

## THE INSTITUTIONS OF HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY

One feature of philosophy in the Hellenistic period often remarked upon is the way that philosophical argument and study become increasingly the domain of trained professionals. Whereas Socrates, who ironically was to serve as the intellectual inspiration for so much of Hellenistic philosophy, approached his interlocutors with philosophical arguments that were both immediate and non-technical, Hellenistic philosophers often produced enormous amounts of specialised technical work clearly accessible only to fellow professionals. However much they may claim to be interested in alleviating the psychic distress of humanity at large, it is equally the case that they often write to score points with fellow professionals against other professionals and with a style and vocabulary that could only befuddle the uninitiated. The establishment and standardization of philosophical topics, the routine rehearsal of common objections and responses, the intensity of focus on argumentative niceties, the creation of a specialized vocabulary to be wielded and understood only by trained technicians—all indicate a discipline progressively leaving any amateur standing behind.

Of course, the notion of philosophers as professionals writing for other professionals is something to which we have grown accustomed and a layperson picking up a piece of professional philosophy today often might just as well be approaching an advanced medical textbook or the latest issue of a physics journal. We may lament this feature of contemporary philosophical argument or we may think it just as essential to developments in philosophy as special technical equipment is to the progress of other specialised disciplines. Regardless of our views here, however, one thing seems undeniable. What underwrites the contemporary practice of professional philosophy is an extended system of institutional support and reward. Without stable university positions, salaries, fellowships, professional journals and presses, endowments, and all the other kinds of familiar institutional support that underwrite the practice of contemporary philosophy, professional philosophy, as we know it, would cease to exist.

It is tempting to assume initially, perhaps, that as it took on an increasing professional aspect, philosophy in the Hellenistic period similarly was supported by institutions of increasing complexity, scope, and power. How else to account for the unparalleled persistence of the four storied schools of Hellenistic philosophy, the Epicurean, Stoic, Academic, and Peripatetic, and the enduring intellectual influence of their great centers in Athens--the Garden, Stoa, Academy, and Lyceum? Such an assumption becomes even more tempting, no doubt, when we dip into standard accounts of Hellenistic philosophy. Although, few now would subscribe to the easy analogies drawn by 19<sup>th</sup> century European philologists between the ancient philosophical schools and modern universities, it is not uncommon to find contemporary scholars making use of language and metaphors that suggest fairly

straightforward correspondences between ancient and modern institutions of philosophy.

A moment's reflection serves to make clear some fundamental differences, however. First, and most obvious, perhaps, is the fact that philosophical schools do not exist today as independent, freestanding institutions dedicated to the study and teaching of philosophy. The contemporary study of philosophy is supported within a larger institutional framework provided by colleges and universities and is thus subject to a wide variety of constraints from without, as are its teachers and students. Although scholars have sometimes described the ancient philosophical schools as "the universities of antiquity" or have tried to trace the origins of the idea of the university to practices in the ancient philosophical schools, nothing could be more misleading at the level of institutional description. Whatever continuities or parallels might exist between the methods and aims of teaching in these respective ancient and modern pedagogical contexts, any attempt to draw parallels between actual ancient and modern institutions quickly runs into a series of obstacles. This is because no ancient philosophical school had anything remotely resembling philosophy's place or support in the wider institutional structures of the modern (or even medieval) university. Indeed, in many ways the flourishing of philosophy in the Hellenistic period presents a rather stark challenge to the notion that there is any strict correlation between the power and resources of established institutions and the complexity, influence, and professional quality of the philosophical thinking and writing that they underwrite. The Stoics, for instance, adherents of arguably both the most technically dexterous and most enduringly influential of the Hellenistic schools, probably never managed to acquire a single piece of property or the slightest bit of any other form of common endowment. So too, although one sometimes hears talk of a long, uninterrupted line of Stoic scholars throughout the Hellenistic period holding forth to generations of students in the Stoa, we have good evidence that Chrysippus, surely one of the most accomplished and professionally visible of Stoic scholars, gave up teaching in the Stoa to teach in the Lyceum, Academy, and the entrance of the Odeon—the very haunts of those old adversaries of Socrates, the sophists. And he may have done so quite consciously, since he claimed that the philosopher should make money by charging for his teaching and "being a sophist" (Plutarch, *Stoic Contradictions* 1034b). Any talk of a Stoic "school", therefore, is likely to be misleading if it implies a particular ongoing institution with a recognizable identity, structure, or even location over and above the individuals or groups who happened to gather together and identify themselves as Stoics at particular times and places.

