

Shaftesbury · Standard Edition

ANTHONY ASHLEY COOPER,
THIRD EARL OF
SHAFTESBURY

STANDARD EDITION

Complete Works, Correspondence and
Posthumous Writings

Edited with German Translations

and a Commentary by

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frommann-holzboog

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Sämtliche Werke, Briefe und
nachgelassene Schriften

Herausgegeben, übersetzt und
kommentiert von

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In memoriam

Erwin Wolff (1924–2007)

Karl-Josef Höltgen (1927–2011)

II,6

ASKÊMATA

CONTENTS

Introduction	9
Conspectus	55
<i>Askêmata</i>	57
Critical Apparatus	465
Appendix I: <i>Oikonomia</i>	471
Appendix II: "Parchment"	473
Appendix III: <i>Excerpta</i>	509
Appendix IV: <i>Laws</i>	529
Appendix V: "Prayer"	532
Appendix VI: <i>Dogmata</i>	542
Index of Names	545

INTRODUCTION

The report compiled in 1871 on the Shaftesbury Papers – a collection which had been presented that same year to the Public Record Office in London by the seventh Earl – listed the contents of two notebooks found there as “essays or reflections on the Deity, Life, Natural Affections, Human Affairs, Shame, Passions, Philosophy, Self, Nature, and other subjects, *all in the handwriting of the author of Characteristics*.”¹ These and the numerous other items described as papers relating to the third Earl² attracted the attention of the Oxford logician Thomas Fowler. He appears not to have taken a closer look at the two notebooks himself, but he did remark, in his book on Shaftesbury, that the philosopher’s papers would all “repay a more careful investigation than that which I have been able to give them”.³ Thus prompted, the Harvard scholar Benjamin Rand duly investigated, and the published results of his research would become nothing less than a landmark for modern readers of the Earl’s work. His edition of the texts which Shaftesbury had united in the notebooks – their collective title there *Ἀσκήματα* (*Askēmata*, “Exercises”) – presented them in somewhat altered form as “The Philosophical Regimen”. They constituted, wrote Rand, “one of the most remarkable unpublished contributions of modern times in the domain of philosophic thought.”⁴

The fascination which these two manuscripts held for their editor is palpable in his introduction. They were “a revelation both of the inmost purpose and of the outward procedure of [the Earl’s] life”, a documentation of his quest for “a law and a code of life” and “one of the most consistent

1 Noel Sainsbury, “Report on the Shaftesbury Papers”, in *The Thirty-Third Annual Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Public Records* (London, 1872), 211–57 (here 238).

2 Rather than differentiating in this volume between (pre-1699) Lord Ashley and (post-1699) Shaftesbury, we shall simply be using the name and the title inherited by him on his father’s death.

3 Thomas Fowler, *Shaftesbury and Hutcheson* (London, 1882), 2.

4 *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury*, ed. B. Rand (London and New York, 1900), v (text 1–272). Rand chose this particular title because “the term regimen is frequently used by [the Earl] in reference to the reflections, and also because it best reflects their true meaning and character” (x).

and thorough-going attempts ever made to transform a philosophy into a life.” Shaftesbury, “intoxicated with the idea of virtue”, had created “a new and brilliant presentation” of the foundation for his own philosophy – the Stoicism of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius – and shown himself to be “the greatest Stoic of modern times [...] The Greek slave, the Roman emperor, and the English nobleman must abide the three great exponents of stoical philosophy.”⁵

Rand’s reading in a sense both determined and foreshadowed the approaches that would be taken over the next hundred years and more. Efforts to define the precise nature of the “Philosophical Regimen” and to examine its relationship to the treatises which Shaftesbury had published during his own lifetime answered the call for “a renewed and critical study” of his *Characteristicks* “from the stoical standpoint”.⁶ While the exposure in print of the thoughts and principles discussed by Shaftesbury in his *Askêmata* may not have resulted in the “Sport or Pitty” (318,23) he himself would perhaps have expected,⁷ it was indeed the case that the frequent “too home-Truth, a plain Word, or a strong Light” (318,22), the starkness and at times bleak austerity jarred. The puzzling disparity in content between many of these texts and those brought together to form *Characteristicks* needed to be explained. How was the connection between Shaftesbury’s published work and private reflections to be gauged? Which

5 Rand, x–xii.

6 Rand, xii. His suggestion became easier to follow in the same year as it was made: John M. Robertson published his new edition of *Characteristicks*, the first complete (English) text to be printed since 1790, in 1900 (London, 2 vols). For our references here to the individual treatises as found in the Standard Edition (SE) see 49f. below.

