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SELF, SOLILOQUY, AND THE EUDAIMONIC METHOD IN SHAFTESBURY

Shaftesbury'de Öz, Özkonuşma ve Eudaimonik Yöntem

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ABSTRACT

Starting with a preliminary discussion on post-theory and the eudaimonic turn, this article aims at exploring the role of self, soliloquy and the eudaimonic method in Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury's *Soliloquy*. To investigate this point, the article will first address the ideological, political, and cultural contexts of Shaftesbury's thought in relation to the advent of the Cambridge circle in the seventeenth century. But later, by abandoning this critical framework and following in the footsteps of the new hermeneutics of trust, the article will adopt a post-critical approach and will try to demonstrate the eudaimonic method in Shaftesbury, the literary critic and philosopher. In accordance, the article will address Shaftesbury's picture of soliloquy as an encomium to ethical agency as opposed to moral passivity. Thus, in identifying in the neo-Platonist and the Enlightenment self a moral automatism, it will be maintained that he proposes a virtuous sense of self that does not have a fixed but rather a developmental outlook. This is portrayed vividly in his *Soliloquy* where the dividing of the self and the engagement with soliloquy become forms of self-dialogism. Through acts of soliloquisation, it will be maintained that Shaftesbury develops a dynamic form of self which is actively engaged with the 'activity of virtue'. The conclusion draws on the point that Shaftesbury's soliloquy as a literary and philosophical act informs the development of an ethical self. The importance of this point lies in the fact that this continuity implies Shaftesbury's centrality to well-being studies as a eudaimonic practitioner.

Keywords: Shaftesbury, soliloquy, self, the eudaimonic turn, ethical agency.

ÖZ

Bu makale, kuram sonrası ve eudaimonik dönüş hakkında belirleyici bir tartışmadan başlayarak, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Üçüncü Shaftesbury Earl'ünün *Soliloquy* (*Özkonuşma*) isimli eserinde öz, özkonuşma ve eudaimonik yöntemin rolünü araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu noktayı araştırmak için, makale önce Shaftesbury'nin düşüncesinin ideolojik, politik ve kültürel bağlamlarının on yedinci yüzyılda Cambridge çev-

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resinin yükselişiyle olan ilişkisine değinecektir. Fakat daha sonra, bu eleştirel çerçeveyi terk ederek ve yeni güven hermeneutiğinin adımlarını takip ederek, makale kuram sonrası bir yaklaşımı benimseyecek ve edebiyat eleştirmeni ve filozof Shafstesbury'de eudaimonik yöntemin varlığını ortaya koymaya çalışacaktır. Bu bağlamda, makale Shaftesbury'nin ahlaki pasifliğe karşı etik eyleyiciliğe bir övgü olarak özkonuşma düşüncesine atıfta bulunacaktır. Böylelikle, neo-Platonist ve Aydınlanmacı öz anlayışlarında bir otomatizm tespit ederek, bunun yerine belirlenmiş değil gelişimsel olan erdemli bir öz anlayışı önerdiği savunulacaktır. Bu düşünce en açık bir biçimde, özün bölünmesinin ve özkonuşmanın öz-diyalogun formları olarak ortaya çıktığı *Soliloquy* (*Özkonuşma*) isimli eserinde ortaya çıkmaktadır. Özkonuşma eylemleri aracılığıyla, Shaftesbury'nin aktif bir biçimde 'aktif erdem' ile meşgul olan dinamik bir öz düşüncesi geliştirdiği fikri savunulacaktır. Sonuç kısmı, Shaftesbury'nin edebi ve felsefi bir eylem olarak özkonuşmasının etik özün gelişimini belirlediği noktasından hareket edecektir. Bu noktanın önemi, bu devamlılığın Shaftesbury'nin eudaimonik bir pratisyen olarak iyilik çalışmalarındaki merkezi konumunu ima etmesinde yatmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Shaftesbury, özkonuşma, öz, eudaimonik dönüş, etik eyleyicilik.

Introduction: How to Do Things with Trust: Post-theory and the Eudaimonic Turn

In his *Freud and Philosophy*, Paul Ricoeur maps out the relationship between psychoanalysis and language. In doing so, he considers that the Freudian dream hosts an investigative model through which "Freud invites us to look to dreams themselves for the various relations between desire and language" (Ricoeur, 1970: 5). The dream itself, as he views it under the standards of his hermeneutic phenomenology, cannot serve as the sublime object of interpretation since it is not the dream as fabulated by the human agent but the textual(ised) aspect of the dream itself which enables the interpretative process. This textual account, in return, transforms dreams into symbols which should be read as "the primitive speech of desire" (Ricoeur, 1970: 6). At the bottom of this concern for textuality, he maintains, lies the symbolic interest in various phenomena out of whose bosom the interpretation of the symbol and finally our relationship with truth can be securely established.

