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Keywords
aesthetic form, Jane Austen, soliloquy, Mansfield Park, nature, form, formalism, eighteenth-century studies

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In *Mansfield Park*, Jane Austen allegorizes her understanding of the novel of manners as a form of cerebral theatre that stages philosophical dialogues, centrally the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. Is nature a tabula rasa, at best unintelligibly moral, or is it informed by an indwelling telos, an intelligibility? Modernity divorces ethics from aesthetics, virtue from pleasure, the pulpit from the theatre, because we have forgotten nature's inherent telos, intelligibility, or mind. Fanny Price's soliloquizing, like Shaftesbury's, actualizes not a static ideal form that invites aesthetic contemplation but an empirical praxis which attempts, like her rehearsals with the mindless Mr Rushworth, to restore the mind, the brain, the memory that our modern understandings of nature have denied. Austen's philosophic dialogue ideally bridges ancient and modern and transforms private, self-educating acts of solitary reading pleasure into acts of public conversation that can be profoundly improving of public manners and mores.

MANSFIELD PARK is centrally about novelistic form, Jane Austen's self-consciously constructed example and defence of the eighteenth-century novel of manners as she understands the genre or at least her own practice of it. Her novel is a series of philosophical dialogues at once rhapsodic and sceptical, scenically staged both out in nature and within doors.[1] These dialogues include solitary self-reflective musings, reveries, and rhapsodies on nature and human nature; literal dialogues between two people on the same subject; public conversations among several characters; and letters. Austen's novelistic dialogues also include what Michael Prince terms "heroic drama" and "allegory," debates and sometimes struggles between fictionalized characterizations of ideas (most obviously, for example, in her other novels sense and sensibility, pride and prejudice, influence and interference) which constitute their narratives or heroic dramas of education. Further, such heroic dramas and allegories capture a dramatic

[1] Significant outdoor dialogues occur in the stargazing scene, the wilderness at Sotherton, the Grants' garden, the seaside at Portsmouth; indoors, in Fanny's east room (repeatedly), the Sotherton chapel, the Bertram drawing room, the Price family parlour at Portsmouth. Portions of this article appeared previously in Lorrie Clark, "Shaftesbury's Art of 'Soliloquy' in *Mansfield Park*," *Persuasions* 24 (2002): 59–70.

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"higher form" of dialogue central to much British Enlightenment fiction and non-fiction: the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, including about the nature of fictional representation or mimesis itself. Should art imitate what is, understood as modern Lockean empiricist realism and probability? Or rather, what ought to be, the heroic dramas of a Neoplatonically understood idealism? The mixed character of the British Enlightenment demands not pure, abstract forms and genres governed by strictly formal internal patterns of coherence (modern aesthetics), but precisely the mixed empiricist and idealist genres and miscellanies of the eighteenth-century English novel.[2]

This mixed character of the British Enlightenment, Prince suggests, may find its most influential expression in Shaftesbury's philosophical aesthetic idea of "soliloquy," an ancient form of philosophical dialogue turned to modern ends. In an age sceptical of philosophical and theological absolutes, such a practice necessarily embeds itself within the miscellaneous forms of modern fiction. A work of self-criticism as well as Austen's "essay on criticism" for the novel of manners as a genre in her time, *Mansfield Park* offers a brilliant late eighteenth-century example of Shaftesburian soliloquy in novelistic practice.[3]

What then is the "form" of Shaftesburian soliloquy that informs this novel of manners, Austen's own self-critical novelistic practices, and by extension perhaps the genre as a whole? To define it in the abstract removed from its fictional practice already violates the necessary embeddedness of the form. But briefly, while its basic form or genre is that of a dialogue,

2 See Michael Prince, *Philosophical Dialogue in the British Enlightenment: Theology, Aesthetics, and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

3 I do not claim to prove Shaftesburian influence on the novel, a possibility raised on the basis of its distinctive vocabulary by philosopher Gilbert Ryle in "Jane Austen and Moralists," in *Collected Papers of Gilbert Ryle* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971), 1:276–91. See also Karen Valihora's recent welcome revival of the Shaftesbury thesis in *Austen's Oughts: Judgment After Locke and Shaftesbury* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010). I suggest that the parallels are unusually illuminating. Shaftesbury's influence on eighteenth-century aesthetics is in any case incalculably diffuse, in part through his successors in the moral sense school of David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, and Adam Smith. Austen had an acutely musical ear for the fashionable idioms of her time, as her effortless parodies of the discourses of sensibility, the picturesque, the Gothic, and the sublime amply demonstrate. *Mansfield Park* alone among her novels employs Shaftesburian language in such a pure and unadulterated register.

soliloquy is paradoxically more a praxis, a dynamic activity of critical examination and self-examination, a drama of education and self-education, than a static form or design. Yet such an examination brings to light or makes explicit a prior form or design, an implicit order hitherto unperceived. Through the philosophical and aesthetically pleasurable practice of reflection and self-reflection, soliloquizing eventually makes the implicit order or teleology of nature and human nature—their beauties and sublimities of mind and moral character—explicit through art, attempting to resolve the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns by restoring the teleological understanding of nature and human nature to modernity.[4] But because this teleology becomes explicit only through the prior, strenuously cerebral ordering of one's own soul, this makes the activity of soliloquy *itself* the highest form of both beauty and virtue for Shaftesbury, and, I shall argue, for Austen.[5]

Aesthetics, Theology, and Dialogue Form in the Novel

As a meta-fiction or allegory of sorts about the novel of manners, *Mansfield Park* suggests that Austen understood it as a form of fiction which, by exercising and inviting readers to exercise Shaftesbury's art of soliloquy, improves the private and public manners of a nation. Like Shaftesbury, she here diagnoses the problem of modern manners and mores as firstly a divorce between ethics and aesthetics, Virtue (the useful or morally instructive) from Pleasure, the Pulpit from the Theatre. This division violates the Horatian aesthetic she shares with Shaftesbury, that poetry should please and instruct. The novel further sees this divorce as a problem unique to modernity, a

[4] Alasdair MacIntyre notes of Austen that "she thus turns away from the competing catalogue of the virtues in the eighteenth century and restores a teleological perspective." MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 240.

[5] Douglas J. Den Uyl argues that Shaftesbury's highest idea of form is not simply a "god's eye" perspective on a "designing mind" behind nature, but the human, "agent-centered" activity of soliloquy: "The key to understanding Shaftesbury on the relation between beauty and virtue is not to begin by thinking of beauty in terms of the characteristics of an external object. One should instead see beauty primarily in terms of the forming power of mind ... Shaftesbury is clear that the highest example of this sort of forming is the ordering of one's own soul" through the activity of soliloquy. Den Uyl, "Shaftesbury and the Modern Problem of Virtue," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 15, no. 1 (1998): 275–316; 294, 297. See esp. the discussion of Shaftesbury's three levels of form, 294–305.

consequence of modern extremes: on the one hand, of pleasure-denying, irrationally zealous forms of religion (evangelicalism), and on the other, of secularization and Hobbesian and Lockean philosophies of selfishness and epicurism. These latter understand nature as non-teleological, lacking any indwelling form, design, or mind which is both morally and aesthetically "good," that is, "beautiful"—synonymous terms. They similarly deny any indwelling higher telos for human happiness than natural selfishness. Sociability is an artful construct serving mutual self-interest, and our rationality merely instrumental.[6] With no ground in natural sociability, ethics becomes a construct too, at best the product of habituation or second nature. Modernity severs not just ethics from aesthetics, then, but both from the standard of nature. The moral "ought" (as Alasdair MacIntyre and Karen Valihora remind us) becomes divorced from the factual "is": one cannot derive ethics and aesthetics from what is empirically observed to be the case.

