

*Therapeutic Arguments, Spiritual Exercises, or the Care of the Self:  
Martha Nussbaum, Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault on Ancient Philosophy*

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**ABSTRACT.** The practical aspect of ancient philosophy has been recently made a focus of renewed metaphilosophical investigation. After a brief presentation of three accounts of this kind developed by Martha Nussbaum, Pierre Hadot, and Michel Foucault, the model of *the therapeutic argument* developed by Nussbaum is called into question from the perspectives offered by her French colleagues, who emphasize *spiritual exercise* (Hadot) or *the care of the self* (Foucault). The ways in which the account of Nussbaum can be defended are then discussed, including both a ‘negative’ defense, i.e. the indication of the weaknesses of Hadot and Foucault’s proposals, and a ‘positive’ one focused on the points in which Nussbaum can convincingly address doubts about her metaphilosophical account. In response to these analyses, some further remarks made by Hadot and Foucault are discussed in order to demonstrate that their accounts are not as distant from Nussbaum after all. Finally, a recent metaphilosophical study by John Sellars together with a therapeutic (medical) model developed by the author of the present article are suggested as providing a framework for potential reconciliation between all three accounts discussed and a resource for further metaphilosophical studies.

**KEYWORDS.** Nussbaum, Hadot, Foucault, philosophy as therapy, spiritual exercises, care of the self

I. INTRODUCTION

Recently renewed interest in ancient philosophy has certainly offered a unique opportunity for contemporary philosophical studies. It has contributed to current debates not only with new, or at least long forgotten theses, but also with substantially different theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks. An obvious example here is the virtue-ethical

approach, which significantly enriched the environment of modern ethical theory, once dominated by consequentialism and deontology.

Irrespective of this unquestionable gain, however, there are still serious considerations about whether, or at least to what extent, we can directly apply the insights of ancient philosophers to our current discussions. The whole issue, ultimately, has a strictly metaphilosophical character. It concerns the very definitional features of what we have agreed to call ‘philosophy’ and the question whether the whole gamut of phenomena belonging to our philosophical tradition can be considered a homogeneous whole or rather a heterogeneous set of sometimes mutually incommensurable projects. Any straightforward application of ancient philosophical frameworks to contemporary contexts seems to presume that our philosophical endeavours are substantially the same as the ones in which Socrates, Plato, or Epicurus used to participate. Such a presumption, importantly, is far from being self-evident.

One of the most striking differences between contemporary philosophical endeavours and their ancient counterparts – at least as far as the English speaking world is concerned – is the theoretical character of the former and the practical, or at least substantially more practical, orientation of the latter. Such a difference, to use a phrase by David E. Cooper, is the one between “[...] the two visions of philosophy as [...] theory or speculation orientated towards Truth, and vital practice orientated towards the Good, towards Life” (2009, 1). Mainstream Anglophone philosophy, importantly, can be equally clearly assigned to the former vision, as it can be classified as at least skeptical about the latter. An arguably representative example of this attitude can be found in Christopher Coope’s comment that the idea of practical philosophy, is “[...] so very unpromising [that anyone] who expects practical guidance from philosophers can’t be serious” (2009, 193).

One of the consequences of this prevalent attitude is a default perspective from which ancient thought is currently seen. Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, in particular, is found interesting only insofar as

it can serve as a reservoir of philosophical theses and theories, which in turn can become useful for the purposes of contemporary debates and models. Such an approach is usually more or less implicit and taken for granted. The fact that some ways in which ancient ideas are nowadays applied would not be recognized by their original proponents goes without saying.

Such a default approach to ancient philosophy with its characteristic metaphilosophical lightheartedness, however, is not the sole perspective taken. There are philosophers who are not only aware of, and explicitly investigate, the ways in which our contemporary philosophy differs from ancient project of *philosophia*, but who also take ancient metaphilosophical ideas seriously and discuss their applicability to the revision of our contemporary understanding of philosophy.

Many of the issues addressed by the authors in question focus on the fundamentally – if not exclusively – practical character of ancient philosophy. This aspect of their analyses can be safely identified as a ‘common denominator’. What is interesting, at the same time, is the fact that they often arrive at different particular specifications of the nature of ancient philosophy on the basis of this shared general emphasis. Some, like Martha Nussbaum, put forward the thesis that ancient philosophy is first of all a kind of therapy. Others, like Pierre Hadot, prefer to identify it with a set of spiritual exercises. Finally, there are suggestions, like that made by Michel Foucault, that we should understand Socrates as well as Hellenistic and Roman thought in terms of the care of the self. All these accounts are obviously similar in their general orientation. Nevertheless, there are significant if subtle differences between them. The careful investigation of the latter can provide us with some non-trivial metaphilosophical insights.

Since Nussbaum’s proposal is most clearly connected with broadly analytic philosophy and most influential within the latter, it will become a guiding motif of this article. After a brief introductory presentation of all three accounts, the metaphilosophical model of Nussbaum will be

called into question from the perspectives offered by Hadot and Foucault. We will then discuss the ways in which her perspective can be defended. These will include both a ‘negative’ defense, i.e. the one made by pointing to the weaknesses of Hadot and Foucault’s proposals, and a ‘positive’ one focused on the points in which Nussbaum can convincingly address the doubts voiced by her colleagues. In response to these analyses, some further remarks made by Hadot and Foucault will be discussed in order to demonstrate that their accounts are not as distant from Nussbaum after all. In conclusion, a recent metaphilosophical account by John Sellars together with a therapeutic (medical) model developed by the present author will be suggested as providing a framework for potential reconciliation between all three accounts discussed and a resource for further metaphilosophical studies.

## II. THERAPY OF DESIRE ACCORDING TO MARTHA NUSSBAUM

The account provided by Martha Nussbaum in *Therapy of Desire* (1994) is inspired by and focused on the analogy between philosophy and medicine (*the medical analogy*). The said analogy used to be common in antiquity and is mentioned by contemporary scholars with relative frequency. What is distinctive about Nussbaum’s analysis, however, is that she takes the similarity between philosophy and medicine literally and seriously.<sup>1</sup> In other words, she does not choose the simple and often travelled path of reducing it to “simply a decorative metaphor.” What she does instead is to understand it as an image very central to certain ancient philosophical projects, “an important tool both of discovery and of justification” (1994, 14).<sup>2</sup>

The aim of her book is directly metaphilosophical: “[...] to understand what philosophy becomes, when understood in the medical way” (1994, 40). In order to fulfill this purpose Nussbaum investigates the three major Hellenistic schools, i.e. Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Pyrrhonism, and the ways in which the idea of medical philosophy was applied by them.

What she emphasizes, importantly, is not only the fact that the medical analogy should be read literally, but also that it is “multifaceted” and thus “invites further analysis and subdivision” (1994, 45). The careful scrutiny of this analogy had led her to a detailed *model of therapeutic argument* constituted by a list of such an argument’s “likely characteristics.” The model developed by Nussbaum is intended to provide a means “to organize [...] concrete investigations” (1994, 45) and, in the case of her own book, “[...] to investigate the particular schools, charting their similarities and divergences” (1994, 16).

Among the eight properties enumerated by Nussbaum, there are three crucial ones, which “[...] can be expected to be present, in some form, in any ethical view that takes its lead from the medical analogy” (1994, 46).<sup>3</sup> Certainly, as Nussbaum subsequently shows, they are present not only in the three Hellenistic schools being analyzed, but also in Aristotelian ethics.<sup>4</sup> (i) Any therapeutic argument, to begin with, has a *practical goal* and is directed at the patient’s good. (ii) It can be expected, furthermore, to be *value-relative*, i.e. to respond “at some level [...] to deep wishes or needs of the patient” (1994, 46). (iii) The therapeutic argument is *responsive to the particular case*, “to the pupil’s concrete situation and needs” (1994, 46).

