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Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments

Self-Cultivation in Practical Philosophy

Matthew Dennis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare this thesis to be the result of original research carried out by me while in candidature for a Joint PhD at Monash University and the University of Warwick; that I am the sole author and research; that the work presented herein is entirely my own; that no portion has been submitted for a degree or qualification at these or any other universities; and that all source materials have been clearly and adequately acknowledged and cited. I also declare that parts of Ch. 4 have appeared in different and abbreviated form in a peer-reviewed journal article titled 'On the Role of Philosophy in Self-Cultivation: Reassessing Nussbaum's Critique of Foucault' in *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy*. This article won the ASCP Postgraduate Essay Prize in 2017.

ABSTRACT

This thesis offers an original theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments based on the Francophone interpretation of the Hellenistic conception of self-cultivation. Recently Harry Frankfurt, Bernard Williams, and Susan Wolf have argued that practical philosophers must direct more attention to how our passionate attachments radically affect our resolution to the question of 'how one should live'. By neglecting this topic, these thinkers argue, we overlook some of the strongest and most distinctively human motivations that guide our practical lives, ones that have a powerful effect on our capacity to flourish. Not only should philosophers explain how our moral obligations and prudential concerns guide our conduct, they should also explain how and why we are guided by deep-seated passionate attachments, considerations that Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf argue provide the conditions for leading a life with a sense of meaning and purpose.

Despite viewing passionate attachments as being vitally important, Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf offer separate accounts of either (i) why we cannot *actively cultivate* them, or (ii) why we cannot *form a philosophical theory* of doing so. If there is a way in which we can cultivate our passionate attachments, then these thinkers argue that we must look outside philosophy: to the contingency of personal preference, to self-help instruction manuals, to guidance from religious traditions, or *in extremis* to clinical psychology. My study aims to show that this attitude is overly pessimistic. Not only do we have reason to view passionate attachments as susceptible to growth, change, and improvement, but we should view these entities as amenable to self-cultivation. Only by understanding this process can we construct a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments.

Focusing on Pierre Hadot's and Michel Foucault's respective accounts of Hellenistic self-cultivation, provides vital conceptual tools to formulate a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments. First, their accounts of Hellenistic self-cultivation offer the conceptual resources for a *philosophical theory* of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. Second, the exercises of self-cultivation they focus on allow us to outline a *practical method* through which we can cultivate our passionate character. This takes the exercises of self-cultivation beyond their historical use, as well as beyond their role in the respective projects of these Francophone thinkers. Doing this brings out a significantly new dimension to the role of the passionate attachments in the flourishing life: not only are they valuable in the way Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf suggest, but we can offer theoretical and practical accounts how we can cultivate them based on the Hellenistic conception of self-directed character change.

That which is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil.

Nietzsche [BGE]: §153

Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments

Self-Cultivation in Practical Philosophy

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I. Prospects For a Theory of Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments

Aristotle tells us that philosophy can be divided into the ‘speculative, practical, and productive’, but this tripartite division has long since been replaced by numerous specialisms and subdivisions in modern-day philosophy departments (1984 [*Topics*]: 145a15–6). Regarding the practical branch of philosophy, Aristotle views it as comprising both ethics and politics, along with what many philosophers now consider to be moral philosophy, which some have argued is best viewed as a subcategory of the ethical sphere. Moving boundary stones always has an effect on what they demarcate, of course, and the historical Aristotle would surely have raised an eyebrow at how his expansive conception of practical philosophy has now been cleanly divided into the two disciplines of politics and ethics with the latter being increasingly occupied with the intellectual concerns of what I follow Elizabeth Anscombe’s influential formulation in terming ‘modern moral philosophy’ (1958: 1). Not only would most practical philosophers working in the Anglophone world most readily identify as ‘moral philosophers’, but the apparatus of the modern philosophy department is solidly geared to reinforce this. Students can opt for courses in moral philosophy, permanent chairs of moral philosophy have been long established, and these self-described moral philosophers belong to societies and publish in journals, which all define themselves – at least in name – as moral philosophy.¹

¹ Philosophers sometimes distinguish between ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’ to carve practical philosophy into a narrower and wider sense. On this view, the term ‘morality’ is reserved for discussion of other-regarding duties and obligations, whereas the more expansive term ‘ethics’ applies to aspects of our conduct that are non-obligatory and self-directed. The problem of employing such a distinction is that the terms ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’ are often used as synonyms in today’s debates. Furthermore, many who would describe themselves as ‘moral philosophers’ work on a range of questions only loosely connected to other-regarding duties or obligations. I use Anscombe’s formulation ‘modern moral philosophers’ to describe those primarily concerned with the narrow version, and the term ‘practical philosophers’ for those concerned with normative questions relating to our wider conduct. For philosophers who employ this wide and narrow sense, see Edward Harcourt (2015: 166), John

Anscombe's essay appeared in the 1950s, but from the last three decades of the 20th century the rumbling discontent it expresses became increasingly impossible to ignore. The effect of her writings on galvanising a renaissance of Aristotle's ideas in the virtue ethics movement has been well documented, and virtue ethicists have often expressed their desire to make good on her proposal to 'jettison' the notions of '*moral obligation and moral duty*', so as to replace them with character-based and virtue concepts (1958: 1). Nevertheless, although the virtue ethical project has made serious headway in realising Anscombe's proposal, it has arguably done little to expand the parameters of moral philosophy to give it the scope Aristotle originally envisaged for the practical branch of the discipline. Rather, one could argue, virtue ethicists have done little more than use alternative conceptual terminology (character, virtue, et cetera.) to offer new answers to the old contentions of modern moral philosophy. Questions regarding the moral rightness or wrongness of actions, are no longer answered by reference to our duties or obligations, but rather by reference to virtues of character and moral goodness.² Such emphasis may lead us to think that, despite reintroducing a terminological vocabulary (character, virtue) that deals with philosophical issues concerning practical life more satisfactorily, virtue ethicists tend to understand the remit of their discipline similarly to those modern moral philosophers they began by criticising so vociferously. While questions relating to moral goodness and our moral character will always be an important part of practical philosophy, an exclusive emphasis these questions can obscure other significant concerns that are not only squarely within the remit of practical philosophy in Aristotle's sense but which also undeniably affect human flourishing.

Writing in the spirit of Anscombe's essay, Iris Murdoch also suggests that the absence of attention towards such concerns should be viewed as a 'void in present-day moral philosophy', preventing philosophers from doing justice to the richness and complexity of our practical lives (2014 [1969]: 46). We must think of the limits of moral philosophy more expansively, Murdoch argues, so that we can 'speak significantly of Freud and Marx', to give rise to a practical philosophy in which the 'concept of love, so rarely mentioned by moral philosophers, can once again be made central' (2014 [1969]: 45).

Skorupski (1998), and Charles Taylor (1982: 4–5), Bernard Williams (1993 [1972]: xiv, 73–81; 1985: 6–8; 2008 [1993]: 41–2).

² See Harcourt's criticism of the exclusive focus of contemporary virtue ethicists to 'settle questions about the rightness of action' (2015: 165). Julia Annas could be said to fall foul of this criticism in *Intelligent Virtue*. See her exhaustive arguments on why virtue *must* be connected to moral goodness, as well as her attacks on 'virtue pluralists', such as Hume and Nietzsche, who countenance non-moral conceptions of virtue (2011: 100–18).

Thinking in terms of the expansive Aristotelian remit of practical philosophy, it is perhaps no accident that Murdoch picks a psychologist and a political philosopher, both of whom show that there is troublingly more to our practical lives than voluntary, conscious actions. Marx offers us a picture of ethical life that is inextricably linked to its social and political conditions, whereas Freud offers a story of personal development that reveals the oft-dominant strength of internal motivations. Without the input of these thinkers, and those like them, moral philosophy assumes a bare and stripped-down model of the subject, one which is ‘free, independent, lonely, powerful, rational, responsible, brave’, Murdoch writes, the unfortunate ‘hero of so many [...] books of moral philosophy’ (2014 [1967]: 78). While ‘free, independent, lonely’ suggest a subject alienated from the external conditions of social and political life, ‘powerful, rational, responsible’ indicate one hubristically acting in ignorance of the unconscious forces actually motivating them. While Aristotle might have struggled to incorporate all the insights of modern day political science and moral psychology into his world view, Murdoch is surely right to suggest that he would appreciate the potential value of the resources of these disciplines for practical philosophy.³

Furthermore, as Murdoch notes in her comment that the ‘*concept of love* [should] once again be made central’ (cited above; emphasis added), many topics recently neglected by modern moral philosophy involve our love relationships. Perhaps scholars have interpreted this comment overly narrowly in terms of the importance of romantic love in our practical lives (the obsession of many of the fictional characters in Murdoch’s novels), but we can more fully understand this thought by interpreting her as thinking of love as encompassing different kinds of deep-seated attachments, including those that do not involve other persons. To avoid viewing the term love in the light of today’s clichéd cultural connotations, in this study I use the term ‘passionate attachment’,⁴ a notion I sketch broadly in order to circumscribe all the heterogeneous things we can care about, not just those we love romantically. The examples of this are extremely diverse: from attachments relating to a creative or intellectual endeavour; to those relating to aesthetic projects or

³ For two thinkers with character-based sympathies, see Jonathan Lear’s work on Freud (1999) and Amartya Sen’s work on human capacities and political emancipation (1999 [1985]).

⁴ This term appears in the Anglophone literature on Hellenism. Annas uses it as a synonym for ‘affectionate relationship’ (1991: 196). Nussbaum uses it to refer to cherished ‘externals’ (2009 [1994]: 484). For these thinkers, our passionate attachments can give rise to strong emotions (*pathē*), although these emotions are generated by other things too (see my remarks in ‘Methodology’ below). The thinkers I examine in Ch. 1 – Frankfurt, Williams, Wolf – use their own terminology, so it is useful to introduce a bridging term.

social justice; as well as the various deep-seated attachments we have to parents, children, friends, or spouse.

Understanding such heterogeneous love relationships under the composite rubric of passionate attachments has significant theoretical advantages. It avoids becoming distracted by idiosyncrasies that only apply to one kind of love relationship because what is important is the characteristic responses that the pursuit of passionate attachments generate in us. It allows us to consider how they affect human flourishing, rather than the particular nature of this or that passionate attachment. Such a 'family resemblance' model allows us to understand what these relationships have in common, as well as safeguarding us from making unwarranted normative specifications about the desirability (or otherwise) of specific kinds of love relationships.⁵ The passionate attachment to a political ideal, say, and the love for one's children clearly differ in vastly important ways, but they are also similar in a way we cannot understand if we focus too closely on the differences. Rather than viewing the many varieties of love as incommensurate, exploring them together shows how we can better understand the role these kinds of attachments play in our practical lives.

After sketching what passionate attachments are and how deeply enwoven they are in our practical lives, I offer a theory of how we can cultivate these kinds of attachments, one that moves beyond existing work on this theme in contemporary practical philosophy. Before doing so I first explain why even those philosophers who offer the most compelling and comprehensive account of them – Harry Frankfurt, Bernard Williams, and Susan Wolf – either baulk at the idea that we can actively cultivate them to any significant degree, or deny we can form a philosophical theory of them. For these thinkers, our passionate attachments cannot be reflectively cultivated because they are largely impervious to self-directed change. On their view, the best we can do is identify whichever passionate attachments we happen to have, and adjust our conduct to better accommodate them in our practical lives. Moreover, even if the self-directed cultivation of our love relationships is possible, Wolf indicates that a philosophical theory of passionate self-cultivation would be especially unsuited to this task. Instead, we would do better to seek such a theory from self-help books, the teachings of spiritual leaders, or – when things go seriously awry – clinical psychologists or psychotherapists. I call this view 'romantic fatalism' in honour of

⁵ There is much emancipatory potential in focusing on love relationships at the right level. If what is important is pursuing passionate attachments, then many questions that have traditionally garnered heated folk attention become otiose. If what matters are the conditions for loving successfully, it does not matter whether one's children are biologically related, what gender one's partner is, whether or not one marries one's long-term partner, et cetera.

the widespread folk belief that what we love is not up to us, and – in the case of romantic love – all we have to do is wait patiently for Cupid to strike.

Although romantic fatalists take such a pessimistic view of our ability to cultivate passionate attachments, theories of how we can cultivate the moral and prudential dimensions of our characters are alive and well in other areas of practical philosophy.⁶ It has long been recognised that through processes and practices of self-cultivation we have the capacity for self-directed development, although this has mainly been explored in the context of moral improvement. Although there has been some philosophical interest in how we can cultivate our prudential characters in the virtue ethical tradition, most literature on this topic focuses on how we can ameliorate these kinds of considerations through the cultivation of moral ones, which is perhaps unsurprising given the dominant concerns of modern *moral* philosophy. Although we might imagine virtue ethicists to be more sympathetic to the idea that our passionate attachments are integral to flourishing, they invariably focus on how we can cultivate our moral character, fitting with the claim I make above about how deeply these thinkers remain enthralled by the guiding concerns of modern moral philosophy.⁷ In contrast to how self-cultivation has been traditionally interpreted in a restricted sense, I argue that self-cultivation is an all encompassing term, one which applies to all dimensions of our character along with the corresponding domains of practical reasoning. On the view I defend, theories of self-directed development need not only apply to the moral or prudential domains of practical reasoning because we can – and should – complement them with one explaining the self-directed development of our passionate character.

As well as the Francophone interpreters of Hellenism that will be the focus of my study, Murdoch touches on the importance of the self-directed cultivation of character when she discusses '*techniques* for the purification and reorientation of an energy that is naturally selfish', even proposing that the investigation of these techniques should be

⁶ The juxtaposition of 'prudential' to 'moral' considerations has been widely taken up by modern moral philosophers, especially by virtue ethicists. As Philippa Foot writes: "'moral" and "prudential" considerations differ insofar as the latter are patently "'self-regarding" pursuits' which by definition places them 'outside morality' (2001 [2010]: 68; cf. Swanton 2003: 58–9). Similarly, Williams defines them as considerations that relate 'merely to comfort, excitement, self-esteem, power, or another advantage of the agent' (1985: 13). I use 'prudential' as a catch-all term to refer to all means-orientated considerations that are instrumentally related to our well-being in an unspecified sense.

⁷ See Snow (2016). While interest in moral cultivation has been most evident among virtue ethicists, recently informative studies have been published detailing how Kant's and Mill's accounts of this kind of self-cultivation, as well as how it can be integrated with the demands of the Categorical Imperative (Louden 1986: 473–89) and the Utilitarian Calculus (Donner 2010: 146–65).

viewed as '[o]ne of the main problems of moral philosophy' (2001 [1962]: 67; emphasis added). Elsewhere Murdoch tells us that such 'techniques' – or 'spiritual exercises' as she calls them⁸ – are extremely important in our practical development, although she leaves us with no more than a sketch of how such exercises function. Making her account of these exercises even more intriguing, Murdoch's description may well be better described as the passionate rather than moral cultivation of character (or something in between). In her celebrated portrayal of a mother (M) who successfully manages to reverse the antipathy she initially feels for her new daughter-in-law (D), Murdoch describes the self-directed process through which M cultivates her passionate relationship with D. To do this, M deliberately redirects her loving attention towards the aspects of the younger woman's character which she had previously viewed as unpalatable. By reflectively redirecting her attention, Murdoch writes, M manages to change her view that D is 'unpolished', 'brusque', 'rude', 'tiresomely juvenile', and comes to reinterpret these characteristics as 'refreshingly simple', 'not undignified but spontaneous', 'not tiresomely juvenile but delightfully youthful'. Murdoch gives no details of the techniques through which M does this, merely telling us that M is a 'intelligent and well-intentioned person, capable of self-criticism', but she does indicate that it involves directing 'careful and just *attention* to the object which confronts her' through how she '*looks* at D, she attends to D, she focuses her attention' (2001 [1964]: 17; 22).⁹

Studies such as Murdoch's account of M and D, indicate that the idea we can actively and self-reflectively cultivate our passionate attachments is at least plausible, and perhaps her example is powerful because it reminds us of the manifold ways in which we are required to cultivate our passionate characters in our practical lives. Life requires that we constantly re-evaluate our current passionate attachments, galvanise ourselves to take up new ones, strive to integrate those we already possess, as well as shedding those that are no longer appropriate or satisfying. Moreover, our ability to cultivate our passionate attachments reduces the extent we are at their mercy, decreasing our vulnerability to the

⁸ I discuss Pierre Hadot's account of the 'spiritual exercises' in Pt. II, but it is striking that Murdoch also views such exercises as a vital aspect of the history of philosophy. In a remark that significantly predates Hadot's work on this topic, she writes, '[m]oral philosophy is properly, *and in the past has sometimes been*, the discussion of the ego and of the *techniques* (if any) for its defeat' (2001 [1962]: 51; both emphases added).

⁹ Murdoch deploys this example to illustrate how we can cultivate ourselves morally. Nevertheless, since her view of moral goodness is markedly differently to the one employed by modern moral philosophers, she discusses the self-directed cultivation of our love relationships in order to explain how we can develop the moral dimension of our characters.

distress we suffer on their account, as well as increasing our ability to replace them if we lose them. Recognising the importance of this kind of self-cultivation means that practical philosophers would do well to seek to understand this kind of human endeavour. It is through practices of self-cultivation that we exercise our capacity to improve a fundamentally important aspect of ourselves, to love more solidly and deliberately, and to enable ourselves to reach a greater measure of flourishing. If our passionate lives are as important as Murdoch, Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf suggest, we stand to learn much about how to bring ourselves to a greater measure of flourishing by explaining what passionate self-cultivation is, how it takes place, and understanding the best way to go about it.

Nevertheless, finding the conceptual resources for a compelling theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, requires parting company with Murdoch for two reasons: first, despite her avowed commitment to the importance of love relationships in how we organise our practical lives, she understands these kinds of relationships to be valuable because they bring us closer to *moral* goodness; second, her account of ‘spiritual exercises’ is fleeting and lacks sufficient depth to provide the conceptual resources for a comprehensive theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments.¹⁰ So where can we find the conceptual resources for a theory of how to cultivate our passionate attachments, if the very thinkers who argue so persuasively for their importance actively deny – or like Murdoch offer no more than a sketch of how – they can be cultivated? I argue that the resources to do this can be found in French philosophy, specifically in the interpretation of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation offered by Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault.

Both these thinkers make auspicious claims regarding potential use of the Hellenistic account of self-cultivation in contemporary practical philosophy, as well as claiming that these conceptual resources can benefit our practical lives.¹¹ Not only do these thinkers locate the conceptual resources for a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments in the Hellenistic source material, but they also offer detailed accounts of the various practices through which we can do this. These claims should encourage us to take seriously the project of seeking philosophical insight into the question of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments from the Hellenistic tradition. Furthermore, Hadot’s

¹⁰ See Maria Antonaccio’s proposal for how this could be done (1998: 84–6).

¹¹ Hadot uses the Hellenistic emphasis on self-cultivation to advocate a return to the conception of ‘philosophy as a way of life’, whereas Foucault argues that it could be used to underwrite a ‘politics of ourselves’. Compelling studies on these claims have already appeared. See Stuart Elden (2016), Timothy O’Leary (2002), and John Sellars (2009 [2003]).

and Foucault's comments should embolden us in the face of criticism from twentieth-century Anglophone thinkers¹² who think that Hellenistic self-cultivation *only* applies to extirpating *pathē*, scholars who deny that these exercises might serve another practical function without this explicit aim. Anglophone thinkers invariably view the exercises of self-cultivation as aiming to extirpate the strong emotions [*pathē*] that Hellenistic philosophers regarded as inimical to human flourishing. While Anglophone thinkers are correct that this was the overriding aim of the exercises of self-cultivation in the Hellenistic world, the work of Foucault and Hadot enables us to think of these exercises more broadly, both in terms of how they functioned in the Hellenistic world but – more importantly – how we might reinterpret them for use in contemporary thought and action. Hadot emphasises how the very same exercises of self-cultivation were frequently transferred between the Hellenistic schools, and claims that they can be applied to problems both in contemporary philosophy and practical life. Foucault takes the transferability of the exercises even further, showing how the Hellenistic exercises of self-shaping have the potential to facilitate wholesale character change, understood more broadly than the suppression of strong emotions. This means a potential theory of cultivating our passionate attachments is offered two important theoretical boons by Hadot and Foucault: first, they provide a philosophical account of the self-directed practices of character change that were popular in the Hellenistic world. Second, they interpret these practices in a suitably broad manner, so that can be applied to the self-directed cultivation of our passionate attachments.

Nevertheless, to date, scholars of Hadot's and Foucault's work have rarely accepted the challenge of applying the conceptual resources of Hellenism to contemporary philosophical debate, perhaps because they find Hadot's and Foucault's remarks on this topic to be elliptical and overly enigmatic. Instead, scholarly attention is invariably directed towards comprehending how their interest in Hellenistic self-cultivation fits with their respective intellectual trajectories. Taking Foucault, for example, numerous scholarly studies now attempt to explain why he turns to Greek and Roman Hellenism in his final works, a trend that will surely increase with the recent publication of the final incomplete volume of *L'histoire de la sexualité*, subtitled *Les aveux de la chair* (2018). Given the impassioned remarks both Hadot and Foucault make on the importance of the Hellenistic

¹² I truncate 'twentieth-century Anglophone thinkers' to 'Anglophone thinkers'. I use this as an umbrella term for contemporary commentators who focus on how the Hellenistic exercises strove to extirpate strong emotions, including Annas (1993, 1996, 2011), Irwin (1998), Nussbaum (1985, 1990, 1993, 2001, 2001 [1986], 2009 [1994]), and Porter (2003). When distinguishing these thinkers from Nussbaum, I use the expression 'traditional Anglophone thinkers'.

tradition for contemporary philosophy, it would be a pity if philosophical work on these thinkers were restricted to demonstrating how their work on this topic relates to the rest of their intellectual trajectory. Both Hadot and Foucault make it clear that their turn to the Hellenistic tradition of self-cultivation is no idle intellectual interest, but rather one motivated by the desire to respond to urgent philosophical problems, both in theoretical thought and in practical life. This study aims to make good on this desire.

II. Methodology

One potential difficulty for my project is finding a common philosophical vocabulary so that the thinkers I discuss can converse with one another informatively. Isolating a common conception of a passionate attachment that Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf could be said to share is not a simple task in itself; showing how we can cultivate our passionate attachments using the conceptual resources from an alien philosophical tradition is even more difficult. Not only is the Hellenistic source material temporally, linguistically, and geographically distant from contemporary Anglophone philosophy, *prima facie* it is so far removed from contemporary philosophical concerns that we might wonder if we can meaningfully engage with it all, let alone whether it can provide the conceptual resources to answer a contemporary philosophical problem. Further potential difficulties are created by tricky interpretive questions regarding the Hellenistic source material, especially as the approaches of both Francophone thinkers I examine has been harshly criticised by their Anglophone colleagues. This might leave us wondering whether we even know what the Hellenistic position was at all, let alone successfully apply it to a pressing issue in contemporary practical philosophy. Finally, we may even think it perverse to seek the conceptual resources for a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments from a tradition explicitly arguing that whatever generates strong emotional responses in us should be strenuously avoided. As Anglophone interpreters stress, historically speaking, Hellenistic philosophers developed the exercises of self-cultivation to counteract the effects of *pathē*, strong emotions which they regarded as hampering our ability to conduct ourselves morally. While passionate attachments are not the only things capable of generating such strong emotions, these kinds of attachments are rightly viewed as an active source of emotional turbulence, particularly because they are so valuable to us and connected to our sense of purpose.

While all these problems are potentially serious, they can be avoided by clarifying the parameters of this study. First, I aim to offer a comprehensive theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, along with a practical method inspired by the

Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation that shows how we can do this effectively. I do not aim give a historically accurate account of the role of the exercises of self-cultivation in Hellenistic philosophy, nor even to adjudicate between the clashes between Anglophone and Francophone scholars on their respective interpretations of the source material. (I do attend to these disputes, but only when it directly sheds light on the idea of passionate self-cultivation.) The Francophone thinkers I examine have not been chosen because of the accuracy of their readings of the source material, but on account of the themes they emphasise in the Hellenistic corpus, for how they mobilise, transform, and deploy the resources of Hellenism for use in a contemporary account of self-cultivation. Not only do these thinkers offer a compelling account of self-cultivation, but Hadot's *exercices spirituels* and Foucault's *pratiques de soi* offer detailed practical accounts of how to do this. My aim is to show how viewing the account of self-cultivation of the Hellenistic philosophers through the prism of Foucault and Hadot presents us with the conceptual resources for a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments.

Second, I do not claim to show how self-cultivation figures in Foucault's or Hadot's respective philosophies, nor how it relates to the rest of their work. Many excellent studies have already been written on this, and it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to offer a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments alongside an account of how Hellenism relates to the rest of Foucault's or Hadot's work. What is more, much of this work has to proceed speculatively because, as I discuss extensively in Pt. II, Foucault and Hadot do little more than indicate what their work on Hellenistic philosophy has to offer contemporary philosophy and practical life. For these reasons, I propose that one way to make good on their claims regarding the importance of Hellenism is to identify a contemporary theoretical problem that has important implications for how we lead our practical lives, and then to show how their work contributes to solving it.

III. Summary of Research Aims

This thesis offers a theory of how we cultivate our passionate attachments, one which explains examples of passionate self-cultivation such as those I have proposed can be found in Murdoch. To do this, I offer a comprehensive theory of passionate self-cultivation, one which departs from those philosophers who acknowledge the value of such attachments in our practical lives, but who resist the idea that (i) we can actively cultivate them, or (ii) form a philosophical theory of doing so. Departing from these views, I aim to show why it is important that we cultivate our passionate attachments, and that we can construct a philosophical theory of doing so from the conceptual resources of the

Hellenistic tradition. One upshot of this is that it shows why this area of our practical lives deserves attention from practical philosophers in the form of a comprehensive philosophical theory, one which would complement the theories of moral and prudential self-cultivation that already exist in practical philosophy. In sum, my thesis has four research aims, namely to:

- (1) Show that we *can* and *do* cultivate our passionate attachments.
- (2) Explain why the self-directed cultivation of our passionate attachments is important.
- (3) Offer a philosophical theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments.
- (4) Give examples of the practical processes through which we do this.

In addition to achieving these primary research aims, this approach may pay another intellectual dividend: by seeking the resources to enrich contemporary practical philosophy from French philosophy, we may be able to understand this tradition better itself. Understanding precisely how philosophers such as Hadot and Foucault offer a contribution to practical philosophy that is not dominated by an interest in morality can help us come to better understand this tradition, especially enabling us to appreciate that this tradition deals with a different set of issues and concerns.

IV. Overview

Pt. I focuses on the complaints directed against modern moral philosophy by Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf, especially their contention that it cannot fully account for the flourishing life, as it fails to recognise the vital role of love relationships in our practical reasoning. Not only do our passionate attachments directly generate integral considerations in resolving the question of 'how one should live' – what these thinkers term the 'Socratic question' – they are also responsible for considerations connected to meaningfulness, which Williams emphasises is a vital condition of wanting to be alive at all. Ch. 1 ends with a comparison of these thinkers' differing accounts of our love relationships to form the composite notion of a 'passionate attachment' – which aims to capture the heterogeneity of the various types of love relationship that can affect our practical reasoning. After this, Ch. 2 asks why Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf regard our passionate attachments as something we are unable to choose or cultivate, and asks why this is so given that philosophers have traditionally held out much hope for analogous accounts of how we can cultivate the moral and prudential dimension of our characters. I then turn to why we are highly motivated to cultivate our passionate attachments, as well

as to exploring the reasons why philosophical insight on this topic can transform the observation that we do cultivate our passionate attachments into a fully-fledged philosophical theory.

Pt. II explores recent claims about the potential of Hellenistic philosophy to provide the resources to expand and enrich contemporary practical philosophy, focusing especially on self-cultivation. While both the Anglophone philosophers (Nussbaum) and Francophone ones (Foucault, Hadot) make this claim, examining the pronounced differences between how these thinkers understand the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation to function allows us to grasp the potential for a contemporary theory of cultivating our passionate attachments. After this I examine the various accounts of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation offered by Nussbaum, Foucault, and Hadot. I argue that Nussbaum's criticisms of Foucault are tendentious once we fully appreciate the role of the Hellenistic exercises in his own account, and adopt a similar approach to Hadot's hostile remarks. Most importantly, however, Ch. 4 gathers the accounts that each of these thinkers give of the Hellenistic exercises, which provide the conceptual resources for an account of cultivating our passionate attachments specifically, which I offer in Pt. III. To do this, I examine three of Foucault's *pratiques de soi* for self-shaping, as well as three of Hadot's *exercices spirituels*.

Pt. III offers a theory of cultivating the passionate attachments, one that responds to the account of passionate attachments given in Pt. I, and furnishes this theory with the philosophical resources of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments in Pt. II. In Ch. 5 I offer a two-part theory of cultivating our passionate attachments that shows what counts as passionate self-cultivation, as well as the various processes through which it operates. In Ch. 6 I show that the exercises of self-cultivation developed in the Hellenistic tradition are well-suited to offering an account of cultivating our passionate attachments, despite the fact they were primarily aimed at extirpating strong emotions in the Hellenistic world.

Chapter 1

The Value of Our Passionate Attachments

If we turn from books on moral philosophy to any vivid account of human life and action such as we find in Shakespeare, nothing strikes us more than the comparative remoteness of the discussions of moral philosophy from the facts of actual life. Is not this largely because, while moral philosophy has, quite rightly, concentrated its attention on the fact of obligation, in the case of many of those whom we admire most and whose lives are of the greatest interest, the sense of obligation, though it may be important, is not a dominating factor in their lives?

H. A. Prichard 1949 [1912]: 1¹³

1.0 Overview

This chapter introduces Harry Frankfurt's, Bernard Williams', and Susan Wolf's respective contentions that the disciplinary parameters of modern moral philosophy need expanding in order for it to explain fundamentally important aspects of the flourishing life. I begin by examining these thinkers' proposal that we should return to what they call the Socratic question of 'how one should live', arguing that this question cannot be settled by determining the normative weight of moral and prudential considerations alone. Following this, I explore what each thinker considers moral philosophers to currently neglect: examining Frankfurt's 'reasons of love' (1.2), Williams' notion of a 'ground project' (1.3), and Wolf's account of 'meaningfulness' (1.4). To provide a complete resolution to the Socratic question, I follow these thinkers in arguing that we must acknowledge a third set of entities – what I term 'passionate attachments' – which are a crucial source of action-guiding considerations. Passionate attachments, I argue, allow us to identify with entities other than ourselves, experience our lives as meaningful, and so are an integral part of human flourishing. The chapter ends by showing how the accounts which Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf propose can bolster one another when scrutinised side-by-side, as well as how their direct engagements with one another reveal significant and theoretically rich

¹³ Cited by Slote (2013: vi).

overlappings which illuminate each of their arguments. This enables me to build a composite account explaining what passionate attachments are, and why they are indispensable to the flourishing life (1.5).

1.1 Returning to the Socratic Question

Over the last three decades increasing numbers of moral philosophers have expressed their disquiet that the parameters of their discipline are overly narrow. These philosophers complain that contemporary moral philosophy cannot account for fundamental aspects of human flourishing as it focuses too closely (often exclusively) on a simplistic interplay between our prudential interests and our moral obligations, rendering its conception of flourishing too thin and limited. While many of these complaints have arisen from thinkers in the virtue ethical tradition,¹⁴ they have perhaps been most eloquently expressed by three philosophers who are not card-carrying virtue ethicists: Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf.¹⁵ Each of these thinkers argue that a full account of a flourishing life – an account of a life that is truly choiceworthy – cannot be given solely in terms of our adherence to any of the theories that moral philosophy currently offers, and (more radically) they propose that our flourishing can involve acting on reasons that are neither generated by our prudential considerations nor our moral obligations. All agree that moral obligations are important, but they argue that we can only deepen our understanding of what a fully flourishing life looks like by acknowledging that it cannot be thought of as one that is exclusively directed by considerations pertaining to morality. Understanding what this kind of life consists of, these philosophers contend, requires us to broaden the scope of our enquiry to ask what else is necessary for flourishing, aside from – and sometimes instead of – ceaseless moral rectitude.

To set their discipline on a more appropriate footing, Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf each propose that moral philosophy should return to its founding question – one often attributed to Socrates – the question of ‘how one should live’. Williams argues that

¹⁴ For classic critiques see Foot (2002 [1977]: 1–5, 181–8); Hursthouse (2002 [1999]: 1–24); Slote (1997: 175–237); MacIntyre (2007 [1981]: 1–22).

¹⁵ I focus on these thinkers because they explicitly argue that passionate attachments ought to have a leading role in resolving the question of ‘how one should live’. They are not the only philosophers who view these kinds of attachments as important (cf. Anscombe 1958: 1; Murdoch 2014 [1973]: 45), but they are distinctive insofar as they insist that these kinds of considerations have an especially important role (cf. Nussbaum 1990: 24–5).

the Socratic question is not equivalent to ‘what life morally ought I to live’, and is more basic than moral philosophy’s other traditional questions such as ‘what is one’s duty?’ (the Kantian question) or ‘how may one be good?’ (the utilitarian question) or even ‘how can one be happy?’ (the eudaimonist one). For Williams, the latter three questions ‘take too much for granted’ since they privilege a single kind of reasons (ones relating to one’s duties, goodness, happiness, et cetera.), and presuppose that a flourishing life must be thought exclusively in these terms. As Williams explains, ‘Socrates’ question [...] means “how has one most reason to live?”’, and because the ‘force of *should* in the question [is] just *should* [...] no prior advantage is built into the question for one kind of reason over another’. He adds, if moral reasons ‘emerge importantly in the answer, [then] this will not be because they have simply been selected for by the question’ (1985: 19). Because it assumes less and has more breadth, Socrates’ question is better cast than the other founding questions of moral philosophy, allowing us to canvass a wider and more diverse set of considerations, taking seriously both moral and non-moral reasons that govern our conduct, while not expressing a view in advance about which considerations ought to come out on top. This means that all three thinkers are ‘normative pluralists’ insofar as they think that the Socratic question cannot be resolved with reference to one type of normative consideration.¹⁶

As Julia Annas notes, to the modern philosophical ear, the question of ‘how one should live’ may seem ‘too particular to be a properly ethical question [...] but it may also, oddly, seem too general’ (1993: 27).¹⁷ For Annas, this creates a paradox. While a ‘great deal of modern literature and psychology arises from and revolves around the way people reflect about their lives, [...] thought about one’s life is no longer seen as central to ethical philosophy’ (1993: 27). Compared to the practical philosophy of the ancient world, modern moral philosophy has drastically narrowed the scope of philosophical enquiry, neglecting vital considerations pertaining to the question of ‘how one should live’, which today has almost exclusively become the domain of writers of self-help manuals, autobiographers, and psychologists of well-being. Today we have to turn to ‘popular self-help manuals to find extensive discussion of questions of the best life, self-fulfilment, the proper role of the emotions, personal friendships and commitments’, Annas writes, whereas in the ancient

¹⁶ See Dale Dorsey who tells us, ‘[n]ormative pluralism holds that there is no such thing as a distinct set of *rational* requirements or “oughts” (distinct, that is, from individual “oughts” generated by the individual special standpoints such as morality, prudence, aesthetics, et cetera.). In other words, there is no such thing as an ought, *period*.’ (2016: 19)

¹⁷ Annas attributes this question to Socrates pronouncement, ‘*honitia tropon chrē zēn*’ (Plato 1997 [Rep.]: 352d; cited by Annas 1993: 27).

world these topics were ‘always treated in a more intellectual way as part of ethics’ (1993: 10).¹⁸ Indeed the breadth of the Socratic question reflected the range of practical issues that ancient philosophers were expected to address, a range which is strikingly broader than the topics covered by a present-day moral philosophy syllabus. For Socrates and his ancient interlocutors, this ‘fundamental’ question was regarded as the ‘natural starting point for ethical reflection’ and was consequently ‘subject to much literature’ (1993: 27–8).

Although Williams claims that Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* is the kind of ‘practical inquiry, which is directed, in effect, to answering Socrates’ question’, many of Aristotle’s minor texts deal with explicitly non-moral dimensions of this question, especially his *Parva Naturalia*.¹⁹ While Aristotle’s notion of practical philosophy certainly has the conceptual bandwidth to accommodate the range of topics that inform the Socratic question, it was the philosophers who came to prominence in the Hellenistic schools after his death who developed his initial insights in practical philosophy in increasing detail, and a wide range of topics relating to the Socratic question were once again explicitly prioritised.²⁰ In what follows I argue that this period could be regarded as a veritable golden age for practical philosophy insofar as the philosophers of this era strove to exhaustively address the many different considerations that allow us to resolve the Socratic question, devoting lengthy philosophical treatises, protracted scholarly discussion, and – prefiguring the interest in moral psychology of today’s theorists – incorporating much empirical evidence pertaining to these topics.

In a similar manner to how today’s self-help books are often marketed with ‘tell-all’ slogans, the titles of many founding Hellenistic texts give a good indication of the philosophical riches they contained, which is fortunate as few of these works have survived. Epicurus, for example, was credited with titles such as *On Love, On Choice and Avoidance, Opinions on the Passions, On the Chief Good*, as well as countless letters on these themes (Diogenes Laertius 1972: X.27–9). The titles of the lost works of the Stoic school are equally as intriguing: Zeno wrote *On Passions, On Duty, On Greek Education*; Herillus wrote

¹⁸ Since Annas’ remarks in 1993, philosophers have increasingly begun addressing a broader range of issues and topics bearing on practical reasoning, many of which share a close resemblance to the items on Murdoch’s wish list.

¹⁹ Aristotle’s *Parva Naturalia* comprises seven short texts on the non-moral conditions of human flourishing: *Sense and Sensibilia, On Memory, On Sleep, On Dreams, On Divination in Sleep, On Length and Shortness of Life*, and *On Youth, Old Age, Life and Death, and Respiration*.

²⁰ Recently Sellars has asked whether Socrates’ ‘humanistic’ or Aristotle’s ‘scientific conception of philosophy’ was most important for the Hellenistic tradition, and has suggested that the Hellenistic philosophers followed Socrates’ conception (2017: 42–4).

On Training, Of the Passions; Sphaerus wrote *Dialogues on Love, Of Wealth, Of Fame, Of Death*; and Chrysippus wrote *On Pleasure, Of Virtues, Of Love* (Diogenes Laertius 1972: XII.107–79). From what we know from extant works, not only did Hellenistic philosophers provide detailed philosophical theories (*logoi*) of the good life, these thinkers explicitly strove to make their work relevant to the lives of their followers, offering practical guides concerning the art (*technē*) of human flourishing, as well as practical exercises (*askēsis*) detailing how to attain it. This is most evident in the texts of the Roman Hellenists, which have been better preserved than those from the Greek period. Lucretius' lengthy prose-poem not only gives an account of Epicurean cosmology and metaphysics, but also the central practical tenets of the latter-day incarnation of the school. The more numerous extant works of Stoics from the Imperial period also follow this pattern. Epictetus' *Enchiridion* contains a philosophical account of a range of issues from childbearing to slave keeping. Seneca's essays and letters deal with topics from anger, to happiness, to leisure, whereas Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* seek to understand how social and psychological factors affect our flourishing. I return to many of these examples in Pt. II, showing how they philosophically investigate many of the most important issues bearing upon the question of 'how one should live'.

1.2 Frankfurt's 'Reasons of Love'

In *The Reasons of Love*, Frankfurt tells us that his key concern, 'how should a person live', should be understood as the quintessential question of 'practical reasoning', which he defines as consisting of 'several varieties of deliberation in which people endeavour to decide what to do, or in which they undertake to evaluate what has been done' (2004: 5). In the same way that Aristotle demarcates the scope of practical reasoning widely, Frankfurt thinks of it as encompassing many species of deliberation and evaluation relating to our conduct. Moral evaluation, for Frankfurt, is only a species within the genus of practical reasoning, one which, he claims, has traditionally garnered an inordinate amount of philosophical attention. Frankfurt is not an immoralist like Plato's Thrasymachus or – on some readings (Foot 2010 [2001]: 111) – Nietzsche because he recognises moral considerations as 'unquestionably important'. Nevertheless, he claims these kinds of considerations tell us less about 'what we should value and how we should live' than moral philosophers typically suppose. Because morality does not 'necessarily have the last word', its 'importance [...] in directing our lives tends to be exaggerated' (2004: 6–7). He writes:

Authoritative reasoning about what to do and how to behave is not limited to moral deliberation. Its scope extends [...] to evaluations in terms of various nonmoral modes of normativity that also bear upon the conduct of life. The theory of normative practical reasoning is therefore more inclusive, with respect to the types of deliberation that it considers, than moral philosophy. (2004: 9)

Many of Frankfurt's earlier articles on this theme begin with observing that people do not act according to moral considerations alone, and that our practical reasoning is in fact legitimately affected by a wide variety of considerations. In an early essay on this theme, for example, he notes that 'the requirements of ethics are not the only things [most of us] care about', and that 'even people who care a great deal about morality generally care still more about other things' (1998 [1982]: 81). He continues:

The role of moral judgment in the development and pursuit of concerns [...] is often quite marginal, not only in potency but in relevance as well. There are many important decisions with regard to which moral considerations are simply not decisive, and which must accordingly be based, at least to some extent, upon considerations of nonmoral kinds. [...] Moreover, it is not wholly apparent that making them in such ways is always unjustifiable. (1998 [1982]: 81)

Frankfurt expands on these observations elsewhere, arguing that all too often modern moral philosophers wrongly presume that the 'demands of morality are inherently [authoritative and] pre-emptive', and that such demands 'must always be accorded an overriding precedence over all other interests and claims' (2004: 6–7). For Frankfurt, acting on moral considerations is certainly an important component of flourishing, but given that resolving the question 'how one should live' must also take into account a panoply of non-moral considerations, morality does not 'necessarily have the last word.' (2004: 6–7).²¹

²¹ Frankfurt and Williams suggest different ways of distinguishing moral, non-moral, and ethical considerations. Frankfurt acknowledges that although there are 'other ways to construe the subject matter of morality', we can define moral considerations as those that show us 'how our attitudes and our actions should take into account the needs, the desires, and the entitlements of other people' (2004: 7), which fits with his definition of morality as a 'matter of how a person relates himself to the interests of others.' (1999 [1993]: 115). By contrast Williams tells us that 'it does no harm that the notion [of an ethical consideration] is vague' because it is in fact '*morality*, the special system, that demands a sharp boundary for itself' (1985: 7; cf. 1995: 241). Cf. n.1 above.

We can think of Frankfurt's argument as having two sides: one negative, one positive. His negative claim is that acting on moral considerations alone is insufficient for attaining the good life, as the moral life can be (and often is) mixed with recalcitrant non-moral vices which interfere with living well:

People who are scrupulously moral may nonetheless be destined by deficiencies of character or of constitution to lead lives that no reasonable person would freely choose. They may have personal defects and inadequacies that have nothing much to do with morality but that make it impossible for them to live well. For example, they may be emotionally shallow; or they may lack vitality; or they may be chronically indecisive. To the extent that they do actively choose and pursue certain goals, they may devote themselves to such insipid ambitions that their experience is generally dull and without flavour. In consequence, their lives may be relentlessly banal and hollow, and – whether or not they recognize this about themselves – they may be dreadfully bored. (2004: 6–7)

Lacking vitality, chronic indecision, or cherishing insipid ambitions, are badly described as moral failings because they apply to our character as a whole, and may only apply to moral character tangentially. Nevertheless they clearly inhibit or thwart our capacity to lead a life that flourishes in the full sense of the term. To give a complete account of human flourishing, therefore, we need a richer and broader conception of what it means to live well, one which weighs-up *all* relevant considerations, including those that have nothing to do with moral concerns.

Wolf supports and expands upon this line of thought in her essay 'Moral Saints' in which she countenances the life of a person who exclusively governs themselves by moral imperatives alone. Wolf's intuitions follow Frankfurt's here. She tells us that such 'moral perfection, in the sense of moral saintliness' does not serve as an 'unequivocally compelling personal ideal' nor one which it would be 'particularly rational or good or desirable for a human being to strive', because the lives of many moral saints neglect some fundamental constituents of the flourishing life (2015 [1982]: 11).²² For Wolf, as for

²² George Orwell writes that passionate relationships are viewed as dangerous by a moral saint such as Gandhi because they interfere with the domination of moral considerations in our practical reasoning: 'Close friendships, Gandhi says, are dangerous, because "friends react on one another" and through loyalty to a friend one can be led into wrong-doing. [...] The essence of being human is that one does not seek perfection, that one is sometimes willing to commit sins for the sake of loyalty

Frankfurt, understanding which fundamental aspects of the good life are missing is the most pressing task.²³ I return to Wolf's account of those aspects of the flourishing life that a moral saint could be said to neglect below.

In addition to his negative claim regarding non-moral vices which can prevent us from living well, Frankfurt argues that modern moral philosophy neglects positive considerations pertaining to how a flourishing life must include passionate attachments or – in his terms – what we 'love' or 'care about'. Although not originating in 'moral nor in egoistic considerations', these 'modes of normativity are quite properly compelling', for Frankfurt, and their essential role in the flourishing life makes them highly relevant to the concerns of practical philosophers (2004: 8). For example, although 'there is nothing distinctively moral about such ideals as being steadfastly loyal to a family tradition, or selflessly pursuing mathematical truth, or devoting oneself to some type of connoisseurship', considerations relating to these things can legitimately supplant or mitigate our moral commitments (1998 [1982]: 81). Sometimes it is reasonable, Frankfurt tells us, for persons to 'care more about their personal projects, about certain individuals and groups' or about the 'various ideals to which they accord commanding authority in their lives' than their moral commitments (1998 [1982]: 81).²⁴ As I show in my discussion of Williams, such personal projects can provide the very conditions of living in the first place, and Frankfurt seems to have something like this in mind.

Frankfurt suggests that 'specific concrete individual[s]', such as persons or other sentient beings, invariably generate 'greater emotional colour and urgency' in us, although passionate attachments need not be concrete at all. While we can love 'another person, or a country, or an institution', Frankfurt stresses that we can do this with a very wide range of entities, even abstract objects such as future projects or social ideals (1999 [1994]: 130). He writes:

[...], and that one is prepared in the end to be defeated and broken up by life, which is the inevitable price of fastening one's love upon other human individuals.' (1961: 455–6; cited by Cocking and Jenning 2000: 278).

²³ We should note that for both Frankfurt and Williams it is possible for our passionate attachments to be, as Williams' puts it, 'in a very evident sense moral projects', for example, 'working for reform, or justice, or general improvement' (1981a [1976]: 13). Like Wolf, both Williams and Frankfurt think of persons who are passionately attached to a moral project as relatively rare. See n.45.

²⁴ As Wolf notes, '[W]hen we are drawn to or moved by beauty or love or intellectual curiosity, we neither are nor ought to be moved by them only insofar as they are sources or pleasure or possessors of moral worth.' (2015: 6)

A person may legitimately be devoted to ideals – for instance, aesthetic, cultural, or religious ideals – whose authority for him is independent of the desiderata with which moral principles are distinctively concerned; and he may pursue these nonmoral ideals without having his own personal interests in mind at all. Although it is widely presumed that moral claims are necessarily overriding, it is far from clear that assigning a higher authority to some nonmoral mode of normativity must always be – in every circumstance and regardless of the pertinent magnitudes – a mistake. (2004: 8)

As well as caring about non-concrete ‘ideals’, elsewhere Frankfurt canvasses a wide range of other suitably weighty non-moral considerations which can become passionate attachments, ranging from ‘imperatives of [...] style, of intellect, or of some other mode of ambition’ (1999 [1993]: 115) to ‘social justice, or scientific truth, or a family tradition’ (1999 [1994]: 130). Such passionate attachments generate considerations that can, under the right circumstances, be more compelling than moral or prudential considerations leading to them to feature decisively (and legitimately) in our practical reasoning when we seek to resolve the question of ‘how should one live’. Not only do they do this, but there are good reasons why this is the case, as I show in my discussion of Williams in the next section.

For Frankfurt, passionate attachments have two essential features: first, they can be incorporated into our practical identities insofar as we can come to identify with them; second, passionate attachments generate a sense of our lives being meaningful since these entities generate goals against which our conduct can be evaluated, goals providing the normative criteria for ‘seeking to resolve the question of how [one] should live’ (1999 [1992]: 91). Regarding the first of these distinctive features, identification, Frankfurt tells us:

A person who cares about something is, as it were, invested in it. He *identifies* himself with what he cares about in the sense that he makes himself vulnerable to losses and susceptible to benefits depending upon whether what he cares about is diminished or enhanced. Thus he concerns himself with what concerns it, giving particular attention to such things and directing his behaviour accordingly. (1998 [1982]: 83)

From this we can see that identifying with something as a passionate attachment involves expanding the remit of our concerns so they include the entity towards which our love is directed. As Thomas Nagel puts it in his essay on meaningfulness, identifying with something else ‘multiplies the problem’ because our own flourishing is now passively tied

to an entity other than ourselves (1979 [1971]: 14). Returning to identification again in his later work, Frankfurt warns that this process can only ever be ‘inexact and less than totally comprehensive’ because the interests of the lover and the beloved can never be entirely concomitant, and – adding somewhat pessimistically – it is ‘improbable that they will even be wholly compatible’ (2004: 62). Despite this, if we think of an object of prudential concern pertaining to our welfare, it is clear that we cannot identify with it because we are only interested in it insofar as it contributes to something else that we care about.²⁵

Regarding the second distinctive feature of passionate attachments, Frankfurt suggests that they are what make our lives meaningful, at least from a first-personal point of view. Returning to his remarks on identification shows why he thinks this. We identify with our passionate attachments, which means we are affected by how they fare. But just as the ups and downs of our own fortunes are highly meaningful for us, once we identify with something its fate becomes meaningful to us too. Our orientation and comportment intimately depend on the fate of our passionate attachment, and our flourishing closely tracks its successes and failures. Moreover, we do not just pursue passionate attachments because we love the objects to which we have become passionately attached: we also recognise that having passionate attachments is closely tied to our well-being. As Frankfurt puts it, ‘[b]eing engaged in the pursuit of a desirable state of affairs is not desirable exclusively because it is desirable that the state of affairs should obtain’, but also because the ‘pursuit is also desirable as an end in itself’ since ‘working to reach desirable ends is essential to a meaningful life’ (1999 [1992]: 90). This is well illustrated if we consider why human beings often go to great lengths to become romantically entwined with another. This difficult to explain solely in terms of the value of the beloved, because we often desire such relations without having any potential beloved in mind. On Frankfurt’s view, however, there is another reason why we care about romantic love, one which does not depend on the perceived worth of the beloved at all: loving generates a sense that our life is meaningful, which in turn contributes to our flourishing. While this is not the primary reason why we pursue romantic passionate attachments, the *effect* of having passionate attachments is salutary insofar as it increases the meaningfulness of our activity, and consequently our flourishing.

²⁵ It is also interesting to think about what kind of world we would live in if we were not the kind of creatures that did not love by way of identification. Many quintessentially human practices would disappear, including environmental concerns, concerns to do with social justice or animal rights, et cetera.

