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Five Principles of Philosophical Health for Critical Times: From Hadot to Crealectics

Abstract:
In a world described or experienced as unfair, what can philosophical practitioners propose in order to help individuals and communities strive for a meaningful life? One answer, empirically informed by the author's practice as philosophical counselor in therapeutic, self-care and organizational contexts, is five principles for the cultivation of philosophical health, namely mental heroism, deep orientation, critical creativity, deep listening, and the "Creal" (the creative Real as ultimate possibility). In the light of Hadot's rediscovery of philosophy as a way of life and in dialogue with his reading of ancient philosophy, it is asserted that the embodied and socially embedded mind can, through these five principles or modalities, be prepared to maintain a pragmatic elevation of view and creative resilience in everyday events, especially in critical situations. This meta-analytic and meta-dialectic practice of philosophical health, termed "crealectics," presupposes that we are of the same creative cosmological flesh (the Creal), and therefore we are bound to comprehend and care for each other philosophically.

Keywords:
philosophical health, philosophy as a way of life, creation, Hadot, crealectics, possibility

Introduction: Philosophy as a Healthy Way of Life[1]

In a time when politics seems to have abandoned the utopian or idealistic impetus in favor of mere social (or rather antisocial) management, public relations, and technocratic engineering, it is left to a generative form of philosophy to take up the asymptotic challenge of imparadising our existence to the highest possible standard. The goal of this article is to deepen our understanding of philosophical health as it may be practiced and anticipated in contexts of care, whether the object of care is our own self, the self of others, or the integrity of our intersubjective engagements – these objects of care being regularly subjected to more or less destabilizing crisis situations. In line with Hadotian considerations equating philosophy with a way of living, I will defend here a definition of philosophical health that is not only about logico-argumentative coherence, but more fundamentally a process of harmonious, creative, and sustainably flourishing coherence between a person's ways of thinking and their active engagement with the Real.

Indeed, in Ancient Greece and in the Roman Empire, philosophical health was perhaps an elitist activity, but it was not purely theoretical: it was maintained partly through spiritual exercises, such as ideational meditation or dialectic inquiry – it could also be perfected via analysis of beliefs or ways of reasoning, but often in the context of real life rather than *in abstracto*. Philosophical health as spiritual endeavor could always be put to the test via our partaking in earthly and civic existence, and furthermore it expresses not only a reactive recentering on what matters, but also an affirmative and creative engagement with life. In an interview given in 1992 and reproduced in the collection of essays titled *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Pierre Hadot explains:

> What's interesting about the idea of spiritual exercises is precisely that it is not a matter of a purely rational consideration, but the putting in action of all kinds of means, intended to act upon one's self… . All these techniques can be useful in crisis situations. Yet we must not allow them to make us forget that what is most important is the profound orientation of our lives, the fundamental choice of a life, which engages us passionately.[2]

Philosophical health does have social consequences even if it expands from a personal source of care of the self, because, as we will see in more detail, the self that Hadot and the Ancients had in mind is not the ego, but more often than not a divine or cosmological visionary self. While a daily practice of mental conditioning is important to avoid morbid or dangerous existential habits, the practitioner cannot rely only on mental palliatives or tricks as in today's cognitive-behavioral therapies or "self-development" individualistic techniques: a "particular vision of the universe" (PWL, 226)[3] is needed, something like a worldview which sustains a passionate engagement with (our) truth and the meaning of (our) biography as microcosm reflecting (upon) a cosmological macrocosm.

Hadot and Foucault were famously influential in reminding us that philosophy is not faithful to its Greek origin when it is exclusively practiced as an abstract, purely logical and disembodied endeavor detached from lived experience: philosophizing must also be conceived as a practice of *askesis*, embodied exercises oriented

1) The author wishes to express his gratitude to editors at *Eidos. A Journal for Philosophy of Culture* – Professor Randall Auxier and Dr. Austin Rooney – for their editorial comments and questions on an earlier version of this text, and a thankful appreciation to the two anonymous reviewers who contributed to the editorial process.

2) Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 284; hereafter referred to as PWL, along with page numbers, using in-text parenthetical citations.

3) The word "vision" appears more than 30 times in the book.

toward the manifested ideal of a harmonious and dignified self-continuity. But Hadot is more daring than Foucault in his critique of mundane anthropocentrism: he shows that self-care should not be merely domestic, political, or civic, but more essentially the actualization of divine bliss[4] or what we will call below the *imparadisation* of being. In other words, macrocosm – the universe or multiverse, what I will call *the Creal* – and microcosm: the here and now, what I call the Real – can and should be woven together via the practice of philosophy. Ancient philosophy tended to be an ideal-driven form of care based on a healthy virtue of coherence between what one admires as self-transcendent, what one thinks, and what one actually does in an otherwise corrupting human society: in Aristotle's words, "virtue and vice respectively keep healthy and corrupt."[5]

In our times, philosophical health should be as important for citizens as are physical or psychological health. Not only the ideal of philosophical health needs to be renewed, but also democratized rather than reserved to the happy few or a sort of aristocracy of the mind which will always be seen with some suspicion by politicians or the masses, as epitomized by the symbolic meaning of Socrates' death. If philosophy does not try to bring holistic joy and blossoming to a majority of humans so that we may become, in the words of Socrates, "as good and reasonable as possible,"[6] it might remain indistinguishable from a haughty training in speculative sophistry, insufficiently engaged in common life or shared comprehension toward the good life, "the greatest good in each of you" (PWL, 155).

In what follows, we will reconnect the ideal of philosophical health with the Hadotian ethos of a passionate engagement with life. In thus doing, we will keep a safe distance from the austerity of scientistic philosophers who, inspired by a certain reading of Kant, wish to detach "enthusiasm" or caring from philosophizing in a manner that renders the notion of "healthy reason"[7] problematic because it is too abstract and incapable of addressing the human need for noumenal experience or feeling. In actively observing our post-industrial societies, one may ask with Canguilhem "whether their actual permanent state is not one of crisis and whether this is not an unequivocal symptom of the absence of their power of self-regulation."[8] Here again self-regulation must be understood as self-transcendent: the globalized world still lacks as we speak a global deep orientation or a shared cosmology, and we cannot trust the invisible hand of capital markets to foster a healthy relationship with the "creative generosity" of life and the cosmos.[9]

So how exactly can philosophy be of any help in our "perpetual crisis" societies?[10] In a world often described or experienced as destructively chaotic and frantic, what can philosophical practitioners propose that could be heard and adopted, in order to help individuals and communities strive for a wise, just, and meaningful life? My personal effort is both theoretical and practical: on the one hand I develop a theory of generative philosophy called crealectics, on the other hand I practice this theory in a context of care via philosophical counseling with individuals or groups who search for regeneration and meaning. Here I synthetize my dual approach, in dialogue with Pierre Hadot, by proposing five principles (which could also be called *modes* or *practices* or *aspects*) for the cultivation of philosophical health: mental heroism, deep orientation, critical creativity, deep listening and the Creal (or Creative Real). I will now explain these principles in succession, although I consider that they should counterbalance one another and thus be cultivated simultaneously.