By way of contrast, modern institutions of higher learning support and lend continuity to the study and teaching of philosophy independently, in a real sense, of any particular individuals. In the Hellenistic period, only the Garden of the Epicureans provided anything remotely like this kind of institutional continuity. But it was a striking exception. The fortunes of the other schools often very much depended on the abilities, intellectual influence, and in some case, the means of particular individuals. Nor should we forget that, for the most part, what we actually have any real evidence for are very short flurries of creative philosophical activity followed by periods of silence that periodically are interrupted by what might best be described as attempts to reformulate doctrines either in the face of new scientific developments or of new philosophical challenges. It might be the case, as many have assumed, that this evidence can best be accounted for by postulating coherent underlying institutions that provided for the continuity, survival, and development of the chief philosophies of the Hellenistic period. But institutional continuity is certainly not the only possible

explanation, especially since any hard evidence, even for briefly surviving institutions, is remarkably scarce. Moreover, in several important cases we have much better reasons for concluding that, to the contrary, philosophical activity was occurring either without any institutional support or under the banner of an institution that in reality was long since defunct.

In turning to the evidence, we face several methodological questions. Chief among them initially, perhaps, is how to understand the relations between the stated doctrines of a school and its institutional practices. Given the extreme paucity of evidence for institutions of any kind or for any of the practices carried on within them, it has often been tempting to try to reconstruct features of the schools from the varieties of evidence that we do have--philosophical doctrines in the main, sometimes augmented by anecdotal evidence about philosophers' personalities or about incidents occurring at lectures, reactions to their teaching, etc. After all, one might suppose, it hardly seems implausible to assume a certain continuity between a school's overt doctrines and its educational practices and one certainly might expect a school's arrangements to reflect or at least attempt to reflect in some measure the very doctrines that gave rise to it in the first place. On closer inspection, however, one soon discovers how difficult it is to make even the most simple inferences of this kind and how spectacularly such inferences can go awry.

We might find gaps between doctrines and actual school practices less surprising, perhaps, if we pause to reflect for a moment on institutions for which we are much better informed. Armed only with the New Testament, for instance, one might go on to make some badly mistaken inferences about the likely forms of association that have occurred among various groups of Christians in particular historical periods. This is not only because the Gospels are open to a bewildering range of interpretations, but also because a host of other considerations can condition the dynamics within groups. Conversely, if one were in possession of evidence only for the behaviour and institutional practices of certain groups of avowed Christians, one might be extremely hard pressed to recover the revealed doctrines they are meant to reflect. Moreover, even in those cases where we both are well informed about the practices of a particular group and have direct access to its guiding texts, we still may be at a loss to understand the exact nature of the connections its members saw between their doctrines and their institutions. How much more precarious, then, to make inferences from doctrines to institutional practices in the case of the philosophical schools. Typically we have next to nothing in the way of evidence for internal practices, and often, to complicate matters further, fairly strong evidence of doctrinal disagreements.

Although few scholars today would move with any confidence between, say, the educational ideals expressed in Plato's *Republic* and the little we know about what may have gone on in the Academy, it is not uncommon for scholars to claim, based on perceived contrasts in philosophical doctrines, that, at the very least, a different ethos pervaded and gave shape to the respective institutional arrangements of the various schools. Martha Nussbaum, for instance, who argues that sharply contrasting forms of association, pedagogical methods, and intellectual goals were to be found in the Peripatos and the Garden of Epicurus, has offered a particularly strong statement of this kind of view and one that well illustrates our methodological problem.<sup>1</sup> The Garden of the Epicureans, she claims, was a place where members were proselytized by a series of careful techniques that speak to our deepest psychological anxieties. Once these anxieties were laid bare, would-be-Epicureans were subjected to a whole battery of coercive techniques whose object was inculcating Epicurean doctrine and

integrating individuals into a homogeneous community of true believers. Among other things, new members would undertake to memorize authoritative doctrines and to put themselves under the spiritual control of superiors who had mastered Epicurean techniques and who would keep them on the right path by administering strong verbal admonitions. Community life in the Epicurean school was structured by a shared concern for constant vigilance and strict adherence to Epicurean doctrines. Thus members were urged to report the backsliding of others and to confess their own lapses in belief or in behaviour.