1.3 Williams' 'Ground Projects'

Like Frankfurt, Williams is open about the range of considerations we should canvass in responding to the Socratic question. He grants that moral considerations are often compelling, but bemoans the fact that philosophers tend to think of them as 'possess[ing] some special, indeed supreme, kind of dignity or importance' (1981a: 21). As he puts it in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, practical philosophers err insofar as they assume moral considerations contribute to an 'especially important kind of deliberative conclusion', and that these considerations must always be prioritised in any practical dilemma (1985: 174–5). This is an error, for Williams, because we can legitimately determine a course of conduct 'for reasons of prudence, self-protection, aesthetic or artistic concern, or sheer self-assertion', reasons which may, on occasion, legitimately trump moral ones (1985: 188). Because it drastically narrows the range of permissible considerations to be adjudicated over by our practical reasoning, Williams tells us that many 'philosophical mistakes are woven into morality':

It misunderstands obligations, not seeing how they form just one type of ethical consideration. It misunderstands practical necessity, thinking it peculiar to the ethical. It misunderstands ethical practical necessity, thinking it peculiar to obligations. Beyond all this, morality makes people think that, without its very special obligation, there is only inclination; without its utter voluntariness, there is only force; without its ultimately pure justice, there is no justice. Its philosophical errors are only the most abstract expressions of a deeply rooted and still powerful misconception of life. (1985: 196)

Just as Frankfurt indicates that resolving the Socratic question requires us to take 'nonmoral modes of normativity' seriously, so too Williams proposes that what he calls our 'ground projects' are fundamentally important in getting the question into focus. If we compare the non-moral considerations both thinkers list, many are strikingly similar; Frankfurt's 'imperatives [concerning] style, of intellect' (1999 [1993]: 115) closely track Williams' 'reasons of [...] aesthetic or artistic concern, or sheer self-assertion' (1985: 188). So what does Williams understand ground projects to be? And can it add anything to the composite notion of a passionate attachment which we have started to build from Frankfurt's account of entities that generate 'reasons of love'?

Williams' most informative characterisation of ground projects appears in 'Persons, Character, and Morality', where he describes them as activities or goals

constituting our practical identities (1981a [1976]). Ground projects are both the stake that we have in being a specific person, as well as the practical purposes around which we orientate our lives. This could make such projects sound self-orientated or even resolutely selfish, which in turn would make it difficult for us to distinguish them from prudential considerations. This would be a mistake. For Williams, we exist for the sake of our ground project, not the other way round. Like Frankfurt's 'loved' or 'cared for' entities, a ground project provides the semantic horizon of a life imbued with meaningful concerns.²⁶ Ground projects are not just the most important source of considerations pertaining to the question of 'how one should live', but they also bear decisively on the question of *whether one has reason to live at all*. He writes:

[A] man's ground projects provid[e] the motive force which propels him into the future, and give him a reason for living. [...] For a project to play this ground role, it does not have to be true that if it were frustrated or in any of various ways he lost it, he would have to commit suicide, nor does he have to think that. Other things, or the mere hope of other things, may keep him going. But he may feel in those circumstances that he might as well have died. (1981a [1976]: 13)²⁷

In the passage above Williams does not pull his punches in delimiting the magnitude of what is at stake: ground projects are so deeply connected with our flourishing that they underwrite our very attachment to life itself. Indeed, we could think back to H. A. Prichard's comment, used as the epigraph of this chapter, about those Shakespearian characters we find ourselves admiring for non-moral reasons. In Williams' terms we can

²⁶ The two definitive features of ground projects: how they (i) constitute our practical identity, and (ii) allow us to view our activities as meaningful, are used by Williams to attack the central contentions of Utilitarian and Kantian moral philosophy respectively. Regarding the former (i), Utilitarianism makes the 'absurd [...] demand that a person should 'neglect how *his* actions and *his* decisions [are] the actions and decisions which flow from the projects and the attitudes with which he is most closely identified' (1973: 116–7); regarding the latter (ii), the Kantian faces the problem of explaining how 'impartial morality' can be a 'reasonable demand on the agent' when it involves giving up 'in the name of the impartial good ordering of the world of moral agents, something which is a condition of his having any interest in being around in that world at all.' (1981a [1976]: 14)

²⁷ Cf. Wolf. 'One difference, which Williams himself points out, has to do with the special connection meaning has with having a reason to live. What gives meaning to our lives gives us reasons to live, even when we do not care much, for our own sakes, whether we live or die. What gives meaning to our lives gives us reasons to live even when the prospects for our own *well-being* are bleak.' (2010: 55–6)

say that what drives Juliet to kill herself is her feeling that remaining alive would be abhorrent since the ground project of a shared life with her beloved is (or seems due to his coma) no longer possible. Juliet does not turn Romeo's dagger on herself because she is excruciatingly unhappy; rather she does so because her passionate character has been so deeply altered that she can no longer recognise herself – she can no longer identify as Juliet – and she finds the prospect of living with none of her previous ground projects deeply alienating and ultimately unconscionable.

But we need not think of ground projects as so exceptional or extraordinary undertakings. Responding to Williams, Wolf warns that, although helpful, his coinage of the term 'ground project' has the potential to mislead because it is 'too suggestive of a finite, determinate task'. Without suitable caveats, the term's connotations could mislead:

Among the things that come to mind as projects are certain kinds of hobbies or careers, or rather specific tasks that fall within the sphere of such hobbies or careers: things that can be seen as accomplishments, like producing a proof or a poem or a pudding, the organizing of a union or a high school band. (2015 [2007]: 94)

Thinking of projects in these terms generates problems for Wolf, because although 'project-like' activities 'contribute to the meaningfulness of people's lives', there are 'other forms of meaningfulness that are less directed, and less oriented to demonstrable achievement' (2015 [2007]: 94). Interpersonal relationships, Wolf continues, an exemplary kind of passionate attachment, are 'awkwardly described as projects' both because they are often not 'deliberately take[n] on', nor are they discrete and achievable tasks. In addition to this, even the meaning of those project-like activities we have in our life 'have the meaning they do for us only because of their place in nonproject-like relationships in which we are enmeshed and with which we identify' (2015 [2007]: 94).

Wolf follows Frankfurt in her view that 'nonproject-like' entities like interpersonal relationships are the most common things to which we attach ourselves, and both believe they often provide a powerful and legitimate source of action-guiding considerations relating to the passionate dimension of our practical reasoning. Interpersonal relationships, and other passionate attachments, generate 'reasons of love' which are fundamentally important in resolving the question of 'how one should live'. Nevertheless, Williams' own characterisation of a ground project suggests that he would be able to endorse what Wolf regards as her important caveats to his terminology. Following Wolf's emendations to the terminology of ground projects further emphasises their all-

encompassing and heteronymous nature, as well as the ubiquity of such passionate attachments.

As well as agreeing with Frankfurt that this third domain of practical reasoning pertains to our practical identities, and generates considerations relating to leading a meaningful life, Williams emphasises how ground projects give rise to other kinds of non-moral action-guiding considerations. Contrary to prudential considerations, ground projects can require us to act in ways that are directly contrary to our own interests, either in the short or long-term, which we saw most tragically in the example in Juliet. Williams explains:

Ground projects do not have to be selfish, in the sense that they are just concerned with things for the agent. Nor do they have to be self-centred, in the sense that the creative projects of a Romantic artist could be considerably self-centred (where it has to be *him*, but not *for* him). [...] There is no contradiction in the idea of a man's dying for a ground project – quite the reverse, since if death really is necessary for the project, then to live would be to live with it unsatisfied, something which, if it really is his ground project, he has no reason to do. (1981a [1976]: 13)

To illustrate how a person's ground projects may legitimately generate considerations that override their moral or prudential considerations, we can reflect on Williams' famous account of a dilemma in the practical reasoning of the nineteenth-century painter Paul Gauguin, appearing in his essay 'Moral Luck'. Here Williams explores how the external contingencies involved in a practical dilemma affects our evaluation of its outcome, although I will use the example in a different sense. I am not concerned with the question of the 'success conditions' of Gauguin's project, but the example can be used to tease out our intuitions regarding the legitimacy of acting on considerations pertaining to our passionate attachments, especially when these considerations enter into direct conflict with moral or prudential ones, or both.

Gauguin's decision to abandon his family in Paris to permanently resettle in Tahiti is notorious; it has been the theme of a recent biopic, as well as numerous literary studies.²⁸ Putting these references aside, however, and telling us he will 'not be limited by historical facts', Williams sets up his example in the following way:

²⁸ Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* (2009 [1919]) is the best known literary study. See Edouard Deluc's movie *Gauguin: Voyage to Tahiti* (2017).

(i) Gauguin is a 'creative artist who turns away from definite and pressing human claims on him in order to live a life in which, as he supposes, he can pursue his art' (1981b [1976]: 22).

(ii) He is 'concerned about [his moral obligations] and what is involved in their being neglected (we may suppose these to be grim)' (1981b [1976]: 23).

(iii) '[N]evertheless, [he] opts for [a life] of realising his gifts as a painter' (1981b [1976]: 23)

Although the 'success conditions' attached to Gauguin's undertaking are Williams' explicit focus, the assumption of the example is that there are times when we are justified in ignoring or suspending moral or prudential considerations in order to pursue our 'ground projects', that is, our passionate attachments.

Few of us would wish to be in Gauguin's position, but the example is intuitively informative as it offers us a stark insight into what might happen if circumstances conspire to force us to choose between the three kinds of competing consideration pertaining to the Socratic question. Some of us – not just frustrated artists – find it hard to shake off the feeling that Gauguin got something fundamentally right, despite behaving so badly. While we may not be able to endorse his overall decision, there is something in it which prevents us from wholeheartedly condemning the painter. Perhaps the easiest way to bring out these intuitions is to show how quickly they alter if we tweak the example. Replacing the ground project of travelling to Tahiti to become a painter with a prudential concern related to Gauguin's immediate pleasure or even his overall well-being, quickly changes our intuitions. Would our sneaking sympathy for Gauguin's trip remain if he chose to neglect his moral obligations for the sake of going to Tahiti on holiday? If we view the only alternative to moral considerations to be self-interested prudential ones, then we are forced to posit an equivalence between prudential and passionate considerations, leading us to answer this question in the affirmative. But surely we have more reason to think that the passionately-painting Gauguin acts in a way that resolves the Socratic question more legitimately than the hedonistically-holidaying Gauguin, for instance, and the intuitive difference we feel when evaluating his behaviour can be explained by the fact we value

ground projects, or passionate attachments, more than purely self-interested considerations.²⁹

Williams sums up these intuitions, telling us that we are ‘sometimes guided by the notion that it would be the best of worlds in which morality were universally respected and all men were of a disposition to affirm it’, but despite this feeling we have ‘deep and persistent reasons to be grateful that that is not the world we have.’ (1981: 23). When considering the dilemma that Gauguin faces, it is hard to shake off the thought that his decision to give significant weight to the aesthetic or artistic concerns of his ground project was an entirely unreasonable thing to do. Even though, on balance, we may think Gauguin should have set sail, we may concede there was something right about his action, which suggests we can learn something about the nature of practical reason by considering his case. We can say that the Gauguin character in Williams’ example suggests that it can sometimes be reasonable for us to suspend the authority of moral obligations and to consider the importance of those relating to his ground project more seriously.

We will return to Gauguin’s decision-making process in Ch. 5, when we examine how exercises of self-cultivation could be usefully employed in making a decision that involves adjudicating between the competing demands of those considerations that pertain to the Socratic question. Read alongside Williams’ analysis of the artist’s plight, explored in Ch. 1, this yields an unexpected and disconcerting intuition: flourishing does not involve acting on moral or prudential considerations exclusively, nor even a combination of both these things, as actively pursuing our passionate attachments is also fundamentally important. Although Williams is primarily concerned to argue that our sympathy for Gauguin ultimately depends on whether he succeeds as an artist, records of the artist’s practical deliberation may make us sympathetic to his resolution of the Socratic question, one in which he balances a range of considerations of which moral concerns form only a minor part.

Rather than supporting the idea that Gauguin should always privilege and prioritise his moral commitments, we find ourselves uncertain about this, even countenancing the idea that, whether or not his venture turns out to be successful, his decision to set sail for Tahiti attempts to resolve the question of ‘how to live’ in a way that

²⁹ Take romantic love, for instance, which is often regarded as the quintessential example of a passionate attachment. As romantic comedies and tragedies often depict, a person in a love relationship would have good reason to be hurt or outraged if they discovered that their beloved’s love for them was instrumental in character. Take, for example, the nefarious protagonist in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, who initially persuades his conquests that he loves them, before breaking their heart by using them instrumentally for his sexual gratification.

gets something fundamentally right. This is not to say that Gauguin gets everything right, of course – far from it, we may say – but it does illustrate how our sympathies can be invoked, at least on an intuitive level, to someone whose life is not primarily guided by moral or prudential considerations, but rather by some other ‘end in life’, as Gauguin himself puts it (1936 [1898]: 18; see epigraph to Ch. 5). Not embarking on such an adventure because of weighty moral commitments may be commendable, but those of us who can empathise with Gauguin’s response to his dilemma cannot escape the feeling that a life dominated by moral considerations would miss something, just as Wolf judged the life of the moral saint to be incomplete. Similarly, as we saw Socrates argue in *Gorgias*, a life taken up with the prudential concerns relating to the satisfaction of simple desires would leave us questioning whether such a life is flourishing in the fullest sense of the term.

1.4 Wolf on ‘Meaningfulness’

Like Frankfurt and Williams, Wolf views modern moral philosophers as ignoring ‘many of the motives and reasons that shape our lives’ (2010: 2). She claims that among these neglected considerations are both those that most closely pertain to ‘activities that make our lives worth living’, and that they are most closely linked to the Socratic question (2010: 2, 12). Wolf expresses regret that all too often commentators treat Williams’ views on practical philosophy as either ‘morally subversive or terribly depressing’, and she proposes treating his ‘conclusions in a different light’ by focusing on how they generate meaningfulness in our lives (2010: 58). Like Williams, she thinks that our motivation to seek out meaningful activities cannot be explained in terms of enjoyment or any other story relating to prudential self-interest. Focusing on examples of non-project-like passionate attachments, she writes:

Much of what we do would be inexplicable, or at least indefensible, if its justification depended either on its being a duty or, even in the long run, on its maximally contributing to our net fun. Relationships with friends and family, nonobligatory aspects of professional roles, and long-term commitments to artistic, scholarly, or athletic endeavours typically lead us to devote time and energy to things that are difficult or unpleasant, and to forgo opportunities for relaxation and enjoyment. [...] There is, however, a point – even a self-interested point – to doing things that fall outside the categories both of duty and of fun. One can find a reason, or at least a justifying explanation, for doing something in the fact that the act or activity in question contributes to the meaningfulness of one’s life. (2016 [1997]: 124)

For Wolf, this observation disqualifies the two models of human motivation which moral philosophers typically resort to in order explain and justify our conduct. She tells us that the ‘oldest and most popular model’ of human motivation – perhaps thinking of Plato’s portrayal of Callicles³⁰ – ‘conceives of human beings as egoists, moved and guided exclusively by what they take to be in their own self-interest’ (2010: 1). But as well as a *unitary* conception of human motivation, she notes, ‘there have long been defenders of a *dualistic* model of motivation [...], according to which people are capable of being moved not only by self-interest, but also by something “higher.”’ (2010: 1; italics added).³¹

From this we can see Wolf follows Williams and Frankfurt insofar as she also offers a tripartite view of the kinds of considerations which bear upon the Socratic question: practical reason does not just comprise prudential considerations, nor a combination of prudential and moral ones, but also includes considerations pertaining to our passionate attachments. Furthermore she agrees with Frankfurt and Williams that our passionate attachments are a source of meaningfulness, and that both these things are a necessary aspect of the flourishing life.³² She supports the latter claim with the observation that ‘most people [...] behave in ways that suggest that they are looking for worthwhile things to do with their lives’ insofar as ‘[t]hey actively seek projects or, more typically, happily seize upon activities, from among those to which they are attracted, that they believe to be worthwhile’ (2016 [1997]: 120). According to Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf, our passionate attachments (‘reasons of love’, ‘ground projects’, or ‘meaningfulness’) cannot even be accommodated by the bipartite picture of practical reasoning which these philosophers

³⁰ See Callicles’ outburst in the *Gorgias* ‘[L]iving correctly involves allowing one’s appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them. And when they are as large as possible, he ought to be competent to devote himself to them by means of his bravery and intelligence, and to fill them with whatever he may have an appetite for at the time. [...] [W]antonness, lack of discipline, and freedom, if available in good supply, are excellence and happiness; as for these other things, these fancy phrases, these contracts of men that go against nature, they’re worthless nonsense!’ (Plato 1997 [*Gorgias*]: 491e–92c).

³¹ We can find such a dualistic model in both major traditions of modern moral philosophy. Kant holds that either our inclinations or our reasoning can motivate us, whereas a Utilitarian such as Sidgwick holds that human beings can either be motivated by their own immediate self-interest or by the interests of others.

³² Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf are not alone in claiming this. See also Thaddeus Metz’s claim that meaning is a ‘gradient and variable final good’ (2013a: 2). Antti Kauppinen puts this even more strongly when he tells us that ‘meaning in life is something [...] desirable for its own sake’ (2012: 288).

offer. As Wolf herself puts it, despite meaningfulness having a greater bearing on our 'thinking about what to do and how to live', considerations relating to it are 'not reducible to or subsumable under either happiness, as it is ordinarily understood, or morality' (2010: 2–3). Operating outside of the work-a-day distinction between morality and self-interest by making space for 'meaningfulness', 'ground projects', or our 'reasons of love' – to run together the terminology of these thinkers – has the potential to better understand human experience, and can save us from 'misunderstand[ing] our values, and ourselves, and distort[ing] our concerns.' (Wolf 2010: 6). Contra both the unitary or dualistic views of practical reason, Wolf thinks we are motivated by 'something "higher"' when we act on reasons pertaining to 'meaningfulness'. So what does she think meaningfulness consist in? And does her account of it add anything to the notion of a passionate attachment which we have started building from the accounts of Frankfurt and Williams?

Wolf tells us that her '*endoxic*' definition of meaningfulness combines two 'popular views', each of which emphasises different ways of how 'meaning in life [is an ingredient] – sometimes the *key* ingredients – in a life well lived.' (2015 [2007]: 90). The first view is the '[f]igure out what turns you on, and go for it' view, which amounts to the idea that 'it doesn't matter what you do with your life as long as it is something you love'; the second view is that meaningfulness consists in becoming 'involved in something "larger than oneself"'. Wolf links both views, telling us that for an entity to generate meaningfulness it must (i) relate to "your passion" and (ii) it must relate to "something larger than yourself" (2010: 10). So far so good, as both views are compatible with Frankfurt's and Williams' respective accounts of 'objects of care' and 'ground projects'; we are passionately engaged with such entities, they are larger than ourselves in the sense that they extend beyond our self-interested concerns,³³ and because of these two things they imbue our lives with a sense of meaningfulness. But Wolf makes the further claim that only entities that are 'objectively attractive', that is, "worthy of love" can generate meaningfulness. This is not because of her stipulation that meaningfulness involves connecting with an entity outside of oneself, however, but because of her account of 'objective attractiveness'. As we saw, both Frankfurt and Williams are committed to the idea that our passionate attachments are the source of meaningfulness, and these entities are resolutely outside ourselves.

³³ Nagel offers some informative examples of the latter view. He writes, '[t]hose seeking to supply their lives with meaning usually envision a role or function in something larger than themselves [such as] society, the state, the revolution, the progress of history, the advance of science, or religion and the glory of God' (Nagel 1979: 16).

She notes that the idea of viewing ‘some objects but not others as being “worthy of love” may be thought to be contentious’ (2010: 8), but claims – in contradistinction to Frankfurt and Williams³⁴ – that even if a person is ‘gripped, excited, interested, engaged, or [...] loves something’ this does not mean that the entity in question can be a passionate attachment that is capable of sustaining meaningfulness. She provides two examples:

A person who loves smoking pot all day long, or doing endless crossword puzzles, and has the luxury of being able to indulge in this without restraint does not thereby make her life meaningful. (2010: 9)

Contentious or not, Wolf is right that not everything is “worthy of love”, but she gives the wrong reasons for this view: it is not because getting stoned on a daily basis, or doing crossword puzzles, are *objectively unworthwhile* activities, but rather the nature of the entity means that we cannot establish a passionate relationship with it. Again, although Wolf is right to say that we cannot establish passionate relationships with these kinds of things, by replacing her account of objective worth with an account which explains why the nature of certain objects makes them incapable of being passionate attachments, we can come to understand passionate attachments better. So why cannot a daily weed habit or a constant crossword puzzling be passionate attachments? And if Wolf’s account of ‘objective attractiveness’ cannot explain this, how can we define what passionate attachments are?

To answer these questions we need to add to the criteria for passionate attachments offered by Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf. In the following subsections (1.5.1–1.5.4), I will pick out what distinguishes passionate attachments from other kinds of considerations without an appeal, *pace* Wolf, to ‘objective worth’. I will do this by introducing a number of constraints on what passionate attachments can be, one of which will relate to their social nature which guards against importing too much caprice and voluntarism regarding the notion the things we choose to be passionate attachments, while also being wary of being overly conservative. We can, therefore, reframe Wolf’s complaint regarding crossword fanatics and potsmokers: rather than following her account of objective worth to explain why these kinds of activities cannot be passionate attachments, we can offer different reasons for her conclusions, ones which do not require the same

³⁴ Frankfurt shows his subjectivist tendency when he says that a ‘person’s life is meaningful [...] only to the extent that it is devoted to pursuing goals that are important to that person’ (1999 [1992]: 90). Wolf tackles Frankfurt on this point in her essay ‘The True, the Good, and the Loveable: Frankfurt’s Avoidance of Objectivity’ (2002: 227–44). Cf. Frankfurt’s response to Wolf in the same volume (2002: 245–52).

metaphysical baggage. Wolf is right to say that many kinds of activities cannot fulfil the role of passionate attachments in our lives (or fulfil it badly), but she is wrong about why this is the case. If we wish to solve the problem by introducing metaphysical complications relating to objectivity, however, we must further stipulate the criteria that ensures an entity can take up the role of a passionate attachment in a person's life. This account will explain why the objects and activities Wolf uses as examples cannot engender meaningfulness, although we need not accept the reasons she gives why these activities cannot be passionate attachments.³⁵

1.5 What are Passionate Attachments?

So far I have used the term 'passionate attachment' as a term of art to designate love objects that provide us with a crucial source of action-guiding considerations, without being moral obligations or prudential concerns. Our conduct is typically informed by many kinds of reasons, but these three dimensions are fundamentally important insofar as they generate essential considerations pertaining to the Socratic question, and flourishing involves adequately responding to all these considerations. From examining the accounts of passionate attachments in Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf, we can identify five broad similarities in how they understand these entities, as well as some important differences.

First, each thinker agrees that our passionate attachments are irreducible to moral or prudential concerns, although Frankfurt and Wolf both emphasise that moral *projects* can become passionate attachments, depending on the role they have in the life of a person. Second, all three agree that our passionate attachments are non-instrumental because they are only pursued for the sake of the passionate attachment concerned. Unlike prudential concerns, passionate attachments are not necessarily connected to our well-being, and neither is there a further end for the sake of which we pursue them, but – rather like moral considerations – they are necessarily ends-orientated, constituting a terminus that renders further explanations unnecessary. Third, each agrees that passionate attachments are integral to the flourishing life, which motivates their complaints against modern moral philosophy – *à la* Anscombe – and their claims that our love relationships should be reinstated as centrally important in practical philosophy – *à la* Murdoch. Fourth, each

³⁵ Wolf herself hints at the fact that there may be other considerations aside from objective worth when she notes the importance of engaging with our passionate attachments in the right way. She tells us that the 'relationship between the subject and the object of her attraction must be an active one' and that 'mere passive recognition and a positive attitude toward an object's or activity's value is not sufficient for a meaningful life' (2010: 9).

views our passionate attachments as connected with our sense that our lives are meaningful, that is, how we view our lives to be purposeful or significant. Instead of the idea that only the existence of a divine being can underwrite the existence of a meaningful life-world – memorably attacked by Nietzsche’s mocking lament ‘God is dead’³⁶ – all think that our experience of our lives as meaningful can be underwritten by the fact we pursue passionate attachments. Fifth, all indicate that experiencing our life as meaningful is a necessary condition of human flourishing: neither hedonistically enjoying ourselves, nor consistently acting virtuously allows us to flourish in the full sense of the term. Rather we need to pursue things we love, and not just because pursuing this or that passionate attachment is a worthwhile thing to do – but because the very pursuit of passionate attachments is connected to our flourishing.

These overlappings alone would allow us to articulate a workable notion of a passionate attachment, but Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf each bring their own distinctive contribution to the notion, enriching it over and above the conceptual commonalities they share. Each distinctive aspect can be viewed as addressing an insufficiency in the other accounts, so adding each of these aspects creates a composite account of the passionate attachments that is immunised against criticisms which each account taken alone might be thought to inherit. Taken together we get a more robust and comprehensive account of a passionate attachment, one which is sensitive to the problems the others encounter.

I examined Frankfurt’s proposal that we should think of passionate attachments in terms of identification in 1.2, showing that, in his terms, we *identify* with our passionate attachments, sharing their wins and suffering their losses. This distinguishes them from prudential considerations which we only care about instrumentally insofar as they allow us to reach further goals concerned with our well-being. Frankfurt’s emphasis of identification is an important part of my definition, and both Williams and Wolf agree that it is an essential aspect of how passionate attachments function. Nevertheless, in 1.3 I showed that Williams usefully extends the notion of identification by emphasising how it must be understood as personalised. In his celebrated attack on Utilitarianism, I showed that he regards one of the dangers of blindly following the guidance of the Utilitarian Calculus is that it obviates the distinctively *personal investment* we have in any given project

³⁶ Thaddeus Metz calls views such as the one Nietzsche criticises ‘supernaturalism’ (that ‘one’s existence is significant just insofar as one has a certain relation with some spiritual realm’). See also his account of how meaningfulness can be generated by our moral commitments. Frankfurt and Wolf would agree with him that a moral *project* – as opposed to merely meeting moral obligations – could generate meaningfulness, but only insofar as the project functioned as a passionate attachment in the person’s life (2013b: 19).

(n.26). On Williams' account, this is required for identification, especially if it is to be a sufficiently motivating feature for a perilous undertaking. Lastly, Wolf refines and expands Williams' notion of a ground project, noting that such entities need to be understood as firmly embedded within 'flesh and blood' relationships with *other persons* because our project-orientated engagement with the world must be understood as involving other people. This stipulation allows us to broaden the understanding of how passionate attachments are involved in the generation of meaningfulness bequeathed to us by Williams, bringing us closer to Frankfurt's emphasis on how loving relationships with other persons are especially important in how we decide to lead our lives.

Now that I have outlined how Frankfurt's, Williams', and Wolf's conceptions of passionate attachments usefully bolster one another, I am ready to complete my definition of the notion with some extra features. Doing this allows me to avoid weaknesses that can be found in (i) Wolf's and (ii) Frankfurt's and Williams' positions. On the one hand, Wolf argues that crossword puzzles and smoking cannabis cannot generate meaning because they are not 'objectively worthwhile'.³⁷ On the other, Frankfurt and Williams tell us that 'what we care about' and 'ground projects' can only be – in Wolf's words – 'subjectively attractive'. Following Frankfurt and Williams would mean that any subjectively attractive entity could function as a passionate attachment (even crossword puzzles and smoking cannabis); whereas following Wolf would require giving an account of 'objective worth'. In what follows, I suggest that passionate attachments: need a certain magnitude and complexity (1.5.1), require a certain amount of exclusive attention (1.5.2), require a robust social dimension (1.5.3), as well as examining why certain entities make for inappropriate or toxic passionate attachments that are incompatible with the flourishing life (1.5.4). Adding these extra features to the notion of a passionate attachment shows why crossword puzzles and smoking cannabis do not fit the requirements to be passionate attachments without appealing to Wolf's notion of 'objective worth'. It also helps us understand what passionate attachments are, distinguishes them from other superficially similar entities, as well as illuminating the relative merits of different passionate attachments.

³⁷ I pass over this question, because whether one's passionate attachments are objective or subjective does not directly bear upon the question of whether one should cultivate them, and would lead to metaphysical issues that could only be fully addressed with lengthy digressions.

1.5.1 *Magnitude and Complexity of Passionate Attachments*

Entities which are suitable candidates to be passionate attachments must exceed a threshold magnitude, in the sense that they must be able to sustain a wide range of interactions without exhaustion or onerous repetition, and they must exceed a threshold complexity for the same reasons. This means that one would struggle to make the eating of an ice cream cone into a passionate attachment, because this activity simply does not have enough scope – it is neither sizable nor complex enough – to support the requisite level of interest and engagement. Of course, the eating of an ice-cream cone could occur in the context of a passionate attachment involving, say, gastronomic pleasure, but in that case the reasons for eating the cone would be prudential because they would be concerned to fulfil a further aim, even if this aim related to a passionate attachment. Gastronomic pleasure could be a passionate attachment, because it has a suitably greater magnitude than merely eating a cone. It involves many different possibilities relating to its fulfilment. If a person wanted to make the eating of a cone into a passionate attachment, then they would have to develop an overriding interest in cones, sample different kinds of gelato from different regions in Italy, say, learn about the history of cone-making, et cetera. Unless the extent of their interest was suitably impressive, however, we would have to resist saying that ice cream cone eating could be a passionate attachment at all.

It is also important that only entities above a threshold level of magnitude and complexity are able to fulfil the other criteria for passionate attachments, which I located in the work of Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf. One cannot *identify* as an ice cream cone eater on account of the limited scope of this activity, but one could identify as something larger as a ‘foodie’ or gourmand. For this reason we would resist understanding ice cream cone eating as a passionate attachment because it does not fit with Frankfurt’s insistence on identification, and thinking about how we can only identify with something of a sufficient scale shows us why: identities must be publicly shared, which rules out private and idiosyncratic activities, as I explore in the next section.

Finally, we can say that the fact that passionate attachments must exceed a threshold level of magnitude or complexity is also implied if we consider it as relating to the question of ‘how one should live’. It would make no sense to say that one has resolved the Socratic question by deciding to eat an ice cream cone, whereas it would make better sense to say that one had devoted one’s life to the pleasures of food. Even *bona fide* passionate attachments vary in magnitude and complexity, but an attachment that was below the required threshold for either of these things would be so quickly expendable that it may well mitigate against us choosing it as a passionate attachment in the first place.

1.5.2 *Social Dimensions of Passionate Attachments*

As well as exceeding a threshold magnitude and complexity, passionate attachments must be collectively understood and socially shared. Again, this social dimension has already been *implied* by what Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf say about how our passionate attachments are integrally involved in the formation of our practical identities, and I touched on some of the reasons why this is so above. Since our practical identities involve sharing our desires, beliefs, and values with others, they must be understood socially, and a passionate attachment which did not have a social dimension would not allow us to do this. Our passionate attachments are tokens which are used to exchange information about ourselves, and it would be difficult to say we understood a person if we did not understand their passionate attachments (see n.58 below).

We get another clue about the social dimension of passionate attachments insofar as we see them as connected to the generation of meaning, at least in the subjective sense. Meaningful activities are deeply entangled with our social lives; they allow us to share our lives with one another. Wolf has already hinted at this when she qualifies Williams' terminology regarding ground projects, which she claims must be understood within the context of socially embedded relationships; ground projects only assume this status insofar as they have a social context, even in the case of Gauguin who could be said to paint for posterity. All of these reasons should lead us to view passionate attachments as eminently social endeavours. Wolf's caveat underlines how many commonly-held passionate attachments have a social dimension, but let's consider two examples of apparent passionate attachments, which do not seem to be social – at least not at first glance.

Take for example, Jasmine, a person who learns how to play a long-disused musical instrument. Let us say she is the only person who knows how to play this instrument, and has to explore archives containing musical scores and playing instructions in order to learn how to do this. Since Jasmine is the only person who engages in this kind of activity, it is not obvious how it can be social, but there are reasons why we should consider it in this way. Obviously, it is not social in the sense that she can play a duet or trio with others, but it is so in the sense that there are existing practices and conventions concerning the playing of the instrument. This is because there is some social momentum within this practice already. A person who learns to play this instrument, does so by reconstructing the historical conventions and knowledge available to them. This need not mean they involve other people directly, but they must be involved insofar as practices and conventions concerning the thing have been previously established, and are involved in the pursuit of the passion attachment concerned. Alternatively, the playing of this

instrument could be incorporated into the instrument players practical identity insofar as it is still within the category of music-playing, an activity which is socially-shared with others who play different kinds of instruments. While the details of this long-neglected instrument may no longer be known, it can still be informatively understood in terms of music-making which ensures the playing of this long-lost instrument retains a social dimension.

The player of this long-lost musical instrument can be informatively contrasted with the case of a person who takes on a similar-seeming asocial attachment, albeit one which genuinely does not meet the social criterion that passionate attachments must have. Take for example, Jake, a hoarder of junk. Jake's pursuit of junk may well meet the criteria of magnitude and complexity (variety of junk is suitably wide in scope; prima facie junk is a complex enough entity), but in this case the social dimension of the attachment is lacking in a way that is not amenable to our charitable reconstruction as was the case of Jasmine, the long-lost instrument player. There is no tradition of practices relating to hoarding as each hoarder employs their own rules and idiosyncratic schemas regarding what items to collect. This means the activity of hoarding has no public criteria of correctness; it is entirely at Jake's whim whether he hoards this or that item, as there is no recognised code of hoarding which determines whether an item should be collected or left on the street. This prevents Jake's hoarding from functioning as part of his practical identity, as well as disqualifying his activity from being meaningful except in an analogous sense of the term. Although Jake's activity could be extremely meaningful to him (indeed the nature of hoarding requires that it must be) upon interrogation the sense that the hoarder is engaged in a purposeful activity which would be difficult to establish because it has no external validation.

1.5.3 *Exclusivity of Passionate Attachments*

Whereas the previous two subsections have dealt with the qualities that entities need to be passionate attachments, this section deals with requirements relating to how such entities feature in the life of the person in order to qualify as a passionate attachment. The idea is that two people could strive to make the same kind of entity into a passionate attachment, with one doing this successfully and the other failing to do so because of differences in how each person attempted to integrate the attachment into their life, rather than anything to do with the nature of the potential passionate attachment they intend to take up. Take the examples I explored in 1.5.1: the 'foodie' with a passionate attachment to gastronomic experience. For this to be a passionate attachment, the person who pursues it must

persevere in this pursuit, as well as it featuring to a significant extent in their passionate character. Just as with magnitude and complexity, both are connected. Because we persevere with our engagement with passionate attachment, there is reason to think it will take up a significant amount of time; because the attachment takes up this amount of time, there is reason to think that it will have a somewhat exclusive hold on our attention and activities. Someone who tried to love something, which would be otherwise capable of being a passionate attachment, may fail to establish the right kind of love relationship with it by not devoting enough time to it, or by overly sharing time that could be devoted to it with their pursuit of other entities.

Frankfurt touches upon the first of these features of passionate attachments when he discusses the difference between desires pertaining to what we care about, and those pertaining to what we desire although do not care about at all. He writes:

[A] person can care about something only over some more or less extended period of time. It is possible to desire something, or to think it valuable, only for a moment. Desires and beliefs have no inherent persistence; nothing in the nature of wanting or of believing requires that a desire or a belief must endure. But the notion of guidance, and hence the notion of caring, implies a certain consistency or steadiness of behaviour; and this presupposes some degree of persistence. (1998 [1982]: 84)

Here Frankfurt alerts us to something important about the nature of passionate attachments: these kinds of entities, and the considerations they generate, require us to engage with them the required way, one which involves closely attending to them over a protracted period of time. A person who was not willing or able to persevere in their engagement with an entity that would otherwise make for a suitable passionate attachment cannot claim that this thing has the status of a passionate attachment in their life. We would have good reason to be suspicious of a person who claims to be passionately attached to a thing without engaging in those activities which would maintain, foster, and further strengthen this relation. For example, it is reasonable to think that someone who said they were passionate about playing the violin, is required to put in the requisite amount of practice. Of course, there is much room for complacency in the way we treat our passionate attachments. We often become distracted regarding the pursuit of our passionate attachments, even using the word 'dilettante' to describe someone who makes the claim that an object or activity is a passionate attachment, while not persevering in their engagement with the thing, or without it having a dominant role in their resolution to the

Socratic question. In these kinds of cases, what is salient is that the object would make for a perfectly good passionate attachment – that is, it would meet all the criteria outlined above – but for how the person engages with it.

We can also understand why this might be the case by considering some of the stipulations regarding passionate attachments I have made above. Considerations pertaining to our passionate character feature in a meaningful way in our resolution to the Socratic question. Although we may blithely assume that an entity is our passionate attachment, without affirmative action on our part, this entity cannot informatively contribute to resolving the question of ‘how one should live’. In this case we would do well to disabuse ourselves of the fantasy that the entity in question is a passionate attachment for us. Just as we do not attempt to re-answer the Socratic question each day, so too our passionate attachments must be longer lasting, and cannot be engaged with on a sporadic or an intermittent basis.

Related to the question of how a person engages with a certain passionate attachment is the question of how powerfully it features in the person’s resolution of the Socratic question. While it is likely that a person has more than one passionate attachment in their life, we would be suspicious if a person claimed to have an extremely large number of passionate attachments because this would indicate that were not able to engage with them with the requisite level of perseverance. Too large a number of passionate attachments may indicate that none of them is a genuine passionate attachment for the person, that they are not truly committed to them, or that they do not have the requisite time and resources to pursue them properly, which is important given the magnitude and complexity of passionate attachments, as I showed in the previous section.

1.5.4 *Toxic or Inappropriate Passionate Attachments*

In my above outline of what passionate attachments are, I have only discussed those that could be said to have a positive effect on our flourishing, partly because I have followed Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf in arguing that these entities have been neglected in the account of the good life offered by modern moral philosophy. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that some passionate attachments hamper or thwart our flourishing, and it is useful to outline such toxic or inappropriate passionate attachments in order to prepare for my account of why we have reason to cultivate our passionate character in the next chapter. Toxic or inappropriate passionate attachments meet all the above criteria for being passionate attachments, but nonetheless negatively impact upon our flourishing, so it would be inadvisable to take them up. Passionate attachments can be toxic or

inappropriate for at least three reasons. They may (i) directly or indirectly contravene our moral obligations; (ii) they may directly or indirectly jeopardise our prudential concerns; or (iii) the passionate attachment's very nature may directly thwart us from establishing a satisfying relationship with it.

An example of (i), a passionate attachment that directly compromises the protagonist's moral obligations, is Vladimir Nabokov's depiction of Humbert Humbert's sexual pursuit of 12-year-old Dolores Haze in *Lolita*. Not only is Dolores a minor, but to ensure his pursuit is successful Prof. Humbert resorts to kidnapping and drugging the child so his sexual relationship with her is unhindered and undetectable. Dolores meets all the criteria for a passionate attachment laid out above. Prof. Humbert's conquest of her is an integral part of his practical identity, one which sustains a deep sense of meaningfulness in his life. Furthermore, his pursuit of Dolores is of sufficient magnitude and complexity, and Prof. Humbert goes to great lengths to discuss precedents for age differences within relationships, at least attempting to lend his passionate attachment a legitimate social dimension (albeit one at odds by his elaborate subterfuge). While Dolores is clearly a passionate attachment for Prof. Humbert, she must be viewed as an inappropriate one because in pursuing her Prof. Humbert contravenes his moral obligations relating to sexual consent, duties to minors, et cetera. If flourishing involves resolving the Socratic question in a way that satisfies each of the fundamental dimensions of practical reasoning – moral, prudential, passionate – then we can say that Prof. Humbert satisfies considerations pertaining to his passionate character directly at the cost of those considerations pertaining to his moral one.

Just as passionate attachments can conflict with our moral duties, so too they can conflict with our prudential self-interest. An example of this is Severin's desire to be beaten by Wanda in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*. Again, like Prof. Humbert's desire for Lolita, Severin's desire meets all the conditions for being a passionate attachment as laid out above: it is a part of his practical identity; it provides him with a source of life-purpose; it is of sufficient magnitude and complexity; it occupies a significant role in Severin's resolution to the Socratic question. By contrast, however, his desire to be beaten senseless does not obviously contravene his moral obligations because it is consensual and actively prized.³⁸ Nevertheless, as Severin reveals to the narrator at the beginning of the

³⁸ Thomas Hurka offers a persuasive account of the motivational economy behind these kinds of relationships by distinguishing between *direct* and *indirect* pleasure. He writes, we can 'feel pleasure—that in a simple pain [which is] what some masochists do. They first feel physical pain, say, from being spanked. Then, perhaps because they want the pain, they feel pleasure *that* they're feeling it,

novel, his relationship with Wanda was deeply inimical to his well-being,³⁹ leading him to write an autobiographical account of it to prevent others falling into the same trap.

Examples such as these differ from the case of Gauguin which we examined in 1.3. Here we saw that the pursuit of certain passionate attachments can *indirectly* affect our ability to meet our moral obligations and indirectly jeopardise our prudential concerns. Unlike Prof. Humbert's pursuit of Lolita, there is nothing *morally* wrong about the passionate attachment to painting in itself; it is just that Gauguin's circumstances require that he neglect his moral obligations to his family if he is to pursue his passionate attachment to his art. Unlike Severin's desire to be beaten by Wanda, there is *nothing inherently imprudent* in Gauguin's enterprise; it is just that in the nineteenth-century a voyage to Tahiti was highly likely to impact upon an inexperienced traveller's well-being. In fact, it is because the painter only indirectly neglects his prudential and moral considerations – rather than actively contravening them – that the example was suitable to provoke our intuitions regarding the importance of passionate attachments themselves. When what is at stake does not involve directly contravening these kinds of considerations, we are more disposed to grant priority to the passionate attachment concerned. Although not all will be persuaded by the Gauguin example, we may have felt our intuitions twitch that there was something right in his decision. Fortunately fewer will feel the same way about the example of Prof. Humbert. While it is only *unfortunate* that Gauguin contravened his moral obligations to his family to pursue his passionate attachment, Prof. Humbert's pursuit of Dolores Haze *requires* that he breaks his moral obligations.

1.6 The Value of Our Passionate Attachments

Contra modern moral philosophy, this chapter has followed Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf in arguing that: (i) our passionate attachments are valuable, (ii) they are fundamental to resolving the question of 'how should one live', and (iii) we should consider them as an important aspect of the flourishing life as they ensure that we can experience our lives as meaningful, with Williams even arguing that they are a condition for wanting to live at all. I have used Frankfurt's, Williams', and Wolf's discussion of these kinds of entities to form a composite notion of a passionate attachment, showing where these accounts overlap with one another, as well as where they differ. In addition to this, in 1.5, I added some extra

or feel good *that* they're feeling bad. And if the second pleasure is sufficiently intense, they can end up feeling more pleasure than they do pain, so they feel good on balance.' (2011: 18).

³⁹ Severin describes himself as being 'terribly unhappy' (1921 [1870]: 17).

criteria for passionate attachments, ones which clarify and expand upon the notion as articulated by Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf. For something to be a passionate attachment: (i) it must be above a threshold magnitude and it must have exceeded a threshold complexity, (ii) it must command a certain exclusiveness on the activities and attention of the person who has it, (iii) it must have a social dimension insofar as it can be shared with, or at least recognised by, others. Finally, I argued that some passionate attachments should be considered to be inappropriate or toxic, either insofar as they contravene our moral or prudential considerations, or because their very nature prevents us from establishing a satisfying relationship with them. While passionate attachments are essential for human flourishing, some are incompatible with it either because circumstances align in a way that means we can only pursue them at the expense of other considerations, or because their very nature requires that we trespass upon our moral or prudential considerations. Now I am ready to examine whether we can cultivate our passionate attachments, as well as why it is valuable to do so. These are the tasks of the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Value of Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments

Attachments are of great seriousness. Choose your attachments carefully. Choose your temple of fanaticism with great care. What you wish to sing of as tragic love is just an attachment not carefully chosen.

David Foster Wallace 1996: 106

2.0 Overview:

This chapter argues that cultivating our passionate attachments is valuable. I begin by interrogating Frankfurt's claim that we *cannot* cultivate our passionate attachments, alongside Williams' and Wolf's resistance to philosophical theories of passionate self-cultivation (2.1). After this, I compare the idea of cultivating our passionate attachments with the more familiar notions of moral and prudential self-cultivation, each of which comes with an informative literature on how we can strengthen and improve these dimensions of our characters (2.2). Showing how we cultivate the moral and prudential dimensions of our character offers clues about how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, as well as providing precedents that a philosophical theory of this process can follow. Contra scepticism regarding the possibility of cultivating our passionate attachments, I argue that this process is not only possible, but also valuable and justifiably highly prized (2.3). Reflecting on our practical lives shows we have strong reason to choose, reflect upon, interrogate, refine, and hierarchise – that is to say, actively cultivate – our passionate attachments because this helps us better resolve the question of 'how one should live'. Showing that we can cultivate our passionate attachments, and why doing this is valuable, gives us reason to think that practical philosophers should offer a theory of how we do this. This is the task of Ch. 5.

2.1 Can We Cultivate Our Passionate Attachments?

Although Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf each stress that modern moral philosophers must take considerations pertaining to our passionate attachments seriously in order to understand the flourishing life, they are markedly pessimistic about our ability to actively cultivate them. While each thinker urges us to return to the Socratic question because they claim it better accommodates the essential considerations that guide our practical reasoning, none offers a theory of how we could come to what Frankfurt calls a 'reasonable deliberation' to this question (1999 [1992]: 92), nor do they offer practical guidance on how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. Instead, much of their work on this topic is concerned with identifying the pitfalls of modern moral philosophy, showing how its conception of the flourishing life is incomplete, rather than proposing ways to escape these traps. Williams, for example, begins *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* by starkly delimiting the parameters of his work. He tells us:

This book is principally about how things are in moral philosophy, not about how they might be, and since I do not think they are as they should be, some of it consists of criticism of present philosophy. [...] In the course of saying what the present state of affairs is, and complaining about it, [however,] I hope to introduce a picture of ethical thought and a set of ideas that apply to it, which could also help us to think about how it might be. (1985: vii).

Furthermore, Williams makes it clear that he is sceptical about our ability to use conceptual resources of the history of philosophy to guide our practical lives, even when discussing the Hellenistic tradition specifically. In his review of Nussbaum's *Therapy*, he suggests that the 'lethal high-mindedness' of Stoics regarding the value of external goods precludes them from offering a therapeutic account of self-cultivation (1994: 26).

Adopting a similar tone, Wolf is equally sceptical, although her worry is more targeted insofar as it focuses on offering a philosophical account of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. Philosophical inquiry can illuminate and clarify the role and importance of those passionate attachments that generate meaningfulness, she suggests, but it is beyond its disciplinary parameters to offer us a theory of how we can actively cultivate such attachments, let alone offer practical advice on how to do this. On Wolf's account:

[M]ost people manage to live meaningful lives without giving the *idea* of meaning a moment's explicit thought, and those whose lives are not satisfactorily meaningful are not likely to be able to remedy this shortfall simply by having it called more explicitly to their attention. (2010: 48–9)

She tells us that the benefits of a philosophical account of meaningfulness will be 'purely intellectual', and that it is unlikely that 'our lives [will] become more meaningful as a result of thinking about meaningfulness, [as] this will more likely happen by an indirect route' (2010: 49). Thinking back to Wolf's account, we can see this is closely connected to her understanding of meaningfulness itself. Because she views the passionate attachments that generate meaningfulness as necessarily outwardly-directed insofar as they are formed from objectively worthwhile entities, she says we cannot cultivate these things ourselves, either practically or in principle. She writes:

Because meaning requires us to be open and responsive to values outside ourselves, we cannot be preoccupied with ourselves. If we want to live meaningful lives, we cannot try too hard or focus too much on doing so. (2010: 51)⁴⁰

Wolf's stipulation aligns with both Frankfurt's and Williams' accounts of passionate attachments, insofar as she views them as relatively autonomous considerations which do not straightforwardly relate to our self-interest. Nevertheless, as I argued in 1.5, we do not need to follow her account of objectivity here. What matters for an account of passionate self-cultivation is that the passionate attachment in question is valued by the person who pursues it, and that it meets the other requirements for passionate attachments which I laid out in Ch. 1. So why are Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf so negative about this? And do they think that we can cultivate our passionate attachments to any extent at all?

Although Wolf does not think philosophers can give an account of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, she does think we can practically do this indirectly when we arrive at 'crossroads' in the flow of our life, one which requires us to make a major life decision. It is only at these times that the question of 'how one should live' emerges for Wolf. At other times our practical reasoning is fully immersed in a world of

⁴⁰ Wolf introduces this claim by telling us that '[W]e can recognize a paradox of meaningfulness, similar to but deeper than the paradox of hedonism', and then by comparing her account to Williams: 'Bernard Williams [writes], with respect to the question of life's being desirable, that "it gets by far its best answer in never being asked at all." Similarly, I think, for a person whose life is meaningful, the need to think about it might never come up.' (2010: 31)

concerns, where the fundamental issues that bear on the Socratic question have been at least provisionally settled. We can think of many specific culturally-endorsed ‘crossroads’ when we are required to decide upon our passionate attachments in this sense. Choosing a university degree, a profession, a romantic partner, whether to spend time working for a charitable project or to travel, and whether to have children are clearly times when we face major life decisions which require that we *explicitly choose* a passionate attachment in Wolf’s sense of the term. Nevertheless, as I show in 5.1.4, choosing our passionate attachments cannot constitute cultivating them because such deep-seated character change can only be the result of an iterative process.

Moreover, these kinds of major life decisions are often viewed as constituting a character-defining ‘rite of passage’ on the path from childhood to adulthood, one that is deeply linked to a person’s identity and public persona. While philosophers from Plato onwards have often spoken as if the moral dimension of our character best reveals who we are, our passionate attachments are often thought to bring who we are into greatest relief. The major life decisions we make regarding our choice of romantic partner, the career to take up, or whether to procreate, deeply inform how others understand us and, consequently, how we understand ourselves.⁴¹ Typically we recognise that major life decisions regarding these kinds of passionate attachments are not unsullied by moral or prudential considerations; marriages are often scrutinised as to whether they are primarily motivated by passionate or prudential considerations (often financial ones), for example, whereas it is easy to see why the decision to sign up to the army or join the church could be viewed as constituted by both moral commitments and deeply-held passionate attachments which are effectively impossible to disentangle.

When we are faced with major life decisions, Wolf argues, considerations pertaining to meaningfulness are weighed against one another (‘Which career would yield a more meaningful life?’), as well as calibrated in terms of other factors, such as our prudential considerations (‘Which partner would provide for me and my future children best financially?’) and moral ones (‘Should moral obligations to God or to my nation influence my choice of a new career?’).⁴² Instead of offering a theoretical account of how we can judiciously cultivate our passionate attachments, however, Wolf’s project stops when she has shown that the passionate attachments that generate meaningfulness are an essential component of the flourishing life. Although she concedes that we can scrutinise

⁴¹ In many ways the strong cultural emphasis placed upon passionate attachments at such ‘rites of passage’ is appropriate because our passionate attachments strongly define our personal identity. See my account of Nietzsche’s view on this topic in Dennis (forthcoming).