But the very textuality which this hermeneutic discourse incurs poses a certain difficulty. It is suggestive of a model of suspicion which reads the world into its own territory of interpretative truth as it offers "an architecture of meaning" (Ricoeur, 1970: 18). If "every *mythos* involves a latent *logos* which demands to be exhibited," (Ricoeur, 1970: 19. Original emphasis),

it should mean that interpretation is at the service of the deconstructive critic's penchant for symbolic thought which is characterised by an attribution of double-meaning to a symbol. This, in return, corresponds to the "intellectual activity of deciphering, of finding a hidden meaning" (Ricoeur, 1970: 19) which is hidden under the first meaning, rendering interpretation an act of distrust whose masters he believes are Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche (Ricoeur, 1970: 32). Drawing on the truth-seeking scepticism of Descartes, they not only identify consciousness itself as a dubious matter but also "clear the horizon for a more authentic word, for a new reign of Truth, not only by means of a "destructive" critique, but by the invention of an art of *interpreting*" (Ricoeur, 1970: 33. Original emphasis). In Rita Felski's words, the revisionary content of Ricoeur's interpretative act develops,

> a key distinction between a hermeneutics of trust, which is driven by a sense of reverence, and goes deeper into the text in search of revelation, and a hermeneutics of suspicion, which adopts an adversarial sensibility to probe for concealed, repressed, or disavowed meanings (2011b: 216).

Despite the anthropological depth that accompanies the idea of an *animal symbolicum* (Cassirer, 1944: 26), it simultaneously necessitates a method of suspicion since it implies that symbolisation follows from a preconceived doubt concerning the falsity of the phenomenon called reality. If so, it enforces a hermeneutics of distrust and it, as identified by Ricoeur, skilfully points towards an ideological divide between what is visible and unseen to the untrained eye.[1] Similarly, when the interpretative force of the symbolic method is transferred to literary criticism, it allocates a suspicious reading which treats the text as a swarm of symbols which cloaks the real meaning under a false appearance of truth. In accordance, the contextualism of ideological criticism which draws on a similar assumption that the literary text as a narrative symbol hides hidden patterns of power relations cements its claim to theoretical legitimacy through the very idea that it can "trump the claims of the individual text, knowing it far better than it can ever know itself" (Felski, 2011a: 574). Despite the interpretative horizons with which critique has nourished the theoretical sphere, the notion that meaning is a dubious matter and that the critic needs to reach out for the

[1] Felski implies that Ricoeur might not be suspicious of the masters of suspicion since his account "stresses its heroic, oppositional, nay-saying qualities" (2011b: 220). While this is a valuable point, it could also be inferred that Ricouer *is* in fact suspicious of ideological suspicion and yet looks for ways to renovate it via his unique method of analysis. See (Felski, 2011b).

real truth behind false appearances leaves "a suspicious eye forever on the lookout for diseased psychodynamics and/or participation in undesirable ideologies, such as racism, sexism, neuroses, false consciousness, hetero-sexism, patriarchy, imperialism, and the like" (Pawelski and Moores, 2013: 27). If so, the suspicious method in literary criticism can be hardly claimed to be concerned with well-being since "it is really a concern with ill-being" (Pawelski and Moores, 2013: 27). Furthermore, through its aggrandisement of common sense and wealth on behalf of political pluralism, it downplays the aesthetic and ethical value of literature by unknowingly becoming a claimant to a version of ostrich nominalism.[2] Or, to put it more provocatively, it seems to suffer usually from the near inhumanity of the inhabitants of Textualité who have "only a single eye" and "share perceptions and ideas with a few other beings in locally bounded communities that establish group norms" (Nussbaum, 1993: 72).

In detecting the single-eyedness of textuality, post-theory detects the contextual deadlock in critical practice. In response to that dysfunctionality and as a post-theoretical endeavour, the eudaimonic turn seeks a reversal of our expectations from the absenteeism and the ill-doing of ideological criticism where the hermeneutics of distrust is substituted with a hermeneutics of trust, or alternatively speaking, well-being. Taking its hint from Ancient ethical theory where *eudaimonia* (happiness, flourishing) constitutes a central discussion of well-being, it assumes an overlap between a trustful mode of reading/being and literature's capacity to cultivate ethical action in the reader as opposed to the endorsement of moral duty and norms (Ricoeur, 1992: 170). In its desire to reformat our critical relationship with language as a symbolic rope we constantly choose to hang ourselves with and to propose instead a non-enigmatic agenda in our encounter with the literary text, it not only exposes in a Momian fashion the shortcomings of what can be called the Apollonian interpreter and his criticism[3] but also suggests that language "can't be blamed for our prevarications" (Moi, 2017: 180). Accordingly, it seeks a reappraisal of critique to transform the negative critical force in criticism—along with a post-theoretical force that tends

[2] I do not use this phrase in the sense David Armstrong uses it in his *Nominalism and Realism* as a response to Quine but as a synonym for the critical appreciation of political pluralism in the name of unmasking hidden structures. For this point see (Armstrong, 1978).

[3] I draw my analogy from Lucian's comedy, *Zeus Rants* where Momus accuses Apollo of cryptic divination to the extent that he declares he would need another Apollo to profess the real meaning behind his words. For this immensely important point, see (Lucian, 1915).

to emotion, affect, and feeling in any given text—into a constituent of a well-lived life and eudaimonic reading. In the end, though recognisant of the fact that we cannot go back to the age of innocence in literary studies, the eudaimonic turn still insists on asking the following questions: can we ever hope to recommend suspicion as a constructive rather than a deconstructive method for reading literary texts? Is it possible to mend our relationship with literature and cultivate "metaphors of personal identification" and "the talent for metaphor" (Cohen, 2008: 8) in reading literary texts? Can literary studies become more than "the academy's designated safe space for expressions of social maladjustment and congenital crankiness" (English and Love, 2023: 2) by healing itself from its post-Romantic experience and evaluate happiness as an end in itself and not as an ideological trap for the twenty-first century reader/audience? Can literature contribute to human flourishing? In a humble effort to produce viable answers to these questions, I will first address the ideological picture of Shaftesbury's *Soliloquy* which will help us understand the historical coordinates of the philosopher out of which his interest in the human self and the virtue assumingly arises. Later, and without resorting to the easy comfort of a rejection of ideological criticism, the following part will propose a review of our critical behaviour and offer a eudaimonic reading of *Soliloquy* as an encomium to ethical agency as divided from the egotistical tradition in British moral philosophy. In doing so, I will try to present a convincing case for the superiority of the former over the latter and how it might be relatable to the concerns of post-theory.