The key contrast with the Peripatos revolves around questions of rationality and respect for individual autonomy. For Nussbaum, the Garden was a place where the practical goals of therapy were placed above concerns for the autonomy of individuals and for their rational understanding of the doctrines they were absorbing. The Peripatos, on the other hand, embodied in a certain sense the liberal ideals of the modern research university. It fostered free and unencumbered inquiry with no constraints other than making one's views or results stand up to the rigorous rational scrutiny of one's fellows. Students came to the Lyceum in search of knowledge and to engage in dialectical examination with fellow researchers; they did not come because they were driven to address some deep inner psychological turmoil or because they were seeking personal salvation. Presumably, in keeping with Aristotle's own views about the importance of early habituation for future moral and intellectual inquiry, the Lyceum attracted students with very different backgrounds from those of the Garden and with different psychological experiences, intellectual attainments, and an upbringing more conducive to free dialectical inquiry. As for the nature of communal interaction in the Peripatos, one should imagine (an idealized) Harvard or Oxford versus the alternative Moonie communities run by the Epicureans.

Although many might disagree either with details of Nussbaum's characterization or with the sharpness of her contrast, it is safe to say that her views capture a general consensus that something very different was going on in the Garden and in the Peripatos with respect to teaching, research goals and methods, social interactions and experiences, etc. And certainly at a general level it would be hard to deny that this may very well have been the case. But the question we face is whether we are in any position to recover actual differences in school practice and whether we are warranted in making inferences from the doctrines we find in philosophical texts toward this end.

Did, as Nussbaum's account suggests, generations of peripatetic teachers engage in the dialectical examination of philosophical topics with their students, show concern to foster their independent research skills, display a healthy respect for their intellectual autonomy, and avoid unappealing displays of paternalism when disagreeing with them? And were they encouraged to do this on the basis of abiding institutional structures that reflected Aristotelian commitments to such pedagogical methods and goals? From the perspective of what we actually know about pedagogical practices in the Lyceum, such questions, frankly, are likely to look a little absurd. We are only very rudimentarily informed about the fortunes of the Peripatos, and then not even for its first hundred years. At that point the Peripatos itself, perhaps, but certainly any surviving evidence of its activities as an institution, disappears precipitously. What remains, in addition to Aristotle's own works, is a substantial body of work by his immediate successor as head of the school, Theophrastus, but thereafter only some fragments and reports for Strato and Lyco, the next two heads of the school. What are we in a position to conclude, therefore, about the ongoing pedagogical practices in the Peripatos? Were Strato's lectures on

microvoids and his classroom manner less authoritarian and more openly dialectical, say, than the mathematical lectures of the Epicurean Philonides? Strato apparently defended a unitary view of the soul. Should we conclude that he affirmed or denied Aristotle's views of habituation, with its corresponding implications for student admission? Was Strato's reported talent for refutation aimed at students in ways that fostered or hindered the development of their rational autonomy? When we turn from Strato to his successor, is there any way of deciding whether the apparently well-dressed and affable Lyco dealt with students in more or less authoritarian manner than his high-strung and anorexic predecessor? Lyco was said to be a vastly popular lecturer. But given his reported predilections for pleasures and erotic pursuits, can we be sure that he avoided demeaning entanglements with his students based, not on respect for their autonomy and a concern for their intellectual growth, but purely as an expression of his own desire and superior power?

We obviously are in no position to form judgments about any of these matters responsibly, and indeed the only glimmers of evidence we have about actual pedagogical practice suggests that as time went on the Lyceum engaged more in instruction than in discussion and dialectic.<sup>11</sup> Whether this was a decision made at a broader institutional level or whether some prominent individuals preferred to teach this way in the face of earlier practices is anybody's guess. If we remember as well Wilamowitz's complaint that Aristotle's choice of Theophrastus; as the next head of the Peripatos over Eudemus (Aulus Gellius 13.5) was autocratic and smacked of paternalism (when compared to the elections of scholars in the Academy), conclusions about a general liberal ethos pervading the actual institutional arrangements of the Peripatos seem, at best, merely fanciful. We therefore should be strongly suspicious, I think, about any attributions of a particular ethos to the Lyceum as an institution generally. It may be that the dialectical nature of the works that survive under Aristotle's name gives theoretical witness to a respect for individual autonomy and reflects Aristotelian views of the importance of our own rationality in assessing and understanding beliefs about ourselves and the world. But such textual features, on their own, provide an insufficient warrant for inferring that the ongoing pedagogical methods of peripatetics displayed any special concern for autonomy or rationality, especially given that the few bits of evidence that we do have about institutional life in the Peripatos actually tend to tell against such a view.