⁴² Examples in parentheses are my own.

and reflect upon our major life decisions, because she thinks our passionate attachments are necessarily outwardly-directed, she does not think there is much to say philosophically about the idea that we can actively work on cultivating them. When we are faced with a major life decision regarding whether to take up this or that passionate attachment, or how to calibrate these attachments with competing moral and prudential considerations, she thinks that philosophy can offer no assistance. If there is a disciplinary role in dealing with these issues at all, she suggests it will be the province of psychotherapy, or we may find it in the advice of those theologians and motivational speakers which I cited her mentioning above (1.4). Although I argue it is beneficial for our passionate attachments to be continually reappraised in 2.3, and later show why regularly doing this is an important aspect of passionate self-cultivation in 5.2.2, Wolf's contention that there are more and less important times to do this is surely right.

Compared to Wolf, Frankfurt is even more sceptical about the idea of actively cultivating our passionate attachments, as he does not even make room for times we can *choose* a specific passionate attachment when we make a major life decision. He tells us that as long as our passionate attachments are 'wholehearted', then even weighing up whether or not to pursue them will 'not [be] a genuine option' (2004: 49). In this fatalistic tone he writes:

What we love is not up to us. We cannot help it that the direction of our practical reasoning is in fact governed by the specific final ends that our love has defined for us. We cannot fairly be charged with reprehensible arbitrariness, nor with a wilful or negligent lack of objectivity, since these things are not under our immediate control at all. (2004: 49).

To illustrate Frankfurt's view, we could think of how Somerset Maugham portrays Charles Strickland, the Gauguin-like protagonist of the *Moon and Sixpence*. When asked to justify why he has left his family, the artist explains, 'I've got to paint. I can't help myself. When a man falls into water it doesn't matter how he swims, well or badly: he's got to get out or else he'll drown.' (2009 [1919]: 47) Like Maugham's Gauguin, for Frankfurt, we have very little autonomy over our passionate attachments. In Frankfurt's words, it is not 'within [our] power to determine what [our will regarding them shall] be' (1999 [1991]: 101).

It is this attitude that Wolf might view us as taking up when she discusses our ability to *choose* our passionate attachments when we make major life decisions. Frankfurt's position is significantly less compromising. He argues that we cannot 'be authors of ourselves' because the fundamental strength of our passionate attachments makes them resolutely 'unresponsive to [our] sheer fiat' (1999 [1991]: 101). Frankfurt seems to have in

mind situations where there is either no ambiguity regarding our choice of passionate attachment (one attachment is clearly stronger than another), or situations when the passionate attachments concerned are so constitutive of the deciding person's identity that there is no room for a dilemma to arise. To illustrate the first type of dilemma, we could think of Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia to appease Artemis, thereby ensuring the gods provide the wind for his ships to sail to Troy. What should outrage us in Aeschylus' version of the tale is how easily Agamemnon's love of battle supersedes his love for his daughter. The poet describes 'her supplications and her cries of father / were nothing, nor the child's lamentation / to kings passioned for battle' (1926: 228).⁴³ To illustrate the second we could think of the celebrated lines from Martin Luther's speech to Charles V, 'Here I stand, I can do no other'. In this case, although Luther is not physically constrained – indeed, he had been granted safe passage to speak to the Emperor – he claims that he cannot do otherwise because speaking out is simply constitutive of the person he is.

Despite his scepticism regarding our ability to cultivate our passionate attachments, it is important to note that Frankfurt does imply that we have limited power to critically evaluate our current passionate attachments. This is hinted at when he claims it is 'within our power to control [what we care about] indirectly' (2004: 49).⁴⁴ While we cannot do this with the executive power of a 'sovereign author' (1999 [1991]: 101), Frankfurt concedes that we often find ourselves wondering if we have resolved the Socratic question well or badly, and that doing this involves evaluating our current passionate attachments. Frankfurt calls this process 'taking ourselves seriously'. In the opening pages of *The Reasons of Love*, he writes:

Taking ourselves seriously means that we are not prepared to accept ourselves just as we come. We want our thoughts, our feelings, our choices, and our behaviour to make sense. We are not satisfied to think that our ideas are formed haphazardly, or that our actions are driven by transient and opaque impulses or by mindless decisions. We need to direct ourselves [...] in thoughtful conformity to stable and appropriate norms. We want to get things right. (2006: 2)

⁴³ See Hursthouse 1999: Ch. 3; and Nussbaum 1986: 32.

⁴⁴ Frankfurt's account of this is interesting, but he gives us no practical account of how we can cultivate passionate attachments. For example, he merely tells us that: 'We are sometimes capable of bringing about conditions that would cause us to stop loving what we love, or to love other things.' (2004: 49).

Yet despite acknowledging that 'taking ourselves seriously' is possible, even important, when Frankfurt turns to offer a philosophical account of how this might be done his answer is vague and underwhelming. He tells us that 'taking ourselves seriously' is 'not essentially a matter of producing [our] character but of taking responsibility for it' (2006: 7). To do this, a person must:

[S]electively identif[y] with certain of his own attitudes and dispositions, whether or not it was he that caused himself to have them. In identifying with them, he incorporates those attitudes and dispositions into himself and makes them his own. (2006: 7)

From this we can see that Frankfurt views 'taking ourselves seriously' as a two-part process: (i) first, a person introspects to identify which of their 'attitudes and dispositions' they actually value; (ii) second, a person selects which of these 'attitudes and dispositions' they wish to actively incorporate into their character. Both these parts of a 'reasonable deliberation' fit with what I characterised above as Frankfurt's sceptical claim that 'what we love is not up to us', as well as his supporting claim that 'our practical reasoning is [...] governed by the specific final ends that [this] love has defined for us' (2004: 49). While we cannot cultivate our passionate attachments in the sense of 'producing our characters', we can come to know the existing attachments that we identify with more clearly, and through this extra clarity reorganise our lives so that we can better pursue these things.

Nevertheless, Frankfurt balks at offering either a practical or philosophical account of how such introspective self-cultivation might work, even dismissing two commonsensical ways through which we might understand introspecting to discover what our passionate attachments are. First, Frankfurt argues that we cannot uncritically observe what it is we care about as we may well identify 'obsessional thoughts', rather than those pertaining to our passionate attachments. As he points out, we often *intensely* want things that we cannot be said to care about, so '[s]heer intensity [...] implies nothing as to whether we really care about what we want' (2004: 11). We may intensely crave a cigarette, for example, while not caring about smoking at all (indeed, while actively caring about *not* smoking). Second, Frankfurt dismisses the kind of introspection we pursue over a long span of time. Observing that non-human animals do this too, Frankfurt notes that 'patterns of interest or of response may be manifestations only of habits or of involuntary regularities of some other kind; and it is also possible for them to develop merely by chance.' (1998 [1982]: 82) Neither a personal reflection on which passionate attachments we hold dear, nor a retrospective analysis of the history of our attachments will do.

Frankfurt's dismissal of the idea that we can 'produce' or 'cause' the configuration of our passionate attachments motivates the charge that his view is conservative, as it suggests that our existing passionate attachments are impervious to self-directed change. The only sense in which we can be said to *cultivate* our passionate attachments, on his account, would be in the sense of endorsing the existing attachments which we identify. Whereas Wolf grants us some limited autonomy when we make major life decisions, for Frankfurt, we cannot actively change those deep-seated commitments we already have. We can only come to know, identify with them, and then let them inform our resolution to the question of 'how one should live'. From this we can see that there is a limited sense in which Frankfurt thinks we can *engage* with our passionate attachments, one which does not amount to cultivating them. This concerns devoting attention to knowing our existing passionate attachments better, especially by distinguishing them from other kinds of considerations

I now leave Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf to examine the case for a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments that goes beyond the times that – *à la* Wolf – persons choose their attachments in the context of a major life decision, one which is more active than merely introspecting – *à la* Frankfurt. I begin by comparing the philosophical literatures on moral and prudential self-cultivation, both of which hold valuable clues for determining how a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments could operate. After this I examine the reasons we might need to engage in a process of cultivating our passionate attachments, and why doing so rightly regarded as an important aspect of the flourishing life. Establishing this justifies why we should devote concerted philosophical attention to constructing a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments.

2.2 Comparisons to Moral and Prudential Self-Cultivation

One reason we may regard Frankfurt's, Williams', and Wolf's scepticism about the possibility of cultivating our passionate attachments as overly sceptical is because accounts of how we cultivate the moral and prudential dimensions of our characters are alive and well in practical philosophy. Not only do many philosophers deem it appropriate to devote explicit philosophical attention to how we cultivate ourselves in these domains, but they agree that strengthening our practical reasoning in these domains – especially in the moral one – is of the utmost importance. While moral and prudential self-cultivation each have their own distinct characteristics, the wealth of historical and contemporary literature on these two areas, provides insights into what an analogous account of cultivating our passionate attachments could look like. Indeed, this should come as no surprise, as I have

already shown that our passionate attachments often straddle the moral and prudential domains.⁴⁵

Promisingly for a project of enlisting the conceptual resources for a theory of passionate self-cultivation from ancient philosophy, the ancient source material well accommodates the composite and overlapping nature of considerations that inform the Socratic question. Compared to modern moral philosophy, it does not focus exclusive attention on our moral considerations, nor does it rigidly distinguish between the various dimensions of practical reasoning. For example, Aristotle views a flourishing human life as containing a mixture of moral, prudential, and passionate elements, and his emphasis on *friendship*, *childrearing*, *financial security*, and *political status* all suggest attachments of a specifically passionate kind. I return to these kinds of attachments when comparing the Stoic and Peripatetic views on passionate attachments in Pt. II.

As well as explicit ancient discussion about which concrete passionate attachments are required for a flourishing life, the importance of our passionate character could be said to be implied in the ancient discussion of the virtues. Aristotle's own list of virtues illustrates this. These character traits do not only pertain to the moral dimension of our characters, but they have a significantly wider remit, incorporating aspects of our characters that would be badly described as moral ones. This explains some of the difficulties many modern virtue ethicists have had in taking on his list of cardinal virtues wholesale, and why they have had to truncate or expand upon his original list. For example, it is often lamented that the virtue of compassion is missing from Aristotle's pantheon, and it has also been observed that the virtue of pride is superfluous and anachronistic.⁴⁶

Moreover, the centrepiece of Aristotle's discussion of the virtuous life, his account of practical wisdom [*phronesis*], seems to include explicitly passionate elements, ones relating to entities we love. As Philippa Foot notes, practical wisdom has two parts because the 'wise man knows the means to certain good ends; and secondly he knows how much particular ends are worth' (2002 [1997]: 5). On Foot's reading, one part of practical wisdom is intellectual; it is similar to other skills that Aristotle mentions, such as building or playing

⁴⁵ In 1.2 I followed Williams' and Frankfurt's claims that a moral project can take on the status of a passionate attachment – not in the sense of a project pursued by a moral saint as Wolf describes it – but insofar it meets the criteria of passionate attachments laid out in 1.5. See n.23.

⁴⁶ Some Aristotelean components of the good life receive remarkably little attention within contemporary virtue ethics, which is perhaps because they do not easily fit within the parameters of modern moral philosophy. I identify a comparable problem in virtue ethics in the General Introduction.

the lyre. The second part of practical wisdom is value-orientated, however. Foot explains that it 'has to do with a [person's] attachments', allowing us to discern 'which pursuits are more worthwhile than others', which are 'trivial' and which are 'important [to] human life' (2002 [1997]: 6–7). Of course, the attachments which practical wisdom views to be choiceworthy need not be passionate ones. Nevertheless, many of Foot's examples fit with the account of passionate attachments that I have outlined in 1.5, or at least include passionate elements. The wise person knows the fleeting value of 'social position', 'wealth', and the 'good opinion of the world', and knows that they are 'too dearly bought at the cost of health or friendship or family ties' (2002 [1997]: 6). Foot's examples here are telling because they include a mix of entities that the wise person regards as choiceworthy: *both* moral and passionate entities. From this we can see that practical wisdom cannot be understood as a virtue that is only directed towards the moral dimension of our practical reasoning. Instead, there are passionate elements ineluctably mixed into it, and exercising *phronesis* requires us to act on the basis of considerations that are generated both by moral obligations and by choiceworthy passionate attachments.

In the next two sub-sections I pick out salient features of theories of moral and prudential self-cultivation for a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, as well as noting those features that make passionate self-cultivation distinctive. To do this, in 2.2.1, I show why the *self-directed* cultivation of our moral character has advantages over *other-directed* moral cultivation.

2.2.1 *Cultivating Ourselves Morally*

In *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Williams expresses his unease at the notion of moral self-cultivation when distinguishing between the cultivation of our moral characters in the first- and third-person senses. For Williams, while moral philosophers have typically taken their lead from Aristotle insofar as they focus on 'socialisation or moral education' of persons in 'third-personal form', the idea that we can cultivate our own virtues, that is, cultivate them as a 'first-personal exercise' has something 'suspect about it', something – he speculates – connected to 'priggishness or self-deception' (1985: 12). We might worry that the main problem with such first-personal accounts of moral cultivation is that thinking 'in this way is to think about oneself rather than about the world and other people', but for Williams the problem with cultivating the moral virtues is that the process is 'not self-directed enough' (1985: 12). He writes:

Thinking about your possible states in terms of the virtues is not so much to think about your actions, and it is not distinctively to think

about the terms in which you could or should think about your actions: it is rather to think about the way in which others might describe or comment on the way in which you think about your actions, and if that represents the essential content of your deliberations, it really does seem a misdirection of the ethical attention. (1985: 12)⁴⁷

On Williams' view, the moral self-cultivator is most motivated by their wish to be seen as moral in the eyes of others, instead of being motivated by the object of our moral concern, or even about our status as a moral agent.

Despite Williams' scepticism, moral self-cultivation has had a long tradition in European philosophy, as well as a significantly longer one in Asian thought.⁴⁸ This term is used equivocally in the literature, however, which brings us to the first point of comparison between the self-directed cultivation of our moral character and the self-directed cultivation of our passionate one. Examining the moral self-cultivation literature shows that the term is used in two distinct senses. In the first sense it refers to the act of cultivating the self – either our own self, or somebody else's – and makes no claim regarding who or what does the cultivating. Plato's and Aristotle's accounts of moral development fall into this category. Both philosophers – using Williams' terminology – offer 'third-personal' accounts of moral cultivation, accounts which only focus on how our character is cultivated by others from our birth to our adolescence. In *Laws*, for instance, Plato tells us 'virtue and vice first enter the soul' via the 'earliest sensations [of pleasure and pain] that a child feels in infancy', and that moral cultivation involves channelling these sensations in the 'right courses before [a child] can understand the reason why' (1997 [*Laws*]: 653b). For Plato, only once a child is old enough to successfully engage in moral philosophy do 'his reason and his emotions agree in telling him that he has been properly trained by inculcation of appropriate habits' (1997 [*Laws*]: 653b). Aristotle was highly influenced by his mentor on this point.⁴⁹ When discussing how we acquire the virtues he tells us: 'it makes no small

⁴⁷ Referring to Frankfurt, Williams writes, '[s]ome ethical thought, particularly if it is self-critical, will of course do that. More than one writer has recently stressed the importance of our capacity to have second-order desire – desires to have certain desires – and its significance for ethical reflection and the practical consciousness. Deliberation toward satisfying those second-order desires must be in a special degree directed toward the self.' (1985: 12).

⁴⁸ For recent studies see Slote & Angle (2013), Ivanhoe (2000).

⁴⁹ Aristotle writes, 'we ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as both to delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought; for this is the right education' (1984 [*NE*]: 1104b4).

difference [...] whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather *all* the difference' (1984 [NE]: 1103b26).

As I followed Foot in showing in 2.2, as well as having an intellectual component, Aristotle views practical wisdom [*phronesis*] as comprising moral *and* passionate elements. This explains why he thinks the task of learning to 'feel delight and pain rightly or wrongly' must be begun as early as possible, as he tells us that our attraction towards attachments which have 'grown up with us all from our infancy' become 'difficult to rub off' and eventually 'engrained [...] in our life' (1984 [NE]: 1105a–1105a7). For both Plato and Aristotle, then, the cultivation of our moral characters has two essential parts: first, we are directed towards suitably chosen passionate attachments by those who raise us as infants. Second, we learn why these passionate attachments are worth loving through the moral education we receive in early adulthood. Moreover, for both thinkers, the possibility of post-adolescent self-cultivation is severely restricted, and any remedial work is impossible after around the age of thirty-five. As Aristotle reminds us, for those whose early moral cultivation was unsuccessful (or inexistent) there is no longer any possibility of virtue, and there is only – as he rather ominously puts it – 'the law'.

In Ch. 4 I show that the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation require the cognitive and emotional faculties of adulthood, and these exercises were explicitly offered as correctives to retrain those who have not had a comprehensive moral education. Contra Aristotle's insistence that our moral cultivation largely depends on forces that are outside of our control, the philosophers of the Hellenistic world understood self-cultivation in the second sense, a model in which the 'self' in 'self-cultivation' refers to what is cultivated *and* to what does the cultivating. The sense of self-cultivation as the *cultivation of the self by itself* is succinctly captured by Michael Slote when he writes:

The idea of moral self-cultivation entails a process that an individual can take charge of and accomplish largely through his or her own efforts. When we talk of self-education in specific school subjects, we mean that an individual learns more and more geography or mathematics largely (though not necessarily entirely) on his or her own, and the same is true across a quite wide range of reflexive verbs. (2016: 195)

Outside the virtue traditions there is evidence for the model Slote describes in which the self is both the *active subject* and the *passive object* of cultivation in the founding texts of both the deontological and utilitarian traditions, as both Kant and Mill regard this kind of self-cultivation as a vital aspect of moral development. Kant's account is buried deep within

the *Metaphysics of Morals*. He tells us that we have a duty to strive towards our moral perfection, which involves cultivating two aspects of our practical reasoning: first, ‘cultivating one’s capacities (or one’s natural predispositions), the highest of which [he tells us] is *understanding*’; second, one is duty-bound to cultivate one’s ‘moral cast of mind’ (1991 [1797]: 191 [387]). It is by cultivating these things simultaneously that humans make good on their ‘duty to raise [themselves] from the crude state of [...] nature, [...] more and more toward humanity’ (1991 [1797]: 191 [387]). Similarly, in the utilitarian tradition, historically-minded scholars have recently attended to the strong emphasis on the self-cultivation of utilitarian virtues. For these commentators, we can better attune ourselves to the demands of the utilitarian calculus by cultivating ourselves, even by taking part in those narrative arts that shake us from our own single-minded perspective and cause us to regard our lives as one lived perspective among many.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to think that philosophers who approach the cultivation of the self in this second sense view it as not involving others at all. As I discuss in 4.2.3, others were involved in many of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation: from spiritual directors, to correspondents, to friends, to the members of the Hellenistic communities.⁵¹

From this we can distinguish that philosophers approach cultivating our moral characters in two senses: first, our moral characters can be *passively* cultivated as Plato and Aristotle describe when they stress that our moral disposition must be cultivated in our youth because the window to effectively influence it is small. Second, as Kant, Mill, and contemporary virtue ethicists like Slote contend, the self can be *actively* cultivated in a self-

⁵⁰ As Wendy Donner notes, Mill’s distinction between ‘morality, prudence, and aesthetics’ in *The Art of Life*, includes the idea that our moral character can be self-developed through exercising our aesthetic faculties. For Donner, ‘one role of the perspective of aesthetics is to offer methods for moving beyond egoism to facilitate selflessness and compassion and wider identifications of self and others’ (2010: 146).

⁵¹ Philosophers who warn against *any* involvement of others in self-cultivation are rare. Nietzsche experiments with the idea when he writes, ‘one should speak only of self-education. The education of youth by others is either an experiment carried out on an as yet unknown and unknowable subject, or a levelling on principle with the object of making the new being, whatever it may be, conform to the customs and habits then prevailing: in both cases therefore something unworthy of the thinker, the work of those elders and teachers whom a man of rash honesty once described as *nos ennemis naturels*. One day, when one has long since been educated as the world understands it, one *discovers oneself*: here begins the task of the thinker; now the time has come to call on him for assistance—not as an educator but as one who has educated himself and who thus knows how it is done.’ (1996 [1880]: 374 [267]).

directed process of moral character development. Understanding the term self-cultivation in this restricted sense fits with how I construct a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments in Ch. 5. This latter kind of self-cultivation is taken up by the Hellenistic philosophers, which is one reason they provide the best conceptual resources for this study. Contra Aristotle's insistence that our moral cultivation largely depends on forces that are outside of our control, the philosophers of the Hellenistic world understood self-cultivation in the self-directed sense, a model in which the 'self' in 'self-cultivation' refers to what is cultivated *and* to what does the cultivating.

2.2.2 *Cultivating Ourselves Prudentially*

Most moral philosophers acknowledge the vital role prudential self-interest plays in our practical reasoning, although few have viewed how we cultivate our prudential character as worthy of detailed attention.⁵² Kant argues that we neither need a philosophical account of the fact *that* we can cultivate our prudential interests, nor *how* we cultivate them, because he thinks, like all sentient creatures, humans have a natural propensity to look after themselves. In the 'Doctrine of Virtue' he cautions that our '*own happiness* is an end [that we have] by the impulses of [our] nature, [so] this end can never without self-contradiction be regarded as a duty.' (1991 [1797]: 190 [385]).⁵³ Our self-interested inclinations, he thinks, naturally ensure that we look after ourselves, and we do not need an account of how they operate in our practical philosophy, as explaining our moral duties and obligations deserves most philosophical attention.

Given Kant's forbidding diagnosis, it is perhaps unsurprising that theoretical accounts and practical methods of self-cultivation concerning the cultivation of our prudential interests are typically more developed outside of philosophy. Cultivating our bodily well-being is covered by the literature on dietetics, exercise regimes, and medicine, whereas those concerning the self-directed improvement of our mental well-being is the

⁵² There are some exceptions to this. Simon Blackburn's 'Looking Out For Yourself' in his *Ruling Passions* gives a lively history of the modern philosophical literature on this topic (2000: 122–160). John Cooper summarises a common view about how satisfying prudential desires is intimately connected to flourishing when he writes, '[t]his view holds that, ultimately, the quality of a human life, for better or worse, is simply constituted by the degree and balance of desire-satisfaction or desire-frustration that it contains.' (2012: 184)

⁵³ Duties, for Kant, can only applied as a '*constraint* to an end [that is] adopted reluctantly', so it is 'self-contradictory to say that [we are] *under obligation* to promote [our] own happiness with all [our] powers.' (1991 [1797]: 190 [385–6]).

province of the literature on meditation, psychotherapy, and self-help. Some self-help teachers encourage us to understand prudentially cultivating ourselves in an even wider sense, one which includes our possessions, our occupation, our friends, and our family relationships. This can be illustrated by the self-help literature that purports to deal with these themes. While the first-wave of literature predominantly concerned practical strategies to be successful in a worldly sense,⁵⁴ this has now been succeeded by a second-wave of literature which focuses on those non-moral character traits that are understood as able to satisfy our self-interested desires.⁵⁵

Building on this interest in the cultivation of non-moral prudential character traits, psychologists such as Thomas Lickona and Matthew Davidson argue that, as well as the traditional interest in '*moral character*', we also need to develop an account of what they call '*performance character*' to explain 'the qualities that are necessary for excellent performance in any domain', such as the non-moral virtues of 'diligence' 'perseverance', 'self-discipline', and 'conscientious effort' (2007: 2–3). For Lickona and Davidson, these character traits are primarily important because excellence in these areas enables us to satisfy our desires more readily, which in turn increases our prudential well-being. What all these disparate ways of understanding the cultivation of our prudential character have in common is that they aim to further our own well-being: they are what Foot calls "'self-regarding" pursuits' (2001 [2010]: 68; cited n.6 above), those activities that Williams tells us relate 'merely to comfort, excitement, self-esteem, power, or another advantage of the agent' (1985: 13; cited n.6 above).

Thinking about theories of cultivating our prudential character, along with practical methods that allow us to do this, shows how the cultivation of our passionate character differs from the cultivation of our prudential one. Passionate self-cultivation is not connected to our prudential well-being because pursuing passionate attachments can be deeply inimical to our prudential character. We first saw this in 1.3, when I noted that Gauguin's decision to paint in Tahiti not only required that he break his moral commitments in terms of providing for his family, but it required him to embark upon a perilous voyage, one which jeopardised his prudential well-being.

The difference between a prudential attachment and a passionate one is well illustrated by Wolf's approach to the question of why we regard passionate attachments as more choiceworthy than prudential ones, especially evident when she emphasises how

⁵⁴ Dale Carnegie's *How to Make Friends and Influence People* (1936) epitomises this theme.

⁵⁵ A forerunner into self-directed prudential character development was Steve Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (2013 [1989]); more recently see Paul Tough's *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* (2013), and David Brooks' *The Road to Character* (2015).

major life decisions are often strongly guided by 'explicit thought about worth or meaning of the activity concerned' (2016 [1997]: 120). While such decisions may not be everyday or commonplace, they are not philosophically interesting because of their magnitude, but rather because of the summative processes of rationalisation that leads up to them, especially how these processes often explicitly eschew self-interest in favour of something they perceive to be more 'worthwhile'.⁵⁶ She writes:

Some people decide to have children because they think it will give meaning to their lives. Others decide not to have children because they fear that the attendant responsibilities will deprive them of the time and resources and peace of mind that they need for other things in which they do find meaning. Deliberations about whether to pursue a particular career, or any career, may similarly involve concerns about whether the job is worthwhile, or whether it would demand time and energy that would distract one from what is worthwhile. Even many who do not talk explicitly in terms of meaning or worth make choices that are best explained by reference to them. In other words, our behaviour, including some of our speech, seems to reveal a preference for a meaningful life. (2016 [1997]: 120).

For Wolf, the outcomes of these kinds of deliberations are often inexplicable on the surface because of the magnitude of the trouble that will be endured in order to pursue our cherished passionate attachments. Given that passionate attachments are in our self-interest, like other more immediately rewarding concerns, it should be no surprise that they are often preferred, but it is the all-encompassing and onerous sacrifices that persons can willingly make that are startling. Although Wolf concedes that we can debate whether 'any of these choices advance our happiness (in the broadest sense, our fun) in the long run', she argues that they are often evaluated within a framework where it is conceded that they do not. She notes:

⁵⁶ As Williams notes, '[o]ne obvious reason why my desires do not all have as their object my pleasure is that some of my desires aim at states of affairs that do not involve me at all: I am not mentioned in a full specification of what would satisfy such a desire. There are self-transcending desires. They are not all altruistic or benevolent—they may be malicious or frivolous. Those who make provisions in their wills to mortify their relatives or to promote some absurd object do not usually believe that they will be there to enjoy the outcome; yet it is *the outcome* they want, not merely the pleasure of thinking about it now. For all these reasons, the line between self-concern and other-concern in no way corresponds to a line between desire and obligation.' (1985: 50)

Relationships with friends and family, nonobligatory aspects of professional roles, and long-term commitments to artistic, scholarly, or athletic endeavours typically lead us to devote time and energy to things that are difficult or unpleasant, and to forgo opportunities for relaxation and enjoyment. (2016 [1997]: 124)

While we may be able to explain some of these kinds of activities in terms of them ‘maximally contributing to our net fun’ over the course of our lives (and often these decisions will be made on this basis), we may cut ourselves off from understanding them if we think of them exclusively in terms of our self-interest. As Wolf notes, by defending our resolution to the question of ‘how one should live’ by invoking reasons relating to our ‘fulfilment’ – whether deep fulfilment in terms of ‘meaningfulness’ or more fleeting fulfilment in terms of ‘pleasure’ – may skew the problem overly in favour of ‘hedonistic interpretation’ because it collapses the distinction between acting on considerations pertaining to meaningfulness and acting on considerations pertaining to pleasure (2016 [1997]: 120–21).⁵⁷

2.3 The Case for a Theory of Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments

I now explore the reasons why (i) we might think that our passionate attachments are something we can – indeed should – actively cultivate (contra Frankfurt) and, therefore, why (ii) this process merits a philosophical theory explaining how best to do this (contra Wolf). In the previous section, 2.2, I explored several circumstantial reasons for both (i) and (ii) by examining the long-established theories of moral and prudential self-directed character change in practical philosophy. Examining the literature on self-cultivation in the moral and prudential domains, I argued, reveals that we have reason to think we can cultivate these dimensions of our characters, and consequently philosophers have devoted concerted attention to creating theories on how to do so. This alone gives us reason to think both (i) and (ii) are possible. First, unless there are other overriding reasons to think that

⁵⁷ Wolf continues, ‘[t]o choose something because it is fulfilling is, after all, to choose it because of a qualitative character of one’s experience – and though fulfilling activities are not always as much fun or intensely pleasurable as some of the alternatives, it may be that in the long run (taking into account Mill’s differences in the quality as well as the quantity of pleasure, as it were), a fulfilling life is qualitatively better, and thus happier in the truest sense, than a life with as many or more pleasures but no fulfilment.’ (2016 [1997]: 120–1).

self-directed character development does not apply to the cultivation of our passionate attachments, then we can justifiably assume that our passionate attachments are amenable to this kind of self-cultivation, in the same way as we can cultivate ourselves morally or prudentially. Second, if it is possible to cultivate our passionate attachments, then – unless for some reason this kind of cultivation is impervious to theoretical analysis – then we should be able to offer a philosophical account of how we do this. In fact, given that our passionate attachments are so deeply connected to our flourishing as I established in Ch. 1, we have good reason to think that a theory of how we can cultivate them will be beneficial insofar as it provides philosophical insight into something that holds the potential to facilitate a greater measure of flourishing.

Nevertheless, in 2.2 I did not just establish *that* there are two philosophical traditions devoted to theoretically explaining how we cultivate our moral or prudential characters, I showed how features of these traditions provide precedents for a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments. First, in 2.2.1, I showed that the literature on moral self-cultivation makes room for the idea that we can cultivate our moral characters ourselves in a self-directed process of character development. Here I examined those self-directed and reflexive practices of self-formation in which the self takes itself as both the *active subject* that is responsible for this process, as well as the *passive object* of the cultivation concerned. Contrary to Aristotelian moral cultivation which emphasises the fashioning of one's moral character at an early age by one's teachers, I argued that cultivating our moral characters after adolescence allows us to make use of critical and imaginative faculties that are unavailable to us at an earlier age. Second, in 2.2.2, I showed that, although philosophers tend to lump considerations concerning our prudential well-being together with those concerning our passionate attachments, there is good reason to pull them apart because our passionate attachments can be deeply inimical to our prudential well-being. In fact, those philosophers who argue most vociferously against the inclusion of an account of our prudential reasoning within moral philosophy, such as Kant, are also those who prioritise the moral dimension of our character in their practical philosophy. Instead of distinguishing a class of motivations that motivate us precisely because of the love they generate in us, and the horizon of meaningfulness with which they surround our lives, these philosophers run passionate attachments and prudential concerns together in a way that fails to acknowledge their fundamental differences.

From this we can see that both the traditions of moral and prudential self-cultivation can guide how we construct a theory cultivating our passionate attachments, but this will only be of use if we can conclusively establish that our passionate attachments can be cultivated at all. Although existing theories of the self-directed cultivation of our

moral and prudential characters indicate that these dimensions of character *can* be cultivated, the existence of such theories only provides circumstantial evidence that our passionate attachments are similarly susceptible to self-directed development. It might be that we can cultivate ourselves morally and prudentially, although we are unable to cultivate our passionate attachments, which is Frankfurt's view. This would mean that any theoretical help we can gain from existing theories of moral and prudential self-cultivation would be lost, so I now need to show there is evidence that our passionate attachments can be cultivated, in order to access the analogical insights from moral and prudential self-cultivation.

The final sections of this chapter show that, contra Frankfurt, there is much evidence that we value and devote explicit attention to cultivating our passionate attachments. In fact, given how important it is to have choiceworthy passionate attachments, for the reasons I give in Ch. 1, it is not surprising we are highly motivated to cultivate them because this ensures that we have the most satisfying passionate attachments possible. Examining the manifold ways people respond to their passionate attachments, shows that many of us cultivate our passionate attachments in non-formalised ways, either unreflectively engaging in practices that result in the development of our passionate character, or by employing various non-philosophical methods to do so (for instance, psychotherapy or self-help). Showing that we can and do cultivate our passionate attachments rebuts Frankfurt's claim that our passionate attachments are impervious to self-directed development. It also undermines Wolf's claim that we cannot form a theory of how we cultivate our passionate attachments, even if we can choose our passionate attachments on occasion when we make a major life decision. Contra both views, the rest of this chapter aims to show that processes that constitute cultivating our passionate attachments are widespread, both those that we engage in with an unreflective notion of what we are doing, and those where we employ a certain method to reflectively engage in passionate self-cultivation. Establishing this provides the conditions for a theory of the cultivation of our passionate attachments. So what reasons do we have to think we *can* cultivate our passionate attachments (contra Frankfurt)? And would this merit a theory of how we do so, analogous to the theories of moral and prudential self-cultivation (contra Wolf)?

2.3.1 *Knowledge of Our Passionate Attachments*

When asking how we can *know* our passionate attachments we may be struck by the sheer variety of processes and procedures aiming at doing this. Perhaps psychotherapy is the field of enquiry that purports to offer knowledge of our passionate attachments *par excellence*, insofar as it offers a comprehensive procedure to discover what our passionate attachments are, as well as a remedial process of redirecting us towards more suitable attachments if our current ones are found to be toxic or inappropriate. Knowing our passionate attachments is prized because it is often not obvious, and any psychotherapist will report that we are often deceived about which attachments we truly identify with. Furthermore, ignorance regarding passionate attachments is rightly regarded as a significant source of unhappiness, either because a person is transfixed by pressing prudential or moral attachments that masquerade as passionate ones, or because they resolve the question of ‘how one should live’ in a way that does not involve the pursuit of what they care about.

Aside from psychotherapy, the idea that knowledge of our passionate attachments should be prized underpins much of the work in the self-care industry, reflected by the amount of time, money, and attention that this industry enjoys. The starting point for much of the literature and many of the motivational speakers within this industry is that we are unhappy with our current resolution to the question of ‘how one should live’ because we misunderstand our passionate attachments (‘what *truly* drives us’, ‘what we *truly* care about’, et cetera.), either by mistaking them for less choiceworthy prudential ones or overestimating the importance of various other concerns (often moral ones). As I discussed in 2.2.2, self-help literature often focuses on how our conduct can be out of sync with our passionate attachments, a state of affairs that this literature – agreeing with psychotherapy – views as impacting upon our ability to flourish.

From this we can see that both psychotherapy and self-help start from the assumption we can be in a state of ignorance or debilitating self-deception regarding what our passionate attachments are. We frequently confuse our passionate attachments with moral considerations or prudential ones, and doing so impacts upon our flourishing because it prevents us aligning our conduct with how we truly wish to live. Furthermore, both disciplines propose that knowledge of our passionate attachments precipitates significant changes in how they feature in our resolution to the Socratic question. From this we can say that although knowledge of our passionate attachments is not the same as cultivating them, it is embarked upon within psychotherapy and self-help because it allows us to cultivate them indirectly. For both disciplines, knowledge of our passionate

attachments make the considerations they generate action-guiding, allowing us to suitably prioritise them in our conduct and our resolution to the Socratic question. Epiphanies, realisations, and insights regarding our passionate attachments are treasured precisely because they enable us to live in a way that aligns with the considerations that our passionate attachments generate.

For the reasons I gave in 1.5, a flourishing life requires that we pursue passionate attachments, so we are highly motivated to know what our passionate attachments are in order to make sure we act on considerations pertaining to them. Mistaking moral or prudential considerations for those that derive from passionate considerations can create problems. For example, mistaking a prudential consideration for a passionate attachment could mean that one did not act in a way that suitably prioritised this consideration in one's resolution to the question of 'how one should live'. In other words, only by knowing what our passionate attachments are, can we ensure that they are consistently action-guiding, and are suitably prioritised in our resolution to the Socratic question. Furthermore, from time to time we need to update this knowledge because – as we will see below – our passionate attachments inevitably change. This means that knowledge of our passionate attachments must be regularly sought to track the various changes we undergo.⁵⁸

2.3.2 *The Chronological Development of Our Passionate Attachments*

We begin life with a very limited capacity to cultivate our passionate attachments because as infants and children we can only take up whatever is immediately available in our vicinity. Yet, all being well, the scope for the cultivation of these kinds of attachments steadily increases, and we even develop new capacities that increase our ability to cultivate our passionate character, capacities that remain undeveloped until we are mature. As we grow, new potential passionate attachments become available to us, ones which it would have been inappropriate to take up previously. One reason we might find it odd to be sceptical regarding the possibility of cultivating our passionate attachments is because these kinds of attachments require us to actively respond to them: we need to be aware of how our current passionate attachments may no longer be appropriate, we must always be on the lookout for new things to become passionately attached to, and we must constantly ensure that our current passionate attachments are appropriate to our stage of development. Our resolution of the question of 'how one should live' does not remain fixed

⁵⁸ Quassim Cassam views 'substantial self-knowledge' ('knowledge of one's own values, character traits, and what makes one happy') as 'necessary for self-cultivation, and makes self-cultivation possible' (Cassam, Dennis, Werkhoven 2018: 222–30).

throughout our lives, so our relation to our passionate attachments must be in a state of constant re-evaluation. We not only acquire new passionate attachments as we develop, but it is important that we are actively involved in this process, choosing, deliberating, experimenting with the passionate attachments we eventually take up.

To understand this, we could think back to the horticultural metaphor of *self-cultivation*. Like a blossoming plant, we will naturally grow and develop, but cultivation begins when we direct, control, or otherwise regulate this growth, typically in ways that we believe to be conducive to our eventual flourishing. Just as the plant has different needs depending on its stage of development, so too we must ensure that our passionate attachments are appropriate to our stage of chronological development. The passionate attachments of infancy, adolescence, and adulthood each have their own distinctive character: we find it difficult to enthuse about our passionate attachments from earlier periods as we once did, and even in the same developmental stage (adolescence, say) we can find ourselves rapidly enamoured with a sequence of different attachments to which it is difficult to find a common denominator.

Consistently flourishing throughout one's life must include a sequence of markedly differing passionate attachments, pursued at various times as the person grows and develops. Some of these will have been taken up avidly but will now be long-forgotten (a childhood hobby or an ex-lover), some will have been toyed with but then abandoned in the face of other considerations (moral or prudential ones, for instance, or perhaps a more compelling passionate attachment), others will have appeared at a point in the person's life from which time they will have remained fairly consistent (such as – one hopes – attachments to their spouse or children). However we strive to resolve the question of 'how one should live', it is unlikely this resolution will be capable of detailing how this or that passionate attachment will inform our resolution to it in a fixed or permanent way.

The fact that our passionate attachments require us to cultivate them in response to our stage of life can be illustrated in cases where a person takes up a passionate attachment that is inappropriate to their stage of development. Moreover, such chronologically inappropriate passionate attachments are taken so seriously that many psychological problems are even defined in terms of our passionate attachments being obsessional, overly rigid, or atavistic. The adolescent who cannot break away from the passionate attachments of his childhood (toys or computer games, say) will be encouraged to take up new attachments more fitting to their current stage of life, whereas the adult who regresses to attachments from their childhood or adolescence may well be sent to a clinical psychologist. This is not to say that we cannot experience healthy nostalgia or forward-thinking ambition regarding our attachments. Far from it, in our desire to form

new attachments we are constantly experimenting with potential entities to which we are speculatively interested in becoming attached.

Furthermore, because our passionate attachments develop in chronologically prescribed ways, there is a sense in which our cultivation of them can go well or badly. We can be criticised for the passionate attachments we choose to take up, which indicates that – at least in some sense – we are responsible for them. But we can only legitimately understand ourselves to be responsible for them if we exercise some freedom when we are cultivating them. This indicates, contra Frankfurt, that there is at least some sense in which we are free to cultivate our passionate attachments.

We do not simply switch from one attachment to another seamlessly at the prescribed time, so there must be evaluable skills and traits that relate to these processes. The explicit major life decisions we take regarding these attachments must be understood as suffused throughout our lives, as we are constantly required to ask ourselves whether we should have an affair with that ex-lover whom one did not marry or whether one should seek a mid-career change. Just as Murdoch notes that the cultivation of our moral characters is ‘something that goes on continually’, so too we should view attending to our passionate attachments in a similar manner (2014 [1964]: 36). While Wolf is right to say that we have greatest opportunity to change our passionate attachments when we encounter major life decisions (Should I marry Jasmine or Julie? Should I study art or architecture?), this is not the only time we can do this. Rather, we are constantly evaluating the passionate attachment we currently have, comparing these to potential new ones or other kinds of considerations, and deciding whether to devote energy to this passionate attachment or that. Our capacity to cultivate our passionate character is not only switched on when we are faced with making a major life decision.

2.3.3 The Contingency of Our Passionate Attachments

Given that our passionate attachments so profoundly inform the question of ‘how one should live’, it is understandable that we should be concerned about whether they are as choiceworthy as possible, to minimise their interference with moral or prudential considerations, and that they themselves are not inappropriate or toxic. When we evaluate our passionate attachments in this way, we compare the worth of them with one another, as well as with potential attachments with which we may replace them. We often realise we are dissatisfied with the passionate attachments we currently have, and conduct ourselves in ways that explicitly open ourselves up to forming new ones. This is why Frankfurt’s advice to introspect to see what passionate attachments one happens to have

cannot do justice to the strongly experimental component in the process of forming attachments, nor does it provide a framework that could support an account of how we can actively cultivate them. We can form passionate attachments with vastly different things – some choiceworthy, others less so – which means our capacity to cultivate these attachments gives a valuable way of orientating ourselves towards those we view as most worthwhile.⁵⁹ Our capacity to evaluate the passionate attachments we have, avoid those that are toxic, and orientate ourselves towards ones that are most appropriate to our stage of development, means we are highly motivated to confirm that our current passionate attachments are the best ones available.

It would be naive to assume that everyone is equally well-placed to enjoy worthwhile passionate attachments. We start in very different places regarding our proximity to attachments that are choiceworthy, and we are therefore highly motivated to discover the most appropriate entities with which to create this kind of relationship. We have a natural propensity to form some passionate attachments and not others given the contingent position we are born into, which is well illustrated by our tendency to form strong passionate attachments to our parents or children. Because of our likely proximity to them, these persons are unquestioningly taken up as passionate attachments, although in some cases these attachments may not be benign. Several times in the above discussion of the value of certain attachments I noted that family commitments are often thought to have a high degree of resilience and consistency. This is not always the case, however, and sometimes these kinds of bonds are formed with persons who, on account of their character or circumstances, cannot satisfy the basic requirements to be an appropriate or a satisfying passionate attachment, or become a kind of toxic attachment, as discussed in 1.5.4. Unfortunately, the examples of such toxic passionate attachments must be sought in places where we also find the most harrowing kinds of human suffering. The drug-addicted father who routinely prioritises his habit over the welfare of his child, the femme fatale who systematically destroys each of her prospective suitors, or the noxious political dream that inspires the fanatic, are all toxic passionate attachments that require a strenuous process of self-cultivation if one is to rid oneself of them. At these times we would do well

⁵⁹ For the reasons outlined in 1.5, I need not think, like Wolf, that choiceworthiness implies 'objective worth', but that we should understand it as 'subjective attractiveness' *à la* Frankfurt and Williams. Even Wolf thinks that 'subjective attractiveness' is a necessary for entities that generate meaningfulness.

to follow Murdoch's advice to 'attempt to check being in love', although she neither offers a theory nor practical strategies on how we might be able to go about doing this.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, acknowledging that there is a large degree of contingency regarding the entities that we are attached to, and that we often find ourselves surrounded by less-than-ideal attachments reveals something interesting. It shows that we have good reason to seek situations where our capacity to choose our attachments can be increased. In impoverished situations it may be impossible to find choiceworthy attachments, so the next best thing we can do is to actively seek situations where we have a greater range of valuable entities to which we can eventually become attached. We can only choose our passionate attachments when they are presented to us as options, but the ways that these objects are presented to us is often not within our power and is contingently dependent on things outside our control. Although we cannot cultivate our passionate character *ex nihilo*, we should not underestimate the extent to which we have the capacity to extend the range of passionate attachments that we can choose to cultivate. We can actively situate ourselves where it is likely that we can encounter entities that could become passionate attachments (joining a dating service), we can decide to experiment with a new potential attachment (trying a new sport), and we can use our imaginative powers to envisage whether a particular passionate attachment would suit us (imagining life with children). While none of these behaviours ensures that we will form a passionate attachment with this or that entity, they do increase our likelihood of us doing so. These examples suggest that, although we cannot master the contingency that surrounds the process of forming passionate attachments, we can influence it.

2.3.4 *The Desire to Integrate Our Passionate Attachments*

There are two senses in which we could be said to strive to integrate our passionate attachments. First, to resolve the question of 'how one should live' our passionate attachments need to be integrated with our prudential and moral considerations. At this level, what I term 'Gauguin's Dilemma' describes the decision-making process that the artist may have undergone prior to his journey to Tahiti. The tragedy of Gauguin's situation is that he has to choose between his moral obligations to his family and his passionate attachment to become a world-leading artist. Williams acknowledges that his example is simplified and schematic. To bring the gravity of Gauguin's dilemma into relief

⁶⁰ Murdoch notes that in such situations 'pure will can usually achieve little [because] it is small use telling oneself "stop being in love"' (2001 [1962]: 54). In Ch. 5 I show that, as well as our intention to cultivate our passionate attachments, this process involves other elements such as iterability.

it deliberately ignores the fact that Gauguin is likely to have other passionate attachments (presumably his wife and children!), which he would have to weigh against his desire to pursue his art. As Williams presents things, Gauguin could neither integrate his passionate attachment to paint in Tahiti with his other passionate attachments (his family, assuming he loves them), nor his moral and prudential considerations. We also noted how unenviable Gauguin's position was. Rather than being able to integrate his passionate attachments with moral and prudential considerations, his circumstances put him in the tragic position where he was forced to choose his passionate attachment to painting, at the expense of all other considerations.

Nevertheless, there is a second sense in which it is necessary to cultivate our passionate attachments in the attempt to integrate them. Unlike the single-minded Gauguin in Williams' example, most of us find ourselves more happily situated within a nexus of passionate attachments which requires that we strive to integrate and re-adjust these attachments with respect to one another. Like the kind of integration involved in Gauguin's dilemma, integration of our passionate attachments with one another requires compromise so that we can maintain salutary passionate relations with more than one thing. Furthermore, depending on the passionate attachments concerned this may be more or less difficult. Some passionate attachments are clearly compatible, whereas others are highly resistant to integration. One thing we may admire about Gauguin's response to his dilemma is his courageous – or perhaps ruthless – response to it: he does not pretend that his passionate attachment to Tahiti is compatible with his moral and prudential considerations, and he single-mindedly chooses accordingly. This behaviour is strikingly different to those who get themselves in all manner of trouble by trying to maintain two or more incompatible attachments under the condition of secrecy. The conduct of an adulterous politician, for example, is often understood as a moral failure (which it may be), but it could also be understood as an irreconcilability of two mutually exclusive passionate attachments. Nevertheless, it is because some passionate attachments are difficult to integrate, often in the public sphere, which gives us further reason to think that our lives could be improved if we were able to cultivate them. Through cultivation we may, for example, be able to eventually discern that what appeared to be a *bona fide* passionate attachment is not in fact one at all; or we may discover that they are actually *integratable*, such as when a straying politician renegotiates her marriage vows to include the possibility of an open relationship.

If we agree that integration of one's passionate attachments, either with one's moral or prudential considerations or with competing passionate attachments, is valuable, then this gives us reason to look favourably on the project of cultivating them. While I only

begin to explore the nuts and bolts of how we can be said to do this when we turn to the Hellenistic tradition in Part II, for now we can acknowledge that cultivating our passionate attachments in a provisional sense of reflecting on, calibrating, comparing, evaluating them will be indispensable if one wishes to integrate them. Given that we wish to have integrated lives in both of the senses explored above, this gives us strong reason to think deeply about how we can cultivate them. Failure to integrate our passionate attachments makes the Socratic question impossible to decisively resolve. Similarly failing to find a way to integrate one's moral, prudential, and passionate considerations leaves us with an unsatisfying resolution to the question of 'how one should live'. Even on the very terms of the three thinkers we have examined, when we make a 'reasonable deliberation' regarding the question of how one should live, we are required to weigh the considerations that these kinds of attachments generate against moral and prudential ones.

2.3.5 *The Fragility of Our Passionate Attachments*

Many of our passionate attachments are fragile, and this makes us eminently vulnerable to losing them. Bereavement offers a chilling example of this. Aside from causing intense pain, one of the most frequently reported symptoms of bereavement is a profound lack of meaning and purpose, which fits with Wolf's view that our passionate attachments generate meaningfulness. I explored this in 1.3 when discussing what motivates Shakespeare's Juliet to commit suicide. Here I argued that, instead of viewing her as just motivated by deep unhappiness, a better explanation for her suicide is that she cannot bear the prospect of a future life that she believes will have no purpose. Romeo's apparent death causes Juliet to suffer existentially because she believes that the shared future they could have had together is destroyed.

Similarly, what we could call 'existential suffering' can be caused when our capacities fail in ways that prevent us from sustaining a relationship with one of our passionate attachments. This concerns the loss of a mental or physical ability that directly impacts on one's ability to pursue the passionate attachment in one's life. The increasing deafness that Beethoven experienced towards the end of his life could be considered an example of this. In these cases, a factor beyond the impacted person's control destroys a cherished passionate attachment or their ability to pursue such an attachment, destroying the possibility that it can function in the life of the person in any meaningful way.

From what I have said about the value of our passionate attachments in Ch. 1, it should be clear that losing our passionate attachments will greatly impact upon our flourishing. Moreover, because our passionate attachments are fragile, it is likely that at

some point we will lose them, which means that it is likely that our flourishing will be impacted at some point. For these reasons, we are highly motivated to cultivate new passionate attachments when our current ones are no longer viable. Fortunately, even in the face of a crushing blow to our passionate character – the death of a loved one, say – we can cultivate ourselves in a way that furnishes ourselves with new passionate attachments. In fact, for our character to be able to demonstrate resilience in the face of untoward circumstances, then it is important that we have the ability to find new passionate attachments, reinventing our passionate character if we lose a central passionate attachment.

