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Good reasons to philosophize: On Hadot, Cooper, and ancient philosophical protreptic

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Abstract
This paper reassesses the Cooper-Hadot debate surrounding how students are converted to philosophy as a way of life (section 1) through engagement with philosophical protreptics. In section 2, the paper identifies the core "argument from finality" in philosophical protreptics seeking to convert non-philosophers to philosophy, starting from the universal human interest in securing eudaimonia. In line with Cooper, this argument seeks to persuade prospective students on rational grounds, so that their choice to philosophise would be rationally motivated. In section 3.1, the paper illustrates how in Plato's *Euthydemus* (a) the choice to undertake philosophy is rationally justified by Socrates, using the eudaimonistic argument from finality. In section 3.2, by recourse to Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, the paper shows how the protreptic texts also compared philosophy to other intellectual pursuits, notably rhetoric, so as to recommend philosophy specifically for delivering a directive wisdom concerning how to live.

KEYWORDS
John M. Cooper, metaphilosophy, Pierre Hadot, protreptic, reason

1 | INTRODUCTION

The question of how and why individuals choose to become philosophers, or to align themselves with a particular philosophical orientation, is ancient. It for instance forms the central concern of the satirist Lucian's Socratic dialogue the *Hermotimus*, in which Lycinus questions

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the bases for the eponymous hero's choice of Stoicism. When students commence philosophical study, the dialogue suggests, they have too little knowledge to wisely choose a philosophical orientation. When they have completed a philosophical education, they presumably have no need to make such a choice or are already irreversibly committed to some dogmatic orientation (Lucian 1959, §§ 13ff).[1]

This "Hermotimus paradox" (as it might be called with a nod to the *Meno*), poses a continuing challenge, wherever and whenever students are invited to become philosophers. It also anticipates one of the key disputes surrounding Pierre Hadot's influential metaphilosophical work on ancient philosophy as a way of life (*manière de vivre* or *mode de la vie*). John M. Cooper and Thomas Flynn have argued that Hadot's vision of ancient philosophy misrepresents its object, in particular by presenting the initial "conversion" of a student to one or other philosophical orientation as an "existential choice," without prior rational justification (Flynn 2005; Cooper 2009, 2012). For Cooper, by contrast, the process of becoming a philosopher involves an initial commitment only to "living according to reason," as against choosing a particular dogmatic orientation and way of life (Cooper 2009, 20, 23). Cooper contends that Hadot completely misses this prior commitment to basing one's life on reason, as against passions of customary beliefs, in his account of philosophical conversion in Greco-Roman antiquity.

One remarkable feature of this debate, however, is that neither of its protagonists looks for guidance to the ancient philosophical genre of writing that was expressly designed to "convert" new students to philosophy (Jordan 1986). This is the genre of protreptic led by Plato's *Euthydemus*, Aristotle's lost *Protrepticus*, and Marcus Tullius Cicero's *Hortensius*.[2] The bases of Hadot's approach to ancient texts lies in a post-Wittgensteinian hermeneutics attentive to the various rhetorical and argumentative genres of ancient philosophical writings (Hadot 2004, 83–102; 2012, 59). Yet, if there is one ancient philosophical genre that would seem to be most closely linked to the idea of philosophy as a way of life, it would be philosophical protreptic. As Sophie van der Meeren comments: "The origin and the sense of the philosophical protreptic is … closely related to the phenomenon of conversion" to philosophy as "a mode of life, as the analyses of Pierre Hadot have reminded us" (van der Meeren 2002, 611). Hadot's passing over ancient protreptic texts, in his key texts and statements on philosophical conversion (see section 1 below), is hence all the more puzzling, and can be challenged on what we might call "Hadotian" grounds.

Occupying these grounds, this paper reassesses the Cooper-Hadot debate surrounding philosophy as a way of life on the specific issue of how new students are converted to philosophy (section 1), by engagement with ancient philosophical protreptic texts. In section 2, following Aristotle's characterization of protreptic as a form of deliberative speech in the *Rhetoric*, I draw out what I term, following van der Meuren, the core "argument from finality" in philosophical protreptics seeking to convert non-philosophers to philosophy, starting from the universal human interest in securing eudaimonia. In line with Cooper's position, I contend, what we see in these protreptic texts is philosophy being recommended on rational grounds, so that any existential choice in its favour, as against other possible courses of life, would be rationally defensible. In section 3, I illustrate how in Plato's *Euthydemus* (a) the choice to undertake philosophy is rationally justified by Socrates, as the means to convert the youthful Clinias, using the eudaimonistic argument from finality. Then, in section 3.2, by examining extant fragments from Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, I show

[1]The same paradox or challenge is charted at Cicero 2006, II, 8–9. I would like to acknowledge my discussions with Matteo Stettler in preparing this paper: sometimes it is robust philosophical and hermeneutic debates that prove most fruitful in clarifying our own positions.

[2]For recent treatments, see Collins 2015; Alieva, Kotzé, and van der Meeren 2018; and Markovich 2021.

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how ancient protreptics involved a second argumentative component. This component involved rebutting "apotreptic" accounts seeking to turn prospective students *away* from philosophy towards rival intellectual pursuits. Philosophy's pre-eminence over rhetoric and other *technai* is argued for, as being the striving to acquire theoretical wisdom concerning the whole and directive wisdom concerning how to use particular things (and other forms of inquiry) in order to live well.

2 | COOPER, HADOT, AND THE GROUNDS FOR THE CHOICE TO PHILOSOPHIZE

Pierre Hadot's work on ancient philosophy as a way of life has exerted huge influence. It has also attracted charges of underplaying the place and roles of forms of reasoned argumentation in distinguishing this way of life. Hadot at times describes ancient philosophy as not simply prescribing different forms of spiritual exercises but being itself a spiritual exercise. From his earliest contributions, Hadot also consistently identified the work of philosophy, or philosophy itself, as a practice of conversion (*epistrophē* or *metanoia*) of inquirers (Hadot 2020). This sets up an ambiguity. It is possible to identify conversion, as Hadot clearly does in several passages, with a continuing work of existential transformation, requiring ongoing practices, including forms of argumentation, dialectic, and reasoned persuasion. The term "conversion," however, also suggests an initial, extrarational moment, when the inquirer just "decided" to become a philosopher of some kind (Hadot 2002a, 102, 103, 132, 176). If this is the case, it would make the initial choice to become a philosopher, or a philosopher belonging to some particular school, a paradoxically non-rational experience. Such at least is one criticism developed by Cooper. As he writes in his piece on Socrates and philosophy as a way of life: "[A]t the root of this whole development [of becoming a philosopher] is the idea that to be a philosopher is to be fundamentally committed to the use of one's own capacity for reasoning in living one's life. … Pierre Hadot speaks of an 'existential option' as needed when anyone aligns himself with the doctrines of any specific school. But this is incorrect" (Cooper 2009, 26).

