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**Marcus Aurelius and the  
Community of Philosophical Life**

**Abstract**

*In the paper, I focus on the historical background of contemporary philosophical practice by pointing out certain aspects of Marcus Aurelius' philosophical education, especially daily routines carried out during his early childhood, passed on to him by his teachers. I will argue in favour of the idea that certain practices can be structured as a part of the life of a philosophical community. My analysis relies on Hadot's interpretations of the philosophical ideal of Marcus Aurelius, identified with figures as Cato the Younger, Rogatianus and Aulus Gellius, to emphasise the idea that the dedication to philosophy in the case of Marcus Aurelius was the result of a long process of engaging in spiritual activities suggested by the teachers to whom he pays tribute in the first book of the Meditations. The idea is suggesting that each of these teachers, influenced by Epictetus, encouraged specific virtues to be instantiated in daily practice during Marcus Aurelius' formative years as a tribute to the Hellenistic conception of philosophy as "care for the soul". Thus, without being historiographical research as such, the paper attempts to offer a resource for a contemporary philosophical practitioner on the nature of philosophical counselling, by providing historical resources for contemporary philosophical practice, as well as a form of introduction to philosophical counselling for non-practitioners, illustrating stoic philosophical counselling at work.*

**Keywords**

philosophical life, Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, Pierre Hadot, philosophical community

**What was Philosophy to Marcus Aurelius**

In the Stoic schools and especially for Marcus Aurelius, practising philosophy as a continuous daily routine was not to be regarded as academic or teaching experience. Rather, it consisted of permanent ability training, and that was the matter of a lifestyle. The problem of beginning to do philosophy or converting to philosophy was not to be identified as a specific moment in Marcus Aurelius' life, as it was the case of Augustine for example, according to his *Confessions*, 8. Instead, it was a life-lasting process. Marcus Aurelius saw this process as consisting of different phases, corresponding to different teachers he encountered in his life. Thus, conversion to philosophy was for him more like a history of a communitarian evolution: he favoured every teacher with a particular list of virtues he had been taught by respectively. We are attempting to point to several such philosophical routines that formed Marcus Aurelius' spiritual exercises according to the forms of education he received from his masters mentioned in the *Meditations*, aiming at imaging the traces of a motivational programme Marcus Aurelius was exposed to during his formation. His philosophical education started in his early childhood with Diogenetus and continued to develop until maturity in different forms; the *Meditations* as day-to-day exercise is only a part of what Marcus Aurelius had practised daily, beginning from his early education. To set the context for our topic it is essential

to first discuss what was the meaning of philosophical life in Marcus Aurelius, and what it aimed at. For him, as for the Stoic tradition in general, philosophy was, first of all, a matter of lifestyle instead of a theoretical study. Following the research of Pierre Hadot, this interpretative principle became one of the most important directions in the European historiography of philosophy.<sup>1</sup> According to Hadot, a philosopher in late antiquity was not necessarily expected to become a theoretician of philosophy but rather someone who learned how to live like a philosopher. For this purpose, one was supposed to study and interpret philosophical texts only to learn how to lead a philosophical life. In his book on Marcus Aurelius, Pierre Hadot considered the examples of ancient figures that were recognised as philosophers but did not write any text: Cato the Younger, a statesman (I B.C.), remembered as a Stoic philosopher, and Rogatianus, another statesman (III A.D.), a Platonic philosopher, a disciple of Plotinus who wrote no philosophical treatise. Of course, the best-known figures of Socrates or Diogenes the Cynic would serve as best known examples but, still, the aforementioned political figures remain more relevant because they speak about the fact that philosophical life did not necessarily entail a life dedicated to teaching philosophy or being a professional philosopher in any sense of it. Cato and Rogatianus were amateur philosophers, so to say, but it is exactly why they are important for our discussion: a *philosopher* was something very different from our stereotypical romantic glimpse; they were philosophers in the sense that they lived a philosophical life but did not necessarily teach philosophy and did not dedicate their life to authoring philosophical texts or manuals. Thus, being a philosopher in the sense of Marcus Aurelius meant living a philosophical life precisely like a non-professional. We should accept this meaning of being a philosopher as coextensive to the concept of stoic tradition and perhaps middle Platonism, at least.