In *Mansfield Park*, Austen characterizes these modern habits of mind as an absent-mindedness or forgetting—a forgetting of the ancient understanding of nature and human nature *as* informed by mind. For her in this novel, as for Shaftesbury following Aristotle, nature has an inherent telos and intelligibility. And human nature is sociable and rational, a rationality that guides rather than serves desire, and which feels delight, wonder, pleasure in the contemplation of nature as something beyond merely its use.

The consequences of this modern forgetting are the moral confusions dramatized at every level of *Mansfield Park*. These begin with the question of whether Fanny is "in" or "out," a question that diagnoses the peculiarly modern divorce in contemporary manners between ethics and aesthetics, virtue and pleasure. But they extend to the inconsistencies of character and conduct dramatized vividly by the Crawfords, Edmund, Sir Thomas, and even Fanny herself. These confusions come to a head in the fuss over the private theatricals. Mr Yates describes the objections to their performance as "unintelligibly moral,"

[6] Mary Crawford's modern view of marriage is a case in point: she insists that it is nothing but a "take-in," "a manoeuvering business," an artful sham based on natural selfishness that replaces marriage as the place where Austen locates the potential or *telos* for human happiness. Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. James Kinsley and John Lucas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 41. References are to this edition.

which is ironically Austen's point. They are unintelligibly—mindlessly—moral to us moderns because we have forgotten the ancient understanding of ethics and aesthetics within which those objections are intelligible. The central conflict of the novel, then, is only ostensibly the dialogue between Virtue (the Pulpit) and Pleasure (the Theatre). More accurately—and this is key—the higher dialogue, allegory, and the heroic drama of education is between the modern understanding that would separate virtue from pleasure (ethics from aesthetics), and the ancient understanding which does not. This dialogue *behind* dialogue formally structures the entire novel.

The remedy Shaftesbury and Austen propose for this forgetfulness is the art of soliloquy that Fanny practises throughout the novel. A private exercise of philosophical reflection and self-reflection on the character and conduct of oneself and others, this mirroring habit of mind ideally bridges ancient and modern. As an act of memory or recollection, a remembering of oneself and others, it remedies modern absent-mindedness. It is also an act of Aristotelian mimesis, which therefore does not just passively reflect upon but can also dynamically improve one's character and conduct. Finally, soliloquy is by definition "theatrical." It requires entering into a dialogue with oneself by splitting oneself in two, by "personating" oneself. Despite the novel's ostensibly anti-theatrical condemnation of the private theatricals, its theatricality has been a primary source of confusion for modern critics, something a clearer understanding of Shaftesburian soliloquy may dispel.

This "cerebral theatre"[7] of soliloquy attempts to put memory and mind back into the modern understanding of nature, practically and perhaps metaphysically speaking. By practising the habit of reflection and soliloquy herself, but also quietly schooling others to develop the same habit, Fanny tries to exercise and strengthen the memory which modern, selfish habits of mind have made so weak. Her east "schoolroom" becomes the site of repeated soliloquizing dialogues, either alone or with Edmund, and once with Mary and Edmund together. Austen terms these "tête-à-têtes," emphasizing the extent to which they are "head-to-head," "mind-to-mind."

Fanny Price's highest virtue, her piety, symbolized by her ornamental cross and chain, is not an orthodox or evangelical

[7] Prince, 62.

Christian piety, but the natural piety of Shaftesbury's natural design, his Aristotelian, organically teleological understanding of nature and human nature.[8] Seeking to temper irrational (mind-less) evangelical enthusiasm by cultivating a more tolerant, rational, reflective habit of mind, he urges not prayer but the "self-conversing exercise" of soliloquy that Fanny practises throughout the novel: after all, "they [the Ancients] esteem'd this a more religious Work than any Prayers, or other Duty in the Temple" (S, 107). And she reflects not upon God but nature and human nature: "We can never be fit to contemplate anything above us, when we are in no condition to look into ourselves, and calmly examine the Temper of our own Mind and Passions" (L, 21). Knowledge of "the natural affections" in ourselves and others—"the *Beauty* of Sentiments, the *Sublime* of Characters"—is the foundation of her piety, a word "which [has] more than half its Sense, in Natural and Good Affection ... of all Men in their several Relations one to another."[9] This union of Fanny's innate "moral sense" or natural affections with her "reflected sense" in her "Home-*Dialect* of Soliloquy" (S, 107) dramatizes the naturalist ethics and aesthetics that Shaftebsury proposes as the remedy for the excessive zeal, enthusiasm, and fear-instilling gravity of evangelical religion as well as for the "selfishness" of modernity.

By the end of *Mansfield Park*, Fanny Price is definitely "out," emerging from her private soliloquies and family retirement into public society, announced by her uncle's magnificent ball for her in volume 2. By the end of the novel, Austen is also "out," making full public acknowledgment of her role as an author, whose novels of manners assume the power to reform and improve the manners and mores—the very "constitution"—of her nation. She "comes out" through dramatizing, in the

[8] Shaftesbury rejects the familiar eighteenth-century mechanistic analogy of a watch for the understanding of nature in a lengthy passage in "Soliloquy: or, Advice to an Author." Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1737), 6th ed., ed. Den Uyl, 3 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), 1:181. References are to this edition, unless otherwise noted, cited as: S for "Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author"; L for "A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm"; and I for "An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit."

[9] Shaftesbury, "Preface to the Sermons of Dr. Whichcote" (1698), in *Select Sermons of Dr. Whichcot* [*sic*] (London, 1698), n.p. [EEBO http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:56135:6].

friendship of Fanny and Edmund, Shaftesbury's "Soliloquy, or, Advice to an Author," in which he recommends that authors practise the private art of soliloquy as the first step towards the reform of national manners: "Our present Manners, I must own," he says, "are not so well calculated for this Method of Soliloquy, as to suffer it to become a national Practice. 'Tis but a small Portion of this *Regimen*, which I wou'd willingly borrow, and apply to private use; especially in the case of *Authors*" (S, 101). Their friendship and eventual marriage is a marriage of Shaftesbury's moral with his reflected sense, whose dialogue constitutes the art of soliloquy as he defines it. More, their marriage symbolizes the marriage of natural religion with aesthetics—the Pulpit with the Theatre, Virtue with Pleasure—in a form of aesthetically pleasurable philosophical reflection which subsumes both within a modern "critical Taste" for reflecting on nature and human nature, manners and mores. Their marriage thus exemplifies, as Lawrence Klein has argued of Shaftesbury, the eighteenth-century "turn" that brings philosophy (and theology) out of the private, metaphysical realm onto the public stage of the novel of manners and conversation, dramatizing thereby Austen's own role as an author.[10] Thus "an honest *Home*-Philosophy must teach us the wholesom Practice within our-selves," remarks Shaftesbury; "Polite *Reading*, and *Converse* with Mankind of the better sort, will qualify us for what remains" (S, 224).

