

Transformative Philosophy

Lydia Amir¹

Abstract: The contemporary relevance of unraveling the transformative power of philosophy lies in helping to secure its place in the academe and in enabling personal change for the benefit of the individual and the society in which we live. Yet formulating the transformative power of various philosophies, of different philosophic notions, and of philosophy itself as a rational discipline which addresses the mind leads to laying the ground for a new field. This is what I attempt to do on my own, yet briefly, in this article, and at length, with the help of others, in the *Handbook for Transformative Philosophy*. In the current article, I explain why only Eastern philosophies are usually considered transformative, I argue that Western philosophy is deeply transformative and I formulate that which performs in it the required transformation of the self. I further identify religious readings of philosophy as one impediment to experiencing philosophy's transformative power, and I point to the ideal of personal philosophic redemption as a promising avenue for modern transformative philosophies.

Key-words: Transformative Philosophy; religious readings of philosophy's philosophic ideals; personal philosophic redemption;

¹Department of Philosophy, Tufts University, USA; Email: lydamir@gmail.com

Introduction

That Western philosophy is deeply transformative is a well-kept secret. It may be at the origin of the belief that only Eastern philosophies aim at individual change, and that solely the practices that are associated with them are conducive to self-transformation. This secret may also be the reason why some of these practices (e.g., Yoga for Hinduism, Meditation for Buddhism, Zazen for Zen Buddhism, Tai Chi for Daoism) were appropriated by Westerners. Divested from the mighty theoretical structures which determined their explicit goals, these were introduced to the West in a more palatable way. Yet the loss in this very move should be at least recognized and maybe also assessed: The redemptive goals of Eastern philosophies, unless endorsed by Westerners, are of no use to those who practice them outside of monastic life, as a hobby rather than a life-vocation; moreover, the practices associated with Eastern philosophies are unnecessarily considered as the sole means of transformation that philosophy may offer. This has the following effects: it shadows Western philosophy's transformative power by involving it at best in an uneasy combination of Eastern (mainly Indian) quietist practices and Western action-oriented, materially-prone and ego-centered individuals.

I began this article by pointing to the well-kept secret: that Western philosophy is deeply transformative. The simplest association of secrets and knowledge may result in the idea that Western philosophy is an esoteric discipline. However, esoteric knowledge is kept secret not only because it is assumed that only the few understand it; it is further intended to be hidden from the many. The many are encouraged to live differently, or with different reasons, from the few. Not so in philosophy. Western philosophy is deeply transformative and has been so since Socrates took philosophy from the skies and brought it to earth. True; but we should also note this: Socrates may have talked openly in the public place which the Agora was, but he was mainly addressing prominent personalities and was followed by the best youth of Athens. But we should also take notice of this: His discussions, disregarding now the faithfulness of the account, are rendered in various Socratic dialogues in a form that may appeal to, and be understood by everyone.

Philosophy is explicit and open to all. That the transformation works for the few rather than for the many may depend on the philosophy, but we cannot presume to know who would benefit from a transformative approach to philosophy. The few are those who are willing to sharpen their rational tools, seeing that it is in their interest to favor that capacity in them, which provides them with a more stable reality than the one that the world may offer. Stabilizing a character within, which helps to guide our action and to control our mood, however, is not solely a rational endeavor. It should navigate emotions, feelings and desires, and ultimately impact behavior. Accordingly, and maybe once again contrary to established opinion, the means to transformation both in the history of philosophy and in contemporary approaches are not solely rational: whilst will and decision have their place in some philosophies, imagination, experience, wonder, and love are also instrumental (Amir, forthcoming e). So is humor as the main bridge between rationality and irrationality, and ultimately, the bearer of a new model of rationality which sustains contradiction whilst easing it (Amir, 2023c).