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4) Hadot, *Discours et mode de vie philosophique*, 99.

5) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1151a15, translated by Jay R. Elliott in "Aristotle on the *Archai* of Practical Thought," 451.

6) Hadot, citing Plato's *Apology* (PWL, 155).

7) Kant, "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?," 8–10.

8) Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, 260.

9) Ibid., 188.

10) O'Donnell, "The Perpetual Crises of Democracy," 5–11.

Principle 1: Mental Heroism

The practice of philosophy as a way of life asserts that the embodied and socially embedded mind may be slowly and sustainably trained to maintain its elevation of view and well-being in everyday events, especially in crisis situations. Far from the popular cliché of the philosopher as one who renounces social life and fully represses passion or ambition, philosophy may contribute to a thriving and multidimensional way of life, indeed a fulfilling of one's highest destiny. This path necessitates a form of courage that Hadot calls a heroic realization:

> The sage would thus be the man capable of living on both planes: inserted perfectly into daily life, like Pyrrho, and yet immersed in the cosmos; dedicated to the service of men, and yet perfectly free in his interior life; conscious and yet peaceful; never forgetting the unique essential [*l'unique essentiel*]; and finally, and above all, faithful to the point of heroism to the purity of moral conscience, without which life would no longer be worth living. This is what the philosopher must try to actualize [*réaliser*]. [11]

Such an ideal was, according to Hadot, perfectly actualized in a historical and philosophical model: Socrates.[12] The Socratic "unique essential" is the philosophical "freedom" of the "soul" in its respect for a divine dialectics that can guide the secular self (PWL, 161). The asymptotic fundamental values of Truth and the Good are approached dialectically, and philosophy is the practice that allows us to cultivate knowledge and a feeling for it (*philo*), despite of the fact that we may not fully comprehend, here and now, what Truth is.

The Socratic ethos remains a possible model in our fragmented and contradictory global environments, Plato's cave still being filled with a cacophony of contradictory opinions and illusions, while digital networks amplify the emotional contagion of humanity's "sad passions."[13] In order to actualize its heroic program of healthy living, philosophy needs to engage with its desire to be practical and social. "Healthy reason" (*Gesunder Verstand*)[14] may aim at a collective agreement of emancipatory common sense, but it takes above all *individual* courage to think (and therefore act) as independently as possible on a daily basis. The philosophical path to health pertains to mental heroism because, as exemplified by Socrates, truth is never achieved once and for all; it is a process that demands a daily personal effort above normality. Kant, in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, reformulated the Socratic heroic ideal of philosophical health along three maxims:

> *Wisdom*, as the idea of a practical use of reason that is perfectly law-like, is no doubt too much to demand of human beings. But also, not even the slightest degree of wisdom can be poured into a man by others; rather he must bring it forth from himself. The precept for reaching it contains three leading maxims: (1) Think for oneself, (2) Think into the place of the other (in communication with human beings), (3) Always think consistently with oneself.[15]

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11) Hadot, *Discours et mode de vie philosophique*, 198, (my translation).

12) Hadot, "Exercices Spirituels," 41.

13) Trott, "Affective Labour and Alienation,"119–26.

14) Kant, "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?," 8.

15) Kant, *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 307.

Such was, according to Kant, the ideal of the Enlightenment, also expressed in his famous imperative against mental "cowardice" and existential "immaturity": "*sapere aude!*" dare to know.[16]

Given the Kantian maxims 1 and 3, one may wonder how maxim 2 can remain useful or applicable: what would be the purpose of conceptual empathy, in other words understanding other people's understanding in communication with one another, if in the end we are to remain faithful to our own thinking and if wisdom cannot be transmitted? That is because thinking is always intersubjective: the mediation of the other in dialogue, reading, even in inner dialogue cannot be avoided. Philosophy cannot consist only of a collection of egotistic or defensive imperatives facilitating the avoidance of being corrupted by, for example, foolishness, cowardice, adversity, immaturity, or social mimicry. The healthy philosopher is dedicated to the service of men, which means that personal philosophical health goes along with an attitude of philosophical care toward the other, at least in the form of dialogue. Mental heroism is not only about being able to resist resiliently or inflexibly to toxic influences, it also about intersubjective attention and openness, hence the need for Kant's second maxim of intellectual empathy and communication. Intellectual empathy is a hermeneutic task:[17] when we think as others think, we do not affirm the truth of all their propositions, we rather understand those propositions as bearing on the whole of another's orientation in thinking.

Through philosophy, the universal – a higher conceptual power, value, idea or ideal – shapes our plastic experience of the particular, while the particular – the empirical tests and challenges of life – may in turn give flesh and autobiographical consistency or robustness to a worldview. In other words, orientation in life and in thinking must tend to become one. This elasticity of the soul is supported via a deep and repeated philosophical orientation, which is our second principle.

Principle 2: Deep Orientation

In order to allow for the possibility of a grateful, intersubjective and passionate intellectual biography, philosophy as a way of life encourages the individual to define a fundamental high orientation. The highest courage, beyond daily mental liberating exercises, is to define and remain – undogmatically but firmly – faithful to an overarching existential and spiritual horizon that can guide the embodied person toward her highest destiny as possible self (PWL, 284). Hadot's notion of "profound orientation" (PWL, 284) echoes Kant's idea of orientation in thinking: "In the proper meaning of the word, to *orient* oneself means to use a given direction."[18] In the light of my praxis as philosophical counselor, I observed that philosophical dialogue helps the counselee, via a dialectic process of honest enunciation and deep listening (see principle 4), to feel less disoriented and slowly approach the verbalized intuition of a personal fundamental direction in life. The ethos of philosophical health, whether it is or is not mediated by a philosophical counselor, is meant to guide the person via concepts, ideas, or beliefs made explicit, so that her engagement with life is coherent with her engagement with ideas and words.