What makes this novel so different from Austen's other novels, then, is that it asks to be read in highly schematic allegorical fashion: as a dialogue that stages the eighteenth-century quarrel between the ancients and the moderns about nature and human nature, with an attempt to bridge the two through the philosophical-poetic art of soliloquy which constitutes the novel itself. Is nature, as modernity asserts, a "mere nothing," a tabula rasa, or informed by mind, an indwelling, intelligible form or telos? Is human nature similarly uninformed by any mind or telos beyond natural selfishness? Are our natural pleasures merely selfish and epicurean (modernity's purely aesthetic pleasure divorced from virtue) or are they the naturally sociable pleasures of the social affections (the ancient combining of pleasure with virtue, aesthetics with ethics)?

[10] Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 36–37.

This quarrel has profound implications for the novel's central concern with how and whether various arts of cultivation (or education) can best "improve" nature and human nature: competing theories of landscape gardening (improving nature), and, for the improvement of human nature, the modern rivalry between the Pulpit (offering a severely moral education in virtue) and the Theatre (an indulgent aesthetic education in pleasure). Again, "soliloquy," for Austen as for Shaftesbury, is the proffered remedy.

Natural design thus informs the novel's content but also Austen's use of allegory as the most explicit possible form of *literary* design, a philosophical dialogue between Virtue and Pleasure that rises to a debate about the metaphysics of "mind." This metaphysical dimension is so unprecedented in her novels that what ought to make interpretation easier, calling deliberate attention to its informing design, instead seems to have baffled many literal-minded readers unable to adjust to its abstract schematics. But our confusion underscores her central point: we moderns have forgotten the ancient understanding of nature and human nature as informed by design, the design within which her novel itself becomes intelligible.

The best example of the art of soliloquy which makes such design explicit is the much-discussed stargazing scene in volume 1, chapter 11 of *Mansfield Park*, a *locus classicus* of literary and philosophical arguments from design which Austen brilliantly turns to her purposes (102).[11] Here, "standing at an open window ... looking out on a twilight scene" (102), Fanny, Edmund, and Mary Crawford have just finished a serious conversation about the clergy before Mary is called to join others at the pianoforte in a musical glee, leaving Fanny and Edmund alone together at the window.

[11] This scene has been the locus for the anti-Shaftesburian readings of Austen that my essay disputes. D.D. Devlin's *Jane Austen and Education* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1975), while acknowledging the likely influence of Shaftesbury on Austen first suggested by Ryle, insists any references are heavily ironic. Dismissing Shaftesbury as too much of a sentimentalist of the moral sense school for the rationalist Austen, Devlin ignores two critical features of Shaftesbury's thought: that his "moral sense" (unlike Hume's) is grounded in the rational perception of an ontological order in the universe; and that the moral sense is subject to an approving or disapproving act of rational reflection. See Klein's trenchant critique of such sentimentalist readings, 53–55. Valihora's book does much to correct this view. See also Ryle.

Modern criticism of this scene reveals the rift between ancient and modern that informs the confusions dramatized in the novel. Colin Jager, for instance, argues for an ironic artificiality to the scene, which depends on ignoring the "framing window" that points to the artifice of appeals to a standard of nature outside it: "Like improvement and acting, the discourse of design, instead of channelling enthusiasm for nature into religious wonder, serves as a screen behind which human desire may slip the bonds of naturalized convention."[12] "Nature, too," is merely "an acquired taste"; Fanny and Mary, "unconvinced by design," "put their trust instead in feelings entirely distinct from its shaping discourse."[13] This view is shared by Valihora and David Marshall, who similarly see the window's "frame" as defining the experience, rendered artificial by the clichés of "the picturesque." Commenting that "Fanny ... seems to be quoting Shaftesbury when she later characterizes this sort of experience as 'rhapsodizing' in a 'wondering strain,'" Marshall nonetheless insists that "she views nature through the frame of a window as if she were beholding a painting or a scene on a stage," concluding, "the frame that positions Fanny looking at 'the scene without' as she speaks her own feelings places Fanny and the reader at more than two removes from both real feelings and the language in which the feelings are described. ... Fanny [is] an actor who reads aloud from ... the scripts of eighteenth-century aesthetic and sentimental experience."[14] For Valihora, "Fanny ... has been taught her feelings and thoughts on the subject of nature, and nature has been therefore framed, here quite pointedly by the window casement."[15]

These readings oddly enough share a sternly Platonic theory of mimesis, seeing all art or design as "more than two removes" from "real feelings" as well as "the language in which the feelings are described." All design is merely conventional,

12 Jager, 150.

13 Jager, 124.

14 David Marshall, *The Frame of Art: Fictions of Aesthetic Experience, 1750–1815* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 74–75. Marshall's separate discussion of Shaftesburian soliloquy (which he does not put together with *Mansfield Park*) similarly insists that in the "vertiginous" mirroring theatricality of Shaftesburian soliloquy, the "self" disappears; see Marshall, *The Figure of Theater: Shaftesbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

15 Valihora, 293.

limiting, radically perspectival. It can therefore never improve—as Aristotelian mimesis can do through actualizing nature's indwelling potential or form—but only corrupt what it attempts to represent. For Aristotle, there is not necessarily such a conventional "frame" interposing between nature's telos and the art which actualizes it: art can make the implicit explicit. But the Platonic view informs these critics' treatments of all the arts of improvement in the novel: those of landscape gardening, the theatre, and education. Landscape gardening is wholly identified with the artificialities of the picturesque. The novel's implicit as well as explicit theatricality reduces Fanny to an "actor" reading merely "scripted" lines. "Nature too" is just "an acquired taste" (again Jager); "both characters have acquired a 'taste for nature' through diligent study."[16] Education too inevitably falsifies, de-natures, and corrupts.

But falsifies, de-natures, and corrupts *what*? one might ask—for, on the other hand, modern critics also *anti-Platonically* deny the very possibility of a "standard of nature" or indwelling form "out there" beyond our perspectival frames of art, of which they can be said to so inevitably and "corruptingly" fall short. The arts which critics rightly make paradigmatic of how we view nature and the drama of human nature for them necessarily aestheticize nature and human nature altogether, resulting in "the sophisticated collapse of nature into art" that Valihora suggests Joshua Reynolds achieves in the later eighteenth century.[17] This leads her to conclude that the novel wholly satirizes the idea of improvement: "Austen mocks the idea that one can actually, literally, 'improve' on the natural."[18]

One could defend these readings as self-consciously modern critiques of the novel's claim to a standard of nature that can only be understood as a claim to "naturalized convention." But to do so ignores Austen's own critique of precisely this modern forgetting of nature, the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns which structures the novel and makes it intelligible.[19] It

16 Valihora, 292.

17 Valihora, 287.

18 Valihora, 291. This inadvertently Platonic reading of mimesis and insistence that a highly conventional discourse of the picturesque governs the novel are the crux of my disagreement with Valihora's otherwise exciting revival of a Shaftesbury-Austen connection.