This article focuses on two topics, which are rarely addressed and maybe undefined in the literature till now, which are brought to my attention when attempting to answer the question: What needs to be done to unleash (Western) philosophy's transformative power? The answer which I propose is that we should liberate philosophy from its tutelage to religion, which was first imposed, then chosen (as in the prestigious Harvard University, where in the 19th century only Theologians were seen fit to teach philosophy and in the early 20th century, only Christians), and finally, freely undertaken by religious philosophers who did not necessarily belong to institutional religion. To this purpose, we should read philosophy anew, not through religious lenses; and we should not only rekindle ancient philosophies, as some have done, but rather uncover the path to individual philosophic salvation that modern philosophy has offered us.

Religious Readings of Philosophy

Philosophy's esotericism, whilst explicit and thus not properly esoteric, is better understood when philosophy is seen as an alternative to

established religions. Philosophy has been created in that optic, as testified already by some of the charges held against Socrates, which led to his trial, such as disrespecting the gods, and introducing new deities. She has also been created to counter the uncritical worldviews imbedded in myths and in tragedies, which were at that time barely differentiated from religion.

Rather than being a preparation for religion, philosophy – as the bearer of good news, a more comical than tragic enterprise – promotes a humanistic view, which is predicated on immanence and on an earthly happiness obtained through our own lights. Thus, to unleash the transformative power of philosophy, remnants of religiosity and mysticism should be discarded, and unholy alliances between philosophy and religion denounced. Philosophy's power is meant for those who do not pertain to an established religion. Those who found truth elsewhere, live in the truth elsewhere.

Nothing is wrong with that, but this emphasis, which puts the focus disproportionately on something which is usually unspoken of, is necessary insofar as the transformative power of philosophy is at stake. In comparison with religion, philosophy will always appear powerless because it is emasculated by this very situation. We may reach the conclusion that it is religion that gives us a view of philosophy as powerless. But not solely religion, as we will soon see.

Insofar as religion is concerned, in order to unleash the transformative power of Western philosophy one should be aware of Christian lenses when reading philosophy. Christianity has enlisted philosophy as its precursor, changing its theories, foci, and ambitions to serve its own aim. Nor is it a deed of the past, it continues to this day.

Consider in this context, for example, Pierre Hadot's work (Hadot 2002 [1981], 1995, 2004), who did much to rekindle interest in past philosophy as a way of life containing spiritual exercises. However, Hadot began his intellectual career as a trainee priest and philologist, with an interest in forms of mysticism. Luc Bresson and Michael Chase begin the article written in his memory as follows: "This memorial essay on the French historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot (1922–2010) explores his life and work. Starting out from an ecclesiastical background and education, Hadot's interest in mysticism led him to study the late Greek Neoplatonists Plotinus and Porphyry, as well as the Latin Church Fathers" (Bresson and Chase, 2011). In his works, Hadot explicitly avowed reading back into

ancient philosophy the Christian concerns that are his own (Chase, 2013), as even the “spiritual” in the title of his book and the chapter “Ancient Spirituality and 'Christian Philosophy'” indicate. It is also worth noting his ablation of Epicureanism out of the line he traces from Platonism, to Stoicism, Neo-Platonism, and ultimately to Christianity. That Christian reading back in ancient philosophy is unnecessary for highlighting its transformative power is masterly exemplified by Martha Nussbaum, whose work on Hellenistic philosophies (1990) is free of contemporary religious interests. Yet philosophy is no servant of theology; reason is not a tool to prove God’s existence and doubt not a step toward faith. Philosophy offers full-fledged guides to good lives, based on autonomy, understanding, and a realistic, critical, argument-based approach to the world and the human condition in it. At best, philosophy is an alternative spirituality to established religions (Amir, forthcoming a). It is not a transformative discipline in view of religion, an exercise of reason to supersede reason. Those who use it in that way, such as Søren Kierkegaard, is rightly taught in Denmark in departments of theology rather than philosophy (Amir, 2014, Chapter 2); Neo-Platonism, which argued that reason has the capacity to transcend reason, soon turned into Theurgy (e.g., Remes, 2014).

The first step toward transformative philosophy seems to be to learn philosophy rather than Christianized philosophy.