On the other hand, taking philosophy courses from a professional philosopher did not necessarily lead someone to become a philosopher in any sense. Many ancient rhetors, historians, medical doctors, like Aulus Gellius and others, were known as students in philosophy but not as philosophers, as they did not claim to live a philosophical life.<sup>2</sup> This is essentially the lesson of Epictetus, the master of Marcus Aurelius and his entire generation. In his *Discourses*, we often encounter sayings like this:

“The builder does not come forward and say, ‘Listen to me deliver a discourse about the art of building’; but he takes a contract for a house, builds it, and thereby proves that he possesses the art. Do something of the same sort yourself too; eat as a man, drink as a man, adorn yourself, marry, get children, be active as a citizen; endure revilings, bear with an unreasonable brother, father, son, neighbour, fellow-traveller. Show us that you can do these things, for us to see that in all truth you have learned something of the philosophers (*oti memathekas tais aletheiais ti ton philosophon*).”<sup>3</sup>

According to such lessons, Marcus Aurelius would know that living a philosophical life involved no other specific activities but doing just everything that humans do during their lifetime, only in a specific philosophical manner. That is, learning from the philosophers is not equivalent to receiving a theoretical philosophical education or becoming a professor of philosophy. Simply living (eventually professing) a way of life different from that of ordinary people, as a result of a conversion, is a radical change of lifestyle.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Marcus Aurelius is considered a stoic philosopher even if he did not invent anything new but only followed practical exercises as found in the texts of Epictetus, which were introduced to him by his teachers.

The difficulty when attempting to understand the kind of relation these figures had to philosophy consists in different things than the doctrine they professed or the nature of philosophy itself: it consists of understanding the kind of motivation these amateur philosophers had for pursuing something opposite to theoretical research or any authorship in the intellectual sense. Epictetus's lines quoted above strongly suggest that the philosopher's life was regarded simply as a practical daily activity which eventually did not even qualify to what we could call today an intellectual or cultural activity in the sense of a conscious creative attitude in the artistic or, generally speaking, humanist field. It was nothing of that kind; it was non-intricate, it was not about seeking to contribute to the humankind history or cultural achievements; the truth was personal, it was like a builder's demonstration of craftsmanship.

In conclusion, what we know about Marcus Aurelius' idea of being a philosopher, as Pierre Hadot summarised it, consists in three things: first, that he wrote his notes for himself, as a daily practice of exercises; secondly, that he wrote daily for the simple purpose of exercising his skills, obtaining nothing more than some *hypomnemata* (personal notes); thirdly, that he attempted to give these personal notes a "refined literary form"<sup>5</sup> for persuasive effect. Unlike many other *hypomnemata* we encounter in antiquity (from Aristotle's texts such as *Metaphysics* to Plutarch, Arrian or Aulus Gellius), the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius played a supplementary role, that of personal training according to a specific method, consisting in repeated reformulations or improvements of similar principles in different life contexts.

But besides the summarisation of Pierre Hadot, we find that several different conclusions should be useful for the contemporary philosophical practitioners: a) philosophy is, first of all, a matter of a way of shaping one's ordinary life; b) learning from a professional philosopher does not entail becoming one; c) the relation with a philosopher or a master is not reduced to the teaching of dogmas but consists of life counselling or coaching.

### Childhood Motivation for "Living Like a Philosopher"

Marcus Aurelius became familiar with the problem of living a philosophical life in his early childhood education with Diognetus and then he returned to the philosophical practice later on, under the guidance of Junius Rusticus. In his first book of *Meditations* (I, 6), Marcus Aurelius recalls how his painting teacher Diognetus introduced him to the ancient "way of life":

"From Diognetus, not to be taken up with trifles and not to give credence to the statements of miracle-mongers and wizards about incantations and the exorcising of demons, and suchlike marvels; and not to keep quails, nor to be excited about such things: not to resent plain speaking; and to become familiar with philosophy and be a hearer first of Baccheius, then of Tandasis and

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Pierre Hadot, *The Inner Citadel. The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, translated by Michael Chase, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1998.