19 Contemporary virtue ethicists are rehabilitating an Aristotelian standard of nature from social constructionism and aestheticism. While disagreeing

also distorts "the special kind of mimesis Shaftesbury postulates," as Prince defines it: "a magical mirror that takes in an accurate representation of mixed phenomena but gives back an orderly and moral design."[20]

In a Shaftesburian reading of the scene, by contrast, it is central that Fanny stands with her cousin and dearest friend next to her brother William, her kindred spirit, her other self. And she takes the greatest pleasure in this togetherness: as the others leave, "she had the pleasure of seeing him continue at the window with her, in spite of the expected glee" (102). Her most immediate pleasure is in the mere fact of his company, for as Shaftesbury remarks, "*the natural Affections are in themselves the highest Pleasures and Enjoyments*":

> There shou'd methinks be little need of proving this to any-one of human Kind, who has ever known the Condition of the Mind under a lively Affection of Love, Gratitude, Bounty, Generosity, Pity, Succour, or whatever else is of a social or friendly sort. He who has ever so little Knowledge of human Nature, is sensible what pleasure the Mind perceives when it is touch'd in this generous way. The difference we find between Solitude and Company, between a common Company and that of Friends; the reference of almost all our Pleasures to mutual Converse, and the dependence they have on Society either present or imagin'd; all these are sufficient Proofs in our behalf. (I, 58–59)

Friendship, company, and mutual converse are the highest pleasures for Shaftesbury, and the presence of a friend, "either present" or (significantly) "imagin'd," is in fact the poet's "muse."

But Fanny's pleasure here consists not simply in the fact of Edmund's presence, in the natural affections she spontaneously feels. Beyond this, her pleasure is in their shared reflections on the scene outside. Alone together, they engage in a dialogue of mirrored thoughts and feelings. Fanny describes the musical harmony and proportion of the universe: nature's physical and also moral beauty of Mind which elevates her to the "rapture"

about the extent to which Aristotelian teleology must be understood metaphysically versus strictly biologically, they agree that one can and should derive "ought" from "is"—that human ethics can and should be based on an empirically observable human nature. See, for example, MacIntyre's *After Virtue*; Christine McKinnon, *Character, Virtue Theories, and the Vices* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1999); and on the compatibility of Aristotle and Darwin, Larry Arnhart, *Darwinian Natural Right: The Biological Ethics of Human Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998).

[20] Prince, 62–63.

and "enthusiasm" that Shaftesbury associates with both religion and poetry.[21]

Though the stars are poetically mythologized in the scene, this poetic rapture and enthusiasm is a tempered, rational pleasure as well. "A very apt scholar," Fanny is interested in the stars as objects of scientific study, responding to her tutor, "*You* taught me to think and feel on the subject, cousin." She has been taught to both (reflectively) think and (affectively) feel, encouraged to develop "a taste for nature in early life." Far from indicting such acquired or educated taste, "If a natural *good* Taste be not already form'd in us; why should not we endeavour to form it and become *natural*?" asks Shaftesbury (S, 207), commenting on "the great difference in this respect between such Persons as have been taught by Nature only, and such as by Reflection, and the Assistance of Art, have learnt to form those Notions, which on experience are found the easiest and most natural" (S, 118). Art and reflection do not necessarily falsify, but they can make the implicit explicit.

Fanny is not strictly speaking in soliloquy here, but in dialogue with Edmund. Yet they are "alone together," one mind in total harmony at this moment. Their mutually approving reflections make them mirrors of each other, and hence engaged in a kind of soliloquy. All soliloquies for Shaftesbury are such mirror dialogues, of the reflecting mind with itself, "a kind of *vocal* Looking-Glass" (S, 108). His definition of the term mixes metaphors of the theatre and the schoolroom. In soliloquy we "come alone upon the Stage," adopting the parts of "Pupil and Preceptor" (S, 100). And through this "schooling," this "Dramatick Method," we come to "know" ourselves (S, 122). Fanny and Edmund continually engage in such reflective dialogues, most often in Fanny's east "schoolroom," where Austen mixes the same metaphors. Arriving to rehearse her "soliloquy" for the play, Mary Crawford notes Fanny has only "very good schoolroom chairs, not made for a theatre, I dare say" (151–52). Always the modern, she separates virtuous instruction from the pleasures of the theatre, when Fanny's room, the central locus for her soliloquies, symbolizes both.

Fanny's mirror-habit of self-reflection is an "*improving* Method," which depends not only on an Aristotelian mimesis,

[21] See esp. Shaftesbury, "The Moralists, A *Philosophical Rhapsody,* Being a Recital of Certain Conversations on *Natural* and *Moral* Subjects," 103–247.

but also on Shaftesbury's distinction between "the moral sense" and "the reflected sense." The reflected sense is the pleasure or displeasure (pain) we feel when we reflect upon our immediate emotional responses to people and events. We approve of those responses with pleasure, or disapprove of them with pain. We reflectively take pleasure in the feeling itself, not just in what gave rise to the feeling: "the *Affections* of Pity, Kindness, Gratitude, and their Contrarys, being brought into the Mind by Reflection, become Objects. So that, by means of this reflected Sense, there arises another kind of Affection towards those very Affections themselves, which have been already felt, and are now become the Subject of a new Liking or Dislike" (I, 16).

In one example of this, Fanny is pained by her own lack of gratitude. Reflecting in the solitude of her east room, she finds that Sir Thomas has had a fire lit there, a luxury forbidden by Aunt Norris. Angry, however, over his attempts to make her marry Henry Crawford, "'I must be a brute indeed, if I can be really ungrateful!' said she *in soliloquy*; 'Heaven defend me from being ungrateful!'" (292; emphasis added). Reflecting on her lack of affection troubles her earlier in the novel as well, when "she really grieved because she could not grieve" over the absence of Sir Thomas (28). Her cousins do not grieve for him either; but they do not reflect on that lack of grief and feel pain over it as Fanny with her acute moral sense and reflected sense does. In another instance, Fanny is angry over Edmund's neglect of her for Mary Crawford: "Such sensations, however, were too near a kin to resentment to be long guiding Fanny's *soliloquies*. She was soon more softened and sorrowful" (387; emphasis added). Reflecting on her feelings, she amends them; her reflections lead to her own self-improvements, reform, and eventually conduct. As Shaftesbury insists, reflection is not enough in itself; it must become the basis for reformed conduct: "This speculative Pleasure ... must yet be far surpass'd by *virtuous Motion* and *the Exercise of Benignity and Goodness*" (I, 60–61).

But what is "improving" about the reflections in our stargazing scene? Do Fanny and Edmund not just passively reflect each other's pleasure here, in harmonious mutual approval? First, even pleasurable reflections are improving for Shaftesbury because they reinforce the habit of feeling the social affections. Observing the order of the universe is "naturally improving to the Temper"

because it reflects and is reflected in the ordered passions of the individual mind as well as of society as a whole.[22]

Yet the scene is not entirely harmonious. In his pleasure, Edmund does not forget those who cannot share this "taste for nature," musing "they are much to be pitied who have not been taught to feel in the same degree as you do ... They lose a great deal." Similarly, Fanny remembers with pain and compassion the "wickedness" and "sorrow in the world": "there certainly would be less of both if the sublimity of Nature were more attended to, and people were carried more out of themselves by contemplating such a scene." The novel singles out several evils to be remedied by such reflection: the evils of loss (or absence), slavery, poverty (the Portsmouth segment), and above all selfishness, the opposite of the social affections.