Discovering the 'Symbol': Shaftesbury in 'Context'

Anthony Ashley Cooper, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury who lived from 1671 to 1713 was an immensely influential philosopher and literary critic of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century whose entry into the world was characterised by post-1688 English politics. This chapter in English history saw the transferral of the civic humanism of fifteenth and sixteenth century Florence into England only to be transformed into a rather English alternative of it since the aftermath of the civil war brought about the need "to define the political community rather more as a polity and rather less as a hierarchy than had been the case before" (Pocock, 1989: 90).[4] Thus, while Florentine citizenship was informed by an Aristotelian

[4] This is greatly exampled by what Mark Goldie names, "the cynosure of Whig anticlericalism" that is "priestcraft" (1993: 216). For this point see (Goldie, 1993).

agenda of autonomy with an outspoken concern for the *res publica*, in England the ascendant Whiggish power displayed a concern with "the material basis of that autonomy" (Pocock, 1989: 91). The civic humanism of Italy looked forward to maintaining a Spartan spirit whereas it remained that the political thought of seventeenth and eighteenth-century England demanded a change since political thinkers like James Harrington "saw the disappearance of tenurial subordination as the restoration of civic virtue" (Pocock, 1989: 92). Although it appears that the classical tenets upon which civic humanism rested still informed the moral concerns of post-revolution England, the English successors to Florentine humanism managed to evolve it into a libertarian cause with a specific emphasis on individual autonomy in a pre-industrial society which was only flirting with an embryonic form of nineteenth century liberalism (Klein, 1994: 129).[5] For, "if the end of property was independence, the end of independence was citizenship and moral personality" (Pocock, 1989: 92) and it led to the contention that "historical conditions had brought about circumstances in which a republic of gentlemen could now be established" (Klein, 1994: 127). Thus, Shaftesbury's philosophy and literary criticism which inspired the subsequent tradition of sentimentalism and were characterised by an astute defence of virtue and beauty as they pertained to the particular or the universal, flourished under this newly-flourishing 'republic of gentlemen' which readily appealed to his Whiggish disposition although his version of Whiggism disallowed systematised allegiance to any form of party politics.[6]

Given the historical coordinates of Shaftesbury's work, the first critical distinction to be derived from his philosophical programme is that Shaftesbury's ethics and aesthetics are nourished by the new cultural politics of the Whig regime as it sprang out from the bosom of a divided world of divided political tastes. For, not only did the rise of libertarianism and commercialism of the eighteenth century produce a soft spot in Whig ideology but also a vulnerability to criticism (Klein, 1994: 125). As part of that cultural politics and as an antidote to this growing cultural and economic doubt, seven-

[5] The Whiggish libertarianism of the eighteenth-century allowed scholarship to identify John Locke as its prophet. However, Lawrence Klein delineates that "research into oppositional writings" revealed "the varieties of Whiggism and the peripherality of Locke" (1994: 129).

[6] See, for instance, Shaftesbury's criticism of philosophy in the *Soliloquy*: "The most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system. And the surest method to prevent good sense is to set up something in the room of it. The liker anything is to wisdom, if it be not plainly the thing itself, the more directly it becomes its opposite" (Cooper, 2000: 130).

teenth and eighteenth-century English politics made tremendous use of the religious epistemology of the group known as the Cambridge Platonists which largely depended on Plotinus's moral realism through which they devised a system where "reason plays not only an epistemological but a *moral* role" (Kaldas, 2024: 218). The moral reason of the Cambridge Platonists, in other words, presented Whig political discourse with a societal plan of morality and autonomy which was committed to

> a Ciceronian idea of *religio*, cleansed of *superstitio*; to the search for the *prisca theologica,* a 'pure' and 'primitive' religion; and to the devising of a civil theology fit for a Whig commonwealth, a polity that knew how to distinguish the 'priest of God from the priest of Baal.' (Goldie, 1993: 211. Original emphases).

The primitivity that is referred to here, does not denote a coarseness in nature. Instead, it is intended as a synonym for rational simplicity that is compatible with a liberal form of aristocratic activity from whose body virtue will flow effortlessly. In connection, it is little wonder that the eldest member of this circle, Benjamin Whichcote writes in one of his sermons that "he that is vicious, is himself a Moral Monster" (1698:18). But also, he advocates for friendship, joy, and virtue in accordance with reason and says:

> Let there be no Moroseness, Rigidness, Censoriousness, Severity, or Stateliness in a Man's Carriage; but all Friendliness, Familiarity, Kindness, Harmony, and Compliance in Converse. *Stateliness* is an Eye-sore to every Body: he is look'd upon as burthensome who is of this Temper. For, take it for granted, that none but those that are *base*, none but those that will make themselves *Slaves for Ends*, will bear another's Scorn or Neglect: and they do it but *externally* neither (Whichcote, 1698: 239. Original emphases).

