



The Urgent Need to Renew the Meaning of Philosophy

According to Jean Greisch

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Abstract

Jean Greisch aims to redefine philosophy's role in response to today's social and economic crises. He traces its evolution from ancient civilizations to modern times, identifying deep psychological roots behind human suffering. Greisch believes past philosophical efforts, though valuable, are no longer enough. For him, philosophy must evolve, breaking away from rigid beliefs and inherited biases. It should become a living, adaptive force that confronts present-day complexities. True renewal, he argues, requires a structural shift in how we understand reality and human behavior. This shift involves a therapeutic-philosophical approach that heals the self. Greisch envisions philosophy not just as theory, but as a practice of transformation.

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1. Introduction

John Greisch is widely regarded as a philosopher of renewal, both in spirit and substance, due to the richness and depth of his philosophical thought. Through his work, he has illuminated the essence of philosophy as a dynamic and evolving discipline—one that remains deeply engaged with the world and constantly seeks to probe beneath surface appearances. For Greisch, change, development, and progression are not mere occurrences but fundamental traits of life, history, time, and space. Accordingly, he asserts that thought must be in a state of continuous renewal—and since philosophy represents the most abstract form of thought, it is philosophy, above all, that must evolve both in theory and in method.

A close reading of the history of philosophy reveals that it has always been marked by epistemological breaks. Its birth in ancient Greece signified a rupture with myth, while the emergence of modern philosophy represented a departure from Aristotelian formal logic. The renewal of philosophy, Greisch argues, has always been intertwined with the rhythms and movements of reality and history. Each time the world undergoes rapid and profound shifts—whether in concepts, themes, or conditions—the philosophical discourse must be redefined to keep pace with these transformations.

Greisch's philosophical project thus aims to reframe the meaning of philosophy itself, shifting its central question from the origin of existence—traditionally a cornerstone of metaphysical inquiry—to a more purposeful and existential interrogation: *What is the aim of existence?* In doing so, philosophy is reimagined as a critical and constructive worldview, but one that must constantly renew itself to effectively engage with the complexities of contemporary life.

This raises a central question: How was John Greisch able to breathe new life into philosophy in the wake of the deepening crises it has faced across eras? In response, this paper seeks to offer a critical exploration of the evolution of the concept of philosophy through its major historical phases—from ancient Greek thought to modern philosophy. We also ask: In an age where many have proclaimed the death or irrelevance of philosophy, how can it rise again? And in the face of unprecedented technological advancement, how can philosophy continue to stand alongside, or even rival, the sciences and the arts?

2. The Genealogy of Philosophy over the Eras:

In here, we will historically scan the development of the notion of philosophy and philosophizing over the eras, starting with the eastern civilization, through the Greek and medieval and modern eras. This reading will offer us a general overview of the genealogy of the development of the notion through the different eras, which is what Jean Greisch presents in his works. This affirms the role that ancient philosophy has played in taking on philosophizing as a way of life. Here, we can say that the Babylonians, Hebrews, and Ancient Egyptians have been ignorant in philosophy, despite their great scientific breakthroughs, except for a few basic and general ideas that have mixed with theology, psychology and metaphysics; where they used their imagination and intuition to treat the existential questions, leaving the route of logical deduction and induction. Persians, Indians and the Chinese, on the other hand, have used the abstract rationale to a great degree; however, they have cornered it to scrutinizing and developing religion, and they did not meet much success in clearing out what is philosophy and establishing a separate field of knowledge out of it.¹ That was when the Greeks took

the spotlight, where they crossed the gap between experience and science in the best of ways, as they understood the true essence, causes by elimination, and proofs, making philosophy to be a fully established field of knowledge. This did not mean that we deny the role of the east in motivating the Greek philosophers to think and gather what they have received to scientifically process them, through actively using their mind, becoming the scholars of humanity.