Let us therefore examine more closely the key Hadotian formulations at stake in this debate. Hadot, as is widely known, claims that "all six schools of philosophy in the Hellenistic period present themselves as choices of life, they demand an existential choice, and whoever adheres to one of these schools must accept this choice and this option" (Hadot 1993, 69, 69–70). But is this choice then a groundless decision, one that, itself lacking philosophical grounds, would *make possible* or motivate subsequent philosophical reasoning? Or is it a choice that is motivated by prior reasoning about the different merits of some ways of life over others?

As Cooper and Flynn protest, the forms of argumentative, dialectic reasoning usually held to define philosophy, distinguishing it from other possible life pursuits, certainly appear in some Hadotian formulations to come only *après coup*.[3] Hadot hence at times claims that the originary choice of a particular philosophical manner of life "gives birth to" what he calls "philosophical discourse": the spoken and written construction of more or less systematic philosophical arguments, but also forms of rhetoric aiming to be "formative, educative, psychagogic, and therapeutic" (Hadot 2002a, 176). Chronologically, such a choice "stands at the beginning, in a complex interrelation with critical reaction to other existential attitudes, with the global vision of a certain way of living and of seeing the world, and with voluntary decision itself" (Hadot 2002a, 3). Hadot does not mention here persuasive argumentation as to why philosophy should be chosen over any other vocation or

[3]This position is challenged in Sharpe 2016.

intellectual dispute. Perhaps the most striking of these Hadotian statements comes in the "Philosophy as a Way of Life" interview in the English-language book of the same title: "If one admits, as I do, that the various philosophical schools of antiquity were characterized above all by their choice of a form of life, *which is then justified after the fact by a given systematic construction* (for instance, Stoicism is the choice of an attitude of coherence with oneself, which is later justified by a general theory of the coherence of the universe with itself) then it is easy to understand how one can remain faithful to one's choice of a form of life without being obliged to adhere to the system" (Hadot 1995, 282).

A complexity in assessing these claims comes from how, in French as in English, talk of "choice" (*choix*) can imply more or less "spur of the moment" decisions. But we also talk of other choices, which may involve a change of behaviour or even form of life, but which are based upon the agent's rational-deliberative assessment of all available information and options. An alcoholic sees that his behaviour is harming those he loves. He infers from this that he must change his ways. On this reasoned basis, he makes an existential commitment involving changed ways of living. Just so, when Hadot talks of the choices of a philosophical form of life being "justified" by the school's philosophical discourse, one possibility is to hear this in a more rationalist (as against decisionistic) register. We might contend that Hadot means to describe a process in which students, confronting a new philosophical system, would be convinced *by its justificatory reasoning* to adopt a particular philosophical way of life. So, they would become a Stoic or Epicurean only after this process of rational assessment. Again, Hadot tells us in *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* that a school's philosophical discourse would "disengage presuppositions, implications, [and] consequences" of the particular choice for a way of life (Hadot 2002a, 175–76). By "*pre*suppositions" here, Hadot could perhaps be read as describing reasons *preceding*, and in this way as justifying and motivating students' acceptance of Epicurean or Stoic physics, for instance, as true or wise.

With that said, Hadot undoubtedly at times does suggest that individuals' choice of a particular philosophical way of life "determines the specific doctrine and the way this doctrine is taught" (Hadot 2002a, 3).[4] As he writes in the opening pages of *What Is Ancient Philosophy?*: "[P]hilosophical discourse, then, originates in a choice of life and an existential option—not vice versa" (Hadot 2002a, 3).[5] In such formulations, as Cooper charges, philosophical discourse would be there not to rationally motivate the choice of some particular theoretical orientation. It would instead, after the commitment was made, Hadot writes, "express the representation of the world that is implied in such and such an existential attitude, and these discourses allow one at the same time to rationally justify the attitude and to communicate it to others" (Hadot 1993, 68–70). It is the attitude in these formulations that is primary.[6]

A final ambiguity in these passages is whether they intend only the "initial choice" of the founders of the different schools, whether Plato, Epicurus, or Zeno. Does Hadot also mean to describe the conversions of students in subsequent generations, who each choose to adopt the developed philosophy but who can be presumed to have come to each philosophy in a manner different to that of the founders? Someone might grant Hadot that, say, Zeno of Kition chose the Stoic way of life out of his experience of a particular fundamental

[4]Hadot qualifies this here with "to some extent."

[5]Indeed, as Flynn identifies, Hadot seems in several other places to ground the "choices" of the different schools, not in their competing achievements of coherence, correspondence, or any other specifically epistemic virtues, but in their giving form to a finite series of "fundamental options," each of which has a specific "existential density" (see Flynn 2005, 619).

[6]Hadot can seem committed in such passages to an ontological relativism, in arguable tension with other of his claims. There is an irreducible plurality of different existential stances and, as such, of different types of wisdom: "In fact,… with regard to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and… in the case of the Hellenistic schools, each school was defined by a specific existential choice. Philosophy was the love of and search for wisdom, and wisdom was, precisely, a certain way of life. This initial choice, proper to each school, was thus the choice of a certain type of wisdom" (Hadot 2002a, 102).

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experience, and developed Stoic philosophical discourse "after the fact" to express, justify, and give form to this existential orientation. Yet, it does not immediately follow from conceding this that we should hold that subsequent students replicated the founder's path to Stoicism. For, unlike the founders, these students could encounter and consider the doctrines articulated by Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus, rationally weighing their claims about logic, physics, and ethics against those of the other philosophical schools, as well as against the customary and religious beliefs of non-philosophers. This is exactly the situation explored in the case of Hermotimus in Lucian (1959, §§ 13–21). As Cooper writes: "Any specific philosophical views and orientations that might characterize an ancient philosopher in the subsequent historical development (as a Platonist or Aristotelian, or Stoic or Epicurean or Sceptic) do not result from anything 'existential'. They result simply from his or her coming to accept specific ideas, all of them supported by philosophical reasoning in pursuit of the truth, that these philosophical schools might put forward about what, if one does use one's powers of reasoning fully and correctly, one must hold about values and actions" (Cooper 2009, 26).