Surely, it would be unjust to overlook the fact that the rational picture of Whichcote's religion which preaches virtue, morality, and politeness is an extended version of Florentine humanism (Cassirer, 1953: 8-24) and that its Italian ancestors helped their English successors to escape "the narrowness and the fetters of ecclesiastical tradition by confronting it with the question of the universal grounds, of the *a priori* of religion" (Cassirer, 1953: 24. Original emphasis). However, the English renovations made to it largely matured its continental outlook since English humanism not only explicitly advocated a compatibilist continuity between reason and faith, creating a fair ground for the philosophical explanation for religious principles rather

than for theological revelation,[7] but also introduced an understanding of rationality as the source of a good life, a trait that is traceable to the confrontation between Augustinianism and Pelagianism (Cassirer, 1953: 96).[8] However, the Cambridge Platonists did not assume the public role of blind watchmakers who were invested in "the pure contemplative activity, the νόησις νοήσεως" (Cassirer, 1953: 49). On the contrary,

> attaining this rational perspective is not something that only happens in the intellect: it has a transformative effect on the whole soul, which flows necessarily into one's affections, one's will, and from there, into one's actions. (…) In other words, reason is inherently *practical*; if it fails to translate into action, it is not genuine reason (Kaldas, 2024: 230. Original emphasis).

The greatest achievement here and an anticipated outcome of a 'practicalised' marriage of reason and faith would be that it would largely stand in stark contrast to a static, abstract, and fixed ideal of virtuosity. In accordance, the practicality, or better put, the 'activity' of the Cambridge Platonists' moral realism posed a threat to a duty-based moral programme of the *ancien régime* since it eradicated the possibility of a virtue in passivity although the concept of divine command and order was still a prominent theme in the writings of the Cambridge Platonists.[9] Consequently, the theological inquiry into the intelligibility of the world which suggested that "the knowledge of the created world is a result of communion with the divine intellect" (Kaldas, 2024: 224) resulted in the argument that "religion is a fundamentally rational thing" (Kaldas, 2024: 228) and that human well-being is achievable only through the moral *use* of reason that is directed towards the workings of the divine intellect. The spiritual, in this sense, is no

[7] I am following here Klein at large. But to integrate the political history of Klein with the intellectual history of Cassirer yields excellent results. Surely, I am not suggesting that the Cambridge Platonists were directly responsible of the changing face of English politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries. But they, though perhaps indirectly, influenced this change and one only needs to keep in mind that judging from the publication history of their works, the members of the Cambridge circle possibly had strong Whig connections.

[8] However, Cassirer, as Kaldas rightfully observes, misses the point of Cambridge Platonism by excluding action from the picture. For this immensely valuable point, see (Kaldas, 2024).

[9] For instance, Ralph Cudworth in his *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* defends the *a priority* of moral principles. Normativity is definitely not out of the picture, and he continues: "But all the moral goodness, justice, and virtue, that is exercised in obeying positive commands and doing such things as are *positive* only, (…) consisteth not in the materiality of actions themselves, but in that formality of yielding obedience to the commands of lawful authority in them" (Cudworth, 1996: 21).

longer in conflict with the rational since and as Whichcote sums it up and contends: "Sir, I oppose not rational to spiritual; for spiritual is most rational" (qtd. in Kaldas, 2024: 229). This, in return, explains the polity-based affinity between the libertarianism of the Whig party and its endorsement of individual autonomy and the idea, and not the ideal, of a rational morality which came to influence Shaftesbury's ethics. In other words, Shaftesbury's ethics and aesthetics are characterised by a pronouncement of the superiority of a moral sense of self that is rational in character and will consequently result in the well-being of the individual and society.

However, not only does Shaftesbury's career coincide with political rivalry in seventeenth-century England as largely championed by the 'moral victory' of the Cambridge Platonists but it also coincides with the apparent divide between two distant personalities in his own family. For, from a biographical point of view, it is also very possible to read his philosophical effort as a display of an unconscious tendency to create a bridge between the first earl who was the "leader of the whig opposition" and the second earl, his father who was "an ailing, reclusive, and somewhat mysterious figure" (Klein, 2004: 217). From this perspective, Shaftesbury seems to adopt the civic concerns of his grandfather along with the internal occupations of his father and produces an amalgamation of the two in his writings since his self-concern is intermingled with a concern for the others where "self-love can sit alongside other ultimate motivations" (Crisp, 2019: 80). Although his conjoined interest in the personal and the societal has been regarded recently as evidence for the everlasting effect of Hobbesian egotism on British moral philosophy (Crisp, 2019: 81), self-interest and public interest do not necessarily exclude one another. For instance, when he writes on cosmic harmony and beauty as a universal phenomenon this cosmic cosmeticism is not devoid of an interest in the harmoniousness of the particular as it pertains to the betterment of the individual. In Shaftesbury's thought, the interior and the exterior, the cosmetic order of the heavens and the cosmetic human spirit are understood in conjunction with one another since there seems to be "no sharp distinction between Shaftesbury's ethics and his aesthetics" (Crisp, 2019: 82) and beauty as an aesthetic category not only informs the rational intellect of the cosmos but also informs the moral sense of the individual. If so, there lies the critical possibility to argue that the conceptual continuity between the public and the private was indeed the making of the Shaftesbury estate's contrastive figures.