Greek philosophy has gone through three different stages: the first is that of Socrates, known for a close fusion between natural sciences and philosophy. The sophists have played an important role in this stage, as they pushed philosophers towards matters of the mind, epistemology, and morality.

The second stage is represented by Plato and Aristotle, where the former was mainly interested in all philosophical questions, using all their power to examine every corner of them; however, they have fused reality with fiction, and proofs with stories, till Aristotle changed the course of processing to that of pure reason, establishing a final thesis on various different philosophical questions. The third stage is known for renewing and redefining old ways, revisiting morally, being influenced by the east, mysticism, and paying more attention towards actual sciences. To differentiate Plato and Aristotle philosophically, we will mention the most important bulletpoints of their respective philosophies.

2.1 Plato

Plato was historically the first philosopher to establish a philosophy, an academy, and a comprehensive philosophical doctrine encompassing both the mind and truth. Plato has derived his ideology from the Pythagoreans and Eleatics, taking inspiration from the writings of Heraclitus and his greatest teacher Socrates. After the

death of Socrates, Plato starting a second scientific stage in his intellectual life, where he became a teacher and philosopher who dedicated himself to teaching and thinking after establishing his Academy.² There, he wrote his books on a new direction of philosophy which he based on conversations, dividing into four sections:

- Epistemology and theory of knowledge, finishing what Socrates has started in critiquing the Sophists.
- Theory of forms, which focuses on absolute truth and the physical nature.
- Existence and ethics, which encompasses the basic principles.

Plato built his philosophy on the Theory of Forms. His views on God, nature, the soul, ethics, the state, and even art are all derived from this theory. Plato denied that the senses could be a source of true knowledge. He believed that knowledge consists of universal concepts—not merely ways the mind thinks, but actual external realities that exist independently. According to him, the Forms are the true source of knowledge.

This kind of knowledge is what philosophy cultivates, and philosophy, for Plato, is the ultimate goal. He even refused to answer the question "What is the use of philosophy?" because, to him, the question itself is flawed. Asking about its utility implies that philosophy is a means to something else—whereas for Plato, this reverses the proper order of things. Philosophy is not a means to an end; rather, everything else is a means to philosophy.

Thus, the ruler must be a philosopher—always a philosopher—devoting his time to understanding the Forms, studying philosophy, and solving people's problems through it. Philosophy is, in Plato's view, the only path to establishing

a sound and lasting political system. It teaches us virtue, purifies the soul from desires, and addresses the condition of the people. One day, Plato believed, the public must come to understand that philosophers are the most suitable people to establish a kind of divine order on earth.

2.2 Aristotle:

Aristotle was a student of Plato. He joined Plato's Academy and remained there until Plato's death. After that, he founded his own school, the Lyceum, in Athens. Aristotle was the first to systematically approach science as a whole and to lay down general principles for classifying the sciences.

For him, science is divided into two categories: theoretical and practical.

- The theoretical sciences aim purely at knowledge, such as mathematics.
- The practical sciences aim at guiding human actions and behavior.

Aristotle is considered the founder of logic, which he defined as the science of the laws of thought, regardless of the subject matter. Logic, to him, is the tool of the sciences. It is a new science born from the mind reflecting upon itself in order to establish a proper scientific method. The subject of logic is the acts of the mind in terms of their correctness or fallacy.³

He authored books such as *Prior Analytics* and *Posterior Analytics*, *On Interpretation*, *Sophistical Refutations*, and *On the Soul*.

Aristotle regarded philosophy as an art of living—every intellectual examination, every action, and every choice aims at some good. Happiness, for him, is the activity in accordance with the highest virtue, and the highest virtue is that of theoretical reason.