In addition to these three features, which are common by definition to all therapeutic projects, there are five further properties that are “more controversial” (1994, 46). (iv) Some, and only some, therapeutic arguments, are *directed at the health of the individual* as such rather than that of the community. For some, furthermore, both (v) *practical reason* and (vi) the “*standard virtues of argument*” (1994, 46, italics mine) including consistency, clarity of definitions as well as lack of ambiguity *have only instrumental value*. Finally, there are therapeutic arguments that are provided within (vii) the framework of a more or less *asymmetric or authoritarian therapeutic relationship*, which is often accompanied by (viii) the situation in which *the teacher discourages the pupil from the investigation of alternative philosophical views*.

All of these additional qualities, as has already been observed, are not universal. And it is actually due to this fact that they are very useful for

metaphilosophical purposes. While the main three features of the therapeutic argument can serve as a means to chart the fundamental similarities between all therapeutic arguments (or the crucial differences between therapeutic and non-therapeutic philosophical arguments), the five additional properties supplement the model with a kind of differential power. What they provide, in particular, is a framework within which the differences between various therapeutic schools can be systematically and vividly scrutinized. The therapeutic arguments provided by the Epicureans, for instance, can be revealingly analyzed as having them all in opposition to those offered by the Stoics, which do not possess any.

### III. SPIRITUAL EXERCISES ACCORDING TO PIERRE HADOT

The metaphilosophical account offered by Pierre Hadot (1995; 2002; cf. Chase 2007; Davidson 1990; Sellars 2009; Zeyl 2003) is considerably earlier than that of Nussbaum<sup>5</sup> and has been developed within a considerably different intellectual milieu.<sup>6</sup> What is important, moreover, is the fact that it is explicitly intended not only as a historical study of “[...] the very essence of the phenomenon of *philosophia* and [...] the traits share by the ‘philosopher’ or by ‘philosophizing’ in antiquity” (Hadot 1995, 56), but also as “[...] a tacit attempt to offer contemporary mankind a model of life” (1995, 208; 211).

The most general metaphilosophical thesis made by Hadot can be understood both negatively and positively. The author of *Philosophy as a Way of Life* consistently emphasizes, in particular, that ancient philosophy cannot be identified with what he calls philosophical discourse and what is relatively applicable as a description of contemporary philosophy: a set of philosophical theses, conceptions, and theories. Ancient philosophy, as seen by Hadot, is instead a way of life and consists of spiritual exercises.

The scope of Hadot’s account is considerably broader than that of Nussbaum. His metaphilosophical perspective, moreover, is introduced

as referring not only to Hellenistic philosophy, but also to the whole of ancient philosophy “at least as far back as Socrates” (1995, 268-269). In *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, accordingly, Hadot provides a history of ancient *philosophia* starting from the Athenians and finishing with the Neo-Platonists. The fact that all this extensive and heterogeneous material is consistently analyzed in terms of an art of living and spiritual exercises is indeed impressive, even if not impregnable to valid criticism.<sup>7</sup>

By saying that ancient philosophy was essentially a *way of life* (*maniere d'être*) Hadot (1995, 272) wanted to recall that for the ancients it was not proficiency at philosophical discourse, “a technical jargon reserved to specialists,” but rather a particular way of living that made a philosopher. It was “not only Chrysippus or Epicurus,” accordingly, who were considered philosophers, but actually “every person who lived according to the precepts of Chrysippus or Epicurus” (1995, 272). It is only in the context of this particular image of philosophy that one can understand the fact that people like Cato the Younger, who “wrote and taught nothing” (1995, 272), could have been considered as an embodiment of the Stoic sage.

The second and more specific of Hadot's technical terms, *spiritual exercise* (*exercice spirituel*), was derived from Ignatius of Loyola (*exercitium spiritualis*). Although the author admits that the adjective ‘spiritual’ can be “a bit disconcerting for the contemporary reader” (1995, 81), he still argues that it is preferable to possible alternatives such as ‘psychic’, ‘moral’, ‘ethical’, ‘intellectual’, ‘of thought’, or ‘of the soul’. The main reason for this is that only the term ‘spiritual’ is broad enough to cover all important aspects of ancient philosophical practices. Phrases like ‘thought exercises’ or ‘intellectual exercises’, for instance, while reliably indicating the cognitive character of the techniques in question, would not do justice to the role played by imagination and affect. It could be tempting, in turn, to refer to ‘ethical exercises’, especially if one understands ethics in the broad manner proper to the ancients. Once again, however, this term would imply “too limited a view of things,” as it

neglects the way in which ancient *askēsis* raises one “to the life of the objective Spirit” and to “the perspective of the Whole” (1995, 82).

As a result, it is only the notion of spiritual exercise that is rich enough to cover the holistic nature of the practices in question; the fact that they are not merely cognitive or rational and that they affect “the individual’s entire psychism” (1995, 82), “the totality of one’s being” (1995, 265). At some points, interestingly, Hadot even talks about *conversion* to the philosophical way of life, “a conversion which turns our entire life upside down, changing the life of the person who goes through it” (1995, 83).<sup>8</sup>

The richness of the term ‘spiritual exercise’, however, also has some drawbacks, especially when it is applied nowadays. It is very probable, in fact, that it will lead to some misinterpretations, both of Hadot’s intentions and of the original ancient thought.<sup>9</sup> Because of this danger, it may be worthwhile to emphasize that Hadot’s ‘spiritual’ originally refers to the Greek *psuchē* and, as such, does not entail any substantial metaphysical claims, including any denial of physicalism. It is exactly in this context that Sellars (2009, 114) reminds us that in both Stoicism and Epicureanism the application of the term *psuchē* was connected with materialist ontology. As such, it did not imply any violation of the word’s common Greek usage referring simply to “all the life-activities of the creature” (Nussbaum, 1994, 13).<sup>10</sup>

#### IV. THE CARE OF THE SELF ACCORDING TO MICHEL FOUCAULT

The third of the metaphilosophical accounts discussed in this article was developed by Michel Foucault in the last few years of his life. In the early 1980s, this French scholar took “the rather surprising turn toward the ancient world” (Gutting, 2013), a turn that is visible in the second and the third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, entitled *The Use of Pleasure* (1985) and *The Care of the Self* (1986), respectively, and the lectures conducted at the Collège de France (see 2005; 2010; 2011) and the University



of California at Berkeley (2001).<sup>11</sup> This late project of Foucault is closely connected to the investigations of Hadot. As a matter of fact, Foucault (1985, 8) explicitly admits that he “benefited greatly” from the latter’s works and the discussions they had.

An attempt at a brief delineation of his position must begin with the distinction Foucault makes between the notions of ethics and morality. Every “morality, in the broad sense,” as he writes (1985, 29), can be divided into two elements: codes of behaviour constituting *morality* (in the narrow sense) and practices of the self (“forms of subjectivation”) being a constitutive part of *ethics*. These two aspects “[...] can never be entirely dissociated, though they may develop in relative independence from one another” (1985, 29). Moralities in the broad sense can be divided, accordingly, into ‘code-oriented’ and ‘ethics-oriented’ (1985, 30). The main emphasis of the former “[...] is placed on the code, on its systematicity, its richness, its capacity to adjust to every possible case and to embrace every area of behavior” (1985, 29). They are essentially connected to authority and penalization and, thus, often have “a quasi-judicial form” (1985, 29). The latter, on the other hand, are focused on the relationship of the individual to him/herself and, especially, on the practices through which this relationship is worked out and the whole being of the individual changed.