7 Not that all early reactions were necessarily positive. Ernest Albee, in his appraisal of Rand’s edition (*The Philosophical Review* 12 [1903], 451–4), saw *Askêmata* as “an imitation and not a creation [...] essentially exotic, and not an important continuation and development of stoicism [...] principally interesting because Shaftesbury wrote it, and not because it is a real contribution to ethics”; the texts threw “very little light on Shaftesbury’s own system”, and Rand was labouring “under a serious misapprehension” as to their nature and importance (453). Albee made a point of reiterating this criticism in his review of Shaftesbury, *Second Characters*, ed. B. Rand (Cambridge, 1914), in *The Philosophical Review* 25 (1916), 182–7. Robertson (“to be quite frank”) found the texts “not particularly readable”, and many of them “in a literary sense, unfitted for publication”: *Pioneer Humanists* (London, 1907), 228.

of the two provided the true key to his thought? Was he really, as Rand believed, the greatest modern Stoic? The answers and the approaches have varied, so much so that a survey of the interpretations given to date would be impossible within the bounds of this introduction. The following very brief account of reactions to the last of the above questions – perhaps the most provocative of Rand’s conclusions – must suffice as example.

The greatest modern Stoic?

While for one early reader of “The Philosophical Regimen” the thinking of a “stoic-pantheistic order”, the “inward stoicism” and “esoteric faith” which he saw in *Characteristicks* were confirmed there,⁸ Ernest Albee stressed that Shaftesbury had been “far too catholic in his general attitude toward the problems of ethics to learn from one school.”⁹ John M. Robertson found that, even if the private reflections do “thoroughly fulfil the promise of the published doctrine [...] in respect of their high and constant concern for the good, the just, the true, the morally beautiful”, Stoicism was “hardly the purport of the *Characteristics*, which, after all, must remain the measure of Shaftesbury’s thought”; where the Earl “failed to live up to his optimism, he fell short as a Stoic.”¹⁰ Both *Characteristicks* and *Askémata* clearly demonstrated, for another scholar writing in the first decade after the publication of Rand’s book, that many of the Earl’s ideas, as well as their spirit and expression, were “either a literal reproduction or a refined modification” of Stoic teachings.¹¹

8 Melancthon F. Libby, “Influence of the Ideas of Æsthetic Proportion on the Ethics of Shaftesbury”, in *The American Journal of Psychology* 12 (1901), 458–91 (here 469 n. and 473 n.). Fowler, for example, had already noted “the similarity of much of Shaftesbury’s teaching to that of the Stoics”: 98 and 112.

9 And, as we saw above, that the *Askémata* were in any case imitative: Albee (1903), 453.

10 Robertson, 228–9. Robertson did concede that he could not “finally demur to Dr. Rand’s panegyric”, since it placed Shaftesbury in admirable company and any differences between him and the two Stoics merely added to “their common stock of thought and merit” (229).

11 Alexander Lyons, “Shaftesbury’s Ethical Principle of Adaptation to Universal Harmony” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, New York University, 1909), 44.