2.3 Medieval Philosophy:

The Middle Ages have often been described as a time of intellectual darkness, where the human mind was subjected to an external authority. Reason had no freedom to think except within the boundaries set by revelation—that is, by faith. Accordingly, philosophy was seen merely as a servant of theology. It did not seek knowledge for its own sake, nor did it explore science to understand nature's secrets or to empower humanity. Instead, its goal was the salvation of the human soul.⁴

Two main currents emerged during this period:

- One current dominated most of the Middle Ages, relying solely on faith without reasoning or interpretation.
- The other current, however, called for rational reflection on the content of faith and doctrine. Despite facing many obstacles, this rationalist trend gradually gained strength.

Although the Middle Ages are often accused of intellectual tyranny, it is unfair to deny that philosophy—in any era—has always aimed to be eternal and influential. Still, it inevitably bears the imprint of the dominant spirit of its age.

Philosophical thought during this period remained closely tied to the legacy of Greek philosophy, and by the 13th century, the role of reason began to clearly emerge. Interest grew in both natural sciences and religious studies, and this period witnessed significant developments that paved the way for the modern era.

Thus, what is commonly referred to as the Renaissance was not a sudden awakening, but rather a natural progression and continuation of a powerful intellectual movement that began in the late 13th century, gradually gaining freedom and reaching its peak in the 17th century.

This development was shaped by two major intellectual forces:

1. **Platonism**, represented by thinkers like *John Scotus Eriugena*, *St. Anselm*, and *Peter Abelard*, who emphasized the harmony between reason and revelation, and believed that universals have a higher, more real existence than individual entities.
2. **Aristotelianism**, represented by *Roscelin* and *Thomas Aquinas*, who believed that true existence belongs to individual beings, and distinguished clearly between reason and revelation.

Medieval Europe also saw the emergence of unique figures who challenged the authority of the Church and its major theologians, advocating instead for the power of reason—such as *Roger Bacon*, who called for liberating philosophy from all that hinders its progress, and who made empirical experience the foundation and source of all scientific knowledge.

We must also remember *St. Augustine*, who emphasized that reason is a powerful tool for attaining true knowledge, but that its ultimate source is God, who bestows essence and being upon all things. For him, inspiration is a strong source of true knowledge, and anyone who wishes to reflect on a given matter must begin with faith: “To reason, one must first believe.”

2.4 Modern Philosophy:

One of the consequences of humanism was the effort to establish a philosophy hostile to religion, accompanied by attacks on Scholastic philosophy, mocking its topics, language, and methods of reasoning, and accusing the entire Middle Ages of barbarism and ignorance.

Among the key features of the Renaissance and the Modern Age were intense individualism in literature, religion, and politics, and a profound

interest in mechanical science and its applications—aimed at expanding human control over nature and increasing material prosperity. This era saw a strong rise in scientific and intellectual movements.⁵

In England, empiricism was strengthened through the work of *Francis Bacon*, *Thomas Hobbes*, and *John Locke*. In France, *René Descartes* emerged with a rational and spiritual philosophy that could be described as new. He defined philosophy as the study of wisdom—not merely practical cleverness, but complete knowledge of everything humans are capable of knowing, including the management of life, preservation of health, and exploration of the arts.

For this knowledge to be what Descartes envisioned, it must be derived from first causes. Thus, philosophy, in his view, is universal science—the science of principles. By examining these principles, we lay the foundation for action, which he considered the highest of goals. Through such action, humans achieve well-being, assert mastery over nature, and use its forces to their advantage.

For Descartes, doubt is essential to truth—it is the key to the method. He transformed the way reason understood itself. Reason no longer merely grasps existence, as it did for the ancients. In this modern shift, science and philosophy separated: science came to focus exclusively on extension and motion, while philosophy confined itself to the realm of thought, becoming a self-reflective system or even a kind of art.

We have chosen to present the views of several traditional and modern philosophers through the limits of their philosophy, its method, and its aim. We also emphasized what *Jean Grondin* (*Grondin/Graish*) pointed out regarding the great importance of philosophy in human culture, and the crucial role it plays in helping to realize the human meaning,

understand the significance of life, and uncover the mystery of existence.