Soliloquizing reflection, then, is Austen's improving method for individual character and conduct. Crucially, for Austen here as for Shaftesbury, the natural affections are not virtues until they have been "approved" or "disapproved" by this act of reflection. As Shaftesbury puts it, "if a Creature be generous, kind, constant, compassionate; yet if he cannot reflect on what he himself does, or sees others do, so as to take notice of what is *worthy* or *honest*; and make that ... his Affection; he has not the Character of being *virtuous*: for thus, and no otherwise, he is capable of having a *Sense of Right or Wrong*; a Sentiment or Judgment of what is done, thro' just, equal, and good Affection, or the contrary" (I, 18). The moral sense is not infallible, but subject to the corrections of the reflected sense. This is why Shaftesbury is not a mere sentimentalist, but a committed rationalist, insisting on "that sound and well-establish'd Reason, which alone can constitute a *just Affection*" (I, 22). This is also why Austen has Edmund come to Fanny so often for advice. He is far less autonomous than she: she is his reflected sense, a kind of moral "conscience" on which he depends.

Public Manners and Mores

But how can this privately improving method of soliloquy reform public manners? This is surely why Austen has Fanny

22 "The Admiration and Love of Order, Harmony, and Proportion in whatever kind, is naturally improving to the Temper, advantageous to social Affection, and highly assistant to *Virtue*, which is it-self no other than the Love of Order and Beauty in Society" (I, 43).

bring up the slave trade in conversation in the drawing room: she has been the only one to reflect on its evils. We can see how her soliloquizing habit of self-reflection could lead her to muse on it in concentric circles of sociability: she muses not just silently to herself but aloud in soliloquy; and not just in strict soliloquy but in dialogue with Edmund; and not just in dialogue but in conversation with the larger family circle in the more public space of the drawing-room.[23] But her potentially remedying reflection goes no further, her eagerness snuffed out by "such a dead silence!" on the part of her cousins, who presumably find it too uncomfortably impolite or unmannerly a subject for public conversation and debate. They dislike being "reminded," and would rather "forget" the slave trade than discuss it.

The novel's earlier conversation about modern female manners has already articulated this central problem for polite, public manners, their divorce from and "forgetting of" ethical substance. Mary Crawford's question about Fanny's social status turns on the larger question of female modesty: "Till now," she "could not have supposed it possible to be mistaken as to a girl's being out or not"; their dress and bonnets were all "very proper. Girls should be quiet and modest" (43–45). But now, once a girl is publicly "out," her sudden transition to bold flirtatiousness suggests she was never (privately) modest to begin with. Edmund "less courteously" than Tom calls this confusion "hypocrisy": "there is no more real modesty in their behaviour *before* they appear in public than afterwards" (45). Taste in fashionable dress and conduct—like the term manners—is no longer moral taste but has "forgotten" its ethical foundation to degenerate into something merely aesthetically understood.[24]

23 For Shaftesbury, speaking aloud—even when alone—is critical to the exercise: "But our Thoughts have generally such an obscure implicit Language, that 'tis the hardest thing in the world to make 'em speak out distinctly. For this reason, the right Method is to give 'em Voice and Accent. And this ... is what *Moralists* or *Philosophers* endeavour to do ... when ... they hold us out a kind of *vocal* Looking-Glass, draw Sound out of our Breast, and instruct us to personate our-selves, in the plainest manner" (S, 107–8). Speaking aloud is the first step in making the implicit form explicit.

24 For an excellent discussion of the fine line between hypocrisy and politeness, see Jenny Davidson, "A Modest Question about *Mansfield Park*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 16, no. 2 (2004): 1–20.

Moral vs. Aesthetic Education: The Pulpit vs. the Theatre

1. The Pulpit

It is the Pulpit, the English clergy, Edmund claims, who should rectify this modern problem of public manners and mores. Dispersed throughout even the smallest villages, where inconsistencies between their private and public lives are obvious to all, country clergymen cannot easily get away with the hypocrisy that modern manners encourage. Insisting that "with regard to their influencing public manners," he does not mean polite manners of "good breeding and courtesy," Edmund stipulates that "The *manners* I speak of, might rather be called *conduct*, perhaps, the result of good principles." The clergy are not "nothing" (Mary's view) but "everything": "I cannot call that situation nothing, ... which has the guardianship of religion and morals, and consequently of the manners which result from their influence"; "as the clergy are, or are not what they ought to be, so are the rest of the nation" (83–84).

Austen recognizes that the two most powerful educators of both private and public manners, traditionally, are the Pulpit and the Theatre;[25] and Edmund here stakes the Pulpit's claim. The clergy should be the educators; and education is not nothing but nearly everything: as he sharply remarks of the hypocrisy of immodest young ladies, "The error is plain enough, ... such girls are ill brought up" (44–45). But the problem of modern education is that the pulpit is too severe, and the theatre too indulgent, extremes exemplified by Mrs Norris and Sir Thomas as well. For them, Fanny's is to be a strictly virtuous utilitarian education designed to maintain the distinctions of rank between her and her cousins. Plain, pious, sober, humourless, preferably invisible—an oft-forgotten "nothing"—Fanny should on no account be improved beyond her natural Portsmouth origins by the leisured culture of Mansfield Park.

The Bertram daughters by contrast are indulged by Mrs Norris with all that is pleasurable: drawing and music lessons, riding, social outings such as dinners and balls, flirtations, fashionable dress, leisure—with the consequence that, just like Mrs Norris's carefully nurtured moor park apricot, they "look" beautiful but "taste" dreadful. They lack moral substance, as Sir

[25] See, for example, Rousseau's *Letter to Monsieur D'Alembert on the Theatre* (1758).

Thomas ruefully acknowledges at novel's end: their dispositions have been entirely neglected. This aesthetic education in "habits of selfish indulgence" is entirely shared by Henry and Mary Crawford. Raised in "a school of luxury and epicurism" (371), "all recreation and indulgence, without the wholesome alloy of labour" (206), both have mastered the arts of witty and pleasing manners: Mary, with her prettiness, her harp, her music, her charming inconsistencies of character and conduct; Henry with his theatrical reading and acting skills. Playful, amusing, leisured, entirely "charming," they live as unabashedly for their pleasures as does Tom Bertram. Their moral taste vitiated by their adulterous uncle's upbringing, they have come to the Grant parsonage to be improved, their errors remedied under the "curacy" of Dr and Mrs Grant. But, "Selfishness must always be forgiven you know," Mary cheerfully announces, "because there is no hope of a cure" (61). Understanding herself in the purely modern way, her innate natural disposition (she claims) is unfavourable for improvement.

What makes these schematic extremes of utilitarian and aesthetic education modern is precisely Mary's assumption about human nature: that it lacks any indwelling potential or telos for a higher good or happiness beyond the fulfillment of selfish pleasures. (Mary is, of course, wrong about this, and even about herself: it is the tragedy of the Crawfords that they prove to have so much potential for the pleasures of mind and virtue, wavering between ancient and modern throughout the novel in this respect.) But again, on the ancient understanding of human nature, education does not improve on a tabula rasa; there is also a natural indwelling predisposition that will be either completed by good education, or thwarted by bad.

Dominated by coded debates about education, the extended metaphor of landscape gardening makes all this explicit. Like Fanny, the Smith estate was "a mere nothing before Repton took it in hand" (49). Mr Smith, as Mr Rushworth plans to do with the Sotherton estate, turned his over to a professional landscape architect (Repton, the famous "Improver"), but one who sacrifices utility to ornament, shaping nature according to neither the character of its owner nor its own indwelling contours but instead to conform to fashionable conventions of the picturesque. Such professional improvers go so far as to cut down whole avenues of ancient trees, to Fanny's dismay, annihilating nature by their art.