2.4 Towards a Theory of Passionate Self-Cultivation

In this chapter I have argued – contra Frankfurt – that we have reason to think we *can cultivate our passionate attachments*, and – contra Wolf – we have reason to think we *can formulate a philosophical theory* of how we do this. I began by examining the literature on moral and prudential self-cultivation, which shows that there is widespread agreement that these dimensions of our character can be cultivated. Philosophers have formed detailed theories of how we can cultivate these aspects of our characters. If we can (i) cultivate our moral and prudential character, and (ii) can form a philosophical account of how we do this, then the mystery is why this *does not* apply to the cultivation of our passionate attachments. Although I will remain open to the possibility that there might be special reasons why (i) and (ii) do not apply to the cultivation of our passionate character, Frankfurt’s denial that we can cultivate our passionate attachments, and Wolf’s denial that we can form a theory of doing so, are difficult to understand without these reasons. Furthermore, not only do such theories offer us two analogous models for a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments, but they also provide philosophical precedents for what a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments could look like. First, in the case of moral self-cultivation, I argued that the literature in this area shows that self-directed character change is at least possible. Second, in the case of prudential self-cultivation, I argued that cultivating our passionate attachments differs from cultivating our prudential considerations because the former are not self-interested. Following Kant’s arguments that cultivating our prudential character needs no philosophical theory because our prudential considerations get along quite well by themselves, I suggested that our passionate attachments are quite unlike this because they are disinterested, so how we cultivate them is in need of theoretical explanation.

In 2.3 I moved to examine the reasons why we might think that cultivating our passionate attachments is something we can do, both in principle and in practice. These reasons aim to provide the motivation for constructing a theory of how we cultivate our passionate character. Here I argued that we are highly motivated to undergo an ongoing process of cultivating our passionate attachments for five reasons. First, we seek knowledge of our passionate attachments, and regard doing so as highly valuable because it allows us to align our conduct with whatever we care about (2.3.1). Second, we strive to ensure that our passionate attachments are appropriate to our stage of development because it is detrimental to have chronologically inappropriate attachments (2.3.2). Third, we start our lives with contingent passionate attachments, so cultivate them to ensure they are as choiceworthy as possible (2.3.3). Fourth, we strive to integrate our passionate attachments with one another, because we recognise that doing so facilitates our flourishing (2.3.4). Fifth, we cultivate our passionate attachments because there are times when we lose our passionate attachments, and are highly motivated to engage in a process of finding new ones (2.3.5). Taken together this shows that we are not only highly motivated to cultivate our passionate attachments, but also that it is possible to think of many examples of when we do precisely this.

Given how important our passionate attachments are to the flourishing life, not cultivating them would be to neglect an extremely valuable aspect of our practical lives. Psychotherapists and self-help teachers have developed methods to help us do this, but we might think that practical philosophers would be well placed to offer a theory of cultivating the passionate attachments, one that could complement the existing theories of self-directed moral and prudential development. Such a theoretical undertaking could have practical benefits. Just as Aristotle claims that knowledge of the good has a 'great influence on life' insofar as it makes us 'more likely to hit upon what we should', so too a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments will benefit this aspect of our practical lives (1985 [NE]: 1094a18). In Pt. II, I propose that we can find the conceptual resources for a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments in the Francophone interpretations of the Hellenistic tradition. These conceptual resources power the theory of cultivating our passionate attachments that I offer in Pt. III.

Part II

Enlisting the Resources of Hellenistic Philosophy

Introduction

In the opening pages of *The Therapy of Desire* Martha Nussbaum claims that '[t]wentieth-century philosophy, both in Europe and North America, has, until very recently, made less use of Hellenistic ethics than almost any other philosophical culture in the West since the fourth century BCE' (2009 [1994]: 16).⁶¹ Nussbaum aims to remedy this neglect by attending to what she argues is the singular nature of the Hellenistic conception of philosophy, the complexity and unfamiliarity of which she believes has chronically hampered previous efforts to understand this tradition. By re-situating Hellenistic texts within a context that views philosophy as an eminently practical undertaking, one which understands itself as an exercise in self-cultivation, she argues, Hellenism is a 'very helpful way of balancing [modern moral philosophy's] interest in common human problems' while 'illuminating our own contemporary circumstances' (2009 [1994]: 16). In the preface to the 2009 edition of *Therapy*, Nussbaum tells us that in contrast to what she regards as the obtuseness of much modern moral philosophy, she believes that the Hellenists offer:

A practical and compassionate philosophy [...] that exists for the sake of human beings, in order to address their deepest needs, confront their most urgent perplexities, and bring them from misery to some greater measure of flourishing. (2009 [1994]: 3)

⁶¹ Since Nussbaum wrote this in 1994, both scholarly and non-scholarly interest in Hellenistic philosophy has increased exponentially. I refer to much of this new wave Hellenistic scholarship below, but it is worth noting that many non-scholarly initiatives on Hellenistic thought have recently begun, especially on Stoicism. One of the most popular of these is Stoic week, which since its inauguration in 2012 focuses on how the insights of Stoic philosophy can be applied to modern life. There is now a growing popular literature on this topic, including informative popular works by William Irvine (2009) and Massimo Pigliucci (2017).

Not only do the Hellenists have the conceptual resources to reinvigorate modern moral philosophy by offering a practical account of how to attain the flourishing life, Nussbaum suggests that historically speaking the Hellenistic schools intentionally orientated their practical philosophy around the Socratic question. For the Hellenists – as for Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf – asking ‘how should one live’ is an eminently practical question, one which is central to the kind of creatures that are prospectively deciding upon (and retrospectively evaluating) their conduct, constantly striving to do justice to many, potentially competing, action-guiding considerations that jostle for attention. Nussbaum writes:

[Hellenistic] philosophy tends to be more sensitive to [philosophically understanding human need and motivation] than contemporary moral philosophy [...]; for *asking how to live* is never, in the Greek traditions, a merely academic exercise, nor philosophy a merely academic subject. [...] [F]rom all of these attempts contemporary moral philosophy has much to learn, if it wishes to move beyond the academy to take its place in the daily lives of human beings. (2009 [1994]: 484)

Yet despite these auspicious words, the way in which Nussbaum urges us to take up the philosophical resources of Hellenistic philosophy primarily involves deepening our understanding of considerations that affect our ability to cultivate ourselves morally. Although she tells us that modern moral philosophy has much to learn from the Hellenists, Nussbaum writes within an Anglophone tradition that primarily interprets these philosophers as viewing strong emotions [*pathē*],⁶² and the passionate attachments which generate them, as deeply inimical to our flourishing, which is why we need ‘philosophical therapy’ to rid ourselves of them. Compared to more traditional scholars within the Anglophone tradition, however, Nussbaum’s project of mining Hellenistic ethics for the philosophical resources to contribute to debates in contemporary moral philosophy is significant because it does two novel things: first, as shown above, she explicitly applies

⁶² I translate the term ‘*pathē*’ as ‘emotion’ – instead of the more commonly-used term ‘passion’ – reserving the term ‘passionate attachment’ for the kind of love objects I outline in Ch. 1. This aims to avoid confusing the entity that gives rise to *pathē* with *pathē* themselves. As I argue, although the Hellenists viewed the passionate attachments as generating *pathē*, these kinds of attachments were not solely responsible for this, as they regarded *any* deep-seated attachment as capable of generating *pathē*, including cherished moral or prudential ones. See Daniel Russell’s helpful etymology of *pathē* (2012: 184), and Nussbaum on the advantages of translating it as ‘emotion’ or ‘passion’ (2009 [1994]: n.4, 319).

the resources of Hellenistic philosophy to the question of ‘how one should live’, claiming it responds to the demands of human life more adequately than the concerns of modern moral philosophy. Second, she emphasises the key role of exercises of self-cultivation, in the face of fierce opposition from scholars such as John Cooper. Third, although she views *pathē* as a potential source of moral error, she argues that passionate attachments that generate them had a more ambivalent status in the Hellenistic world than Anglophone scholars traditionally suggest.

Despite these innovations, Nussbaum shares two assumptions with traditional Anglophone scholarship which remain central to her account: first, she tends to view Hellenistic self-cultivation as applicable to our contemporary circumstances insofar as it offers opportunities for exercises in self-directed *moral* development, from which her very conception of ‘therapy of the passions’ derives. Second, she views *philosophical practice* as constituting the true locus of Hellenistic self-cultivation, primarily because of its role in extirpating *pathē*, and roundly criticises those interpreters who do not share this view. These last two points require that I move beyond Nussbaum’s focus on *pathē* or strong emotions in order to enlist the conceptual resources of Hellenism in a theory of how we cultivate our passionate attachments. To do this, I examine thinkers in the Francophone tradition who also claim that the conceptual resources of Hellenism can help us, while also offering a broader and richer account of the ancient practices of self-cultivation, one which does not view them exclusively in terms of the suppression of *pathē*. Both Michel Foucault and Pierre Hadot believe that the ethics of the Hellenistic world provide the resources to pursue a programme in practical philosophy that is not limited to moral development, with Foucault arguing that the practice of philosophy is only one of several ways to cultivate the self.

Pt. II examines Foucault’s and Hadot’s powerful claims regarding the value of Hellenistic philosophy for both contemporary philosophy and contemporary life, claims which I argue make a vital contribution to the question of how we cultivate our passionate attachments. Before focusing on these claims in the second half of Ch. 3, I should note that both of these Francophone thinkers make strong claims regarding the possibility *and* desirability of employing the conceptual resources of Hellenistic philosophy in contemporary philosophical debate, claims that go beyond Nussbaum’s own. Foucault tells us, for example, that the Hellenists harbour a ‘treasury of devices, techniques, ideas, procedures that, [although] cannot exactly be reactivated, at least constitute [...] a certain point of view which can be very useful as a tool for analysing what’s going on now – and to change it’ (1997b [1983]: 261), and in the research summary to his 1980–81 lectures at the Collège de France, he writes:

The most useful line to follow for this inquiry seems to be what could be called 'techniques of self', that is to say the procedures, such as no doubt exist in all civilizations, that are recommended or prescribed to individuals for fixing, maintaining, or transforming their identity in terms of certain aims and thanks to relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge. (2017 [1980–81]: 293)

Although more expansive and elliptical, Foucault's remarks follow the earlier work of his acknowledged influence Hadot. Throughout my discussion of the Francophone interpretations of the Hellenistic tradition, I show that there is indeed much overlap in the work of these thinkers, and both approach the problem of how the conceptual resources of Hellenism can be employed in a contemporary context in ways that complement one another.

Perhaps Hadot is more fervent in his support for a renewed interest in Hellenism, but Foucault's – albeit cryptic – comments will be shown to be more useful for the leading question of this thesis. In contrast to Foucault's equivocation regarding the question of whether Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation can be reactivated (see above; 'cannot exactly be reactivated'), Hadot affirms that ancient conception of philosophical self-shaping 'could still be reactualised [since] these models correspond to permanent, fundamental attitudes which all human beings find necessary when they set about seeking wisdom' (2002 [1995]: 277–8). One reason Hadot says this, which I will explore in detail in 3.1, is that he believes that Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation can be 'detached from their antiquated cosmological and mythical element', a view he supports by observing that the different schools used precisely the same exercise for vastly different philosophical purposes (2002 [1995]: 277–8). For this reason, he suggests, the 'plurality of ancient schools is precious' because they offer an account of self-cultivation that is readily amenable to transplantation or reactivation. He calls this attitude of borrowing one exercise from one tradition and applying it to another 'eclecticism', a term that he concedes is 'often rather poorly viewed by philosophers', but also one that harbours the possibility of making the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation available to us today (2011: 102).⁶³

⁶³ Asked by philosopher Arnold Davidson about the present importance of 'philosophical eclecticism', Hadot tells us, '[t]his attitude of eclecticism is potentially of great importance in the contemporary world, in which the schools no longer exist and in which one feels reticent to let oneself be influenced by any kind of school.' (2011: 102).

In a similar vein, in response to the question of whether ‘ancient philosophy can have something to teach modern man, have meaning for him, and help him guide his conduct’, Hadot replies in the affirmative, arguing that the public feedback he has received in response to his publications on this topic strongly endorses this view (2011: 147).⁶⁴ Furthermore, he claims to be working within a broader tradition of seeking the philosophical or cultural resources from the ancient world to help with contemporary problems. Citing a passage from Nietzsche’s *Nachlass*, used as the epigraph of the next chapter, he argues that the German philosopher ‘considered the schools of Greek philosophy to be an experimental laboratory from which we can still benefit’. In short, Hadot sees the influence of the ancient world everywhere in contemporary life. Drawing an analogy between how recent work in ancient anthropology has been used to ‘inspire our modern democracies’, he asks why this should also not be the case ‘when it comes to the experience of ethics and of philosophical life?’ (2011: 102–3). In this spirit, I seek the conceptual resources for a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments in his account of Hellenistic self-cultivation.

Before examining Foucault’s and Hadot’s respective contributions to the question of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, I should clarify the research parameters I observe in this part of the thesis. The first research parameter concerns Hadot’s claim that, for the Hellenists, philosophy was viewed as a way of life, as well as his proposal that today’s philosophers ought to return to this model. This is one of Hadot’s most celebrated claims, and modified versions of it have been developed by Cooper⁶⁵ and

⁶⁴ Question posed by the classicist Jeannie Carlier. In response to it Hadot tells us: ‘[i]t is up to the reader to decide. One is free to believe or not to believe, to act or not to act. If I judge on the basis of the numerous letters I have received, written by very different people, from France, Germany, and the United States, telling me that my books have helped them spiritually someone even wrote to me, “You have changed my life” – I think that the method is good, and I have always been able to respond to these people, with reason, that it is not me but the ancient philosophers who brought them this help.’ (2011: 147–8)

⁶⁵ Cooper acknowledges Hadot’s influence regarding this matter (2012: x, 8), although he builds his account independently from the ancient source material. Like Nussbaum, Cooper emphasises the primacy of reason in ancient self-cultivation, which he thinks ancient philosophers viewed as creating a link between one’s philosophical commitments and the way one led one’s life. He writes: ‘It is by adopting [the] assumption that [the capacity for reasoning does have an inherent power of moving us to action] that ancient philosophers are able to make plausible, and to work out, in their different theoretical constructions, their conceptions of philosophy as a way of life.’ (2012: 12) I return to Cooper’s account of the rational processes involved in self-cultivation when discussing Nussbaum and Hadot on this theme in Ch. 4.

John Sellars.⁶⁶ Hadot stresses that he does not intend his contribution only 'to be relevant to an historical analysis of ancient philosophy' because it is 'also an attempt at defining an ethical model which modern man can discover in antiquity' (1995 [1987]: 208). In *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, he dramatises this idea with a series of non sequiturs, asking:

Why not define the philosopher not as a professor or a writer who develops a philosophical discourse, but, in accordance with the concept which was constant in antiquity, as a person who leads a philosophical life? Shouldn't we revise the habitual use of the word 'philosopher' (which usually refers only to the theoretician) so that it applies to the person who practices philosophy, just as Christians can practice Christianity without being theorists or theologians? Do we ourselves have to construct a philosophical system before we can live philosophically? (2002 [1995]: 275)

Hadot's point here is that the exercises of self-cultivation he details in *Philosophy as a Way of Life* and *What is Ancient Philosophy?* should be understood as so integral to philosophy that engaging in them actually constituted what it was to be a philosopher in the Hellenistic world. Moreover, his claim is not only a historical one about how Hellenistic philosophers understood themselves: he thinks that modern philosophers can and should take up this 'ethical model', so that a requirement of calling oneself a philosopher would be that one's life expresses the principles to which one is philosophically committed.

⁶⁶ Sellars offers a restricted version of Hadot's claim, one which more plausibly accommodates patently theoretical themes in the Hellenistic corpus. Understanding the Hellenistic conception of ethics, for Sellars, fits with a traditional conception of philosophy insofar as 'λόγος is a necessary component', although he adds that it must include the idea of 'philosophical exercise or training (ἄσκησις)' (2003: 7). For Sellars, then, the Hellenists conceived philosophy as an 'art (τέχνη), [involving] both rational principles (λόγοι) and practical training (ἄσκησις)' (2003: 107). This means that it is essential that we do not follow those like Hadot (and Nussbaum) who 'identify spiritual exercises with philosophy itself' because these exercises are 'merely the second, although essential, stage of philosophical education coming after an initial stage devoted to philosophical principles (λόγος)' (2003: 118). This is an original departure from Hadot's view, as the latter implies when Hadot writes, '[d]espite my attempts to avoid it, some of what I have written about spiritual exercises in general may suggest that spiritual exercises are *added* to philosophical theory, to philosophical discourse, that they would be *practice* that merely complements theory and abstract discourse. In fact, all philosophy is an exercise-instructional discourse no less than the inner discourse that orients our actions.' (Hadot 2011: 88)

The second and third research parameters of this thesis are interpretative and hermeneutical. The former relates to the Hellenistic source material. In the next chapter, I will examine the strikingly different ways the Hellenistic texts have been interpreted, not just across the Anglophone and Francophone traditions, but also within these traditions, as on occasion the various protagonists I examine advocate markedly different positions concerning the reading of the same key text. Such clashes are partly due to the fact that the extant Hellenistic source material is often genuinely equivocal. For example, concerning the question of whether Hellenistic philosophers viewed philosophy as a 'way of life', even strong advocates of this position such as Cooper are forced to insert lengthy caveats in order to counter off-the-shelf objections to his key claims. He writes:

[F]or many philosophers of almost all periods of antiquity we have no evidence to suggest that their philosophy was considered as offering, or being, a way of life. Their work seems to have been motivated by nothing more than what motivates most philosophers nowadays. They seem to have found philosophical ways of thinking, and the questions philosophy addresses, simply interesting, even engrossing. They enjoyed logical analysis and argument, and were fascinated by logic and paradox, as philosophers of all ages have always been. They found some of the questions of philosophical debate at their time fascinating and worth thinking about, for their intrinsic intellectual value. In their approach to their work they did not differ from such other intellectuals of their time as mathematicians or medical researchers, even if we, and they, might agree that those other sorts of work could have more immediate practical applications and so were less purely theoretical than theirs. (2012: 24)

Although such an astonishing admission illustrates that the source material rarely lends itself to definitive interpretation, this does not concern the key aim of my thesis. The historical questions of whether or not the Hellenists understood philosophy as a 'way of life', or to what extent (if any) they prioritised exercises of self-cultivation, are fascinating on their own terms, but the purpose of this thesis is to deploy the conceptual resources of this period to shed light on the question of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. The only exception to this is where I adjudicate between interpretations on the basis of the internal consistency of the account concerned. To some extent, I do this in 4.1, for example, when I scrutinise Nussbaum's attack on Foucault, both because I believe her trenchant criticisms of him can be deflected by attending to his work carefully, and because doing this elucidates the scope of Foucault's account of self-cultivation.

Furthermore, the scholarly interpretations on which I focus have been chosen because they gather and expand upon the Hellenistic source material in a way that is highly apposite to the project of formulating a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. A critical analysis of whether Hadot or Foucault get the Hellenistic account of self-cultivation right or wrong would be the topic of another project, and indeed there is already a wealth of informative literature available on the historical veracity of both their readings.⁶⁷ For example, in 3.2, I will raise some of Cooper's stringent objections to Hadot's use of the Hellenistic source material, regarding whether the Hellenistic philosophers prioritise exercises of self-cultivation at all. While these worries are interesting, and allow us to understand Hellenistic philosophy in greater depth, I pass over them relatively quickly, because my aim is not to analyse readings of Hellenistic texts, but to locate and deploy the conceptual resources to answer a question in contemporary practical philosophy.

The third research parameter of this thesis is related to the second insofar as it also concerns an issue of hermeneutics and interpretation, one mentioned in my General Introduction. Not only will I refrain from adjudicating whether Anglophone or Francophone scholars are more accurate readers of the Hellenistic source material, neither will I ask how Hellenism connects to, for instance, Foucault's philosophical project as a whole. Much valuable work on Foucault aims to do precisely this, partly because his writings on the Hellenists is unfinished, and his comments on their significance for our own era are typically fleeting. Although I will draw lightly on some of this excellent scholarship – especially Stuart Elden's *Foucault's Last Decade* (2016), Edward McGushin's *Foucault's Askesis* (2007), Timothy O'Leary's *Foucault and the Art of Ethics* (2002) – I primarily use Foucault's reading of the Hellenists to inform my discussion of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. Instead of reconstructing Foucault's suggestive remarks on the contemporary relevance of the Hellenistic tradition, I offer a way of applying his work to the guiding question of this thesis, one that concentrates on locating the conceptual resources for a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. In other words, instead of speculating about what Foucault had in mind in his intriguing comments on how Hellenistic ethics can answer contemporary ethical, political, and philosophical problems, I scrutinise what he says about self-cultivation within this

⁶⁷ For a critique of Foucault's use of ancient source material, see Patricia O'Brien (1989: 25). For a comprehensive summary of Hadot's reception by classicists, see Daniel del Nido's (2018: 7). Rather than engage with these critiques, I follow Laura Cremonesi's view that both Hadot and Foucault suggest a 'useful redefinition [of the spiritual exercises], allowing us to enact today a renewed practice of the self' (2015: 196).

tradition in order to show that his reading of the Hellenists allows us to access their conceptual resources in a way that allows us to answer the questions I raised in Ch. 1 and Ch. 2.

Similarly, with respect to Hadot, Pt. II does not pursue his contention that the Hellenistic philosophers understood their discipline as a way of life, nor Cooper's or Sellars' versions of this claim. Nor will it pursue the – admittedly fascinating – idea that the Hellenistic conception of philosophy as a 'way of life' can be reactualised today.⁶⁸ Rather, my work on Hadot and Foucault aims to employ the conceptual resources of Hellenism in a theory of how we cultivate our passionate attachments, one which contributes to debates in practical philosophy by supplementing Frankfurt's, Williams', and Wolf's claims regarding the value of passionate attachments outlined in Ch. 1, and my own arguments on the value of cultivating them in Ch. 2. In sum, my aim is to improve our philosophical understanding of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, but it does not advance the further point – proposed by Hadot – that contemporary philosophers should replace a conception of philosophy that is concerned with philosophical theories [*logos*] with a practical one which emphasises how these theories are expressed in the life [*βίος*] of the philosopher who holds them. Instead, this part argues that Hellenism can underwrite a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. It does not claim that philosophy is the way to cultivate the self *par excellence*, nor that cultivating the self could be – in a special sense – philosophy. If Pt. II can do this, then significant progress in answering the questions raised in Pt. I will have been made.

Overview of Pt. II

Pt. II follows the spirit of Nussbaum's claim that the study of Hellenism has much to offer contemporary practical philosophy insofar as it countenances a greater range of considerations that affect our practical reasoning, some of which are especially important. Nevertheless, locating the conceptual resources for a theory of how we cultivate our passionate attachments requires me to part company with Nussbaum for two reasons: first, she emphasises *moral* self-cultivation; second, her claim that *philosophical* self-cultivation

⁶⁸ Hadot's claims that we should do this are – at least for me – often highly persuasive. He writes, 'philosophy has progressively entrenched itself on this purely formal path, in the search for novelty in itself at all costs. For the philosopher, it is a question of being as original as possible, if not by creating a new system, at least by producing a discourse that makes itself complicated in order to be original. The more or less skilful construction of a conceptual edifice will become an end in itself. Philosophy thus has progressively distanced itself from the concrete life of humans.' (2011: 55)

was viewed as the primary instrument of self-directed character change in the Hellenistic world. Doing this leads to seek the bulk of the conceptual resources for my theory from the Francophone account of Hellenistic self-cultivation, while following the research parameters discussed above. This allows me to engage with Hadot and Foucault without speculating on the correctness or otherwise of their interpretation of the source material, neither asking how Hellenistic self-cultivation fits into their respective philosophical projects. Moreover, I do not pursue Hadot's claims regarding 'philosophy as a way of life', which have been intriguingly developed by Cooper and Sellars. Instead, from the second half of Ch. 3 onwards, I interrogate Foucault's and Hadot's respective conceptions of Hellenistic self-cultivation, focusing especially on the exercises they view as crucial for this kind of self-development. This aims to show that, on the Francophone reading, the Hellenistic exercises are at least *compatible* with the idea that they can be used to cultivate our passionate attachments. In Ch. 4 I investigate the exercises themselves, providing the conceptual resources for both my theoretical and practical accounts of cultivating our passionate attachments, developed in Ch. 5 and Ch. 6 respectively.

Chapter 3

Revaluing Hellenism

So far as praxis is concerned, I view the various moral schools as experimental laboratories in which a considerable number of recipes for the art of living [*Kunstgriffen der Lebensklugheit*] have been thoroughly practised and lived to the hilt. The results of all their experiments belong to us, as our legitimate property. Thus, we will not hesitate to adopt a Stoic recipe just because we have profited in the past from an Epicurean one.

Nietzsche: KSA 9.15 [59]⁶⁹

3.0 Overview

This chapter explores the dominant interpretations of Hellenistic ethics in Anglophone and Francophone scholarship to prepare for an account of how the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation can provide the conceptual resources for a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments. While there is significant interpretative crossover in these traditions, for the most part they have remained separate, perhaps because they emphasise significantly different themes in the Hellenistic corpus. I start by discussing how Anglophone scholars emphasise that the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation were moral exercises that aimed to extirpate emotions [*pathē*].⁷⁰ These scholars view *pathē* as caused by a range of things, but they are especially suspicious of the passionate attachments on account of their propensity to generate these damaging emotions. I propose that this suspicion of the passionate attachments arises from three interconnected Hellenistic doctrines, each of which has been influential in the Anglophone tradition. First, most straightforwardly, the Hellenistic recognition that passionate attachments are especially prone to generating *pathē*, and their advocacy of ways of life that minimised these things (3.1.1). Second, the

⁶⁹ Cited by Hadot 2002 [1995]: 277 and 2011: 102. Hadot returns to this theme regularly. Later he writes, 'Nietzsche remarked, this could happen because the ancient schools were a kind of experimental laboratory, thanks to which we can compare the consequences of the various types of spiritual experience they proposed (2002 [1995]: 277–8).

⁷⁰ See n.62 of the Introduction to Pt. II. I translate the term '*pathē*' as 'emotion' – instead of the more commonly-used term 'passion' – reserving the term 'passionate attachment' for the kind of love objects I outline in Ch. 1.

claim that virtue alone is sufficient for flourishing (3.1.2). Third, the Hellenistic endorsement of a minimal conception of prudential attachments, coupled with routine criticism of those who take up more attachments than are strictly necessary (3.1.3). As a foil to these arguments, I also discuss Nussbaum's significantly more positive conception of the passionate attachments, one for which she offers reasons that are independent of the source material, and one which eventually leads her to reconsider (and part company with) the Stoics. It is Nussbaum's more sophisticated appraisal of the passionate attachments that distinguishes her from other Anglophone scholars. As mentioned above, due to her insistence on the importance of *philosophical* self-cultivation, I furnish my theory of cultivating our passionate attachments with the conceptual resources of the Francophone tradition, one which views the exercises of self-cultivation as having a significantly wider remit.

The second half of the chapter charts the remarkably different direction taken by the Francophone scholarship. Although commentators in this tradition acknowledge the suspect nature of the passionate attachments for Hellenistic philosophers, those whom I scrutinise in depth – Hadot and Foucault – claim that the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation have much to contribute to contemporary philosophy, along with the power to transform contemporary ways of living (3.2.1–3.2.2). While I do not reconstruct or speculate what Hadot and Foucault had in mind regarding this, I show that their exegesis of Hellenistic ethics offers an account of the Hellenists exercises of self-shaping that is especially well-suited to a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments.

3.1 Extirpating *Pathē* in Anglophone Philosophy

Before Nussbaum's influential publications on Hellenism in the mid-1990s, it would be little exaggeration to say that Anglophone scholars were single-mindedly negative when discussing how the Hellenists assessed any entity capable of generating *pathē*. These scholars were united in the belief that the Hellenists were invariably suspicious of any worldly entity to which one could become deeply attached – whether it be prudential or passionate – because they interpreted Hellenistic philosophers as viewing such relations as undermining a life devoted to rational activity and morality, two ways of life these philosophers viewed as deeply entwined. This literature typically focuses on the role of the emotions [*pathē*] in Hellenistic thought, rather than the various kinds of attachments we pursue, because it is the *pathē* that inhibit flourishing directly. On the Anglophone view, Hellenistic thinkers regarded *pathē* as generated in two ways: first, by our attachment to the *wrong things*; and, second, by our attachment to the *right things in the wrong way*. In the

former case, as I show Nussbaum argues below, the Hellenistic account of which attachments are valuable (and which must be judiciously avoided) is more complex than it seems.

While Anglophone commentators have felt safe assuming that Hellenistic philosophers regarded any strong attachment with suspicion, Nussbaum's work precipitated uncertainty about whether we can assume that such a blanket attitude existed in the Hellenistic corpus. Moreover, Nussbaum's own view of the value of the attachments capable of generating *pathē* is what makes *Therapy* much more than a straightforwardly historical account of the Hellenistic period. She claims that we can find traces of 'ambivalence' regarding the value of deep-seated attachments such as 'friendship', 'love of spouse [,] children [,] city [,] country' in Hellenistic philosophers from Epicurus to Lucretius to Seneca (2009 [1994]: 10), even when these philosophers fiercely defend their hostility towards such passionate attachments against their Peripatetic contemporaries, as I show in 3.1.2. Furthermore, Nussbaum makes it clear that she has her own philosophical dog in the fight, telling us that, although it is 'easy to accept the conclusion that in living a life with deep attachments one runs the risk of loss and suffering', we should 'confront these arguments' because, she argues, it is difficult to understand flourishing without these things (2009 [1994]: 10). This is strongly emphasised in her 2009 edition of *Therapy*. Here Nussbaum tells us that she has 'changed [her] mind' regarding the Stoics. While both editions present the Stoics as significantly more outward-orientated than the Epicureans, in her new preface she notes that even the Stoics give 'too little space to nonderivative loyalty to family, friends, loved ones, even nation'. In a claim echoing the thinkers we examined in Ch. 1, she goes on to claim that '[w]ithout such attachments, life becomes empty of urgency and personal meaning.' (2009 [1994]: xvi)

Contrary to this, on the traditional Anglophone view, all the Hellenistic schools were united in regarding *pathē* as deeply inimical to our flourishing, an attitude routinely applied to any entity that generates such strong emotions. The upshot of this is that the virtuous person must curtail, or at least minimise, all kinds of deep-seated attachments in order to free themselves from the tyranny of resulting emotions. Instead of focusing on the entities that generate them, this emphasis on the Hellenistic disavowal of strong emotions, is evident throughout the Anglophone literature, both in content and emphasis. Annas tells us that the Stoics viewed the 'virtuous person is *apathēs*, unfeeling, and [that they believed] that virtue requires *apatheia*, absence of feeling or emotion' (1993: 61), and this view is endorsed by Anglophone Hellenistic specialists from A. A. Long to John Procopé. Long tells us, '[i]n the Stoic universe, passionate emotion, pitting strictly personal and subjective affect against the divinely determined course of events (including the inevitability of death,

sickness, and so forth), is taken to be irrational, pointless, a gross failure to live in accordance with the necessary facts of life.' (2006: 389) Procopé puts it even more strongly. He writes, '[t]he Stoa maintained that human passions are intrinsically wrong, a malfunction of human reason, from which the wise man will be free.' (1998: 171) Here the primary focus is on *pathē*, of course, so if there is a role for cultivating passionate attachments that generate these powerful emotions, we can infer it will be a negative one, concerned with extirpating all but the most essential attachments for life itself.

In his article, 'Stoic Inhumanity', Terence Irwin vividly sketches what we could view as an extended visual metaphor for the Anglophone approach when he proposes that Virgil's famous depiction of Aeneas offers a 'familiar picture of the "inhuman" Stoic' (1998: 219). Unresponsive to Dido's entreaties that he continue their romantic relationship in Carthage, Aeneas commands his men to prepare their ships and sail away into the night. For Irwin, the image of Aeneas indifferently contemplating the sight of Dido's burning suicide pyre – his 'mind remains unmoved; the tears rolling down [his face] empty' – exemplifies Stoicism's approach to attachments of a passionate kind (Virgil 2008: 4.449; cited by Irwin 1998: 219). On Irwin's view, Aeneas exemplifies Stoic sagacity for two reasons: first – as Irwin emphasises – Aeneas displays no emotion, abandoning Dido without flinching and seemingly with no regret. Aeneas' indifferent attitude confounds our intuitions because it contrasts so starkly with the blossoming romantic relationship that Virgil describes him as sharing with Dido in books 2–3 of the *Aeneid*. Instead of being distraught by Dido's self-immolation, as one might expect, Aeneas maintains his tranquillity, regarding his lover's suicide as merely another part of the causal sequence of nature. What is commendable about Aeneas' actions from a Stoic point of view is that he manages to free himself from his attachment to Dido without falling victim to concomitant *pathē*.

In addition to this, there is another important reason why an Anglophone scholar such as Irwin views Aeneas as emblematic of the Stoic way of life, one which pertains to how easily the warrior prince dispenses with his passionate attachments when they conflict with other considerations. By decisively acting upon Mercury's advice to leave Carthage, Aeneas implies that his conduct can only be affected by the moral imperatives of the gods, rather than by reasons generated by his earthly passionate attachments. On Aeneas' view, even a cherished passionate attachment such as his lover, Dido, does not give rise to legitimate considerations that are capable of informing his resolution to the question of how to live. Indeed, Irwin supports his contention by quoting Virgil's description of the serene appearance of Aeneas ('his mind remains unmoved; the tears rolling down [his face] empty'). For the more human-all-too-human of us – after all, Aeneas

was the son of Venus – our passionate attachments are extremely important for the reasons given in Ch. 1. From this we can see that Aeneas' ability to resist acting on considerations deriving from his passionate attachment to Dido gives Irwin a second reason to regard him as a Stoic exemplar.⁷¹ He recognises that the passionate attachments are highly antithetical to our rational and moral capacities, so he dispenses with his lover with little hesitation.⁷²

Extant historical source material on the way of life in the Hellenistic schools supports the Anglophone contention that both Epicureans and Stoics viewed strong emotions as hampering our passage to the flourishing life. The basic problem for both schools was that forming deep-seated attachments to worldly entities generates *pathē* which inhibit our capacity to reach the ethical ideals of *ataraxia*, in the Epicurean case, or *apatheia* in the case of the Stoics. The more profoundly we are attached to an entity, the more we are vulnerable to *pathē* because we are inevitably affected by the fate of what we care about, a phenomenon I explore with Frankfurt's discussion of love in Ch. 1. We can see how *pathē* and the attachments that generate them are connected throughout the Hellenistic tradition. Diogenes Laertius, for example, notes that the Stoics identify four cardinal emotions – 'pain, fear, desire, pleasure' – and then claims that each is generated by a faulty 'judgment' about whatever the emotion is connected to. The *pathē* of 'greed', he writes, is based on the 'supposition that money is honourable' (Inwood and Gerson 2008: 110–1). This shows how the Hellenists viewed *pathē* as deeply connected to the passionate or other deep-seated attachments they are generated by, insofar as the latter simply derives from an incorrect estimation of the value of the former.

In contrast to Aeneas' imperviousness to grief or sorrow, I argued in 2.3.5 that losing one or more of our passionate attachments invariably impacts upon our flourishing because these entities are deeply connected to our ability to live a purposeful life. Although losing our passionate attachments certainly causes deep distress, we may not only seek to retain them to avoid such distress, but also because we recognise that leading a purposeful life is necessary in order to lead one that could be said to flourish. Nevertheless, even if we disagree with what seems to be the Hellenists' pessimistic diagnosis of how passionate attachments feature in the flourishing life, we may well agree that these kinds of

⁷¹ As I showed in Ch. 1, Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf view our passionate attachments as a source of reasons. I should note, however, that the Stoics regard *pathē* as non-rational desires that are action-guiding. See Stobaeus' and Diogenes Laertius' accounts of the how '[d]esire is an irrational striving', and how this also applies to the *pathē* these desires generate ('hatred, quarrelsomeness, anger, sexual love, wrath, spiritedness') (Inwood and Gerson 2008: 113, 10).

⁷² Porter illustrates this. He claims that the Epicurean exercise of 'purging oneself of the false beliefs' should be understood as a 'moral injunction' intended to eliminate *pathē* (2003: 226).

attachments make us vulnerable to experiencing strong emotions, on account of how deeply we are affected by the rise and fall in fortunes of the entities we care about. Moreover, the very fact we are so strongly affected by the fate of such entities lends support to my claim in Ch. 1 that passionate attachments are valuable.

Nussbaum's reading of both the Stoics and the Epicureans echoes this thought. She tells us that '[t]o cherish something, to ascribe to it a high value, is to give oneself a basis for the response of profound joy when it is present; of fear when it is threatened; of grief when it is lost; of anger when someone else damages it' (2009 [1994]: 370). For this reason, all the Hellenistic schools warned of the dangers of ascribing a high value to 'unstable worldly items such as loved friends, city, possessions' make us 'hostages to fortune' (2009 [1994]: 370; cf. 366). Interestingly, Nussbaum herself is ambivalent on whether passionate attachments are worth pursuing, although she is sympathetic to the idea that they might be. She tells us that:

It is likely that there will remain deep division – among human beings and, perhaps, within each human being – over these questions. For vulnerability is indeed painful, and the *life of passionate attachment* to externals a perilous and, at times, a harmful, unjust life. On the other hand, it is difficult to dismiss the thought that these attachments contribute something without which life – and perhaps even virtue itself – is not complete. (2009 [1994]: 484; emphasis added)

While in Ch. 1 I showed that Frankfurt and Nagel also acknowledge the price of having passionate attachments can be devastatingly high, Frankfurt's conclusion – along with Williams and Wolf – is that they are so integral to the flourishing life that they must be pursued. On the traditional Anglophone reading of the Epicureans and Stoics, however, such a high price cannot be worth paying, unless we can somehow insulate ourselves from the *pathē*. So how did the Hellenists think *pathē* could be cultivated? And how did their distrust of the passionate attachments affect their views about how to do this?

Unless they were judiciously cultivated, all the schools regarded strong emotions as inevitably clouding our judgements to act on other weighty considerations – especially the prerogatives of morality – in a *zero sum* game that the emotions would invariably win unless they were systematically weakened or extirpated. This could either be done directly or indirectly. In the first case, *pathē* could be extirpated themselves, rendering us less susceptible to experiencing these strong feelings. This process has been the focus of the bulk of the Anglophone literature. In the second case, one could manage one's emotions indirectly by *cultivating whatever deep-seated attachments gave rise to emotions*, rather than

cultivating the emotions themselves. It is the marginal Hellenistic interest in this process that provides the most resources for a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments. In the next three sections I focus on the places that Hellenistic philosophers discuss cultivating the passionate attachments, while recognising that this is closely tied to the project of extirpating *pathē*. First, in 3.1.1, I outline how Anglophone scholars have described the Hellenistic distrust of love relationships, including their cautionary comments on many of the passionate attachments I discuss in Pt. I. Second, in 3.1.2, I examine the Stoic view regarding whether virtue is sufficient for flourishing. Third, in 3.1.3, I examine how narrow the scope of permissible attachments was in the Stoic and Epicurean schools.

3.1.1 *Flourishing Without Passionate Attachments*

One of the most striking images from the Hellenistic world is that of Epicurus' garden, at once a school for teaching Epicurus' doctrines, a residential community, and a haven for those intent on escaping the *pathē* generated by the unsatisfied desires of everyday life. For the Epicureans, removing deep-seated attachments, either prudential or passionate ones, allows us to avoid *pathē* because such deleterious emotions are only generated when we are disappointed in our pursuit of this thing or that. Furthermore, in the Epicurean literature, the garden functioned as a metaphor for the ethical ideal of *ataraxia*, variously translated as 'equilibrium' or 'tranquillity of soul' (Peters 1967: 28). To achieve *ataraxia*, Annas writes:

[The] Epicurean will have no passionate attachments to particular people. He or she will have untroubling affectionate relationships, distributing his or her affections among a circle of friends without strong dependence on or attachment to any in particular. (1991: 196; emphasis added).

Taking a similar view, Nussbaum elaborates on the carefully curated environment in which Epicureans lived. Like the Stoics, she writes, Epicurus viewed the 'objects of desire' ('wealth, luxury, power, love') as the 'central cause of human misery' (2009 [1994]: 105). To remedy this, living in the Epicurean community required that one leaves one's 'usual occupations in the city' leaving cherished passionate attachments such as one's 'career', 'children', and other 'loved entities' behind (2009 [1994]: 118). She describes the garden as a 'placid, cheerful, apolitical world [...] suspicious of all external ties', in which the community offers 'its own replacements for familial, societal, and civic relationships',

replacements which aimed to exchange one's own passionate attachments with the shared and disinterested values of the community (2009 [1994]: 121). In contrast to the more outward-orientated Stoics, the Epicurean solution to managing the *pathē* was preventative and local. They believed that the best way to prevent them arising was to remove the conditions for forming strong, personal passionate attachments (or at least substituting these for the public ones of the community), along with living in an environment which merely provides the minimum prudential attachments capable of sustaining life. Evidence of this *modus operandi* can be found in the doxological reports on the life of Epicurus, as well as in his extant writings. As the philosopher tells us when discussing sexual attachments, for example, by 'taking away the chance to see and talk and spend time with [the beloved], then the passion of sexual love is dissolved' (Inwood 1994 [VS]: 37; square brackets supplied by Inwood). This typifies the Epicurean attitude of dealing with the *pathē* indirectly. Strong emotions are vanquished by creating an environment which inhibits forming any kind of deep-seated attachment, whether this be directed towards a treasured passionate attachment or a prudential one.

While Anglophone scholars view the Epicureans and the Stoics as agreeing that the passionate attachments should be regarded as a dangerous source of *pathē*, we cannot view each school's overarching disapproval of these kinds of attachments in precisely the same way, which is reflected in the strikingly different methods with which they propose to deal with them. Rather than 'nudging' their initiates into living without *pathē* by removing potentially-tempting attachments from their immediate environment, the Stoics proposed dealing with entities that they regarded as especially prone to generate *pathē* in ways which were notably more liberal. For the Stoics, certain passionate attachments could still be maintained (children, spouses, a political role in the city), but only on condition that one was attached to these entities in the correct way, one which is markedly *dispassionate*.⁷³ This is well illustrated in the Stoic attitude towards marriage and childrearing. Citing Chrysippus, for example, Diogenes Laertius notes 'the wise man will participate in politics unless something prevents him; citing Zeno, he tells us that the Stoic 'will marry [...] and have children' (Inwood and Gerson 2008 [Lives]: 122). Similarly, Stobaeus notes that the Stoic sage should not be considered immune to the 'love of music', 'of horses', 'of hunting', et cetera. (Inwood and Gerson 2008 [Antho.]: 129). In fact the Stoics roundly criticised the

⁷³ For example, as Diogenes Laertius notes, the Stoics view the 'wise man as "free from passions" because he is not disposed to them', whereas the 'base man is "free from passions" in a different sense, which means the same as hard-hearted and cold.' Regarding childrearing, for example, the Stoics viewed 'love for one's children [as] natural to them', noting that it 'does not exist among the base' (Inwood & Gerson 2008: 121).

Epicureans' hostile attitude to both marriage and child-rearing, viewing them as permissible and – at least in theory – compatible with the flourishing life, with influential Stoics even pointing out that both Socrates and the founders of their school were all conjugally entwined.⁷⁴

Nevertheless, we cannot view the Stoics' account of how we can maintain passionate attachments (even in the right kind of way) as evidence that they approved of them, or even showing that they viewed them as contributing anything to the flourishing life. Anglophone scholars are right to emphasise this. Even Nussbaum tells us that the 'Stoic does not hesitate to describe the wise person as *totally* free from passion', adding – à la Irwin's account of Virgil's Aeneas – that this means free from 'fear, distress, pity, hope, anger, jealousy, passionate love, intense joy, and all of the many relatives and subspecies of these' (2009 [1994]: 390; emphasis added). For Nussbaum, the 'Stoics teach [...] that the passions should be not moderated but extirpated', a difference she illustrates with a powerful passage from Seneca, one which could be said to decisively distinguish the Stoic view from that of the Aristotelians. While for Aristotle, Nussbaum tells us, one 'can form *passionate attachments* and still regard [oneself] as [one's] own to govern', for Seneca:

Love itself is a dangerous hole in the self, through which it is almost impossible that the world will not strike a painful and debilitating blow. The passionate life is a life of continued gaping openness to violation, a life in which pieces of the self are groping out into the world and pieces of the world are dangerously making their way into the insides of the self; a way of life appropriately described in the imagery of bodily violation, implosion, explosion; of sexual penetration and unwanted pregnancy. (2009 [1994]: 442)

⁷⁴ Nussbaum's concise summary of Stoic criticism emphasises this. She writes, 'Epictetus repeatedly asserts, as if referring to a famous (or, from a Stoic point of view, infamous) position, that the Epicurean will neither marry nor have children (*Disc.* 3.7.19, 20; 1.23.3; 1.23.7); he condemns this teaching as ruinous for the city, and exclaims that Epicurus' parents, even had they known he was going to say this, would not have exposed him (1.23.10). Seneca reports the same view, with a slight qualification: the sage will marry only *raro*, "since marriage is mixed up with many inconveniences" (fr. 45 Haase). And Clement concurs, ascribing to both Epicurus and Democritus a rejection of both marriage and childrearing (*Strom.* 2.23.138). (Cf. *Us.* 19, 521, 523.) Epicurus himself, the paradigmatic wise man, did not marry.' (2009 [1994]: n.26; 152–3). For the Stoic view on creative activities, see Nussbaum on their ambivalence regarding poetry (1993: 98–9).

To support her claim, Nussbaum cites Lactantius, who describes how strong emotions must be ‘pulled out root and branch’; quoting Cicero she tells us that not only must we ‘cut out the external manifestation’ of the *pathē* concerned, but we must also tear out its roots; and finally returning again to Seneca, she notes that he tells us that whereas the ‘Peripatetics moderate [*pathē*]’,⁷⁵ the Stoics ‘drive [them] out altogether [*expellunt*]’ (2009 [1994]: 389).⁷⁶

From this we can see that there is copious evidence for Anglophone scholars to draw on to support their view that passionate attachments were regarded with inveterate suspicion in *both* the Epicurean and Stoic schools. Although there are important differences between the schools, there is much evidence that the Hellenistic attitude towards anything that generates *pathē* – whether passionate attachments or deep-seated prudential ones – was overwhelmingly negative. I now turn to the two formalised doctrines which Anglophone scholarship view the Stoics and Epicureans as sharing, both of which support the negative evaluation of passionate attachments because of their tendency to give rise to insidious *pathē*. I suggest that these doctrines explain the negative assessment of the passionate attachments, and help us understand the ways the schools proposed dealing with them, which I explored in this section. To make best use of the extant source material, I focus on the Stoics to illustrate the first doctrine (that virtue is sufficient for the flourishing life); to illustrate the second (that our attachments should be strictly limited to prudential ones) I examine the Epicureans.

3.1.2 *Virtue as Sufficient for Flourishing*

Since the doctrine that virtue is sufficient for flourishing is so widespread in the Stoic corpus, it is perhaps unsurprising that so much Anglophone scholarship has been devoted to it. Daniel Russell, to take a recent example, assigns over a third of his *Happiness for Humans* to explaining why the ‘sufficiency thesis [was] the watershed issue in [Stoic] ethics’ (2012: 107, see especially 178–96), an assessment which is representative of the most influential Anglophone literature (for example, see Cooper 2012: 194–8). Evidence for this claim can be found throughout the Stoic corpus. In *Lives of the Philosophers*, Diogenes Laertius records that Zeno and Chrysippus, the founders of the Stoic school, were both committed to the doctrine that ‘[virtue] is sufficient for happiness’ (Inwood & Gerson 1997 [*Lives*]: 202). Following these early thinkers, Cicero offers two dialogues listing the reasons why ‘virtue alone is sufficient for the happy life’ (1945 [*Tusc. Disp.*]: 437–585 [V]), as does

⁷⁵ Nussbaum’s reference: *Ep.* 116.1 = SVF III.443.

⁷⁶ Nussbaum’s reference: *Cic.* TD 3.13ff.; cf. 61–3.

Seneca (2004 [*Epist.*] 118–24 [85]) and Epictetus (2008 [*Dis.*] 185 [4.1.90]). Illustrating the point in his *Paradoxa Stoicorum* – titled with the spoiler, ‘That Virtue is Sufficient for Happiness’ – Cicero describes the dreadful death of the legendary Roman general, Marcus Regulus. He writes:

[H]is greatness of soul was not tortured by the Carthaginians, nor his dignity, or his loyalty, or his consistency, or any of his virtues, nor even his soul itself. [...] No one can fail to be supremely happy who relies solely on himself and who places all his possessions within himself alone (1985 [*Para. Stoic.*]: 19–20 [2])

But the idea that virtue is sufficient for human flourishing originated earlier than either the writings of Zeno or Chrysippus because the idea is originally a Socratic one, and the Stoics make much of this heritage.⁷⁷ It features in Socrates’ final words before he drinks the hemlock, when he tells the jury that a ‘good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death’ (Plato 1997 [*Apol.*]: 41d), and Plato argues for it forcefully in *Republic*. Here Glaucon is shown to be unable to refute Socrates’ claim that a ‘just person [who is] whipped, stretched on a rack, chained, blinded with fire, and, at the end, when he has suffered every kind of evil, [...] impaled’ nonetheless flourishes (1997 [*Rep.*]: 361e). In the same way as Cicero describes the death of Marcus Regulus in the quotation above, in Plato’s account of the dying Socrates, his flourishing is both maximal and complete *because* he is virtuous. So what exactly is the doctrine? And why is it connected to the suspicion of passionate attachments, which I have sampled from the Hellenistic literature above?

Perhaps the best way to understand the Stoic version of the doctrine is to situate it in relation to Aristotle’s more accommodating view of how many different types of passionate attachments are essential in the flourishing life. I already touched on this briefly in 2.2 where we noted that Aristotle’s understanding of human flourishing includes the pursuit of what can be viewed as passionate attachments, as I outlined in Ch. 1. Fame, children, and wealth are all intimately connected with flourishing on the Aristotelian view, and all these things fall under the definition of passionate attachments which I gave in 1.5. This goes some way to explain why even some moral philosophers of a virtue ethical stripe have not been able to incorporate all the elements of his system. Because they consider some of the attachments Aristotle lists – for example, the vast wealth that is necessary in

⁷⁷ For example, as Diogenes Laertius records, ‘[Antisthenes] held that virtue to be sufficient in itself to ensure happiness, since it needed nothing else except the *strength of Socrates*’ (1931 [*Lives*]: 13 [VI]; emphasis added).

order to exercise the virtue of magnanimity – as outside the remit of moral philosophy, character excellences with a non-moral component have received less attention than those with more obviously moral connotations such as courage or prudence (Annas 1996: 237–8; Swanton 2003: 71). The Stoics were also well-versed on Aristotle’s views on this matter, and it provided the material for them to engage in a long-running debate on it with Hellenistic Peripatetics. Cicero summarises this debate in *On Moral Ends*. He writes:

The Stoics argue that there is nothing good except what is moral, the Peripatetics claim that there are certain bodily and external goods as well, even while attributing by far and away the greatest value to morality. Here we have a truly honourable contest, a tremendous clash. The whole dispute centres on virtue and its value. (2004 [*Fin.*]: 49 [II, 64])

Here Cicero acknowledges that Aristotelians view ‘certain bodily and external goods’ as necessary for flourishing. For the Aristotelians, while moral virtue *is necessary* for humans to flourish, it is *not sufficient*, as flourishing necessarily includes other external goods too. For the Stoics, by contrast, all that is strictly required for flourishing is the upstanding nature of our moral character, expressed through the active exercise of our moral virtues. Unlike the Epicureans, as we saw in the previous subsection, the Stoics did not entirely exclude passionate attachments such as a spouse or children from the flourishing life, although they did emphasise that our attachments to these things should be minimal, and we must be continually beware of the *pathē* they generate. Unlike Aristotle, however, the Stoics did not think of these things as necessary for flourishing, regarding them as a potential source of danger, and calling them as ‘preferred indifferents’. I explore this further below.