But not solely established religion, when read back into philosophy, diminishes its power. We can list also society and psychology as weakening agents. Society is opposed to philosophy by the very ideals that it promotes; it challenges the desirability of the ideals that philosophy endorses. Psychology argues against the viability of these philosophic ideals.

Philosophy is the realm of ideals, then, of the normative claim on our reality. It differs radically from psychology in the very act of promoting ideals: all therapy, regardless of the school it represents from Freud on, discards ideals (Edmundson, 2015, pp. 242, 244–245). And insofar as the content of philosophic ideals is addressed, it is openly opposed to societal ideals, such as riches, power, fame, the pleasure of the senses, having rather than being, etc.

When religion, society, and psychology are taken out of philosophy's way, we are able to see the full panoply of the main ideals of philosophy, and better understand how they work.

The main philosophic ideals are flourishing, the ideal of Ancient Greece (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle); peace of mind, the ideal of Hellenistic and Roman times (Stoicism, Epicureanism, Pyrrhonism); redemption here and now, the ideal of the Enlightenment; self-realization, the ideal of Romanticism; and authenticity, the ideal of existential philosophies, both religious (Jaspers, Bubber, Levinas) and not (Heidegger, Sartre, Camus). All these ideals have in common a focus on human agency, which works mainly on its own, whilst acknowledging dependance on luck or on something mysterious and unknown, and aiming at happiness or at better than that: All the philosophic ideals present themselves as the true content of happiness, except authenticity, which openly renounces it for something higher, the truth of the human condition.

These ideals, once embraced, are transformative. Reworking some of them to fit the many requires more often than not solely to put back the thinkers, especially the Greek ones, into their original circumstance, and avoid projecting unto them Christian meanings. Let me explain this through the use of some examples.

1. It is not only the reflective life that Socrates proposes which leads to flourishing. Plato's view of the inward harmony we attain when we embody the four virtues that he proposes is another one. One way of emasculating this view is to insist that this can happen only in (a utopian) republic. That is, that it cannot be attained. But Plato did try (twice) to make his republic work, at great personal peril. And, despite his failure, the individual harmony which he proposes as the content of flourishing is viable today as it was in his time. That this is attained when eros or love is oriented toward wisdom should not discourage us from having loving relationships along the way, including sex. Plato's love is not Platonic love (Amir, 2001). In these (subtle) ways, which make Plato more spiritual than he was, Platonism is divested of its contemporary transformative power.

2. Most chapters of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, if we except Chapter 10, which has been prioritized by early Christian, especially monastic, readers, give a balanced and practical view of living a right life through his theory of the mean and the development of intellectual virtues which lead to it. True, this reading has been embraced and reworked by

Muslim, Jewish and Christian Medieval philosophers. The work done by Idit Dobbs-Weinstein (2003), for example, who differentiates between the Christo-Platonic tradition, which reads Aristotle in a certain way, and the Judeo-Arabic Aristotelian materialistic tradition, which has been occluded, is exemplary here. In an interview as part of the faculty of Vanderbilt University, she maintains that there is a serious problem with the ways in which the so-called “Classical” tradition was read – the tradition that is believed to have “originated” Western philosophy and formed its official “canon.” We can add to this argument that the secular framework of Aristotle’s work has been eclipsed. Ethics is advocated by Aristotle because it is pleasurable and brings earthly happiness, the highest possible state for a human being. It is the consciousness of attempting to live well that yields happiness, given some external circumstances that most of us enjoy. Nothing more is needed.

3. Plato’s ideal of harmony can be reached outside of the *Republic* and Aristotle’s good life outside of contemplation. Hellenistic philosophies are not only Stoic, as Hadot makes us believe through his expertise in Stoicism. There is an Epicurean tradition, which has won in the guise of contemporary science, and a skeptical tradition, the Pyrrhonian, which offers a full life, enlightened by peace of mind, and which can be pursued in contemporary society. The cynics, who criticize too theoretical philosophers offer a short-cut to virtue and presents a viable option at all times (Amir, 2018, Chapter 4).