Our focus was on its three major philosophical problems:

- the problem of existence,
- the problem of knowledge, and the problem of theology.

We then followed the development of thought into contemporary philosophy, where these issues have greatly expanded in scope, and where modern philosophers have taken on a wide range of perspectives due to the massive intellectual heritage they received and the soaring wave of scientific and technological progress.

Grondin read history with the aim of affirming the importance of the earliest philosophies, which served as the intellectual foundation from which modern philosophies derived their methods and ideas. These early philosophies were considered ways of life and true existential arts, and their influence persists to this day in our ways of thinking—despite the divergences and contradictions among philosophical schools.

Each philosophical doctrine is, in fact, an expression of its time. The nature of any given philosophy depends on multiple factors, including:

- the philosopher's personal character,
- their education,
- the social and intellectual context they lived in,
- the political circumstances surrounding them,
- and the level of scientific advancement of their era.⁶

Based on this, philosophy today faces new and numerous challenges that did not exist in earlier times.

This necessitates a renewal in the meaning, methods, and approaches of philosophy—adapting it to the time and place we live in.

Philosophy must become a tool for understanding the human soul and for developing mechanisms and solutions to approach the ethical and epistemological challenges posed by the modern world.

According to Jean Grondin, despite the importance of traditional philosophies, they have partially lost their ability to express the challenges facing humanity in more advanced eras and have struggled to keep up with them. Hence, Grondin calls for a re-evaluation of the theoretical and practical frameworks of traditional philosophy and a renewal of its conceptual language, along with the creation of new concepts.

He advocates for building a flexible philosophical framework that is responsive to the dangerous transformations impacting all of humanity. For Grondin, renewal means creating something truly new—innovating methods of thinking and ways of teaching.

The features of this renewal in the meaning of philosophy are especially evident in his book *Living Through Philosophy*, also referred to as a therapy of the soul or a medicine for the spirit.⁷

3. Renewing the Meaning of Philosophy According to Jean Grondin:

Jean Grondin is a contemporary French philosopher, born in the town of Koerich in Luxembourg in 1942. He studied theology at the Catholic University of Leuven and at the University of Innsbruck in Austria, where he became familiar with transcendental and phenomenological approaches, particularly in reading *noumenology*. He also studied Hegel's philosophy and attended Paul Ricoeur's lectures on interpretation, metaphor, and the philosophy of action.

Grondin served as the dean of the Catholic Institute from 1985 to 1994. In 1985, he defended his doctoral thesis on Martin Heidegger, which would later be published as a book titled *The Happy Saying: Martin Heidegger Between Things and Words* (1987). He taught in numerous universities in the United States, Japan, and elsewhere.

Grondin's bibliography is rich and includes numerous books, translations, and hundreds of articles and lectures in various languages. Among his notable published works are *Hermeneutics and Metaphysics* (1977), *God and the Absolute in the Philosophical Theology of Modernity* (2012), and his translation of Hans Jonas's *The Principle of Responsibility: An Ethics for Technological Civilization* (1990). His works have been translated into English, Spanish, Japanese, Romanian, and Arabic.

His most important book is titled *The Philosophical Experience: Spiritual Exercises and the Healing of the Soul*, which we aim to introduce critically and highlight for its intellectual, methodological, and even linguistic richness.

In this book, Jean Grondin presents a historical overview of the eras that valued philosophy and philosophizing,⁸ viewing philosophy as a therapy for the soul and a form of inner relief. Within its content, Grondin analyzes several philosophical figures who treated philosophy as spiritual medicine—this includes traditional philosophies—and shows how it evolved into philosophical therapy through modern efforts.