It is notable that we don't find an equivalent description anywhere in Hadot of this seemingly rather uncontroversial proposition in Cooper, concerning how later students might become philosophers, once the competing schools had been established in Athens and more widely. We can readily imagine students attending lectures and discussions at the competing schools before deciding to commit to any one of them. In another passage, Hadot himself agrees that "things were very different" for prospective philosophical students in antiquity than with modern students. But here is what he writes: "[N]o university obligations oriented the future philosopher toward a specific school; instead, the future philosopher came to attend classes in the school of his choice *as a function of the way of life practiced there*" (Hadot 2002a, 98). Again, as Cooper charges, this would seemingly make attendance and subscription to a given philosophy initially a matter of *ethos*, not *logos*, as against one of the students' (say) hearing the school's arguments about physics, logic, and ethics, and finding them most true or cogent, in comparison with rival philosophies' arguments or what was taught in the school of rhetoric (see section 2 below).[7]

This examination of Hadot's claims about the existential choice he sees at the origin of ancients' conversion to different philosophical orientations doesn't commit anyone to wholly discounting the force of exemplars in ancient (or modern) philosophical education, beginning with that of Socrates himself. Cooper nevertheless seems to me to be on solid Socratic ground when he points to prospective philosophers' capacities to reason and assess competing perspectives as decisive in any explanation of how their initial commitments to pursue philosophical lives were formed.[8] Hadot's recognition of this rational component in peoples' choices to philosophize, we have seen, is more ambivalent, with several passages suggesting that reasoning and discourse would follow from a choice which, in its initial moment, would be prerational or arational.

Given that the debate turns upon a textual record, however, to try to further resolve it, let me now turn to the ancient philosophical protreptic texts that set about converting readers to a philosophical way of life, led by Plato's *Euthydemus* and Aristotle's *Protrepticus*.

[7]Perhaps Hadot is thinking here of the student Hermotimus's justification of his initial choice for Stoicism in Lucian's *Hermotimus*: "I saw the Stoics going about with dignity, decently dressed and groomed, ever with a thoughtful air and a manly countenance, as far from effeminacy as from the utter repulsive negligence of the Cynics, bearing themselves, in fact, like moderate men; and everyone admits that moderation is right" (Lucian 1959, § 18). Lucian's Lycinus, however, quickly refutes this justification for Hermotimus's choice in *Hermotimus*.

[8]We could also consider here the capacities of established philosophers to refute rival, putative "pretenders" to wisdom, with a view back to Plato's *Apology* 23c, where this dialectical ability is pointed to as attracting young students to emulate Socrates.

3 | PHILOSOPHICAL PROTREPTIC AND THE ARGUMENT FROM FINALITY

The ancient Greek verb *protrepō* literally evokes a movement, "to turn towards." The verb has a wide variety of meanings: from soldiers turning in headlong flight in Homer or a person giving way to grief, to more active uses, describing forms of persuasive speech acts: exhortation, injunction, and the rousing of an addressee to some emotion or deed (Collins 2015, 7–8). In Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, "protreptic" rhetoric shows up as one branch of deliberative oratory. It aims to persuade or exhort someone *towards* a particular action. In this way, it is counterposed to dissuasive or "apotreptic" discourses aiming to turn someone *away* from some course of action (Aristotle 2020, 1358a–59a; see Collins 2015, 39).

The existence of a long-standing ancient tradition of specifically philosophical protreptic discourses, aiming to persuade new inquirers to in some sense "become philosophers," is not disputed. Amongst Socrates' pupils, Antisthenes is credited with a protreptic urging readers to justice and courage. Aristippus of Cyrene is known to have written a work entitled *Protreptic* (Collins 2015, 31–32). Plato's *Phaedo* is considered by some sources as a meaningfully protreptic work, alongside parts of the *Euthydemus* and the *Clitophon*, to which I return in section 3.1. Aristotle's *Protrepticus* (see section 3.2 below) enjoyed a high reputation and extensive influence in antiquity. But other peripatetics, including Theophrastus, Demetrius of Phaleron, and Ariston of Chios, as well as different Stoics, including Chrysippus, wrote lost protreptic works, and an anonymous Epicurean protreptic was uncovered in Herculaneum. The most famous example of a Roman philosophical protreptic is Cicero's lost *Hortensius*, while from Seneca there are his *Hortationes* and several of his *Epistulae morales*, led by *Letter 90*. The last ancient philosophical work bearing the title *Protreptikos* is attributed to Themius in the fourth century C.E. (Collins 2015, 31–32).

As this long chronology spanning different periods and philosophical orientations might suggest, there is continuing scholarly debate about whether philosophical protreptic can be considered as a single, discrete literary genre (cf. Jordan 1986, 9–34). Dispute also surrounds what minimal features might demarcate a given text, or parts of texts, as specifically "protreptic," especially in relation to forms of "paraenetic" discourse proffering precepts concerning how to act (Collins 2015, 23).[9]

The putatively Platonic opposition between philosophy and rhetoric, looking back to the *Gorgias*, can also add to our confusion about the very idea of a philosophical exhortation. Yet, just as on one hand rhetoric would come to form one part (or subpart) of philosophy in several of the ancient schools (see "Philosophy, Dialectic, and Rhetoric" in Hadot 2020), on the other hand Aristotle's *Rhetoric* considers *logos*, and forms of philosophical argumentation, as one means of producing *pistis* (conviction), alongside *ethos* and *pathos* (Aristotle 2020, 1356a3; see II, 20, 22). In so far as philosophical texts aim to persuade audiences about some particular subject, through reasoning and other means, they can be considered as engaging in different forms of rhetoric. Hadot's consideration of the many genres of ancient philosophical writings—from treatises to meditations, consolations, or poems—as each playing different "languages games" directed to differing audiences, contexts, and goals, points us to the ways that ancient philosophers used different forms of rhetoric at the same time as they each maintained that philosophy could not be reduced to rhetorical ends or means.[10]

[9]Collins's *Exhortations to Philosophy* suggests that protreptic be specified as dialogic, agonistic, situational, and rhetorical, before noting immediately that these features cannot be considered exclusive to protreptic discourse (Collins 2015, 17–18) and echoing the earlier concerns of Johnson and others about the definability of the phenomenon (Collins 2015, 32–34).

[10]See Hadot 2004; and on the way that philosophical use of forms of rhetoric is defended—even by Plato's "Socrates" in the *Gorgias*—see Kennedy 1999, 58–66.

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Following D. S. Hutchinson and Monte Ransome Johnson, I propose therefore to take our orientation concerning the philosophical protreptics from Aristotle's treatment of protreptic speech in the *Rhetoric* (Hutchinson and Ransome 2018). Alongside other ancient rhetorical manuals, Aristotle in *Rhetoric I* defines deliberative speeches as persuasive (protreptic) or dissuasive (apotreptic): "[F]or both those who give counsel in private and those who address assemblies in public always produce one or other of these" (Aristotle 2020, 1358b8–10). The subject matter of such deliberative *logoi* are possible future courses of action, "the things that will be," concerning which the speaker offers counsel: in public life, about matters of political concern; in private life, about practical decisions, including whether to take up some new pursuit or way of life (Aristotle 2020, 1358b13–15). As in all species of rhetoric, the question of who the addressee(s) are, as well as the specific issues being deliberated upon and with which aims, to shape which arguments, tropes, and other persuasive means will likely prove optimal. In all cases, however, it is possible to say that the end or goal of protreptic and apotreptic discourses is "the advantageous and the disadvantageous": "For the one offering *protreptic* offers counsel on the basis that a proposal is better, and the one offering *apotreptic* offers counsel on the basis that it is worse, but the other things (where just or unjust; whether beautiful or shameful) are taken up as adjunct in relation to this" (Aristotle 2020, 1358b21–25).