4. In the list of ideals presented above, the ideal less known, but which is worth exploring is “redemption here and now.” It is a modern ideal; and, as it is often Modern philosophy which is accused of being impractical, let us have a transformative look at it in the remaining of the article.

Personal Philosophic Redemption of the Here and Now

Between peace of mind, the philosophic ideal of Hellenistic and Roman times, and redemption here and now, the philosophical ideal of the Enlightenment, there lies the potent religious ideal of salvation, the sole ideal of medieval Europe. The tradition in modern philosophy which I address here is a sub-group of the Enlightenment ideal of social

cooperation. This ideal aims at attaining to redemption here and now by jointly creating a heaven on earth for society as a whole.

The individualistic version, on which I elaborate here, attempts a *personal philosophic* redemption. It feeds on religion, especially Medieval Christianity, in offering personal redemption, and on antiquity, in making this a here and now thing, obtained through our own power and by human capacities alone, not through God's grace, and in this life rather than in another. It begins with Montaigne, although it is not formulated as such by him; it is fully developed by Spinoza; it follows with Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Santayana, but also with the French philosophers Alain (Amir, 2024) and Gilles Deleuze (Amir, 2021). It also has additional contributors, including the author of this article, who work in this lineage. Unfortunately, from Schopenhauer on, the tradition which properly begun with Spinoza, was soon rectified to better align with the values of the Christian tradition if not with its God (Amir, 2023a and Amir, 2023b). Let me broach the main line of this tradition.

Early modern thought was transformative, continuing ancient thought in this line, but also departing from it (Cottingham, 2013). Modern philosophy properly begins with the 16th century philosopher, Montaigne (Amir, forthcoming d), not with Descartes, yet it is important to note that Descartes's thought, too, has transformative ambitions (Kobusch, 2013; Cottingham, 2018).

Montaigne is a practical philosopher (Desan, 1994), who incites us to essay our judgement instead of emulating the thought of others, including his own. He thinks as if religion does not exist, because we do not have a relation to being. It does not matter if he follows Catholic conventions, because he was born in France, or if he has Protestant leanings, living as he did during the war of religions. He liberates us from the grip of the ancients and from all forms of additional dogmatism to come, living, as he does, before Descartes and after the Middle Ages. He gently mocks reason, as being too ambitious, and the philosophic schools' mania of sticking to one principle whilst disregarding our flexibility, our changing conditions and moods, and our humane versatility. His is a criticism of philosophy from the point of view of the common man – of our psychological limitations, which acknowledges the folly that inheres in all wisdom. By embracing it rather than fighting it, he reaches more than, if not his predecessors, then some of his followers, such as Nietzsche. The

yes-saying that he attains to – “He made all good, all good...” – and the cheerfulness that follows it make pale other, more bombastic attempts. His is a call for humbly enjoying our condition, and for exchanging self-hatred by self-acceptance, melancholy with joy, lofty spiritual pursuits for the vanity of our lives, which reside in the body, first, aided by the soul.

Montaigne had an immense influence (e.g., Michel, 1969), first on his compatriots, who were too prone to revert as soon as possible to Christianity (Descartes, Pascal), but especially on the British (Dedeyan, 1946), who better developed some of his ideas, such as empiricism. Especially the Enlightenment British philosopher, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (Amir, 2014, Chapter 1), was receptive to the view of the practical, transformative aspect of philosophy (Amir, 2015).

Shaftesbury offered philosophy to the individual as the means to shape artfully one's character and to society as an educational tool for a new class of citizens, soon represented in the parliament, that he wishes to form. Reason will make us moral; as rationality is furthered by using it, the more pleasant its use the more we will use it. Thus, humor and wit should be used freely to sharpen our wits in the privacy of the club. Philosophy itself should be taken out of dusty books and brought to the world for the benefit of self and society.