Grondin bases his book on rethinking the meaning of the Socratic statement and examining its implications by following a path guided by three essential questions:

1. What is the empirical foundation of philosophy?

2. What kind of *discipline* does it accomplish?
3. What kind of *salvation* does it offer?

These questions lead to a particular idea of philosophy, highlighted in the works of writers Grondin admires, such as Martha Nussbaum, Pierre Hadot, Michel Foucault in *The Care of the Self*, and Paul Ricoeur in *Oneself as Another*. He sought to pursue and deepen the inquiry into the exclusive framework of ancient philosophy, trying to assess its intellectual richness and perhaps also the particular limits of a conception of philosophy that existentially reflects a specific way of life—before it became a formal system of doctrines.

Grondin seeks to explore the multiple faces of the philosophical experience across the ages—Greek, Medieval, and Modern—from Plato to Descartes, showing how treating philosophy as a form of healing became a method and path to salvation. He aims to demonstrate that the ancients' approach, in diving into the depths of the human soul and uncovering its mysteries, has become today a vital and effective way for modern humans to escape the unjust and dark world they struggle and suffer in—plagued by wars, marginalization, violence, and terrorism.

This situation demands a return to philosophy, which upholds the highest human virtue: establishing a connection between all types of knowledge and the ultimate ends of human reason. The philosopher must not be merely a craftsman of the intellect, and philosophy should not be treated as a luxury of thought. Rather, it is a skill whose mission is to properly handle the concepts that have become confused for the modern person and led to alienation and spiritual loneliness.

Philosophy, as wisdom, takes care of what matters to every human being. It must therefore monitor all sciences, and especially watch over their bearer: the human being.

This philosopher must not forget his role and moral duty, nor should he be overly proud of his skills. He must teach humanity wisdom if he is to truly deserve the title.

Jean Grondin thus brings us back to an essential question: What is philosophy?

When does a philosopher truly deserve to be called wise?

And how can philosophy, as philosophical therapy, care for human beings in their personal and ontological unity?

The Philosopher:

Philosophy is the art of forming and creating concepts through *conceptual personae* that contribute to defining them. It requires a *friend*—not just someone external, like an example or empirical circumstance, but rather an *inner presence* of thought, a condition for the very possibility of thinking. It is a *living statement*, an *experienced transcendence*. A friend of wisdom is someone who becomes a philosopher—well-versed in concepts and in the significance of their absence. This philosopher perceives those concepts that are neither logically valid nor random or shapeless, and *creates concepts* that are well-crafted and attest to creativity, even if they are disturbing or dangerous.⁹

Jean Grondin gives us an illustrative example he considers functional for understanding the conditions a person must meet to be not just a philosopher, but a *sage*. He refers to *Plato's Symposium*, and to Socrates' idea of philosophical desire, where Socrates says:

"No god aspires to philosophize or to become wise, for he is already wise

without lack or deficiency. The title of 'wise' is fitting only for the god."

We also find a similar idea in Heidegger, who says that *philosophy is something within man*, and here *man* means the *human being*. In other words, animals cannot philosophize, and gods have no need to philosophize. A god who philosophizes would no longer be divine, because the essence of philosophy is the *finite possibility of a finite being*.

Levinas, for his part, reverses the common definition of philosophy—not as *love¹⁰ of wisdom*, but as *the wisdom of love*. The wisdom of love in the service of love.

So when Jean Grondin responds to the question of whether philosophy is merely a rational art, and whether the philosopher is simply an artisan of reason, he answers that the philosopher is a *friend of the concept*. Philosophy is not merely the art of shaping and inventing concepts, because concepts are not necessarily forms, discoveries, or crafted materials.

Philosophy, more precisely, is *cognitive reason based on the creation of concepts*. The *continuous creation of ever-new concepts* is the true subject of philosophy. Since concept creation entails originality and innovation, the philosopher, by nature, possesses *power and capability*.

Creativity is usually associated with the sensory and with the arts—since art unifies spiritual entities, and since philosophical concepts also possess *sensitivity*. In truth, sciences, arts, and philosophies are *all creative* in their own right—even if the *creation of concepts* is exclusive to philosophy. Yet concepts do not simply await the philosopher, ready-made, as if they were celestial bodies. There is no *heaven of concepts*, as Gilles Deleuze¹¹ says. Rather, they must be *invented, crafted, or more precisely, created*. And they would be meaningless if they did not *bear the signature of their creators*.

