherapy, may help develop novel classification systems for philosophically-oriented psychotherapies, as per mentioned example of life-affirming and retreat-oriented psychotherapeutic strategies.

PWL as a meta-therapeutic framework, as part of an interdisciplinary approach, may assist in addressing existential issues, such as what constitutes the good life. A PWL approach to psychotherapy would include the pursuit of the 'objectively' true and good. This pursuit necessitates an interdisciplinary approach—which was a matter of course in antiquity—whereas now psychotherapy is recognized as a specialized domain within the social sciences. This bifurcation commenced with the advent of individualistic therapeutic practices, as Freud (1933, 128) notes: "As a specialized science, a branch of psychology – 'depth-psychology' or psychology of the unconscious – it is quite unsuited to form a 'Weltanschauung' of its own; it must accept that of science in general." However, the scientific worldview fails to address inquiries concerning the significance of life—at least not in a conventional sense. Consequently, contemporary psychotherapy grapples with the cultural pessimism and disenchantment that arises from the dissolution of both religious and secular narratives of salvation. Both PWL and psychotherapy possess the potential to engender meaning in life by unearthing repressed opportunities. Nevertheless, philosophy—with its millennia-old tradition of contemplating existential inquiries—may have an advantageous position.

In conclusion, the meta-philosophy of PWL, when applied as a meta-therapeutic and a meta-paradigmatic framework, can inform contemporary psychotherapy, as part of an interdisciplinarity approach, and could assist philosophers in gaining insight into how modern evidence-based psychotherapy might provide ideas for the practical application of familiar philosophical wisdom; psychotherapists may discover new therapeutic techniques and concepts; and it may assist both therapists and philosophers in finding a way of

[13] Retreat-oriented therapeutic modalities typically arise in contexts characterized by warfare or societal oppression. Buddhism can be interpreted as a response to the subjugation imposed by Zoroastrianism. The expansion of Buddhism throughout Asia can largely be attributed to the conversion of the Indian monarch Ashoka, after his observation of the extensive fatalities resulting from the Kalinga conflict (Bentley 1993, 44-46)

integrating and fitting their professional activities within a *larger* philosophical vision that encompasses existence and humanity's role within it.

In closing, I cite a passage from the British philosopher Bertrand Russell, from the chapter "Value of Philosophy" in the book *Problems of Philosophy*, as it provides an eloquent description of the value of 'doing' philosophy as *way of life*, as discussed in this chapter, and succinctly encapsulates its psychotherapeutic benefits.

> The mind which has become accustomed to the freedom and impartiality of philosophic contemplation will preserve something of the same freedom and impartiality in the world of action and emotion. It will view its purposes and desires as parts of the whole, with the absence of insistence that results from seeing them as infinitesimal fragments in a world of which all the rest is unaffected by any one man's deeds…Thus, contemplation enlarges not only the objects of our thoughts, but also the objects of our actions and our affections: it makes us citizens of the universe, not only of one walled city at war with all the rest. In this citizenship of the universe consists man's true freedom, and his liberation from the thralldom of narrow hopes and fears (Russell 2001, 93).

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