Even when no longer restricted in scope by the influence of *Quellenforschung*, the conclusions reached have remained divergent. For Esther Tiffany “Stoic philosophy is the foundation not only of Shaftesbury’s private thought, but of his popular teaching,” and “the *Characteristics* – particularly its three fundamental problems; the beautiful, ethical taste, and natural affection – can be fully understood only on comparison with his *Philosophical Regimen*.”¹² Perceived inconsistencies can be explained as “the ideal of severity with self but indulgence to others”; the “harsh terms, the uncompromising rigidity of discipline of self by self” in his private notebooks would have been seen by Shaftesbury as “incivility, unpleasantness, and ostentation” if suggested in the same form to readers of his published work: “Ease and pleasantness, then, in matter and manner, the smile, the fable, must usher into the drawing-room what he considered too austere or too formidable to be acceptable in its primary state.”¹³ Robert Voitle reaches a similar conclusion: the differences between *Characteristics* and *Askêmata* (that, to name one instance, natural affection for mankind, in the *Inquiry* the foundation of morality, appears reduced in the notebooks to a ‘vulgar notion’) “can be reconciled in terms of function.”¹⁴ However, the *Inquiry*, stresses Voitle, is by no means “essentially Stoic”, and Shaftesbury only a Stoic within the confines of a specific objective (“achieving tranquillity and self-sufficiency for himself”): “the difficulties he would encounter were he to enter into other regions of philosophy which interested the Stoics are masked.”¹⁵

Laurent Jaffro sees a “relation fonctionnelle de préparation entre l’exercice privé et la doctrine publiée.”¹⁶ While Stoic themes feature prominently in *Characteristics*, “ils ne déterminent pas univoquement le sens”;

12 Esther A. Tiffany, “Shaftesbury as Stoic”, in *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 38 (1923), 642–84 (here 684).

13 *Ibid.*, 653–4.

14 Robert Voitle, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, 1671–1713* (Baton Rouge and London, 1984), 160–1.

15 *Ibid.*, 162–3.

16 Laurent Jaffro, “Les Exercices de Shaftesbury: un stoïcisme crépusculaire”, in *Cahiers de philosophie politique et juridique* 25 (1994), 205–17. Cited here: the reprint in P.-F. Moreau (ed.), *Le Stoïcisme au XVI^e et au XVII^e Siècle [Le retour des philosophies antiques à l’Âge classique, vol. 1]* (Paris, 1999), 340–54 (here 340–3).

the *Askémata*, in turn, are “une mise en pratique” of Stoicism, not compiled, however, for the sake of singling out this one ancient doctrine over others, but rather using it to represent “la conception antique de la philosophie [...] la pointe la plus aigüe de l’esprit de l’Antiquité.”¹⁷ The distance between the private Shaftesbury of the notebooks and the public author is as great as the gulf between his own time and antiquity, but “le philosophe écrivain, l’auteur des *Caractéristiques*, s’appuie sur une vertu qu’il sait enfouie dans le secret de la préparation, c’est-à-dire des *Exercices*.”¹⁸ For Mark-Georg Dehrmann the private notebooks provide us with the key, the Stoic ‘source context’ to a philosophy which published writings, addressing an age which (Shaftesbury believes) can no longer understand such principles, must disguise and render unobtrusive. The Stoicism around which the manuscript texts revolve is a practical ‘philosophy of self and care of self’. The asceticism prescribed represents a ‘massive programme’ designed by the Earl as a concrete, rather than speculative alternative to the Christian doctrines which he rejected; man can only counteract ‘the destructive potential of his empirical nature’ by taking on the kind of responsibility for himself which the exercises attempt to develop; the intensity of the required asceticism ‘shows how problematic human nature ultimately appeared to Shaftesbury’: the optimism so often assigned to him is ‘built on a substratum of suffering and endangerment’.¹⁹

Our own verdict here is an open one. Shaftesbury could once quite simply be described as an ‘excellent writer’ in whom one could trace links to Plato, to Stoic ethics, and to the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean – who had, then, clearly addressed ‘every good and profound thought ever expressed in moral philosophy.’²⁰ And it would, as Thomas Fowler remarked, “have been strange indeed, had the tastes of an author so devoted to the study of classical literature as Shaftesbury not been reflected in his

17 “Le cynisme ferait aussi bien l’affaire” (ibid., 343).

18 Ibid., 344 and 350.

19 Mark-Georg Dehrmann, “Humanismus und Stoa: Shaftesburys *Characteristics* und die *Askémata*”, in H. Cancik and M. Vöhler (eds), *Humanismus und Antikerezeption im 18. Jahrhundert*, vol. 1: *Genese und Profil des europäischen Humanismus* (Heidelberg, 2009), 35–55 (here 48–9).