Whether we consider Shaftesbury a figure of what Jonathan Israel names the radical enlightenment which, in an English context, would render him "a radical ideologue of the 'Glorious Revolution'" and his philosophy a "post-aristocratic philosophy" (Israel, 2001: 88), it would be undeniably true that trying to locate the coordinates of Shaftesbury's thought in any of these 'contexts' would mean to treat him as a 'symbol'. In other words, they would undermine his role as a philosopher and critic, reducing him to a symptom of seventeenth-century English power relations. Thus, despite the broadscale interpretative repertoire with which the critical framework provides us here, trying to locate the coordinates of Shaftesbury's thought solely in its historical, political, and biographical contexts does not necessarily explain its teleological end. For, on one hand, these contexts make a kinetic statement of Shaftesbury's understanding of the human self; on the other hand, they fail to address the *ergon* (function) of Shaftesbury's human being which is defined by her place in a rational aesthetic programme. In other words, the content and method of Shaftesbury's philosophical and literary inquiry rises above the concerns of the critical school and to insist on the unorthodox Whiggery, both personal and political, risks reading Shaftesbury into the 'textuality' of his text which altogether clouds the theoretical underpinnings of his philosophical programme. We are at a crossroads here: since the historical, political, and the biographical contexts of Shaftesbury's thought do not necessarily help us understand how human life, "with its joys and sorrows," is a "'vale of soul making'" (Pawelski and Moores, 2013: 43),[10] it is important to review our taken-for-granted confidence in the road usually taken by literary studies and try to view Shaftesbury's self "as a practice, or set of practices, rather than as an object of a proof of existence" (Purviance, 2004: 154). In an attempt to follow this path, the following part will take a eudaimonian approach to Shaftesbury's self-concerning his use of soliloquy with the aim of laying bare the philosopher's eudaimonic method.

[10] Obviously, the reference is here to John Keats' famous 1819 letter to George and Georgiana Keats whose Romanticist underpinnings I do not necessarily agree with within the context of Shaftesburian ethics and the eudaimonic turn as it seems hard to argue that Shaftesbury is looking forward to participating in the making of the human soul but rather, he seems to be interested in the making of the self. Still, I refer to Pawelski and Moore's reference to the Keatsian understanding of human soul as a nineteenth century synonym for the Shaftesburian self as devoid of its Romanticist underpinnings. See (Pawelski and Moore, 2013).

Every Man 'Out' of His Context: Self, Soliloquy, and The Eudaimonic Method in Shaftesbury

The mission of taking Shaftesbury out of his various critical contexts leaves us with a vast metaphysical mission that Shaftesbury furthers in his ethical writings. In the second part of *The Philosophical Regimen*, he starts by outlining the characteristics of a system in which all elements are "combined, united, and have a mutual dependence upon one another" where all these elements "hold to one stock" (1900: 13). The unison of Shaftesbury's universe is essentially Neo-Platonist in character in that everything holding to one stock bears considerable similarity to the first principle of Plotinus which is self-sufficient and monistically singular (Plotinus, 2018: 6.9.6.17-21, p.890). But Shaftesbury's metaphysics also holds an Aristotelian argument of function where "every nature is constantly and never-failingly true to itself, and certain to produce only what is good to itself and to its own right state" (1900: 17). On one hand, Shaftesbury's argument echoes Plotinus's idea of the One as an all-encompassing and self-sufficient phenomenon which he identifies with "one all-knowing and all-intelligent nature" (1900: 18). Under this standard, he naturally concludes that "there is no chance or contrary ill-design" and "if there be a supreme reason of the whole, then everything happens according to that reason" (1900: 31). But also, his Neo-Platonist deism melts into Aristotelian functionalism when he discusses the teleological end of beings:

> Now every particular nature certainly and constantly produces what is good to itself, unless something foreign molest and hinder it, either by overpowering and corrupting it within, or by violence from without. Thus nature in the patient struggles to the last and strives to throw off the distemper. Thus even in plants and seeds every particular nature thrives and attains its perfection if nothing from without obstruct and if nothing foreign to its nature has already impaired and wounded it; and even then it does its utmost to redeem itself (1900: 17).[11]

In Shaftesbury's case there are two necessary outcomes of a juxtaposition of this sort: first, it puts to us that the harmoniousness and orderliness of the

[11] Compare with *Nichomachean Ethics* I.7.1098a35-39 where Aristotle provides an implicit but striking account of human 'good'. He indicates: "For living is apparently shared with plants, but what we are looking for is the special function of a human being; hence we should set aside the life of nutrition and growth. The life next in order is some sort of life of sense perception; but this too is apparently shared with horse, ox, and every animal" (Aristotle, 1999: 9).

cosmos is a marker of its intelligence and its rational powers. If so, it should mean that our moral sense is predated by a moral first principle in nature as independent of the human mind. Accordingly, in *Characteristics* he considers our sense of beauty and virtue as incorruptible "notwithstanding any fashion, law, custom or religion which may be ill and vicious itself" and argues that their viciousness "can never alter *the eternal measures and immutable independent nature of worth and virtue*" (2000: 175. Original emphasis). If beauty and virtue are not susceptible to any foreign threat and that their existence is safeguarded by eternal measures, it should naturally mean that Shaftesbury was indeed a moral realist according to whom the recognition of moral properties do not require the observatory powers of a human agent since they exist independently from the human mind (Irwin, 2015: 866). In other words, the metaphysical principle of the universe, *ceteris paribus*, informs our teleological 'good' which runs parallel to the rational, cosmetic, and harmonious first principle. There is a simple *modus ponens* here at work: all elements in the universe *(p)* are part of a rational design *(q)*, humanity is an element of the universe *(p)*, therefore humanity is part of a rational design *(q)*. Thus, it delivers the very argument that the teleological good of human nature is headed in the direction of its own rationale. It is in this sense that Shaftesbury furthers a moral realism where the moral sense is necessitated by the governing principles of a rational cosmos. The human good, in accordance, is a finite mission as characterised by a sense of duty through which moral perfection is achievable and compatible with the rational principle. Under this standard, there can be little doubt that the human self is necessarily attracted to virtue and moral beauty since the self is defined in terms of a trustful relationship between the cosmic intellect and the individual. To put it more correctly, the first strand in Shaftesbury's ethics enforces the notion that human beings are the material manifestations of a cosmetically moral force on earth whose *raison d'être* informs the limits of our moral duty.[12]