This improving method of turning one's estate over to professionals has been precisely Sir Thomas's method of educating his children, turning them over to governesses and Mrs Norris. But these modern landscape improvers and educators forget nature through their art: it is a mere nothing lacking any indwelling potential or telos, a tabula rasa to be not so much improved as created *ex nihilo*. Like the modern but hypocritical young ladies whose fashionable dress and manners forget what ought to be their natural ground in virtues of character and conduct, they are "absent-minded"—as absent-minded as the modern absentee landowners, parents, and clergymen who hand over their charges to these very hired improvers or only sporadically take a hand in their development.

Edmund, by contrast, in theory at least is an ancient: he protests that he would have "less ornament" and more utility at Thornton Lacey (219), and that he would do the improving himself, a hands-on method of trial and error with which Fanny concurs. His establishment will express both the character of its owner and the natural predisposition of the land, its indwelling telos; and his children's education and upbringing will do the same. He would no more be an absentee father and landowner like Sir Thomas than he would be an absentee clergyman who visits his living only for the Sunday sermon.

As a budding clergyman, Edmund's education of Fanny provides the test case for the pulpit. In actual practice, does he remedy or exacerbate the modern divorce between virtue and pleasure? His education indeed provides the virtuously "curative" and consoling functions of religion: he compassionately allays her fears ("she crept about in constant terror of something or other" [12]), as religion attempts to allay fears of death; he consoles her for her "loss" of her Portsmouth family, trying to reconcile her to it by finding comfort in her new family at Mansfield Park. Yet it is highly significant that, like Shaftesbury, Austen transposes these traditionally religious functions into a more naturalistic key. Edmund may show Fanny no more than simple human kindness; prayer or a happier afterlife are never among his proffered comforts. He is above all Fanny's friend: "From this day, Fanny grew more comfortable. She felt that she had a friend, and the kindness of her cousin Edmund gave her better spirits with every body else" (14).

Edmund's education of Fanny is ancient, not modern, because it reinforces the virtues of natural, familial piety (the moral

sense) as well as friendship (the reflected sense). The idea of family here alone among Austen's novels stands as a metaphor for the profoundly affective kinship, the natural affections, which Shaftesbury argues harmoniously unite all human beings when not vitiated by the modern "selfish affections." Edmund realizes how much Fanny misses her family, especially William, and speedily "cures" this ailment by securing pens and paper so that she can write him a letter. "Family squabbling is the greatest evil of all" he declares (116), in yet another transposition of religious language into a more naturalistic key.[26] If this is so, then family harmony is the greatest good, making the greatest virtue familial or natural piety, the innate moral sense of the human affections.[27] Edmund's education of Fanny is, then, morally instructive, reinforcing her natural familial piety, her virtuous moral sense. Yet his education is not a severe or ascetic one which denies pleasure as Mrs Norris tries to do. He consistently recognizes the natural sociability denied by modern selfishness. What others consider luxuries for Fanny—paper and pens, leisure to rest, reflect, converse, and write letters to William, sociable outings and conversation, a horse, a friend—are indeed necessities.[28] So it is that Edmund's "attentions were ... of the highest importance in assisting the improvement of her mind, and extending its pleasures" (18–19).

26 The entire plot consists of the repeated rupturing and reconstitution of family ties: it opens with the story of the family squabble among the three Ward sisters; Tom's selfish squandering of Edmund's inheritance threatens a rift between the brothers as well as with his father; the Bertram sisters squabble jealously over Henry Crawford; the young Price sisters squabble over their dead sister's silver knife.

27 Fanny laments in the Sotherton chapel not that religious services are no longer held there, but that the family no longer assembles in habitual weekly communion. The family impiety towards Sir Thomas most upsets Edmund about the theatricals. Familial impiety mars the Crawfords: Edmund and Fanny equally deplore Mary's satirical comments upon her uncle the Admiral and brother-in-law Dr Grant. The adulterous affair between Maria and Henry horrifies Fanny as a violation of family relations: "—the whole family, both families connected as they were by tie upon tie, all friends, all intimate together!" (402).

28 Mrs Norris ironically contradicts her own Hobbesian doctrine of solitary selfishness by insisting she cannot have Fanny move in with her, for "the absolute necessity of a spare-room for a friend was now never forgotten" (24). Even she proclaims a friend is not a luxury but a necessity, thereby acknowledging the natural sociability denied by Hobbes but insisted on by Austen and Shaftesbury—when it suits her self-interest. Again, all the characters are caught between such ancient versus modern "inconsistencies."

2. The Theatre

Edmund's education of Fanny thus proceeds on an ancient understanding of nature and human nature, combining virtue with pleasure and the moral with the reflected sense in the Shaftesburian pleasures of the social affections. Yet, like all the characters including even Fanny herself, he struggles with the temptation of modernity to separate virtue and pleasure as that presents itself in the form of the thoroughly modern Crawfords who embody this divorce. Once they arrive, it seems even the Pulpit is in danger of succumbing to the Theatre, the pleasures of pure aesthetics in the form of Mary. Fanny almost comes to share Edmund's "addiction," in her case to both Mary and Henry.[29] Just as Edmund develops the habit of enjoying Mary's musical performances, so Fanny becomes habituated to doing the same in his absence. She is even more charmed by Henry's charismatic acting and reading. But her pleasure in the Crawfords' performances and "theatricality" is much more uneasy and unwilling.

Edmund and Fanny are in danger of forgetting themselves in the pleasures of the theatrical Crawfords, a forgetting that climaxes in the disputes over the private theatricals at Mansfield Park. Much ink has been spilled over Austen's attack on the Theatre as a corrupting force, an attack some interpret as placing her squarely (albeit puzzlingly, given her family's documented pleasure in private theatricals at Steventon) in the anti-theatrical tradition of Plato and Rousseau. This puzzle disappears if we consider that Austen merely sets up the historically traditional debate between the Pulpit and the Theatre to propose a remedy. Why is the Theatre's "education" so allegedly corrupting? Suggestions include the content of the play itself, or two traditionally "anti-theatrical prejudices": female actresses violate modesty by displaying themselves publicly on the stage; and acting compromises one's authenticity or sincerity, creating the inconsistency between private and public selves which Edmund declares clergymen especially must never fall into. Others suggest conversely that acting a part licenses the public expression of private desires which otherwise would remain unrealized, not acted upon.[30]

[29] Mary comments on how she has been "so little addicted to take my opinions from my uncle" (100); the narrator remarks on "every body at all addicted to letter writing" (387). Austen clearly recognizes the power of pleasurable habit.

[30] The classic formulations of these prejudices as they may operate in the novel are by Jonas Barish, in *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of

The greatest danger of acting as Austen represents it here again finds an ancient rather than modern explanation: the power of rightly directed habit in educating moral character. Good habits improve, bad habits corrupt—precisely why Aristotle urges the importance of cultivating good habits in the young.[31] Such is the power of habit that, if they were to repeatedly rehearse their embraces with Maria and Mary, Henry and Edmund might indeed "act" themselves into really falling in love. What begins as a playful amusement and challenge by gradations becomes the real thing. Aesthetic acting easily becomes its opposite, moral conduct or action.