In fact, as Aristotle specifies, the ultimate aim of deliberative rhetoric, in both protreptic and apotreptic modalities, is to promote eudaimonia: the universally agreed-upon human goal with whose examination his *Nicomachean Ethics* opens. For this reason, in the discussion of protreptic, the *Rhetoric* offers readers an inventory of the different constituents that different potential audiences for deliberative *logoi* might nominate as making up eudaimonia (Aristotle 2020, 1360b14–18). It is a matter of good birth, numerous and virtuous friends, good old age, health and bodily beauty, reputation, honour, and good luck (Aristotle 2020, 1360b14–18). Protreptic discourses themselves do not typically call into question these commonly granted ends of human desire. Instead, they propose means to achieve them. "[T]he deliberative orator's aim is utility: deliberation seeks to determine not ends but means to the ends, i.e. what is most useful to do" (Aristotle 2020, 1362b15–18)—all given the particular make-up and interests of the audience. The task of speakers is to convince the particular audience that the means they propose, as against other possible courses of action, is the best or even the only course capable of securing the ends they already take to be desirable.

On these Aristotelian grounds, and following directions set out by Sophie van der Meeren (2002) and Mark R. Jordan (1986), we would argue that it becomes possible to get clearer soundings concerning the forms and functions of ancient, specifically philosophical, protreptic texts. James Henderson Collins's *Exhortations to Philosophy* (2015) opens by specifying philosophical protreptic-involved attempts by philosophers and other would-be *sophoi* to recruit new students. They did so, after the middle of the fifth century, in the context of intellectual competition with other teachers promoting alternative ways of life, theoretical discourses, and of course rival arts like rhetoric to prospective students (see section 1 above; Collins 2015, 4–5, 7–8, 17–18, 38). The goal of such exhortations was to convert non-philosophers into what the Stoics called *prokoptonta*: that is, students motivated to pursue forms of philosophical inquiry or, indeed, any other exercises associated with a philosophical life, in contrast to their pursuing other possible *bioi* available to them in the ancient cities. As Annemaré Kotzé underscores in her contribution to *When Wisdom Calls*: "[T]he communicative aim of a work to convert its audience to a new way of life is the closest we will get to a necessary element for regarding a work as protreptic" (Kotzé 2018, 366).

This rhetorical situation, and this conversional aim, set up two intermediary tasks for philosophical protreptic. First, there was philosophers' positive aim of persuading students that philosophy, or one's particular conception of philosophy, was the best course of action, or way of life. Secondly, there was their task of refuting the critical, "apotreptic" claims of sceptics and competitors, contending that a specific philosopher's approach was inferior to theirs.

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Now, we have seen that protreptic in any form, per Aristotle, involves proposing one's particular course of action as the best means to ends *that one's audiences already take to be desirable*. Just so, philosophical protreptics aimed to position the author's/speaker's philosophy as the best means to eudaimonia. These texts necessarily also worked with what we might term, invoking Aristotle, *endoxa*: common opinions of the kind already held by people who had not yet been converted to philosophy and encountered technical forms of argumentation. Finally, as Clitophon complains of Socrates' protreptic in Plato (*Clitophon*, 408c–e, 410c–e), the exhortative arguments in philosophical protreptics necessarily leave the more demanding work of philosophy itself open, precisely as arguments and challenges to be subsequently pursued by the new converts.

Van der Meeren hence argues that what she calls argumentation by, from, or through (*par*) "finality" is definitive of all forms of philosophical protreptic: "The first characteristic of the protreptic is that it presents philosophy through (*par*) its finality, and that this finality coincides with the supreme finality of human beings. This is the essential point of the argumentation in exhortative discourses, which all represent the commonplace of the *Euthydemus*, enunciated by Socrates at the beginning of his first discourse: 'is it true that all human beings desire to be happy?' [Plato, *Euthydemus*, 1967, 278e]; which means that philosophy is the middle term, the intermediary which makes it possible to obtain the finality" (van der Meeren 2002, 604–5). Schematically, this argument from finality looks like this:

1. everyone desires happiness or flourishing (*eu prattein*, *eudaimonia*);
2. philosophy, the pursuit of wisdom (however defined), is a *necessary and efficient* condition for the goal (premise 1);
3. hence, the addressee should pursue philosophy (in order to achieve the goal).

The controversial work of philosophical protreptic involves establishing premise 2, the "middle term," that philosophy, amongst all possible means, is the best course of action or life to pursue in order to achieve the goal. This controversial protreptic work may be pursued through a variety of discursive means: from the kinds of long exhortative speech modelled for us in Plato's *Clitophon* as allegedly characterizing Socrates' protreptics or through different forms of dialogic interchange, like that we see in the *Euthydemus*.

In order to position philosophy as the *best* or perhaps even the *only* surefire way to eudaimonia, however, protreptic *logoi* needed also to refute alternative candidates bidding for students' allegiances. Because of this, it is necessary to add a division into van der Meeren's "middle term" (premise 2, above). Ancient philosophical protreptics, as well as "selling" philosophy as the way to happiness (a contention we'll call premise 2a), typically also compare philosophy as a putative means to addressees' flourishing, with other candidates (whether forms of life or forms of intellectual pursuit, like rhetoric and medicine). They then rebut the apotreptic claims of these other candidates to being better able to deliver the eudaimonistic goal.

This gives us the premise 2b:

2b. by comparing philosophy with other candidates (*synkrisis*), it can be shown that:

- — their apotreptic claims against philosophy's utility for the goal are ill-formed, inadequate, or unpersuasive;
- — their own claims to be able to deliver happiness or its vital preconditions, are unpersuasive.

In this way, we arrive at the key distinction in ancient philosophical protreptics, between what van der Meeren calls "the exhortation strictly speaking (*proprement dite*)" and the "apotreptic (*l'apotrope*)," or, using the Latin terms, the *argumentatio* and *refutatio* (van der

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Meeren 2002, 600). The complete, formal representation of van der Meeren's argument from finality at the heart of philosophical protreptic is accordingly as follows:

1. all people desire happiness or flourishing (*eu prattein*, *eudaimonia*)
2a. (*protreptic strictly speaking*) philosophy, the pursuit of wisdom (however defined), is the *necessary* condition for the goal;
2b. (*apotreptic*) by comparing philosophy with other candidates (*synkrisis*), it can be shown that:

— the competitors' claims against philosophy's capacities are ill-formed or unpersuasive;
— their own positive claims to be able to deliver happiness or its preconditions are unpersuasive;

3. hence, the addressee should pursue philosophy (in order to achieve the goal)

With this much established concerning philosophical protreptic, and the place of rational argumentation within it, let us turn now to two key ancient texts, assessing what bearing their developments of this "argument from finality" has on the question dividing Hadot and Cooper concerning how new students chose, or were converted to, philosophy as a way of life. After addressing "protreptic properly speaking" (the *argumentio*) with recourse to the *Euthydemus* below, I address the "apotreptic" (*refutatio*) component by addressing Aristotle's *Protrepticus*.