Of the two, ‘ethics-oriented’ moralities are the main area of late Foucault’s interest. In particular, and not surprisingly, he connected Greek and Roman philosophy with this kind of morality and emphasized that ancient *philosophia* was focused on “[...] the relationship with the self that enabled a person to keep from being carried away by the appetites and pleasures, to maintain a mastery and superiority over them, to keep his senses in a state of tranquillity, to remain free from interior bondage to the passions, and to achieve a mode of being that could be defined by the full enjoyment of oneself, or the perfect supremacy of oneself over oneself” (1985, 31).

This particular relationship of the individual to him/herself has been later connected by Foucault (1986, 2005) with the principle of the *care* (or

*cultivation*) of the self (Greek *epimeleia beauton*, Latin *cura sui*, French *le souci de soi*). This very important theme was initiated by Socrates and then taken up by later philosophers who ultimately placed it at the very heart of their projects. It became a universal idea within Stoicism and Epicureanism as well as among the Cynics. In fact, Foucault (2005, 8) makes an even stronger claim that “[...] the *epimeleia beauton* [...] remained a fundamental principle for describing the philosophical attitude throughout Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman culture [including] Christian spirituality, up to the fourth and fifth centuries A.D.” (2005, 11). Foucault believes, in particular, that “[...] the first two centuries of the imperial epoch can be seen as the summit of a curve: a kind of golden age in the cultivation of the self” (1986, 45).

The care of the self as understood by Foucault is a complex phenomenon. It consists of: (i) “a general standpoint” or “an attitude towards the self, others, and the world” as well as (ii) a particular form of attention or looking converted “from the outside, from others and the world [...] towards ‘ourselves.’” Finally, it also involves (iii) special practices “exercised on the self by the self [...] by which one changes, purifies, transforms, and transfigures oneself” (2005, 10-11). These particular practices are variously designated by Foucault, who uses either the notion of the *techniques (technologies) of the self* (see especially 1988) or the notion of *the arts of existence* (1985). In either case they are intended to refer to the Greek phrase *technê tou biou*.<sup>12</sup> The technologies of the self discussed by Foucault are numerous and diverse. They can be commonly subsumed, however, as all “[...] those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being” (1985, 10). The aim of such a transformation could be specified as flourishing (*eudaimonia*) or wisdom (*sophia*), but also – and this is characteristic of the Foucaultian approach – as “[...] an *oeuvre* that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria” (1985, 10-11). It is due to the latter specification that one can consider Foucaultian technologies of the self as constituting *the aesthetics of existence*.

## V. POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF NUSSBAUM'S ACCOUNT

Now that the three metaphilosophical proposals made by Nussbaum, Hadot, and Foucault have been briefly summarized it becomes possible to relate them to each other. In particular, the model developed in *Therapy of Desire* – as representative of and very influential within the English-speaking philosophical world – will be subject to more detailed analysis in the context of the insights offered by the two remaining accounts.

As far as the model developed by Nussbaum is concerned, the features of the therapeutic argument enumerated by her are not the most interesting in the present context. Rather, it is the very fact that her attempt at the specification of Hellenistic philosophy is focused around the therapeutic *argument* that is worth closer attention. It is the *genus proximum* of her model, in other words, rather than its *differentia specifica* that will be called into question here.

The most general and unbiased, even if equally trivial, attempt at the specification of therapeutic philosophy has to be understood as one directed at the definition of a particular kind of philosophy. In Nussbaum's case, however, it goes without saying that philosophical *therapeia* can be accounted for *via* the notion of therapeutic argument.<sup>13</sup> The notion of philosophical argument is considerably narrower than that of philosophy itself and the same is the case for therapeutic philosophical argument in relation to therapeutic philosophy. As a result, the choice of a *genus proximum* made by Nussbaum cannot be ignored as making only a nominal difference. Rather, it is far from methodological innocence and as such has many substantial consequences for the ensuing analyses.

The fact that Nussbaum regards the notion of philosophical argument as central to any philosophical project is not only evident in her introductory remarks but also visible throughout the whole book. As far as the three Hellenistic schools analyzed by her are concerned, for

instance, she explicitly states that all of them could accept the Epicurean definition of philosophy as “[...] an activity which by arguments and discussions brings about the happy life” (LS 25K, see Nussbaum 1994, 15). While investigating these schools with all their practical orientation, value-relativeness, and particularity, moreover, she makes considerable and numerous efforts to convince the reader that the philosophy practiced in them “[...] never ceases to be understood as an art whose tools are arguments, an art in which precise reasoning, logical rigor, and definitional precision have an important role to play” (1994, 15).

The very same metaphilosophical perspective appears when she emphasizes the therapeutic orientation of philosophy. The fact that the latter is to be assessed in terms of its success in the modification, or eradication, of passions, does not entail that the philosopher has to “[...] turn away from her commitment to reasoning and careful argument” (1994, 39). As a matter of fact, the broadly cognitive theory of emotion, i.e. the claim that passions are not “blind surges of affect,” but rather “intelligent and discriminating elements of the personality” (1994, 38) that are “made up out of beliefs” (1994, 39) and responsive to arguments, enables her to make an even stronger claim. Together with ancient philosophers, she insists that philosophy is not only somehow applicable to desires but also that argument “is exactly the way to approach them” as “no less intelligent way will address the root of the problem” (1994, 39).<sup>14</sup>

The focus on the notion of philosophical argument as more or less sufficient to cover the essential features of philosophy is far from surprising in the context of contemporary philosophy, even less when one considers its analytic branch. Its usefulness for the study of ancient philosophy, however, is not only far from obvious but also, in fact, questionable. The problems connected with the application of this concept to ancient practical philosophy will become even clearer if one considers some points made by Hadot and Foucault.

## VI. NUSSBAUM'S READING FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF HADOT AND FOUCAULT

The main thesis of Hadot, as one may remember, can be understood both positively, as the claim that ancient philosophical project is constituted by spiritual exercises, and negatively, as emphasising that it is not “[...] the deposit of philosophical concepts, theories and systems to be found in the surviving texts of Graeco-Roman antiquity” (Zeyl 2003). In order to delineate the “profound difference” existing “between the representations which the ancients made of *philosophia* and the representation which is usually made of philosophy today” Hadot (2002, 2) draws the distinction between philosophy itself and philosophical discourse or discourse about philosophy (2002, 172-179).

*Philosophy*, to begin with, was understood by him as a philosophical way of life “[...] which is radically opposed to the way of life of nonphilosophers” *Philosophical discourse*, in turn, has been identified with a set of theoretical formulations “[...] which justifies, motivates, and influences this choice of life.” Even though such a distinction is particularly applicable to Stoicism, in more general terms it is intended as referring to the whole “phenomenon of ‘philosophy’ in antiquity” (Hadot 2002, 172).<sup>15</sup>

What is of special importance here is the relationship between philosophy and philosophical discourse. According to Hadot in particular, they are “simultaneously incommensurable and inseparable” (2002, 172). The *incommensurability* in question refers to the fact philosophy and philosophical discourse have “completely heterogeneous natures” (2002, 173). The nature of philosophy as such is existential; it consists of the choice and the experience of a certain way of living, be it Stoic, Epicurean, or Cynic. As such it is not “of the order of discourse and proposition” and, thus, “wholly escapes expression” by them (2002, 173-174).