Aristotle’s account of external goods appears early in the *Ethics* when he lists the things he views as relevant to our flourishing. This list includes attributes we possess but do not control (being well-born, good looking), as well as things we have limited control over but do not depend on us in the strong sense that he and the Stoics view our moral characters as doing (wealth, friendship, begetting children). In contrast to the Stoics, Aristotle views both the non-moral goods which do not depend on us *and* those which we have some partial control over as decisively impacting upon our capacity to flourish in two ways: either they have an instrumental use insofar as they ‘support and facilitate [our] activity’, or they are ‘desirable for their own sake’ insofar as they add to what Aristotle describes as the ‘lustre of blessedness’ (1984 [*Nico. Ethics*]: 11–12 [1099b]).

Although Nussbaum ultimately sides with a modified Aristotelian view, one that recognises the passionate attachments as essential for the flourishing life,⁷⁸ she would surely agree with Russell's synopsis. Like Russell, she also thinks that Aristotle 'sets out worldly conditions of the good life' which makes 'virtuous activity dependent [...] upon material and educational conditions that are beyond the individual's control' (2009 [1994]: 10). The upshot of this difference is that Aristotle has to offer an account of how the external goods required for flourishing should be distributed, since he 'assigns to politics the task of bringing [the external] conditions [of flourishing] to people',⁷⁹ whereas the Stoics do not need to do this because, Nussbaum explains:

Instead of arranging to bring the good things of this world to each and every human being, [the Stoics] focus on changes of belief and desire that make their pupil less dependent on the good things of this world. They do not so much show ways of removing injustice as teach the pupil to be indifferent to the injustice she suffers. (2009 [1994]: 10)

This may well remind us of the complaint that Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf make of modern moral philosophy. Like the modern moral philosophers we criticised in Ch. 1, for the Stoics only our moral character contributes to flourishing; everything else is extraneous and may even impede our passage to the flourishing life.

3.1.3 *The Only Kinds of Attachments Worth Having*

The last major doctrine which leads Anglophone scholars to emphasise that the Hellenistic philosophers rejected deep-seated attachments *in toto* consists in fully theorised accounts of the various kinds of attachments that are available to human beings, the desires appropriate to them, alongside prescriptive guidance on how these various attachments are capable of hastening or retarding our passage to the flourishing life. The first, a typology of the various kinds of desires to which human beings are susceptible, is found

⁷⁸ See Nussbaum, '[t]he bold Stoic attempt to purify social life of all its ills, rigorously carried through, ends by removing, as well, its finite humanity, its risk-taking loyalty, its passionate love. Abandoning the zeal for absolute perfection as inappropriate to the life of a finite being, abandoning the thirst for punishment and self-punishment that so frequently accompanies that zeal, the education I recommend looks with mercy at the ambivalent excellence and passion of a human life.' (2009 [1994]: 510)

⁷⁹ For Aristotle, Nussbaum writes, the 'good political arrangement is the one "in accordance with which each and every one might do well and lead a flourishing life.'" (2009 [1994]: 10)

in the Epicurean fragments; it distinguishes *desires* that aim at choiceworthy entities from those that aim at non-choiceworthy ones. The second, a classification of external attachments found in the Stoic literature, details the various *entities* to which we may become attached, and endorses a small portion of these as worthy of pursuit. Just as there is copious extant evidence for the Stoic ‘sufficiency of virtue’ thesis, there is much textual support for these positions in the Hellenistic corpus, so Anglophone scholars have much source material to draw upon. Nevertheless, attending to the nuances of the Stoic and Epicurean positions reveals that their conceptual resources may be more compatible with the project of formulating a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments than their overtly hostile attitude towards *pathē* might lead us to suppose.

Unlike some of Epicurus’ other doctrines that have had to be reconstructed from corrupted or missing textual evidence, Hellenistic scholars have a relative wealth of information regarding his typology of desires. In ‘Principle Doctrines’, Epicurus claims there are three kinds of desires, the ‘natural and necessary’, the ‘natural but unnecessary’, and the ‘neither natural nor necessary’ (Inwood & Gerson 1994 [*Prin. Doct.*]: 34 [XXIX]).⁸⁰ An undated and unattributed scholium to this fragment in Diogenes Laertius’ citation of the maxim helpfully adds:

[B]y natural and necessary Epicurus means those that bring relief from pain (e.g. drink when we are thirsty); by natural but not necessary he means those that merely vary the pleasure, without removing the pain (e.g. expensive food); and by neither natural nor necessary (e.g. garlands of honour and the setting up of statues). (Inwood & Gerson 1994 [*Prin. Doct.*]: 34 [XXIX])

Epicurus’ description of the various kinds of desires to which humans are susceptible is followed by prescriptive advice about how we should deal with them, advice which explains the purposely bland features of the Epicurean communities I described in 3.1.1. Here I showed that the Epicureans sought to tackle the effects of the *pathē* by removing deep-seated attachments from the community because they viewed the presence of such attachments as inevitably precipitating turbulent emotions that cut us off from flourishing. In line with this strategy, Epicurus advises:

⁸⁰ Cf. Epicurus’ ‘Letter to Menoecus’: ‘We should reflect that of desires some are natural, some empty. Of the natural, some are only natural and some are necessary. Of the necessary, some are necessary for happiness, some for comfort of the body, and some for life itself.’ (Inwood & Gerson 1994 [*Ep. Men.*]: 29–30 [127])

We should not force our nature, but persuade it; and we shall persuade it in satisfying the necessary desires, and the natural ones if they do not harm, and by harshly refuting the harmful ones. (VS 21)

For the Epicureans, desires pertaining to ‘natural and necessary’ entities (food and water, et cetera.) should be embraced, unlike ones which are ‘neither natural nor necessary’ (garlands of honour, statues) which should be shunned. ‘Natural but unnecessary’ desires are to be indulged with caution and in strict moderation. While all three of Epicurus’ desires relate to ‘prudential attachments’ of various kinds (see my definition of these kinds of entities in n.6 above), only those desires that are neither natural nor necessary could orient themselves towards passionate attachments. This suggests that the Epicureans would frown upon any way of life that included passionate attachments. Indeed, as James Porter notes, ‘Epicurus was notoriously hostile’ to inessential activities such as ‘music, poetry, and the like’, all of which are the object of ‘neither natural nor necessary desires’ (2003: 223; cf. Nussbaum 1993: 97). For the Epicureans, then, attachment to neither natural nor necessary entities, and the desires that pertain to them, have no part in the flourishing life because they neither relieve the pain we suffer when one of our natural desires remains unfulfilled, nor are necessary insofar as they cause us to act against our prudential interests. From our definition of passionate attachments in 1.5, it should be clear that such desiderata are subject of desires that are ‘neither natural nor necessary’. Under such a schema, Gauguin’s risky journey to Tahiti to pursue his passionate attachment to painting would clearly be prohibited.

The Stoics had a comparable classification of desires, one which deals even more directly with the various kinds of *entities* to which we can become attached, rather than the desires pertaining to these entities. Just as for the Epicureans, after countenancing a broad range of potential attachments, the Stoics offer a very narrow account of those which are permissible and conducive to our flourishing. Since the Stoics view virtue as sufficient for flourishing, they viewed any other so-called ‘goods’ merely as ‘preferred indifferents’ [*adiaphora*],⁸¹ entities that may be pleasant but are not necessary for flourishing, ones that may even divert or distract us from what is truly important. For example, after listing the various moral virtues that expedite (and the vices that thwart) flourishing, Diogenes Laertius tells us that the Alexandrian Stoic, Arius Didymus, proposes that:

⁸¹ For a comprehensive account of *adiaphora* see Russell (2012: 182).

Preferred indifferents are things like this: life and death, good and bad reputation, pleasure and pain, wealth and poverty, health and disease, and things similar to these. (Inwood & Gerson 2008 [*Prin. Doct.*]: 125 [VII.102–7])

Comments like these have led Anglophone scholars to conclude that for the Stoics the entities that generate *pathē* must be relegated to the realm of preferred indifferents, and therefore should be viewed with suspicion. In his account of the Stoic distinction, for example, Russell tells us that, while it may be ‘natural’ to suppose that ‘lovers, families, rewarding careers, things we love to do’ are ‘important for our happiness’, for the Stoics none of them is ‘strictly speaking good’ (2012: 184). Similarly, Cooper writes:

[T]he Stoics seem to have classified all defective desires as instances of ‘passionate’ or ‘emotional’ attachment. They are all of them excessive desires, in the sense that they desire something as if it were good – possessed of a higher value – when in fact it is, at most, only something possessing the value of being ‘preferred’. They overvalue these merely naturally valuable things, as if they were good (or their opposites bad). (2012: 205)

From this we can conclude that, the Stoics would regard passionate attachments as ‘preferred indifferents’, which, while they might appear desirable, will have a detrimental effect on our flourishing. I now turn to the Francophone tradition.

3.2 Hellenistic Self-Cultivation in Francophone Philosophy

In the Introduction to Pt. II, I surveyed Hadot’s and Foucault’s cryptic claims on the potential contemporary importance of the Hellenistic conception of self-cultivation. Going further than Nussbaum’s remarks on how the philosophy of this era has the potential to reinvigorate modern moral philosophy, both thinkers propose that the Hellenists also offer us a set of practical exercises that can be enlisted in debates in contemporary philosophy and practical life. These exercises, they claim, are both valuable for rethinking theoretical problems in philosophy and our practical lives, although Hadot insists that these tasks are connected, advocating that we can take up the Hellenistic conception of philosophy as a *way of life*. In the Introduction to Pt. II, I stressed that I would not explore Hadot’s claim that Hellenistic philosophers understood their discipline to be a way of life, nor his claim

– as provocative as it is intriguing – that contemporary philosophers should return to this conception of philosophy. Moreover, I noted that I would not dispute the reading of specific passages in the Hellenistic texts, but rather would focus on the different emphases within the Anglophone and Francophone traditions to show how the latter rather than the former better isolates the conceptual resources required for a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments. As I showed when discussing Cooper’s lengthy exegetical caveats, this is because the textual evidence is often equivocal, so adjudicating between the various possible interpretations of it would require a separate book-length study, one which would distract from my task of formulating a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments.

Aside from interpretative differences between the Francophone and Anglophone commentators, even Hadot and Foucault sketch out very different research programmes to incorporate the insights of the Hellenists into contemporary thought and action. Although neither thinker attempts to offer a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments, the aim of the rest of this chapter is to show how the conceptual resources that they isolate from Hellenism allow us to do precisely this. This is not to say that the theory of passionate self-cultivation I offer in Pt. III is especially Foucauldian or Hadotian in inspiration. Far from it. I am neither aiming to provide a robust exegesis of the work of either of these thinkers, nor a historically accurate reconstruction of the role of self-cultivation in Hellenistic philosophy; rather I am aiming to identify the conceptual resources that Foucault and Hadot can provide, one which is based on their emphasis on, and detailed exegesis of, the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation.

3.2.1 *Building upon Anglophone Interpretations*

Before exploring the exegetical differences between Foucault and Hadot, it is important to acknowledge that neither thinker denies that, historically speaking, the Hellenists *did* worry about how morally damaging *pathē* are generated by misguided attachments, either prudential or passionate ones. Hadot, for instance, patently shares some of the interpretative views of Anglophone scholars such as Annas and Irwin. He tells us that in the Hellenistic world ‘[o]ne conception was common to all the philosophical schools’: they were united in the belief that ‘people are unhappy because they are the slave of their passions’ (1995 [1987]: 102). Furthermore, he concurs with Anglophone scholars insofar as he sees such *pathē* as directly caused by one’s deep-seated attachments to those things – whether prudential or passionate – that are ‘exterior, alien, and superfluous’ to us, even explicitly describing the purpose of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation in these terms (1995 [1987]: 102). He writes:

The goal of such exercises was to help people free themselves from the desires and passions which troubled and harassed them. These needs and desires, it was thought, were imposed on the individual by social conventions and the needs of the body. The goal of philosophy was to eliminate them, so that the individual might come to see things as nature herself sees them, and consequently desire nothing other than that which is natural. (1995 [1987]: 242)⁸²

For the Hellenistic philosophers, on Hadot's view, it is only 'with the help of [the spiritual] exercises' that we can escape the 'state of alienation into which [we have] been plunged by worries, passions, and desires' (1995 [1987]: 103). Nevertheless, this should not lead us to conclude that this was the only role of the exercises in the Hellenistic world. In fact, Hadot stresses that removing *pathē* is only a means to a further end for Hellenistic philosophers: it provides the conditions for living in conformity with the ethical ideal of the school concerned. He tells us:

All schools agree that man can be delivered from this state. He can accede to genuine life, improve himself, transform himself, and attain a state of perfection. It is precisely for this that spiritual exercises are intended. Their goal is a kind of self-formation, or *paideia*, which is to teach us to live in conformity with the nature of man, which is none other than reason. (1995 [1987]: 102)

For Hadot, therefore, while the removal of *pathē* was one of the explicit aims of the Hellenistic spiritual exercises, this was only a means to the further aim of attaining the ethical ideal of the school concerned, which he glosses as living in 'conformity with the nature of man' (cited above). Furthermore, as cited in the Introduction to Pt. II, he also endorses the claim that the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation have 'something to teach modern man, have meaning for him, and help him guide his conduct', which I have shown we need not only interpret as advocating a contemporary renewal of interest in extirpating *pathē* (2011: 147).

From this we can see that Hadot's project is composed of two – at least conceptually – separable ones: first, he is concerned to contribute to our historical understanding of the Hellenistic conception of philosophy, and how the spiritual exercises

⁸² Hadot often glosses these ideals as 'living in conformity with one's rational nature', although each of the Hellenistic schools had different understandings of what this means. For example, the Epicureans thought this meant *ataraxia*; whereas the Stoics understood this in terms of *apatheia*.

are connected to this; second, he is concerned to show the possibilities this has for contemporary philosophy and practical life. Hadot views these projects as closely connected insofar as he is interested in a contemporary renaissance of the Hellenistic conception of philosophy as a way of life. Nevertheless, the next two sections aim to show that they are distinguishable insofar as his reasons for advocating this renaissance also underwrites the mobility of the exercises in a way that allows us to deploy them to answer contemporary philosophical questions. So what arguments does Hadot offer for his view there are aspects of Hellenistic philosophy that may be re-actualisable? And can the reasons he adduces for using Hellenistic conceptual resources for contemporary purposes be used to justify the project of deploying them to underwrite a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments?

3.2.2 *Transposing the Hellenistic Exercises of Self-Cultivation*

When discussing the turn to Hellenistic philosophy in his final works, Foucault connects his previous interest in the passive shaping of the subject by external forces with his later concern with how the subject can actively cultivate itself. This requires, he proposes, investigating the historical development of ‘technologies of the self’, exercises of self-cultivation which intend to facilitate self-directed character change. Such technologies, he writes:

[P]ermit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their bodies, their own thoughts, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of happiness, perfection, purity, supernatural power. (1997 [1981]: 177)

Using a similarly expansive definition in one of his final interviews in 1984, he tells us that technologies of self-cultivation, what he also calls the ‘exercise of the self on the self’, enable the practitioner to ‘develop and transform [themselves]’ in a way that allows them to ‘attain to a certain mode of being’ (1997 [1984]: 282). From this we can see that Foucault views these technologies⁸³ as providing a practical account of self-directed character change that can serve a variety of different purposes. In fact, on his view, technologies of the self have historically fulfilled a variety of different aims (‘happiness, perfection, purity’,

⁸³ In his emended version of this interview, Foucault uses the French term ‘*technologie*’ to maintain the etymological connection with the Greek one, ‘*technē*’.

et cetera), aligning with Hadot's arguments for the transposability of the Hellenistic spiritual exercises, discussed below. Like Hadot, Foucault thinks that Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation were not limited to extirpating *pathē*, but rather had a variety of purposes, ones which included the cultivation of character more generally. For Foucault the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation were a strand of ancient interest in the 'care of the self', which included many different cultural practices. Most importantly for the aims of this thesis, however – again like Hadot – Foucault's claim that the exercises of self-cultivation have historically fulfilled a variety of terms underwrites his proposal that Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation can be abstracted from their original setting and be enlisted to answer contemporary theoretical and practical problems. I cited some of these claims in the Introduction of Pt. II. Here we saw that Foucault views the texts of the Hellenistic era as harbouring a 'treasury of devices, techniques, ideas, procedures' that can be a 'very useful tool' for contemporary philosophy ('analysing what's going on now') and for practical life ('how to change it') (1997b [1983]: 261). Although Foucault claims this can be done, however, he offers no arguments for it, which is why I seek the justification for applying the Hellenistic conception of self-cultivation from Hadot.

Compared to Foucault's relatively fleeting comments on the potential value of Hellenistic philosophy for contemporary philosophy and practical life, Hadot elaborates at length on this topic, offering two arguments why Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation can be deployed in a way that takes them beyond their original aims and objectives. First, he claims that, historically speaking, the spiritual exercises were viewed as *transposable* because they were used for vastly different purposes by the Hellenistic schools, even underwriting significantly different doctrines. Second, when Hadot turns to define the term 'spiritual exercises', his careful framing of it shows that he envisages it as more encompassing than either (i) exercises for the self-directed development of our moral character; and (ii) exercises that were predominantly geared towards extirpating the *pathē* (two tasks Anglophone commentators view as connected, as discussed in 3.1). Rather, the scope of Hadot's spiritual exercises makes them compatible to many aspects of character development, including – potentially – the project of cultivating our passionate attachments, which I show in Ch. 6. For now, however, I examine each of these arguments in turn, noting the places in which analogous arguments appear in Foucault's oeuvre, so we can gauge how closely he follows Hadot on this topic. While we saw in the Introduction to Pt. II that Foucault claims that the conceptual resources of Hellenistic philosophy have contemporary use, these remarks are schematic. Foucault simply states the claim, presumably intending to elaborate upon it in future works, which he never had the opportunity to write. For this reason, his account of how this can be done can be usefully

supplemented by the reasons Hadot offers for transposability of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation that I discuss below.

Hadot first argues for his claim that the spiritual exercises have contemporary relevance by noting that, at their very inception, these exercises were regarded as transposable across the Hellenistic schools because they were used to support remarkably different doctrines. This was ‘Cicero’s position’, Hadot tells us, whom although often corralled into the Stoic school, viewed himself as free to choose ‘what seems to be the best solution each time, whether it be inspired by Epicureanism, or Stoicism, or Platonism, or any other model of life.’ (2011: 102). For Hadot, Cicero’s ‘eclecticism’ should lead us to conclude that:

[P]hilosophical practice is relatively independent from philosophical discourse. The same spiritual exercise can be justified after the fact by widely different philosophical discourses, in order to describe and justify experiences whose existential density ultimately escapes all attempts at and systematizing (2002 [1995]: 275)

The exercises that the Stoics and Epicureans advocated illustrate this. For example, Hadot tells us, ‘for various and almost opposite reasons’, each of these schools ‘advised their disciples to live always aware of the imminence of death, freeing themselves from the worry of the future and the weight of the past’ (2002 [1995]: 275). Similarly, ‘[f]or completely different reasons’, Hadot writes, philosophers in both schools ‘urged their disciples to concentrate their attention on the present moment, and free themselves from worries about the future as well as the burden of the past’ (1995 [1987]: 212).⁸⁴ This demonstrates, Hadot concludes, that it is ‘not necessary, in order to practice these exercises, to believe in the Stoics’ nature or universal reason’ (1995 [1987]: 212)⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Regarding the exercise of the ‘view from above’ (explored in detail in 4.3.3), Hadot tells us that: ‘Stoics, Epicureans, and Platonists, each for their own reasons, exhorted their disciples to raise themselves to a cosmic perspective, to plunge into the immensity of space and time, and thereby transform their vision of the world’ (2002 [1995]: 275).

⁸⁵ Reaffirming this point in his response to Carlier, Hadot elaborates, ‘the spiritual exercise of concentration on the present exists in the Epicureans and the Stoics, with slight difference but for entirely different reasons. Thus I think that this spiritual exercise of concentration on the present moment has a value in itself: independently of the theories; I have practised this exercise rather often, but this does not imply that I believe, as the Stoics did, in the eternal return, a doctrine that can be connected to this exercise.’ (2011: 160).

From this we can see that, for Hadot, spiritual exercises were used to fulfil a variety of different functions in the Hellenistic world, ones that need not be related to the ethical ideal of the school concerned. Rather the exercises were used to sharpen the practitioner's practical reasoning in general: they did not consider there to be – nor need there be – any logical connection between the spiritual exercises and (i) the philosophical position, nor (ii) the way of life of the school concerned. Nevertheless, given that Hadot's account of ancient philosophy often purposely groups the Hellenistic schools together to home in on the aspects of the worldview they share, I need to dismiss the possibility that he only thinks these exercises could be transposed between schools because each school shared the common goal of extirpating *pathē*. Nussbaum, for instance, might argue that each school employed the very same spiritual exercises because these exercises were geared up to extirpating *pathē*, an aim each school shared, despite having other importantly different doctrines. On this view, the spiritual exercises would be only useful for extirpating *pathē*, and might be useless for another self-formative process with a different aim. Hadot's definition of spiritual exercises eliminates this possibility, however. Not only are the spiritual exercises doctrinally independent of the Hellenistic school that employed them, Hadot views them as applying beyond the removal of *pathē* which we can see by examining how his definition of spiritual exercises is crafted. While extirpating *pathē* was certainly an aim of these exercises, Hadot's definition of spiritual exercises combines a wide range of functions relating to self-directed character change. So does his definition of these exercises enable us to understand them as applying beyond the removal of *pathē*?

Hadot defines 'spiritual exercises' as 'voluntary, personal practices meant to bring about a transformation of the individual, a transformation of the self.' (2011: 87) Rather than viewing them as only aiming to extirpate *pathē*, with the purpose of strengthening the moral dimension of our character, he views them as aiming to cultivate our character in a more holistic way. Hadot's view on this topic is revealed when he explains his motivation for using the term 'spiritual exercises', dismissing other candidate terms for the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation one-by-one. After acknowledging the very term 'spiritual exercises' may be a 'bit disconcerting for the contemporary reader' because of its mystical resonances, he explains why no other potential candidates for these exercises would cover 'all the aspects of the reality we want to describe' (1995 [1987]: 81). Other potential candidates include the terms "'psychic," "moral," "ethical," "intellectual,'" or compounds such as "'exercises of thought'" or "'exercises of the soul'" (1995 [1987]: 81). The problem with all these terms is they do not delineate the aspect of the self that Hellenistic

philosophers were concerned to cultivate: each is too narrow, specifying a particular aspect or domain of our character to the exclusion of others that are also involved.⁸⁶

Hadot is also careful to rule out two other terms for Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation, further clarifying the scope of the exercises in useful ways. First, he tells us that, although "'ethical exercises" is a rather tempting expression', this will not do because it would present 'too limited a view of things' (1995 [1987]: 82). Although the spiritual exercises 'contribute in a powerful way to the therapeutics of the passions', he stresses we should not think that this is done simply to improve one's moral conduct because the exercises aim to improve the entire 'conduct of life' (1995 [1987]: 82). On Hadot's view, therefore, Hellenistic self-cultivation is significantly more inclusive than Nussbaum's account: these exercises do not only aim to extirpate *pathē* that corrupt our moral character, they aim at cultivating our character in its entirety. This makes it easier to resist criticism from Hellenistic scholars in the Anglophone world who primarily understand the exercises as aiming at our moral development through the extirpation of *pathē*. Instead, following Hadot's analysis of the spiritual exercises as laid out above, shows that in the Hellenistic world these exercises were aimed at cultivating our character as a whole. This is reflected in Hadot's enthusiastic description of the wide scope of the exercises: they apply to, in his words, the 'metamorphosis of our personality', to the 'transformation of our vision of the world', to changes in our 'entire psychism' (1995 [1987]: 82). From this we can see that there are two reasons underpinning Hadot's claim that the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation have contemporary relevance: first, he views the spiritual exercises as *transposable* throughout the schools; second, the *scope* of his notion of spiritual exercises is wide enough to capture many practices of self-directed character shaping, including but not limited to those that aim to shape more than the moral dimension of our character.

⁸⁶ Hadot is not alone in this worry. He cites Paul Rabbow employing the same terminology (1954. Cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 127), and upon returning to this theme in *Conversations* he notes that both the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant (1965. Cited by Hadot 2011: 87) and Louis Gernet (1968. Cited by Hadot 2011: 87) supports his wider usage. Rabbow writes, '[b]y "moral exercise," we mean a procedure or determinate act, intended to influence oneself, carried out with the express goal of achieving a determinate moral effect, so the 'spiritual exercises' of the Hellenistic world 'resemble moral exercises like a twin' because they belong to 'the religious sphere', dealing with the purpose or meaning of our existence (1954. cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 127).

3.2.3 *Appropriating the Hellenistic Exercises of Self-Cultivation*

From this we can see that Hadot's work offers two compelling reasons for thinking that the Hellenistic exercises can be transposed to serve different theoretical and practical functions. First, because different schools practised precisely the same spiritual exercise for markedly different purposes, he suggests that the exercises themselves do not have any substantive content, and were – and still are – capable of being transposed to serve different philosophical functions. Not only was there eclecticism in the schools, he tells us that:

[M]odern man can practice the spiritual exercises of antiquity, at the same time separating them from the philosophical or mythic discourse which came along with them. The same spiritual exercise can, in fact, be justified by extremely diverse philosophical discourses. These latter are nothing but clumsy attempts, coming after the fact, to describe and justify inner experiences whose existential density is not, in the last analysis, susceptible of any attempt at theorization or systematization. (1995 [1987]: 212)

On Hadot's account, we can enlist the resources of Hellenistic philosophy to tackle contemporary problems without obliging us to also endorse what he follows Raymond Ruyer in calling 'the gangue' [*la gangue*] that surrounded the exercises themselves (2011: 160). Rather, 'modern humans do not have to accept all the metaphysical presuppositions or the mythological representations of Stoicism, or of Epicureanism, or of Cynicism', because the emancipatory core of the 'spiritual exercises [allows us to practice them] independently of the discourse that justifies or counsels them' (2011: 160).

As well as arguing that the exercises were transposed between different schools, Hadot offers three further arguments that show why the spiritual exercises apply to contemporary life specifically, ones that underwrite the claim about transposability in his account, but can also be applied to Foucault. Hadot's first argument attempts to show that spiritual exercises are transposable into a contemporary context because they do not 'correspond to specific social structures or material conditions' (1995 [1987]: 282). Instead, since they appear to be heterogeneous cultural practices that offer prescriptive guidance on 'how one should live', we can think of them as transposable to our own era (1995 [1987]: 282). His second argument argues that spiritual exercises can even be found in the work of modern philosophers who do not share the Hellenistic world view. Finally, his third argument proposes that we can already locate manifold examples of spiritual exercises in

modern contexts, once again indicating that the exercises have applicability outside the Hellenistic world view.

Hadot begins his first argument by noting that spiritual exercises of one kind or another 'have been, and continue to be, practised in every age', even in the 'most widely diverse milieus and in widely different latitudes' (1995 [1987]: 282). His examples of the non-Hellenistic 'diverse milieus' are multifarious. He notes that spiritual exercises have been practised by 'Christians, Muslims, and Jews', as well as noting they have been practised in places as diverse as 'China, Japan, India' (1995 [1987]: 282). This shows that, on Hadot's view, there is nothing inherently *Hellenistic* about the exercises, as they are found in many traditions that propose very different resolutions to the question of 'how one should live'.

Hadot proposes we can find the idea that our character can be cultivated in a self-directed way by using spiritual exercises in the history of practical philosophy. While these arguments are intended to lay the ground for Hadot's celebrated contention that ancient philosophers primarily understood their discipline as a 'way of life', they also show how the spiritual exercises can have a wide variety of functions. The figures Hadot claims offer exercises of self-cultivation are scattered across the philosophical canon, belonging to no underlying outlook or theoretical position. For example, he notes that:

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant declares that the exercise of virtue must be practised with Stoic energy and Epicurean *joie de vivre*. This conjunction of Stoicism and Epicureanism can be found in Rousseau's *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*, in which there is both the pleasure of existing and the awareness of being part of nature. Goethe describes beings who, by their innate tendencies, are half Stoic and half Epicurean. (2011: 102)

Following this, referring to Nietzsche's *Nachlass* fragment used as the epigraph to this chapter, Hadot notes that 'one must not be scared of adopting a Stoic attitude after having benefited from an Epicurean recipe' (2011: 102). The very fact that Hadot invokes Nietzsche, a philosopher who often speaks highly of the cultivation of strong emotions, should leave us with no doubt that there is no necessary connection between the spiritual exercises and the extirpation of *pathē*.

Hadot's third argument that the Hellenistic spiritual exercises can be applied to contemporary theoretical or practical problems offers examples of spiritual exercises that have neither a historical connection to the Hellenistic tradition, nor aim at removing *pathē*. To do this, he claims that we can find examples of how the spiritual exercises have been applied to the self-directed cultivation of human flourishing in a variety of ways, leading

him to conclude that spiritual exercises are ‘still alive in contemporary consciousness’ (1995 [1987]: 82). From this we can see that versions of the spiritual exercises not only apply to the various cultural practices in different historical epochs, nor do they only appear within philosophical works within different traditions, but they also have been employed in the cultivation of human flourishing more widely.⁸⁷

Citing a passage from a diary-entry in the final work of the French sociologist Georges Friedmann, Hadot notes that the professor recommends the merits of a “‘spiritual exercise” every day either alone or else in the company of someone who also wants to improve himself’, telling us that Friedmann’s remark reads like a ‘pastiche of Marcus Aurelius’, one which could have ‘been written by a Stoic of antiquity’ (Friedmann 1970: 359; cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 70, 81). Similarly, he finds evidence for spiritual exercises in the writings of the nineteenth-century educator Jules Payot. In *L’Éducation de la volonté*, Hadot writes, Payot discusses ‘spiritual retreat [...] as an exercise for the examination of conscience’ (2011: 37). Both these examples show that Hadot thinks that spiritual exercises – including those loosely based on the Hellenistic tradition⁸⁸ – can be employed in contemporary thought and practical life. As well as Hadot’s arguments for the legitimacy of transposing Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation to contemporary life – examined in 3.2.2 and mentioned above – I have examined how he strongly endorses applying the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation in a contemporary context, ones that are far removed from his project of resuscitating the notion of philosophy as a way of life. Both Friedmann’s and Payot’s uses of the spiritual exercises relate to, in Friedmann’s words, the goal of ‘improving oneself’ (Friedmann 1970: 359; cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 81), and by referring back to Friedmann’s original text, Hadot shows that he primarily understands such ‘improvement’ in terms of one’s prudential well-being.

⁸⁷ Prefiguring Hadot’s claim about the ubiquity of such exercises, Murdoch suggests that ‘prayer’, ‘reading literature’, and the ‘appreciation of beauty in art or nature’ could be viewed as ‘spiritual exercises’ (2001 [1962]: 63; 67).

⁸⁸ See Sellars on why Hadot’s spiritual exercises ‘would hardly fit under the modern label “psychotherapy”’, primarily because of their connection to the ‘individual and the cosmos’ (2009 [2003]: 115).

3.3 Revaluing Hellenism

This chapter explored the differences between the interpretations of Hellenistic philosophy in the Anglophone and Francophone traditions. While I have shown that traditionally Anglophone scholarship has tended to focus on how the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation were aimed at extirpating *pathē*, Francophone thinkers such as Hadot and Foucault understand these exercises significantly more broadly, understanding extirpation of strong emotions as only one of the functions of the exercises. Moreover, both thinkers claim that the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation have relevance for contemporary philosophy and for practical life, although they understand this potential contribution in markedly different ways. Hadot views these exercises as potentially contributing to a renewal of philosophy as a way of life, although he also provides arguments relating to the transposition of the exercises that could be used to justify many different uses of them. While Foucault only hints at what he envisages the contemporary relevance of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation to be, his own understanding of these exercises is more expansive. He thinks that the Hellenistic account of self-shaping can apply to problems in contemporary philosophy and in practical life.

Although I do not explore Hadot's contention that contemporary philosophy *can* and *should* return to the model of a *way of life*, I do make use of the arguments he offers for the transposability of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation. First, in 3.2.2, I note that both Hadot's interest in philosophical eclecticism, and his very definition of spiritual exercises, implies that the exercises are not conceptually attached to their historical function in the Hellenistic world, so there is *no conceptual incompatibility* in applying them elsewhere. Second, in 3.2.3, I propose that Hadot's claim that the exercises are independent of 'social structures and material conditions', that they have been used by practical philosophers for vastly different functions, and they have even been used to offer practical guidance outside philosophy about 'how one should live', all suggest that these exercises can be enlisted into the project of cultivating our passionate attachments. While Hadot clearly intends these arguments to further his project of renewing philosophy as a way of life, they not only constitute reason to support this claim, but they also support those who also wish to employ the conceptual resources of Hellenism in different ways. Here I claimed that both Foucault's sketches for a contemporary renewal of theoretical and practical interest in self-shaping, and my own project of enlisting the resources of Hellenistic philosophy to offer a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, can be directly supported by the arguments Hadot offers.

In contrast to the traditional Anglophone view, we have reason to think that historically the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation had a wider remit than simply extirpating *pathē*. Anglophone thinkers are right to say that the Hellenists were suspicious of any kind of deep-seated attachment, because they viewed such attachments as giving rise to *pathē*, which is implied by the three Hellenistic doctrines I examined in 3.1. Nevertheless, as Nussbaum makes clear, while *pathē* were invariably viewed negatively by the Hellenists, we can detect some ambivalence about the deep-seated attachments that generate them. While excessive attachment to prudential attachments was always regarded with suspicion, some passionate attachments – friendship and family bonds, for instance – were recognised to be valuable, especially for the Roman Stoics. Rather than banishing these kinds of attachments completely, discussion often centred around how to minimise *pathē* these things would inevitably generate. In her own practical philosophy, Nussbaum eventually sides with the Hellenistic Peripatetics on this matter since she thinks that even the Roman Stoics were too grudging in accepting the value of passionate attachments, in a way that could be said to mirror Frankfurt's, Williams', and Wolf's objections to the conception of human flourishing at work in modern moral philosophy. From this we can see that there is no conceptual incompatibility with the idea that the Hellenistic account of self-directed character change could be used to provide an account of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. While the passionate attachments were regarded with caution, even suspicion, Nussbaum shows that the Hellenists had this attitude precisely because they recognised the importance of these entities. I now move to examine how the Hellenists understood self-shaping to function in general, as well as how each of the major Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation operated in particular. This provides both the theoretical resources (Ch. 5) and the practical method (Ch. 6) for a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments in Pt. III.

Chapter 4

Hellenistic Exercises of Self-Cultivation

As wood is the material of the carpenter, bronze that of the statuary, so each individual's own life is the material of the art of living [*technē tou biou*].

Epictetus [*Dis.*]: 1.15.2

4.0 Overview

This chapter offers a combined account of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation by comparing the interpretations offered by Nussbaum (4.1), Foucault (4.2), and Hadot (4.3). Although each of these thinkers situate the exercises at the core of their interpretation of Hellenism, they disagree markedly about their nature and function, especially on the extent to which they should be viewed as philosophical. While I only adjudicate between these interpretations on the basis of their internal consistency, comparing them side-by-side provides a comprehensive overview of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation, as well as showing why Hadot and Foucault have most to offer a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. Defending these two thinkers against Nussbaum, Cooper, and other Anglophone detractors reveals three things. First, it shows how pervasive the idea of cultivating the self was in the Hellenistic period, one which was not limited to the extirpation of *pathē*. Second, my rebuttal of Nussbaum's targeted attack on Foucault's interpretation of these exercises shows why we should resist understanding them as narrowly philosophical as they lie on a spectrum comprising bodily and mental exercises. Finally, my defence of Hadot from the attacks of Cooper shows that the Hellenistic conception of practical philosophy was broader than its modern incarnation, which suggests – in the spirit of Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf – that we should be more imaginative about what we consider practical philosophy to be, rather than criticise Francophone thinkers for allegedly straying beyond the bounds of modern moral philosophy. By following the Francophone tradition's interpretation of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation, we can find the conceptual resources to construct a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. This will be the task of Pt. III.

4.1 Nussbaum's 'Philosophical' Self-Cultivation

While Nussbaum acknowledges that traditional forms of folk self-cultivation formed a large part of the *Weltanschauung* of the Hellenistic era, and that the philosophers at this time had much 'in common with religious and magical/superstitious movements [of] their culture', she insists that:

What is distinctive about the contribution of the philosophers is that they assert that philosophy, and not anything else, is the art we require, an art that deals in valid and sound arguments, an art that is committed to the truth. [Hellenistic] philosophers claim that the pursuit of logical validity, intellectual coherence, and truth delivers freedom from the tyranny of custom and convention, creating a community of beings who can take charge of their own life story and their own thought. (2009 [1994]: 5)

Other Anglophone commentators follow Nussbaum's view. Cooper proposes that we can only understand the ancient way of life if we acknowledge the 'central force of the fundamental commitment to living a life on the basis of philosophical reason.' (2012: 19) On his view, the philosophical way of life can be distinguished from ways of life based on 'religion' or 'tradition' because both of these ways of life rely on 'mere feeling or conviction that some way of living is the right one' (2012: 18). As well as agreeing with Cooper that philosophy was vitally important in the Hellenistic era, Nussbaum also thinks that the philosophical dimension of self-cultivation was central to Hellenistic ethics. While she begins by commending Foucault for drawing scholarly attention to the 'extent to which [Hellenistic philosophers were] engaging in complex practices of self-shaping', she then argues that her emphasis on *philosophical self-cultivation* is more historically accurate, and that it decisively separates her reading of the period from the one Foucault offers in *The Care of the Self*. For this reason, she views Foucault's broad interpretation of Hellenistic self-cultivation as 'deeply problematic' (2009 [1994]: 5–6). When scrutinising his reading of the Stoics, for example, she complains that his alternative 'emphasis on habits and techniques *du soi* [...] too often obscures the dignity of reason', and that although 'many forms of life in the ancient world purveyed techniques *du soi*, [...] what sets philosophy apart from popular religion, dream-interpretation, and astrology is its commitment to rational argument' (2009 [1994]: 353).

Nussbaum even cites support for her concerns about the historical accuracy of Foucault's interpretation of Hellenistic self-cultivation from Hadot, who I have showed

Foucault openly acknowledges as a pervasive influence on his later works (1986 [1984]: 241; see also Foucault's approving references to Ilsetraut Hadot in 1986 [1984]: 50, 244). In a footnote Nussbaum approvingly cites the 1987 edition of Hadot's *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* and his translated article from 1990, 'Forms of Life and Forms of Discourse in Ancient Philosophy', both – like Nussbaum's own account – go to great lengths to distinguish philosophical self-cultivation from the other modes of self-shaping which were common in this era.⁸⁹ For Nussbaum, then, philosophical thought is an integral part of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation because of its ability to counteract *pathē*. Moreover, if Nussbaum had waited a year before publishing *Therapy*, she could have cited support for her view from Hadot's own pointed comments on what he too regards as the patent lack of philosophy in Foucault's final works. In *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, the English translation of the second edition of the original text (including revised translations of the two texts Nussbaum cites), Hadot adds an extra chapter which roundly criticises Foucault's neglect of the rational activities which Hadot claims were integral to the Hellenistic conception of self-cultivation. In this chapter, 'Reflections on the Idea of the "Cultivation of the Self"', he bemoans the 'tendency of modern thought' that views the ideas of 'universal reason' and 'universal nature' as being without 'meaning anymore', and tells us that Foucault, as a committed advocate of this tendency, found it 'convenient to "bracket" them' (1995 [1987]: 208).⁹⁰ Most decisively, however, Hadot has Foucault in his sights in his subsequently published *What is Ancient Philosophy?*. Here Hadot does not mince his words when he warns:

[The] danger, the worst of all, is to believe that one can do without philosophical reflection. The philosophical way of life must be justified in rational, motivated discourse, and such discourse is inseparable from the way of life. Nevertheless, we have to reflect critically on the ancient, modern, and oriental discourses which justify a given way of life. We must try to render explicit the reasons we act in such-and-such a way, and reflect on our experience and that of others. Without such reflection, the philosophical life

⁸⁹ Here Nussbaum appeals to both the 'different account in Hadot (1987, 1990), and the approving introduction [to Hadot's 1990 text] by Arnold Davidson' (2009 [1994]: 353). Cf. O'Leary who argues, contra Nussbaum, that Foucault's account of Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation 'closely follows Hadot's' (2002: 75). Cf. Sellars (2003: 117–8).

⁹⁰ Hadot vacillates on this claim, however. In a 1992 interview with Michael Chase, he tells us that '[w]hat's interesting about the idea of spiritual exercises is precisely that it is not a matter of a purely rational consideration, but the putting in action of all kinds of means, intended to act upon one's self. Imagination and affectivity play a capital role here [...]' (2009 [1995]: 284)

risks sinking into vapid banality, “respectable” feelings, or deviance. (2002 [1995]: 281)

On Nussbaum’s view, all the Hellenistic schools⁹¹ prioritised *rationality* and the use of *reason* in self-cultivation as this was the best way to extirpate *pathē*, and she adduces compelling textual evidence for her contention that a specifically *philosophical* conception of self-cultivation dominated the Hellenistic world. She first cites Epicurus’ claim that philosophy must be primarily understood as therapy for the soul,⁹² before turning to the frequent references to this idea in the Stoic literature. Here she quotes Galen recounting (then extant) texts from the Stoic Chrysippus who tells us that, in addition to the ‘art called medicine’, there is a ‘corresponding art concerned with the diseased soul’ which is called philosophy (2009 [1994]: 13). Nussbaum finds further support for her contention in Cicero’s writings on the early Stoics. She quotes the Roman statesman approvingly when he refers to the early Stoic writings that suggest that philosophy should be regarded as ‘a medical art of the soul’, a conception that can guide us to ‘become capable of doctoring ourselves’ (2009 [1994]: 14). On her view, then, the cultivation of the self proceeded using a distinctively philosophical method insofar as it was discursive, analytical, and employed arguments. Nevertheless, Nussbaum argues that it did so for a therapeutic rather than a theoretical purpose, one tied to expiating *pathē* for the purpose of moral improvement.

Furthermore, in addition to disagreeing with the historical accuracy of Foucault’s account, Nussbaum tells us that his previous philosophical commitments sever him from the possibility of offering an interpretation that does justice to the Hellenistic emphasis on rationality. In her scathing review of *The Use of Pleasure*, she tells us that Foucault’s interest in self-cultivation in the Classical period in this work is a ‘retreat from the principles that defined his career’ (1985: 13). Expanding on this view in *Therapy*, she claims that ‘it is questionable whether Foucault can even admit the possibility of such a community of freedom, given his view that knowledge and argument are themselves tools of power’ (2009 [1994]: 5–6; cf. 353). On Nussbaum’s reading, then, Foucault neither gives a historically accurate reading of Hellenistic techniques of self-cultivation, nor can he

⁹¹ Nussbaum focuses on Epicureanism and Stoicism, rarely mentioning the Cynics, and discussing the Sceptics in a single chapter. Unless specified, I use the term ‘Hellenistic’ to refer to a common conception of philosophy shared by the Stoic and Epicurean schools.

⁹² The source is Hermann Usener’s *Epicurea*, which Nussbaum translates as ‘empty is that philosopher’s argument [*logos*] by which no human suffering is therapeutically treated. For just as there is no use in a medical art that does not cast out the sicknesses of bodies, so too there is no use in philosophy, unless it casts out suffering in the soul.’ (2009 [1994]: 5)

incorporate Hellenistic notions of self-directed character development into his own philosophy, given the positions he had previously argued for so influentially in his earlier work.

Nussbaum believes that we must understand Hellenistic exercises as philosophical at this time because she views Hellenistic ethics as organised according to an analogy that trades on a distinction between therapeutic procedures which apply to the body and those which apply to the soul. Contrasting her own account in *Therapy* with Foucault's, she tells us that her work offers an account of Hellenistic ethics that follows a 'central guiding [...] analogy between philosophy and medicine as arts of life' (2009 [1994]: 6). In the same way that medicine treats bodily pathogens – so her analogy runs – philosophy treats moral diseases of the soul, maladies that Hellenistic philosophers viewed as primarily caused by *pathē*, as I explored in 3.1 (see especially 2009 [1994]: 37). She writes:

[Philosophy's] arguments are to the soul as the doctor's remedies are to the body. They can heal, and they are to be evaluated in terms of their power to heal. [...] This general picture of philosophy's task is common to all three major Hellenistic schools, in both Greece and Rome. (2009 [1994]: 5)

For Nussbaum, the philosophical art of extirpating damaging emotions can only be understood as an 'art whose tools are arguments, an art in which precise reasoning, logical rigour, and definitional precision have an important role to play' (2009 [1994]: 15). Philosophical therapy is appropriate, she argues, because of the nature of the complaint: for the Hellenists, 'diseases of belief and social teaching' are what hamper human flourishing, so the only way 'we can [become] truly free and truly flourishing' is through dialectical and deliberative practices, which she insists must be regarded as quintessentially philosophical (2009 [1994]: 5). While the features of 'precise reasoning, logical rigour, and definitional precision' still characterise the discipline of philosophy in our own era, for Nussbaum, the use of such argumentative tools had a markedly different purpose in the Hellenistic world, one which was explicitly aimed at the 'achievement of flourishing human lives' (2009 [1994]: 15). This meant that the 'valuation of any particular argument must concern itself not only with logical form and the truth of premises, but also with the argument's suitability for the specific maladies of its addressees' (2009 [1994]: 15).

4.2 Foucault's *Pratiques de Soi*

Given Foucault's wide-ranging focus in *The Care of the Self* and his concomitantly-presented lectures, it is perhaps unsurprising Nussbaum complains that his account of self-cultivation does not unequivocally emphasise its philosophical dimension. Making no mention of philosophical concerns when he defines *pratiques de soi*, Foucault initially urges us to think of self-directed character development in the Hellenistic world as various 'ascetic practices', in his terms, an 'exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being.' (1994: 282). Foucault proposes that it would be 'a mistake to think that care of the self was an inversion of philosophical thinking, and that it constituted a precept peculiar to philosophical life' because, he emphasises, the idea of cultivating or caring for the self 'was actually a precept of living that, in a general way, was very highly valued in Greece' (1994: 94).⁹³ In a subsequently polished version of the idea in *The Care of the Self*, he acknowledges that the theme of 'caring for oneself (*heautou epimeleisthai*), was actually a very ancient theme in Greek culture', one that eventually worked 'loose from its first philosophical meanings' becoming 'rather general in scope', operating as an 'imperative that circulated among a number of different doctrines' (1986 [1984]: 43–5). Over the course of the Hellenistic period, he tells us, the ideal of cultivating the self-became increasingly diffuse, evolving into 'procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected, and taught', which required it spilling into disciplines outside of philosophy. He writes:

[T]he fact that the philosophers advise that one give heed to oneself does not mean that this zeal is reserved for those who choose to live a life similar to theirs, or that such an attitude is required only during the time one spends with them. It is a valuable principle for everyone, all the time and throughout life. (1986 [1984]: 47–8)

Foucault's account here fits with Nussbaum's early acknowledgement that both philosophical and non-philosophical varieties of self-cultivation pervaded the Hellenistic *Weltanschauung*, and that even philosophers whose work falls squarely under the medical analogy had much in common with those 'religious', 'magical', and 'superstitious movements' who also 'purveyed a *biou technē* [or] an "art of life"' (2009 [1994]: 5). While

⁹³ Foucault writes, 'the idea that one ought to attend to oneself, care for oneself (*heautou epimeleisthai*), was actually a very ancient theme in Greek culture. It appeared very early as a widespread imperative.' (1986 [1984]: 43–4).

Foucault clearly does not view Hellenistic self-cultivation as *only* existing within the province of philosophy, many of the sources with which he articulates his reading have a distinctly philosophical flavour, even when they do not directly come from philosophers themselves. In any case, he also often cites philosophers on this theme directly, as I show below. Nevertheless, Nussbaum's caveats show that she herself concedes that self-cultivation was a widespread phenomenon in the Hellenistic world, which undercuts the severity of her criticisms of Foucault, especially if we consider that both philosophers and philosophy appear in *The Care Of the Self*.

Instead of viewing techniques of self-cultivation as either philosophical or non-philosophical like Nussbaum, Foucault proposes that we should regard Hellenistic exercises as lying on a continuum between 'two poles', which the Greeks called *meletē* [meditation] and *gymnasia* [physical exercise]. Between the poles of *meletē* and *gymnasia*, he tells us, there were a 'whole series of intermediate possibilities' which comprised the bulk of exercises of self-cultivation in the Hellenistic world (1997a [1982]: 240).⁹⁴ Like Hadot (1995 [1987]: 59), Foucault tells us that *meletē* includes heterogeneous 'rational', 'imaginative', and 'intuitive' elements which were fashioned into discrete mental and intellectual exercises, each aiming to foster the care of the self. Although some practices of *meletē* included a physical dimension,⁹⁵ Foucault focuses on those involving one's mental faculties alone.

Foucault's account of *meletē* is mentioned in *The History of Sexuality*, but he explores it in greater depth in the lecture courses and shorter articles (1997a [1982]: 239). I start by comparing his account of *meletē* with Hadot's account of 'spiritual exercises' in order to broaden our understanding of the kind of mental exercises of self-cultivation that were

⁹⁴ See also the course summary of the *Hermeneutic of the Subject* lecture series in 1981–82, where Foucault tells us, '[b]etween the pole of the *meditatio*, where one practices in thought, and the pole of the *exercitatio*, where one trains in reality, there is a whole series of other possible practices designed for proving oneself.' (1997b [1982]: 102)

⁹⁵ Foucault tells us that Seneca and the neo-Pythagoreans both recommended part-mental and part-physical exercises. Seneca recommends 'voluntarily placing oneself within the confines of destitution' for 'three or four days' to experience a 'bed of straw', 'coarse clothing', and 'bread of the lowest quality'; whereas Plutarch recalls a similar practice championed by the neo-Pythagoreans involving 'whetting the appetite through the practice of some sport [and then] plac[ing] oneself in front of tables laden with the most succulent dishes, [before leaving] them to the servants and making do with the kind of food that slaves ate.' (1984 [1986]: 58–60)

common in the Hellenistic world.⁹⁶ This allows me to pick out three exercises from Foucault and three from Hadot, roughly those which each thinker emphasises are vitally important.