2

Ibid., p. 4.

3

Epictetus, *The Discourses as Reported by Arrian, the Manual, and Fragments*, vol. I,

translated by William Abbott Oldfather, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1956, III, 21, 5–6.

4

P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, p. 5.

5

Ibid., pp. 34–37.

Marcianus; and to write dialogues as a boy; and to set my heart on a pallet-bed and a pelt and whatever else tallied with the Greek regimen.”<sup>6</sup>

The “Hellenic way of life” or the Greek regimen presented to the young Marcus is schematised here, taking the shape of a childish game: Marcus is being familiarised with the idea of becoming a philosopher by imitating what was for him at the time a childish attraction. Hadot links this passage with the story in *Historia Augusta* that contains *The Life of Marcus Aurelius* and says that:

“At the age of twelve, he adopted the costume of a philosopher, and a little later the endurance of one, too. He used to study dressed in a pallium – that is, a philosophers’ cloak-and sleep on the ground; his mother had all kinds of difficulty in getting him to stretch out on a bed covered with animal skins.”<sup>7</sup>

Hadot insists on the idea that these two texts have common elements, the short cloak and a hard bed as symbols of the Stoic philosophical life, also found in Seneca, in the younger Pliny, and in Musonius the teacher of Epictetus. For the child Marcus, these represented a stereotypical image of a philosopher, used by an entire Stoic tradition and by his master Diognetus as well to offer a simplified motivational model.

But the childish games consisted in other important activities as well, listed by Marcus: avoiding unimportant things, ignore superstition, avoiding silly games, accepting the *parrhesia* (plain-speaking), getting familiar with philosophy, attending masters, and writing dialogues. It is a list of seven practices that count to him and may be considered as spiritual exercises that the professor Diognetus used to request from the young Marcus, apart from dressing and sleeping simply. It is a short list (we cannot know how complete though) of everyday activities meant to motivate the interest in philosophy.

Thus, the relation of the young Marcus to his teacher was first of all motivational and consisted in practising stereotypes of the desired educational model, that was the old school image of a philosopher, associated with continuous advice on what to do, what to avoid and what to become: essentially there were three (or various) kinds of abstinence (from fancy things, from superstition, from silly games), three active practices (*parrhesia*, the approach of philosophy, attending masters), and one scholarly activity (writing dialogues). This list could be explored as an attractive model for contemporary philosophy with children consistent program design, structuring the formation of youngsters according to what was considered to be the chore of philosophy by the Stoics.

### **Fronto: the Observation of Maladies, Self-Narration, Style**

The forming of stylistic skills seems to have continued as a permanent concern, especially since Fronto, his rhetoric teacher and friend to whom Marcus offers in his *Meditations* a shorter note, will teach Marcus solid abilities. First, in the *Meditations*, we learn that Fronto taught him to observe tyrants and their vices:

“From Fronto, to note the envy, the subtlety (or cunning, *pokilia*), and the dissimulation which are habitual to a tyrant; and that, as a general rule, those amongst us who rank as patricians are somewhat wanting in natural affection (*astorgoteroi*, from *storge*, tenderness, familial or natural affection).”<sup>8</sup>

It seems that the sort of observations Fronto taught Marcus to perform aimed at focusing on what Stoics named maladies of the soul (*pathemata*), and thus

we can identify Fronto's initial influence on Marcus through teaching on how to spot diseases. The care for the self (*epimeleia heautou*), one of the most common meanings of philosophy at that time, needs to identify the disease to be cured, and Fronto's exercises point precisely at this.

On the other hand, if the personal self remains unexamined, then such kind of continuous spotting of diseases risks turning the philosopher into a stylish misanthrope. Strong evidence for the fact that self-examination was consistently present between Fronto and Marcus is the exchange of letters they had. When writing to Fronto, Marcus is determined to become a philosopher but spends much time recalling and at the same time taking distance from his foolish acts.