The relationship between philosophy and philosophical life, furthermore, is not symmetrical in terms of importance. It is the way of life that is crucial, because philosophy, in the words of Seneca “teaches us to act,

not to speak” (*Epistles* 20.2). It is the practice of real philosophical life that makes one a philosopher. The cases of Roman statesmen Cato of Utica, Rutilius Rufus, and Quintus Mucius Scaevola Pontifex, who were not proficient users of philosophical discourse but could still have been called philosophers due to their genuinely Stoic ways of life, are exemplary here. Philosophical discourse, as a consequence, is “not essential part of philosophy” and has “value *only* if it has a relationship with a philosophical life” (Hadot 1995, 282; italics mine).

Philosophical discourse, what is more, is also existentially secondary. It originates, as Hadot claims, “in a choice of life and existential option – not vice versa” (2002, 3). Any existential option chosen implies, in particular, “[...] a certain vision of the world, and the task of philosophical discourse will therefore be to reveal and rationally justify this existential option, as well as this representation of the world.” Discourse of this kind, in result, turns out to come “*after the fact*” (Hadot 1995, 282) and to be “the expression and the means” (Hadot 2002, 3-4) of the way of life.<sup>16</sup> Philosophical schools, similarly, correspond to and represent particular existential choices made by their students. They are “[...] models of life, fundamental forms in accordance with which reason may be applied to human existence [...] archetypes of the quest for wisdom” (Hadot 1995, 273).<sup>17</sup>

The ultimately secondary and derivative character of philosophical discourse has obvious and non-negligible consequences for the function of philosophical *theoria*. All theoretical formulations offered by ancient philosophers are, according to Hadot “clearly and decidedly put in the service of practice” (1995, 60). The features of good philosophical theorizing such as systematization or comprehensiveness, accordingly, are not ends in themselves, but rather means of philosophical life.<sup>18</sup> This meta-philosophical position, to give one instance, is evident in the celebrated words from Epicurus’ *Letter to Pythocles* (85-88, LS 18C) in which the philosopher in question insists that “[...] we should not think that any other end is served by knowledge of celestial events [...] than freedom

from disturbance and firm confidence.” “What our life needs,” he adds, “is not private theorizing and empty opinion, but an untroubled existence.”

The last feature of philosophical discourse that is of importance in the present context is its essentially ambiguous character. Any discourse of this kind is always inherently connected with a danger that a philosopher will “imagine” that it is “sufficient to itself without being in accord with the philosophical life” (Hadot 2002,174). The awareness of such a danger is quite explicit and prevalent in the writing of the ancients. “Empty are the words of that philosopher,” as Epicurus (LS 25C) famously claims, “who offers therapy for no human suffering.” Or: “Away with you! Look for someone else to vomit over” as is a considerably less subtle response given by Epictetus (*Discourses*, 3.21.6) to a student who cannot lead a really philosophical life but invites others to listen to his philosophical commentaries.

As soon as the distinction between philosophy and philosophical discourse developed by Hadot has been introduced, it becomes possible to apply it to the model offered by Nussbaum. The first point to be made is that *Therapy of Desire* by its explicit focus on the therapeutic argument – as a special kind of philosophical argument – has clearly orientated itself towards philosophical discourse. Philosophical therapy, in other words, is addressed by Nussbaum mainly as a particular kind of philosophical *logos*. Such an approach, as we have already observed, is hardly surprising when offered by a contemporary, and especially broadly analytic, philosopher.

At the same time, however, one has to admit that it is less obvious when applied to ancient philosophical projects including, especially, the Hellenistic schools. If Hadot is right to identify ancient *therapeia* with philosophy as a way of life, rather than with philosophy as a kind of discourse, then the model developed by Nussbaum may appear as not only biased, but simply inappropriate to cover the very essence of Stoicism, Epicureanism, or Neo-Pyrrhonism. Such inappropriateness, interestingly, is exactly what Hadot would expect from contemporary philosophy,

which according to him has been “reduced [...] to philosophical discourse” and is “obviously no longer a way of life or form of life – unless it be the form of life of a professor of philosophy” (1995, 271). After all, as he says quoting Thoreau’s *Walden*, “There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers” (Hadot, 2005).

The response to Nussbaum’s account that could be made from the perspective of Foucault is not as clear as was the case with Hadot. Nevertheless, there are some clues in his writings that suggest that his general perspective would be in unison with those of his colleague from the College de France. Two points to which one should refer in this context are Foucault’s comments on the theme of *gnothi seauton* (‘know yourself’) and his thorough discussion of *parrhêsia*, or the activity of courageous truth-telling.

The famous Delphic prescription being at the very centre of contemporary reading of ancient philosophy (especially of the Socratic tradition) was discussed by Foucault in relation to the principle of *epimeleia beautou*. And, quite obviously, he does not deny the importance of the former. Nevertheless, he does insist that in antiquity there was “[...] a kind of *subordination* of the expression of the rule ‘know yourself’ to the precept of care of the self” (Foucault 2005, 4; italics mine). In the whole Graeco-Roman culture, as he claims, one “[...] had to occupy oneself with oneself *before* the Delphic principle was brought into action” (1988, 19; italics mine; cf. Foucault 2005, 5; 67)<sup>19</sup> It was only in the following ages that this hierarchy had been inverted and the theme of the care of the self became more or less forgotten (see Foucault 1988, 22).

Remarks that are even more directly applicable to the idea of philosophy as confined to objectively and impersonally understood philosophical argument can be found in Foucault’s discussion of the truth-telling activity of *parrhêsia* (for a detailed definition see Foucault 2001, 19) and its relation to truth. What is crucial is that his “intention” is “not to deal with the problem of truth” conceived as an impersonal issue of “the criteria for true statements and sound reasoning,” but rather with the



intrinsically personal “problem of the truth-teller, or of truth-telling as an activity” (Foucault 2001, 169).<sup>20</sup> The activity of Socrates, for instance, who was “the real parrhesiastic figure” (Foucault 2001, 105), was meant to disclose “the truth of someone’s life, i.e., the kind of relation someone has to truth” (Foucault 2001, 102). Socrates himself, accordingly, was understood as a kind of a ‘touchstone’ (*basanos*) “[...] which tests the degree of accord between a person’s life and its principle of intelligibility or *logos*” (Foucault 2001, 97).

Foucault, for obvious reasons, never explicitly discussed the model developed by Nussbaum. Nevertheless, his analyses of the subordination of the theme of *gnothi seauton* to the principle of *epimeleia heautou* and the truth-telling activity of *parrhêsia* can lead one to hypothesize that he would not be satisfied with her model’s evident preoccupation with philosophical argument, which might seem to be a non-negligible bias where Hellenistic and Roman philosophical currents are concerned.

## VII. NUSSBAUM’S RESPONSE TO FOUCAULT AND ‘OTHER AFFILIATED WRITERS’

The assessment of the model developed by Nussbaum made from the perspectives offered by the aforementioned French scholars should not be left without response, particularly when we are aware of the fact that she is cognizant of their accounts and makes some references to them. The defence of Nussbaum’s model will consist of two parts. (i) The first will be negative and will point to the deficiencies of the metaphilosophical accounts offered by Hadot and Foucault. (ii) The second will be positive and will focus on those aspects of Nussbaum’s account that make it at least partially insusceptible to the doubts expressed above.