4 | THE *EUTHYDEMUS*, THE *PROTREPTICUS*, AND THE HADOT-COOPER DEBATE

4.1 | Protreptic strictly speaking: The *Euthydemus* and Hadot's conception of existential choice for philosophy

It is generally agreed that Plato's *Euthydemus* contains two directly protreptic interchanges, surrounded by three "apotreptic" sections, in which the eristic sophistry of Euthydemus and his brother Dionysodorus is ludicrously displayed. Socrates sets the visiting sophists a protreptic challenge: to persuade the young Clinias that "it is necessary to love wisdom [*philosophein*] and practice virtue" (Plato, *Euthydemus*, 1967, 275a). To do so, he says, would be to illustrate "the protreptic wisdom [*ten protreptiken sophian*]" (*Euth*., 1967, 278c). After a first eristic sequence has dissolved into absurdity, Socrates steps in, presenting what he calls a *paradeigma* (*Euth*., 1967, 282d) of a *logos protreptikos*, proteptic discourse (*Euth*., 1967, 282d).

What follows is not a long exhortatory speech. It is a dialogic exchange with Clinias, although key moments of this exchange are echoed in the *Cleitophon*'s protreptic address (Plato, *Cleitophon*, 1925, 407d–408e). As Aristotle's account of protreptic in the *Rhetoric* suggests, and as van der Meeren identifies, Socrates first solicits agreement from the youth that everyone wishes to go well (*eu prattein*) (van der Meeren 2002, 605). Then, again anticipating Aristotle's description of protreptic in the *Rhetoric*, Socrates and Clinias agree upon the kinds of things people generally agree are desirable or constitutive of flourishing: first, external goods like wealth, fame, and power; secondly, wisdom and the other virtues; and thirdly, good fortune (*Euth*., 1967, 279a–c).

The argument next proceeds to eliminate good fortune as necessary for flourishing. In fact, wisdom about how to respond to adverse and favourable fortune, of the kind evinced by craftspeople within their fields of expertise, is superior. As Benjamin Rider comments of this argumentation: "The conventional belief that *eutuchia* is the greatest of goods begins to look somewhat less plausible when we recognize how much a wise person can, through good decisions, minimize the impact of fortune on her life" (Rider 2012, 212).

Next, Socrates argues against the idea that external goods can make people happy: a contention that will leave wisdom, coupled to the virtues, as the last candidate standing for what

makes happiness possible. The elenchus here turns first on the distinction between possessing such putative "goods" as money and deriving use or benefit from them. In order that anything could benefit us, it needs to be used, not merely possessed. But, decisively, the beneficial use of money or power requires that the person have knowledge (*epistēmē*) about how to derive benefit from it. Without such knowledge, as the *Cleitophon* agrees (407e–408a), it would be better for people to have fewer resources. They could then do less harm to themselves or others.

This all means that putative external "goods" without one having knowledge about how to use and benefit from them are neither good nor evil in themselves. One thing alone never harms its possessor, a wisdom about how to use and benefit from all things: "To sum up, Clinias, I said, it seems likely that with respect to all the things we called goods in the beginning, the correct account is not that in themselves they are good by nature, but rather as follows: if ignorance leads (*hegetai*) them, they are greater evils than their opposites, to the extent that they are more capable of complying with a bad master; but if good sense and wisdom lead, they are greater goods. By themselves (*auta de kath'heauta*), however, neither sort is of any value…. Then what is the result of our conversation? Is it not that, of the other things, no one of them is either good or bad, but of these two, wisdom is a good thing and ignorance a bad thing?" (*Euth*., 1967, 281d–e). The exhortative conclusion is that those wishing to live well need to pursue wisdom. But this is to "philosophize" concerning how we can use and benefit from things, and thereby ensure as much good fortune for ourselves as we can: "Let us consider then, I said, the further conclusion that lies before us. Since we are all eager to be happy, and since we were found to become so by not only using things but using them aright, while knowledge, we saw, was that which provided the rightness and good fortune, it seems that every man must prepare himself by all available means so that he may be as wise as possible. Is it not so? / Yes, he said" (*Euth*., 1967, 282a).

Recalling our formulation of the argument from finality in part 2 above, the protreptic argument of the *Euthydemus* becomes:

1a. everyone desires to go well;
1b. people suppose that going well involves external goods, wisdom and the virtues, and good fortune;
2a. despite this common opinion, going well requires only wisdom to make the best of any fortune, and to know how to use other putative "goods" (i.e., philosophy);
3. thus, anyone who desires to go well ought to pursue wisdom or *philosophein*

So how, then, does this argument situate us with regard to Hadot's claim that the conversion to philosophy in the ancient world was an existential choice preceding recognizably philosophical reasoning, but motivating a student to pursue philosophy as a way of life? If Hadot's position is that the choice to pursue philosophy involved, for each student, the choice of a particular form of life "which is then justified after the fact by a given systematic construction" (Hadot 1995, 282), then this claim seems problematic with reference to the protreptic argument of the *Euthydemus*, and Clinias's conversion to philosophy that it stages. On one hand, the chosen pursuit of philosophy here is not yet an opting for any particular school, just as Cooper contends (2009, 26). At stake is an open-ended commitment to become as "wise" as possible "if wisdom is teachable and does not present itself to mankind of its own accord—for this is a question that we have still to consider as not yet agreed on by you and me" (*Euth*., 1967, 282c).[11]

On the other hand, the choice of the philosophical pursuit of wisdom in the *Euthydemus* is justified, in advance of the conversion. And it is done so precisely by a reasoned argument

[11]It is exactly this open-ended, curiosity-prompting (as against curiosity-satisfying) aspect of Socratic protreptic that Clitophon finally laments, taking this to be the entire sum of Socratic philosophizing: "Though you [Socrates] were better than any man at the task of exhorting (*protrepein*) men to devote themselves to virtue, yet … either you are capable of effecting thus much only and nothing more—… [or] you are none the more an expert about justice because you eulogize it finely" (Plato, *Cleitophon*, 1925, 410b–c).