20 Immanuel Hermann Fichte, *Die philosophische Lehre von Recht, Staat und Sitte in Deutschland, Frankreich und England* (Leipzig, 1850), 820.

ethical writings.”²¹ Insight into the previously unknown *Askémata*, however, revealed the remarkable extent to which he not only admired and absorbed, but also, in one sense or the other, practised for himself certain aspects of Stoicism – specifically those set forth by Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.²² Contextualization therefore seems justifiable or even necessary. But is it not so that the ancient context²³ for Shaftesbury’s *Askémata* can hardly be confined to the two Stoics, however prominently they feature there, however close his reading of the relevant texts, and however imitative his own exercises at times were?²⁴ The one philosopher he declared publicly to be the “divinest Man that had appear’d ever in the Heathen World”, “the very Founder of Philosophy it-self”,²⁵ is omnipresent in his private notebooks too (and in Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius): Socrates. The life and thought of the “*Philosophical PATRIARCH*”²⁶ was, in addition, to stand for “Vertue & Philosophy & y^c Antients” in the planned *Chartae Socraticae*; a detailed draft for this “Socrattick History” was drawn up by Shaftesbury in the main between 1698 and 1704 – the period to which the greater part of his *Askémata* notebooks can be dated. His work on Socrates and his exercises were, then, in both a literal and a wider sense

21 Fowler, 98.

22 Cf. Jaffro (1999), 341: “Shaftesbury, pour parler rigoureusement, ne s’inspire pas du stoïcisme antique, mais a plutôt une expérience directe des textes d’Epictète et de Marc Aurèle.”

23 Leaving aside, that is, any indirect influence e.g. via Cambridge Platonism, specifically Benjamin Whichcote. The texts chosen by Shaftesbury for his edition (*Select Sermons* [London, 1698]) speak for themselves: see now SE II 4,23–4 and, for example, Sermon I,5 on the “great Work of *Self-Government*” (158).

24 The manuscript evidence of his textual studies will be detailed and in part edited in SE II 8. Particularly significant is the “Book of Notes not set down in the Margin of my little Colon-Edition” (TNA: PRO 30/24/27/16): Shaftesbury not only grappled there (probably between 1705 and early 1708) with the Greek and with the structure of Arrian’s *Discourses*, but also tried to reconstruct the situations in which the dialogues reported had originally taken place, and to define the approach or style chosen by Epictetus for his different interlocutors. Three other manuscripts quoted at various points here in our notes show lists of titles given by the Earl to chapters in the *Discourses* (see e.g. 59, n. 1 and 450, n. 3).

25 *A Letter concerning Enthusiasm* 344 [31] and *Miscellaneous Reflections* 292 [244].

26 *Soliloquy* 166 [254].

parallel projects. In a letter to Pierre Coste Shaftesbury would later (1 October 1706) ‘contextualize’ Stoic doctrine in the age of Horace: the Academic, Peripatetic, and Stoic schools together represented one of the only “two real distinct Philosophys” then in existence and were “deriv’d from Socrates”.²⁷ Theirs was the “Socratick civil, or social [...] Theistick” philosophy which “recommended Action, concernment in civil affaires, Religion &c:”. Finally, the *Tabula Cebetis* – the “Golden Piece” which illustrated “*the True Learning*” (the Earl to Michael Ainsworth, 28 January 1709) – would be characterized in 1712 as “*stoical truly Socratick*” in its teaching.²⁸

Perhaps the *Askémata* notebooks are the key to a fuller understanding of Shaftesbury’s *Characteristicks*, but the opposite could also be true. Perhaps we should consider the manuscripts in the light of the works which he himself published, first (in some cases) separately, then again together and with his own notes and commentary. Not to mention the extensive preparations for a second collected edition, or the impatience with which, as various letters show, the Earl and his close friends awaited readers’ reactions to the first (especially critical ones). Where was it that Shaftesbury did finally leave “the greatest Confidence in the World, which is that of my Philosophy”, the ‘confession’ made to James Stanhope in a letter on the *natural* “Passion or Affection towards Society”, on aesthetic and moral harmony as “*Harmony by Nature*” (7 November 1709)?²⁹ Tucked away as

27 The other being “deriv’d in reality from Democritus and passing into the Cyrenaick and Epicurean”. On our quotations from Shaftesbury’s correspondence see 49 below.