But Shaftesbury embraced a Platonic, rather than Epicurean or a Sceptic view of the universe, which may have more palatable to Montaigne. Platonism led Shaftesbury to assume a harmony in the world, which he could not sense nor prove using other means. Although Shaftesbury knew of Spinoza, and had been suspected by the Editor of his collected works, John M. Robertson, to have mold his early philosophy on the Dutch-Jewish philosopher (Robertson, 1963, xxxi; see also Amir, 2004, pp. 288n3, 300n95), the proper heir of Montaigne, though direct legacy is unprovable, is Spinoza. However, Stephen Nadler's recent biography of Spinoza (Nadler 2018, pp. 129, 152) points to the option that the culture of Spinoza's Latin teacher, Franciscus van den Eden, educated in Louvain university, probably included Montaigne, as we know that it included many other important thinkers.

Spinoza thought that the role of modern philosophy is to replace organized religion. And he offered a philosophy which could do that, that is, replace Christianity once its truth is formulated in philosophic terms, but his radicalism lies in his explicit and argued attempt to replace it

completely. That is, he offered salvation through love and an equivalent to eternal life, yet on immanent terms, to be reached gradually through our lives and by our own lights (Amir, forthcoming c). This salvation, which he terms beatitude or the highest happiness, can be reached by amending our character once we realize where lies our true interest. The outcome is the eradication of all passivity and passion, which fuels our suffering, in favor of the joy of acting, or being more realized, more alive, more differentiated from our surroundings. Insofar as we understand better, the world, that is, God, and ourselves as modifications of His eternal substance, we partake of truths which enable us to see the world under the species of eternity. As we advance, in proportion to this understanding, which yields love, we enjoy peace, joy and happiness, and a feeling of eternity. Spinoza took the main notions of religion, mainly Judaism and Christianity, and filled them with secular meanings, still enabling us to say that we are saved through the love of God and that we have the concomitant eternity for which we yearn. Not only was Spinoza ignored at best and reviled at worst for 200 years, I believe that later on and to this day Spinoza does not have a proper legacy. Those who praised him deformed his thought and those who reviled him availed themselves directly of his philosophy: they retained his main idea, but redirected his views to better encompass the Christian truth. This was done in such a way that most of the Christian values, some of which Spinoza rejected, were endorsed, with the consequence of utterly deforming his revolutionary thought.

This is how Spinoza's lineage came to include such unlikely followers as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Santayana, who explicitly relate their work to his. All attempt to offer personal philosophic redemptions through love and an alternative to eternal life, following the blueprint of the Dutch-Jewish philosopher; at the same time, they endorse values that deform his thought. It is interesting to note that all those who follow this path, including contemporary thinkers, such as Alain and Gilles Deleuze, are Spinozists to some extent, the former eventually a Cartesian and the latter a vitalist, which Spinoza was not. Moreover, there are additional developments of Spinoza's attempt, including the work of the author of this article, which I believe, attempt to be loyal to the spirit of his philosophy and to his message, which is to replace religion with philosophy (Amir, 2019; Amir, forthcoming d, Amir, forthcoming e).

This is not the place to probe these mighty philosophies. I have done it elsewhere and keep elaborating on it. One word of caution is in order, however, to conclude the brief exposition of this ideal, the personal philosophic redemption of the here and now. Though relatively ignored as a main thread in modern philosophy, it is the most potent aspect of transformative philosophy that modernity can offer. It formulates an ambitious goal which rivals and indeed supersedes those of antiquity, of the Hellenistic and Roman times, and of the Middle Ages.

In order to be able to fully appreciate its power, this lineage should be differentiated from German idealism and Romanticism, whose approach to the relations of philosophy and religion subtly diverge. Because it is difficult, yet crucial, to pinpoint the difference between the ideal of personal philosophic redemption and those traditions, which availed themselves freely on Spinoza, I wish to conclude this article by making this effort.