The accounts and analyses conducted by our French scholars are not extensively present in the work of Nussbaum. Nevertheless, she makes some passing references to Foucault and “other affiliated writers”, seemingly to be understood as Hadot and Arnold Davidson, the latter being

the author of “the approving introduction” to *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Nussbaum 1994, 353; cf. Davidson 1990). Concerning Foucault, or the third volume of his *History of Sexuality* in particular,<sup>21</sup> she admits that the account of Hellenistic philosophy made by him in terms of the technologies of the self seems to her both “exciting” and “deeply problematic” (Nussbaum 1994, 5).

Despite her acknowledgement that the French scholar “[...] brought out something very fundamental about these philosophers when he stresses the extent to which they are not just teaching lessons” (Nussbaum 1994, 5), she still considers his account fundamentally insufficient. The reference to the practices of the self and an attempt to build an art of living, she insists, are not specific to philosophy. In fact, they can also be found in “religious and magical/superstitious movements of various types” (Nussbaum 1994, 5), in “popular religion, dream-interpretation, and astrology” (Nussbaum 1994, 353). Nussbaum, quite understandably, would like to separate philosophy from all these phenomena as sharply as possible.<sup>22</sup>

The approach of Foucault, according to Nussbaum, does not do full justice to the distinctiveness of philosophy. What it neglects, in particular, is the fact that the ancient philosophers, including the Hellenistic ones, not only wanted to provide an art of living but also had always claimed that it is “*philosophy*, and nothing else” that is required: “an art that deals in valid and sound arguments, an art that is committed to the truth” (Nussbaum 1994, 5). Such a very “fundamental commitment to reason” (Nussbaum 1994, 5) and “*rational argument*” (Nussbaum 1994, 353; italics mine), always placed at the very centre of philosophy, has been, according to Nussbaum, obscured by the overemphasis on *techniques du soi* characteristic of Foucault and “other affiliated writers”, including Hadot.<sup>23</sup>

The very same point that constitutes the weakness of the French scholars’ accounts is a strength of the model developed by Nussbaum. Not only does she place the notion of philosophical argument at the very ‘conceptual heart’ of her framework, but she also discusses explicitly –

and at considerable length – the specificity of philosophy as a *particular* art of living. She is well aware, more specifically, that Hellenistic philosophy, with its consistent practical and therapeutic orientation, is always at risk of “ceasing to be philosophical” (1994, 489), especially when it is tempted to turn to “non-argumentative means” or “some sort of ‘conversion’ experience,” which both “[...] have more in common with religious and political manipulation than they do with philosophy” (1994, 489). Accordingly, she always tries particularly hard to demonstrate that the *logoi* of philosophical therapy are not “merely forces,” but that they “are in some sense truly rational” means that work “not just by being causes, but by giving reasons” (1994, 52).

All of the above remarks can be understood as indicating the strength of Nussbaum’s account and, simultaneously, the insufficiency of Foucault and Hadot’s models. As soon as they are made one can turn to a more positive defence of Nussbaum’s proposal and show that her account is, after all, not as narrow as its explicit confinement to philosophical argument might have suggested. Actually, the very fact that her nominally limited model has been applied by her so fruitfully in *Therapy of Desire*, a book that is a genuine *tour de force* through Hellenistic philosophy without anything comparable coming easily to one’s mind, is indeed thought-provoking. A crucial point to be made here is that the richness of her account has not been achieved *despite* her model, but rather and precisely *thanks to* it. How can this be so?

The answer to the above question is hidden in a relatively particular and broad meaning attached by Nussbaum to the notion of philosophical argument, a meaning that is actually pretty distant from what one might be inclined to imagine. The very therapeutic vision of philosophy, in particular, “leads to a new conception of philosophical method and procedure” (Nussbaum 1994, 485), a conception of method that is dynamic and, crucially, neither context- nor content-neutral. In fact, the very application of the noun ‘argument’ may turn out to be too static, when one understands that the history of Hellenistic ethics is “[...] not simply [...]

the history of arguments, but also [...] the history of *practices of argumentation* and *psychological interaction* aimed at personal and societal change” (Nussbaum 1994, 9; italics mine). Such a perspective, as a matter of fact, does not seem to be very distant from Foucault’s attempt at the investigation of “truth-telling as an activity” (2001, 169).

The second important feature of the Hellenistic therapeutic argument, i.e. its substantial context- and content-relativeness, has often been neglected by contemporary scholars “producing a picture of Hellenistic ethics as a timeless whole” (Nussbaum 1994, 7) more or less similar to the theories of modern normative ethics, which are supposed to be applicable at any time and in any interpersonal, historical, and cultural context. The Hellenistic philosophers do indeed share our care for the features of the good argument such as its explicitness, clarity, or coherence. They are “still very much philosophers” (Nussbaum 1994, 4) who want to distinguish themselves from magicians and sophists. At the same time, however, they insist “[...] that it is to real people and their beliefs and desires that [the argument] must ultimately be responsible” (Nussbaum 1994, 28). Such a combination of more or less impersonally specified rationality and strictly personal frame of application is obviously not easy to make.

The fact that the therapeutic argument has to be responsive to real-life reality and applicable to a concrete contextually situated person has many non-negligible consequences. First, it shifts the domain of the philosopher’s interest so that he/she becomes seriously interested in human psychology, a psychology of a creature for whom the argument is ultimately designed. The practical side of this interest entails, furthermore, the reference to complex and sometimes indirect techniques focused on the effectiveness of the argument, including the rhetorical, narrative, imaginary, and mnemonic ones. The form and content of the argument, significantly, “[...] are not just incidentally linked, as they are so frequently in philosophical writing today” (Nussbaum 1994, 487). Literary and rhetorical techniques, in other words, are not merely decorations. Rather, they “[...] enter into the methods at a very deep level [...] shaping the

whole sense of what a therapeutic argument is” (Nussbaum 1994, 486). It is precisely due to the depth of this connection that the language used by Lucretius or Seneca can “[...] engage the interlocutor’s (and the reader’s) entire soul in a way that an abstract and impersonal prose treatise probably could not” (Nussbaum 1994, 486).

The combination of the traditional marks of good reasoning and therapeutic effectiveness leads to a very peculiar and broad notion of therapeutic argument. The latter, in particular, cannot be approached on any account without attending to its context. The real character of particular literary and rhetorical devices applied, for instance, cannot be fully explained unless the reference is made to their social, cultural, and historical background. In case of the Hellenistic philosophers it will be the context of the Hellenistic world, in case of the Roman philosophers it will be the non-negligibly different context of their Romanness. Taking this into account is, as a matter of fact, “[...] the only way in which we can get a full idea of what these philosophical teachings have to offer – for central in what they offer is their rich responsiveness to the concrete, and this will be obscured if we characterize their enterprise too timelessly and abstractly” (Nussbaum 1994, 44).

The broadness and considerable peculiarity of Nussbaum’s notion of the philosophical argument is perhaps most visible in the fact that it is inherently personal. It has to be “*responsive to the particular case*” (Nussbaum 1994, 46; italics original) and, obviously, it has to be made by a particular philosophical physician. In order to do full justice to this feature, Nussbaum needed to introduce an imaginary pupil into her book. The pupil in question, named Nikidion, consults one philosophical school after another and in so doing enables the reader to “imagine vividly” (Nussbaum 1994, 44) how her concrete ‘case’ would be consulted by each school and to understand the specific character of the therapeutic communities investigated (involving the scope of their social inclusiveness). The very fact that all these features can hardly be illustrated in their whole concreteness without the help of an imaginary student is convincing

evidence of the very special character of the therapeutic argument. Most classical philosophical arguments can easily be discussed without any special reference to their recipient (and author). In case of the therapeutic argument it simply cannot be done.<sup>24</sup>

The discussion of the broadness and internal complexity of the notion of the therapeutic argument was crucial to show that Nussbaum's account is only apparently narrow and confining.<sup>25</sup> And no careful reader of her *Therapy of Desire*, as it seems, could seriously accuse the book of narrowness or the lack of insights.