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that appeals to Clinias's pre-existing desire, as a human being, to flourish. Clinias is persuaded by the argument for philosophy's necessity and utility. There is no sense of either a radical existential rupture or "a complex interrelation with critical reaction to other existential attitudes, with the global vision of a certain way of living and of seeing the world, and with voluntary decision itself" (Hadot 2002a, 3). Nor is it a matter of Clinias's attraction to any specific way of life, embodied by Socrates, however favourably the latter appears in comparison to the comical sophists he is pitted against in the *Euthydemus*. Even the understanding of "wisdom" that Socrates succeeds in situating as necessary to flourishing is entirely exoteric and mundane. It involves only a putative knowledge about how to use or enjoy seeming goods like money or power, as well as to respond optimally to the different turns of fortune's wheel. As Jordan reflects: "Let me pause at the end of this episode [*Euthydemus* 278a–282c] to underscore certain structural features. First, the protreptic does not seek so much to arouse a desire as to connect an admitted desire with its object. Thus, second, the aim of the protreptic is to produce a choice, an action—the passionate pursuit of a wisdom now thought to be obtainable. Because its hinge is desire, the argument relies, third, on showing that access to the desired objects is provided only by a master-good, by wisdom. Indeed, the whole argument, from beginning to end, plays upon the given question, how to get what one wants" (Jordon 1986, 320).

4.2 | Apotreptic: Aristotle's *Protrepticus* and Hadot and Cooper's conception of the choice to become a philosopher

The loss of the original text of Aristotle's *Protrepticus* introduces philological complexities into any consideration of the text. Ingemar Düring in 1961 suggested a reconstruction of the text as a single speech by Aristotle (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, vii), whereas in the past few decades Hutchinson and Johnson have proposed, on philological grounds, that the *Protepticus* represented a dialogue with three characters: a Pythagorean, Heraclides; a character modelled on the educational rival of Plato, Isocrates; and "Aristotle" himself (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017). This dialogical framing of the *Protrepticus* has an especial significance in our understandings of the argumentative bases of the ancient protreptics. It highlights how ancient protreptic texts not only used philosophical argumentation to convert prospective students to philosophy as a way of life and form of inquiry. They also, as a corollary, set out to compare philosophy with the other forms of inquiry a student might choose to pursue, a work of *synkrisis* (Focke 1923). The goal here, supporting the protreptic, was to rebut the "apotreptic" claims, on behalf of rhetoric in particular, to being superior forms of learning in contrast to philosophy, which was depicted by its rivals to be esoteric or frivolously impractical.[12] One should not just choose philosophy as a way of life but *choose it in preference to other forms of rational inquiry*, and notably—in the ancient world—in preference to its great rivals, forms of rhetoric and sophistry.

There is scholarly consensus that Aristotle wrote his *Protrepticus* as a response to the historical Isocrates' apotreptic attacks on Platonic philosophy in texts like the *Antidosis*.[13] Following Hutchinson and Johnson, the character "Isocrates" in Aristotle's *Protrepticus* would be there

[12]On *synkrisis* of the different sciences or *artes* in ancient protreptics, see van der Meeren 1999, 38–39.

[13]Whether Isocrates is best considered a philosopher or a rhetor is disputed: he did claim the term *philosophia* (see Livingstone 2007; Fernández 2024). What is salient here is that the character "Isocrates" in the *Protrepticus* presents apotreptic arguments against philosophy as conceived by Aristotle, which the latter sets out to refute, and which reflect arguments against philosophy made by rhetoricians, to convert students to their arts. See, for example, the apotreptic argument by "Crassus" against philosophy in Cicero's *De oratore* (1942, III, 15, 58): "But as men accustomed to constant and daily employment, when they are hindered from their occupation by the weather, betake themselves to play at ball, or dice, or draughts, or even invent some new game …; so they [the philosophers], being either excluded from public employments, as from business, by the state of the times, or being idle from inclination, gave themselves up wholly."

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as an apotreptic mouthpiece, arguing against the kind of philosophy as a way of life that Aristotle aimed to defend (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, vii). This is the same "gadfly" role that will later be played by the titular "Hortensius" in Cicero's famous protreptic (Ruch 1958), a text widely held to have drawn upon Aristotle's lost (but in antiquity highly renowned) dialogue.[14]

In ways that Cicero's "Hortensius" will echo in his apotreptic against philosophy in the *Hortensius*[15]—and in ways that arguably remain very familiar to philosophers even today—Isocrates' arguments principally concern the alleged *impracticability* of philosophizing in the Platonist manner, effectively asking sceptically, "What use is it?" The historical Isocrates, we know, praised forms of inquiry that would inculcate the virtues of moderation and justice, both for themselves and for their practical utility, since "those who demonstrate justice and moderation greatly benefit human life" rather than just trading theoretical notions (Isocrates 1980, §§ 29–30). In the same "But what use is it?" vein, the character "Isocrates" in Aristotle's *Protrepticus* praises productive *technai*, which use their knowledges to produce things of agreed use for people, once more in apotreptic contrast to theoretical philosophizing (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, 17–19). By contrast, theoretical philosophy of the kind recommended by Plato, which extends beyond practically applicable concerns to those of physics or mathematics, serves no end beyond itself.[16] Purely theoretical philosophy is like what we would call "book knowledge" of medicine, when the end of this art is to cure the body, or astronomy's speculations about the causes of the movements of the heavenly bodies, as against the practical art of actually navigating by the stars: "[I]t should not be overlooked by someone who is going to scrutinize these subjects that everything that is good and beneficial for the life of humans consists in being used and put into action, and not in the mere knowledge. For we are not healthy by being acquainted with what produces health, but rather by applying it to our bodies,…[and] nor, most important of all, do we live well by knowing certain sorts of beings, but by acting well, for this is truly what it is to be successful. Hence it is appropriate for philosophy as well, if indeed it is beneficial, to be either a practice of good things or else useful for those sorts of practices" (Iamblichus, in Hutchinson and Johnson 2013, 17).

Aristotle's "protreptic strictly speaking" (premise 2a above) in the *Protrepticus* hence involves a second argumentative component, absent in the *Euthydemus*, in which Socrates' sophistical opponents are a good deal less competent than the apotreptic "Isocrates." This component involves refutation of Isocrates' apotreptic claims against all forms of philosophy that would include forms of physical, ethical, logical, or metaphysical *theoria* without more or less immediate practical applicability. As the apotreptic of "Isocrates" compares theoretical philosophy unfavourably with more directly practical sciences, so Aristotle's positive exhortation is an argued defence of philosophy's superiority over these other sciences, including of its ultimate practical utilities (Hutchinson and Johnson 2018). How does Aristotle's protreptic rebuttal of the apotreptic of "Isocrates" proceed, and—once again, with an eye to the Hadot-Cooper dispute—does it involve any appeal to existential decision or to the ethical exemplar of the philosopher himself?

[14]To what extent is debated. See Turkowska 1965; Schlapbach 2006; McKendrick 1989; Jaegar 1948, 31, 55, 62, 65, 73–74, 101, 155.