Luc Ferry explains how the German Enlightenment, which took a philosophic or metaphysical form only in Germany, aimed at secularizing the Christian religion and could do it following Luther's achievement. Rather than rejecting Christianity, it gave it its exact status, a human one. Lessing is the master here; Kant and Hegel follow, or so Ferry argues in the interview conducted by Sébastien Charles (Charles, 1999, pp. 140–142). The lineage that Spinoza begun is, to the contrary, based on a radical critique of religion, which cannot be accepted by Kant and Hegel, whose religiosity is obvious. Nor by Lessing, who, admiring of Spinoza as he may be, advances a pantheism of a spiritualistic stamp rather than a Spinozistic pantheism, and appears to be upon closer analysis shaped by and giving shape to a Christian heritage (Yasukata, 2002).

Conclusion

Regardless of the truth of Spinoza's view, the full impact of the transformative power of philosophy will unleash upon understanding that there is no other discipline that can guide us in view of an earthly good life. Without stipulating about God's existence, nature, and relation to human beings, which is way beyond what we can know, and without asserting that He does not exist or does not exist in the way described by Theists, living as agnostics is all we can do.

Apparently, this is no small feat if we glance at the history of philosophy. But times may have changed. Philosophy should not be made to resemble religion, cater to our emotional needs, and yield to spiritual pressure. Those who still desire that, can resort to religion or to mysticism, which may be transformative in their own way. As far as philosophy is concerned, it is the province of philosophical practice to make philosophy active in the world, and only insofar as it can be transformative can it be practical.

Author note: This article is partly based on the Key-note lecture which I was invited to deliver at 17th International Conference on Philosophical Practice in Romania, June 2023, (www.icpp2023.ro) and partly on reflections triggered by the panels and the workshops in which I participated in the conference.

References

- Amir, Lydia. (2001). "Rationality as Passion: Plato's Theory of Love." *Practical Philosophy*, 4(3): 6–14. Reprinted (2006). *Philosophers as Philosophical Practitioners*, (Jose Barrientos Rastrojo (Ed.), (pp. 77–90), vol. I. Sevilla: Ediciones X–XI. Translated in Greek (2007). *Love and Forgiveness*, (M. Pascou, Ed. and Trans.), (pp. 71–75). Athens, Greece: Holistic Harmony. Reprinted in Lydia Amir. (2017). *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility*, (Chapter 9; pp. 180–195). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Amir, Lydia. (2012). "Spinoza's Ethics in a Global World." *The Journal of Global Studies*, 4(1): 123–138. Reprinted (2015). *The Organizational and Business Ethics Imperative*, (J. H. Westover, Ed.), (pp. 35–54). Champaign, IL: Common Ground Publishing. Reprinted (2015). *Globalization and Responsibility: Challenges and Opportunities*, (S. Litz, Ed.), (pp. 168–187). Champaign, IL: Common Ground Publishing. Reprinted with some changes in Lydia Amir (2017). *Rethinking Philosophers' Responsibility*, (Chapter 4, pp. 78–96). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.