#### VIII. IS NUSSBAUM'S CRITICISM VALID?

Having defended Nussbaum from the accusations inspired by the accounts of Hadot and Foucault, it may be worthwhile to make some remarks about the applicability of her own criticism to the latter perspectives. Are these French scholars really guilty of the neglect of philosophy's commitment to reason?

An initial hint about the answer can be found in one of Hadot's footnotes, in which he explains why he would not discuss the theories attempting to connect spiritual exercises with the "[...] magico-religious/shamanistic traditions of respiratory techniques and mnemonic exercises" (1995, 116). He does not want to address these conceptions because of his lack of anthropological competence and the complexity of the problems connected with available sources. Most importantly, however, he does not engage in the possible discussion because the spiritual exercises he is interested in "[...] are mental processes which have nothing in common with cataleptic trances, but, on the contrary, respond to a *rigorous demand for rational control*" (1995, 116; italics mine).

This modest hint can be significantly enriched when some further passages concerning the relation between philosophical discourse and philosophy are quoted. According to Hadot, we might recall, philosophy as a way

of life and philosophical discourse are not only incommensurable, they are also *inseparable*: there is “[...] no discourse which deserves to be called philosophical if it is separated from the philosophical life, and there is no philosophical life unless it is directly linked to philosophical discourse” (2002, 174). And it is especially the latter fact that is of great importance in the context of Nussbaum’s – and Cooper’s (see note 9) – doubts.

The claims made by Hadot in *Philosophy as a Way of Life* seem to be rather insufficient to convey their full importance. All Hadot admits is that “[...] there can be no philosophy without some discourse – either inner or outward” (1995, 281). His later book, entitled *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, seems, however, to be considerably more helpful. The general metaphilosophical approach given here is relatively explicit: philosophy “[...] is, at the same time and indissolubly, a discourse *and* a way of life” (2002, 4). Philosophical life, even more strongly, “[...] cannot do without philosophical discourse, so long as such discourse is inspired and animated by philosophy; for it is an integral part of such a life” (2002, 175). The relationship between philosophical life and philosophical discourse, importantly, is not only emphasized by Hadot, but also specified as consisting of three interrelated connections.

- (i) Philosophical discourse, to begin with, justifies the choice of a way of life theoretically and develops its consequences. An important point to be made here is that philosophers are expected by Hadot to “[...] establish the rationality of their choice of life” and, as a consequence, to rely on “a discourse which itself aims, insofar as is possible, for rigorous rationality” (2002, 175). In fact, it turns out that at least in some cases it will be the entire framework of ancient theoretical philosophy that one needs. For the Stoics and Epicureans, in particular, “[...] it will be necessary [...] to seek man’s place within the world and thus elaborate a physics [...] to define man’s relationship to his fellow man and thus elaborate an ‘ethics’” and, finally, to “define the very rules of reasoning used within physics or ethics, and thereby elaborate a ‘logic’ and a theory of knowledge” (2002, 175-176).

- (ii) The second function of philosophical discourse enumerated by Hadot refers to the fact that discourse of this kind, when it is an authentic expression of an existential option chosen, is “an indispensable means” for the needs of philosophical life and the actions one performs on oneself and on others. Conceived as such, philosophical discourse becomes a spiritual exercise with “formative, educative, psychagogic, and therapeutic” functions. As such it “is always intended to produce an effect, to create a *habitus* within the soul, or to provoke a transformation of the self” (2002, 176).
- (iii) Finally, philosophical discourse is “[...] one of the very forms of the exercise of the philosophical way of life, as dialogue with others and with oneself” (2002, 175). At least since Socrates dialogue has always been an inherent part of philosophy and so it remains, even if in considerably different forms, not only in Platonism and Aristotelianism, but also in all the Hellenistic schools.

The remarks on the relationship between philosophical discourse and philosophy reported above, as concise as they are, seem to certify that Hadot, at least as far as *What is Ancient Philosophy?* is concerned,<sup>26</sup> makes considerable efforts to acknowledge the fundamental commitment to reason made by the philosopher. The possibility of defending Foucault from the accusations made by Nussbaum is a slightly more complex issue.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, there are some comments made by him to which we can appeal.

In *Fearful Speech*, for instance, he quite explicitly acknowledges that “parrhesiastic activity” involved not only “the relationships between truth and one’s style of life,” but also “an epistemic role” referring to the fact that “the philosopher had to discover and to teach certain truths about the world, nature, etc.” (Foucault 2001, 105-106). The search for truth and the care of the self, furthermore, constitute “a complex set of connections” (2001, 107). A false belief, in particular, is “like an ill which attacks the soul, corrupts it, destroys its health.” And it is nothing less than “logos” and “good reasoning” which is indicated as the cure (Foucault 2011, 107-108). It is by following *alêtheia*, the truth, that “we will avoid that ruin/destruction of the soul caused by the opinion of the crowd” (Foucault 2011, 105).<sup>28</sup>



The comments by Hadot and Foucault reported above are obviously brief. Nevertheless, they seem to be sufficient to show that the commitment to reason, which philosophers commonly recognize as the very essence of their discipline, is explicitly acknowledged by the former author and at least present in the writings of the latter.<sup>29</sup>

## IX. CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion to the analyses conducted above one might say that the metaphilosophical accounts provided by Martha Nussbaum, Pierre Hadot, and possibly Michel Foucault are not so distant from each other as it might have initially seemed. For this reason, accordingly, it could be worthwhile to offer a framework within which all these models can be systematically reconciled and applied in fruitful cooperation. There are at least two options here.

The first can be found in the analysis of *the technical conception of philosophy* conducted by John Sellars (2009) who, significantly, is not only fully aware of the works of Nussbaum, Hadot, and Foucault, but also makes a number of insightful comments on them. The usefulness of Sellars' proposal is connected with the fact that it may be used as a source of an explicit and systematic specification of the role of argument in philosophical therapy and, especially, of the way in which such argument is related to philosophical life. These particular points, unfortunately, are not clearly and satisfactorily systematized in all three scholars investigated above.

To put these complicated issues in order, Sellars refers to the Stoics and their idea of philosophy as a special kind of *technê*, the *technê peri ton bion* (an art concerned with one's way of life).<sup>30</sup> Philosophy as conceived by the Stoics, in particular, "[...] is an art (*technê*) comprised of two components, rational argument (*logos*) and practical exercise or training (*askêsis*), both being necessary components of this art concerned with transforming one's way of life (*bios*)" (Sellars 2009, 11).<sup>31</sup> By itself such a statement does

not seem to constitute any substantial metaphilosophical gain in comparison to Hadot's claim that philosophy "[...] is, at the same time and indissolubly, a discourse *and* a way of life" (2002, 4). Together with detailed analyses of the Greek usage of the term and its specifically philosophical applications made by Socrates, the Stoics, and the Sceptics (who criticized the analogy between philosophy and *technê*), however, it becomes a serious and insightful contribution.