"I went riding, as usual. I got started and we gradually moved away. Suddenly, in the middle of the road, there was a big flock of sheep, and the place was deserted: there were four dogs, two shepherds, and nothing else. When they saw this group of horsemen coming, one of the shepherds said to the other, 'Watch out for these horsemen; they're the kind that usually cause the most trouble'. No sooner did I hear this than I spurred my horse and headed him straight for the flock; the terrified beasts scattered, running every which way, bleating and in the utmost confusion. The shepherd threw his staff at me, but it landed on the rider who was following me, and we fled. Thus, he who was afraid of losing a lamb wound up losing his staff!"<sup>9</sup>

Pierre Hadot interpreted this letter as meaning a more relaxed period of Marcus:

"In the letters from Marcus to Fronto which dates from before the years 146–147, we do not perceive the slightest trace of this youthful – or rather, childish – enthusiasm for the Spartan – style philosophical way of life. No doubt it had been short-lived; and yet this fire, though apparently extinguished, continued to smoulder, and it would not be long before it flared up once again."<sup>10</sup>

But if the kind of exercises we read in the *Meditations* I, 6, is relevant, then precisely that point should count as the reading key for the foolish acts described in the letter to Fronto: Marcus was focusing on his own "maladies" with the same intensity that he had for spotting them in others. Nevertheless, according to Hadot, Fronto and Marcus developed the habit of exchanging letters, some of them preserved in a palimpsest.

The fragment quoted above contains another kind of exercise as well. Spotting illnesses of the soul (his and of others) is associated with the ability to describe or narrate. The letter as self-narration helps the young Marcus (in his late teenage years at the time) to better analyse and understand what he observes. It seems, then, that the style of the meditations is owed to Fronto; he had required Marcus to compose and reformulate in different ways daily sayings such as paradoxical statements (*nome*), even build a collection of sayings.<sup>11</sup>

6  
Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *The communings with himself of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Emperor of Rome: together with his speeches and sayings*, translated by Charles Reginald Haines, London 1906, I, 6. I am quoting from this edition but occasionally I will refer to his work as *Meditations*.

7  
P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, p. 7.

8  
Marcus Aurelius, *The communings with himself of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Emperor of Rome*, I, 11.

9  
Fronto, *Ad Marc. Caes.*, II, 16, according to: P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, p. 6.

10  
P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, p. 8.

11  
*Ibid.*, p. 257.

Yet another exercise Marcus had to observe with Fronto was reading. Fronto used to recommend Marcus different authors and probably quite often he would fail to accomplish tasks. In another letter to Fronto, Marcus seemed to use a stylistic figure when he claimed to be so sad and unable to eat because he has not fulfilled an assigned reading and has not written a rhetorical exercise with *pro* and *con* arguments; this counts nevertheless as a different kind of exercise, that of argumentation. At this age Marcus was already “converted” to philosophy, some argue,<sup>12</sup> which is not so important since, as we have seen, Marcus began to be motivated towards “living like a philosopher” from his childhood. Instead, it is the practising of philosophy as a continuous activity what counts for the kind of philosopher Marcus Aurelius was.

To sum up, we shall list the activities Marcus Aurelius was supposed to attend as a teenager philosopher. They were: observing maladies of the soul (envy, cunning, dissimulation or hypocrisy, *astorgeia*); self-examination, self-narration, reading, argumentation and style. Even though we would be inclined to notice that style seems to be an earlier achievement, it is reasonable to support the idea that it was a lasting element of a continuous educational program, there were no such thing as “achievement”, in terms of reaching a goal; style continued to offer a solid element of the structured way of life for the young Marcus, besides other new activities that were introduced. To this extent, Fronto offered Marcus a new kind of philosophical community, dedicated to the analysis of the self through examination and narration in order to point to maladies. The list and structure of the maladies according to the Stoic Schools should make the subject of a different discussion, here, it is essential to notice that today’s philosophical counselling is built around precisely this kind of investigation.<sup>13</sup>

### Junius Rusticus: The Philosophical Way of Life

At maturity, Marcus Aurelius will eventually become an autonomous philosopher, as described above, choosing his life program and separating himself from what we called a philosophical communion with his teachers, or giving it a different meaning. According to Hadot, the first evidence we have of Marcus Aurelius’s adherence to philosophical study may indicate an age of about twenty-five years, when he experienced some highly addictive lectures from an author named Aristo, at a time when he was an independent thinker detaching himself from rhetoric and starting to appreciate more and more the philosophical texts, especially the *Manual of Epictetus* Junius Rusticus had introduced him to.