[15]See this speech of "Hortensius": "For unless wisdom exists in some act by which it may exercise its power, it is empty and false…. For it is necessary for the good to act rather than shut up in corners to tell what ought to be one, precepts which those who talk do not carry out themselves. And since they have removed themselves from true acts, it is clear that they have devised the art of philosophy for the sake of exercising their tongues or providing a hobby for their minds. Those who teach only and do not act draw weight away from their own precepts,… They do not seek utility, therefore, from philosophy, but delight" (Lactantius 1964, III, 16, 2–5).

[16]As the historical Isocrates wrote: "I would, therefore, advise young men to spend some time on these disciplines," at least as a kind of "gymnastics" to train their reasoning capabilities, "but not to allow their minds to be dried up by these barren subtleties" (*Antidosis*, in Isocrates 1980, §§ 268–69).

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"It is agreed," the character "Aristotle" of the *Protrepticus* first argues (and let us note the recourse to imputed *endoxa*), that there are sciences "valued for themselves," as against those more practical or applied forms of learning that Isocrates, and the ancient rhetoricians and sophists, laud (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, 14). If the former sciences are valued for themselves, the character "Aristotle" claims, it is because of their precision (the case of mathematics) or because their objects are "better and more honorable" than those of other *technai* (the case of astronomy) (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, 14). One can imagine that Isocrates would be as little moved by this argument as most laypeople then and now. Yet, secondly, in a way that has puzzled some commentators, this "aristocratic" argument for impractical philosophizing (see Walker 2010; Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, 26–27) is conjoined with an argument for philosophy's superior *utility*, in comparison with other, more obviously instrumental forms of knowing. Aristotle clearly intends also to meet and beat Isocrates, on his own "practicist" grounds. As in Socratic protreptic, "Aristotle" in the *Protrepticus* accepts that all humans desire eudaimonia, starting with the common notions that this "is either intelligence and a certain wisdom, or virtue, or enjoying oneself most of all, or all [of] the above" (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, 61). Like Socrates in the *Euthydemus*, Aristotle then seeks to position philosophical forms of reasoning, aiming at wisdom and virtue, as the best means to this goal: "For it is not possible to live as human without these; and it also provides something useful for living a life, *for nothing good happens to us unless it is reasoned and acted upon intelligently* (italics ours)" (Iamblichus, *Protrepticus*, VII, 41, 7–11, in Hutchinson and Johnson 2013, 31). Without knowledge of how to wisely use or enjoy external things, as Socrates had exhorted, the acquisition and use of external things can be harmful: "The things with which we are furnished for life, e.g. the body and bodily things, are provided as kind of tools [*organa*], and the use of them is dangerous, and those who do not use them fittingly produce more of the contrary effect. We ought therefore to seek to acquire (*ktasthai*) and to use [*chresthai*] fittingly that knowledge through which we shall make the best use of all these instruments. By all means one must, therefore, do philosophy [*philosopheteon*] since only philosophy includes within itself this correct judgment and this intelligence to issue orders without errors" (Iamblichus, *Protrepticus*, VI, 37, 2–37, 11, in Hutchinson and Johnson 2013, 1).

So far, then, the comparison to the *Euthydemus*'s use of the argument from finality is clear. What differs in Aristotle's *Protrepticus*, as a reasoned argument for the choice of philosophy, follows from the philosopher's need, absent in the *Euthydemus*, to also refute the apotreptic that in Aristotle's text is voiced by the character "Isocrates," and that would turn students towards more immediately practical forms of intellectual inquiry. To do this, Aristotle in effect carries the Socratic argument over from the preceding comparison between bodily "tools" and a directive knowledge about how to wisely use them, to reframe Isocrates' *synkrisis* of philosophy with the more directly productive and practical sciences: "Some kinds of knowledge produce the good things in life, others use this first kind; some are ancillary, others prescriptive; with these last, as being more authoritative, rests the good in the leading sense [*to kyrios on agathon*]. If, then, only that kind of knowledge which entails correctness of judgment, that which uses reason and contemplates the good as a whole [*to holon agathon*], that is to say philosophy, can use everything and prescribe according to nature [*kata physin*], we ought to strive in every possible way to become philosophers, since philosophy alone comprises right judgment and unerring wisdom, commanding what ought to be done or not to be done" (Iamblichus, *Protrepticus*, VI, 37, 11–22, in Hutchinson and Johnson 2013, 66).

If we return to the syllogistic presentation of the protreptic argumentation from section 2 above, and its development through our examination of the *Euthydemus*, the argument from finality in the *Protrepticus* hence looks like this:

1a. Everyone desires eudaimonia.
1b. Going well is usually thought to consist of intelligence, virtue, wisdom, and enjoyment.
2a. Going well in truth requires a knowledge or wisdom which knows how to use or enjoy all other putative "goods."
2b. Such knowledge can only come from philosophy, which pursues knowledge of the whole good (*to holon agathon*), in comparison with productive and more directly practical sciences.
3. Thus, people who desire to go well "ought to strive in every possible way to become philosophers," as against technicians, rhetoricians, or sophists who scorn theoretical philosophising

So, what are the implications of this highly developed argumentation, aiming *both* to convert Themison and other readers *to* philosophy, *and* to rebut apotreptic attempts to turn students *away* from it towards competing sciences, for Hadot's more decisionistic-sounding formulations concerning how students were converted to philosophy in the ancient world? Once more, recovering this second dimension to ancient protreptic texts seems to show that Hadot's formulations on this subject are contestable. They cannot be upheld if we include in our metaphilosophy a consideration of ancient philosophical protreptics, the genre of philosophical writing dedicated exactly to converting students to philosophy.

Someone might cavil, we suppose, that Socrates' ordinary language metaphilosophical argumentation in the *Euthydemus* is not strictly "philosophical." Such an argument, however, is clearly impossible in the case of Aristotle's *Protrepticus*. Hutchinson and Johnson (2017), throughout their reconstruction of Aristotle's text, point out how Aristotle's exhortative argumentation stages reasonings that will also appear in the "esoteric" texts directed for already recruited students: for instance, *Metaphysics* I, 1–2; V, 1; V, 25; VII, 44; XIII, 3; *Posterior Analytics* I, 13; *Physics*, 184a; *De anima* I, 2; *Politics* I, 6; *Nicomachean Ethics* III, 4; X, 5; and X, 7; and many more (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, 6, 9–10, etc.). Perhaps Themison, the addressee of the text, was known by Aristotle already to have some familiarity with Platonic argumentation. Otherwise, it seems easy to imagine that Aristotle's dense appeals to such arguments would have gone far over his head (say, concerning priority in nature versus priority for us, concerning the different standards of precision achievable in different sciences, or concerning the differing "nobility" of objects of inquiry (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, 20–22). "The philosopher," as Aristotle would later be called, does not seem to have sharply distinguished in his protreptic between the kinds of reasoning that a non-philosopher like Themison, yet to be exhorted, might find persuasive, and the kinds of reasoning already exhorted philosophical students might understand, which no one disputes are definitively "philosophical" in Aristotle's esoteric works (Chroust 1966, 202–7). Even less so than in the case of the *Euthydemus*, that is to say, does Aristotle seem to have thought that the possible conversion of Themison to philosophy would require an existential choice whose rational grounds could only be presented after the fact. On the contrary, Aristotle seeks to convert him to philosophy following Aristotle's metaphilosophical arguments to their prescriptive conclusion.