One of the clearest examples of the usefulness of this account is the discussion of the analogies existing between philosophy and other *technai*, such as house building. The latter, for instance, just like philosophy, involves a particular, albeit more or less implicit, knowledge (*epistêmê*). What is crucial is the fact that any claim to possess this knowledge would be meaningless unless one is able to produce works (*erga*) determined by the *telos* of the art in question. "A builder," in the words of Epictetus (*Discourses* 3.21.4), "does not come up and say, 'Listen to me lecturing on the builder's art', but acquires a contract to build a house and shows by building it that he knows the art." Exactly the same applies, as both Socrates and Hellenistic thinkers would confirm, to philosophy. One cannot claim to have genuinely philosophical *logos* unless one 'produces' an *erga* proper to philosophy, i.e. the way of life (*bios*) which is authentically philosophical.<sup>32</sup>

Philosophy understood as a *technê*, moreover, involves not only philosophical knowledge (*epistêmê*) or discourse (*logos*), but also, and necessarily, philosophical practice (*askêsis*). In order to become an expert at house building, the builder mentioned in the previous paragraph had to spend a considerable amount of time as an apprentice. A theoretical knowledge of the basic principles of the craft would not have been sufficient. Both experience and supervised practice were necessary. The same applies to a novice philosopher, or more precisely to virtually any philosopher, who needs training (*askêsis*), which "is the key to transforming a philosopher (*philosophos*) into a sage (*sophos*)" (Sellars 2009, 108). A *philo-sophos*, as a consequence, who "[...] wants to master the art of living and to cultivate

excellence (*areté*) will need to train in a manner analogous to the way in which the athlete or the craftsman must train” (2009, 114).

The last point to be made about Sellars’ account of the technical conception of philosophy is that it cannot be reliably accused of the neglect of the *logos*. We are reminded explicitly and in several places that both “[...] *logos* and *askēsis* are necessary components of philosophy conceived as a *technē* but neither can be identified with philosophy itself” (2009, 118). More specific and direct precautions are added to this, moreover. The author explicitly stresses, for instance, that “[...] despite the central role of practical training (*askēsis*) in philosophy conceived as an art (*technē*) this does not imply any rejection or devaluation of philosophical discourse or theory (*logos*)” (2009, 108). As with other crafts, mere training will never suffice on its own and replace theory. Mastery, accordingly, “will require both practice (*askēsis*) and a grasp of the relevant theoretical principles (*logoi*)” (2009, 109).

Even the very brief account of the technical conception of philosophy as conceived by Sellars illustrates that this systematic and consistent model can be very helpful for the purposes of mataphilosophy. Among other things; it very clearly illustrates the considerable usefulness of the analogy between philosophy and the crafts (*technai*). With this fact in mind; it may be tempting to confine the analogy to one particular *technē* that seems to be particularly similar to philosophy, namely medicine. The *medical* or *therapeutic analogy* yielded would be an application or a special version of the technical analogy depicted above.

The affiliation between philosophy and medicine has been already observed not only by the ancients, but also by the scholars discussed in this paper. It is obviously a prevalent theme in the work of Nussbaum. It also appears, from time to time, in the books by Hadot, perhaps most explicitly in his claim that ancient philosophy “appears, in the first place, as a therapeutic of the passions” with each philosophical school having “its own therapeutic method” (1995, 83). It is a comment by Foucault, however, that deserves closer attention here.

In the third volume of his *History of Sexuality* one can find the following remark: “[...] philosophy and medicine [...] in fact draw on a shared set of notions, whose central element is the concept of ‘pathos.’ [...] On the basis of this shared concept, it was possible to construct a grid of analysis that was valid for the ailments of the body and the soul” (1986, 54). The framework constituted by the notions common to philosophy and medicine, crucially, can be applied “[...] as a common guide for a medicine of the body and the therapeutics of the soul” and makes it “possible not only to apply the same type of theoretical analysis to physical troubles and moral disorders alike, but also to use the same kind of approach in attending to them, treating them, and, if possible, curing them” (1986, 55). Foucault repeats this general insight during the lectures conducted at the College de France, but, unfortunately, does not develop it in any depth (2005, 97).<sup>33</sup>

The very idea of a conceptual framework common to philosophy and medicine (therapy), however, seems to deserve further elaboration and systematization, especially in the context of its considerable metaphilosophical potential. Such a task, in fact, has already been undertaken by a few scholars (Ganeri 2010; Gowans 2010; Peterman 1992) including Nussbaum (1994, 28-29). With the exception of Fischer’s model (2011a; 2011b), however, all these accounts are relatively modest.

An attempt to develop a systematic *therapeutic (medical) model of philosophy* has been recently made by myself (Banicki 2014). The model itself is intended as applicable not only for metaphilosophy, but also for interdisciplinary investigations such as the comparison between philosophical therapy and psychotherapy. It is due to this precise fact that it is not biased in any fundamental way towards philosophy.<sup>34</sup> The model itself is constituted by the set of therapeutic notions, among which are some that have been very rarely discussed heretofore. It especially applies to personal concepts such as those of the physician, the patient, or the physician-patient relationship. The meaning of these notions is relatively clear in the

context of somatic medicine or mental health professions. It is still not obvious, however, how they could be applied to philosophical *therapeia*.

The common feature of the technical conception of philosophy as conceptualized by Sellars and the therapeutic model of philosophy is the fact that they both conceive philosophy as a kind of *technê*. The first of these accounts is general and focuses on those features of philosophy the latter shares with *all* other crafts. The second is considerably narrower and directed at those properties that are shared by philosophy and the arts of a medical or therapeutic kind. Both of these approaches, it seems, may be metaphilosophically prolific in independent and complementary ways.

The technical conception of philosophy developed by Sellars (2009) can be applied not only as a comprehensive and revealing specification of the function of ancient philosophy, but also as a useful and original framework in terms of which one can account for the philosophical activity of the ancients. As such, it can incorporate the accounts of Nussbaum (therapy as a kind of *technê*), Hadot (spiritual exercises as *askêsis*), and Foucault (technologies of the self as *technai tou biou*). While it obviously shares several features with these three proposals, it seems to deal more appropriately, i.e. more explicitly and more systematically, with the specification of the connection between philosophical *logos* and philosophical life.

The descriptive and explanatory potential of the technical model is further developed by the therapeutic approach, which is a specific version of the former (medicine or therapy, as a matter of fact, is an example of *technê*). The particularity of the medical framework can provide additional insights, especially when questions founded on the medical status of philosophy are addressed (e.g. what is the illness that is to be cured?) or when ancient therapeutic approaches are compared to contemporary medical *technai* including contemporary psychotherapy (cf. Banicki 2014; Robertson 2010).<sup>35</sup>

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## NOTES

1. It is disputable whether and if so when it was taken literally by the ancients. As for the history of the analogy provided by Nussbaum (1994, Chapter 2), even though she begins her account with Homer and Pindar, she is careful enough to insist that it was not earlier than with Democritus that the connection between philosophy and medicine was explicitly confined to strictly philosophical *logos* and developed "at length in a clearly philosophical context" (1994, 51). Cf. the applicability of her own model, as she perceives it, discussed below.

2. Another recent example of the medical analogy taken seriously can be found in the papers by Fischer (2011a, 2011b).

3. It is not clear how this can be reconciled with the statement that the list is “flexible” in such a way that it “by no means claims to give” not only sufficient, but also necessary conditions for a medical argument (Nussbaum 1994, 45).