Still, he did not dedicate himself to theoretical study, but after discovering the *Manual*, Marcus turned to a Stoic program of life characterised by simplicity. There is a striking contradiction between the childish games of playing the philosopher that have been taught by Diognetus and some pages in Epictetus that say, for instance:

“What, then, is subject matter for the philosopher? It is not a rough cloak, is it? No, but reason. What is end for the philosopher? It is not to wear a rough cloak, is it? No, but to keep his reason right. What is the nature of his principles? They do not have to do with the question of how to grow a long beard or a thick head of hair, do they? Nay, rather, as Zeno says, to understand the elements of reason, what the nature of each one is and how they are fitted one to another, and all the consequences of these facts.”<sup>14</sup>

Epictetus' program of life will become Marcus' continuous preoccupation, and in his *Meditations*, he will acknowledge Rusticus for being able to offer efficient teaching regarding such skills. Even Fronto, in some of his letters, will often allude the philosophical way of life led by Marcus since his new readings.

Comparing these remarks with Marcus Aurelius' lines about Rusticus in his *Meditations*, Pierre Hadot finds that the education of Fronto and that of Rusticus are in conflict; giving up poetry, rhetoric and refinement represented a real conversion for Marcus. Still, Hadot considers that Marcus Aurelius "does not say a word about the Stoic doctrines taught to him by Junius Rusticus",<sup>15</sup> which is true, but then Hadot offers a personal translation of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* I, 7, where we notice the presence of a Stoic programme immediately. I am quoting the text in Haines' translation here and then offer Hadot's version in the endnote.

"From Rusticus, to become aware of the fact that I needed amendment and training for my character; and not to be led aside into an argumentative sophistry; nor compose treatises on speculative subjects, or deliver little homilies, or pose ostentatiously as the moral athlete or unselfish man; and to eschew rhetoric, poetry, and fine language; and not to go about the house in my robes, nor commit any such breach of good taste; and to write letters without affectation, like his own letter written to my mother from Sinuessa; to shew oneself ready to be reconciled to those who have lost their temper and trespassed against one, and ready to meet them halfway as soon as ever they seem to be willing to retrace their steps I; to read with minute care and not to be content with a superficial bird's-eye view; nor to be too quick in agreeing with every voluble talker; arid to make the acquaintance of the Memoirs of Epictetus, which he supplied me with out of his own library."<sup>16</sup>

A short analysis of this fragment reveals that Marcus Aurelius is, besides using a Stoic terminology, describing his learning from Rusticus as a complex procedure of care for the self. He says that, first of all, he learned (a) to pose in

12  
Ibid., p. 11.

13  
Contemporary literature on philosophical counselling is abundant in describing methods such as Socratic Dialogue, philosophy as a way of life, etc., that rely on self-analysis and self-narration. See, for instance: Peter Bruno Raabe, *Philosophical Counselling. Theory and Practice*, Praeger, Westport 2001, chapter 2 for a synthetic approach.

14  
Epictetus, *Discourses*, IV, 8,12.

15  
P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, pp. 10–11.

16  
Marcus Aurelius, *The communings with himself of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Emperor of Rome*, I, 7. In Hadot there is a different translation worth quoting for its improved precision regarding the Stoic terminology: "To have had some idea of the need I had to straighten out my moral condition, and to take care of it. That I did not let myself be dragged

into sophisticated ambition, or to compose treatises on philosophical theorems, to declaim fine exhortatory speeches, or, finally, to try to strike my audience's imagination by parading myself ostentatiously as a man who practices philosophical exercises, or is generous to a fault. To have given up rhetoric, poetry, and refined expressions. Not to walk around in a toga while I'm home, and not to let myself go in such matters. To write letters simply, just like the letter he himself wrote to my mother from Sinuessa. To be disposed, with regard to those who are angry with you and offend you, in such a way as to be ready to respond to the first call, and to be reconciled as soon as they themselves wish to return to you. To study texts with precision, without being content just to skim over them in a general, approximate way; and not to give my assent too quickly to smooth talkers. To have been able to read the notes taken at the courses of Epictetus, which he lent to me from his own library." – P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, pp. 10–11.