Kant adds that to orient myself "I also need the feeling of a difference in my own subject."[19] Does a profound existential orientation imply, for example, a difference between future, past, and present? There are several passages in which Hadot abides with the Stoic or Epicurean notion that we should try and live principally in the present: "The happy mind does not look towards the future" (PWL, 224). Yet the very idea of a *way* of life,

16) Gattei, "Back to Kant's 'Sapere Aude!'," 115–16.

17) Makkreel, *Orientation & Judgment in Hermeneutics*.

18) Kant, "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?," 8.

19) Ibid.

as well as the notion of orientation, also presupposes a future destination, even if this is an ideal to be realized: "For us, the ideal is in the future" (PWL, 220). Indeed, to be faithful to a profound orientation means not to disregard the future but to act upon it with trust, a form of present exercise of confidence rather than anxiety, fear, or passive hope:

> Enjoying the present without thinking about the past or the future, does not mean living in total instantaneousness. Thoughts about the past and the future are to be avoided only insofar as rehashing past defeats and cowering in fear of future difficulties, can cause distractions, worries, hopes, or despair, which turn our attention away from the present, where it ought to be concentrated. When we do concentrate our attention on the future, however, we discover that the present itself contains both the past and the future, insofar as it is the genuine passage within which the action and movement of reality are carried out. (PWL, 223)

The deep orientation of philosophical health is an active care that is anticipatory of the future as well as informed by the past. Above all, it is oriented toward the present as a form of attentive engagement with life. This can be a present of aesthetic enjoyment, but it is above all the present of creation (see principles 3 and 5).

When we conjugate an English verb in the future tense, an auxiliary term is added: *will* or *shall*. These two modal signifiers indicate an orientation. They may seem to point toward a middle ground between desire and necessity. *I will because I must*: it is my duty. *I will because I long for*: it is my vision. What do we long for? The issue of a crisis, for example, cannot merely rely on a list of objective goals, measurable quantitively ("I will lose ten kilos," "I will make ten thousand euros," "I will quit my job, leave my country or my partner"), otherwise they might not point to a healthier future but to a deterministic and narrowed projection of the past. The future is never certain, standardized, or wholly objective: it is singular, partly subjective, and possible with various degrees of trust or faith. In my view (which is also the view of process philosophers such as Bergson or Whitehead), the practical and philosophical modality through which past, future and present are *eudynamically* connected is creation or creativity (see principle 3). In Hadotian terms, a profound orientation means that we think about the future as a co-creative horizon in which the domestic realm and the cosmological realm are in harmony and correspondence. It is a possibility of wholeness that engages us here and now, conjugates our being in the present tense: we care about our healthy belonging to a universal meta-human process and we feel a longing for a grateful expanding, a non-fragmented nor diminished existence.

Beyond the individual, to think about the future of life on earth, for example, should not be only a measurable exercise in probabilities and statistics – scientific knowledge is not enough: we have known quantitatively about the dangers of pollution and climate change for decades now and yet only a minority is subjectively and actively concerned with ecological action. The systemic change that is needed implies philosophical and cosmological care. As pointed out by Hadot, some form of engaged passion must be preserved (PWL 284). In this care for the future of being, there might still remain a touch of hope, a great deal of love, an energy of epic struggle or joyful desire, certainly some form of faith for immanence.

Deep orientation means participative trust in what we admire. In the words of the Roman poet Horace: "Strain your wine and prove your wisdom; life is short; should hope be more? … Seize the present; trust tomorrow even as little as you may."[20] The poet suggests substituting passive *hope* for performative *trust* in the future, favoring present engagement. *Carpe diem* does not mean merely, as it is often understood, to indulge in carefree pleasure; it rather means a *doing* and therefore an avoidance of procrastination or sleepwalking. Too

20) Horace, *The Odes and Carmen Saeculare*, 11.

much hope tends to be reactive, even when it seeks guarantees in prediction sheets and other Babylonian tables of predictive computing. Probabilistic knowledge based on vast amounts of so-called objective data is mortiferous when it objectifies the future, limits our horizon of possibility and creativity, prevents us from thinking the unthinkable. The philosophical principle of deep orientation calls for awareness in agency, an involvement with time that generates a co-created and examined future never detached from the care of practice. Hadot here also quotes Epicurus: "life is wasted in procrastination" (PWL, 88).

Deep orientation is actively idealistic rather than reductively realistic. Any vision regarding the future of humanity that claims to be grounded on mere realism – whether it is Marxism or current technocracies relying on statistics and artificial intelligence – not only abolishes the future as open horizon of possibility but also the present as creative cosmological realm (see principle 5). Many so-called scientific utopias, such as today's technological transhumanism or former communism, can be said to criticize the present for the sake of a better future: "We call communism the *real* movement that abolishes the present state of things."[21] A profound orientation toward an ideal (for example justice, beauty, or truth) does not abolish the possibility of creative freedom in the now: it is, as we shall see, *crealectic* rather than merely analytic or realistic.

One might be tempted to feel the task is overly ambitious: can I ever define clearly what my profound orientation is and if so, why does philosophy have privileged access to it? Philosophical thinking seems to have been a feature of the human species for only several millennia while life on earth appeared more than three billion years ago, and an evolutionary biologist might conclude that philosophizing is not hardwired in the brain in the way survivalist, competitive, aggressive, or fearful behaviors are. What if our so-called profound orientation was simply reproduction? One answer to such reductionism is simply to observe that it is a fact that humans make and have made decisions that are not based on a reproductive agenda, but rather on a transformative search for meaning. Or, as Hadot puts it: "Such is the human condition. In order to live, mankind must 'humanize' the world" (PWL, 258).