4. The applicability of the therapeutic analogy to Aristotle is a relatively more controversial thesis. For the evidence gathered by Nussbaum (1994) see especially Chapters 2 & 3.

5. The first edition of *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Hadot, 1995) was published in 1981 under the French title *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*.

6. Among the influences that are explicitly enumerated by Hadot (2002, ix-x) there are Rabbow (1954) and Ilsetraut Hadot (1969). See also Domański (1996) and Voelke (1993).

7. While commenting on Hadot’s account of spiritual exercises in the Academy and the Lyceum; Zeyl (2003) comments that “the evidence is pressed into the Procrustean bed prescribed by the author’s *demonstrandum*” (2003). A recent and influential criticism of Hadot has been also made by John M. Cooper (2012). For some of his remarks see notes 9 and 17.

8. Such formulations are less surprising, and more understandable, if one takes into account Hadot’s lifelong interest in Neo-Platonism.

9. Cf. Cooper’s (Cooper 2012, 402) thesis that spiritual exercises when understood narrowly as possessing a non-trivial “[...] affinity with St. Ignatius’s meditations on sin and on the passion of Christ” are important only for the late ancient philosophy, which “has transformed itself [...] into something not easily distinguishable from a religion” (Cooper 2012, 23). Alternatively, as he claims, they can be conceived broadly and indeed found in the whole of antiquity, but then they turn out to be “[...] no more than perfectly ordinary ways of getting oneself to understand the real meaning and implications of philosophical arguments and philosophical positions, to fix them in one’s mind and make oneself ready to apply them smoothly to situations of life as they may arise [...] simply [...] synonymous with living one’s philosophy” (2012, 402-403).

10. Cf. Foucault’s remark about the care of the self: “You have to worry about your soul – this is the principal activity of caring for yourself. The care of the self is the care of the activity and not the care of the soul-as-substance” (1988, 25).

11. Further important sources include Foucault 1988. For helpful systematic accounts see O’Leary 2002; Sellars 2009.

12. In his very careful analysis, Sellars notes that the phrase *techné tou biou* does not actually appear in the ancient textual evidence. What we can find there, instead, is the formula of *techné peri ton bion* translated by him as “an art concerned with one’s way of life” (2009, 5).

13. As a matter of fact one could go further and argue that her account is even narrower as focused mainly on ethical arguments. Cf. “I am speaking here above all of ethical arguments” (Nussbaum 1994, 15).

14. One another point at which this general framework is evident is a brief remark on the Cynics, in which Nussbaum explains the reason for which this movement has been omitted by her. She points to the general lack of evidence and, especially as it seems, to the fact that very little is known “even about whether they offered arguments at all.” It is probably not accidental, furthermore, that the Cynics are called by her the “practitioners of a *quasi-philosophical* form of life” (1994, 8; italics mine).



15. Hadot claims that this distinction was originally developed by the Stoics. The textual evidence to which he refers, however, including Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* (7.39-41) and Cicero's *On Moral Ends* (3.72), does not seem to explicitly include it. An additional, and probably more revealing source of Hadot's understanding of philosophy and philosophical discourse may be the distinction between *notional* and *real assent* as offered by John Henry Newman (1870; cf. Hadot 1995, 277).

16. At some points Hadot goes even further and claims that various philosophical discourses "[...] are nothing but clumsy attempts, coming after the fact, to describe and justify inner experiences whose existential density is not, in the last analysis, susceptible of any attempt at theorization or systematization" (1995, 212).

A very interesting consequence of the primacy of philosophy is the fact that its connection with a particular philosophical discourse is in a sense accidental. Philosophical way of life, in other words, is at least partly independent: essentially the same existential choice can happen to be connected with non-trivially different philosophical discourses. It is actually due to this kind of independence that Hadot writes that the very "[...] same spiritual exercise can [...] be justified by extremely diverse philosophical discourses." Contemporary people, similarly, "[...] can practice the spiritual exercises of antiquity, at the same time separating them from the philosophical or mythical discourse which came along with them" (1995, 212; cf. 282-283).

17. Such a perspective has been harshly criticized by Cooper who insists that any "[...] specific philosophical views and orientations [...] that might characterize an ancient philosopher [...] do not result from anything 'existential.'" What is 'existential' is only "[...] the basic commitment to being a philosopher, to living on the basis of philosophical reason" (2012, 18-19). All the rest, including the choice of a particular school, is a consequence of philosophical reasoning and the acceptance of its conclusions.

18. For some purposes, especially in extreme situations, which required one to respond quickly, it was a short saying that could be easily kept at hand (*procheiron*), rather than a complex theoretical structure, which might prove to be psychologically effective and, thus, helpful.

19. An understandable exception to this general tenet made by Foucault concerns Platonism, in which it is the maxim 'know yourself' that is given priority (1988, 26)

20. At one point, in fact, Foucault says that the question "[...] how is it that the alleged *parrhesiastes* can be certain that what he believes is, in fact, the truth," the "sceptical question [...] is a particularly modern one which [...] is foreign to the Greeks" (2001, 15). Such a claim, however, is very hard to defend, especially if the whole tradition of ancient Scepticism is taken into account.

21. No other writings by Foucault are explicitly referred to by Nussbaum (1994). She mentions, however, the lectures he gave during the last years of his life (1994, 5).

22. A similar attempt seems to motivate, at least partly, the criticism of Hadot voiced by Cooper (2012); cf. notes 9 and 17.

23. In fact, Nussbaum expresses doubts whether Foucault, with his view of knowledge and arguments as tools of power, is even in principle capable of admitting the real nature of this commitment and the autonomy of reason defended by all classical philosophical projects (1994, 5-6; 354).

24. The writings of Lucretius or Seneca, for the very same reason, cannot be fully understood without the reference to their intended interlocutors such as Memmius (for Lucretius) or Lucilius and Novatus (for Seneca).

25. As a matter of fact, it is Nussbaum herself who admits that focusing on her model “[...] too narrowly would prevent us from seeing a great deal that we ought to see” (1994, 47).

26. Some claims made by Hadot in his earlier book, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* are considerably more problematic in the context of Nussbaum’s doubts.

27. Some of his remarks, as a matter of fact, seem to support the Nussbaum’s criticism, such as when he asks “What is philosophy if not a way of reflecting, not so much on what is true and what is false, as on our relationship to truth?” (Foucault 1997, 327) or makes a parrhesiastic confession: “I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation” (Foucault 1997, 131).

28. A similar perspective has been offered by Foucault in one of his interviews, when he considers intellectual work as an effort directed at self-transformation. “I know,” he says, “that knowledge can transform us, that truth is not only a way of deciphering the world (and maybe what we call truth doesn’t decipher anything), but that if I know the truth I will be changed. And maybe I will be saved” (1997, 130-131).

29. For further attempts at defending Foucault see Sellars (2009, 115-118).

30. It is very important to notice that Sellars builds his account on the Socratic notion of *techné*, which is considerably broader than its Aristotelian counterpart confined to productive arts (for a detailed discussion see Sellars [2009, 42-47]).

31. In fact, Sellars argues that “this is [...] precisely how Foucault understands the matter” (2009, 11).

32. Cf. Foucault’s discussion of the *parrhesiastes*, who can be identified by “the decisive criterion” of “the harmony which exists between his *logos* and his *bios*” (2001, 106).

33. Cf. “So there is this system of analogies, which I skip over quickly because it is well known” (Foucault 2005, 98).

34. Such bias is a common feature of all the models discussed above.

35. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions, which have enabled me to substantially improve this paper.