28 *Plasticks* 172. For our reading of *Askémata* see Friedrich A. Uehlein, “Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury”, in H. Holzhey and V. Mudroch (eds), *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie: die Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Basle, 2004), I, 51–6, 62–89, and 164–8 (esp. 62–84); id., “‘Stoisch, wahrhaft sokratisch’. Epiktet und Marc Aurel in der Philosophie Shaftesburys”, in B. Neymeyr, J. Schmidt, and B. Zimmermann (eds), *Stoizismus in der europäischen Philosophie, Literatur, Kunst und Politik: eine Kulturgeschichte von der Antike bis zur Moderne* (Berlin and New York, 2008), 1047–62.

29 A ‘confidence’ of which we have two copies made during Shaftesbury’s lifetime, neither in his own hand, and the anti-Lockean content of which he had already shared with Michael Ainsworth (see below, e.g. 118, n. 2).

the centrepiece of the carefully crafted *Characteristicks*, or deliberately and entirely hidden from view in *Askémata*?³⁰

Closet-Work

As will be seen below, a large percentage of the texts in both *Askémata* notebooks represented, at the time of entry, the latest stage in a process of rewriting, while the ensemble in its extant form was the product of repeated rereading. It is, in a sense, the finished article, as the exercises proper ceased long before the last dated entry.³¹ However, the collection remained heterogeneous in form and in style, ranging from the earlier sober and logical to the later emotional and spiralling, from the almost scholastic to the poetic and prayer-like, verging even on the mystic.³² The common denominator is the situation of retreat or, more simply, the addressee: Shaftesbury is alone with himself, caring for himself, testing, debating with and exhorting himself. The subjects are “the Figures

30 Although we cannot be absolutely sure about this, it does appear that the notebooks, which Shaftesbury eventually took with him to Naples, were for his eyes only. And, even if they did not exactly go to the grave with him, there is no evidence to suggest that his son or, as one might have expected, his nephew James Harris, or anyone else read them later. Harris’s appreciation of the ‘at heart genuinely ethical intention’ behind his uncle’s published works can be attributed, argues Dehrmann (54), to a knowledge of the private papers. While Harris certainly had access to a number of documents (items now conserved among his own papers), one might argue that his insight could equally have been derived from his reading of *Characteristicks*.

31 See 34 below in our discussion of the dates.

32 Many of the passages written in 1698 and 1699 reformulate themes central to Shaftesbury’s *Inquiry* (the first version of which he had actually completed by late July 1698), and there are clear similarities in style. Between the early and the later texts – those entered in 1703 and 1704, but to some extent also those added between 1699 and 1703 – there is a contrast comparable to the difference between the *Inquiry* and *The Sociable Enthusiast*, on which last the Earl certainly worked during his second retreat, if not even before that. One device, however, is used throughout, if in varying degrees: questioning dialogue. Cf. Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness* (Cambridge and New York, 1994), 71 on the “continually juxtaposed statement and question [...] this dynamic interplay of assertion and doubt”.

Proportions & Symmetry of Life: without w^{ch} Science all is Confusion” (318,2), without which there can be no proper “Performance & Musick of Life” (428,13): more plainly stated, the “*Laws & Rule of Life*” (343,2). This is the “Closet-Work”, the “Studdy Writing Figuring Practicing” (317,12) that is as necessary to “the Work of Self-Improvement” (243,17) as it is to the art of the carpenter, the architect, the mathematician, or the sculptor. The task and the objective are not “for Shew: but for Exercize, Practice, IMPROVEMENT” (317,15), the studying and training to be done in retirement and absolute privacy: “Let the Rules look as odd or ridiculouse as they will. what is that to Thee, whose Buisness is only to improve by these, not publish them, profess or teach them?” (318,7).³³