front of his mind (*labein phantasia*) that he needed to (b) straighten (*diortho-seos*) his moral condition and (c) take care of it (*therapeias tou ethous*); (d) not to be dragged by sophisticated evidence (*eis delon sophistikon*); (e) not to speculate on theorems; (f) not to write short protreptic sentences (*logaria*); (g) not to parade as an ascetical man (*asketikon*, the Stoic word for philosophical exercises) or as a well-doer to strike the imagination of people; (h) to give up (*apostenai*) the rhetoric, poetry and refinement; (i) to avoid bad taste (like wearing a robe at home); (j) to address people simply; (k) to be reconciling; (l) to practice intensive text study; (m) to weight before consent; (n) reading Epictetus's courses.

It is possible to structure this list in multiple ways, but we should be satisfied with saying that the first five items (a, b, c, d, e) relate to the self-discipline and restraint, the f) and h) point towards intellectual activity, then (g, j, k, m) are about cultivating the other people, and finally (l and n) regard the study of texts. Thus, the mature Marcus Aurelius preoccupies himself with the philosophy as a way of life consisting of these four core activities: self-discipline, intellectual exercises, practicing ethical values, and study. These are complementary to the previous programmes but function altogether as consistent features of a formed philosopher, able to separate from the community of his teachers. This is the meaning we attach to Hadot's remark that the teachings of Fronto and Rusticus are in conflict: it is the student Marcus that allows himself an autonomous approach. Leaving behind poetical and rhetorical refinements for the sake of self-discipline, ethics and intellectual practice, Marcus is detached from the community of formation and starts to form a community with his self. Diognetus and Fronto formed a training community with Marcus, whereas Rusticus is in communion with an already mature philosopher.

### The Philosophical Community of Marcus Aurelius

What interests us at this point is the fact that Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* count for him not only as exercises but to a broader extent as recognition of his education process in which several people took active parts. Diognetus, Fronto and Rusticus are the active mentors of a lifestyle shared by a community of individuals. In his *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius mentions other teachers as well: he attended Apollonius, from whom he retained mostly moral and practical attitudes, Sextus of Chaeronea (the grandson of Plutarch),<sup>17</sup> a Stoic from whom he learned benevolence, house-holding, living according to nature, gravity, empathy, patience, impassibility, and the ability to systematise the practical teachings.

Other persons that Marcus considered as teachers include Roman statesmen, all of them known as philosophers:<sup>18</sup> Alexander the Platonist who was to become Marcus' secretary for Greek correspondence, Catulus, Severus and Maximus, political figures (among them Severus was a consul and Aristotelian, and Maximus who was proconsul of Africa and a philosopher),<sup>19</sup> then Emperor Antoninus, called an ideal prince and compared to Socrates. Junius Rusticus became a consul and prefect of Rome himself. There was also a Peripatetic philosopher, Eudemus of Pergamon, together with other Peripatetics like Sergius Paulus, consul in 168 and proconsul, Flavius Boethius, Governor of Palestinian Syria, and Vetulenus Civica Barbarus, another consul. Galen testified that these statesmen were conscious and active attendants of their philosophical schools,<sup>20</sup> either Stoic or Aristotelian.



Throughout his life Marcus Aurelius was part of a group of philosophers in the sense described, that is, practitioners of philosophy. Pierre Hadot says that he “surrounded himself with philosophers”,<sup>21</sup> but obviously he was a member of a structured community of philosophical enquiry and living. It is essential to emphasise that Marcus Aurelius was not the only philosopher who ruled the Roman Empire at that time – there was an entire community of statesmen-philosophers.