Nussbaum's reconstruction of institutional life in the Garden raises a connected methodological worry, that of the relation between doctrines and particular practices in those few cases where we actually have some evidence for the latter. In making her argument that life in the Garden was rigidly hierarchical, coercive, and ever vigilant against heterodoxy, she relies heavily on Philodemus' *On Frankness* along with texts of Epicurus that treat philosophy as analogous to therapy. Philodemus offers our most complex and richly detailed discussion of pedagogical and social practices associated with any ancient school. At the same time, however, *On Frankness* is a text two hundred years removed from the days of Epicurus and one whose discussion clearly may be influenced by later developments in groups far removed from the original Garden in time, place, cultural and political milieu, etc. Thus, although Philodemus alludes, for instance, to what looks like a developed hierarchical system of Epicurean trainers and trainees, we have no independent evidence for such a hierarchy within the institutions of early Epicureanism. Nor, indeed, do we have any evidence for the type of close-knit community seemingly envisaged by Philodemus' text. Indeed, one persistent misconception about the Garden is that a kind of alternative community lived within its grounds committed to

Epicurus' injunction to "Live hidden." Epicurus' will (D.L. 10.19) leaves to his followers a garden and a small house separate from it, the latter for the use of his innermost circle and their children. But there is no serious evidence to suggest that Epicurus himself ever envisaged groups coming together to live in the Garden in obedience to his principles; nor do we have any evidence of any permanent residences in the Garden at any period. At one time, it was fashionable to postulate camps of humble little huts, a la Lucretius 5 no doubt, thronging the Garden. But in retrospect, this vision of a kind of perpetual tent city in Athens abutting the walls of the Academy hardly can fail to strain our credulity. It is much more likely that Epicureans went back and forth from their residences to the Garden just as members of other schools went from their homes to their meeting places. How they got there, of course, is a different matter. Our most influential recent collection of Hellenistic philosophical texts, by A.A. Long and David Sedley, offers an illustration of the ancient philosophical schools (p.4) in which the Academy is chock a block with serious looking men and youths reading and striking thoughtful poses. Next door, at the Epicurean Garden are two huts, what appears to be a series of vegetable plots, and one solitary fellow walking away from what is either a very long-eared horse or a donkey. Old stereotypes die hard, it seems. It is difficult to know what to say about the vegetable plots, except that they seem more English than Greek. The donkey, as the saying goes, is hard to dispute with, especially if we are meant to view him, not as the companion of a permanent resident, but as having just dropped off a visitor.

It is unlikely that Nussbaum's picture of a closed, alternative community of Epicureans corresponds, therefore, to any historically occurring group associated with the original Garden in Athens. Other Epicurean groups in such places as Rhodes or Cos may have practiced differently, but that remains a matter of speculation. On the other hand, we do have good evidence that memorizing authoritative doctrines of the master was a practice encouraged from the very beginnings of the school. Does this count as evidence that prevailing in the Garden was a general ethos of disregard for rationality and individual autonomy? Certainly not on its own, I think, since this practice can be open to a variety of interpretations. When taken out of Nussbaum's more claustrophobic account of Epicurean group dynamics, memorizing doctrine begins to look far less sinister and threatening to individual autonomy. Nussbaum aligns memorization with Epicurean sayings that stress the therapeutic aspect of philosophy, e.g. "Empty are the words of that philosopher who offers therapy for no human suffering. . . . there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the suffering of the soul" (L&S 25C=Porphyry, *To Marcella* 31). But we also have Epicurean statements (and ones more likely to have been memorized by adherents) that suggest a strong commitment to truth and individual understanding: "One should not pretend to philosophize, but actually philosophize. For what we need is not the semblance of health, but real health" (L&S 25D=*Vatican Sayings* 54). In this different light, it is possible to see how memorizing might function as an initial aid to one's further rational understanding of doctrine, not merely as a replacement for it. Thus, Elizabeth Asmis, for example, takes the Epicurean practice of memorizing authoritative sayings as part of the initial stages of Epicurean education, a basic first step by which one comes to eventually understand the thought of the Master rationally.<sup>iii</sup> She also finds nothing objectionably coercive in the sort of hierarchies described by Philodemus, but rather views them as an institution grounded in friendly guidance—guidance of the sort that is respectful of students' autonomy and slowly leads them to rationally understand the truths of Epicureanism for themselves.