[12] Compare and contrast this point with Iris Murdoch's reading of Plato's idea of the good where she continues: "Plato pictures the journeying soul as ascending through four stages of enlightenment, progressively discovering at each stage that what it was treating as realities were only shadows or images of something more real still. At the end of its quest it reaches a non-hypothetical first principle which is the form or idea of the Good, which enables it then to descend and retrace its path, but moving only through the forms or true conception of that which it previously understood only in part (*Republic* 510-11). (...) What he does suggest is that we work with the idea of such a hierarchy in so far as we introduce order into our conceptions of the world through our apprehension of Good" (Murdoch, 1970: 89).

But this is a reductionist view of Shaftesbury's ethics. For, there is also a second strand and although it could be argued that it is still in conversation with the first conclusion we have arrived at, it has a more practical, a more Aristotelian point of departure. Although the Platonic and Neo-Platonic forces in Shaftesbury's moral system ensure that the "distinction between nature as an endowment and nature as an achievement" is narrowed by "a first principle of normativity that explicitly transcends appearances" (Gerson, 2023: 46), it hardly escapes our attention that he values virtue as a practical art and not as a static principle to abide by. To put it more correctly, although there is a rationalistic continuity between his perfectionist metaphysics and ethics, it is hard to suggest a penultimate identification between them. This is exampled best by his discussion of soliloquy as both a literary and a philosophical act in his *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*. Following an introduction on the difficulty of one's giving advice to another since it simply facilitates a selfish pride in the giver of advice and in addition, "it is no easy matter to make advice a free gift" (2000: 70), he develops instead an 'internal' alternative to taking advice from others and continues:

> Go to the poets, and they will present you with many instances. Nothing is more common with them than this sort of soliloquy. A person of profound parts, or perhaps of ordinary capacity, happens on some occasion to commit a fault. He is concerned for it. He comes alone upon the stage, looks about him to see if anybody be near, then takes himself to task without sparing himself in the least. You would wonder to hear how close he pushes matters and how thoroughly he carries on the business of self-dissection. By virtue of this soliloquy, he becomes two distinct persons. He is pupil and preceptor. He teaches and he learns (Cooper, 2000: 72).

Identifying the social disability of giving advice without any self-interest, the *Soliloquy* starts as a subtle 'mirror for princes' for the contemporary author since he is not pleased with "the morals of our modern dramatic poets" (Cooper, 2000: 72) although he commends the dramatic poets for their introduction of soliloquy. Towards the end of the treatise, Shaftesbury openly criticises the English author whose literary imagination is full of "natural rudeness" along with an "unpolished style," and "antiquated phrase and wit" (Cooper, 2000: 124). Elevating ancient wisdom over modern learning, he identifies in the ancient author a literary/moral high ground whose "fame must necessarily last as long as letters" since "posterity will ever

own their merit" (Cooper, 2000: 118).[13] In this sense, to Shaftesbury's reasoning, the modern poet's use of soliloquy on stage conflicts with the poet's inability to transfer the remedial uses of soliloquy to his inner life. To this extent, *Soliloquy* seeks a reformation of authorial tastes. But also, if not more importantly than that, he acknowledges the primacy of soliloquy as it pertains to the reformation of the tastes and manners of the individual. For that reason, it also continues as a moral guidebook for the seventeenth-century gentleman who could benefit from this mirror. In doing that, soliloquy becomes part of both a literary and philosophical technique and daily contemplation. For, if the matter of dividing the self into two, as can be recalled from stage productions, could be integrated into our private lives, he argues that we would have "discharged some of our articulate sound and spoke to ourselves *vivâ voce* when alone" which would yield "this anticipating remedy of soliloquy" (Cooper, 2000: 72. Original emphasis). In a distinctly Aristotelian manner, Shaftesbury praises the literary invention of soliloquy but wishes to transfer it to the individual sphere fearing that if denied of this "relief in private", authors will "appear with so much froth and scum in public" (Cooper, 2000: 74) as much as the gentleman will miss the opportunity to reform his tastes and manners which will give rise to "an increase of liberty, an enlargement of the security of property, and an advancement of private ease and personal safety" (Cooper, 2000: 112). But more importantly than that, whether we take *Soliloquy* as a mirror for individuals or a mirror for authors, Shaftesbury takes a practical approach to literary and philosophical self-examination which does not resort to the comfort of moral passivity due to the metaphysical principle he seems to recognise in the way of the world.[14] Although it could be counter-argued that Shaftesbury's remedial approach hides in itself "an awareness of actual human weakness and "illness"—in various forms of irrationality, selfishness, dullness, pettiness, dishonesty and all the rest—" (Marsh, 1961: 68), soliloquy is a means of expressing the idea that "wisdom as well as charity may be honestly said 'to begin at home'" (Cooper, 2000: 85). If so, it is possible to maintain that Shaftesbury furthers a literary-philosophical pro-

[13] It is important to note that this specific point in Shaftesbury's 'mirror' emerges as a direct influence on what C.A. Moore names the "ethical poets" (1916: 264). For instance, consider Alexander Pope whose entire oeuvre can be considered a play on the ascendancy of merit over modern learning. See (Moore, 1916).