Closely tied to the invention of philosophy is the ideal of human flourishing, by which individuals aspire to free their selves from uncontrolled beliefs, automatic fears, bellicose impulses, dogmas, or lack of mastery over their personal destination. Well-being is not only preoccupied about reproductive survival or posthumous bliss in an otherworldly paradise. Perhaps one could say that philosophy's gift to humanity is the democratic ideal of a paradise on earth for each citizen: "The most significant heritage Plato left to utopian thought was the conviction that an ideal society was in some measure feasible."[22] From Plato to Nietzsche, and also beyond the European tradition, philosophers tend to suggest that philosophy could help us to realize a joyful, meaningful and fulfilling social life, a form of personal and collective imparadisation of being here on our planet, among humans and not in an otherly post-mortem heaven. Civic paradise on earth for the many can in fact be seen as the collective orientation of philosophy, and according to Hadot, this has to do with the drive to understand social life *sub specie aeternitatis*: "philosophy was held to be an exercise consisting in learning to regard both society and the individuals who comprise it from the point of view of universality" (PWL, 242).

But, because philosophizing as a way of life is constantly engaged in particular worlds and not only in the eternal or universal, its orientation is confronted with what may be interpreted as moments or situations of crisis in which a critical assessment needs to be combined with a capacity for renewal or regeneration in order to avoid disorientation. Hence our third principle: critical creativity.

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21) Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 162.

22) Manuel and Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, 112.

Principle 3: Critical Creativity

To understand how philosophy can influence our engagement with life in critical contexts, we need first to grasp the multifarious meaning of crisis and make a performative semantic choice. The etymology of crisis is derived from the Greek *krisis* and its verb *krinein*, which meant to choose, to discriminate, to judge or to decide in an important moment. *Krisis*, and its Proto-Indo-European root, *krey-*, which refers to the practice of passing material through a sieve, indicates an act of separation or division, "the winnowing of wanted elements from unwanted material."[23] According to Michel Foucault, a crisis is a call to our capacity to formulate a judgment at the right moment, when no law or previous knowledge might exist.[24] Critical is the mind that takes the right decision at or before the point of "acme" of a process, anticipating and influencing its unfolding.[25] This aspect of criticality was for example how the historian Thucydides interpreted contexts in which war may become peace or conversely.[26]

A crisis is never a purely objective phenomenon, a set of articulated facts to which we would merely react; it is always also subjective, as an interpretative situation upon which we can act prophylactically by staving off unhealthy trends, or therapeutically, by conjuring attitudes or remedies that may heal. Hadot adds that a social or personal crisis is a moment of truth, or better an opportunity for veracity, increased authenticity, honesty, in which the faithfulness to our conscience is tested.[27] The critical act is anticipatory, it seeks to maintain, redefine, or assert an orientation, and such orientation, as we have seen, is always value-laden: never neutrally deterministic, it involves a decision, a responsibility for what may happen.

This notion of crisis was also used in the medical realm by Ancient Greeks and Romans: there is a crucial moment, for the doctor to discriminate and judge in each singular case, when a disease can either be cured or it will worsen.[28] Today, an organism that is healthy and not seriously affected by any physical crisis is said to be in "homeostasis,"[29] a term coined in 1926 by the Harvard physiologist Walter Bradford Cannon to designate a bodily state of equilibrium – sometimes also called "eustasis"[30] from the Greek prefix *eu-*, meaning *good*. An ill organism in more or less critical condition is said to be in "cacostasis,"[31] from the Greek root *caco-*, meaning bad. Despite the idea of fixity that might be conveyed by the term *stasis* (state), bodies, like minds, are in a constant dynamic process in which they both react to stress, stimuli, or act upon their environment, sometimes in co-creative ways. Stress physiologist George Chrousos recently proposed the term "hyperstasis" to emphasize the proactive, creative, or resilient aspect of health:

> The interaction between homeostasis-disturbing stressors and stressor-activated adaptive responses of the organism can have three potential outcomes. First, the match may be perfect, and the organism returns to its basal homeostasis or eustasis; second, the adaptive response may be inappropriate (for example, inadequate, excessive and/or prolonged) and the organism falls into cacostasis;

23) DeCaroli, "Arendt's *Krisis*," 176.

24) Foucault, *Lectures on the Will to Know*, 102.

25) Parrochia, *La forme des crises*, 189.

26) Samman, "Crisis Theory and The Historical Imagination," 969.

27) Hadot, *Discours et mode de vie philosophique*, 198.

28) Cooper, "Numbers, Prognosis and Healing: Galen on Medical Theory," 48.

29) Davies, "Adaptive Homeostasis," 1–7.

30) Chrousos, "Stress and Disorders of the Stress System," 374–81.

31) Ibid., 375.

> and, third, the match may be perfect and the organism gains from the experience and a new, improved homeostatic capacity is attained, for which I propose the term "hyperstasis."[32]

If bodies can be hyperstatic or eudynamic, and if, as science also proposed in the last decade, brains can demonstrate plasticity late in life and epigenetics be as influential as genetics,[33] it is not asking too much that mind be occasionally critically creative.

The ideal of philosophical health suggest a durably resilient, eudynamic and regular capacity for recreative transformations of critical situations. Cognitive critical creativity means not only being able to remain logically vigilant about fallacies of reasoning by examining the premises and consequences of our beliefs – it also means to address and anticipate situations of crisis with an hyperstatic attitude, one that is not obsessed by a conservative and perhaps impossible return to a past equilibrium, but capable of creating new states of consciousness and existential haleness. In other words, articulated by Foucault, philosophy must combine novelty, *crisis* and *critique* in order to help us to:

> Separate out, from the contingency that has made us what we are, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think. It is not seeking to make possible a metaphysics that has finally become a science; it is seeking to give new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom.[34]

Foucault here is commenting Kant's idea that Enlightenment means self-determination and liberation from immature dependence. Healthy reason should not only dwell in science or metaphysical knowledge but also in creative politics and innovative citizenship.

As Hadot insists, philosophical health should therefore not be seen only conservatively, as the stoic attempt to return to a homeostasis of the mind, a pre-set equilibrium of "well-studied theorems" that would be defined once and for all regarding a reified and fantasized optimal human nature (PWL, 268). The comparison that Hadot proposes is that of the artist, who may seem to "do nothing but apply rules, yet there is an immeasurable distance between artistic creation and the abstract theory of art" (PWL, 268). Life is constantly presenting new situations to us, which may or may not be defined as crises when we evaluate them through the lens of our worldview and orientation, without letting ourselves be influenced by statistical anxieties or self-abasement. Healthy thinking is "a continuous act, permanent and identical with life itself," which has "to be renewed at each instant" (PWL, 268). We as co-creators may also present new situations to life.