How then are we to choose between these two diametrically opposed visions of life in the Garden? Both try to link the Epicurean practice of memorizing authoritative sayings to textual doctrines. However, texts can be found that put this behaviour in a different light. Moreover, it is clear that different groups can engage in the same practice for different purposes, regardless of any textual warrant. Our problem is that we have insufficient historical evidence to decide how the practice of memorization was actually carried on within the Garden and what internal institutional functions it was meant to serve. We do not know, that is, the kinds of connections groups of Epicureans themselves might have seen between their authoritative texts and this practice, or between their doctrines and their institutions more generally. Presumably some of their members never achieved the requisite rational understanding of Epicurus' thought, regardless of the time they spent in memorizing, while others perhaps did. But our evidence does not allow us to discriminate finely enough to determine the exact nature of this practice and its function in the Garden. Any conclusions about a general ethos in the Garden seem, therefore, to be on much the same footing as those made about the Peripatos, even though we initially may seem better informed about some features of the Epicureans' institutional life. This is because, given the limitations of our evidence, we are not in a position to decide how particular practices were actually carried on nor can we sure of their point. Making this claim, I hope, is not to give in to some lamentable form of historical scepticism; rather, it is meant as a gentle reminder of the kinds of evidence we would need to defend claims about the general ethos of institutions. The Epicureans were doctrinally philosophical dogmatists in the way that members of the Peripatos presumably were not. But how this difference in philosophical attitude translated into the institutions and actual pedagogical practices of their two respective schools is not something that we can hope to recover on the basis of inferences from perceived contrasts in philosophical doctrine, even at a general level.

It is unfortunate that although we have some intriguing titles in booklists (e.g. *Peri Askeseos*, *Peri Agoges*, *Didaskalos*, etc.), there are no surviving treatises from any of the founders of the four schools that take up in a theoretical way such questions as a philosophical school's proper arrangements, its institutions, the best and most productive forms of institutional life, etc. Moreover, although it seems plausible to assume that the founders themselves took at least some pains over the ongoing internal arrangements of their schools, our evidence is largely silent on this point. Indeed, it is surprising how little provision they seem to have made for the survival of their schools at all, if they had any hopes that it would be through such institutions that their thought would endure and continue to be propagated. Plato taught both at the Academy and later in an adjoining garden at Colonus when he returned from Sicily for the first time (D.L. 3.5ff). His will, however, makes no mention of the garden and makes no provision for the continuation of his school. We therefore have no evidence to suggest that Plato believed that his school would continue its activities after his death, nor do we know if he cared. We do know, however, that he took no special steps to insure its future institutional life, even by making the minimal gesture of naming a successor. Aristotle, too, made no provisions for any particular institution to survive him, though he seems to have picked a successor. Being a resident foreigner, he could not legally own property in Athens. Moreover, given his flight from Athens for political reasons, it is unlikely that he could have ever imagined such an institution coming into being in a city that had become so hostile. Zeno, likewise, was a resident foreigner at Athens, as was his successor Cleanthes. Although feted by the Athenians for his services to virtue with a gold crown and a