If we say that the philosopher is a *creator*, then he is also a *challenger*. He *finds truth upon challenge*, and his stance is *ethical* before it is *demonstrative*. It is a *deliberate, vital position*, not merely a professional obligation.¹²

Challenge, in this sense, is a *critical stance* that encompasses all the meanings associated with the term "critique": it is to *draw the boundaries* of each cognitive power, to *expose its sources, illusions, and misuses*; to *unmask its false consciousness*; to *dismantle its idols*; to *deconstruct the certainties of its history*; to *uncover the origins of its formation*; to *analyze its presuppositions*; to *dig into what it keeps silent about*, and what it excludes as the *other*—what it judges as *outside, or wrong, or evil, or heretical, or backward, or degenerate*.

Philosophy

Jean Grondin stated that philosophy is a specialized form of education that encompasses multiple fields. The very name *philosophy* has long pointed to a theoretical domain—one that is most often confined to academic teaching and research, wherein philosophers are shaped, whether willingly or not, within a specific kind of philosophical knowledge.

Logic and epistemology emerge as the earliest indicators of this specialization in the post-Aristotelian tradition—when philosophy, as it had been practiced in Plato's Academy or in other ancient schools, shifted toward scholastic education. Philosophical knowledge thus came to be divided into three essential domains: logic, physics, and ethics, along with a growing specialization in epistemological knowledge.

In the 20th century, another factor emerged, contrasting different conceptions of philosophy: the analytical tradition, which emphasizes conceptual analysis, the rigor of argumentation, problem

identification, and the search for solutions; and the continental tradition, which focuses on historical sources and philosophical heritage. The dialogue between these two traditions is extremely complex.

In more recent times, philosophy has encountered many new competitors, especially in the human sciences, most notably sociology, which aspired to replace philosophy. This was partly due to philosophy gradually neglecting its tendency to create concepts, preferring instead to restrict itself to generalities. Later, epistemology, linguistics, and even psychoanalysis and formal logic challenged its domain. Then came computer science, commercial marketing, design, advertising, and all disciplines concerned with communication—posing additional challenges.

Paul Ricœur sought to distinguish philosophy from other sciences, and to elevate philosophical thought toward a new kind of philosophy¹³—one that does not aim to outline the logical framework of historical movements, but is instead built on the act of historical communication unique to each philosophical experience.

With Ricœur, the horizon of philosophy expands further through his pursuit of analyzing the movement of discourse from within. A philosopher, according to this view, is someone who can reveal the spirit of their era, because the philosopher's work is ultimately a verbal creation. This brings us to one of the most extreme and significant dimensions of philosophy: the complex relationship between actual history and the discourse it produces—what we ultimately refer to as the philosophical experience.

The Methodological and Essential Difference Between Philosophy and Philosophizing

Jean Greisch focused his attention on the fundamental epistemological and ontological difference between *philosophy* and *philosophizing*, and on the forms this distinction has taken through the historical transformation of philosophical discourse.

This difference, according to him, lies between doctrine and method, or between an idea embodied in a system, school, or intellectual current, and a way of life—a lived practice guided by what Pierre Hadot called *spiritual exercises*, which include tools of meditation, introspection, asceticism, and techniques for self-mastery.¹⁴

Before philosophy became an academic system of knowledge, philosophizing referred to a new way of leading one's life. Greisch emphasized the need to renew our understanding of philosophy, pointing out that the question "*What is philosophy?*" is one that even Plato and Aristotle approached only courageously but not conclusively. For them, philosophizing was not yet a school activity.