In other words, the deep orientation that guides the philosophically oriented person cannot be a rigid theory, and mental heroism cannot mean stubbornness; it is rather a faithfulness to an asymptotic ideal (truth, justice, honesty, knowledge, or philosophical health itself, among other possibilities) that bounces with agility on the constant trials and encounters of life. This grounded yet creative attitude involves an acute and astute attention to the singularity of each situation, which is akin to a deep form of listening.

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32) Ibid.

33) Fagiolini, "Epigenetic Influences on Brain Development and Plasticity," 207–12.

34) Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 46.

Principle 4: Deep Listening

The idea that attentive listening ("akroasis" in Ancient Greek) can be practiced as a "spiritual exercise" and as a principle of philosophical health was already present in Philo of Alexandria two thousand years ago (PWL, 84). In philosophical dialogue, the speaker may be tempted to lecture the listener with ideas or references that are "the fruit of long efforts pursued in private," but the "true philosophical teacher," according to Hadot, "adapts his speech to the state of his listeners" in order to approach a horizon of care and healing (PWL, 69). Deep philosophical listening induces a feedback loop of attention between the persons in dialogue.

The source of philosophical comprehension is traditionally associated on the one hand with wonder, on the other hand with the ideal of autonomous thinking "in order to escape from ignorance."[35] Since Aristotle, we know that philosophy starts when we consider objects, ideas, or practices in their peculiarity and singularity, but also with a comprehensive attitude in order to situate these particulars within the greater whole. To comprehend philosophically is not only to understand analytically, it is also to engage in dialectic *com-prehension* (etymologically a seizing-together), a form of dialogue that aims at becoming "consonant" with the other, with nature and with truth, consonance being a sound-related idea Hadot takes from Epictetus (PWL, 194).

As I write these lines on a computer, I hear the birds sing outside in the garden, perched on trees. I close my eyes and listen to one of them chirping. There is a silence, then a high-pitched chitter composed of a few notes, then apparent silence again. As I focus, the sound seems to be located in my head. Yet I know that I did not produce it completely and that silence is a subjective myth: my surroundings are a patchwork of sounds waiting to be interpreted. The more I can name and identify them, the more I hear them distinctly; for example, the distant droning of a heating unit, a raven croaking, or, closer to my lifeworld, the staccato of my fingers typing on the computer's keyboard. I heard these sounds previously, yet, when I pay more attention, they have a freshness to them that seems to be proportional to my focus.[36] I close my eyes again, surrendering to the sounds as if for the first time. Other sounds do not reach my "psychological threshold" and remain subliminal, as in Leibniz's "petites perceptions."[37]

As a philosophical counselor, I am every week in private conversation with individuals about their existence, acts, interpretations, and existential beliefs. I am sometimes asked what my methodology is, and my first answer is that philosophical care must start with open and deep listening. In a dialogue with another person, philosophical listening is a practice belonging to the tradition of care for truth as "emergence" and "co-naissance," a co-creative birth and burst of signification and meaning.[38] Foucault writes in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*:

> Good philosophical listening involves a necessary work of attention, of a double and forked attention. On the one hand looking towards the *pragma*, towards a specifically philosophical signification in which assertion is equivalent to prescription. And then, on the other, a looking at ourselves in which, memorizing what we have heard, we see it embedding itself and gradually becoming subject in the soul that listens. The soul that listens must keep watch on itself. In paying proper attention to what it hears it pays attention to what it hears as signification.[39]

35) Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 982b.

36) This phenomenon of centration of the attention has been studied by Jean Piaget and James J. Gibson.

37) Rouder and Morey, "The Nature of Psychological Thresholds," 656.

38) Kirkpatrick, "Understanding in a Post-Truth World: Comprehension and Co-Naissance as Empathetic Antidotes to Post-Truth Politics," 327.

39) Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 351.

Contrary to analytical descriptions aiming at a neutral objectivity, a healthy philosophical perspective consciously engages the observer, the listener, the speaker, the writer, not in order to apply a systematic grid of diagnoses, but to let a singular signification manifest itself, here and now, within a context of trust for the unheard-of. This attentive concentration may allow us, according to Hadot's recapture of Stoicism and Epicureanism, "to discover the infinite value and unheard-of miracle of our presence in the world" (PWL 259).

Human flourishing is a harmonious dialogue with inner and outer worlds akin to a pragmatic form of poetry, an intuitive co-creation of slowly emerging networks of symbols, webs of meaning, some of which become explicit or performative at a slower rhythm than the forced pace of technological growth. A consonant signification might connect signs, realms or domains that might have seemed to be heterogenous. We correspond with the world via intertwined notions and sensations, as in Baudelaire's familiar *Correspondences*, in which the "living columns" of nature "release now and then words' confused interplay, as through forests of symbols."[40] Baudelaire here famously echoed the Swedish mystic Swedenborg – in her biography of the latter, Signe Toksvig writes:

> All psychological processes were immaterial events which could have an effect in the material world. And these effects were often "correspondences"; they expressed either directly or in symbolic form their spiritual cause… Life, for him, was a force emanating from the Divine… Temporary, soul-stuff "phantasies" could become materialized – appear in solid earth-stuff – if they, "which in themselves are spiritual, meet with homogeneous or corresponding things in the earths, for then are present both the spiritual that furnishes a soul and the material that furnishes a body."[41]

Swedenborg's thinking style is esoteric, but the idea that we live in the environment that our psychology deserves is familiarly encountered in therapy. Common experience abounds with complications emanating from an initial act that was made out of fear of complication, or conversely with ideals that inspire similarly minded concretizations.

Careful listening bears fruits because everything in the universe is interlaced, and not only human lives. What emerges is what Merleau-Ponty calls the *co-birth* of meaning within the flesh of the world, or *co-naissance*:

> The flesh of my body and the flesh of the world are one, with Merleau-Ponty going so far as to say that we are made from *la même étoffe* – the same stuff… . *Naissance* is the French word for "birth" while *connaissance* comes from the verb *connaître*, which means "to know" or "to understand." Hence, to have *co-naissance*, is to have both an "understanding" and a "co-birth." … Understanding in terms of *connaissance* implies a more comfortable familiarity with something, which in turn raises the notion of *famille*, or family. Thus, to have an understanding is to have a familial bond, a genetic relationship, or *to be of the same flesh*.[42]

Philosophical health, contrary to some forms of psychotherapy, does not establish borders, labels and distinctions between minds or human types: it presupposes that we are of the same cosmological flesh and therefore we are bound to comprehend each other, if only we listen to alterity and the unheard-of before we respond.