But notice the habit of acting can either "corrupt" (Henry's adulterous liaison with Maria) or "improve": Henry's falling in love with Fanny. Habit can be as powerful an educative force for virtue as for vice, depending on the telos towards which it is directed: selfish pleasure, or friendship and love, defined for Austen as for Shaftesbury as pleasures of the mind. Despite the defining importance of its end or telos, habit alone is a powerfully determining factor: without habitual intercourse between the Price and Bertram families, "so long divided, and so differently situated, the ties of blood were little more than nothing" (390). Visiting Portsmouth, Fanny sadly realizes she cannot become her mother's friend: "the instinct of nature was soon satisfied," for without the ties of habit, "Mrs. Price's attachment had no other source" (354). And in the final crisis between Edmund and Mary,

California Press, 1981), 299–307; and Lionel Trilling, *The Opposing Self* (New York and London: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1978), 181–202. For more on the range of critical commentary on the theatrical, see Penny Gay's excellent interpretive and historical notes in *Jane Austen and the Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). On the relation between theatricality and "forgetting," see Daniel O'Quinn, "Jane Austen and Performance: Theatre, Memory, and Enculturation," in *A Companion to Jane Austen*, ed. Claudia Johnson and Clara Tuite (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 377–88. O'Quinn's reading takes the theatre out of its "metaphorization" to consider how as "a lived social and material practice" it contributes to the formation of cultural memory, and in this respect our readings might seem diametrically opposed. But see n34.

31 "Excellence of character comes into being as a consequence of habit ... The virtues come to be present neither by nature nor contrary to nature [one cannot 'habituate' a stone to move upward], but in us who are of such a nature as to take them on, and to be brought to completion in them by means of habits ... It makes no small difference, then, to be habituated in this way or that straight from childhood, but an enormous difference, or rather all the difference." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Joe Sachs (Newberry Port: Focus Publishing, R.R. Pullins, 2002); book 2, 1103a and b, 21–23.

"I imagined I saw a mixture of many feelings—a great, though short struggle—half a wish of yielding to truths, half a sense of shame—but habit, habit carried it. She would have laughed if she could" (418).

The private theatricals epitomize most of all the habits of leisured self-indulgence and aesthetic amusement so characteristic of the Bertram sisters, the Crawfords, and Tom, leading to the selfishness, jealousy, and family squabbling that erupts from the moment the play is in the works. Above all a pleasing diversion Tom rationalizes as a comfort to allay Lady Bertram's alleged fears about the absent Sir Thomas, the theatricals encourage the entire family to forget him. Upon his return, Sir Thomas "meant to ... forget how much he had been forgotten himself as soon as he could" (169).

Forgetting Nature: Ancient and Modern

To violate natural piety by forgetting Sir Thomas in the playful diversions of the theatre is to forget nature itself in pure aesthetics. The modern idea of nature is ultimately forgetful, absent-minded, because it holds that nature itself is absent a mind; as in Pope's *Dunciad*, it is "nature without a *nous*." Fanny's central meditation on nature shifts rapidly into the subject of the human mind, specifically, the faculty of memory. "Rhapsodizing," "wondering" in Mrs Grant's garden with Mary, Fanny muses:

> "This is pretty—very pretty ... Every time I come into this shrubbery I am more struck with its growth and beauty. Three years ago, this was nothing but a rough hedgerow ... perhaps in another three years we may be forgetting—almost forgetting what it was before. How wonderful, how very wonderful the operations of time, and the changes of the human mind! ... if any one faculty of our nature may be called *more* wonderful than the rest, I do think it is memory ... —We are to be sure a miracle in every way—but our powers of recollecting and of forgetting, do seem peculiarly past finding out." (187–88)

In stark contrast to Edmund's harmoniously mirroring responses in the stargazing scene, Mary, "untouched and inattentive," replies, "I see no wonder in this shrubbery equal to seeing myself in it" (189): modern self again replaces nature's telos. But Fanny cannot look at nature without remembering mind.

Fanny and Mary represent Edmund's climactic choice in the novel's central heroic drama or design, the dialogue—indeed, struggle—between virtue and pleasure we have been tracing

here, "the choice of Hercules" as one of Shaftesbury's engravings represents it.[32] Despite his exemplary ancient education of Fanny, Edmund admits to Mary and Henry that the clergy too severely divide virtue from pleasure: their sermons are too long, didactic, and boring (79); he himself is too plain spoken and lacking in wit to amuse or entertain (84). He could use some training in the art of dramatic reading to improve his delivery, for the clergy has too long assumed that (pleasurable, dramatic) "reading was reading," and (virtuous, undramatic) "preaching was preaching" (308). But things are changing: "There is now a spirit of improvement abroad," Edmund notes, "more general observation and taste, a more critical knowledge diffused, than formerly" (308). Such is the broader public dissemination of this spirit that "in every congregation, there is a larger proportion ... who can judge and criticize" (308). What he needs most, it appears, is poetry, more specifically, dramatic poetry, a kind of "theatre," as Henry's reading aloud of Shakespeare brings home (306). Is the charmingly theatrical Mary then the better choice?

This would only be true if Fanny represented virtue in the modern understanding of it: ascetically divorced from pleasure, the pious pulpit divorced from the theatre. But Fanny's pretty cross and chain are far removed from their original religious signification. Gifts and "remembrances" from William, brother and friend, and from Edmund, cousin, friend, and eventual husband, they now signify her affective and reflective human kinships and friendships of the moral and the reflected sense, the Shaftesburian pleasures of the social affections. Fanny does not pray; she does not seek out chapels, although she laments their falling into disuse; Sundays are not a time for conversing with her Maker. Sundays and chapels provide the opportunity for and habit of reflection and soliloquy, a self-conversing form of theatricality whose pleasures of mind improve rather than corrupt. Edmund tells her of his final crisis with Mary on a Sunday: "Sitting with her on Sunday evening—a wet Sunday evening—the very time of all others when if a *friend* is at hand

[32] See Shaftesbury, "The Judgment of Hercules," ed. Den Uyl, 3:213–39. Hercules, "being young, and retir'd to a solitary place in order to deliberate on the Choice he was to make of the different ways of Life, was accosted ... by the two Goddesses, VIRTUE and PLEASURE. 'Tis on the issue of the controversy between these *Two*, that the Character of HERCULES depends ... So that we may naturally give to this Piece and History, as well the Title of *The Education*, as *the Choice or Judgment of* HERCULES" (3:214–15). I am grateful to Karen Valihora for calling my attention to this engraving.

the *heart* must be opened, and everything told—*no one else in the room* except his mother, who, *after hearing an affecting sermon*, had cried herself to sleep—it was impossible not to speak" (413; emphasis added).