Greisch presented a survey of the educational practices of the great ancient philosophical schools—Platonism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism. He highlighted that their goal was not merely to provide a rational explanation of the world, but rather to elevate the inner transformation of human thought. This inner transformation was expressed through spiritual attitudes such as tranquility (*ataraxia*), freedom from disturbance, and self-autonomy.

Such transformation requires mental and physical training through what he calls *philosophical gymnastics*—raising self-awareness, mastering the self, and engaging in conscience examination. Within this understanding, philosophy becomes a rational way of living and thinking, and philosophizing becomes a mode of existence.

According to Jean Greisch, there is therefore an opportunity to reformulate the historical elements of philosophy, from Socrates to post-Nietzschean thought, in order to arrive at principles of a life worth living, regardless of status, location, or possibility.

This, he argues, is the original task of philosophy, ever since Socrates: philosophy is a fragile mental activity, and that fragility is the price of its nobility.

While philosophizing is natural to humans, and children's questions are similar across cultures, sustaining philosophical thought demands a rare and extraordinary effort—one that needs a particular environment that does not compel the mind to sanctify dogmas.¹⁵

Philosophy, he concludes, is the ladder that modern civilization climbed in its gradual ascent toward improving:

- the ability to think, in the face of illusion,
- the ability to live, in the face of suffering,
- the ability to coexist, in the face of violence.

Theoretical foundations, then, are not merely abstract luxuries, as critics of philosophical thinking often claim; rather, they are the mental and intellectual condition for a way of living and for civic conduct.

Features of Renewal in Jean Greisch – Philosophy as Therapy for the Soul

Jean Greisch drew on many figures, such as Martha Nussbaum, who emphasized therapies of desire and forms of self-flourishing, following Pierre Hadot and his foundational ideas about spiritual exercises in philosophical practice. He also referenced Michel Foucault and his concepts of subjectivation and care of the self through care for the other, and finally Volker Gerhardt, with his vision of

philosophical medicine to reform reason and heal inner fractures.

What these thinkers share is a wise use of the medical metaphor, placing inner maladies in the context of spiritual healing—though the tools are not medical in the traditional sense, but spiritual in the broad sense of “spirit”, encompassing the aesthetic, moral, and artistic, not the metaphysical or religious.

Before philosophy became a system of knowledge and a conceptual technique, it was an art of living, a way of life that engages being in its entirety. Philosophizing is therefore a spiritual exercise, not merely a theoretical discourse. This exercise accompanies life in its entirety, aiming to transform it entirely. Philosophy is not merely a mode of cognition or a path to knowledge; it is also—perhaps primarily—a way of living and a mode of being, practiced at every moment.

Thus, the notions of *exercise* and *spirituality* are essential in describing the philosophical mode of existence, where concept and ethical-psychological practice are intertwined.

These exercises involve not only the power of thought but also engagement with the inner dimension of the person¹⁶, as Heidegger called it: the care (Sorge) centered in the soul. Philosophers try to heal and care for it because the human being is inherently given to pain, grief, and an entire spectrum of intensified psychological tendencies—obsessions, hatred, urges...

For this reason, ancient philosophers were deeply concerned with treating the soul's disorders,¹⁷ especially within the Stoic school, which turned philosophical medicine into a practical method for addressing psychological imbalances and the afflictions of life. This method transforms tension—from negative

emotional outbursts into a positive inner harmony, where all of being is unified and directed toward noble ends.

Greisch reminds us of the philosophical exercises practiced by ancient Greek philosophers, which had clear purposes that must be appreciated to understand ancient thought and the essence of philosophy itself. According to him, we are entitled to practice philosophy if we seek to:

- Learn to live with rational and emotional balance in self-conduct—as if we were to live forever.
- Learn to converse with communicative ethics and respect for the other—as if the other might be right.
- Learn to die through contemplation and mindfulness—as if we were to die tomorrow.
- Learn to read, with an eye for meaning and experience hidden in the world's structure.