Epictetus had encouraged his pupils to write down their reflections and keep them constantly at hand, to reread them, talk about them both to themselves and to each other: by having “these thoughts at hand, and engrossing yourself in them when you are by yourself, and making them ready for use, you will never need anyone to comfort and strengthen you.”³⁴ This encouragement was included by Shaftesbury, albeit only the writing and reading part, among the quotations which preface both the first *Askêmata* notebook and the second (60,7; 313,11). Together with the other passages cited there, it points for us to one original purpose of the two books and explains why the texts written down there were not destroyed in the course of the routine “Writing: and then Burning” (317,16). The texts represented the Earl’s personal struggles as a closet pupil to formulate for himself the rules to be ingested, to compose the required private handbook(s) of progress and improvement. They were “such Exercises as come under the notion of this *self-discoursing Practice*”, the publication of which he would have considered “very indecent”.³⁵

33 Cf. Laurent Jaffro, “Les manuscrits de Shaftesbury: typologie et théorie”, in É. Décultot (ed.), *Lire, copier, écrire: Les bibliothèques manuscrites et leurs usages au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 2003), 161–78: “Il n’y a dans les *Askêmata* aucune autre main que celle de Shaftesbury et il n’existe dans les *Shaftesbury Papers* aucune copie d’extraits par un secrétaire [...] le secret qui leur est assigné est absolu” (176).

34 Arrian, *Discourses* 3,24,103 and 115 (translation: see 50f. below).

35 *Soliloquy* 52–4 [164].

Such “Super-intendancy & Care of Self” (195,8) stands, of course, in a very long tradition,³⁶ and the influence of Epictetus and, in particular, Marcus Aurelius is obvious. So much so, in fact, that one might wonder at times whether Shaftesbury, who styles himself in his notebooks “a Disciple of y^c Antients” (499,24) and who, when recording the greater part of the exercises, was more steeped than ever in these ancients,³⁷ was genuinely training as behoves a practising philosopher, or whether he was quite often ‘merely’ conversing with these two “LIGHTS, GUIDES, MASTERS” (492,1) and experimenting with the Stoic teachings which he was currently studying.³⁸ When he says, for example, that, given the state of “Morralls Philosophy, now a days”, talking to others about his studies would have been a detestable “Prostitution” of the principles he had formed (319,7), or that his “cool Thoughts & Reasonings” would be “meer Madness” to his contemporaries (205,17), does he really mean this, or is he just playing and expanding on a ‘law’ laid down by Epictetus in *Encheiridion* 46,2?³⁹ Or when “All is Corruption, & Rottenness” (260,17), is this one of “many dark moments” and “desperation” in the notebooks,⁴⁰ or is it Shaftesbury’s variation on the drastic imagery frequently found in Marcus Aurelius?⁴¹

The autobiographical content of numerous allusions in *Askēmata* cannot be doubted, and the personal situation of their author, i. e. the retirement he sought, allows a certain degree of biographical interpretation. But this does not necessarily mean that we can psychologize all or parts of them as authentic “journals of self-examination [...] inert mirrors of his inner life”.⁴² Was the Earl really “the gifted offspring of a gilded background, whose hypertrophied sensibility preyed on his inner conflicts to produce a late adolescent crisis, of which the notebooks provided detailed and

36 See e.g. Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris, 1981).

37 See below, 22 and 25.

38 And taking them, for instance, to one logical, “terrible” extreme: “*To take Pleasure in Nothing. To do Nothing with Affection. To promise well of Nothing. To Engage for Nothing*” (213,22 and 487,9).

39 i. e. not to discuss philosophical principles with the uneducated.

40 Klein, 72.

41 Cf. e.g. 2,12; 2,17; 4,48; 8,37; 9,36.

42 Klein, 71.

Introduction

intellectualized reportage”?⁴³ Does Shaftesbury’s “quest for spontaneous, ‘natural affection’ for his fellow man” in the earlier entries “lead to an angry paralysis at the roadblock of his intractable sexual desires and to a loathing of the ‘effeminate,’ vulnerable permeability of his body”, his language betraying “his aggressive sexualization of philosophy, culminating in a metaphorical sexual assault on the ‘Deity’ whom he had previously set out as the guarantor of universal moral order”?⁴⁴

