

## Editorial

Freud, like Augustine, Meister Eckhart, Heidegger and others, speaks of inwardness, the inner life, the soul; about being excluded and the return home. In Heidegger and Eckhart we hear, clearly, a Platonic inflection in the need for man to return to a forgotten, innermost ground. For Eckhart, the hidden ground of the soul (*Grund*) is not a thing but man's relationship to Being. In his Latin sermons, Eckhart identifies this interior world of the soul as Plato's intelligible world. He tells the soul to stay at home, in its own inner room. In a similar way, Heidegger describes man as already being Dasein. Already being a fundamental relatedness. But one characterised by a fallenness of its innermost being. Both for Eckhart and Heidegger there is a distinction here between the being which has re-entered into its ownmost essential nature and the being that has not. Eckhart's 'outer man' is occupied with things rather than with thought; he is outside, in the visible world, rather than at home (Caputo 1986). Schürman (2008) tells us that 'in an opposition between dispersion among the "they", and the "properly seizing upon" the self, we have the core of Augustinian anthropology' (115). For Augustine man is homeless and dispersed. By turning inwards, by returning to himself, he seizes what is most properly his. This is because the mind was seen as a faculty of the soul, made in the image of God. That is to say, what was most interior in man, by the divine likeness or seal imprinted on it, was already outside. This idea is found, in a host of different forms running through the whole Western Platonist tradition. Paradoxically, perhaps, returning (which is, of course, bound up with the notion of *memoria*) is something 'done', a work. We can still find something of this notion in Freud and it always comes as a surprise to those concerned with 'things', as they imagine that thinking is doing nothing.

It is now by no means unusual to view philosophy in Antiquity as 'a way of life' or 'art of living' and to identify the Latin tradition of spiritual exercises with the Greek term ἄσκησις. The source cited for this is, invariably, Pierre Hadot's *Exercices Spirituels et Philosophie Antique* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes) which appeared in 1981. The argument is set out in the first chapter, which had originally been published four years earlier. It is a question that hinges, partly, on an understanding of the parts of philosophy and on the ambiguity of the word θεωρεῖν which can mean to watch a spectacle, albeit usually with religious associations, to contemplate and to do 'theoretical' research. Although Hadot is most often cited as the source for the view that ancient philosophy was 'a way of life' he was by no means the first modern commentator to describe it thus<sup>1</sup>. Nor the first to notice that such a way of life often had an ascetical character<sup>2</sup>. Or indeed that ἄσκησις corresponded to a special way of life, a training by

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<sup>1</sup> Franz Boll in 1920 suggested it in relation to the Presocratics. Nock noticed that the philosophical schools that developed around Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, like the Pythagoreans, 'offered a life with a scheme'. It was an *agōgē*, a way of teaching and 'a way of living...a *raison d'être* for the disciplined life'. This, he thought, made it fundamentally religious, a vocation and involving its adherents in something akin to a conversion (Nock, A.D. *Conversion. The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* 166-7. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933). In 1923, in his 'evolutionary' reading of Aristotle, *Aristoteles, Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung*, Jaeger argued against Boll that the origins of the view of philosophy as a way of life only began with Plato. This was for two reasons. Firstly, because he saw philosophy as the 'theoretic life', a life dedicated to rational thought and knowledge, opposed to the practical life and quite distinct from Pythagorean and Orphic way of life. And secondly, because he doubted the historical accounts of the lives of earlier philosophers, considering them as having come under the influence of the Platonic ideal (Jaeger. W. (1948). *Aristotle. Fundamentals of the History of his Development* 428 and n.3; 429; 432 and n. 1. Oxford. The Clarendon Press).