With that said, the importance of responding to the apotreptic of the character "Isocrates" in Aristotle's *Protrepticus* also calls into question the sufficiency of Cooper's language of the choice to become a philosopher involving a commitment to live according to "philosophical reasoning" (Cooper 2009, 26). The historical Isocrates and Aristotle's own "Isocrates" attest that to understand specifically "philosophical reasoning" in the ancient world was already to understand it in comparison (*synkrisis*) to other possible forms of inquiry, such as those propounded by the sophists and teachers of rhetoric. Cooper writes that "to be a philosopher is to be fundamentally committed to the use of one's own capacity for reasoning in living one's life" (2009, 26). Aristotle's *Protrepticus* shows that this formulation glides over the question of how one's "capacity for reasoning" could potentially be trained or moulded in antiquity, not simply by philosophers as representatives of "reasoning" per se, but by sophists who promised that their teachings alone could inculcate virtue and lead to worldly success. To be converted

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to philosophy in the ancient world, if Aristotle's *Protrepticus* is authoritative, is to accept that *only* philosophy, including theoretical considerations without direct practical implications, affords the kind of comprehensive, directive forms of reasoning about nature, human nature, and goods that conduce to happiness: "For just as in the other craftsman-like skills the best of their tools were discovered on the basis of nature (in carpentry, for example, the carpenter's line, the standard ruler, the string compass) … similarly the statesman must have certain guidelines taken from nature itself, i.e. from the truth, by reference to which he judges what is just, what is good, and what is advantageous" (Hutchinson and Johnson 2017, 53).

Beyond the *Euthydemus*, to conclude this section, Aristotle's *Protrepticus* highlights the extent to which any full account of how ancients were persuaded to choose philosophy as a way of life needs to place in the foreground philosophy's continuing rivalries with, and claims to superiority over, poetry, rhetoric, medicine, and the other liberal arts. Protreptic argumentation not only exhorted students to convert to philosophy, it did so by presenting reasons speaking against their possible conversions to other forms of inquiry and ways of life.

5 | CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper has claimed that any adequate account of how ancients were converted to philosophy as a way of life should attend to the philosophical protreptic texts, which were expressly dedicated to this recruiting aim. Following Aristotle's account of protreptic in the *Rhetoric*, I argued in section 2 that philosophical protreptics turned upon an "argument from finality," as Sophie van der Meeren contended. Contra certain of Pierre Hadot's formulations concerning students' choices to philosophize in the ancient world, this argument positioned philosophy as the necessary and best means to eudaimonia, making it rational to be chosen amongst possible ways of life, exactly by potential students who had not yet chosen to become philosophers.

By looking at Socrates' set-piece demonstration of protreptic in Plato's *Euthydemus* (278a–282c), I showed that the conversion to philosophy envisaged for young people like Clinias in ancient protreptic texts did not involve (per Hadot) a groundless existential choice, giving rise to a new way of seeing that could only find its philosophical justifications *post festum* (section 3.1). Socrates presents Clinias with good reasons to philosophize, given the universal human desire to live well: the argument from finality.

In section 3.2 I showed how Aristotle's *Protrepticus* includes an argued metaphilosophical refutation of Isocrates' apotreptic claims that philosophy is useless for people to pursue. The *Protrepticus* hence highlights a second protreptic form of argumentation that is neglected in both Cooper's and Hadot's conceptions of the choice for philosophy in the ancient world (section 3.2). This is the task not simply of persuading students to embrace reasoning (per Cooper) but of differentiating philosophical from other forms of reasoned inquiry that potential students might opt for. The argumentation of ancient protreptics secondly sought to establish philosophy's claim to directive priority as the pursuit of wisdom concerning nature, different kinds of goods, and how to wisely use and enjoy different things, as well as to pursue different sciences.

Let me close by proposing caution concerning the scope of what I have argued, relative to the debates surrounding Hadot's metaphilosophical conception of ancient philosophy. In his early critical response to Hadot's work, Thomas Flynn registers a concern akin to Cooper's, that Hadot's metaphilosophy as a whole "plunges us into the midst of the paradox of Kierkegaardian-Sartrean fundamental option- or criterion-constituting 'choice', with its charges of decisionism and/or irrationalism" (Flynn 2005, 619). Yet, while Hadot's formulations concerning how students were originally converted to philosophy do invite this charge, Flynn himself notices that in his work on Stoicism Hadot observes the shaping role of a conception of the universal *Logos* structuring all things, of which our individual

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mentalities are fragments (Flynn 2005, 617–18; Hadot 2002b, 56, 74–76, 78–79, 95, 157, 180, 231, 268). As I have noted elsewhere (Sharpe 2016), Hadot also registers that logic is one of three parts of philosophy as a way of life in the Stoics, and that different forms of dialectic played a predominant role in ancient philosophical pedagogy. I add here that, as early as Hadot's ground-breaking 1954 work on philosophical conversion ("*Epistrophe* and *Metanoia* in the History of Philosophy," Hadot and Irvine 2021), Hadot was concerned to differentiate philosophical *epistrophê*, a return from alienation back to one's putatively true self in accordance with nature in the Stoic and Platonic traditions, from *metanoia*, a "changing of the mind" associated with forms of Christian rebirth (Hadot and Irvine 2021, 201–10)—and, so we might contend, anticipating later modern existentialist hypostasizations of groundless choice. As Hadot writes: "In its most evolved notion, *epistrophê* is the very definition of the spiritual life in which the soul places itself again into the eternal movement of being: the perfection of being is… its return to its own source. In this sense *epistrophê* is *anamnêsis*, reminiscence" (Hadot and Irvine 2021, 202).

To challenge Hadot's formulations concerning the original decision to philosophize, and whether this choice did not for the ancients have sound rational grounds,[17] hence is not (in my view, implausibly) to position Hadot's metaphilosophy as wholly decisionistic or irrationalistic. The attentive study in the protreptic texts of the arguments from finality, and against students choosing solely practical and technical inquiries over philosophy, however, attests that Hadot's formulations concerning this original choice should be challenged.

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[17]Although this is not to exclude how, in some cases, people may have been initially moved, for instance, by admiration for the character of a particular teacher, as in the case of Polemo (see Hadot 2002a, 98).

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