[14] It could be even argued that the metaphysical principle is an early modern reception of Aristotle's *energeia* and *dunamis*. However, this point requires a separate study and is not of central importance given the limitations of the present study. For this point, see (Kosman, 2013).

gramme of active virtue by endorsing "this intelligence in life and manners" (Cooper, 2000: 112). It is not a mere coincidence that he later arrives at the conclusion that politeness became commonplace in Greece as their wit and humour developed (Cooper, 2000: 112). For, indirectly speaking, he implies that soliloquy gave rise to the refinement and development of taste and virtue. The division of the self and soliloquising in private, in other words, is not only a literary act from which the stage highly benefits but also it could become a commonplace form of contemplation if the individual applies it correctly to his daily life. If so, soliloquy is nothing but the endorsement of virtue by practical means which negates the temptations of the "enchantress Indolence" who "invites us to her pillow, enjoins us to expose ourselves to no adventurous attempt, and forbids us any engagement which may bring us into action" (Cooper, 2000: 142).

Despite the Platonic and neo-Platonic structure of Shaftesbury's universe, it is important to detect the Aristotle in Shaftesbury since virtuous behaviour does not simply descend from a higher and rational principle. It is the making of the individual since in connection with indolence, Shaftesbury asks a simple question: "Is sleeping, life? Is this what I should study to prolong?" (Cooper, 2000: 142). The human agent is not a passive recipient of moral taste in the neo-Platonic sense. Instead of defining a rule-based moral programme, Shaftesbury designates an action-committed life since "life and happiness consist in action and employment" (Cooper, 2000: 142). Shaftesbury recognises the very fact that virtuosity is an *act* and not a state; a noteworthy idea which has practical implications. For as the "grand critic" (Cooper, 2000: 112), Aristotle argues in *Nichomachean Ethics* II.IV. 1105b-10-2:

> It is right, then, to say that a person comes to be just from doing just actions and temperate from doing temperate actions; for no one has the least prospect of becoming good from failing to do them (1999: 22).[15]

[15] Compare the superseding paragraph in *Nichomachean Ethics* with Shaftesbury's criticism of philosophy in the *Soliloquy* where he argues: "If this be the subject of the philosophical art, I readily apply to it and embrace the study. If there be nothing of this in the case, I have no occasion for this sort of learning, and am no more desirous of knowing how I form or compound those ideas which are marked by words, than I am of knowing how and by what motions of my tongue or palate I form those articulate sounds, which I can full as well pronounce without any such science or speculation" (Cooper, 2000: 135).

If so, Shaftesbury seems to borrow from Aristotle a dynamic and not a static understanding of virtue and human happiness which will later align itself with his criticism of the current form of philosophy as the investigation of "knowing how I form or compound those ideas which are marked by words" and "how and by what motions of my tongue or palate I form those articulate sounds" (Cooper, 2000: 135). Cognisant of the ethical implications of moral stativity, he judges virtue as a means of retaining our well-being which is only achievable through an engagement with virtuous action. In other words, this 'virtue in action' constitutes the core of our rational function and by extension, soliloquy sits at the centre of this endeavour. From this perspective, however hard we might want to trace Shaftesbury's division of the self and soliloquy back to Plato's divided self or trace it forward even to a Stevensonian breakdown of the psyche, Shaftesbury neither necessarily recommends soliloquy as an essential Platonic conflict between "the Principle of Opposites" which "yields a division of the soul into two parts" (Kamtekar, 2012: 82) nor, anachronistically speaking, as a neo-Romanticist fissure between the desirous inner self and the social self. Shaftesbury recommends division for the sake of self-understanding and self-rehabilitation. Self-autopsy is not recommended for the sake of a technical examination or evaluation. Instead, it is recommended for the sake of self-appraisal since

> (...) if in our private capacity we can have resolution enough to criticize ourselves and call in question our high imaginations, florid desires and specious sentimental, according to the manner of soliloquy above-prescribed, we shall, by the natural course of things, as we grow wiser, prove less conceited and introduce into our character that modesty, condescension and just humanity which is essential to the success of all friendly counsel and admonition. An honest home-philosophy must teach us the wholesome practice within ourselves. Polite reading, and converse with mankind of the better sort, will qualify us for what remains (Cooper, 2000: 162).

In connection with the degree of practicality involved in soliloquy as a literary-philosophical act, soliloquy, by Shaftesburian standards, is a remedial—if not cathartic—act which supports the development of a virtuous self. The active virtue which is initiated by the proper use of soliloquy, so to speak, defines the self as an activity in its own right which openly resists the neo-Platonic fixation on immutability and the Lockean and Hobbesian "re-