<sup>2</sup> Nock (1933) points out that Pythagorean, Orphic and Cynic schools of philosophy were all ascetical. Later, in the first century AD, Seneca looked back on Pythagoras' abstinence from meat as a kind of ideal,

means of spiritual exercises<sup>3</sup>. For Hadot, spiritual exercises are not limited to the ethical sphere but include all aspects of philosophy. He sees these exercises in Pythagoreanism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, in Plotinus<sup>4</sup>, in early Christian monastic life and in the sixteenth century exercises of Ignatius Loyola<sup>5</sup>. And in the twentieth century Hadot sees Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* as a spiritual exercise (Hadot 1981: 10). Others have developed or added to Hadot's proposition<sup>6</sup>. Some have seen a continuation of the category of spiritual exercises in Western medieval writers such as Aquinas<sup>7</sup>. Others have read rabbinic literature (Schofer 2003) and medieval Islamic philosophy as a series of spiritual exercises<sup>8</sup>. Yet others have understood psychoanalysis as a 20<sup>th</sup> century eruption of this Graeco-Roman tradition. And it is easy to see continuity here. But in all these cases, the argument hangs partly on the meaning of ἄσκησις, a term that emerges only gradually, amidst the semantic development and plurality of the uses of ἀσκέω.

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### References

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<sup>3</sup> Dodds, in discussing Pindar Fr. 116B and Xenophon *Cyrop.* 8.7.21, made the point more precisely, describing the 'deliberate *askēsis* [of the shaman as] a conscious training of the psychic powers through abstinence and spiritual exercises' (150), '*askēsis* [being] the practice of a special way of life' (150; 154). It was a life characterised by 'a period of rigorous training, which commonly involves solitude and fasting' (140). See Dodds, E.E. (1959). *Greeks and the Irrational*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>4</sup> Hadot refers to Plotinus' treatises as spiritual exercises throughout his book *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard* (Paris, Études Augustiniennes 1973), e.g. on p.115 in relation to attentiveness (*prosochē*).

<sup>5</sup> Hadot says his opinion on the latter was based on the 1954 study by Paul Rabbow, *Seelenführung. Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike*, in which the author re-situated the exercises of Ignatius Loyola within the earlier tradition (1987: 15 n.5). Rabbow was not, in fact, the first to link Ignatius' exercises to an earlier tradition. In 1933 von Hertling had tried to trace back the earliest uses of the Latin expression both in its singular and plural forms. In the prior case, drawing on Venturi (1921) and the Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum* he found a passage in the 7<sup>th</sup> century *Vita* of St Lomer (Launomarius) which reads '*Longa quippe exercitii spiritualis eruditione fundatus vir iste in sacerdotio suo digne Deo*' (*Vita Launomari Abbatis* 1.5 *Acta Sanctorum* Vol. II of the 1863-1870 Paris edition ed. Palmé for 19<sup>th</sup> January, 595). In the latter, he was able to go back as far as Cassian's *Conferences* 12, 14 (Petschenig p. 338). Leclercq also cites Cassian, in relation to the exercise of virtue, at Col. XXI, 15, 1 (though it is, in fact at line 7): *Elaborandum est enim ut virtutes illae, que vere bonae sunt, jejuniis adquirantur, non ut ad jejuniorum terminum tendant illa exercitia virtutum*. Leclercq. J. (1961). *Exercices Spirituels Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* IV c.1902-8. Paris: Beauchesne.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault developed a version of the same idea acknowledging his indebtedness to Hadot. Sellars (2009) has explored some aspects of the differences between the versions of Hadot and Foucault, specifically in relation to the *Enchiridion* and *Dissertations* of Epictetus and the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius.

<sup>7</sup> Kruger argues that Thomas' teaching on the virtues, the will and reason can all be read from within the category of spiritual exercises, as expounded by Hadot, as a form of insight. He then gives this a contemporary flavour by assimilating it to Foucault's version of this tradition as 'the formation of subjectivity'. Kruger. M. (2017). Aquinas, Hadot, and Spiritual Exercises *New Blackfriars* 98 (1076): 414-26.

<sup>8</sup> Azadpur (2011) discusses the philosophy of Alfarabi and Avicenna in terms of the category of spiritual exercises and in reference to Hadot and Foucault, see: *Reason Unbound. On Spiritual Practice in Islamic Peripatetic Philosophy*. New York: State University of New York Press.