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40) Baudelaire, *Correspondences*, *Brigham Young University Studies*, 154.

41) Toksvig, *Emanuel Swedenborg*: *Scientist and Mystic*, 285–87.

42) Kirkpatrick, "Understanding in a Post-Truth World," 327–28.

The comprehensive listening of philosophical dialogue would not be possible if one thought that words cannot reveal anything but our social mimicry or incapacity to reach any truth via verbal enunciation. "Deep listening" was a key concept for American musicologist Pauline Oliveros, who advocated to "listen to everything until it all belongs together and you are part of it."[43] Oliveros emphasized the active nature of listening, as opposed to passive "hearing," and she called the former "sonic meditations":

> With continuous work, some of the following becomes possible with sonic meditations: heightened states of awareness or expanded consciousness, changes in physiology and psychology from known and unknown tensions to relaxations which gradually become permanent. These changes may represent a tuning of mind and body.[44]

Of course, philosophy is not a miracle pill, and it must be distinguished from technical promises of permanent nirvana, not because it doubts that mind and body can to a certain extent be harmonized, nor because it does not believe that heightened states of consciousness can be attained via thinking, but because philosophical health is preferably understood as a becoming, an asymptotic ideal. Philosophy is a *way*, insisted Hadot, and "way" means here slow-growth *process*, patient journey rather than spectacular landing: "Both the grandeur and the paradox of ancient philosophy are that it was, at one and the same time, conscious of the fact that wisdom is inaccessible, and convinced of the necessity of pursuing spiritual progress" (PWL, 265).

This "continuous vigilance and presence of mind," this pragmatic "constant tension of the spirit" (PWL, 84) would not be possible if the philosopher was not presupposing that each life is both common and singular, that is, at least *a priori* capable of the unheard-of, because the common cosmological flesh we belong to is the "multiplicity of *physeis*" or "natures" (PWL, 137) which can be understood as a creative influx of ultimate possibility, here called *Creal*.

Principle 5: The Creal, or Ultimate Possibility

What is the core of my evolving being, of other beings, and of being itself? Can I access this source, this *primum mobile*, via thoughtful meditation or via a series of meaningful acts in the world? Social reality as we know it and practice it every day may weaken our capacity for self-transcendence and recreative thinking. We get used to biological impulses, mimetic behavior, habits, rituals, ideologies, cultural traits, object-oriented norms, and we may stop paying attention to their strangeness, to their arbitrariness, to their capacity to be otherwise, and to our capacity for self-transmutation, and for what Hadot calls "a heightening of consciousness which may go as far as a philosophical conversion" (PWL, 149).

Philosophy starts as a perceptive and creative cognitive risk, the openness to experience a "metanoia,"[45] a "philosophical conversion, implying a voluntary, radical transformation of one's way of living and looking at the world."[46] This might sound like a vaguely dangerous endeavor. Indeed, some conscious risk need to be taken, as epitomized by our first principle; philosophical health may re-enchant our lifeworld, but it also starts with the courage of making our world a stranger and less comfortable place in the short term and in order to get rid of bad habits. It might be compared with the courage of the newborn, who arrives in

43) Oliveros, *Sounding the Margins*, 7.

44) Oliveros, *Sonic Meditations*, 1.

45) Hadot, *Discours et mode de vie philosophique*, 133.

46) Ibid., 222.

a new strange world in a quite uncomfortable fashion, except that philosophical healthiness requires that we become our own parent.

Each appearance of a human newborn on earth reshuffles the possibles *a priori*. Each baby is given a unique horizon, more or less rich with multiple future meanings, orientations, practices, and beliefs. No predetermined golden path for success can be stated for certain, no educational or economic standard for personal bliss can be imposed deterministically, apart from "dignified" conditions of existence such as "nutrition, water, health care, housing, education."[47] Each person may try to elaborate their spiritual growth or "auto-transcendence" by "bootstrapping"[48] through more or less adversity, as years go by – and often more so in late age, as suggested by research in "gerotranscendence."[49] A philosophical-health mindset is an authentic and diverse way of life because it does not teach which ideal-self specifically to become; rather, it advocates a transformative freedom to create a singular biography and therefore act as personally as possible, without clinging to past impairments, social determinism or suboptimal conditions. Hadot insists that most philosophical "schools believed in the freedom of the will, thanks to which man has the possibility to modify, improve and realize himself."[50]

This of course cannot be meant to suggest that we do not develop or encounter limitations, impairments, obstacles, or impossibilities *de facto* in the course of our existence. As observed by some existentialist philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre, the challenge of our freedom to grow consists in integrating finite actualities, our contingent biography, within an ontological precondition of ultimate possibility. We can interpret a given situation in many ways and the situation itself is grounded on a multifarious process of becoming. The *primum mobile* of all beings is creative possibility, or, in Heidegger's words, "being must be first thought in the form of the possible."[51] Infinite cosmic possibility or multiplicity is the ontological principle of philosophical health. It is the most generous ontological hypothesis about the cosmological source of all things, one that postulates that the ultimate Real is an infinite and multifarious creative process, here called "Creal" to insist on the fact that this real-Real is a creating influx, an onflow of disparate becoming, an ecstasy of externalizations rather than a substance.[52] In Hadot's phrasing, it is the ground of "physis, that movement of growth and birth by which things manifest themselves" (PWL, 260).

If the ground of being is pure potentiality *de jure*, then any person may have access to feeling its energy, not matter what her *de facto* limitations are. In Kierkegaard's view, the self is an existential kind of relation with the world that involves the integration of what he calls "the infinite and the finite."[53] Infinite possibility of possibility is not to be understood in the techno-economic sense of control over nature, but as a grateful and trustful relationship to the natural multiplicity of being, prior to its social and biographical actualizations. This, as we shall argue in what follows, is the aspect of philosophical health that activates a form of engaged faith in life and becoming: good faith if not cosmological faith or what Hadot calls "faith in the providential Logos" (PWL, 282), rather than bad faith.