Marcus’s education for a philosophical living knew at least three basic stages of learning to live philosophically, under the influence of three important masters. Such were: (1) childhood education, under the guidance of Diognetus, consisting in imitation of what a philosopher looks like, or the so-called “playing the philosopher”, together with recognisable typical Stoic practices: simplicity, parrhesiastic attitude, attending lessons, studying philosophy, writing, etc.; (2) the adolescence lessons guided by Fronto consisting in knowledge of the maladies of the soul, self-examination, self-narration, reading, argumentation and style; (3) maturity communion with Junius Rusticus, relying on self-discipline, intellectual style, relation with other people, and texts study.

Our examination of Marcus Aurelius’ education structure and guidance within limits described in his *Meditations* and few other texts is completely conclusive in claiming that the Stoic education represented for Marcus and his fellow philosophers a continuous effort in the sense of *askesis* (exercise) to which he was exposed since childhood and continued throughout his life, with the important observation that such an “ascetical” life was lived within a community. This community contained, first of all, the mentors (Diognetus, Fronto and Rusticus appearing as the most influential), and not least, Marcus’ philosopher-friends. Together they cultivated what was called a triadic structure of the wise life, consisting in three general rules as pointed out by Hadot<sup>22</sup> (relation with the self, relation with the universe and relations with other people),<sup>23</sup> but embodied in different activities at each age, every activity weighing differently. The communitarian dimension of philosophical practice is above all essential, and this sense of a philosophical school is rarely emphasised. Philosophical practice is, for this reason, indebted to the Stoic tradition not only for the methods and exercises it inherited from it but above all for this dimension of community. Philosophical counselling is essentially

17

Cf. C. R. Haines, note 4, in: Marcus Aurelius, *The communings with himself of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Emperor of Rome*, p. 7.

18

P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, p. 16.

19

Ibid., p. 17.

20

Ibid., p. 19.

21

Ibid.

22

Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life. Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*,

translated by Michael Chase, Blackwell Publishing, Malden (MA) – Oxford – Victoria 2017, pp. 81–126.

23

P. Hadot, *The Inner Citadel*, p. 44, there is a different description of the three rules: (1) judgment, as activity, concerns the domain of the faculty of judgment and aims at the inner attitude of objectivity; (2) desire, as activity, concerns the domain of the universal Nature and aims at the inner attitude of consent to destiny; and (3) the activity called impulse toward action concerns the domain of reality corresponding to the human nature and aims at the inner attitude justice and altruism

different from other forms of therapy for the very reason that it is built on a concept of community relation, not on a sum of individuals. The philosophical community, as traced in Marcus Aurelius' education, is worth exploring as a model for that.

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### **Marko Aurelije i zajednica filozofijskog života**

#### **Sažetak**

*U radu se usmjeravam na povijesnu pozadinu suvremene filozofijske prakse ističući određene aspekte filozofijskog obrazovanja Marka Aurelija, naročito dnevne rutine upražnjavane tijekom njegova ranog djetinjstva, koje su mu prenijeli njegovi učitelji. Argumentirat ću u korist ideje da postoje određene prakse koje se mogu strukturirati kao dio života filozofijske zajednice. Moja se analiza zasniva na Hadotovoj interpretaciji filozofijskog ideala Marka Aurelija, vezanog za figure poput Katona mlađeg, Rogacijana i Aula Gelija, kako bi se naglasila ideja da je Aurelijeva posvećenost filozofiji bila rezultat dugotrajnog procesa sudjelovanja u duhovnim aktivnostima predloženima od strane njegovih učitelja, kojima je odao počast u prvoj knjizi svojih Meditacija. Idejom se predlaže da je pod utjecajem Epikteta svaki od učitelja poticao na oprimjerivanje karakteristične vrline u dnevnim vježbama tijekom Aurelijevih formativnih godina, kao počast helenskoj koncepciji filozofije kao »brige o duši«. Stoga, bez da se radi o historiografskom istraživanju, rad nastoji ponuditi izvor suvremenom filozofijskom praktičaru, o privodi filozofijskog savjetovanja, nudeći povijesne izvore za suvremenu filozofijsku praksu, te oblik uvoda u filozofijsko savjetovanje za nepraktičare, time ilustrirajući stoičko filozofijsko savjetovanje na djelu.*