sults of an associationist psychology in ethics" according to which "the human mind is a passive receptacle of ideas which join together by association" and is "a machine working according to the laws of motion" (Brett, 2020: 104). Due to its call for activity, soliloquy is not simply part of our moral nature according to which we discover "the task of obeying one's natural instinct as requiring a laborious preliminary inner struggle of the mind" (Marsh, 1961: 55). Instead, it carries within itself an active ethical aim that is explicitly therapeutic in nature. For, through a literary-philosophical reconsideration of soliloquy, Shaftesbury reaches a separation between ethics and morality where the former stands "for the *aim* of an accomplished life" which is "characterised by its Aristotelian heritage" while the latter speaks for "the articulation of this aim in *norms* characterized at once by the claim to universality and by an effect of constraint" which derives its principles from "a Kantian heritage, where morality is defined by the obligation to respect the norm" (Ricoeur, 1992: 170. Original emphasis). In this respect, it seems difficult to suggest that the Shaftesburian self is simply a subordinate asset of the rational mind of the universe due to the degree of self-indulgence the "inward colloquy" inheres (Cooper, 2000: 146) and that he is "unable to shake off the psychological egoism and substantive hedonism which dominated British moral philosophy after Hobbes" (Crisp, 2019: 91). Since "the inward conversation of soliloquy, whose purpose is self-criticism and self-maturation" is an extension of the idea that philosophy should be "a practical activity in pursuit of moral self-knowledge and moral transformation" (Amir, 2014: 90), Shaftesbury's self should be an entity that strives for ethical perfection rather than a subject bound by her duty towards self-preservation or the rational governance of a metaphysical being. Consequently, this leaves us with a full picture of an active self that is facilitated by the practical concerns of soliloquy.

If considered from the above-mentioned perspectives, it should mean that Shaftesbury's soliloquy manifests itself as a eudaimonic method of self-examination since "to be well accoutred and well mounted is not sufficient" and "the horse alone can never make the horseman nor limbs the wrestler or the dancer" (Cooper, 2000: 86). It underlines the fact that it is not enough to recognise human beings as *animale rationale* and "it should be only *rationis capax*" (Swift, 1741: 29) since it is only through the just employment of soliloquy that we can hope to achieve agency and ethical perfection. In accordance, Shaftesbury's approach helps him install soliloquy as a rational principle that pre-coordinates the competence for ethical

agency and self-mastery which has serious capabilistic implications. This argument is evidenced in his re-telling of a Xenophontic passage in the *Soliloquy* where the Socratic prince helps his young courtier cure himself of his vices and the latter continues as follows:

> 'Oh, Sir!,' replied the youth, 'well am I now satisfied that I have in reality within me two distinct separate souls. This lesson of philosophy I have learned from that villainous sophister Love. For it is impossible to believe that, having one and the same soul, it should be actually both good and bad, passionate for virtue and vice, desirous of contraries. No. There must of necessity be two, and, when the good prevails, it is then we act handsomely, when the ill, then basely and villainously. Such was my case. For lately the ill soul was wholly master. But now the good prevails by your assistance, and I am plainly a new creature with quite *another apprehension, another reason, another will*' (Cooper, 2000: 83. Emphasis added).

The Xenophontic parable includes a surprisingly finalising argument: that soliloquy is a safeguard against moral stativity and makes room for self-development, implying that there is "an indirect influence of cognitive processes on our emotional dispositions" (Renz, 2012: 133). From a literary point of view, it is the perfect antidote for the boastful author in whose prefaces there is "talk of art and structure" in accordance with "the public relish and current humour of the times" (Cooper, 2000: 118). From a philosophical point of view, it communicates the "province of philosophy" as a familiar terrain where we learn "to teach us ourselves" (Cooper, 2000: 127) and not the reserved spot of philosophers with their "pretended knowledge of the machine of this world and of their own frame is able to produce nothing beneficial either to the one or to the other" (Cooper, 2000: 130). But eventually, in both cases, it declares the supremacy of soliloquy as a means of acquiring self-knowledge and eudaimonic vision as an individual, author, literary critic, and philosopher. When used correctly, it holds the promise of ethical agency only through which we will grow into ethical readers/critics and not into Apollonian interpreters.

Conclusion

As a post-theoretical aspiration, the eudaimonic turn considers the centrality of human well-being by reconsidering the function and use of literature and literary studies. In doing so, it signals a pivotal and remedial change in our method of reading literature which has been devoted to re-

vealing the truth behind the figurative symbol. In this regard, the eudaimonic turn suggests looking away from "a reduction of texts to political tools or instruments" (Felski, 2015: 29) and intends to draw a line "between a hermeneutics of restoration and a hermeneutics of suspicion" (Felski, 2015: 32). Thus, it offers an ethical model of reading which largely disbands the textuality of a literary text and instead "searches for patterns of possibility—of choice, and circumstance, and the interaction between choice and circumstance" rendering literature a medium that speaks "*about us*, about our lives, and choices and emotions, about our social existence and the totality of our connections" (Nussbaum, 2010: 244). In accordance, in its detection of the absence of the ethical in our critical approach to the literary text, it offers a eudaimonic approach through which literature is re-situated as a therapeutic medium where the possibilities of life are discussed rather than a sinister container of monstrous symbols. As a highly significant theoretical forerunner of this paradigmatic shift in the twenty-first century, Anthony Ashley Cooper, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury's ethical aim as outlined in his *Soliloquy; or Advice to an Author* lays bare a eudaimonic method which is not only outlined as a literary advancement but also as a philosophical errand. For, in providing the contemporary author with a eudaimonic advice, Shaftesbury builds a soliloquy-oriented argument which necessarily informs his understanding of self as an active agent, a virtuoso who is capable of virtuous behaviour. In conclusion, through a lengthy discussion of the individual benefits of soliloquy, Shaftesbury not only gives a cold-shoulder to moral passivity and favours ethical activity as a *vera causa* but also discusses soliloquy as a literary-philosophical act that could serve as the informant of a therapeutic model of reading, composing, and individual flourishing. In the end, Shaftesbury's literary-ethical vision pierces through the symbol in an iconoclastic fashion which ushers in "this other way of reading" (Cooper, 2000: 153).

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