- Amir, Lydia. (2014). *Humor and the Good Life in Modern Philosophy: Shaftesbury, Hamann, Kierkegaard*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Amir, Lydia. (2015). "Shaftesbury as a Practical Philosopher." *Haser*, 6: 81–102.
- Amir, Lydia. (2018). *Taking Philosophy Seriously*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Amir, Lydia. (2003a). "Individual Liberation in Modern Philosophy: Reflections on Santayana's Affiliation to the Tradition Inaugurated by Spinoza and Followed by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche." *Ruch Filozoficzny* LXXIX (1): 43–77.
- Amir, Lydia. (2023b) "The Ideal of a Philosophic Redemption: Spinoza's Place in Western Philosophy and in Santayana's Thought." In *The Companion to Skepticism and Animal Faith*, (Glenn Tiller and Martin Colman, Eds.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Amir, Lydia. (2023c). "A New Model of Rationality: Conceptualizing Humor as a Philosophic Tool." In *Bioethics and Aporia of Psyche*, (Luka Janeš, Ed.) (pp. 331–348). Zagreb: FFRZ Press.
- Amir, Lydia. (forthcoming a). "Philosophy as Alternative to Established Religions." *Religions*. Special Issue: *Religiosity and Spirituality in Philosophical Practice: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*.
- Amir, Lydia. (2024, forthcoming b). "Alain and Santayana." *Rocinante*.
- Amir, Lydia. (forthcoming c). *Redemptive Philosophies: Spinoza versus Nietzsche*. Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung. Berlin, Germany: de Gruyter.
- Amir, Lydia. (forthcoming d) *The Incongruous Human Being: Homo risibilis*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Amir, Lydia. (forthcoming e). *What We Have in Common: A Philosophy for a Global Age*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Amir, Lydia. (forthcoming f). *Michel de Montaigne: An Inquiry into the Value(s) of Philosophy*. Leiden and Boston: Brill.
- Amir, Lydia, ed. (forthcoming g). *Transformative Philosophy Handbook*. Cham: Springer.
- Aristotle. (1955). *The Nicomachean Ethics*. New York: Viking Press.

- Bresson, Luc, and Michael Chase. (2011). "Behind the Veil: In Memory of Pierre Hadot." *Common Knowledge* 17 (3): 433–440.
- Charles, Sébastien. (1999). "Entretien avec Luc Ferry." In *Une fin de siècle philosophique*, (pp. 121–150). Montreal, Quebec: Editions Liber.
- Chase, Michael. (2013). "Observations on Pierre Hadot's Conception of Philosophy as a Way of Life." In *Philosophy as a Way of Life Ancients and Moderns: Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot*, (Michael Chase, Stephen R. L. Clark, Michael McGhee, Eds.), (pp. 262–286). Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Cottingham, John. (2013). "Philosophy and Self-improvement: Continuity and Change in Philosophy's Self-conception from the Classical to the Early-modern Era." In *Philosophy as a Way of Life Ancients and Moderns: Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot*, (Michael Chase, Stephen R. L. Clark, Michael McGhee, Eds.), (pp. 148–166). Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Cottingham, John. (2018). "Descartes and the Meaning of Life." In *The Meaning of Life and the Great Philosophers*, (Stephen Leach and James Tartaglia, Eds). London: and New York: Routledge.
- Dobbs-Weinstein, Idit. (2003). "Whose History? Spinoza's Critique of Religion as an Other Modernity." *Idealistic Studies* 33 (2/3): 219–235.
- Dedeyan, Charles. (1946). *Montaigne chez ses amis anglos-saxons*. Paris: Bovin.
- Desan, Pierre. (1994). "Michel de Montaigne." In *Gradus philosophique*, (pp. 532–544). 2nd édition corrigée. Paris: Flammarion.
- Edmunson, Mark. (2015). *Self and Soul: A Defense of Ideals*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hadot, Pierre. (2002 [1981]). *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Hadot, Pierre, and Arnold Davidson (ed.). (1995). *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Malden, MA: Wiley.
- Hadot, Pierre. 2004. *What Is Ancient Philosophy?* (Michael Chase, Tr.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Kobusch, Theodor. (2013). "Descartes' *Meditations*: Practical Metaphysics: The Father of Rationalism in the Tradition of Spiritual Exercises." In *Philosophy as a Way of Life Ancients and Moderns: Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot* (Michael Chase, Stephen R. L. Clark, Michael McGhee, Eds.), (pp. 167–183.) Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Michel, Pierre. (1969). *Montaigne*. Paris: Ducros.
- Nadler, Stephen. (2018). *Spinoza: A Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, Martha. (1994). *The Therapy of Desire*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Remes, Pauliina. (2014). *Neo-Platonism*. New York: Routledge.
- Robertson, John M. (1963). "Introduction." In Anthony Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc.* Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith.
- Yasukata, Toshimasa. (2002). *Lessing's Philosophy of Religion and the German Enlightenment: Lessing on Christianity and Reason*. New York: Oxford University Press.