#### **Ključne riječi**

filozofijski život, Marko Aurelije, *Meditacije*, Pierre Hadot, filozofijska zajednica

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### **Mark Aurel und die Gemeinschaft des philosophischen Lebens**

#### **Zusammenfassung**

*In der Arbeit fokussiere ich mich auf den historischen Hintergrund der zeitgenössischen philosophischen Praxis, indem ich bestimmte Aspekte der philosophischen Ausbildung Mark Aurels hervorhebe, namentlich die während seiner frühen Kindheit eingeübten täglichen Routinen, die von seinen Lehrern an ihn weitergegeben wurden. Ich argumentiere zugunsten der Idee, dass bestimmte Praktiken existieren, die sich als Teil des Lebens der philosophischen Gemeinschaft strukturieren lassen. Meine Analyse stützt sich auf Hadots Interpretation des philosophischen Ideals von Mark Aurel, das mit Figuren wie Cato dem Jüngeren, Rogatianus und Aulus Gellius verknüpft ist, um die Idee zu unterstreichen, dass Aurels Hingabe an Philosophie der Ausfluss eines langdauernden Prozesses der Teilnahme an spirituellen Aktivitäten war, die von seinen Lehrern vorgeschlagen wurden, denen er im ersten Buch seiner Meditationen huldigte. Mit dieser Idee wird nahegelegt, dass jeder der Lehrer in täglichen Übungen während Aurels prägender Jahre unter dem Einfluss von Epiktet den Ansporn zur Exemplifizierung der charakteristischen Tugend gegeben hat, zu Ehren der hellenischen Konzeption von Philosophie als „Seelsorge“. Daher zielt der Aufsatz, ohne von der historiografischen Forschung zu handeln, darauf ab, dem zeitgenössischen philosophischen Praktiker eine Quelle zur Natur der philosophischen Beratung zu offerieren, indem er historische Quellen für die zeitgenössische philosophische Praxis sowie eine Form der Einführung in die philosophische Beratung für Nichtpraktiker bietet und somit die stoische philosophische Beratung am Werk veranschaulicht.*

#### **Schlüsselwörter**

philosophisches Leben, Mark Aurel, *Meditationen*, Pierre Hadot, philosophische Gemeinschaft

**Claudiu Marius Mesaros**

**Marc Aurèle et la communauté de vie philosophique**

**Résumé**

*Dans ce travail je me concentre sur le contexte historique de la philosophie contemporaine pratique en relevant certains aspects de l'éducation philosophique de Marc Aurèle, en particulier ceux de sa routine quotidienne pratiqués durant sa jeune enfance qui lui ont été transmis par ses professeurs. J'argumenterai en faveur de l'idée selon laquelle il existe certaines pratiques qui peuvent être structurées comme un élément de la vie de la communauté philosophique. Mon analyse repose sur l'interprétation de l'idéal philosophique de Marc Aurèle de Hadot, qui est lié à des figures tels que le jeune Kant, Rogatianus et Aulu-Gelle, afin de mettre l'accent sur l'idée selon laquelle le dévouement de Marc Aurèle pour la philosophie a été le résultat d'un long processus de participation aux activités spirituelles proposées par ses professeurs à qui il a rendu hommage dans le premier livre de ses Méditations. À travers cette idée, il est suggéré que chaque professeur, sous l'influence d'Épictète, encourageait l'exemplification des valeurs caractéristiques dans les exercices quotidiens durant les années de formation de Marc Aurèle, comme un hommage à la conception hellénistique en tant que « soin de l'âme ». Ainsi, sans qu'il soit question d'une recherche historiographique, ce travail s'applique à offrir une source au praticien philosophique contemporain sur la nature du conseil en philosophie, en offrant des sources historiques pour la pratique philosophique contemporaine et une forme d'introduction du conseil en philosophie pour les non pratiquants, et de cette manière illustrant le conseil en philosophie stoïque à l'œuvre.*

**Mots-clés**

vie philosophique, Marc Aurèle, *Méditations*, Pierre Hadot, communauté philosophique