

Geographies of Mental Space: Philosophy and Spiritual Exercises

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The paper takes as its starting point Pierre Hadot's *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). In this work Hadot attempts to reclaim for modern philosophy the importance of the Hellenistic traditions of philosophical-spiritual exercises (Socratic, Stoic, Epicurean). Hadot asks us to think of the role of philosophy in terms of the aim of cultivating a particular way of living and being. This is opposed to a now dominant tendency within modern philosophy (and critical theory) in which the aims and practice philosophical reflection (in logic, epistemology, analytic legal theory, or 'radical' political/critical theory) is divorced from the everyday life and mode of living of the philosopher or (legal)critic. Within legal theory, one contemporary inheritance of this line of thinking is in the work of Shaun McVeigh in his insistence upon the questions of 'office', 'lawful conduct' and 'taking responsibility for the law' (S. Dorsett and S. McVeigh, *Jurisdiction*: London, Routledge, 2012)

In some respects the idea of spiritual exercises can be thought of as the attempt by the individual to re-organise the geography of their mental space and to take up a form of conduct guided by this geography. Taking a cue from Henri Lefebvre's caution that 'mental space' cannot be divorced from physical space, nor from the wider operation of the social and modes of production within capitalism (*The Social Production of Space*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), the paper considers the problematic fate of such spiritual exercises under conditions of the commodification and bureaucratisation of labour.