Philosophy is a way of looking at life that tries to encompass the totality of what there is or might be, what Hadot calls "the vision of totality, and elevation of thought to the level of universal thought" (PWL, 99), in contradistinction to the analytic fragmentation of sciences or specific applied practices which deal with

47) Antkowiak, "A 'Dignified Life' and the Resurgence of Social Rights."

48) Dupuy, "Individualisme et auto-transcendance," 250.

49) Tornstam, *Gerotranscendence: A Developmental Theory of Positive Aging*.

50) Hadot, *Discours et mode de vie philosophique*, 102.

51) Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (Of the Event)*, 374.

52) de Miranda, "On the Concept of Creal," 511–14.

53) Stenner, "On Standards and Values: Between Finite Actuality and Infinite Possibility," 158.

a delimited corner of the Real without caring about the Whole. I abide with the view that the largest idea one can have of totality is that it is creative possibility in perpetual becoming, or multiversal creativity. This Creal or Creative Real (in order to distinguish it from its subset, a more restrictive and objectified Real), which Alfred North Whitehead also called "creativity process," is always there in the background of the Real as "the universal of universals characterizing the ultimate matter of fact."[54]

Creal is an *a priori* concept that echoes what the Pre-Socratics termed *physis*. The intellectual cultivation and feeling of this idea is for Hadot an indispensable spiritual exercise, advocated for example by Marcus Aurelius:

> "Physics," when practiced as a spiritual exercise, leads us to "familiarity" with nature. Thanks to this familiarity, we can perceive the links between all phenomena which seem strange or repugnant to us, and between these phenomena and universal reason, the source from which they flow. From such a perspective, every event will seem to us beautiful and worthy of our affectionate assent. To be indifferent to indifferent things means to make no difference between them; in other words, to love them equally, just as nature does… . And the Universe, too, loves to produce all that must be produced. Thus, I say to the Universe: "I love along with you!" (PWL, 197)

Such love or crealectic ecstasy is not a systematic surrendering, given the fact that some phenomena might destabilize our well-being and deep orientation. Because of the courage it requires, the spiritual exercise of ultimate possibility also reconnects with principle 1, namely mental heroism, and thus the open circle of principles is constantly turning.

Before contemporary physics and the mathematical measure of material phenomena, there is a more primordial physics, one that welcomes the noumenon as prime generator in the cosmic possibilization furnace, what Spinoza would call "divine Nature": "Nature is the prime subject-being; … it has maximal power; … it is the productive origin (if not 'creator') of all beings; … it exists in all possibilities."[55] Whenever we see only the realistic finitude of a situation, its limitations, its facticity or dependence on facts or predefined forms (the Real), and forget the background of possibility and creativity that is implied by a processual totality of being and wholeness of becoming (the Creal), we limit our capacity to think, feel and act in new ways, with regenerated enthusiasm, mental hyperstasis and eudynamic self-transcendence.

In Whiteheadian phrasing, "any one finite perspective does not enable an entity to shake off its essential connection with totality," which is the "infinite background" of ultimate possibility.[56] Or in more mystical terms, "There is a practical consciousness, an 'I can,' that underlies and precedes the reflective self-consciousness of the 'I think,' but the 'I can' is given and coeval with an 'it can'."[57] This *It Can* or *It Is Possible* axiom of universal creativity is the cosmological *a priori* of philosophical health, the fundamental origin of becoming, one that may not be proven mathematically, but that is the subject-being of a cosmological act of faith, precisely what Hadot calls "faithfulness to the Logos" (PWL, 95).

Existentially, one might take the highway of received secular normality and remain on it to pretend one knows what a safe life amounts to until a critical situation surges that could not be predicted, and then a good faith must be counted upon or rebuilt. In order for a society to function, we have indeed to follow a set

54) Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 31.

55) Almog, *Everything in Its Right Place*, 90.

56) Whitehead, *Essays in Science and Philosophy*, 60.

57) Sinclair, "Heidegger on 'Possibility'," 191.

of analytic rules, but these are always contingent and do not exhaust the totality of the possible. Jean-Paul Sartre notoriously wrote in *Existentialism Is a Humanism* that "existence precedes essence."[58] There is no such thing as full necessity in matters of human society. To believe that we are fully determined, and causally so, by the rigid or dark conditions of reality is the form of thinking that Sartre calls "bad faith."[59] Any discourse that negates my freedom to rebound beyond the statistical average in the same conditions is self-contradictory, because in resignation the subject is negating himself as subject and reifying herself as an object subjected to causality and determinism: "We cannot decide *a priori* what ought to be done,"[60] since the only *a priori* one can accept in good faith is the possibility of possibility, whether we posit it as a spiritual principle or whether we prefer to focus on secular collective action, that is on, as I have written elsewhere, "the possibility for the concept of universal creation to be a political and ethical axiom, the result of a global social contract."[61]

Here it must be added that the received idea that philosophy advocates a reliance on the sole power of will and/or worldly logic is historically inaccurate: if in the twentieth century philosophers have tried to articulate worldviews that did not contain an explicit reference to a belief in the divine or a cosmological principle, most major philosophers in history have been believers in some form of higher power, from Socrates's daimonion to Heidegger's Being. Moreover, as Whitehead and Kierkegaard, among others, pointed out, science itself relies on "leaps of faith,"[62] for example the fatalistic idea that the totality of all there is may be a predictable and deterministic mechanism.[63] The world is not a mathematical object only, but a creative "process of becoming."[64] This is why a subject is always more or less consciously engaging, beyond analytic intelligence (the rational fragmentation of the world) and beyond dialectics (oppositional dynamics), in "crealectics,"[65] which is the life-engaged conjugation and world-forming articulation of the Real and the Creal. The Latin etymology of *conjugate* means to join together; such a link that joins can be a harmonization, a healthy assembling, a composition of infinite and finite possibilities, a *compossibility* – a neologism proposed by Duns Scotus in the thirteenth century and rediscovered by Leibniz four centuries later to designate an ensemble of compatible possibilities.[66]

"Crealectics is a zigzag in between the actual and the virtual, on the crest line,"[67] I wrote elsewhere. Thus, the present and future way of life of each human may be an openness to the possibility of possibility, in order not only to avoid despair but to foster existential joy. Our collective responsibility is to be able to actualize what not only intensifies our shared potentialities in the present, but also what preserves the future as a terrain for the healthy self-actualization and self-transcendence of newborns to come:

> If a self is to become itself, then it must become concrete – a concrete part of the world of activity. Kierkegaard insists that this process of becoming concrete "means neither to become finite nor

58) Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 20.