4.2.1 'Controlling One's Representations'

Foucault tells us that the first exercise, 'controlling one's representations', featured in both the Epicurean and Stoic schools, and consisted of an 'attitude of constant supervision over the representations that may enter the mind' (1997b [1982]: 103–4). Epictetus' account of these kinds of mental exercises, he writes, was expressed with two metaphors:

[T]hat of the night watchman who does not let just anyone come into the town or the house; and that of the moneychanger or inspector – the *arguronomos* – who, when presented with a coin, examines it, weighs it in his hand, and checks the metal and the effigy. (1997b [1982]: 103–4)

Watching 'perpetually over representations' was often combined with a 'morning examination' in which one considers the 'tasks and obligations of the day', alongside an examination of one's conscience in the evening to 'review the day that had gone by' (1997b [1982]: 240; 1986 [1984]: 60–1). Seneca's claims that the 'mind should be called to account daily' is an example of this, as well as in his description of Sextius' nightly practice of asking himself "'Which of your failings have you cured today? Which vice have you resisted? In what respect are you better?'" (Inwood & Gerson [*De Ira*] 2008: 186 [36.1]). Describing how he often used this practice himself, Seneca tells us about the daily process of 'plead[ing his] case in his own internal court [...] hiding nothing from [himself] and omit[ting] nothing' (Inwood & Gerson [*De Ira*] 2008: 186 [36.1]). Doing this, we can surmise in the terms of Pt. I, allowed him to improve his resolution to the question of 'how one should live', allowing him to check that his current conduct aligns with his duties, values, and what he loves.

⁹⁶ This is not exhaustive, however, as the Hellenistic corpus contains a variety of different exercises. For example, Massimo Pigliucci claims to be able to 'distil [...] twelve "spiritual exercises," or Stoic reminders of how to act in everyday life' from Epictetus' *Enchiridion* (2017: 254–5).

4.2.2 'Praemeditatio Malorum' and 'Meletē Thanatou'

In addition to a daily process of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of one's representations, for Foucault, the two most-prized and dramatic Hellenistic exercises of *meletē* were the 'mediation on future ills' [*praemeditatio malorum*] and the 'meditation on death' [*meletē thanatou*]. The aim of the *praemeditatio malorum*, Foucault explains, was not to 'visualise the future as it is likely to be', but rather to 'systematically imagin[e] the worst that might happen', even if this was not likely to happen at all; whereas the aim of the *meletē thanatou* was both to prepare for death, as well as encouraging the initiate to 'live each day as if it were the last' (1997b [1982]: 103). While both exercises may sound pessimistic, even needlessly morbid, Foucault emphasises how they were primarily aimed to evaluate one's worldly attachments, or as he puts it allowing one to 'judge each action that one is performing in terms of its own value' (1997b [1982]: 105). Visualising the events depicted in *praemeditatio malorum* or *meletē thanatou* did not so much aim to prepare the practitioner for the future occurrence of these events, but rather to precipitate insights into whether they are living well or badly.⁹⁷ By suspending the usual conditions under which the person viewed their life, it was hoped, they could discover the extent to which this person is truly satisfied with their lived resolution to the Socratic question. Although these exercises have a different focus, there are benefits both exercises could be said to share. The *praemeditatio malorum* primarily aimed to bolster the spirits, encouraging the participant to value and reappraise the life they had become accustomed to enjoying. By focusing on a potentially disastrous future, on this interpretation, the person would become grateful because their current life was not completely disastrous. The *meletē thanatou* shares this dimension in even starker form, insofar as death is usually taken to be a greater evil than illness. Foucault cites Seneca urging Lucilius to live 'each day as if one's entire life depended on it' (1997b [1982]: 105), and following his own advice in 'On the Shortness of Life' the Roman statesman gives an extended account how meditating on our finitude helps us live more fully (2007: 140–162).

Hadot's gloss on these exercises is also informative because he emphasises how they guided initiates towards other doctrines of the school concerned. To make this connection, the initiate must 'engrave striking maxims on [his] memory' so that, 'when the time comes, they can help us accept such events' (1995 [1987]: 85; cf. Hadot 2011: 162). As

⁹⁷ Nicolas Bummarito focuses on the mediation on death in the Buddhist tradition, but he notes that the mental exercise of imagining human finitude can also be found in Hellenic and Hellenistic philosophy, such as in Plato's characterisation of Socrates in *Phaedo* (1997 [*Phae.*]: 67e) and in Epictetus (2008 [*Dis.*]: 8).

I show in 4.3.2 and 4.3.3, the *meletē thanatou* also has a deep conceptual connection with the exercises that he picks out as vitally important.

4.2.3 *Hupomnēmata*

The last of Foucault's *pratiques de soi* to explore in this section is his exercise of 'self-writing' (*hupomnēmata*), a self-reflective form of writing taking the form of 'personal journals' and 'intimate correspondence'. There are many Greek examples of this practice, but it increased in popularity and sophistication towards the end of the Roman Period, so most of Foucault's examples come from the Roman Stoics, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius.⁹⁸ Although his accounts of these exercises only appear in short articles and lecture transcripts, these texts show that he views them as highly important, in part because their role was to document, integrate, and reflect upon insights generated by the other Hellenistic exercises in a comprehensive process of what he calls 'subjectivisation'.⁹⁹ For example, in the revised transcript of his 1982 seminar, 'Technologies of the Self', Foucault proposes that 'Seneca's letters are an example of this self-exercise', and that reflective writing about oneself – either in the form of 'taking notes on oneself to be reread' or 'writing letters to friends to help them' – increased in complexity towards the end of the Hellenistic period until it served a vital role 'in the culture of the care of the self' (1997a [1982]: 232). In a short text dated the following year, he tells us:

Hupomnēmata [...] could be account books, public registers, or individual notebooks serving as memory aids. [...] One wrote down quotes in them, extracts from books, examples, and actions that one had witnessed or read about, reflections or reasonings that one had heard or that had come to mind. They constituted a material record of things read, heard, or thought, thus offering them up as a kind of accumulated treasure for subsequent rereading and meditation. (1997a [1983]: 209)

⁹⁸ As Foucault tells us, 'writing – the act of writing for oneself and for others – came, rather late, to play a considerable role. In any case, the texts from the imperial epoch relating to practices of the self placed a good deal of stress on writing.' (1994 [1983]: 208) See Sellars' extrapolation of how, in Foucault's terms, Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* is an exemplary *hupomnēma* (2012: 460–1).

⁹⁹ It is difficult to specify the precise differences between the Anglophone emphasis on 'character change' and the Francophone one on 'subjectification', although the latter includes a first-personal dimension that emphasises the subjective perspective of the person who undergoes the change in character. The absence of a shared nomenclature has hindered what could otherwise be productive Anglo-Franco discussion of these issues.

From this we can see that *hupomnēmata* constituted a variety of writing practices, all of which aimed to provide material that could be continually reflected upon in the ongoing cultivation of the self. With *hupomnēmata*, on Foucault's account, a person could engage in a wholesale process of self-cultivation by gathering a set of personally-crafted and targeted fragments to help guide their ongoing character development. Assembling such a 'fragmentary [and] scattered *logoi*', was a cherished means of 'establishing a relationship with oneself', he explains, a relationship that was tempered and hardened by the reflective practice of carefully recording these insights (1997a [1983]: 211).

Nevertheless, to understand *hupomnēmata* fully we must distinguish it from two apparently-similar practices, both of which would distort our understanding of this vitally-important tool. Regarding the first, Foucault cautions, '*hupomnēmata* should not be thought of simply as a memory support, which might be consulted from time to time, as occasion arose; [nor are they] meant to be substituted for a recollection that may fail' (1997a [1983]: 210). Instead *hupomnēmata* are better understood as a 'framework for exercises to be carried out frequently', as this allows the practitioner to *assimilate* the insights of 'reading, rereading, meditating, conversing with oneself and with others' (1997a [1983]: 210). Regarding the second apparently similar practice, Foucault stresses that we must be careful to differentiate *hupomnēmata* from the 'narratives of oneself' that we find in 'written confession[s]', in modern autobiographical literature, or in accounts of 'spiritual experience (temptations, struggles, downfalls, and victories) that [are] found in later Christian literature' (1997a [1983]: 210). Instead of such a 'monastic notion of spiritual experience', which aims to 'dislodg[e] the most hidden impulses from the inner recesses of the soul', *hupomnēmata* were used to constitute the practitioner as a 'subject of rational action through the appropriation, the unification, and the subjectivation of a fragmentary and selected already-said' (1997a [1983]: 221). *Hupomnēmata* are functional and practical, therefore, because they primarily aim to 'capture the already-said [...] for a purpose that is nothing less than the shaping of the self.' (1997a [1983]: 210–1).

From this we can see, on Foucault's account, the *hupomnēmata* were an integral and supportive part of a comprehensive process of self-cultivation in the Hellenistic world. Their purpose was to record and document – in order to more intensely reflect upon – the practitioner's current resolution of 'how one should live'. Their aim was to assimilate and digest the insights of one's previous resolutions to the question, as well as to reflect upon other practices of self-cultivation, including the 'monitoring of one's representations', the *praemeditatio malorum* and *meletē thanatou*. They not only contained general practical wisdom – like Aristotle's *Ethics*, for example – but they provided a personalised guidebook of how to do this in which the practitioner became actively involved in their own process

of formation. They enable the practitioner to ‘digest’ the insights of their reading and discussion on self-development by creating a personalised repository of *endoxa*. Citing Seneca’s imagery of horticultural cultivation, Foucault tells us that the *hupomnēmata* must be ‘planted in the soul’, so that one ‘does not merely make them its own but [is] *itself*’ (1997a [1983]: 210; translation amended, italics added).

In contrast to the Anglophone emphasis on how the Hellenistic exercises were primarily aimed to extirpate damaging emotions, Foucault tells us that the *hupomnēmata* provided a forum where the attachments that generated *pathē* could be scrutinised and evaluated. He writes:

They also formed a raw material for the drafting of more systematic treatises, in which one presented arguments and means for struggling against some weakness (such as anger, envy, gossip, flattery) or for overcoming some difficult circumstance (a grief, an exile, ruin, disgrace). (1997a [1983]: 210)

Not only were the *hupomnēmata* useful in alleviating *pathē* such as ‘anger’ or envy’, they were also involved in the cultivation of whatever attachment gave rise to these feelings, since they allowed the practitioner to reflect on the loss of passionate attachments such as the death of a loved one (‘grief’), a change in fortune, such as one’s financial ‘ruin’ or one’s ‘exile’ from the city state (1997a [1983]: 210). We can say, then, that even in the Hellenistic world the *hupomnēmata* were not only aimed at extirpating *pathē*, but also were directed towards an ongoing process of self-reflection on those passionate attachments that generated these emotions. Although I have previously stated *pathē* can be caused by all kinds of practical consideration – especially sought after prudential ones – the above passage singles out *pathē* that are generated by passionate attachments; grief, for example, associated with the death of a love object. This is not to claim that Hellenistic philosophers had a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments, but that they recognised that the kind of attachments that generate the strongest type of emotional disturbance must be managed, as well as the *pathē* themselves. I return to this idea in Ch. 5.

Foucault’s discussion of the *hupomnēmata* also reveals an interesting correspondence with Hadot’s interest in the eclecticism in the Hellenistic schools. As I argued in 3.2.2, Hadot’s justification for deploying the Hellenistic exercises outside their original context supports the project of enlisting their conceptual resources to offer a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments, as well as Foucault’s claim that the exercises can be applied to theoretical questions and to resolve problems in practical life. When discussing *hupomnēmata*, Foucault picks up on a similar eclecticism by stressing that

forming these personalised texts was a matter of ‘selecting of heterogeneous elements’ in contrast to either the ‘grammarians, who try to get to know an entire work or all the works of an author’ or the ‘professional philosophers who subscribe to the doctrinal unity of a school’ (1994 [1983]: 213). Citing Epictetus, Foucault writes that ‘it makes little difference whether one has grasped exactly what [Zeno or Chrysippus] meant to say, or whether one is able to reconstruct their whole argument’ (1994 [1983]: 213). What matters is the way in which one employs these teachings to answer practical or theoretical questions.

Although I have followed Foucault in emphasising that the *hupomnēmata* were employed in a self-led and highly-personalised process of character development – one which emphasised ‘withdrawing into *oneself*, getting in touch with *oneself*, living with *oneself*, relying on *oneself*’ – they must also be understood as serving as a platform for a more socially-orientated manner of cultivating the self (1997a [1983]: 211; italics added). While *hupomnēmata* are primarily ‘personal writing exercises’, they also ‘serve[d] as raw material for texts that one sen[t] to others’ (1997a [1983]: 214). Here Foucault is referring to the active epistolary tradition of the Hellenistic era, which is prominent in any reconstruction of the Hellenistic world because much of the extant source material takes the form of letters. These often combine a mix of philosophical commentary with personal information, informatively weaving both together, to provide personalised practical advice on the practices of cultivating the self. While this is connected to the emphasis on the value of friendship in the ancient world, Hellenistic epistolary practices employed and advocated concrete techniques and elaborate conventions through which friendships could be practically performed.

In Ch. 3, I followed Nussbaum in arguing that friendship was perhaps the passionate attachment that Hellenistic philosophers looked upon most benignly, regarding it as serving an essential role in the cultivation of the self, rather than simply leaving us vulnerable to *pathē*. Not only did the Hellenists recognise friendship as an important passionate attachment, however, Foucault claims that these thinkers offered practical advice on how written communication with friends could aid self-cultivation specifically. Epistolary correspondence had recognised advantages over face-to-face discourse; exchanging letters allowed a greater period of time for the addressee to reflect upon their reply, forcing them to formalise their thoughts in a schematised way, and to use conventions that facilitated deeper-level reflection. Such correspondence offered an account of oneself and the principles one strives to live by, Foucault tells us, are a ‘matter of bringing into congruence the gaze of the other and that gaze which one aims at oneself when one measures one’s everyday actions according to the rules of a technique of living.’ (1997a [1983]: 221) Through the eyes of another person, one is required to find the

‘reciprocity of the gaze and the examination’, one that ‘works toward the subjectivation of the regimen that one judges useful to one’s correspondent’, as well as providing the opportunity to recall one’s own regimen (1997a [1983]: 217–8).

I have shown that Foucault situates the Hellenistic exercises on a spectrum, ranging from the bodily exercises of *gymnasia* to the mental exercises of *meletē*. This should lead us to question Anglophone scholars who think of these exercises as exclusively concerned with the process of extirpating *pathē*. Furthermore, Foucault’s account of the practices of sifting one’s representations – *praemeditatio malorum*, and *meletē thanatou* – sits in tension with Nussbaum’s insistence that philosophy was the primary means of Hellenistic self-cultivation. Unless we radically reinterpret philosophy to such an extent that it is unlike anything resembling the contemporary discipline, stipulating that Hellenistic self-cultivation was primarily philosophical merely hampers the project of employing the exercises to answer new philosophical questions.

4.3 Hadot’s *Exercices Spirituels*

For Hadot, the role of the spiritual exercises must be prioritised in any account of the philosophy of the Hellenistic world, as I showed in 3.2. Hadot begins his account of the ‘spiritual exercises’ by conceding that, despite the fact that ‘allusions to [...] inner activities are very frequent in the writings of the Roman and Hellenistic periods’, ‘[n]o systematic treatise codifying the instructions and techniques for spiritual exercises has come down to us’ (1995 [1987]: 83–4). Despite this, he identifies two times in the Hellenistic corpus that exercises of self-cultivation have been given explicit thematisation, both of which appear in the writings of the Hellenistic-Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE – 50 CE).¹⁰⁰ Philo’s first list of exercises of self-cultivation consists in: ‘research (*zetesis*), thorough investigation (*skepsis*), reading (*anagnosis*), listening (*akroasis*), attention (*prosoche*), self-mastery (*enkrateia*), and indifference to indifferent things’; the second cites ‘reading, meditations (*meletat*), therapies of the passions, remembrance of good things, self-mastery (*enkrateia*), and the accomplishment of duties.’ (1995 [1987]: 84) Hadot claims that these lists offer a ‘fairly complete panorama or Stoico-Platonic inspired philosophical therapeutics’, one which provides an informative summary of the kind of practices that were integral to Hellenistic philosophy. Nevertheless, he tells us, some of these exercises should be regarded as more important to Hellenistic self-cultivation than others. While

¹⁰⁰ Hadot explains his focus on Philo’s work by noting that ‘[m]any Stoic treatises entitled *On Exercises* have been lost’, although he tells us we have a ‘short treatise entitled *On Exercise*, by Musonius Rufus’ and ‘[o]ne chapter of Epictetus’ *Discourses* is dedicated to *askesis*’ (1995 [1987]: n.18, 111).

Philo's lists are relatively general, he also cites independent evidence that 'attending to the present moment' and viewing one's life 'from above' were especially important for the Stoic and Epicurean schools (1995 [1987]: 84, 238).

Furthermore, it is important to note that Hadot views the *exercices spirituels* as connected with one another. For Epicureans, Hadot writes, the 'thought of death is the same as consciousness of the finite nature of existence', and focusing on this gives rise to understanding the 'infinite value to each instant' (1995 [1987]: 95–6). Citing a letter from Horace, he tells us that 'believing each day that dawns will be [one's] last' increases the value of the present (1995 [1987]: 96; n.119, 120). For the Stoics, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, the thought of death 'transforms the tone and level of inner life' it is connected to the 'infinite value of the present moment', and focusing on it causes us to live as if the present is 'both the first moment and the last' (1995 [1987]: 96). Similarly, Hadot argues that the *meletē thanatou* has a natural connection to the 'view from above', and it precipitates the same kind of insights. Hadot tells us that to 'observe human affairs from above means [...] to see them from the point of view of death' (1995 [1987]: 247; cf. Sellars (2009) [2003]: 153), as well as claiming that '[t]raining for death is training [...] to look at things from the perspective of universality and objectivity.' (1995 [1987]: 95). I discuss the 'focus on the present moment' and 'view from above' in detail in 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 respectively, in preparation for exploring their potential role in passionate self-cultivation in Ch. 6.

4.3.1 'Generalised Research'

Given that many of the activities Philo mentions are not obviously or exclusively to do with cultivation of character, it is perhaps unsurprising that commentators who dispute the importance of exercises of self-cultivation in the Hellenistic world have questioned Hadot's reliance on this material, especially as he sources his accounts of 'attending to the present moment' and the 'view from above' from other places in the Hellenistic corpus. Despite agreeing with Hadot's claim that Hellenistic philosophers primarily understood their discipline as a 'way of life', Cooper offers two reasons to dispute his emphasis on Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation. First, he proposes that Hadot's claim is based on scanty textual evidence; second, he suggests – *à la* Nussbaum's attack on Foucault¹⁰¹ – that Hadot underestimates the distinctively philosophical nature of Hellenistic thought. Regarding his first criticism, Cooper complains, the most ancient figure Hadot cites as

¹⁰¹ Cooper does not cite Nussbaum's criticism, perhaps because it would lead him to an interpretive puzzle. Nussbaum enlists Hadot in her criticism of Foucault for not emphasising the distinctively philosophical nature of Hellenistic philosophy, but Cooper attacks Hadot for not doing precisely this.

representing the Stoic school is Seneca, a philosopher who writes in the middle of first century CE. 'It is a striking fact', Cooper notes, that 'almost all [Hadot's] references are to writings from the late second century and afterward', with no mention given to 'fourth- or third century BCE writings' (2012: n.4, 402). Hadot cannot assume, Cooper cautions, that 'what goes for Marcus Aurelius or Plutarch or Galen goes for Chrysippus or Epicurus or those who followed the Stoic or Epicurean philosophies four to six centuries earlier!' (2012: n.4, 403) In a similar vein, Cooper argues that Hadot gives Seneca's account of the 'nightly practice of self-examination' and 'examination of conscience' too much significance, as the Roman statesman's account of these exercises should be viewed as 'evidence of the novelty of such a practice at Seneca's time' rather than its ubiquity (2012: 20).

Cooper's second claim connects to his first one insofar as it questions whether the extant evidence for the spiritual exercises can ground Hadot's interpretation, although the force of the worry is directed towards whether Hadot's spiritual exercises are philosophical enough to justify his claim that philosophy was an integral part of the Hellenistic way of life. To support this claim, Cooper argues that Hadot's examples of philosophical exercises are either just (i) interpreted by him so loosely that they can capture any activity whatsoever; and (ii) they are only very loosely equivalent to the stab and thrust of genuine philosophical engagement. Regarding (i), Cooper complains:

[Hadot] stretches the application of the term to cover *any* activity of living, for example activities of daily life in which one infuses one's actions with one's knowledge of Stoic logic or Stoic physical theory, as well as Stoic ethical theory, thinking Stoic thoughts in directing one's daily life. Applied as widely as that, engaging in spiritual exercises would simply be synonymous with living one's philosophy. (2012: n.4; 402)

Regarding (ii), his complaint that Hadot's spiritual exercises do not take into account the distinctively philosophical nature of Hellenistic thought, Cooper proposes that the exercises Hadot cites are best described as practices of 'nonrationality', rather than philosophical exercises (2012: 22).¹⁰² He writes:

¹⁰² Instead of constituting anything philosophical, Cooper writes, the bulk of Hadot's spiritual exercises include 'meditation, self-exhortation, memorization, and recitation to oneself of bits of sacred text, causing in oneself devoted prayerful or prayer-like states of consciousness and mystical moments' (2012: 22).

[A] great many of the alleged 'spiritual exercises' Hadot instances in his discussion of Hellenistic philosophy are no more than perfectly ordinary ways of getting oneself to understand the real meaning and implications of philosophical arguments and philosophical positions, to fix them in one's mind and make oneself ready to apply them smoothly to situations of life as they may arise. (2012: n.4, 402)

Cooper suggests that Hadot underestimates how deeply Socrates' way of life influenced all the Hellenistic schools. This way of life had a robust philosophical component in it, he proposes, and was one in which the:

[P]ractice of philosophical discussion is itself the central activity. Philosophical insight and knowledge show us that the good of the soul is the highest good, and that this good is wisdom – a permanent, deep, and complete grasp of the whole system of human values, in all their ramifications and applications to the varying circumstances of life. (2012: 50).

From my analysis of why Nussbaum's attacks on Foucault miss the mark, however, we may think that Cooper's second point is less devastating, as there are few hard-and-fast equivalences between philosophy in our own and the Hellenistic eras. Because of the nonrationality of Hadot's exercises, Cooper writes, we should regard them as having 'at most a secondary and very derivative function in the philosophical life during the heyday of ancient philosophy' (2012: 22).

As Cooper's criticisms emphasise, the spiritual exercises that Hadot views as constituting 'generalised research' – 'thorough investigation (*skepsis*), reading (*anagnosis*), listening (*akroasis*), attention (*prosoche*) – are a heterogeneous melange of different activities and practices that had a variety of other functions. Furthermore, Cooper is right to say that it would be hard to describe these practices as philosophical because there is no sense these activities involve rationality, argumentation, or logical thought. Instead, they would be better described as an ongoing process of developing one's intellectual powers and academic knowledge, in a way that sought to improve, empower, and challenge the practitioner. Compared to Foucault's *hupomnemata*, the exercises constituting 'generalised research' had a wider-ranging remit, one which allowed them to perform a variety of different functions, including accumulating and reflecting upon whatever non-philosophical knowledge would contribute to the ongoing cultivation of the self.

4.3.2 'Only the Present is our Happiness'

Similarly to how Foucault's emphasis on non-philosophical forms of folk self-cultivation, which he argues were an important feature in Hellenistic cultural life, Hadot tells us that Greek '[p]opular wisdom advised people both to be content with the present, and to know how to utilise it.' (1995 [1987]: 221) Despite this, he warns, we should not adopt the romanticised view of the Greeks offered by philosophers such as 'Hegel', 'Nietzsche', or 'Heidegger', one which envisages the 'existence of an idealised Greece' in which the Hellenists were 'perpetually bathed in beauty and serenity' on account of the cultural importance they attributed to 'liv[ing] in the present moment' (1995 [1987]: 221). Echoing his claim that Hellenistic spiritual exercises had a variety of roles, including the extirpation of *pathē*, examined in 3.2.1, Hadot tells us that 'people in antiquity were just as filled with anguish as we are today' because '[l]ike us, the ancients bore the burden of the past' and 'the uncertainty of the future' (1995 [1987]: 221). Because the Hellenists regarded losing contact with the present moment as deeply inimical to a person's overall flourishing, however, both the Epicurean and Stoic schools 'sought to provide a remedy' that aimed to 'allow people to free themselves from the past and the future, so that they could live within the present' (1995 [1987]: 221–2).

Not only did the Hellenists regard the practice of living in the present moment as one that reduced *pathē* that inhibit flourishing, it was also regarded as revolutionising the perceptual faculties, in a way that freed the practitioner from their habitual approach to the Socratic question. Hadot writes:

[T]o live in the present moment is to live as though one were seeing the world both for the last and for the first time. To work at seeing the world as though one were seeing it for the first time is to get rid of the conventional and routine vision we have of things, to discover a brute, naive vision of reality, to take note of the splendor of the world, which habitually escapes us. This is what Lucretius is attempting to do when he suggests that if the spectacle of the world appeared briskly and unexpectedly to our eyes, the human imagination would be incapable of conceiving something more wonderful. And when Seneca speaks of the stupefaction that strikes him when he looks at the world, he says that it often happens that he looks at it as though he were looking at it for the first time. (2011: 173)

From this we can see that focusing on the present moment allows the practitioner to reappraise their life anew in a way that avoids positive assumptions or gloomy predictions about the future, one which is also free of the weight of past memories. As Hadot puts it, when focusing on the present one, 'no longer projects oneself into the future, but considers each of one's actions in itself and for itself', allowing oneself to 'become aware of the infinite value of the present moment, of the infinite value of today's moments' (2011: 163). As we develop our characters, so the Hellenists thought, we get stuck in self-made habits and routines of thought, both of which negatively impact upon our ability to flourish.

As explored in 3.2.1, both the Epicurean and Stoic schools employed many of the same methods to keep a person's attention raptly focused on the present, while proposing strikingly different reasons for doing this. Hadot claims to identify an 'extraordinary structural analogy between the experiences of time as it was lived in both [the Epicurean and Stoic] schools', one that by attending to we can 'glimpse a certain common experience of the present underlying their doctrinal divergences' (1995 [1987]: 222). Both schools, Hadot claims, are committed to the view that:

[H]appiness can only be found in the present, that one instant of happiness is equivalent to an eternity of happiness, and that happiness can and must be found immediately, here and now.
(1995 [1987]: 222)

For Hadot, this shared view is what motivates the structural analogy, and which is responsible for the value each school attributes to attending to the present moment. To understand this, I examine how this exercise featured in the Epicurean and Stoic schools. In what follows, I examine the Epicureans' motivation for various exercises of self-cultivation connected to the focusing on the present, before focusing on those of the Stoics. After this we will be in a good position to understand why focusing on the present moment was considered valuable, as well as demonstrating Hadot's claim that many spiritual exercises were shared between the Hellenistic schools for completely different doctrinal reasons.

Hadot tells us that the Epicureans' views on desire motivated them to pay much attention to the task of focusing on the present moment. We first encountered their views on the various kinds of desires in 3.1.3, when I suggested that Anglophone scholars have reasonably taken Epicurus at his word when he tells us that 'natural and necessary' desires are the only permissible ones (Inwood & Gerson 1994 [*Prin. Doct.*]: 34 [XXIX]). Building on

Epicurus' theoretical injunction regarding permissible desires, Hadot also offers a practical method for identifying desires whose status is ambiguous. Focusing on the present moment allows us to sift and weigh the importance of our desires in a way that allows those which are truly important to us to become most salient. He writes:

According to Epicureanism, senseless people – that is, the majority of mankind – are tormented by vast, hollow desires which have to do with wealth, glory, power, and the unbridled pleasures of the flesh. What is characteristic of all these desires is that they cannot be satisfied in the present. (1995 [1987]: 223).

On this view, we do not focus on the present moment once we have renounced all those desires that are not natural or necessary, but instead we engage in present-focused activities so we may be better able to distinguish between those desires we really care about from those that may well be initially highly attractive yet we cannot endorse upon reflection. Desires we care about will be action-guiding on reflection, whereas those we do not really care about can be identified as not worthy of action, and can therefore be discarded. This dimension of the exercise will play an important role in my account of how this has the resources for passionate self-cultivation in Ch. 6.

Despite also advocating the same exercise, the reasons why the Stoics did so were vastly different. Instead of the Epicurean emphasis on being able to identify desires that should be action guiding, the Stoics primarily viewed attending to the present moment as valuable because it increased our autonomy. Hadot does not pull his punches in his account of the Stoic interest in focusing on the present, telling us that the 'fundamental attitude that the Stoic must maintain at each instant of his life is one of attention, vigilance, and continuous tension, concentrated upon each and every moment' (1995 [1987]: 226). Drawing on Marcus Aurelius' account of how to do this in *Meditations* [9.6], Hadot terms Marcus Aurelius' call to saturate each and every present moment as 'delimiting the present', claiming it has the power to free us from worry about the future or regrets about the past. For Hadot, the act of 'concentrat[ing] [the mind] upon what one is in the process of doing' was one of the most valuable exercises of self-cultivation for the Stoics because, as Anglophone commentators also emphasise, it allows us to evade the debilitating *pathē* of worry and anxiety. Aurelius tells us that 'if you separate from yourself the future and the past, and apply yourself exclusively to living the life that you are living – that is to say, the present – you can live [...] in calm, benevolence, and serenity' (12.3, 3–4; cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 228). Similarly, Seneca recommends 'cutt[ing] short [...] the fear of the future and the memory of past discomfort' because, he tells us, 'the one does not concern me

anymore, and the other does not concern me yet.' (Seneca [*Epi.*], 78.14; cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 228).

From this we can see that exercises of self-cultivation focusing on the present moment were highly prized in both the Epicurean and Stoic schools, albeit for very different reasons. Hadot's claim that the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation are transferable and can be used to address different philosophical problems is supported by the fact that this exercises was engaged in despite having very different theoretical underpinnings. When we focus on the present instant, both the Epicurean and Stoic schools propose, our critical faculties to distinguish between the various kinds of desires which constantly bombard us are enhanced. Focusing on the present moment puts us in a stronger position to understand what kind of desires we truly care about, and in so increases our ability to come to a robust and insightful resolution to the question of 'how one should live'. I return to the extent this exercise can facilitate this task in Ch. 6.¹⁰³

4.3.3 *The 'View From Above'*

Like a hot-air balloon, [true poetry] lifts us up into higher regions, along with the ballast that clings to us, and lets us see, from a bird's-eye view, the mad labyrinths of the world spread out before us. (Goethe [*Dichtung und Wahrheit*]: 580; cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 239).

Goethe's powerful image of how poetry, like flight, allows us to escape our mundane and limited viewpoint on the world, sets the scene for Hadot's discussion of the Hellenistic exercise of the 'view from above'. Altitude, for Goethe, reveals the overall structure of the cosmos and our essential interconnectedness to it, showing how we are only a limited part of a far greater whole.¹⁰⁴ Elsewhere Hadot suggests that a similar experience was undergone by those who witnessed the lunar landings of 1969, as this gave rise to the same intuitive insight of the 'vanity of borders and of all the barriers, physical and moral, that separate humans' (2011: 168). In its literal sense, therefore, the 'view from above' is simply the act of looking down upon ourselves from a vertiginous vantage point, allowing us to

¹⁰³ See Foucault's connection with *hupomnemata*. He writes, '[*hupomnemata*] can be connected to a very general theme of the period [...]. The *hupomnemata* contribute one of the means by which one detaches the soul from concern for the future and redirects it toward contemplation of the past.' (1997a [1983]: 211–2)

¹⁰⁴ When asked about his interest in this spiritual exercise, Hadot notes that Goethe's enthusiasm for the 'first hot-air balloon flights (in 1783)' was motivated by the poet's reverence for the bird's-eye-view perspective (2011: 168).

situate ourselves within the totality of a cosmos of which we are an insignificant fragment. Hadot writes:

The view from above, directed at the earth from a mountain-top, an airplane, or a spaceship, must obviously be distinguished from the imagined, thought look from above, but that obviously supposes the experience of the look directed from an elevated point. (2011: 167)

Nevertheless, this literal sense harbours a figurative meaning, one which enables it to function as a spiritual exercise. Long before the invention of hot-air balloons or spacecraft, Hadot tells us, many in the ancient world used this spiritual exercise to imaginatively precipitate the 'terrible shock' of our relative insignificance (2011: 168).¹⁰⁵ By allowing the 'imagination [to] speed through the infinite vastness of the universe' (1995 [1987]: 242), Hadot proposes, we can reveal the 'whole of human reality, in all its social, geographical, and emotional aspects [as an] anonymous, swarming mass' to which we are inextricably linked (1995 [1987]: 245). This exercise, he suggests, enables us to perceive beyond:

[O]ur biased and partial point of view, to bring us to see things and our personal existence in a cosmic and universal perspective, to situate us in the immense event of the universe, but also, one might say, in the unfathomable mystery of existence. (2011: 96)

On Hadot's reading, therefore, the 'view from above' is, in his own words, the 'philosophical way par excellence of looking at things' because it situates any particular thing in the context of the universal cosmos to which all things belong (1995 [1987]: 242). Viewing things in this way allows us to escape our limited point of view to see things from 'the point of view of universality', allowing us to move 'from individuality and particularity to universality and objectivity' (1995 [1987]: 242). From this more detached perspective, one can accede to a more enlightened perspective, one which Hadot terms 'philosophical'.

¹⁰⁵ Hadot claims that the 'view from above' is frequently described in 'Plato, Epicurus, Lucretius, Philo of Alexandria, Ovid, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucian' (2011: 167). Sellars, for example, locates five examples of the exercise of taking up the 'point of view of the cosmos' in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* (2009 [2003]: 150). Although Hadot does not claim that it functions as a spiritual exercise in the work of all these thinkers, he argues that it appears as an image from which philosophical insights can be drawn.

Similar to how the Epicureans and the Stoics both advocated attending to the present for very different reasons, the motivation for encouraging students to practice the ‘view from above’ as a spiritual exercise likewise differed radically according to each school. Hadot speculates that for the Epicureans this exercise may have been cherished because it was equivalent to the view taken up by the Epicurean sage. The lives of sages were subject to much interest and lively debate in the Hellenistic world as sages were regarded as exemplars to be emulated, and this interest maintained a large doxological literature on their ways of life.¹⁰⁶ As Hadot puts it, the sage was characterised by his lack of concern with ‘mundane affairs’ because this individual spent their time ‘contemplating the infinity of space, time, and the multiple worlds’ (1995 [1987]: 243). It allowed, Hadot suggests, an ‘individual to see things in a universal perspective and to remove itself from its egoistical point of view’ (2011: 167).¹⁰⁷ Imaginatively taking up the ‘view from above’ within the context of this Hellenistic exercise, therefore, was a way to temporarily participate in how the sage viewed the world on a daily basis. Taking the image further, Hadot speculates, the Epicureans may have even regarded his exercise as imitating the view of the Epicurean gods, those lofty celestial beings that Epicurus famously claims view the activities of humans with unconcern. The exercise, Hadot writes, allows humans to become ‘aware of the greatness of humans, because [like gods] their minds are capable of covering the whole universe.’ (2011: 167)

The Stoics’ motivation for the very same exercise was strikingly different, a claim Hadot bases on passages by Philo and Marcus Aurelius. In the first of these, Philo describes the life of the Stoic wise person in a way that would surely resonate with Epicurean accounts of the sage. He writes:

Their goal is a life of peace and serenity, they contemplate nature and everything found within her: they attentively explore the earth, the sea, the air, the sky, and every nature found therein. In thought, they accompany the moon, the sun, and the rotations of the other stars, whether fixed or wandering. Their bodies remain on earth, but they give wings to their souls, so that, rising into the ether, they may observe the powers which dwell there, as is fitting for those who have truly become citizens of the world. (Philo Judaeus [*Special Laws*]: 44; cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 243–4).

¹⁰⁶ See Sellars for a comprehensive list of this literature, including works on the lives of Hellenistic philosophers, by Plutarch, Xenophon, Diogenes Laertius, and Porphyry (2009 [2003]: 21–30).

¹⁰⁷ Although providing no references, Hadot tells us that ‘Lucretius describes [the view from above] in reference to Epicurus’ (2011: 167).

Here a physical description of the cosmos is shot through with the philosophical emphasis on the interrelatedness of entities that comprise it. Moreover, it is this insight pertaining to interrelatedness, Hadot writes, that enables wise persons to become what Philo calls ‘citizens of the world’ (cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 244). Next Hadot quotes Marcus Aurelius on what the concrete upshot of this spiritual exercise might be. By watching the ‘courses of the stars as if you were running alongside them’ and by ‘continually dwell[ing] in [one’s] mind upon the changes of the elements into one another [one can] wash away the foulness of life on the earth’ because by looking at ‘earthly things below as if from some vantage point above them’ we can see the natural rational forces that operate behind them (Aurelius [*Med.*]: 47–8; cited by Hadot 1995 [1987]: 244). By taking the ‘view from above’ we have the capacity to detach ourselves from the immediacy of our own concerns, and are better able to reflect upon our life and what matters to us from a more detached and considered perspective. We are able to reflect upon all the considerations that are important to resolving the question of ‘how one should live’.

4.4 Enlisting the Resources of Hellenistic Philosophy

This chapter began by exploring Nussbaum’s contention that any correct historical reading of this period must emphasise that self-cultivation in the Hellenistic world was resolutely philosophical, a position supported by Cooper and Hadot. Nussbaum’s insistence on this matter is directed against Foucault’s final works on Hellenistic philosophy, in which he countenances a broader conception of self-shaping, which he terms the ‘care of the self’. For Nussbaum, the *pratiques de soi* that Foucault claims fall under this broad notion are too general to equate to what she claims is the specifically philosophical kind of self-shaping that the Hellenists advocated. Philosophy is necessary, on Nussbaum’s view, because only reason and rationality can counteract *pathē*, those strong and debilitating emotions which impact upon our flourishing.

While I have shown in 3.1 that Nussbaum is right to view the Hellenists as deeply concerned with the damaging effects of *pathē* on our flourishing, I have also argued that they did not view the exercises of self-cultivation solely in these terms. Rather, I have followed Foucault’s account of Hellenistic self-cultivation that views it as a broader and more expansive process of self-shaping, as well as Hadot’s arguments for the transposability of the exercises through which they strived to do this. While jointly these arguments ensure that there is no direct conceptual incompatibility with using the Hellenistic account of self-cultivation to provide the resources for a theory of cultivating

our passionate attachments, Hadot's arguments for the transposability of the exercises alone would be enough to justify using them for this philosophical task. The exercises of self-cultivation clearly served a variety of functions in the Hellenistic schools, and in Ch. 3 I proposed that Hadot's arguments for their contemporary theoretical and practical transposability are compelling.

Furthermore, by outlining the Hellenistic exercises that Foucault and Hadot focus on in 4.2 and 4.3, I have shown that they were complex and sophisticated practices of self-shaping that need not pertain to one dimension of character, and that there is evidence that they were not limited to the suppression or elimination of damaging *pathē*. Despite the Hellenists viewing these exercises as useful for extirpating *pathē*, it would be odd to describe these techniques as 'philosophy' because they often involve explicitly non-rational imaginative techniques. Nussbaum's insistence on them as 'philosophical' seems terminological, therefore, as these exercises can only be loosely described as philosophical in the discursive, analytical, and argumentative sense. Nevertheless, although she views Foucault's *pratiques de soi* as failing to have suitable philosophical credentials, I argue that the breadth of these exercises is their strength for both a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments and a method that would help us do this. This is the task of Pt. III.

Part III

Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments

Introduction

Pt. III proposes that the philosophical resources of the Hellenistic tradition can provide the conceptual resources for a theory of how we can cultivate the passionate attachments in the terms laid out in Pt. I. In Pt. II I showed that the status of passionate attachments was an intense source of debate in the ancient world, one in which the Stoics and Epicureans sided against the Hellenistic Peripatetics to argue that any entity that generated *pathē* should be regarded with suspicion. While Nussbaum has shown that there were subtle differences between the schools on this topic, the Stoics and Epicureans are rightly regarded as viewing passionate attachments with distrust. Anglophone and Francophone thinkers agree that, historically speaking, extirpating *pathē* was a vitally important dimension of these procedures because the Hellenists regarded these strong emotions as inimical to moral development, viewing them as impacting negatively on the ethical ideal of the school concerned. Nevertheless, as the Francophone thinkers I have looked at contend, the exercises of self-cultivation which the Hellenists developed to increase human flourishing did not only aim to extirpate *pathē*, whether caused by passionate attachments or excessive prudential desires. Rather these exercises were part of an overarching interest in global character change, of which removing of the *pathē* was a central but not exclusive concern.

Most importantly, however, both Foucault and Hadot propose that important aspects of these exercises can be enlisted to answer questions in contemporary philosophy and in practical life. Each thinker does this in different ways, however. For Hadot, as well as eliminating *pathē*, the exercises are connected to his contention that the Hellenists viewed philosophy as a way of life, a conception that he views as providing insights into, among other things, how the universal *logos* governs both us and the cosmos. The status of Hadot's contention that ancient philosophy was a way of life to which he urges modern philosophers to return has generated much fascinating literature, but it is not the subject of this study. Hadot's work is valuable, however, as he gives a series of arguments – explored in 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 – for why the Hellenistic exercises can be transposed from their original philosophical context to solve new problems. As well as underwriting Hadot's

own work (and Foucault's schematic remarks on the contemporary relevance of Hellenistic self-shaping), these arguments are useful for any project that seeks to enlist the conceptual resources of the Hellenists for new purposes.

Neither Foucault nor Hadot offer a theory of passionate self-cultivation, for example, but are useful for forming a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments for three reasons. First, as mentioned above, Hadot provides compelling arguments for why the exercise of self-cultivation are amenable to being transposed. Second, both Foucault's and Hadot's emphasis on self-cultivation in the Hellenistic tradition offer *valuable theoretical insights* into how any process of self-directed character development must proceed. Third, both thinkers locate a set of *paradigmatic practical methods of self-shaping* within the Hellenistic corpus, exercises of self-cultivation that could be used for self-cultivation in different ways. The first argument secures the conceptual platform for applying the conceptual resources of the Hellenists to a contemporary problem, the second and third offer a theoretical and practical framework that I argue can be applied to passionate self-cultivation in particular. This does not aim to replicate or reconstruct the use that Foucault and Hadot envisage for the Hellenistic tradition when they reflect on how this tradition can be of use for contemporary life, although doing this does show one possible way that their claims regarding the value of Hellenism for contemporary philosophy and practical life could be fulfilled.

If we take these reasons seriously, the Hellenistic exercises could be said to provide a practical method for self-directed character change on two levels. At the *first* level, they are involved in self-cultivation insofar as they allow us to generate a robust resolution to the question of 'how one should live' by countenancing the weight of *all* the various considerations that bear on how we resolve to live. Because the exercises generate deep reflective insights into our resolution to the Socratic question, engaging in them helps us better assess the relative weight of the considerations that inform our conduct. For example, in the process of deciding whether or not he should set sail to Tahiti, practising the *meletē thanatou* may have assisted Gauguin in weighing up the demands of his moral and prudential considerations against those of his passionate attachments. By envisioning imaginatively that his life was finite, Gauguin may have come to realise that his moral commitments were especially important to him, or it may have confirmed his gut instinct that to leave his family to pursue his passionate attachments was the right thing to do (as the epigraph to Ch. 5 suggests).

At the *second* level, the exercises allow us to cultivate each of the dimensions of practical reasoning without which the question of 'how one should live' can only be partially resolved. To resolve the Socratic question, we must not just resolve how the

prudential, moral, and passionate considerations that bear upon our lives can be reconciled with one another, but we must also resolve how these considerations can be reconciled with other considerations of the same kind. As I showed in 2.2, both the moral and prudential traditions of self-cultivation countenance the use of exercises that can cultivate these aspects of our character. As Anglophone interpreters of Hellenism show, the exercises can also be used to cultivate ourselves in ways that benefit an aspect of character *indirectly*, such as when they are used to extirpate *pathē* with the aim of improving our moral character. Nevertheless, while there is much philosophical literature on how we can cultivate ourselves morally and prudentially, the question of how we can cultivate our passionate character remains entirely unexplored, and even the very philosophers who stress the importance of our passionate attachments either deny that these entities can be cultivated at all, or that we can form a theory of doing so. The contention of Pt. III is that they can also be applied to the cultivation of the passionate dimension of our characters in a self-directed process of cultivating our passionate attachments.

Applying the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation to the cultivation of our passionate attachments puts them on unfamiliar terrain, one which departs from the leading contentions of *all* the theorists I have examined. On the one hand, although it concurs with Frankfurt's, Williams', and Wolf's contention that the passionate attachments are a vitally important dimension of the flourishing life, it breaks with Frankfurt's denial that the passionate attachments can be cultivated, as well as Wolf's claim that, although possible, passionate self-cultivation is impervious to theoretical analysis. On the other, although it makes good on Hadot's and Foucault's claim that Hellenistic self-cultivation is relevant to theoretical philosophy and our practical lives, it does so in a way that they did not envisage. Such a composite theory of cultivating our passionate attachments need not satisfy all or any of its influences, of course. While we might hope that it is *compatible* with some of these influences, it need not agree with everything these influences say, and it may even be starkly opposed to them.

For a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments to be comprehensive it must include three things. First, it must offer a substantive definition of *what it is* to cultivate our passionate attachments, distinguishing this kind of cultivation from similar-seeming self-directed processes (especially prudential self-cultivation for the reasons discussed in 2.2.2). Second, it must show *how the overall process* works, explaining the theoretical principles that underlie any particular method of cultivating our passionate attachments. Third, it should offer a practical method of cultivating our passionate attachments, one that relates the theoretical insights concerning how passionate self-cultivation proceeds with a practical account of how this can be accomplished. To do this, I examine how each of the Hellenistic

exercises that Foucault and Hadot pick out could be enlisted in the project of cultivating our passionate attachments specifically. Combining my account of the importance of the passionate attachments for the flourishing life – *à la* Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf – with the Francophone accounts of how the self can be practically cultivated allows me to do all three things.

Overview of Pt. III

Pt. III offers a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, one that employs the conceptual resources of the Francophone interpretation of Hellenistic philosophy explored in Pt. II to shed light on how we can cultivate our passionate attachments first raised in Pt. I. I begin by setting out the necessary and sufficient conditions for passionate self-cultivation in Ch. 5, before showing how principles of Hellenistic self-cultivation of character in general can be applied to the cultivation of our passionate attachments in particular. After this, in Ch. 6 I show how each of Foucault's *pratiques de soi* and Hadot's *exercices spirituels* offer a practical method that can be enlisted into the project of cultivating our passionate attachments.

Chapter 5

A Theory of Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments

Some have an end in life, others have none. For a long time I had virtue dinned into me; I know all about that but I do not like it. Life is hardly more than the fraction of a second. Such a little time to prepare oneself for eternity!

Gauguin 1936 [1898]: 18

5.0 Overview

This chapter offers a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. It is composed of two elements. First, it defines *what it is* to cultivate our passionate attachments, showing what counts as passionate self-cultivation in terms of its necessary and sufficient conditions. Second, it explains *how* we can actively cultivate our passionate attachments, putting to work general Hellenistic observations on self-directed character change by applying them to how passionate self-cultivation functions specifically. To do this, 5.1 offers examples (and counterexamples) of passionate self-cultivation to show what distinguishes passionate self-cultivation from other – ostensibly similar – ways of cultivating the self, such as moral or prudential self-cultivation. Following this, 5.2 explains how such deep-seated character operates, comparing the processes that apply to all kinds of self-cultivation to those that apply to passionate self-cultivation specifically. These sections build on my account of what distinguishes our passionate attachments from other deep-seated action-guiding considerations (1.5), show how passionate self-cultivation differs from the other types of self-shaping that philosophers have traditionally been interested in (2.2), and connects this to the reasons we have to think that this kind of self-cultivation is especially valuable (2.3). With this theoretical account in place, we will be ready to return to Foucault's *pratiques de soi* and Hadot's *exercices spirituels* in Ch. 6, where I show how these exercises offer a practical method that can be applied to the cultivation of our passionate character.

5.1 What Counts as Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments?

For an activity to count as cultivating our passionate attachments, it must meet five criteria. Each of these criteria is necessary for a practice or activity to count as cultivating a person's passionate attachments, and together they provide sufficient conditions for passionate self-cultivation. This distinguishes passionate self-cultivation from other modes of cultivating the self, even those that might at first glance be misidentified as an instance of cultivating one's passionate attachments. It also allows us to adjudicate between concrete examples, distinguishing cases of passionate self-cultivation from apparently similar cases.

For an activity to be an instance of passionate self-cultivation:

- (i) It must involve a *change in our passionate character*.
- (ii) It must be *self-directed*.
- (iii) It must be *intentional*, although the precise results need not be known in advance.
- (iv) It must be the result of an *iterative* process.
- (v) It must affect how a person resolves *Socrates' question*.

Only by meeting all these criteria could a person be said to be cultivating their passionate character. As I show, many instances of self-shaping meet most – but not all – of these criteria, so in these cases the above schema helps to show why they are not examples of cultivating our *passionate* character per se.

5.1.1 *Change in Passionate Character*

My discussion in Pt. I shows what passionate attachments are, so understanding how our passionate character can change mainly involves invoking the salient points. There I proposed viewing our passionate character as the profile of our various passionate attachments – those things we love and which generate a sense of identity and purpose in our lives. I initially followed Frankfurt's, Williams', and Wolf's respective contributions to the notion, enabling me to produce a conceptual Venn diagram in which I showed that the overlapping aspects of each account bolstered the others, while also explaining how the non-overlapping areas elaborated on aspects of the notion the other accounts only touched on tangentially. Moreover, I added a further set of clarifying criteria in 1.5. These criteria provided an alternative to Wolf's account of the 'objective worth' of the entities that she views as generating meaningfulness, while also showing how we can distinguish

passionate attachments from other cherished desires (the hoarder's pursuit of junk, for instance).

Understanding a person's passionate character as their profile of passionate attachments gives us most of the information we need to see what it means for it to change. Such a change need not involve the change of all of a person's passionate attachments. Although passionate attachments are arranged in interlocking constellations (for example in a family), one or more passionate attachments might change independently of the others. Because of the 'magnitude and complexity' of passionate attachments discussed in 1.5.1, even a change in one of them would have a significant effect on one's resolution to the question of 'how one should live'. To illustrate the wholesale change of all or most of a person's passionate attachments, let us return to the Gauguin example. In all the variations of the example we have considered so far, Gauguin went from having a set of passionate attachments that were closely linked to his life in Paris, to a very different set connected to Tahiti. As the profile of Gauguin's passionate attachments constitutes his passionate character, when one of these passionate attachments changes then his passionate character will change accordingly. Comparing the two states of Gauguin's passionate character side-by-side illustrates this change. At first, 'Parisian Gauguin' was passionately attached to his wife and children in *fin de siècle* Paris, painting when he could snatch time from his work or family duties. The passionate character of the 'Tahitian Gauguin' could not be more different, and it was one in which seemingly none of his former passionate attachments remained.¹⁰⁸ This Gauguin no longer cared for his family or the Parisian painting scene because his passionate character had altered so profoundly that he only cared about his painting practice in Tahiti. The 'Tahitian Gauguin' fell in love with the smell of the jungle, the intensity of the tropical sunlight, and the beauty of the inhabitants of the island, one of whom he eventually married. Given the striking differences of Gauguin's passionate attachments in Tahiti, we can say that there was a change in his passionate character. Not all cases are so clear cut. Consider a 'Gauguin' whose passionate attachments do not change so radically. In this somewhat happier example, the painter decides to travel to Tahiti to pursue painting, but cannot bear to leave his wife and children, so takes them with him. Yet whereas the change in this Gauguin's passionate attachments here is not so sweeping or clear-cut as how Williams presents things, there is a change in his passionate character as he still pursues his love of painting in Tahiti. As passionate attachments are necessarily weighty, as I showed when discussing their 'magnitude' and 'complexity' (1.5.1), even altering a single one of them will alter our passionate character.