History shows that the philosopher played a healing role. In the Cave Allegory, Plato used the word “healing” to describe the liberation of man from the prison of ignorance. The Roman philosopher Cicero considered philosophy the true medicine for the soul. In the Middle Ages, Boethius wrote *The Consolation of Philosophy*—the second most influential book of the time after the Bible. While imprisoned, he didn't seek solace in religious belief, but in philosophy.

In the modern era, Nietzsche defined the philosopher as a doctor of civilization, whose role is to diagnose cultural diseases.

In our age, philosophical therapy has revived ancient healing metaphors from Hellenistic traditions. Each philosophical school—like the Stoics and Epicureans—

offers its own approach, shaped not only by cultural context but by an attempt to heal society's pains through an exploration of the human inner world.

Philosophical therapy thus intertwines with a project of social reform, aiming to build an ideal society, one that respects the inherent dignity of every human being—regardless of status, gender, race, or nationality.

Jean Greisch emphasizes the importance of the philosophical-medical question: it captures the essence of human suffering and proposes a therapeutic philosophical program. This requires shifting philosophical problems from the paradigm of truth vs. falsehood to that of health vs. illness.¹⁸

Thus, the philosopher's mission becomes one of healing, in proportion to the civilizational diseases and existential disorders of our age. It's an ambitious program, which Greisch developed

4. CONCLUSION

What we conclude is that philosophy faces numerous challenges, and therefore it is compelled to renew itself—its methods, questions, modes of inquiry, and teaching approaches—with a new philosophical spirit. This renewal must go beyond traditional academic lessons and curricula, encompassing a complete revitalization of the philosophical stance. We are in need of a new, informational philosophy—one that enables us to understand and absorb the profound and wide-ranging transformations brought about by information and communication technologies.

More importantly, we urgently need to elevate and guide the ethical impact of these technologies on us and our environment, in order to construct an intellectual framework that can help us grasp the mental and conceptual implications of our current predicament. Philosophy must reshape its questions to

through a series of works, calling for a reflexive rethinking of philosophy—a philosophy that questions its own tools and methods, and links addressing the “big questions” to healing the human self.

Greisch writes:

“It is the burden of human suffering and the desire for flourishing that drives human beings to philosophize.”¹⁹

Most people think philosophy is something only done by scholars in ivory towers, discussing texts. What escapes them is that philosophy is practiced daily, quietly, and constantly. Socrates didn't lecture from podiums. He had no set time to teach or walk with his students. He philosophized in jokes, in shared drinks, and finally in drinking hemlock in prison. He was the first to show that everyday life provides opportunities for philosophy—at any time, in any place, through everything we experience and do.

fit each era. The pursuit of self-understanding and understanding the world is an innate human drive—persistent, structured, and resilient, even when confronted with crises and conflicting ideas.

While cognitive sciences have attempted to replace philosophy by claiming the domain of thought, they have failed to do so. Philosophy has withstood repeated assaults and continues to preserve the uniqueness of philosophical discourse. Jean Greisch affirms that the therapeutic role of philosophy distinguishes it from both science and art, preserving its independence and strength. Even as science advances and dazzles, philosophers inevitably return—and with them, philosophy is reborn. What confirms philosophy's worth and power is precisely its therapeutic function. Though it may have initially appeared as a pursuit of knowledge, philosophy is ultimately a

medical, spiritual, and philosophical remedy for the modern human, who suffers from alienation and stumbling.

The renewal brought by Greisch is a reinterpretation of this intellectual legacy in light of the needs of our time. The old precedes the new; authenticity is the

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foundation of modernity, and the means lead to the end. Philosophy is the means, and renewal is the end—an end that contributes to improving reality, solving its problems, and eliminating the causes of its obstacles.²⁰

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- ¹⁹ Hanafi, H. (2017). *Heritage and Renewal*. United Kingdom: Hindawi Foundation.
- ²⁰ Grondin, J. *Living by Philosophizing*, p. 69.