tomb upon his death (D.L. 7.10 ff), in his lifetime Zeno could have harbored no hopes for the kind of private grounds and facilities enjoyed by the Epicureans. Among the four so-called founders, then, it is really only Epicurus, who made any material provisions for an institution to outlast him. Whether or not we accept Diskin Clay's thesis that Epicurus further tried to ensure the survival of his thought by depositing central works in the archives of Athens,<sup>iv</sup> he is the only one of the four who consciously provided physical resources for the survival of his school. In this he was preceded by Aristotle's successor, Theophrastus, who acquired and bequeathed a garden for the Peripatos that provided a private space for the next few generations of that school. We know that Plato's garden as well, presumably inherited by his nephew Speusippus, came to serve as a meeting place for his immediate successors, though after the death of its third head, Polemon, no more mention of it is made in our sources. It is worth noting these simple points, perhaps, since when we speak of the Academy, Lyceum, Garden, and Stoa it is often easy to think of something much more grand and to forget on just how fragile a foundation, in the sense of private material support, the ancient schools survived. Of course, some prominent members of schools, such as Theophrastus, were exceedingly well off. But ongoing resources for the support of philosophy at any kind of institutional level were decidedly minimalist. Apart from some small bits of property which usually were alienated among philosophically interested family members for their own use, but then often lost for the future use of the school, some pieces of furniture, and small collections of books, which also tended quickly to go out of groups' possession, the material resources available for most practicing philosophers as members of schools were practically nil. Schools in the material sense typically consisted of little more than a private place where members could meet and make use of the library belonging to the school's head. Moreover, except for the Epicureans, it is not clear that any of the schools enjoyed even such modest amenities for more than their first few generations. The Stoics managed on less. Illustrative of their institutional resources is the story that Cleanthes, after becoming the second head of the Stoa, augmented the money gained from his teaching by engaging in the lowly profession of water-carrier. (D.L. 5.168)

When we speak of the ancient schools, then, we are speaking of institutions that primarily relied on traditions of teaching and on the ongoing relations of individuals for their continuity and survival. This is one reason why analogies to our contemporary institutions can be so misleading. In fact, one of the greatest impediments to our understanding of the ancient schools as institutions is perhaps simply our habit of calling them "schools", since so many of the associations that this word holds for us do not apply in the ancient context. Take, for instance, a representative claim by the great French historian of education, Henri-Irénée Marrou. In the course of what is often taken to be the standard account of education in the philosophical schools, he claims that a small number of elite students went on to study philosophy after completing the standard Hellenistic *enkyklios paedia* and that they would begin their studies with general lectures in the history of philosophy.<sup>v</sup> This should all sound rather familiar, since it corresponds to our own experience of a few elite students going directly on to study philosophy in schools after finishing their preliminary studies. Nor is this familiarity unplanned. This is because, for Marrou, the Hellenistic schools are in many ways not only paradigmatic of Greek educational principles generally, but also the source for our own educational institutions. Moreover, he subscribes to a *longue duree* conception of institutions<sup>vi</sup> in which one explains historical phenomena by means of resemblance, analogies, and parallels to

subsequent contexts. There is an obvious danger of anachronism in such a procedure, one might think, but the claim is that this vision of the historical connections among institutions holds out the promise of discovering deep underlying correspondences between practices that we might otherwise miss.

Such an account, however, whatever its use in helping to isolate paradigmatic and static transhistorical structures—and ones that serve as models for later historical periods—blurs what, if anything, is to my mind most characteristic of the teaching of philosophy in the Hellenistic period. And that is the ever-shifting plurality of forms of association, many of them evanescent, which arose among particular philosophical groups, groups whose composition and intellectual focus rarely remained stable. Did some elite students go on to study philosophy after finishing their preliminary studies? There can be little doubt. But it is hard to believe that the Epicureans and Stoics, regardless of their increasing concern with philosophical polemics, started their students off with lectures in the history of philosophy. Indeed, we have evidence that they did not, since in their view there would be little value in getting things out of focus immediately by exposing students to a regrettable history of philosophical error. More important, however, Marrou's account treats philosophical education as being the next potential step in a larger, more systematic process of Greek *paedia* and one that depends on one's prior education. But this claim, apart from admitting of many exceptions, more worryingly assimilates philosophical study into a wider institutional structure that it never enjoyed. Philosophical education was typically viewed as something separate and unconnected, and certainly never a part of *enkyklios paedia*. The story of Epicurus turning to philosophy because his schoolmaster could not explain to him the meaning of "chaos" in Hesiod (D.L.102) is just one of many illustrations of the fact that philosophical questions were viewed as something apart from standard education. Indeed, Epicurus exhorted those interested in philosophical questions and the good life to shun the standard education entirely: "Hoist all sail, my dear boy, and steer clear of all education" he urges his follower Pythocles (D.L. 10.6). Philosophical study was viewed by the Epicureans as a replacement for standard education, not as a next step following upon it. Similarly for Stoicism, it is hardly likely that a student like Cleanthes, for instance, had much prior education, since he was a boxer from an impoverished background. The jibes of his fellow students, moreover, by no means suggest that he could be characterized as the elite product of a system of general education. But my point is not to line up exceptions to Marrou's claim, since there are many. It is to dispute his general picture of philosophical study as duly taking up its assigned place, much as in our own day, in the wider institutional structures of cultural and political life. Such an account implies the kind of stable ongoing system of institutional support that the study of philosophy in the "schools" of the Hellenistic period just did not have.