59) Phillips, "Bad Faith and Sartre's Waiter," 23–31.

60) Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, 46.

61) de Miranda, "On the Concept of Creal," 510.

62) Schacht, "Kierkegaard on 'Truth is Subjectivity' and 'The Leap of Faith'," 297–313.

63) Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, 15.

64) Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 163.

65) de Miranda, "*Artificial Intelligence and Philosophical Creativity.*"

66) See for example Brown & Chiek, *Leibniz on Compossibility and Possible Worlds.*

67) de Miranda, "On the Concept of Creal," 513.

> infinite" but to synthesize the two in each and every experience. We need what he calls the limiting factor of the finite, but we also need the expanding factor of the infinite. To become itself, then, a self must weave together the finite and the infinite through processes of infinitizing and finitizing.[68]

This crealectic process of infinitizing openness and imparadizing externalization is not only a private form of growth, it belongs to a dynamic of societal possibilization not only of sameness but also of "the Other," which is a widening of Kant's maxim: to think into the place of the Other, of the unheard-of, rather than just the other fellow.

If the ground of life is a creative and continuously recreative duration, then societal time cannot be a mere deterministic unfolding of necessity. The ultimate value of philosophical health, its shared cosmology, is an intuition of totality as open creativeness, which can manifest itself subjectively as good faith in the powers of Otherness or sublimity: "Sublimity, writes Hegel, lifts the absolute above every immediate existent and therefore brings about the liberation which, though abstract at first, is at last the foundation of the spirit."[69] What Hadot and the Ancient philosophers meant by spiritual exercises, is that no matter how able your body is in its capacity for an autopilot dealing with the current real state of affairs, you cannot live an inspired and spirited life without an effort of the mind toward a spiritual absolute. This is also a preventive stance: starting a practice of philosophical health before we are objectively impaired, anticipating the crisis, prepares us to deal better with future physical or mental impairments.

The sublime feeling of possibility of possibility sensitizes us to an outside and an inside in thought, to what Merleau-Ponty calls a recreative "hyper-dialectic" between imagination, reason, body, plurality and ambiguity.[70] A healthy human life and healthy thinking needs to host regular moments of felt sublimity, as a necessary condition to reconnect our feeling and goodwill with the possibility of regeneration or novelty. This crealectic practice of constant returning to the felt source of possibility becomes "the transport that leads all thought (critical thought included) to its limits."[71] Crealectic self-transcendence, this paradoxical capacity to pursue something that is both personal and transpersonal, but conceived and felt, more real than the Real, can ultimately be productive of novel manners of being in the world, indeed, if not of a new form of life, a new way of life.

Conclusion: Get Creal!

In dialogue with Hadot's rereading of Ancient philosophy, we explored five core principles of philosophical health, which I see as *ways of crealing*: mental heroism, deep orientation, creative criticality, deep listening, and the Creal. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, nor a rigid algorithm for personal development; it is a philosophical contribution to an urgent global discussion about the meaning of a healthy life. Despite the ironic imperative carried by the title of this conclusion, a crealectic regimen must be felt singularly rather than followed. For many of the Ancient philosophers that Hadot cites, "one cannot know the principle of all things if one has not had the experience of union with it" (PWL, 60). Crealectics does not advocate a full fusion or impersonal union with the Creal, which would be contradictory to the ideas of becoming and multiplicity, but in Deleuzian terms, one can and should have a "feeling" for and of the Creal.[72]

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68) Stenner, "On Standards and Values: Between Finite Actuality and Infinite Possibility," 159.

69) Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 362.

70) Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 94.

71) Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, x.

72) de Miranda, "Is a New Life Possible? Deleuze and the Lines," 130.

In common parlance, philosophy, like poetry, is sometimes said to be inoperative, beautifully vain, gratuitous as would be our flights of fancy. Poets and philosophers are often seen as marginal or passive observers, masters in escaping the seriousness of real life or conversely too serious and tragic. But philosophy and poetry are here to remind us that the object and the subject, the Real and the Creal, are a present conjugation that may bear healthy fruits within a rhythm of slow growth rather than the artificial growth of forced forms of technocratic or arithmomaniac production. No matter the crises we are facing, at every instant the world is renewed by our beliefs and actions, as well as by the plurality and meta-human onflow of creal becoming.

Philosophically-minded citizens should have a more active part in the global process of meaning-making. Yet both in evolutionary terms and in statistical terms, philosophizing is still too marginally active or too implicit on our planet. Socially speaking, philosophical thinking tends to remain the privilege of a minority; yet philosophy as a democratic and global way of life is a possibility to be realized on a large societal scale. Physical health and psychological health, as practices of care, were in the beginning of the twentieth century a privilege for the happy few, but by the end of the same century they were treated institutionally and culturally as a necessity for all; it is not impossible to imagine that philosophical health could be widely seen as a necessity for all before the end of the current century. But is it not dangerous or even self-contradictory to desire that philosophical health be institutionalized as is physical health?

Humans are still learning to define objectives that remain meaningful and healthy in the long term. "Paradise on earth" can indeed quickly become hell on earth, a paranoid prison in which the quest for security, unity, or meaning may produce the depletion of our *joie de vivre*. However, it is my contention that to counterbalance the totalitarian rise of artificial, arithmetic, and deterministic intelligence, we need to foster on a global scale a culture of natural and creation-affirming intelligence, within the open limits of deep listening and respectful dialogue. A crealectic global social contract should enhance a constantly renewed opening to the concept of creation as felt possibility of possibility.

Crealectic care means being philosophically attuned, not only to reality as we know it, but also to the continuous creations and to the relation with the possible that constantly renews our common destiny. The often-heard popular injunction to "get real" may be helpful in some cases of excessive denial or delusion, but it can often be an imperative to die spiritually, thus engendering depression or resignation, abandonment or loss of meaning. Hence the meta-realistic counter-injunction of philosophical health, which is not a categorical imperative, rather an intersubjective expression of philosophical joy: *Get Creal!*

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