Buddhist Spiritual Practices: Thinking With Pierre Hadot on Buddhism, Philosophy, and the Path. Edited by David V. Fiordalis. Mangalam Press, 2018. xi + 333 pp. Pb. \$35. ISBN-13: 978-0-89800-117-4.

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Pierre Hadot (1922–2010) was a French scholar of classical philosophy, best known in the English-speaking world for books translated as *Philosophy as a Way of Life* and *What is Ancient Philosophy?*, in which he presents a way of reading Greek and Roman philosophical texts as philosophical discourses about a way of life. Philosophy, in this conception, is rediscovered as *philosophia*, a way of living which attempts to transform the individual through what he calls ‘spiritual exercises’, towards an ideal of human perfection. Ancient philosophers, according to this conception, had made an existential commitment to live according to a vision and a practice, whether that of Stoicism, Epicureanism or Scepticism. The surviving treatises of these schools, on such topics as logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and so on, should be understood as philosophical discourses whose purpose was to define, explore and justify the intellectual framework of the practical philosophical life of whatever school.

Hadot’s work has descriptive value, in that it aims to rediscover the historical realities of ancient philosophy; but it is evaluative too, even revolutionary. It tries to show how most scholarly work on ancient philosophy misses the original point of philosophical discourse, which is not an end in itself but an adjunct to a way of life. More than this, Hadot’s work highlights how modern academic philosophy is all discourse and not much self-transformation. It offers a pretty straight challenge to many of the presuppositions of contemporary academic philosophy. Many forms of Buddhism would seem to have a lot in common with philosophy as a way of life, certainly enough to justify trying out some of Hadot’s ideas and approaches on aspects of Buddhism. The book here under review is a collection of articles from a conference on Pierre Hadot and the study of Buddhism, held in March 2015 at the Mangalam Centre in Berkeley, US. It consists of an introduction and seven substantial articles, as well as a bibliography, including of works by Hadot in French and English translation. In short, this is a very useful new collection. It more or less doubles the available literature on Hadot and Buddhist philosophy, and sets some high standards for further work.

The introduction by the editor, David V. Fiordalis, argues that there has been an understandable attempt in recent years, by such figures as Mark Siderits and Jay Garfield, to position Buddhist philosophy within the ‘problems and arguments’ mode of philosophical activity. While this certainly helps Buddhist philosophy get ‘seen’ in contemporary philosophical discourse, it is problematic in the context of Buddhist intellectual life, since Buddhist philosophical activity in Asia cannot easily be separated from meditation and ritual. Using Hadot’s approach allows for an

Keywords: Buddhism, Philosophy, Philosophy as a way of life

alternative approach, which takes his account of the Buddhist way of life as the context of discursive philosophising. Fiordalis leaves open, however, what exactly Hadot's approach might achieve; might it be a better model for philosophical understanding of Buddhist philosophy? Or a better model for *doing* Buddhist philosophy? The former would be of scholarly value, the latter quite a radical proposal for specifically Buddhist philosophy practice — probably not one that is compatible with the present state of academic philosophy.

The seven articles take up quite specific topics. The first, by the late Prof. Steven Collins, makes a remarkably deft case for the relevance of Hadot's (and Foucault's) work on 'care of the self' (*epimeleia heauton*) to Buddhists, drawing attention to the merely reflexive nature of this 'self', and the presence of comparable language in Buddhist texts, despite the not-self teaching (*anātman*). Collins makes some clear and helpful comparison between Theravāda Buddhist spiritual exercises and those described in classical Greek and Roman texts, emphasizing the role of what he calls 'Regimens of truth' and their relation to forms of therapy. Collins even makes a range of what, to me at least, were original observations of Hadot and Foucault in relation to their aims and methods. It is a loss that Steve Collins' death in 2018 means he has not been able to continue reflecting on these themes.

Sara McClintock's article takes up a theme broached by Collins, that of the relationship of a philosophical way of life to a *school*, meaning, some social organization and set of relationships within which spiritual exercises were undertaken. We know little enough about the details of Greek and Roman schools. McClintock reveals through some relentless analysis how we know even less about the school-affiliations of Buddhist philosophers. She begins from a useful distinction of three kinds of school, relevant to understanding Buddhist philosophy: (1) actual institutions of teaching and learning (*school^{inst}*) (e.g. Nālanda University, or the Mahāvihāra in Sri Lanka), (2) broadly aligned communities of discursive and non-discursive forms of practice (*school^{comm}*) (perhaps certain Mahāyāna schools), and (3) doxographical hyposticizations of discursive practices (*school^{dox}*) (which would include such entities as Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika, only named retrospectively by Tibetan doxographers). She makes the very interesting point that the 'existential commitment' of Buddhist philosophy is basically the 'going for refuge' to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha which is common to all Buddhists, which means there is much less diversity between Buddhist philosophical schools than between Greek and Roman philosophical schools with their quite different commitments. Finally, she mounts a kind of defence of contemporary academic philosophy as a way of life. Her article shows just how much is up for discussion in the topic of Hadot and Buddhist philosophy.

James Apple's article takes up a philosophical discourse by Atiśa, and discusses it in terms of Hadot's conception of a 'spiritual exercise' and a 'way of life'. What begins to emerge from this is how Hadot's approach allows us to step outside the taken-for-granted socio-spiritual context of Buddhist texts, and to appreciate their purpose and method, in relation to a range of implicit conceptions of practice. In this and in the remaining articles of the book, the emphasis is on reading and interpreting Asian Buddhist texts with the help of Pierre Hadot, and not on philo-

sophical activity or discourse per se. Pierre-Julien Harter would like to dispute Hadot's conception of a 'spiritual exercise', or at least to highlight systematic differences between Buddhist practices and Greco-Roman exercises. Maria Heim makes a sensitive analysis of how Pāli commentarial literature handles the scene-settings (*nidānas*) of early Buddhist discourses, alongside the de-contextualised (*nippariyāya*) doctrines of Abhidhamma. Pierre Hadot acts as a kind of exemplar of such sensitive readings of ancient literature. Davey Tomlinson takes up the theme of reflections on death, which are such an important spiritual exercise for Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, and investigates the value of the meditations on the intermediate state (*antarābhava* or *bardo*) in Tibetan Buddhist texts. David Fiordalis investigates the three levels of wisdom — hearing (*śruta*), reflecting (*cintā*) and developing (*bhāvanā*) — as this distinction is used in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, reflecting on the exercises and the meaning of 'wisdom' involved.

The last four articles involve close readings of Asian Buddhist texts, with Pierre Hadot's help. It struck me, as I read, that some quite fundamental questions remained unexplored at the end of the volume. To what degree is Buddhism, of any sort, directly comparable to philosophy as a way of life? Have any hermeneutics comparable to Hadot's developed *within* Buddhism? How is reason and argument, of the sort prized in philosophical discourse, related in Buddhist texts to the Buddhist practice that might be comparable to the spiritual exercises of *philosophia*? I think that close engagement with specific texts and traditions, of just the sort exemplified in this volume, will be the approach most likely to yield useful insights and comparisons. The field lies open for further work.