In antiquity, a variety of terms were used to refer to the activities of philosophers.<sup>vii</sup> Some, such as *exedra*, *peripatos*, and *kepos* referred to the places where they met and strolled. *Schole* and *diatribe* came to be used to describe courses of study and lectures. *Hairesis* and *agoge*, in the sense of choices of a particular type of philosophical life and view of one's *telos*, become more prominent later in the period. Indeed, it became a matter of controversy whether some philosophers, e.g. cynics, could be said to belong to a *hairesis*. Hippobotus (*On the Sects*) denies a place to cynics among the 'schools' precisely because they produced no body of coherent doctrine and they seemed to be unable to specify a *telos* for their style of life. Whether we agree with Hippobotus' definitional strictures here, it is perhaps salutary to reflect on the way he formulates the problem. He believes that a philosophical

school is primarily a group of adherents who share the same view of the *telos*. Obviously, such a criterion raises problems of its own. It is too general to capture readily such phenomena as the strong shifts in doctrines that occurred among Academics; nor can it pretend to account sufficiently for any of the fine-grained relationships that doubtlessly structured membership in the schools. Clearly, life in philosophical groups was shaped by a myriad of personal relationships, rivalries, and personal research agendas, for which we have only the most inadequate, scattershot testimony. But it is perhaps worth following out some of the implications of this claim, however general, if only as a corrective to the kinds of misconceptions we are likely to fall prey to if we follow Marrou's lead in thinking of philosophical activity as taking place in schools in the familiar sense.

Obviously such generalizations can be crude, but in looking at the overall history of philosophy in the period, we can see in each *hairesis*, as it were, some roughly similar patterns consisting of brief flurries of philosophical activity followed by intervals of silence and, in some cases, short-lived revivals. Obviously, we need to be on our guard not to substitute one form of anachronism for another, but in some ways it may be helpful to think of ancient philosophical "schools", in the first instance, as emerging and initially functioning in a way that corresponds to how we might today view the "school" of Wittgenstein and his followers, or the "schools" of Leo Strauss or Ayn Rand. The analogy is by no means perfect, of course, since followers of these modern scholars typically are supported individually within universities and thus lead intellectual lives that, while more secure, are both more dispersed and isolated than their ancient counterparts. But the point of the analogy is to try to pick out some common features shared by groups of adherents to schools of thought--schools of thought that wax and wane in popularity and prestige, perhaps, but that manage to continue attracting individuals who subscribe to their particular doctrines. To be sure, one could not describe these contemporary groups as comprising schools in the familiar sense of a group of individuals gathered together under the aegis of a common, stable institution with fixed curricula, degrees, legal status, formal admission requirements, dedicated positions, etc. But we can recognize them as adherents to particular schools of thought, nonetheless, by the rough, if changing, similarity of their views and their shared intellectual commitments.

Although there are several significant differences that must be taken into account, it may be worth pursuing this analogy further since it captures some additional features of schools of thought and the behavior of their adherents that may be relevant to our discussion. Like the followers of Wittgenstein, Strauss, or Rand, the first followers of Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and Epicurus were attracted by their masters' compelling combination of philosophical talent and personal charisma. There is no need to retail the ancient lore in support of this point, especially since too much ancient evidence for modern tastes typically is directed precisely at demonstrating this often problematic feature of the psychology of philosophical groups. No doubt connected to this characteristic of philosophical groups is the way that, at least among the generation of students who have had direct contact with the master, there arises a deep concern to understand and propagate the master's thought. At the same time, although personal study and conversation with the great master can serve as a special mark of distinction, it is also something that can color doctrinal disputes with charges of loyalty and betrayal and it certainly can foster personal jockeying based on claims to the master's favor, etc. Not surprisingly, therefore, internal disputes often arise among the first generation of adherents about the exact import of particular doctrines or actions of the master, occasionally leading to bitter disputes, charges of apostasy,

excommunications, etc. One further important consideration here is that within ancient philosophical groups, family relationships were similarly involved and added their own special dynamic to the mix.