Soliloquy is the spirit of poetry that can deliver sermons so affecting they stir even Lady Bertram's torpidity, educating her to both think and feel. In marrying Fanny, Edmund marries the Horatian spirit of poetry, the unity of virtue and pleasure, modernity has forgotten. Marrying her is to embrace and strengthen not only his natural piety or profound kindness, his moral sense, but also his reflected sense, the new, Shaftesburian spirit of moral and aesthetic taste which can reflectively "judge and criticize" nature and human nature as the first step towards their improvement and reform.[33]

Marrying Fanny most of all refreshes Edmund's memory for the more comprehensive ancient understanding of nature and human nature. Our modern memories are "weak," as Fanny mused in the garden: "There seems something more speakingly incomprehensible in the powers, the failures, the inequalities of memory, than in any other of our intelligences. The memory is sometimes so retentive, so serviceable, so obedient—at others, so bewildered and so weak—and at others again, so tyrannic, so beyond controul!" (188). Like Fanny herself—pale, thin, easily fatigued—the memory needs the habitual exercise of reflection and soliloquy which muses over past conduct and events, gradually tempering the selfish passions to bring better feelings. The modern young Mr Rushworth, whose estate, like his natural predisposition of mind, is "low," wholly "unfavourable" for improvement, cannot remember his lines for the play. He has no memory: he is the tabula rasa of modernity. It is Fanny who patiently rehearses his lines with him, a repetitive, vocal, mirroring exercise which Austen parallels with the exercise

33 Even Dr Grant stands some chance of improvement, Fanny says, because having to sit down and habitually write sermons "must make him think"; in a more active profession, "he might have escaped that knowledge of himself, the *frequency* at least of that knowledge which it is impossible he should escape as he is now" (101). This echoes Shaftesbury's comment that "a Creature such as Man ... must in the very Use of this his reasoning Faculty, be forc'd to receive Reflections back into his Mind of what passes in itself ... in short, of whatsoever relates to his Character, Conduct, or Behaviour amidst his Fellow-Creatures, and in Society. Or shou'd he be of himself unapt; there are others ready to remind him, and refresh his Memory, in this way of Criticism (I, 68).

of soliloquy and which is equally designed to improve him. "Your *kindness* and patience *can never be forgotten*," Henry compliments Fanny, "your indefatigable patience in trying to make it possible for him to learn his part—in *trying to give him a brain which nature had denied*—to mix up *an understanding* for him out of the superfluity of your own!" (203; emphasis added).

After all too frequently forgetting Fanny in Mary's diversions, Edmund finally remembers not only Fanny but himself. While he was tutoring her, through their habitual tête-à-têtes she has been tutoring him, in the dramatic alternation of tutor and pupil which Shaftesbury describes: the natural theatrical aesthetics of soliloquy. Edmund proves an apt pupil; writing to Fanny about his plan to confront Mary: "I shall be able to write much that I could not say, and shall be giving her time for reflection before she resolves on her answer, and I am less afraid of the result of reflection than of an immediate hasty impulse; I think I am" (385).

By novel's end, Fanny is becoming a full-fledged poet, the author to whom Shaftesbury addressed his advice. Through her soliloquizing dialogues, readings aloud, and conversations with her sister Susan in their upstairs haven in Portsmouth, Fanny graduates from pupil to tutor and from sister to comforting friend. She has introduced Susan to books, although with characteristic modernity, she is "without any of the early delight in books, which had been so strong in Fanny" (381). Susan's youthful vanity, however, makes her an apt pupil, earnestly desirous of good manners: approaching Mansfield Park, she is "meditating much upon silver forks, napkins, and finger glasses" (407). She has been well schooled, for she has a retentive memory:

> what Fanny told her of *former times, dwelt more on her mind* than the pages of Goldsmith; and she paid her sister the compliment of preferring her style to that of any printed author ... Their *conversations* ... were not always on subjects so high as history or morals. Others had their hour ... and none *returned so often*, or *remained so long* between them, as Mansfield Park, a description of the people, the manners, the amusements, the ways of Mansfield Park. Susan, who had *an innate taste* for the genteel and well-appointed, was eager to hear. (381; emphasis added)

Fanny's repeated, habitual "rehearsals," her conversations about manners and morals, the harmonious pleasures of the social affections, mirror Austen's novel itself, awakening a great longing in Susan to improve herself. It is precisely thus, as Henry

Crawford observes of Shakespeare—another master of the art of soliloquy—that the Theatre, or Poetry, can so improve the manners and mores of a nation: "Shakespeare one gets acquainted with without knowing how. It is part of an Englishman's constitution. His *thoughts and beauties* are so spread abroad that one touches them every where, one is *intimate with him by instinct*.—No man *of any brain* can open at a good part of one of his plays, without falling into the flow of his meaning immediately" (306; emphasis added).[34] By the end of this novel, Miss Austen, like Miss Price, is definitely "out," not only setting the example for the novel of manners, but allegorizing what it can do. "'Tis no wonder that the primitive Poets were esteem'd such *Sages* in their Times," comments Shaftesbury, "since it appears, they were such well-practis'd *Dialogists*, and accustom'd to this improving Method, before ever Philosophy had adopted it" (S, 122).

Mansfield Park is the most strenuously intellectual of Austen's novels, for by it she tries to restore to us moderns the brain, the mind, the memory which our modern understandings of nature have denied (and, out of the superfluity of her own). Soliloquy as the "form" for her novels of manners is not a static proto-Kantian form manifesting a strictly internal coherence and harmony of parts and wholes, a model inviting disinterested aesthetic spectatorship.[35] Again, soliloquy is an activity, a form

[34] O'Quinn's reading of this remarkable scene in which Edmund, Fanny, Henry Crawford, and Lady Bertram discuss Henry's brilliant reading aloud of Shakespeare for the "sense" not merely the words emphasizes Henry's misogynistic "forgetting" that it was through the agency of well-known actresses such as Mrs Siddons that Shakespeare became "part of an Englishman's constitution" (306). This "erasure of Siddons' cultural labour" is also a "mystification of theatrical reception" which posits "a spectral Shakespeare" behind his texts (Johnson and Tuite, 385–86). O'Quinn thus reads "manners" entirely as a form of culturally embodied memory and forgetting, a material praxis. But despite its historicism, this modern reading erases the ancient metaphysical teleological view of nature I am arguing Jane Austen wants to restore. Our readings of memory, forgetting, and theatricality may be complementary, not mutually exclusive. Virtue ethics similarly investigates the embeddedness of social practices: as MacIntyre puts it, Austen "identifies that social sphere within which the practice of the virtues is able to continue ... the *telos* of her heroines is a life within both a particular kind of marriage and a particular kind of household within which that marriage will be a focal point" (239). And steeped in its Shaftesburian idiom, the novel enacts the embeddedness of discourse itself as a form of cultural memory and "iteration," O'Quinn's focus.

[35] See Den Uyl: "Finally, connecting beauty to virtue first within one's own soul or character forces us to think of the appreciation of beauty as an act

of praxis that does not separate art from life. Mimetic, dialogic acts of reflection and self-reflection on nature and human nature (manners) whose characters centrally engage in such dialogic debates, her novels in turn invite readers to engage in this same strenuously reflective and self-reflective praxis of reading, reflection, debate, and conversation, one which makes the private act of solitary reading part of a wider public dissemination and reform of public manners, a heroic drama of private and public education.

It may be that soliloquy illuminates only Jane Austen's novelistic form and practice, not the eighteenth-century novel or even the novel of manners as a sub-genre. But "the critical case Shaftesbury makes for his magical glass will influence all discussions of representation during the next seventy years of the eighteenth century," comments Prince[36]—to which we might add "and beyond." For Austen and Shaftesbury, soliloquy brings what a materialist, scientific modernity marginalizes as private matters—theological and philosophical debate—out of the realm of silence onto the public stage of the novel. In doing so, it refreshes our memories for the ancients as a transfiguring mirror whose understanding of the seamless unity of an ethics and aesthetics grounded in a standard of nature might well "improve" our own.

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of *engagement* between the agent and that which is appreciated, rather than as an act of disinterested contemplative spectating" (301). See also his arguments against the "proto-Kantian internalist" and "subjectivist" readings of Shaftesbury "which Charles Taylor, Stephen Darwall, and Alasdair MacIntyre are so keen on seeing as a sign of Shaftesbury's modernity" (302), a modernist position finally endorsed by Prince and Valihora as well.

36 Prince, 62.