¹⁰⁸ Maugham's depiction of his Gauguin-like protagonist epitomises this. Asked by the narrator whether he still 'cares for' his wife, the artist flatly replies, 'not a bit' (2009 [1919]: 47).

5.1.2 *Self-Direction*

I first raised the possibility of self-directed character change when discussing the philosophical literature on moral self-cultivation in Ch. 2. There I claimed that, whereas Plato and Aristotle emphasise how our moral and passionate character must be passively cultivated *for us* during our youth, philosophers have also offered theories of *self-directed* moral development, exploring how we can improve or maintain *our own* moral character. As I discussed in 2.2.1, both Kant and Mill persuasively argue that the self-directed development of one's moral character is important because of how certain activities require the intellectual capacities of adulthood. Kant, for instance, not only believes that doing the right thing is important, but also that we must do it for the right reasons, and this story of our moral motivation requires at least partially-developed mental processes. On Kant's account, a person who does not cheat at backgammon because they have simply been taught not to does not demonstrate honesty; they only act morally when they refrain from cheating because they see it betrays the Categorical Imperative, which requires them to be in possession of the requisite intellectual faculties. In fact, if this backgammon player had had honourable play instilled into them during their youth – the importance of which Aristotle would emphasise – then Kant would not regard refraining from cheating to be a moral action at all.

We might be sympathetic to the idea that self-directedness is especially important in the realm of passionate self-cultivation for similar reasons. Many highly-prized passionate attachments only become available to us once we have passed the formative stages of childhood and adolescence, the ages at which Plato and Aristotle emphasise that character change takes place most effectively. The idea of cultivating a passionate attachment to a prospective romantic partner before reaching the requisite emotional maturity is odd, whereas the idea of a person cultivating a passionate attachment with a sexual dimension before puberty is at least inappropriate. Cultivating our passionate attachments, therefore, needs to track the developmental stage one is passing through, so – unless the seeds of everything we will go on to love in adult life can be planted in us at an early age¹⁰⁹ – it is important for us to develop our passionate character in a self-directed manner throughout our lives.

¹⁰⁹ Of course, according to Freud, passionate attachments of a sexual or romantic nature are closely tied to our early childhood experiences. But even if we accept the Freudian view that our childhood experiences *tightly delimit* our choice of future romantic or sexual passionate attachments, there is still room for the cultivation of our passionate attachments. In fact, the analytical process aims to do precisely this: through transference we are better able to make informed choices regarding which

The importance of self-direction, along with claims about the requisite qualities to do this using mature emotional and mental faculties, was recognised by the Hellenistic philosophers. They explicitly denied that the process of self-cultivation is finished once a person reaches maturity, and strongly advocated that self-cultivation ought to continue throughout adulthood. This view explains why many of the Hellenistic exercises assume sophisticated cognitive powers. In Foucault's account of the *praemeditatio malorum*, for instance, we are presented with an exercise in which one's resolution to the Socratic question is scrutinised in the knowledge that one's life is finite, fallible, and will inevitably wane. This exercise is complex, and may be traumatic, involving much imaginative effort, so it is aimed at persons with the mental and emotional capacities required to vividly imagine such a troubling and complex experience.

Understanding passionate self-cultivation as involving a self-directed aspect also helps to distinguish it from changes in our passionate attachments that result from so-called 'conversion experiences'. In these cases, although there is a profound change in a person's passionate character, the fact that this change is caused by an external force prevents it from counting as an instance of passionate self-cultivation. Take Augustine's conversion to Christianity, for example. At the end of Bk. VIII of his *Confessions*, Augustine describes how after years of living with two internal drives, 'one carnal, one spiritual [...] in conflict with one and other', God communicated to him through the voices of two children repeating the words of a childhood game (2004: 189). These words, 'Take up and read; take up and read', Augustine tells us, directly instigated him to renew his study of the Bible, removing his obsession with the dissolute passionate attachments he had avidly pursued during his teenage years. Although Augustine's conversion took place at the level of his passionate character (as well as his moral one), his description of it in *Confessions* shows that it was *not* self-directed. Indeed, his prayer of thanks gives God full credit for the new more wholesome passionate attachments he has taken up. It is because God converted him ('Thou converted me'; 2004: 207–8) from his sensual passionate attachments to spiritual ones that Augustine is grateful. The passive dimension of Augustine's conversion can be informatively contrasted with that of Blaise Pascal. As the Frenchman tells us in *Pensées*, he changes his passionate attachment to Christianity through a self-directed process of self-cultivation, as it is through repeatedly attending church and through the practice of prayer that his faith in God grows. Unlike Augustine, Pascal demonstrates significantly more self-direction in the cultivation of his Christian faith, as he does not passively wait for his faith to be implanted in him by a higher power; he

passionate attachments we ought to take up (or avoid) that benefits from the insights generated from psychoanalytical practice.

actively directs himself towards activities that ensure that his initially tentative faith will be nurtured (Pascal 1995 [1670]: especially 58–65).

In addition, in Ch. 2 I argued that knowing someone's passionate attachments is often taken to be a fundamentally important part of knowing their character, as well as noting that knowledge of one's own passionate attachments is often strongly correlated with self-knowledge. While Socrates inaugurates a philosophical tradition that links knowing others with knowing their moral character, I argued that knowledge of one's passionate attachments should be regarded as a similarly powerful mode of understanding oneself or others. Knowledge of another person's passionate attachments – from their choice of romantic partner to how they spend their leisure time, from their deep-seated sexual desires to their charitable commitments – is at least as highly prized as a means to know a person as knowing their moral character. In fact our passionate character is so profoundly personal that we often regard the explicit direction or manipulation of another person's passionate as inappropriate (see Ch. 2 n.29 regarding this in the choice of one's romantic partner). Because a person's passionate attachments are taken to be at least as revealing of their character as their moral disposition, we have reason to expect that a person should be actively involved in fashioning it through the choice and cultivation of these attachments, even if this was mediated through external advice or guidance.

We can bring out our intuitions regarding this by way of example. Take a person who is strongly committed to a worthy environmental ideal, one which appears to occupy the status of a *bona fide* passionate attachment in their life. This person is deeply involved in supporting the ideal concerned, attends every committee meeting, is a recognised advocate for the cause concerned, and so on. For this person's activity to be a genuine part of their passionate character, however, we have reason to expect them to have made up their own mind by engaging in a reflective process of countenancing other views on this topic, of investigating the pros and cons of different positions, in short, of acquiring their allegiance in a self-directed manner, et cetera. Suppose, after hearing about the passionate attachment of the nature-lover, we found out that their job requires them to endorse the environmental cause concerned, or that they come from a family that has advocated for this position for generations. While we may well still recognise the value of the passionate attachment concerned, we have good reason to take it less seriously because it has been passively adopted through a *cultivated* and not a *self-cultivated* process. If the person's commitment to this cause was foisted upon them through family pressure, for instance, we may agree that they have a passionate attachment relating to this worthy cause, while

resisting the idea that it was self-directed in the required manner for it to count as an instance of the person cultivating their passionate attachments.¹¹⁰

5.1.3 *Intention*

Cultivating our passionate attachments must be intentional, although the unpredictable, often improvisational, and intransitive nature of self-cultivation means we must understand intentionality broadly. We can understand the importance of intentionality tweaking our Gauguin example once again. Imagine Gauguin had an Algerian lover whom he travels across the Mediterranean to visit every few months for an illicit rendezvous. In the rush at the Marseille docks, however, Gauguin accidentally embarks on the wrong ship, ending up in Tahiti instead of the closer African colony. Upon disembarking in Tahiti, he quickly discovers the pleasures of painting, writes to his wife to say he will never return, and then goes on to create the artworks for which he is best known. In this case, Gauguin has developed his passionate character in a way that meets all the criteria we have outlined so far: there has been a change in his passionate character (his passionate attachments have changed from his wife and family to pursuing the life of an artist), and this change was completely self-directed (he chose to embark upon the ship, albeit the wrong one). Nevertheless, in this case we cannot say that this Gauguin cultivated his passionate attachments, because he did not do so *intentionally*.

We might think that all self-directed action is intentional, but while these things are often aligned this example shows that they can be prised apart. To say that Gauguin's arrival in Tahiti was self-directed is just to say that Gauguin brought it about himself. He did this by buying the wrong ticket. In the same sense, we can say that acquiring his new set of passionate attachments was self-directed, even as we deny that it was intentional: Gauguin was causally responsible for his new set of passionate attachments because of his haste at the ticket office, even if he did not intend to be. Bringing about a state of affairs without intending to do so is incompatible with the idea of *cultivating* the state of affairs concerned. To return to the horticultural context from which the metaphor of self-cultivation derives, a farmer does not cultivate the land unintentionally, but rather in a

¹¹⁰ There are many other – often more troubling – examples of how a change in a person's passionate character can occur without them being actively involved in the process. In cases of radicalisation, for example, we recognise that a person's passionate character has changed in a way that cannot be attributed to the person themselves. Similarly, pernicious advertising is thought to work by implanting desires in us – often prudential – that we cannot trace back to ourselves, and upon reflection we can only partially identify.

thoroughly intentional process, which is purposeful, carefully planned, and closely monitored. We should not say that Gauguin cultivates his passionate attachment in this scenario any more than Jack's mother cultivated a beanstalk by throwing away his magic beans.

Finally, although intending to cultivate our attachments is a necessary condition for cultivating them, the specific change in our passionate character need not be anticipated in advance, a point I return to when discussing 'incrementality' in 5.2.1. Indeed, many of the processes of self-cultivation I have examined in earlier chapters show that there are good reasons why the change in a person's passionate character cannot be predicted entirely in advance. Self-cultivation requires opening ourselves up to new kinds of attachments in an open-ended and often experimental way because we necessarily change as we embark upon this process. Even if we know the domain that the prospective passionate attachment will be in, we may well not know precisely which passionate attachment we will end up with. Take the example of romantic love. Embarking on cultivating a love relationship with someone begins from an open domain of possible options (although there may be certain constraints – the gender, age, or character traits of the person, for instance). It is part of the process that one cannot know in advance precisely who the person one falls in love with will be, and in fact *not* having an overly specific idea is often taken to be important. There is taken to be something questionable about a suitor who exclusively seeks a mate in terms of certain characteristics (height, weight, ethnicity, et cetera.), and this person is reasonably thought to be missing something vital. Similarly, we could imagine a situation where the painter Gauguin embarked upon a voyage to Tahiti with every intention of engaging in a creative activity, but in the end decided on sculpture instead of painting. In this case he intentionally cultivated his passionate attachments in the domain of creative work, despite ending up by using a chisel instead of a paintbrush.

5.1.4 *Iteration*

I now move to the penultimate criterion for cultivating our passionate attachments, one that eliminates all the various Gauguins I countenanced above. Cultivating our passionate attachments relies upon an *iterated* process in the sense that it is caused by a repeated practice or activity that leads to the eventual uptake of the passionate attachment concerned. Again the horticultural analogy of self-cultivation can guide us here. Just as a farmer tends her crops by watering them daily, regularly fertilising or pruning them, so too passionate self-cultivation is the result of an iterative process in which one regularly attends to, monitors, and evaluates one's passionate attachments in an ongoing process.

Our passionate attachments may change in such a process – just as they can change unintentionally, for instance – but for them to change in a *cultivated* way requires that such a change was caused iteratively.

We also have reason to think that the cultivation of our passionate character is an iterative process in which one repeats a practice or activity for the reasons I explored in Ch. 2. Here I showed that two reasons we are highly motivated to cultivate our passionate attachments in a self-directed sense is because they are in constant development, either changing to the extent that they are appropriate as we pass through life stages (2.3.2), or breaking down (therefore needing renewal) due to their inherent fragility (2.3.5). I also noted that it is often because we do not have up-to-date or realistic knowledge of our passionate attachments that we encounter psychological problems, ones which may well need remedial therapeutic work (2.3.1). In the transition from adolescence to adulthood, for example, we need to bear in mind that many of our passionate attachments will change, especially because they are integral to our practical identities. Because our passionate attachments govern how we understand ourselves and others, and because they are centrally involved in resolving the question of ‘how one should live’, means that when they are not aligned with how we conduct ourselves they have an impact on whether we flourish or not. This means that it is fundamentally important that our passionate attachments are regularly cultivated, and practical methods that can be employed to do this will improve our ability to flourish. We do not resolve the Socratic question once and once only. Rather, we do best by organising our lives in a way that facilitates the regular appraisal of our passionate attachments. We flourish most, then, when our passionate attachments undergo a continual process of ongoing evaluation, so that the considerations they generate can play a suitable role in our conduct, one which reflects how important these kinds of considerations are to our life as a whole.

Finally, it is worth noting that an *iterative* process of cultivation is different from a *protracted* one. Gauguin’s resolution to travel to Tahiti would not count as cultivating his passionate attachments if it were a merely protracted process. For example, if Gauguin merely brooded about leaving his wife over a long period of time, this could not count as cultivating his passionate attachments because the very idea of cultivation requires that the cultivator repeatedly engage in the process. Although Gauguin’s voyage resulted in a discernible change in his passionate character (from his wife and children to his life as an artist), it was self-directed and intentional. In the absence of an iterated process concerning

his visit, it would perhaps be better described as a simple ‘major life decision’ in the way Wolf outlines.¹¹¹

Supporting what I said in 5.1.2 regarding self-direction, passive changes in a person’s passionate character that are not due to an iterative process cannot count as an example of cultivating our passionate attachments. Often our passionate character is altered by single events with no iterative dimension. A traumatic accident that shook up a person’s world view in a way that caused them to change their passionate attachments would fall outside the criteria I have already laid out above – notably ‘self-direction’ and ‘intention’. Nevertheless, we can imagine a change in a person’s passionate character that was both self-directed and intentional, but still would not count as cultivating their passionate attachments because it was not the result of an iterative process. Aldous Huxley’s description of ‘soma’ in *Brave New World* is an example of this. Soma is a drug that citizens take to make them passively accept the nauseating features of their society, but changing one’s passionate attachments in such a manner would not be an example of cultivating one’s passionate character because it would miss the essential component of iterability, even if this is done in a self-directed and intentional way.¹¹²

5.1.5 *Socrates’ Question*

Finally, cultivating one’s passionate attachments must have what we could term ‘existential bite’, that is it must affect how one resolves the question of ‘how one should live’. In Ch. 1 I followed Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf in arguing that passionate attachments have a powerful bearing on the Socratic question, and I supported this contention with the features I outlined in 1.5. Here I distinguished passionate attachments from less deep-seated desires on the basis of the ‘magnitude and complexity’ (1.5.1), ‘exclusivity’ (1.5.2), and ‘sociality’ (1.5.3). Moreover, when discussing toxic and inappropriate passionate attachments in 1.5.4, I proposed that some passionate attachments should be regarded as suboptimal precisely because they will interfere with other considerations that feature in our resolution to the Socratic question. All these

¹¹¹ Of course, this is not to say that Gauguin would have to follow the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation. Far from it. Gauguin could still be said to cultivate his passionate attachments if he did so within another tradition of self-shaping that included cultivating passionate attachments. He may be a Buddhist, for example.

¹¹² Interestingly, when describing how soma differs from mescal, Huxley tells us that whereas the latter merely improves mood temporarily by making us feel more favourably disposed towards our current life, the former makes us identify with it in a deeper and more permanent sense.

considerations suggest that passionate attachments cannot be pursued lightly, and cultivating them will profoundly affect our practical lives. These weighty requirements for an entity counting as a passionate attachment explain why cultivating one's passionate character is different from the activity of a dilettante who flits between passionate attachments. Even though the life of a dilettante resembles a person cultivating their passionate attachments, this person cannot be said to be cultivating the passionate dimension of their character because they do not engage with the attachment concerned with the requisite exclusivity (1.5.2).

We can understand why this is the case by considering how the other ways we can cultivate our character share similarities with how we cultivate our passionate attachments. For example, we would want to resist saying that a person has cultivated their moral character if doing this did not result in a concrete change in how they resolved the question of 'how one should live'. Someone who underwent a process of cultivating the virtue of honesty in themselves could only say they had done so successfully if they resist subsequent opportunities to lie or cheat. In a similar way, we can conclude that we have cultivated our passionate character, while actually deceiving ourselves, resulting in a previously discarded passionate attachment resurfacing. Take, for instance, a person who upon returning from an intensive retreat in which they had attempted to extirpate an unhealthy passionate attachment to a lover. Instead of embarking on a road trip with Dolores Haze, for example, Prof. Humbert might have checked himself into a treatment centre for the purpose of ridding himself of his infatuation with the girl. Nevertheless, the professor could only legitimately claim to have cultivated his passionate character if his practical reasoning was no longer moved by considerations to pursue Lolita once the treatment was over and he returned home.

It would not be cultivating one's passionate attachments if a person's passionate character changed (5.1.1), as a result of a self-directed (5.1.2), intentional (5.1.3), and protracted (5.1.4) process with no change in their resolution to the question of 'how one should live'. This does not mean that a person's passionate attachments have to change in an obvious or externally manifest sense, because there are times when a process of cultivating one's passionate attachments results in a person positively re-endorsing their current passionate attachments, and the role they play in their resolution to the Socratic question. Although in 5.1.1 I argued that a change in a person's passionate character is necessary in order for us to say that the person has cultivated their passionate attachments, there will be times when a process of self-cultivation causes a person to positively reappraise their current passionate attachments, causing them to re-affirm or re-endorse them. Given that the phenomenology of loving the same things after a process of

passionate self-cultivation could well be strikingly different than before this process was embarked upon, in such a case we can say that this process still had ‘existential bite’.

From this we can conclude that the cultivation of our passionate attachments must have a discernible impact on our resolution of the Socratic question. We can envision a person meeting all the other criteria (5.1.1–5.1.4) without this having a concrete bearing upon their life, and in this case we would have to deny that this counted as cultivating their passionate attachments. While their passionate character may have changed as the result of a self-directed, intentional, and protracted process, unless this changes *how they live their life*, we cannot say that they cultivated their passionate attachments. Even if one’s passionate character changes, it often takes courage to live in a way that expresses this change existentially because there can be other considerations that strongly tell against it. We could imagine a case where fear of professional recrimination or public shame kept a potential Gauguin from pursuing his artistic dreams. Even if Gauguin met all the other criteria for cultivating his passionate attachments, if he did not act on his love of a painting practice in Tahiti, we would be forced to deny that he cultivated his passionate attachments. In this case, despite his process of self-cultivation being self-directed, intentional, and – after practising the Hellenistic exercises – iterative, we would have to say that, although he got close, he failed to cultivate his passionate attachments in the fullest sense of the term.

5.2 How Can We Cultivate Our Passionate Attachments?

Now I have explained what *counts* as cultivating our passionate attachments, I am ready to discuss *how* this process operates, in preparation for showing how each of the Hellenistic exercises that Foucault and Hadot discuss can *practically* contribute to cultivating our passionate character in Ch. 6. Taken together, the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation constitute a specific *method* through which the self can be cultivated, one that follows the general theoretical principles of self-cultivation I outline here. Although these theoretical principles are not intended to be exhaustive, they apply to any practical method of passionate self-cultivation, indicated by how versions of these exercises appear the various methods of passionate self-cultivation that appear in other traditions. For example, a psychotherapist might propose that cultivating our passionate attachments requires transference; a Buddhist may claim it involves practices of renunciation; whereas a self-help teacher may emphasise the merits of their specific method. While each of these *practical methods* of passionate self-cultivation involve very different practices, they are governed by the *theoretical principles* that govern how any specific method of passionate

self-cultivation operates. In contrast to understanding how any of these various practical methods function, a theoretical account of cultivating our passionate attachments involves showing what these governing principles and processes are, that is, articulating the theoretical principles that underlie any particular method of cultivating our passionate attachments.

As well as debating which specific methods were most efficacious for cultivating the self, in the ancient world the general principles of self-cultivation were discussed in terms of the *technē* of self-directed character change. As O’Leary notes, ‘[t]echnē [was regarded as] a skill or a craft that can be applied in any field’, for example in the ‘training of horses, the framing of laws, [...] the sculpting of statues’ (2002: 4; cf. Nussbaum 2009 [1994]: 5, 14). In addition to these practical activities, the term ‘*technē*’ was analogously applied to the ‘arts of the self, the techniques of existence (*technē tou biou*)’, since self-cultivation was also ‘conceptualized as [an] instance of form-giving.’ (2002: 2; for a more detailed definition see Sellars 2009 [2003]: 42–5). A theory of the cultivation of our passionate attachments must do this too, albeit restricting itself to offering a *technē* of how we cultivate our passionate character specifically. As I showed in 2.2, the cultivation of our moral or prudential character each have their own distinct *technē*, ones which have already been subject to much literature, as have other related projects in self-directed character development such as extirpating *pathē*.

Of course, other theories of character development often discuss ways we can cultivate our passionate attachments too. As noted in the General Introduction, Murdoch intends her discussion of M and D to improve our understanding of how important our perceptual faculties are in the self-directed cultivation of moral goodness, despite the fact that her example also describes the self-directed cultivation of M’s passionate character. Similarly, I have noted that the practical methods of self-cultivation advocated by self-help teachers, psychoanalysts, and various religions would be badly described as exclusively pertaining to our moral character. Rather these practical methods aim to improve the adherent’s passionate character – directing them to more worthwhile objects to love – in addition to reforming their moral one. A *technē* of cultivating our passionate attachments is concerned with how any practical method must operate, then, rather than detailing the particular features of one account or another. In sum, in offering a *technē* of cultivating our passionate attachments I do not debate the potential merits of any particular method, but rather lay out general principles according to which any practical method of cultivating the passionate attachments must operate, despite apparent diversity. Indeed, this is what makes this *technē* a contribution to practical philosophy. Before elaborating a practical

method that can cultivate our passionate character, first I will outline the key underlying processes that explain how cultivating our passionate attachments works.

Passionate self-cultivation is governed by the following processes:

- (i) Our passionate character is cultivated *incrementally*.
- (ii) Our passionate character is cultivated *regularly*.
- (iii) Our passionate character is cultivated by *reconciling* fundamental considerations.
- (iv) Our passionate character is cultivated by *hierarchising* fundamental considerations.
- (v) Our passionate character is cultivated by *subtracting* extraneous considerations.

In contrast to the five necessary (and collectively sufficient) criteria that allow us to identify what counts as cultivating our passionate attachments, outlined in 5.1, the processes that govern passionate self-cultivation outlined here do not aim to be sufficient. They simply outline a selection of the most important ways that passionate self-cultivation operates.

5.2.1 *Incrementality*

The cultivation of our passionate attachments operates according to an incremental process connected to the iterative nature of passionate self-cultivation that I discussed in 5.1.4. Here I argued that passionate self-cultivation cannot take place through the ingestion of a pill to change one's passionate attachments or by hypnotising oneself to do this. Understanding the incremental process of cultivating our passionate attachments helps elucidate why cultivating our passionate character operates incrementally. In Ch. 1, I followed Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf in arguing that our passionate attachments profoundly affect our resolution to Socrates' question, so changes to our passionate character will strongly affect how we lead our lives, leading me to note that this is even a necessary criterion for a self-directed process to count as cultivating our passionate attachment in 5.1.5. The change in Gauguin's passionate attachments from Parisian family life to a painting practice in Tahiti, unseated his moral commitment to his family and motivated him to undertake a prudentially risky journey, changes that resulted in him endorsing a very different resolution to the question of 'how one should live'. Explaining how we can make such changes in our passionate character is *prima facie* difficult because they involve deep-seated changes in our conduct. Given that our passionate attachments are so decisive in how we resolve the Socratic question, therefore, we would be right to think that changing them in a self-directed way is difficult. Understanding how passionate self-cultivation operates

incrementally shows how, although challenging, we can produce such deep-seated changes in ourselves.

The incremental nature of passionate self-cultivation can be illustrated if we view changes in our passionate character in retrospect. Understanding how we have come to have the passionate attachments we currently have is often inexplicable without a story of the intermediate passionate attachments that we have passed through to arrive at the ones we now have. The choice of our passionate attachments later in life can often only be explained with knowledge of the ones that preceded them. Charting the chronological trajectory of our passionate attachments can show that they share a continuous causal history that, once recalled, can explain our current passionate attachments. For example, a person may only be able to explain their current love of horse riding with reference to their childhood love of other pets, which led to their love of nature, which led to their love of a country house, which led to their love of horses, which finally led to their love of riding these animals. In this case, their current passionate attachments can only be explained by those that preceded them.

Frankfurt's denial that we cannot determine what we care about in manner of a 'sovereign author' could be viewed as expressing the complexity of explaining how we can cultivate something so important to our practical lives as our passionate attachments (1999 [1991]: 101). This led me to compare how early readings of Nietzsche also tended to overemphasise our volition in seismic character change.¹¹³ On Frankfurt's view, regarding ourselves to actively choose our passionate attachments in this way would be to seriously overestimate the power of our volition in this regard. But whereas Frankfurt concludes that our passionate character cannot be cultivated, there is a way that we can make room for it, one which becomes clear once we understand the incremental nature of self-cultivation. While it is difficult to see how we can change something as deeply embedded as our passionate character through the power of mere choice alone, it becomes more understandable if we think of the process as comprising many incremental and intermediate steps. So if self-directed change of our passionate character is possible at all, we should not be surprised that it occurs incrementally. It is easier to explain how we can make small incremental changes to our passionate attachments than large ones, and if such small changes were combined into a regular process (as I explore in the next section) we could envisage changes in our passionate character to occur in a ratchet-like process. This

¹¹³ Contra the 'sovereign author' hypothesis, elsewhere I argue that Nietzsche constantly emphasises practices and virtues of self-cultivation in order to effect deep-seated character change. See Dennis 2018: 1–18.

would mean that we can make large-scale changes to our passionate character in a cumulative process of making many small ones.

Take, for example, a bereaved person desperately wishing to find a new passionate attachment to replace the one they have lost. In this case, it is hard to understand how this person could do this by simply *choosing* to love something without falling foul of Frankfurt's criticism that we cannot understand our choice of passionate attachments like the choice of 'sovereign author'. Understanding this process as an incremental one, however, makes the idea of taking on a new passionate attachment more plausible. Returning to Murdoch's example of how M cultivates her love for D, we can see that Murdoch envisages this process to be ratchet-like as it is both gradual and cumulative. Murdoch describes how M manages to reframe her perception of D through a painstaking process of incrementally reinterpreting D's behaviour; she does not claim that M could come to love D through a sheer act of will. Understanding the importance of incrementality in the cultivation of our passionate attachments sheds light on this. For our passionate character to change from X to Z, it will need to pass through Y. First, we may imagine, M focuses on those aspects of D that she *does* like, her free-spiritedness, for example. Then upon closer inspection, M sees that this is closely tied to other aspects of D's character, which she starts reinterpreting in a positive light too.

By understanding passionate self-cultivation as an incremental process, we can see how M can do the seemingly impossible: she can change her passionate character so that she ends up *loving* the very character traits for which she previously felt antipathy. Because passionate self-cultivation takes place incrementally, it is possible to explain the radical transformation of our passionate character, and we can even say that the more radical such a process is the more intermediate stages a person will have to pass through. We can only move incrementally, edging ourselves towards whatever it is we wish to take up as a passionate attachment.

5.2.2 *Regularity*

In 5.1.4 I argued that iteration is a necessary condition for passionate self-cultivation in a way that distinguishes *cultivating* our passionate attachments from merely making a major life decision regarding them. This means that a spontaneous decision to pursue a certain passionate attachment *cannot* count as cultivating a person's passionate character. Relatedly, in the previous section, I emphasised that cultivating our passionate attachments works via an incremental process in which one cultivates a passionate attachment bit by bit, allowing us to come to love entities to which we were previously

indifferent to or even hostile. So how does *regularity* help explain how the process of passionate self-cultivation operates? How can regularly repeating an exercise of self-cultivation allow us to change our passionate attachments?

Regularity is closely connected to such incrementality. Because cultivating our passionate attachments works through the incremental incorporation of love objects, such a process requires that we diachronically persist in cultivating our passionate attachments in a process that necessarily exhibits regularity. We saw this emphasis on regularity in the accounts of Hellenistic self-cultivation offered by Foucault and Hadot, which I examined in Ch. 3. There we saw that Hadot emphasises that in the Hellenistic world the ‘spiritual exercises [...] must be taken up again and again, in an ever-renewed effort’ in order to be successful (1995 [1987]: 103). Similarly, Foucault suggests that his *pratiques de soi* should be engaged with on a routine basis, emphasising this in his account of both the *meletē thanatou* and *praemeditatio malorum*. Regularly envisioning one’s death or the worst possible outcome of one’s life allows us to shield ourselves from wayward emotions once these events eventually occur. Both thinkers emphasise that the exercises are not only practised sporadically when one is required to make decisions concerning the Socratic question, but should be practised on a regular basis. The exercises are intended to be diurnal, not merely involved in resolving ‘how one should live’ when one is making a long-term decision, but also used to guide one when making every day practical decisions.

While I have not argued that the Hellenists had an account of cultivating our passionate attachments, in 3.2.2 I discussed how Hadot claims that their exercises of self-cultivation – his *exercices spirituels* – can be applied to other dimensions of character, especially to the moral dimension which currently occupies most literature on this topic. Just as the *exercices spirituels* are practised regularly when extirpating *pathē*, or in the cultivation of the moral dimension of our character, so too we should view the cultivation of our passionate attachments as operating according to the same process. Cultivating our passionate attachments involves the regular re-evaluation of our passionate character, in both in the sense of (i) appraising them with respect to other practical considerations, and in the sense of (ii) evaluating our passionate attachments in terms of one another. From our discussion of the chronological development of our passionate character in 2.3.2, we can see why this is the case. We seek appropriate passionate attachments to our state of development, so we must constantly monitor and track them in order to ensure that our current conduct is aligned with their pursuit. In addition to this there is another reason why the cultivation of our passionate character must be an ongoing or regular activity. As we saw in 2.3.5, we must also monitor our passionate attachments because they are fragile, and we are continually vulnerable to their loss or demise.

5.2.3 Hierarchisation

Viewing character as composed of three dimensions aims to schematise those parts of our practical reasoning that are essential in resolving the Socratic question, but it also elucidates (and dramatises) cases of practical conflict, such as Gauguin's, as well as allowing me to single out considerations generated by our passionate attachments specifically. Furthermore, schematising practical reason in this way also allows us to see how the process of *hierarchising* our passionate attachments is important in their cultivation. We can hierarchise our passionate attachments in two ways, both of which track the two global ways of cultivating our passionate attachments that I outlined in the Introduction to Pt. III. Here I argued that we can either cultivate our passionate attachments in the sense of (i) cultivating them in terms of the other considerations that bear upon the Socratic question, or (ii) we can cultivate our passionate attachments in terms of other passionate attachments.

Although it cannot count as cultivating our passionate attachments because it does not meet all the criteria outlined in 5.1, Frankfurt offers a powerful description of the first kind of self-cultivation when he describes a person making a 'reasonable deliberation' to the Socratic question, one that takes into account the various considerations that bear upon resolving it. He writes:

In any reasonable deliberation about how [...] to live, a person must assess and compare the values of those things that he regards as important to him. He must define the respective roles that are to be played in his life by feelings, by desires, by morality, by various personal commitments and ideals, and by whatever else he cares about. The most critical issue [a person] has to face, in deciding upon [his or her] final ends, is to determine the relative importance that [he or she] will accord to each of these. Answering the question of 'how to live' is tantamount, indeed, to making that determination. (1999 [1992]: 92)

We might imagine Gauguin engaging in such a 'reasonable deliberation' before embarking on his voyage to Tahiti, insofar as he responds to the three primary dimensions of practical reasoning, which in Ch. 1 I argue are necessary in order to resolve the Socratic question. Gauguin's case provokes our intuitions that it is sometimes legitimate to open ourselves to

a greater range of considerations, most importantly those pertaining to our passionate attachments, the considerations the painter eventually decides to prioritise.¹¹⁴

In a similar manner, we can either: (i) hierarchise our passionate attachments with other kinds of practical considerations (moral or prudential ones), or (ii) we can hierarchise one passionate attachment over another. In the first sense, for example, we might imagine Gauguin weighing up the demands of his moral obligations towards his family and his desire to look out for his prudential well-being *against* his passionate attachment to travel to Tahiti. In the second sense – assuming his family is a rival passionate attachment – we might imagine him deciding whether he loves his family more than his painting or vice versa (We might think that this description of his case is plausible, because he is not only morally bound to materially provide for his family, but – one might hope – he also loves them, even if on reflection his passionate bond with his family turns out to be less strong than his desire to pursue his artistic development.) Tweaking the example in this way shows that Gauguin’s decision was one that did not only require that he resolve the Socratic question by responding to other considerations of practical reasoning, but also that he adjudicated between the various passionate attachments in his life. In this version of his dilemma, Gauguin weighed up the various passionate attachments in his life, ranking and ordering them, and eventually acted according to which passionate attachments were most important to him. Understanding which passionate attachments he prized most highly would be an integral part of the process.

5.2.4 *Reconciliation*

Throughout my discussion, I have emphasised the interlocking and composite nature of the considerations to which we respond. For example, certain passionate attachments – like one’s partner – come with clear moral obligations, along with – as those who are married often report – stringent prudential considerations, both of which enter into the question of ‘how one should live’. This means that considerations generated by the various dimensions of practical reason often pertain to the very same object, and require the same conduct. This is fortunate because it means reconciliation of one’s passionate attachments

¹¹⁴ Fortunately the dilemmas of practical reason are not always as tragic as in Gauguin’s case, and we can often accommodate the various kinds of considerations that bear upon resolution of ‘how one should live’ without choosing between them so decisively. I have emphasised that the dimensions of practical reason are invariably muddled and intermingled. Although it has made conceptual sense to break practical reason into a tripartite system for the purposes of this study, this only aims to clarify the kinds of considerations that we should understand as bearing upon the Socratic question.

with other kinds of considerations is more easily achieved, as in responding to one consideration we indirectly meet the demands of another. We could imagine Gauguin initially striving to reconcile his passionate attachments with his moral commitments, for example, before realising that this was in fact impossible, and his circumstances required that he must choose one over the other.

While Gauguin's story is useful to show the strength and power of our passionate attachments, the circumstances that require that the painter choose to pursue his passionate attachments to the exclusion of all other practical considerations is clearly less than ideal. Of course, Williams' schematised caricature of the painter's plight is crafted precisely to precipitate the realisation that our passionate attachments are vitally important, as well as to convey his central point about how the success conditions of such an undertaking relate to whether the painter produces great work. On Williams' reading, Gauguin fails to reconcile his practical considerations in a balanced manner in a way that testifies to the importance of his overriding passionate attachments – as they provide the horizon under which all his other activities are understandable. Under more propitious circumstances, however, we may hope to reconcile our passionate attachments with the other considerations that bear upon our practical reasoning in a way that allows us to harmoniously pursue them all in a joined-up way.

In the original version of the tale, one that loosely fits our historical understanding of his situation, Gauguin is forced to choose between two options: either to stay with his wife and children, drastically curtailing his ability to work as an artist; or setting sail for Tahiti, fully embracing his painting practice, at the cost of permanently leaving his family in Paris. No compromise is possible. Gauguin is forced to choose. If he loves his family – that is, if they have the status of a passionate attachment – then he needs to choose between two loves: either his family or his painting practice. If he does not love his family, then he has to choose between his moral obligation to support his family and his love of painting. As I claim above, this is precisely the dramatic power of the example, but as many artists struggle to reconcile the demands of their family commitments with their passionate commitment to their creative work it seems to be possible to reconcile these competing demands satisfactorily, one which could well be aided though actively cultivating our passionate attachments.

Due to the dramatic circumstances he found himself in, Gauguin could only cultivate his passionate character in the sense of hierarchising his passionate attachments, but under different circumstances we can imagine other ways that he could meet the demands of his dilemma. Fortunately our dilemmas in our practical lives are not always so clear-cut, and we sometimes have the possibility to reconcile the various considerations

that bear upon our resolution to the Socratic question. To reconcile his initial passionate attachments in Paris (family) with those future ones in Tahiti (art), we could imagine a situation in which Gauguin proposed emigrating with his family to Tahiti. While this would raise another set of practical questions – such as moral ones concerning the safety of his family – this would be an example of the painter integrating his passionate attachments through a concerted process of calibration. As with all real-world practical dilemmas, there could well be a trade-off, but it is the ill-fated circumstances of Gauguin’s case that led to such a striking practical dilemma.

As Nussbaum notes in her book on practical conflict, often such problems are only produced by a lack of imagination in how we arrange our practical lives. To borrow Nussbaum’s own example, previous generations of women were often presented with a practical choice between motherhood or a career, choices that were often believed to be mutually exclusive.¹¹⁵ With the introduction of childcare, maternity cover, and the legal right to work part-time, however, such binary choices have been ameliorated. Indeed, we could imagine that Gauguin’s tragic choice might have been avoided had he travelled with his family to Tahiti, or mitigated if he could have regularly visited them, and so on.

I first discussed our need to ‘integrate’ our passionate attachments in 2.3.4, when countenancing the reasons why we are motivated to cultivate our passionate character. Here we saw that we have reason to reject the scepticism of Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf regarding whether we can cultivate our passionate attachments, as we often do things to ensure that we can meet the future demands of our passionate attachments, either in the sense of prioritising how our passionate attachments determine our conduct over and above other considerations, or in the sense of making sure that our passionate attachments can be integrated with one another.

¹¹⁵ Nussbaum writes: ‘It was long thought that there must be a tragic conflict for a woman between career and family. Now we have called that complacent conclusion into question, by asking why the structure of careers should not be adjusted to reflect the facts of family life, and by asking that men share in child care. It was once thought that poor parents must face a tragic choice between educating their children and using them for child labour: the choice was thought tragic because child labour was thought to be necessary for the parents’ own survival. Now, although parents in many parts of the world still face such tragic choices, we know that this need not be: good political planning can make it possible for all citizens to be educated without anyone starving.’ (1986: xxxi)

5.2.5 *Subtraction*

The previous two subsections have explored how cultivating our passionate attachments involves the processes of hierarchising (5.2.3) and reconciling (5.2.4) the considerations that bear upon the Socratic question. Similarly, cultivating our passionate attachments can involve subtraction, in which we strive to minimise the passionate attachments we have to be better able to meet their demands. In Ch. 1, I showed why the ‘magnitude and complexity’ (1.5.1) of passionate attachments indicates that pursuing them will be onerous, and that passionate attachments require us to engage with them with a requisite amount of ‘exclusivity’ (1.5.2). Having too many passionate attachments thwarts our ability to establish satisfying relations with them, which is why subtraction is an appropriate process through which we can cultivate them.

The importance of the process of subtraction in self-cultivation in a general sense can be found in the work of those ancient thinkers who were involved in the reception and transmission of the idea of Hellenistic self-cultivation. In a passage cited by both Hadot and Foucault as emblematic of the processes of Hellenistic self-shaping, Plotinus tells us that:

If you do not yet see your own beauty, do as the sculptor does with a statue which must become beautiful: he removes one part, scrapes another, makes one area smooth, and cleans the other, until he causes the beautiful face in the statue to appear. In the same way, you too must remove everything that is superfluous, straighten that which is crooked, and purify all that is dark until you make it brilliant. Never stop sculpting your own statue, until the divine splendour of virtue shines in you [...] If you have become this [...] and have nothing alien inside you mixed with yourself [...] when you see that you have become this [...] concentrate your gaze and see. For it is only an eye such as this that can look on the great Beauty. (Plotinus [*Enneads*]: 1.6.9)

In a pointed reference to how the image appears in the Foucault’s ‘aesthetics of existence’, Hadot tells us that Plotinus’ image is ‘often misunderstood, since people imagine that this expression corresponds to a kind of moral aestheticism.’ On this interpretation, ‘its meaning would be to adopt a pose, to select an attitude, or to fabricate a personality for oneself.’ Nevertheless, for Hadot, it means ‘nothing of the sort’ because ‘[f]or the ancients, sculpture was an art which “took away,” as opposed to painting, an art which “added on.” The statue pre-existed in the marble block, and it was enough to take away what was superfluous in order to cause it to appear.’ (1995 [1987]: 102)

Although Plotinus is discussing self-cultivation in general, not the cultivation of passionate attachments in particular, the image nonetheless functions as a good analogy for a vital process of passionate self-cultivation. I touched on one of the reasons why this is the case in 2.3.4, when discussing how we often strive to integrate our passionate attachments with one another, as well as the other considerations in our lives, because this ensures we can conduct ourselves in a way that satisfies multiple considerations. When Plotinus discusses the cultivation of character in the passage above, the emphasis – as Hadot points out – is squarely on the removal of the superfluous to reveal the essential, rather than ‘reconciling’ the various parts of the statue with one another. Moreover, as noted above, Gauguin’s dilemma is instructive – as well as so tragic – because the dramatic circumstances in which he found himself effectively ruled out the possibility of responding to moral and prudential considerations if he was to satisfy his passionate ones. Although he may well have wanted to reconcile his passionate attachments with other considerations bearing on ‘how one should live’, Gauguin was in a position where this was not possible, and because he chose to sacrifice his prudential and moral concerns for the sake of pursuing his passionate attachments shows how important his passionate attachment to his painting practice was to him. Unable to reconcile or hierarchise his attachments effectively, Gauguin was forced to choose to pursue those he valued the most, and this involved eliminating other weighty considerations that had previously informed his resolution to the question of ‘how one should live’. This shows that as well as striving to reconcile our passionate attachments, both with one another and with competing influences on the Socratic question, we must strive to eliminate whatever considerations are incompatible with a single way of life.

Furthermore, there may be a more substantive reason why passionate self-cultivation should be thought of as a subtractive process, one which does not just apply to self-cultivation in general, but to the cultivation of our passionate attachments in particular. When indicating the most distinctive features of passionate attachments in 1.5, we saw that Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf all emphasise how passionate attachments are typically all-encompassing, that they exceed a threshold magnitude and complexity, and that they act as the semantic horizon for a person’s life. Both the tenor and tone of all these descriptions (and the other requirements I added to their respective theories, such as ‘magnitude and complexity’) suggest that our passionate attachments will be few and far between. Cultivating our passionate attachments can certainly sometimes be conceived as a process of reconciliation, but, given the magnitude of these kinds of considerations, any sense in which we cultivate them must take into account that practically it is often a question of selecting those passionate attachments most important to us and eliminating

the others. Wolf is right to be concerned that Williams' language of 'ground projects' may be too project-orientated, since our passionate attachments are often found embedded in a context of personal relationships (when they are not personal relationships themselves). Nevertheless, we can think about the cultivation of our passionate attachments as concerned to make sure that those attachments we value most highly, or those that we identify with most deeply, are given highest priority in resolving the question of 'how one should live'.

In addition to this, the emphasis on the required parsimony and elimination in self-cultivation in the Hellenistic source material goes hand-in-hand with our account of the required economy of passionate attachments, for example in the Epicurean garden, which I examined in Ch. 3. Despite their general scepticism regarding passionate attachments, when Hellenistic philosophers countenance the idea that such attachments are an important part of the flourishing life, they do so with strong reservations, emphasising the gravity and grave dangers involved in such undertakings. Taking on passionate attachments – to use Nussbaum's words – makes us 'hostages to fortune', so should only be engaged in with extreme care and attention (2009 [1994]: 370; cf. 366). In addition, the Hellenistic philosophers describe a world in which we are naturally immersed with attachments, pulled in this direction or that by the demands of many different kinds of love objects. The task, well illustrated by the coddled environments that the Epicureans created, was to remove extraneous attachments, rather than finding new or better things to which to become attached. Starting out by viewing human beings as typically having too many attachments – passionate or otherwise – to one in which we have a more honed and refined set of attachments is the primary purpose of the processes of self-cultivation that the schools promoted. When applied to the passionate attachments, the exercises themselves imply that we should be most concerned with refinement of our current attachments, rather than gaining more. Typically, they are aimed at testing, stressing, and interrogating our current passionate attachments, discerning those genuine attachments from false ones, even in the absence of a guarantee that the *meletē thanatou*, for example, will not precipitate the realisation that one has overlooked a passionate attachment to which one is deeply committed.

5.3 A Theory of Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments

This chapter has offered a two-part theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments, one that includes (i) a definition of what counts as cultivating our passionate attachments, and (ii) an explanation of the processes constituting passionate self-cultivation. From this we can distinguish cultivating our passionate attachments from other kinds of self-shaping, such as moral and prudential self-cultivation, both of which already come with a detailed philosophical literature, as outlined in 2.2. Defining *what it is* to cultivate our passionate attachments incorporates elements of the literature on these kinds of self-cultivation, and shows what is *sui generis* about this type of self-directed character change. For example, unlike the self-directed change of our moral or prudential characters, cultivating our passionate attachments involves developing our passionate character specifically. Describing the *processes* through which this kind of self-shaping proceeds also distinguishes cultivating the passionate dimension of our character from cultivating its moral or prudential dimensions. While there is overlap in the processes that govern these three kinds of self-shaping, I have also highlighted the processes applying to the cultivation of our passionate attachments specifically. My discussion of ‘subtraction’ in 5.2.5 illustrates this. Here I connected my claim in 1.5.2, that our passionate attachments must have a certain ‘exclusive’ claim on our resolution to the Socratic question, with the process of ‘subtraction’. Passionate attachments are especially amenable to be cultivated in a process of subtraction since we cannot sustain many of them because they must play a weighty role in our resolution to the Socratic question in order to be passionate attachments in the first place. This shows how the processes that constitute the cultivation of our passionate character are informed by the very nature of our passionate attachments. It shows that, although we can learn from the processes that govern the cultivation of the other dimensions of our character, in order to understand how we cultivate our passionate attachments we must account for what is special about the passionate dimension of character.

In Ch. 1, I followed Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf in their insistence that we cannot understand fundamental aspects of the good life without understanding the importance of our passionate attachments. Resolving the question of ‘how one should live’ involves responding appropriately to the moral, prudential, *and* passionate considerations that bear upon our conduct. Not only is responding to passionate considerations required to resolve the Socratic question, but it is also a condition of resolving it satisfactorily, that is, it is a condition for our flourishing. A flourishing life is one that is experienced as meaningful,

and as passionate attachments are an important source of meaningfulness, they are an essential part of our lives.

Chapter 6

Practices of Passionate Self-Cultivation for Contemporary Life

Maybe the problem of the self is not to discover a positive self or the positive foundation of the self. Maybe our problem is now to discover that the self is nothing else than a historical correlation of the technology built into our history. Maybe the problem is to change those technologies. And in this case, one of the main political problems would be nowadays, in the strict sense of the word, the politics of ourselves.

Foucault 1997 [1982a]: 222–3

6.0 Overview

This chapter returns to the Francophone interpretation of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation, and explores how the exercises explicated by Foucault and Hadot offer a sophisticated method that can be applied to the cultivation of our passionate attachments. In 6.1 I argue that this fulfils the respective promises that both Foucault and Hadot make regarding the importance of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation for our own era, albeit not in a way that they would have anticipated. Nevertheless, since my project does not aim to reconstruct their views on the contemporary relevance of Hellenism, the primary concern of this chapter is to show how each of Foucault's *Pratiques de Soi* and Hadot's *Exercices Spirituels* can be used to facilitate the cultivation of our passionate character. To do this, I discuss each of Foucault's exercises in 6.2, discussing those that Hadot elaborates in 6.3. As I note in 6.4, although these exercises only offer one of many possible methods of cultivating our passionate character, it is significant that many of the exercises which Foucault and Hadot discuss in the context of the wholesale cultivation of character appear in methods of passionate self-cultivation in different traditions.

6.1 Fulfilling the Promise of Francophone Interpretations of Hellenism

In the Introduction to Pt. II, I surveyed some of Foucault's and Hadot's auspicious claims about the value of the Hellenistic account of self-cultivation for practical philosophy and contemporary ways of living. Here I discussed Foucault's declaration that the Hellenists harbour a 'treasury of devices, techniques, ideas, procedures that, [although] cannot exactly be reactivated, at least constitute [...] a certain point of view which can be very useful as a tool for analysing what's going on now – and to change it' (1997b [1983]: 261), comparing this with Hadot's contention that Hellenistic self-cultivation 'could still be reactualised [since] these models correspond to permanent, fundamental attitudes which all human beings find necessary when they set about seeking wisdom' (2002 [1995]: 277–8).

For Hadot, just as the exercises were commonly transposed from one Hellenistic school to another in order to justify this or that doctrinal position, so too we can employ the exercises whether we endorse these doctrines or employ them for our own purposes. In 4.3.2, I showed that, on Hadot's account, both the Epicureans and the Stoics advocated attending to the present moment, despite offering opposing reasons for doing so. I also argued that Hadot does not view such 'transferability' as being confined to the Hellenistic era: he claims to find traces of the injunction to focus on the present moment in 'Nietzsche', 'Hegel', 'Hölderlin', and 'Heidegger' (1995 [1987]: 221). Most radically, however, as I explored in 3.2.3, Hadot claims that the exercises have contemporary relevance, repeatedly citing the writings of Georges Friedmann, and telling us that these exercises are 'still alive in contemporary consciousness' (1995 [1987]: 81–2). Despite these claims, Hadot's own view on how the Hellenistic exercises have contemporary relevance has three main components, each of which, he argues, has an important precedent in ancient philosophy. I present them here in order of increasing importance. First, like the Hellenists, he views them as practical tools for combating *pathē*. Second, also like the Hellenists, he views them as facilitating the connection between our own individuality and that of the cosmos. Third, like all ancient philosophers from Socrates onwards, he views them as an example of how philosophy used to be a 'way of life', for which a renaissance of Hellenism is necessary to reconnect us with these 'permanent, fundamental attitudes' that allow us to acquire philosophical wisdom (2002 [1995]: 278). Although a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments fits with Hadot's claim that the Hellenistic exercises have the potential to benefit our practical lives, it does so in a way that does not meet these three specifications.