But a clear difference that one typically sees between this first generation of students and those generations with no personal experience of the master is that the personal force and character of such worries begins to wane in later generations. In the same way, say, that Wittgenstein's immediate students took on some of his personal mannerisms along with his doctrinal ones, so some of Plato's immediate students began to mimic his stoop (Plutarch, Mor. 26b, 53c) as well as his manner of argument. But the stooping Platonist and the impossibly arrogant, abrupt, and laconic Wittgensteinian rarely makes an appearance in the generation which has had no direct personal experience of the master. Such affectations are not likely to carry weight with members of these later generations, in any case. So too, among those adherents of subsequent generations, it is harder to find those with the same kind of commitment to the master's particular projects or to find those who wish to take on the mantle of his thought with the same doctrinal reverence as those who experienced that thought first-hand. To style oneself a Wittgensteinian today, for example, is a very different proposition from what it meant, say, forty years ago in the days of Norman Malcolm and it involves an altogether different level of commitment to a cult of personality.

Even the most cursory look at the early history of peripatetic, Academic, or stoic thought shows how quickly corresponding shifts of focus and doctrine appear with each new generation. The history of Academic philosophy in the Hellenistic period, for example, presents such profound shifts in doctrine that scholars are at a loss to find even the thinnest of common threads uniting its first few generations. For the most part, its "institutional" history and continuity consists of little more than a list of scholars. The early and short-lived Peripatos undergoes deep shifts in focus, if not doctrine, and the later renewal of Aristotelianism under Critolaus seems to be much more an exploration of Aristotelian possibilities and positions in the face of new philosophical challenges than attempts to examine and revive actual doctrines of the master. Stoicism, too, along with some strong early doses of in fighting, undergoes measurable shifts in focus, although these shifts are typically presented as capturing the true spirit of the founder's thought. But they are shifts, nonetheless, and again it is only the Epicureans who maintain an easily recognizable doctrinal continuity along with their institutional continuity and thus provide an exception to this pattern. But even here the overall rigidity in Epicureanism can be overdone. Later Epicureans such as Zeno of Sidon and Diogenes of Tarsus seemed perfectly willing to recast works of the master in different forms. And although it has been claimed that Epicureans were deeply concerned to establish canonical texts, we do not find among them, as we might expect if this were the case, a parallel tradition of commenting on texts such as we find in later Aristotelianism.<sup>viii</sup>

One further feature of philosophy in the Hellenistic period that bears on this analogy is the manner in which talented philosophers took up the mantle of one of the great masters' thought and attempt to breathe life into neglected doctrines e.g. Critolaus' "revival" of peripatetic thought or Arcesilaus' reinvigoration of Academic philosophy. Correspondingly, in a few generations, perhaps, some powerful thinker might again take up the mantle of Wittgenstein and revive aspects of his thinking that have fallen out of fashion. When Critolaus did this for Aristotelianism, and identified himself as a peripatetic, the Lyceum had been defunct as an institution for over one

hundred years. His adherence to the “Peripatos” was thus not a pledge to any ongoing institution, but to a school of thought.

Of course, it would be misleading to suppose that this notion of a school of thought can capture all the varieties of philosophical association that occurred in our period. But it can perhaps help us to see something whose importance for the survival and success of Hellenistic philosophy cannot be underestimated, although it is sometimes overlooked in accounts of institutions. Contemporary adherents to schools of thought are typically supported by established institutions, but nonetheless the long-term power and influence of their philosophies depend less on institutional mandates, in many ways, than on their own talent and teaching. In this they provide a clear and important parallel to Hellenistic philosophers. This is because it is primarily to these more intimate personal rhythms of philosophical life—and not to any institutional backing provided by something called “the Stoa” or “the Lyceum” -- that we owe the survival, power, and professional complexity of Hellenistic philosophy.

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<sup>i</sup> Nussbaum (1994) p.

<sup>ii</sup> Lynch (1972) p.84 ff.

<sup>iii</sup> Asmis (2001) passim.

<sup>iv</sup> Clay (1998) pp. 40-54.

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<sup>v</sup> Marrou (1956) p. 309

<sup>vi</sup> Cf. Too (2001) pp.2-10

<sup>vii</sup> See Glucker (1978) p.159 ff.

<sup>viii</sup> Snyder (2000) p.54.