Foucault moves beyond this position in important ways. In the quotation used as the epitaph to this chapter, he reiterates his claim about the contemporary relevance of

Hellenism. Here he tells us that revaluing the Hellenistic account of self-cultivation is important because it provides a practical account of how we can change the technologies by which we are surrounded. By changing these technologies, so his claim goes, we not only have the power to affect our practical lives, but we can even change how we arrange ourselves collectively, either in a social or political sense. What precisely Foucault had in mind by these claims – especially his tantalising claim on how self-cultivation relates to politics – is beyond the scope of this thesis, and reconstructions have already been the subject of many excellent studies (Elden 2016, McGushin 2007, O’Leary 2002).¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, it shows that Foucault thinks that we must go beyond how they were employed historically if we are to see how these exercises can contribute to contemporary life. Not only should we recognise a certain ‘transferability’ of the exercises – one that allows them to instil the various agendas of the schools *à la* Hadot – but, on Foucault’s view, their potential use extends beyond extirpating *pathē*. While Foucault did not have the project of cultivating the passionate attachments in mind, showing how the Hellenistic exercises provide the conceptual resources to explain how we can do this at least makes good on his claim that they can be usefully redeployed in contemporary life.

From this we can see that, although neither Foucault or Hadot propose that a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments can be underwritten by the conceptual resources of Hellenism, we can still make good on their claims that Hellenistic philosophy holds the resources to answer contemporary philosophical problems – in fact, the value of giving a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments should spur us on towards this goal for the reasons I gave in Ch. 2. Furthermore, in Ch. 5 I argued how Hellenistic discussion of self-directed character change can help us think about the processes through which we cultivate our passionate attachments, such as the Hellenistic emphasis on ‘subtraction’, discussed in 5.2.5. Additionally, this chapter outlines how each of the Hellenistic exercises that Foucault and Hadot discuss could be enlisted in a process of cultivating our passionate attachments specifically. To do this, I devote a subsection to each of the exercises, showing how each of them could be said to practically contribute to the cultivation of our passionate attachments. If I can show how the exercises of self-cultivation which appear so prominently in the Francophone tradition can be enlisted into a practical method of cultivating our passionate attachments, then I can show how exercises which were originally designed to combat and inhibit *pathē* can be applied to solve a contemporary problem in practical life.

¹¹⁶ Of these works, Elden’s recent text, *Foucault’s Last Decade*, gives the most comprehensive work to date on this theme, one which offers a painstakingly reconstruction of Foucault’s position, based on his lecture notes, incomplete manuscripts, and interviews (2016: 134–63).

6.2 Enlisting Foucault's *Pratiques de Soi*

In 4.2 I examined Foucault's *pratiques de soi*, focusing on his account of those exercises that Nussbaum suggests are incompatible with the Hellenistic emphasis on the *philosophical* component of self-cultivation. Here I showed that Foucault's *pratiques* consisted in various mental [*meletē*] and physical [*gymnasia*] exercises, the latter of which are perhaps less useful for an account of cultivating our passionate attachments. As Nussbaum points out in her critique of Foucault for including non-philosophical modes of Hellenistic self-shaping, his interest in *gymnasia* – Hippocrates' regimens from the *Epidemics*, or Athenaeus' quasi-medical remedies – closely connects self-cultivation to our prudential well-being. Foucault saw this practical side as extremely important. As he tells us '[n]o technique, no professional skill can be acquired without exercise; nor can the art of living, the *technē tou biou*, be learned without an *askēsis* that should be understood as a training of the self by oneself.' (1997a [1983]: 208). Nevertheless, as we saw in 4.2.3, Foucault not only discusses *gymnasia*; his *pratiques de soi* also include mental exercises, and it is these exercises that I argue have most potential to be enlisted in the project of cultivating our passionate character. Again, although doing this was neither Foucault's nor the Hellenistic purpose in using these exercises, we can recall they were explicitly aimed at bringing our practical lives into line with the demands of the Socratic question. Given the value of our passionate attachments for the flourishing life (Ch. 1), and the value of cultivating the passionate dimension of our character to bring us to a greater measure of flourishing (Ch. 2), it is reasonable to think that redeploying the Hellenistic exercises in the project of cultivating our passionate attachments has much to contribute to resolving the question of 'how one should live' itself.

6.2.1 'Controlling Our Representations'

The exercise of controlling our representations occupies a central place in Foucault's account of Hellenistic self-cultivation (1997b [1982]: 105). Perhaps this is unsurprising given that, on the Hellenistic view, our desires are labile, inconsistent, and readily hijacked by forces outside of our control. Such a model of desire implies that we must strictly monitor the representations of desirous entities, otherwise they will implant themselves in us, actively developing according to their own agenda, leaving us with no opportunity to reflectively endorse them in our resolution to the Socratic question. While we need not follow the Hellenistic proposal that *pathē* are the cause of our ills, I have shown in Ch. 2 that our passionate attachments make us vulnerable because we identify with them, so we

are affected by their fortunes, their interests, and their fate. I also emphasised this in Ch. 3 when discussing Nussbaum's account of how the Stoics regarded loving – even in its highest forms – as a risky business, in part because *pathē* are most keenly generated by the representations of entities we feel strongly about. Taking this picture seriously gives us good reason to think that actively controlling our representations could play an important role in the cultivation of our passionate attachments.

Fortunately, as I showed in 4.2.3, Hellenistic philosophers such as Epictetus and Seneca developed a method for dealing with the representations of potentially alluring attachments that can lead us astray. These need not be potentially new and enticing passionate attachments, of course, but could be entities that generate other kinds of considerations, notably prudential ones geared towards pleasure or well-being. I first examined the heterogeneous nature of prudential desires when discussing Kant's account of self-cultivation in 2.2.1. There I showed that Kant claims that a philosophical theory of cultivating our inclinations is unnecessary because, for him, such prudential desires are more than capable of looking after themselves. Considerations generated by a prudential concern for our own well-being, for Kant, are what need to be combated in order to give moral self-cultivation a foothold, so we do not need a philosophical theory of how we can actively cultivate them, nor practical guidance on how to do this. In fact, I argued that Kant laments how moral considerations are typically weak, despite their overwhelming importance on his view, so need to be bolstered whenever possible. (When Wolf points out the danger of a moral saint we can say that she is notably more optimistic than Kant about the propensity of people to become dominated by moral considerations.)

Taking the Hellenistic picture of the lability of our desires, along with Kant's view about the propensity of our desirous nature to become dominated by prudential considerations pertaining to our own well-being, underlines the importance of the exercise of controlling our representations in cultivating our passionate attachments. If flourishing involves resolving the Socratic question in a way that is responsive to each of the three fundamental dimensions of practical reasoning (moral, prudential, passionate), then we should pay close attention to representations of attachments that generate considerations in each of these realms. Following Kant, we can say that exposing oneself to representations of alluring prudential attachments is especially dangerous, since representations of prudentially attractive things are likely to have an inordinately powerful effect on how we resolve the Socratic question. Not only can these things override pertinent moral considerations, but they can also override more fragile passionate ones because – as shown in Pt. I – passionate attachments are difficult to acquire, risk potential injury, and can rarely be guaranteed. If we are to cultivate our passionate attachments in

the sense of actively hierarchising them against other considerations, we should remain wary that our representations of these things may be susceptible to fading against potentially more alluring prudential ones. From Pt. I onwards, I have argued for a conception of flourishing in which we are responsive to considerations from all three dimensions of practical reasoning (moral, prudential, passionate), so it is vitally important that one kind of consideration is not allowed to dominate.

As well as competing with representations of moral and prudential considerations, controlling our representations has another potential role in the cultivation of our passionate attachments, one which relates to how passionate attachments are cultivated with one another. I have discussed the importance of cultivating the various kinds of considerations that bear on the Socratic question with one another in the Introduction to Pt. III, so it will be useful to see how the controlling of our representations could fulfil this role. When discussing how our passionate attachments can be cultivated in 5.2, I proposed that 'reconciling', 'hierarchising', and 'subtracting' our passionate attachments should be viewed as fundamental modes of cultivating them. Due to the magnitude and complexity of passionate attachments (1.5.1), they require a certain 'exclusivity' over our attention (1.5.2), which led to my argument in 5.2 that it is important to hierarchise our passionate attachments, and to regularly be on the lookout for ways to eliminate ones that are less cherished or are – or have become – toxic (1.5.4). All these aspects of our investigation so far should cause us to ask how the control of our representations could be used to cultivate our passionate attachments in the sense of integrating them with one another. How can we do this?

Following the horticultural metaphor of 'cultivation', in 5.2.3 I discussed how we cultivate our passionate attachments in a process of 'incrementality', one which involves cultivating a relationship with a loved entity bit by bit. This can take place negatively or positively. We saw an example of a negative process above, when I described how we can cultivate ourselves by weakening or attenuating other potential considerations (moral or prudential ones, say), although this process can also apply to the attenuation of passionate attachments themselves. It is at least plausible to think that we can hierarchise or subtract inappropriate passionate attachments from our resolution to the question of 'how one should live' by filtering our images of these things. Thinking back to Prof. Humbert's pursuit of Dolores Haze in 1.5.4, there is a strong sense in the book that the protagonist is blameworthy, not just because of his desire, but also because of how he has actively cultivated it. Nabokov overtly describes Prof. Humbert as feeding his passionate attachment to Dolores by viewing images of similar looking girls. If Humbert was concerned to attenuate his passionate attachment to Dolores, he could have resolutely

avoided images that fed this desire, which may have caused his passionate attachment to her to diminish.

In contrast to how such an abstemious Prof. Humbert could have mitigated his passionate attachment to Dolores by controlling his representations, we encountered an example of a person positively implanting passionate attachment in themselves in Murdoch's mother-daughter example. Here I argued that we can read Murdoch's example as one in which M cultivates her passionate attachment to D by focusing on what she already loves about her, then building upon this by finding resemblances with those other aspects of D that M does not yet love. Understanding how the cultivation of our passionate attachments works in this way gives us a clue to understanding how the controlling of our representations could be involved in this process. Thinking back to Murdoch's example, if the mother-in-law let herself encounter representations of her daughter-in-law in an uncontrolled or an unselective sense, she would be less able to cultivate her initial feelings of antipathy towards this person. By focusing her attention on those aspects of D that she likes, however, M is able to kindle a love relationship with D, one which could be described as a process of controlling her representations. By narrowing the parameters of the representations that she allows herself to experience, M can foster her love for D, thereby cultivating his passionate attachment.

6.2.2 '*Praemeditatio Malorum*' and '*Meletē Thanatou*'

As discussed in 4.2.2, Foucault tells us that both the '*praemeditatio malorum*' and the '*meletē thanatou*' were ways to 'judge each action one is performing in terms of its value' (1997b [1982]: 105). It is this evaluative element that is useful in the project of cultivating our passionate attachments because it reveals how passionate attachments can be valued relative to moral or prudential considerations, and how they can either be reconciled, hierarchised, or subtracted from one another. Indeed, while I suggested that each of the Hellenistic schools understood the value of conduct in terms of their ethical ideal, Foucault does not offer any such ideal himself, so we can remain open as to what this value is. To do this, we should not assume that Foucault is thinking of a value that relates to any particular dimension of practical reasoning, but rather that he is thinking of value in terms of how the action concerned contributes to the resolution to the Socratic question in general. Both these exercises were concerned with changing the conditions of our evaluative perception, so that we could see a particular aspect of our life with greater clarity in terms of its contribution to our life as a whole. Despite this similarity of aim, both exercises function differently, however, so we must deal with them separately to best

determine how they can be useful in the project of cultivating our passionate attachments. To recall, in the *praemeditatio malorum*, a person envisages the very worst life events that could befall them. This person might, for instance, recall each of their most cherished prudential desires, and imagine that they will remain perpetually unsatisfied. Or this person might imagine each of their passionate attachments perishing, those things from which they draw their life-purpose and sense of identity.

Thinking about the mental state precipitated by this exercise helps explain how it could be enlisted into a practical method aiming to cultivate our passionate attachments. Practising this exercise brings the person's passionate attachments under intensified scrutiny, allowing us to better discern the role the person reflectively thinks they should play in their resolution to the Socratic question. In 2.3.1, I noted that knowledge of our passionate attachments is often inaccessible to us because of their complexity, interconnectedness, and the manifold roles they play in our practical lives. We value knowledge of our passionate attachments precisely because of this, but accessing this knowledge is not easy. Take, for example, a person musing over whether her partner is a *bona fide* passionate attachment. While introspecting, she realises that there are many different considerations that bear upon how she has resolved the question of 'how one should live' with this person, but she cannot be certain about which considerations motivate her current resolution. She feels some moral obligation to stick with her partner, she also feels moved by prudential considerations relating to her own well-being and her desire to start a family, and the strength of both these considerations leave her wondering whether she is passionately attached to her partner. The *praemeditatio malorum* could be thought of as offering a way to answer this question, which could in turn affect how the woman resolves the question of 'how one should live'. When agonising over whether it is her partner whom she loves, or simply his ability to father her children, for example, she might be able to discover what she thinks about this by envisaging a situation in which her partner could not be her biological co-parent for medical reasons. Envisioning such a situation might allow the woman to realise that her passionate attachment to her partner is not strong enough to sustain a childless relationship, or – perhaps more happily – it might precipitate her realisation that she loves this man no matter what. Whatever the result, the exercise seems to directly facilitate the woman's knowledge of her passionate attachments in a way that her previous attempts at straightforward introspection failed to do.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ See my discussion of Frankfurt's arguments in 2.1 on why introspecting about what we care about is notoriously unreliable.

In a similar manner, the *meletē thanatou* could be enlisted to precipitate insights into the role our passionate attachments have in our current resolution to the Socratic question. As I showed when discussing Foucault's account of this exercise in 4.2.3, the practitioner envisages their own death in order to generate deep-level reflection on how they are currently living their life. As Foucault puts it, this exercise offers the 'possibility of looking back, in advance as it were, on one's life', and this is what allows the practitioner to assess the 'value' of each action they perform (1997b [1982]: 105). To understand how this might contribute to the cultivation of our passionate attachments, we need to imagine how thinking of our own finitude might be able to elucidate how we value our current passionate attachments, or might even galvanise the person concerned into prioritising a previously neglected passionate attachment. How might this work?

There are traces of this kind of reasoning at work in the quotation from Gauguin's journal, used as the epigraph to the previous chapter. Here Gauguin connects his commitment to his 'end in life' to his awareness that '[l]ife is hardly more than the fraction of a second', noting that this leaves '[s]uch little time to prepare oneself for eternity!' (1936 [1898]: 18). In the *meletē thanatou* we are made to realise that, as finite creatures, our resolution to the Socratic question is one that is bounded by rigid temporal limits. Perhaps deathbed regrets about how one has chosen to live are not uncommon precisely because resolving the Socratic question is a difficult process, one in which one constantly risks a subset of considerations dominating. These regrets take the form of wishing that they had emphasised different considerations in their resolution to the Socratic question (moral ones, for instance), but at other times they can express a last-minute worry about the neglect of the person's passionate character. In Bronnie Ware's 2012 book, *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying*, for example, participants often reported wishing that they had devoted less time to their jobs and careers. Couched in the terms of my study, we can say that they regretted resolving the Socratic question in the way that they did because they gave too much importance to a particular kind of consideration. Envisaging our mortality may well precipitate thoughts regarding the amount of time we have left to devote to our various projects, especially as the projects that ground our semantic horizons are often able to be neglected in a way that the more pressing demands of prudential or even moral considerations cannot.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Variations of this exercise have been proposed by other traditions that deal with self-directed character change. The celebrated self-help theorist Stephen Covey proposes that a version of this exercise can get our prudential considerations into focus (2013 [1989]: 45). Interestingly, in 2017 an internet application was developed that sends users five randomly-timed reminders of their eventual

6.2.3 'Hupomnemata'

In 4.2.3 I showed that Foucault's account of *hupomnemata* emphasises that this practice did not simply aim to record or represent the life of the practitioner. Instead, *hupomnemata* comprised collections of notes and fragments that acted as a highly personalised practical guide for ongoing self-development. *Hupomnemata* were assembled diachronically (usually over months or years), and cataloged whatever was regarded as pertinent to the practitioner's way of life. It was not only personal observations, however. It comprised highly personalised endoxa – a bricolage of the 'already said', as Foucault puts it – for the purpose of 'shaping the self' (1997 [1983a]: 211). The practice of *hupomnemata* can be viewed as consisting in two parts. On the one hand, it functioned as a repository of practical texts that aimed to further self-cultivation and the practitioner's resolution to the Socratic question. On the other hand, it served as a reflective forum to analyse and evaluate the insights generated from other exercises of self-cultivation. So could a text-based practice that is modelled on the Hellenistic interest in *hupomnemata* be enlisted into the project of cultivating our passionate attachments? And, if so, how might this operate?

In speculating how the practice of writing *hupomnemata* could be enlisted to cultivate our passionate attachments, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which the original Hellenistic version of this practice already was concerned with the self-directed development of our love relationships. As I showed in Pt. II, all the Hellenistic schools recognised the passionate attachments as significantly impacting on our resolution to the Socratic question, invariably emphasising their dangers. Yet, in opposition to the unyielding view of traditional Anglophone scholarship, Nussbaum argues that the Hellenistic schools evaluated the passionate attachments in sophisticated and nuanced ways, which I used to support my contention that they viewed them as amenable to cultivation, even if this was invariably understood as extirpation. While the passionate attachments were worrisome because of their propensity to generate malign *pathē*, the issues regarding them were fiercely debated. We saw this most forcefully in 3.1.2, when I explored the theoretical arguments between the Stoics and the Peripatetics, but in 4.2.3 the issue came up again when I discussed the value of friendship, and the role it had in correspondence. Looking at extant *hupomnemata* reveals that these documents did indeed contain much discussion of the passionate attachments. So how could the extended written reflection on the passionate attachments comprise their cultivation, in the terms laid out in Ch. 5? How might such a process work?

death. As Brooklyn-based developer Hansa Bergwall notes, this is based on a folk Bhutanese saying that we should contemplate death five times a day to find happiness.

The first reason we might think that *hupomnemata* are especially well suited to the cultivation of our passionate attachments is because of their dual role. Not only did these texts function as a repository of previously written practical advice, they were also a forum in which the practitioner could analyse and evaluate the insights generated from other exercises of self-cultivation. Since these exercises were complex, there would be much to be gained from sustained reflection on each of Foucault's other *pratiques de soi* and Hadot's *exercices spirituels*, especially if this took place across a long period. Take, for example, my discussion of a person who practices the *praemeditatio malorum* in order to explore their passionate attachment to their family in 6.2.2. This exercise, I suggested, has the potential to generate insights relating to this person's passionate attachments because it enhances their perceptive power of specific attachments in their life. The exercise of *meletē thanatou* has similar powers, as I proposed when discussing Ware's account of the wishes of terminally-ill patients. By practising these exercises, we may hope to become better at letting our resolution to the Socratic question accommodate our passionate attachments correctly. Without doing this, our conduct may not be aligned with our resolution to the Socratic question, and we are in danger of overemphasising one kind of consideration or another (as Ware's patients regretted overemphasising prudential considerations). By recording the insights that these exercises generate, however, we have reason to think that we would be better able to build up an accurate picture of the passionate attachments we have, and our motivations for pursuing them further. We would also be better able to detect considerations that still function as action-guiding despite us no longer caring about them.

Compiling the insights generated by the *praemeditatio* and *meletē thanatou* may also help the practitioner to discover correlations and overlaps in their passionate attachments, or to be able to discern that they are pursuing two – perhaps mutually exclusive – passionate attachments that can never be reconciled. To use an example from outside the Hellenistic tradition, we could consider Nietzsche's recommendation in *Schopenhauer as Educator* when he asks us to visualise on 'what have you truly loved up to now? what has drawn your soul aloft? what has mastered it and at the same time blessed it?' While here Nietzsche only proposes that we ask ourselves these questions sporadically in order to discover what we care about, this process would surely be even more effective if we were able compare our answers over a significant span of time. After asking this, he recommends that the practitioner should:

Set up these revered objects before you and perhaps their nature and their sequence will give you a law, the fundamental law of your own true self: Compare these objects one with another, see how one completes, expands, surpasses, transfigures another, how they

constitute a stepladder upon which you have clambered up to yourself
as you are now (1997 [1873]: 129)

Nietzsche's emphasis on a comparison between our 'revered objects' in this passage suggests that diachronically tracking our passionate attachments could allow us to discern the common denominator that connects them. Isolating a common denominator that links previously pursued passionate attachments may well give rise to valuable insights into what future attachments one would do well to pursue, as well as invaluable recollections of how it was to pursue a certain passionate attachment, the problems of doing so, and the resultant satisfaction, et cetera. We can see what previously worked, what didn't, what satisfied us, and so on. Because passionate self-cultivation must be an ongoing process, the documenting of this process in *hupomnemata* will yield insights that have a long range and span. We do not ask the Socratic question once and once only, but are in a continual process of development, so the *hupomnemata* are eminently suited to tracking such a long-term process.

In addition to the merits of extended personal observation, we might also think that *hupomnemata* can be enlisted into the project of cultivating our passionate attachments because of their aim to produce a highly personalised life guide. In 2.3.1 I argued that knowing our passionate character is highly valued because it gives rise to a level of self-knowledge that is at least as illuminating as knowledge of our moral character. Given that passionate attachments are so personal, then targeted advice on cultivating this idiosyncratic aspect of our character will be valuable. This fits with how *hupomnemata* were often used to fuel the active epistolary tradition in the Hellenistic world. As I discussed in 4.2.3, writing to others who were also concerned to cultivate themselves enabled the correspondents to compare notes, and to exchange useful information. Discussing the cultivation of our passionate character with others in such a forum offers the possibility of questioning, interrogating, and critically evaluating our own process of cultivating our passionate attachments, while allowing our correspondent to do the same. Circumstantial evidence for this is perhaps provided by the fact that discussion of our passionate attachments with long-term friends and family members often yields insights that we could not have arrived at alone.

6.3 Enlisting Hadot's *Exercices Spirituels*

In 4.3 I examined Cooper's criticisms of Hadot's conception of *exercices spirituels*, a conception Cooper criticises for being only loosely philosophical because of the wide remit and inclusivity of the exercises. Here I noted that these criticisms are analogous to those Nussbaum makes of Foucault. Both Cooper and Nussbaum employ a conception of philosophical thought that is anachronistically applied to the Hellenists, which we can see by considering how many of the canonically endorsed philosophers employed what today would be considered to be non-philosophical methods. As I emphasised in my discussion, neither Foucault nor Hadot restrict themselves to exercises of self-cultivation that would be considered philosophical in the modern sense of the word, and the exercises they pick out would be unlike anything on a modern philosophical syllabus. Nevertheless, I have argued that Foucault's exercises of self-cultivation can be enlisted into a practical account of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. These exercises offer a methodological contribution to the theory I outlined in Ch. 5 by showing how we can practically cultivate our passionate attachments. The next section examines whether Hadot's *exercices spirituels* can add anything to this practical account of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments. I discuss the Hellenistic exercises Hadot focuses on in the order I presented them in 4.3.

6.3.1 'Generalised Research'

Hadot's account of the Hellenistic practice of 'generalised research' shares affinities with Foucault's of *hupomnemata*. Focusing on these affinities allows us to see how Hadot's exercise could also be usefully enlisted into the project of cultivating our passionate attachments. Just as *hupomnemata* involves collecting the 'already said', and critically sifting this source material into a personalised guide for living, Hadot's generalised research involves both 'reading (*anagnosis*)' and 'listening (*akroasis*)' to assemble a collection of insights pertaining to self-directed character development. Similarly, to *hupomnemata*, generalised research also involves an introspective aspect as it includes 'attention (*prosoche*)', which has the potential to facilitate first-personal observations of how the practitioner's passionate attachments have chronologically developed. Nevertheless, in addition to the features it shares with *hupomnemata*, generalised research has another

important aspect, one that is solidly empirical and research-orientated.¹¹⁹ In what follows, I argue that it is this empirical aspect of the practice that makes it especially well suited to the cultivation of our passionate attachments. How might this work?

Hadot's description of this exercise is brief and schematic, so my account here is speculative rather than reconstructive. Despite this, even a speculative approach shows how this exercise could provide a platform that could be developed in ways that would lend themselves to the cultivation of the passionate attachments. This is because this exercise is not only a passive accumulation of the 'already said', but it also involves actively acquiring new knowledge that may be pertinent to the practitioner's resolution to the Socratic question. As well as the aspects of generalised research that are shared with *hupomnemata*, mentioned above, Hadot mentions that this exercise includes 'research (*zetesis*)' and 'thorough investigation (*skepsis*)'. Generalised research is more outward-orientated than assembling previously articulated philosophical insights because it is concerned with any information that could enhance the cultivation of the self. We can see how the active dimension of generalised research could be especially important in cultivating our passionate attachments by thinking back to the reasons we are highly motivated to cultivate our passionate attachments, which I explored in 2.3. Here I argued that we have reason to seek *knowledge* of our passionate attachments (2.3.1), that our passionate character *changes chronologically* (2.3.2), that the passionate attachments we start life with are *contingent* (2.3.3), that we have a desire to *integrate* our passionate attachments (2.3.4), and that whatever passionate attachments we have will be inherently *fragile* (2.3.5). Although the first of these considerations would perhaps be best met from the introspective processes associated with *hupomnemata*, the last four give us reason to think that the active dimension of generalised research could be useful in the process of cultivating our passionate attachments. Passionate attachments are externally situated entities, so cultivating them involves being knowledgeable about things outside ourselves in a way that requires us to move beyond our power to introspect.

In 2.3.2, I emphasised that we often find ourselves experimenting with potential entities in order to become passionately attached, even if we do not employ a formalised practical method of doing so. The person who decides to leave an unhappy marriage may throw themselves into other activities for the purpose of experimenting with what potential passionate attachments they could take up. Formalising this process by adopting a practical method to cultivate their passionate attachments might have tangible benefits.

¹¹⁹ The empirical dimension of this exercise sits uncomfortably with Hadot's criticisms of the lack of philosophy in Foucault's account of Hellenistic self-cultivation because, as Hadot presents it, generalised research is overwhelmingly empirical rather than philosophical.

Researching potential passionate attachments, in the manner Hadot outlines in his account of generalised research, would be valuable because it helps us understand what potential passionate attachments are out there. It gives a framework to compare them to our current passionate attachments, and to test how they could feature in our future resolution to the Socratic question. Combining an active process of self-cultivation with the more introspective processes also included in the idea of generalised research could mutually enrich one another. Understanding how previous passionate attachments have affected our resolution to the Socratic question positively or negatively could provide invaluable insights to evaluate the merits or otherwise of other speculative passionate attachments.

We might also think there are reasons why generalised research into potential passionate attachments would help us cultivate them effectively because of what I said about the contingency of our passionate attachments, which I explored in 2.3.3. Here I argued that we are initially introduced to passionate attachments before our critical and evaluative faculties are fully developed, so although our passionate attachments begin as contingent, self-directed cultivation offers us the possibility of finding those that we find more satisfying. The outward-orientated aspect of generalised research offers us a way to think about doing this. By comparing our existing passionate attachments with other potential attachments, we can come to recognise that the passionate attachments we have are largely contingent. By doing this we will be better able to situate our current attachments within an evaluative context that is populated by other potential attachments. Such an evaluative context can only be established once we know what other potential passionate attachments are out there, however, and doing this requires us to embark upon an outward-looking process of generalised research. Doing this helps us escape the contingency of the passionate attachments with which we are initially surrounded, and – especially if these passionate attachments are inappropriate or toxic – brings us closer to a greater measure of flourishing.

In 2.3.4 I noted that we have a strong desire to integrate our passionate attachments, which I suggested is a reason for developing a theory of the cultivation of our passionate character. Generalised research offers us a way to think about how this could be practically achieved, one which combines both the reflective dimension of this practice and its more outward-looking aspect. Reflecting on our previous passionate attachments reveals what our passionate attachments are, but to discover whether these attachments are integratable with one another often requires an experimental approach. Speculatively considering a certain passionate attachment would benefit from such a process. In this case we may want to research its compatibility with other attachments, or the other considerations that bear upon our resolution to the Socratic question. This would be

benefitted by a process of generalised research that is focused on the passionate attachment concerned.

Most importantly, however, we can consider a practice of generalised research to be important when we lose a cherished passionate attachment, for example, if we suffer a bereavement. In 2.3.5, I discussed how such grief can be ameliorated by seeking out new passionate attachments, and – although the process of coming to love again is extremely painful – it is often the best chance we have of moving on from our loss. Faced with the loss of a partner, a person may find themselves with reason to engage in the practice of generalised research to see what new potential attachments there are out there. In these cases, the outward orientated dimension of the practice of generalised research will be highly valuable in cultivating new passionate attachments, as it will allow us to understand what potential passionate attachments are out there, how these share similarities (and differences) with previous attachments, and how they can replace the lost passionate attachment in our resolution to the question of ‘how one should live’.

6.3.2 ‘Focusing on the Present’

From the beginning of Ch. 3 onwards, I argued that Hellenistic philosophers offer a picture of human experience in which we are confused, deluded, and typically estranged from those entities that would ensure our flourishing. For these philosophers, we gravitate towards entities that generate debilitating *pathé* which cloud our judgment, and only by subjecting ourselves to a strenuous process of self-cultivation can we hope to liberate ourselves from these damaging emotions. When exploring Hadot’s account of focusing on the present in 4.3.2, I noted that he cites memory of past experiences and the imagination of potential future experiences as chronically hampering our ability to discern what is in our best interests. The exercise of focusing on the present aims to redirect our perception away from our memory and imagination towards an accurate representation of how our conduct aligns with our resolution to the Socratic question. Taking this exercise out of the Hellenistic context, I propose, shows how this exercise could be enlisted into the project of cultivating our passionate attachments by a similar process of suspending the powers of memory and the imagination.¹²⁰ How can we envisage this exercise as contributing to the cultivation of our passionate attachments?

¹²⁰ Sellars offers a compelling account of the differences between this Hellenistic exercise and contemporary ‘mindfulness’. For Sellars, whereas mindfulness ‘aimed at increasing health, happiness and general well-being’, for the Stoics the exercise ensured that the practitioner kept ‘philosophical principles [...] ready to hand’ (2018: 17–18; cf. Sorabji 1997: 197). Just as how modern

The Hellenistic philosophers advocated focusing on the present moment because it was thought that this would enable those who practised it to see what considerations should be action-guiding. Memories or imaginative speculation expands the number of images that can give rise to *pathé*. By focusing on the present moment, then, we not only drastically narrow the range of things within our perception to which we can respond, but we also limit our focus to those entities that we can have the power to affect. We could think of how this exercise has the potential to be enlisted into a practical method of cultivating our passionate attachments in a similar way. By filtering out considerations pertaining to the past or the future, we strengthen our perceptual faculties in a way that allows us to see what we care about more carefully. Given that our passionate attachments are in a continual process of change and development (2.3.2), gaining up-to-date knowledge of them is both necessary and highly useful. Increasing our ability to know what our passionate attachments are is especially useful, therefore, both because these kinds of considerations are vitally important to resolving the Socratic question and because our passionate character is in a constant process of change. To take an example from literature, Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* describes the process in which after an extended process of meditation, one primarily involving focusing on the present moment, the narrator decides to dramatically alter his passionate attachments by leaving a life of pomp and luxury to join an ascetic community. Under the conditions that focusing on the present moment produces, we are better able to see which of our current passionate attachments should be reaffirmed, whether we truly love the passionate attachments we have, and whether our conduct follows our resolution of question of 'how one should live'

6.3.3 'View From Above'

Perhaps there are especially compelling reasons why the *view from above* could be used in a process of cultivating our passionate character compared to the other *exercices spirituels* that Hadot mentions. Understanding why this is the case, we need to recall the social dimension of passionate attachments, which I examined in 1.5.3. There I argued that because our passionate attachments are part of our practical identities, they need to be able to be socially sharable. Entities that are resolutely idiosyncratic would not be able to be taken up as a passionate attachment, leading me to dismiss the idea that the hoarder's pursuit of junk could be a passionate attachment in the full sense. Practising the exercise

versions of mindfulness have entirely different aims to the Stoic exercise of 'attention to the present moment', so too my account of how the exercise can be deployed to cultivate our passionate attachments has aims that would not be recognised by the Stoics.

of the view from above could be said to create the conditions to focus on this social dimension of passionate attachments. Imaginatively viewing ourselves in an increasingly wider context allows us to see how any passionate attachment we have must be embedded in a social context, one which is an essential aspect of the passionate attachment concerned. We first encountered this idea in 1.3 when I discussed Wolf's emendation to Williams' terminology of 'ground projects', a term which she argues does not adequately reflect how passionate attachments are necessarily deeply enmeshed within social relationships. Passionate attachments are either other human beings, or are inexplicable outside of a social context constituted by others.

Viewing our lives from above, along with our resolution to the Socratic question, reveals that our passionate attachments cannot be understood as exclusively personal, but rather that they are only comprehensible within a social context. Situating our passionate attachments within this social context should be considered as an important aspect of cultivating them. Furthermore, viewing our passionate attachments in an enlarged social context reveals how we do not pursue passionate attachments alone, but that we do so in a context in which others pursue their passionate attachments. Viewing our passionate attachments in an enlarged social context allows us to see that our passionate attachments are often intricately entwined with others, especially in reciprocal relationships where two people take each other as a passionate attachment. Viewing our passionate attachments in an enlarged context helps us see that they are best pursued when they are comprehended as part of a large social context.

Although the very idea of the self-directed cultivation of character might seem individualistic, I stressed in Ch. 3 that the Hellenists regarded self-cultivation as intricately connected to a social context, one that typically involved friendship, exemplars, schools, and reliance on a corpus of existing literature. In fact, as I argued in 2.2.1, although the philosophy of moral self-cultivation shows that self-directed self-cultivation is possible, we should not understand this as the isolated cultivation of the person, but rather as showing how cultivating ourselves always takes place in a context in which others are present. Like the *meletē thanatou*, viewing our passionate attachments from above reveals to us that how our pursuit of them will be limited by surrounding circumstantial factors that are outside of our control. The pursuit of passionate attachments always has limitations because our passionate attachments are fragile, and our own ability to pursue them is limited. By situating our passionate attachments in as broad a context as possible, the exercise of the view from above could help reveal this.

6.4 Cultivating Our Passionate Attachments

This chapter supplements the theory of cultivating our passionate attachments, as outlined in Ch. 5, with a practical account of how the Francophone reading of the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation could be enlisted into such a project. This means that the conceptual resources of the Hellenistic tradition have not only been useful to construct a theoretical account of cultivating our passionate attachments, but the exercises that Foucault and Hadot focus on also offer a practical method that can be applied to passionate self-cultivation. Deploying the Hellenistic source material both goes beyond the historical use of these exercises, and how these exercises have been viewed by Francophone interpreters. For example, I have acknowledged that using these exercises to offer a practical method of cultivating our passionate attachments goes against the three ways that Hadot himself suggests that the Hellenistic exercises could be deployed in a contemporary context. As noted, Hadot suggests that the exercises provide theoretical and practical accounts of how we can (i) extirpate *pathē*, (ii) understand ourselves to be a connected part of the cosmos, and (iii) return to a conception of philosophy as a way of life. Hadot has a vital role to play in the project of cultivating our passionate attachments, however, because he provides arguments to show why the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation can be transposed into new theoretical and practical contexts (3.2.2).

In addition to Hadot's arguments, there is another reason we why should look favourably on the idea of applying the exercises of self-cultivation to the cultivation of our passionate attachments specifically. In Ch. 1, I followed Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf in arguing that resolving the Socratic question required responding appropriately to moral, prudential, and passionate considerations, as well as endorsing a conception of the good life that recognised that each of these fundamental considerations were necessary for human flourishing. Because we can find examples of exercises of self-cultivation in practical accounts of moral and prudential self-cultivation, then applying these techniques to the cultivation of our passionate character is at least possible in principle. As this chapter has argued, there is no conceptual incompatibility with using the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation in this task, and I have sketched how we can envisage how the exercises could be applied to the cultivation of our passionate attachments specifically.

Conclusion

Self-Cultivation in Practical Philosophy

When making a decision of minor importance, I have always found it advantageous to consider all the pros and cons. In vital matters, however, such as the choice of a mate or a profession, the decision should come from the unconscious, from somewhere within ourselves.

Sigmund Freud 1983 [1913]: vii¹²¹

i. Constructing a Theory of Passionate Self-Cultivation

Contrary to Freud's assertion above, I have argued that some of the most 'vital matters' in our practical lives – *viz.* pursuing passionate attachments – can be actively and reflectively cultivated, and that we can locate the conceptual resources for a theory of how to do this from the account of self-directed character change found in the Hellenistic tradition. As well as positioning myself against Freud's above remark, doing this places me against Frankfurt's denial that we can cultivate our passionate attachments, and Wolf's claim that – although on occasion we are granted a spike in our capacity to choose them – we cannot form a philosophical theory of how we do this. I have called those who think that we cannot actively and reflectively cultivate our passionate attachments 'romantic fatalists', and at least the tenor and tone of Freud's remark indicates he would be willing to join Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf in their view that our passionate attachments are impervious to self-directed change. Constructing a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments, then, rebuts both key claims of romantic fatalists: first, it demonstrates we can indeed cultivate our passionate attachments (*contra* Frankfurt); second, it shows we can formulate a theory of doing so (*contra* Wolf).

This is not to say that actively and reflectively cultivating our passionate attachments requires, in Freud's words, 'consider[ing] all the pros and cons' (1983 [1913]: vii; cited above). Given the value of these kinds of considerations in resolving 'how one should live', it would be crass to suggest that we can cultivate them merely by tallying up the reasons for pursuing this passionate attachment or that. Doing justice to the importance

¹²¹ Conversation with Theodore Reik in 1913. Reference to Reik 1983 [1913]: vii.

of passionate attachments in our practical lives requires that we cultivate them with a comprehensiveness, a perseverance, and an urgency that goes beyond weighing their relative advantages and disadvantages. Cultivating our passionate attachments does not just require us to *calculate* which passionate attachments we have most reason to pursue. It requires that we consistently strive for knowledge of them, that we modify our pursuit of them as we grow up, that we upgrade them when we discover better ones, that we strive to integrate them with our other commitments, and that we replace them when they perish.

To construct such a theory, I have proposed that we can locate both the conceptual resources for a *theoretical account* of cultivating our passionate attachments and a *practical method* which can facilitate doing this by examining the Francophone account of self-cultivation in the Hellenistic tradition. The exercises that Hadot and Foucault focus on in their respective accounts of self-directed character change go far beyond Freud's suggestion to 'consider the pros and cons', at least when making a minor decision, in terms of their sophistication and complexity, but they also differ insofar as they are highly self-reflective, requiring us to *consciously* appraise the considerations that bear upon our resolution to the question of 'how one should live', rather than following the dictates of our unconscious. Nevertheless, although conscious, these processes are not especially calculative or rationalistic, as Freud's terminology of 'pros and cons' suggests. Rather, as well as self-reflectively weighing considerations, they require us to use our memory, imagination, and non-cognitive powers to discern what our passionate attachments are, to track their growth and decline, to search out new ones, and to seek to reconcile them with other fundamental considerations that bear on our resolution to the Socratic question. As I explore in the next section, this is not to say that *all* our passionate attachments can be cultivated in this way, since Freud may be right to say that *some* are guided by unconscious mental processes that we cannot actively or self-reflectively control. Nevertheless, in the above epigraph at least, Freud overstates his case by telling us that quintessential passionate attachments such as the 'choice of a mate or profession' can only be decided upon by tapping into those unconscious forces that he views as directing the most important decisions in our practical lives.

Freud's casual remark here is perhaps not representative of the complex psychoanalytical story about how we cultivate our passionate character, as I have already implied when briefly discussing psychoanalysis in Ch. 2. In fact, in stark opposition to the concerns of modern moral philosophy, the importance of our passionate attachments for character development and human flourishing has always been a key psychoanalytic concern, so recent philosophical interest in this topic could be said to have been anticipated

by this tradition for some time.¹²² Nevertheless, the psychoanalytic theorisation of our passionate character is usefully supplemented by a philosophical one, such as the one I have outlined above. This is partly because the psychoanalytical story contains more governing assumptions than a philosophical theory of passionate self-cultivation, making it difficult to discern what is common between it and other methods of cultivating our passionate character. Most obvious is the fact that psychoanalysts invariably privilege passionate attachments with an erotic dimension, as they view unconscious libidinous energy as the actual cause of all passionate attachments we take up. Such assumptions, could be said to skew how psychoanalysts view the cultivation of our passionate attachments, both in theory and in practice. It is the source of Freud's theoretical assertion that in 'vital matters' – that is, when seeking to resolve 'how one should live' – we must look to the unconscious, as well as seeping into the practical methods that psychoanalysts advocate for doing this, such as the practice of transference.

Enlisting the conceptual resources from the Hellenistic tradition gives us a remarkably different set of tools with which we can cultivate our passionate attachments. I have argued that the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation that Foucault and Hadot pick out as especially important provide a practical method that can be applied to the cultivation of our passionate attachments, one that is relatively unfreighted with theoretical assumptions. In fact, Hadot's arguments for the transposability of the Hellenistic exercises shows how they can operate independently of a theoretical framework, a claim that both he and Foucault use to support the idea they can be enlisted to solve contemporary problems. I have emphasised that neither Hadot, Foucault, or the Hellenistic philosophers understood the exercises as having this function. Rather the opposite is the case. As I have argued, historically speaking, the Hellenists regarded the spiritual exercises of self-cultivation as having a variety of functions, including the extirpation of the *pathē*, but this historical fact need not limit the exercises to this role. Instead of adjudicating between the various interpretations of how the Hellenists understood the exercises, I have focused on those aspects of them that are most useful for a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments, especially on those arguments that these theorists offer for their respective claims that Hellenistic self-cultivation has potential contemporary applicability.

Constructing a theory of passionate self-cultivation in this way, makes good on Hadot's and Foucault's claims that Hellenistic philosophy has relevance to our own era, but it does so in a way that goes beyond their own research trajectories. Given their fervent

¹²² As psychoanalyst Hans Loewald writes, 'becoming a person is [a matter of the] development of [a person's] love life' (Loewald 1978; cited by Harcourt 2011: 82).

claims regarding the relevance of Hellenistic self-cultivation for contemporary philosophy and practical life, it may be that they would support of such a project, although I have not speculated on this since reconstructing their respective claims is not the aim of this thesis. Rather I have focused on these Francophone thinkers because they locate the conceptual resources to rebut the claims of romantic fatalists such as Frankfurt, Williams, and Wolf. Not only do Hadot and Foucault give detailed attention to the widespread potential of practices of self-shaping in the Hellenistic world, Hadot's proposal that we return to the Hellenistic conception of philosophy as a way of life requires that he provides arguments as to why the exercises can be transposed to solve problems in our own era. Although Hadot's major claim does not directly contribute to the philosophical concerns of his thesis, I have proposed that his arguments show that Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation need not be restricted to their historical use and function, because they can be transposed to provide the conceptual resources to solve new problems in contemporary philosophy and practical life.

From this we can see that we do not have to follow the imperatives of romantic fatalists when they say that what we love has been decided for us. Neither do we need to accept the various causal stories they offer to explain why we have the passionate attachments we have. Rather, as I have argued, some of the most important passionate attachments in our practical lives are amenable to self-cultivation. Given that these passionate attachments are so important in our practical lives, it is reasonable to want to attend to their growth and development to the best of our abilities. But I have also argued that some passionate attachments – a romantic partner, for example – require that we actively choose who this person will be because this type of relationship cannot be entered into passively, or on the basis of non-passionate considerations. Constructing a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments allows us to bring philosophical insight to bear on how we can do this, both demonstrating what passionate self-cultivation has in common with other ways of cultivating the self, and also showing what makes it distinctive.

ii. The Limits of Passionate Self-Cultivation

Although I have argued that there is good reason for practical philosophers to offer a theory of how we cultivate our passionate attachments, I have not claimed that *all* our passionate attachments are amenable to cultivation, or that *all* aspects of passionate character can be developed in a self-directed way. This means that although I have denied Frankfurt's view that '[w]hat we love is not up to us', I only have done so because this claim is too sweeping (2004: 49). Contra Frankfurt, I have argued that *at least some of what*

we love is up to us because many of our passionate attachments can be cultivated, as well as arguing that these passionate attachments are some of the most significant in our practical lives. Frankfurt may be right that we harbour a core of passionate attachments that remain impervious to self-directed development, so circumscribing these attachments usefully clarifies the parameters of my theory of passionate self-cultivation. So what passionate attachments might be *un-cultivable*? And how might these attachments differ from those which I have argued are amenable to self-directed development, such as, contra Freud, the 'choice of a mate or a profession' (1983 [1913]: vii; cited above)?

We first encountered the contention that some passionate attachments are impervious to cultivation in 2.2, when I discussed Plato's and Aristotle's insistence that our moral character must be cultivated at an early age. Since this is only effective when the person is in infancy, adolescence, and early adulthood, the process is required to begin before we acquire the requisite faculties for self-directed development, so our parents, guardians, and teachers must take charge of cultivating us morally on our behalf. In 2.3.2, I argued that this dimension of moral self-cultivation cannot be grafted on to a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments because our mature passionate attachments cannot simply be inculcated into us at a young age because they require faculties that we have yet to develop. My later discussion in 5.1.2 aimed to respond to this problem by showing that the cultivation of our passionate attachments cannot begin too early because it requires 'self-direction'. Not only is it impossible to cultivate certain mature passionate attachments too early (sexual ones, for example), certain passionate attachments require correspondingly mature faculties to be successfully assimilated into the person's life. As noted in 5.1.2, it is an important dimension of romantic love that we choose our beloved ourselves, which requires the kind of autonomous faculties I termed as 'self-direction'.

While Frankfurt intends his view that '[w]hat we love is not up to us' to apply across the board, he does offer some reasons why certain passionate attachments may be considered to be impervious to our self-direction, and why the cultivation of such attachments is unnecessary. Both 'caring about our children' and caring 'about our own lives' are, Frankfurt claims, 'biologically embedded in our nature' (2004: 29–30). We cannot cultivate such passionate attachments because they 'naturally grip us' with a 'practically inescapable power', and those who strive to free themselves from such attachments, either deliberately or by simply neglecting them, betray 'our fundamental expectations concerning human nature' to such a degree that we are justified in 'regard[ing] them as pathological' (2004: 84). Indeed, much support for Frankfurt's view comes from psychological literature on attachment, which emphasises the persistence of early infantile

attachments, explaining it with a story about the biological and psychological processes that govern human behaviour.

Nevertheless, much of this literature is also concerned with what happens when our passionate attachments go wrong, and how developing strong and stable bonds, even with our own children, is not something that can be guaranteed.¹²³ This means that Frankfurt's picture could strike us as too sanguine, as it does not do justice to the messiness – nor what can be the tragedy – of the practical lives of human beings, even regarding so-called stable attachments such as their own children. Although Frankfurt is right to say we should be troubled by those who ignore considerations generated by these kinds of passionate attachments, unfortunately it is not uncommon for people to do precisely this. Given that passionate attachments are so fundamental to our flourishing, we should be continually wary of underestimating the extent to which they can be cultivated, otherwise we will routinely neglect a means to increase our flourishing in a self-directed sense. Despite the limits of cultivating our passionate attachments, we should strive to cultivate those we can as much as possible by improving, modifying, and upgrading them. It is surely better to overestimate our power to cultivate our passionate attachments, because the danger of underestimating our power to do this is that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

iii. Prospects for a Comprehensive Theory of the Self-Cultivation

In Ch. 1, I followed Frankfurt's, Williams', and Wolf's arguments that modern moral philosophy ignores or neglects the passionate attachments, so cannot fully understand human flourishing. Despite this, in Ch. 2, I explored how these very same philosophers argue that, although vitally important, our passionate character can neither (i) be cultivated (Frankfurt), or (ii) be theorised (Wolf), claims which I countered by arguing (i) we have reason to think we can cultivate our passionate attachments (2.3), and (ii) we can model a theory of passionate self-cultivation on existing theories of how we cultivate ourselves morally and prudentially (2.2). Following my arguments that our passionate character *is* amenable to self-cultivation, and its cultivation *can* be theorised, I proposed that we can locate the conceptual resources to underwrite a theory of passionate self-cultivation in the Hellenistic tradition.

¹²³ See Harcourt's summary of the attachment literature, especially how early secure attachments 'make available to the infant a great many other goods' in later life (2013a: 124). For a concise account of the importance of early secure attachment, see John Bowlby's summary of his own infant attachment theory (1982 [1969]: 376–8).

In Ch. 3, I examined the differences between Anglophone and Francophone readings of Hellenistic philosophy, arguing that the latter holds more conceptual resources for a theory of passionate self-cultivation. Both Hadot and Foucault claim that the Hellenistic account of self-cultivation has much to offer contemporary philosophy and practical life, but, instead of following the ways these thinkers envisage this in their own work, I focused on how Hadot's arguments for the transposability of the Hellenistic self-cultivation underwrite other uses of the conceptual resources of the Hellenistic tradition (3.2). Furthermore, in Ch. 4, I argued that the Hellenists not only offer us a theoretical account of self-cultivation, but also a practical method to do this, one which is elaborated on by Foucault's informative account of *pratiques de soi* and Hadot's account of *exercices spirituels*.

In Ch. 5, I proposed that the exercises offer us the possibility of transposing the Hellenistic account of self-directed character development in two ways: first, we can deploy the general theoretical principles on self-directed character change to the cultivation of our passionate character in specifically. Second, we can think imaginatively about how the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation offer a practical method that could be applied to cultivating our passionate attachments. Ch. 5 followed the first way. There I employed some of the Hellenistic theoretical insights into self-cultivation to show how we can formulate a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments. Ch. 6 followed the second one. There I argued that the practical exercises of self-cultivation that the Hellenists offer can be enlisted into this process, and that these exercises offer a practical method that can be applied to cultivating our passionate character. Together these chapters show how the Hellenistic exercises of self-cultivation make a theoretical and practical contribution to the question of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments.

While a theory of cultivating our passionate attachments can be considered a valuable addition to practical philosophy in its own right, it is especially valuable given the other accounts of self-cultivation in practical philosophy. Practical philosophers already offer detailed theories of self-directed character change for the moral and prudential dimensions of our character, so offering an account of cultivating our passionate character change complements these theories, making our understanding of how self-directed character change operates significantly more comprehensive. Human flourishing extends well beyond the parameters laid out for it by modern moral philosophers. It is multifaceted, and involves responding appropriately to passionate considerations, as well as to moral and prudential ones. We cannot understand our practical lives without accounting for all three of these dimensions of our character, so we ought to give serious philosophical attention to how we can cultivate each of them. This

means that constructing a theory of how we can cultivate our passionate attachments usefully adds to existing philosophical accounts of how we cultivate our moral and prudential characters. We must not only strive to cultivate ourselves morally and prudentially, but must also strive to cultivate our passionate character. This study has proposed how this can be done in theory and in practice, and this suggests that a comprehensive philosophical theory of self-cultivation is now within our reach.

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I provide the original date of publication in square brackets (when known); the edition used is provided in rounded ones. In classical texts, I give the year of the translation I use, along with the reference to the standard edition (details in bibliography). In texts quoted from the complete published works of a philosopher, I add the abbreviated name of the cited text after the year the translation was published in square brackets.