The questioning, doubting and berating, the disgust and estrangement, the frequent progression in the texts from orderly, considered thoughts to a seemingly spontaneous stream might sometimes be explained in biographical-psychological terms, and the oft-cited cure, the regimen seen as ‘self-therapy’. The notebooks were indeed “tools of self-investigation and also of self-command, amounting to a kind of moral workbook.”⁴⁵ But perhaps their purpose was not a wholly and immediately personal one. Perhaps the self examined and superintended there is objectified as a patient at the ‘clinic’ of morality and life: “The school of philosophy is a surgery. You should not depart from it in pleasure, but in pain, for you are not healthy when you come in.”⁴⁶ The extent to which these exercises may have been the answer to a considered and reasoned need is revealed in a letter written by Shaftesbury on 29 September 1694, its addressee John Locke:

What I count True Learning, & all y^t wee can profit by, is to know our selves; what it is y^t makes us Low, & Base, Stubborn ag^t Reason, to bee Corrupted & Drawn away from Vertue, of Different Tempers, Inconstant, & Inconsistent with ourselves; to know how to bee allways Friends wth Providence thô Death & many such Dreadfull Businesses come in y^c way; and to bee Sociable & Good towards all men [...]

Whilst I can gett any thing y^t teaches this; whilst I can search any Age or Language y^t can assist mee here; whilst Such are Philosophers,

43 Ibid.

44 Lori Branch, *Rituals of Spontaneity: Sentiment and Secularism from Free Prayer to Wordsworth* (Waco, Texas, 2006), 10. See also *ibid.*, 97: the *Askêmata* “provide an almost ideal psychoanalytic text of Enlightenment”.

45 Klein, 71.

46 Arrian, *Discourses* 3,23,30, cited by Shaftesbury e.g. 250,3.

Introduction

& Such Philosophy, whence I can Learn ought from, of this kind; there is no Labour, no Studdy, no Learning y^t I would not undertake.

This is what I know to bee sufficiently despis'd. for who is there y^t can think so much to y^e Dishonour & Prejudice of himself as to think y^t he has odious Vices within him, w^{ch} only Labour & Exercize can throw out?

If one is to lead a good life, radical 'health care' for the mind is needed.⁴⁷ And the good life, as lived by the sages of antiquity (in the service of the commonwealth, in pursuit "of knowing themselves, & learning how to bee serviceable to others") is all:

to Profess Philosophy, was not to Profess a Life: and y^t it might bee said of one, y^t *Hee was a great Man in Philosophy*; whilst nobody thought it to the purpose to ask *how did Hee Live? what Instances of his Fortitude, Contempt of Interest, Patience &c:?* What is Philosophy, then, if nothing of this is in y^e case?

This entire letter – we shall be looking at another part of it below (36) – reads very much like a programmatic declaration, one 'customized', of course, to suit the recipient.⁴⁸ And the intensity with which Shaftesbury tests his own long-established beliefs in *Askêmata*, the urgency and severity with which he probes into passions and affections, ideas and judgements certainly constitute "Labour & Exercize". There may well have been a "roadblock" or "crisis". The "Conviction" to which he himself refers (219,2) was perhaps one not easily reached. However, the subjectivity, the awareness and perception it created of his own state and position within the "Order & Economy of things in the Univers" (99,25) brought with it conflict and tension of a kind that was persistent and recurrent, even impossible to solve – a permanent "roadblock", then.⁴⁹ Living "suitably to thy appointment & Rule: willingly to Obey Thee, & to Seek thy End & Purpose in my Nature & Life: this alone, being *the End*, and,

47 Shaftesbury quotes Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 3,1,1 on *animi medicina*.

48 The "old Tutor and Governour, whose Name is so establishd in the World; but with whom I ever conceald my Differences as much as possible": Shaftesbury to Stanhope, 7 November 1709.

49 See Friedrich A. Uehlein, *Kosmos und Subjektivität: Lord Shaftesburys Philosophical Regimen* (Freiburg and Munich, 1976), esp. 133–59 on the attempted solution: the economical self.

when attain'd, *the Good* of every Rationall Creature" (535,12) required a purging of the self from "distemper'd & unsound" (535,20) passions, an extinguishing of "those Ardours & Inflammations of a Mind towards outward things" (537,7), the formation of an 'economical self' able to survive out in a world of "Strife, Contention & Animosity, the Envyings, & Repinings, the Jealousyes & Disgusts, the Losses & Confusions, the Shamefull Condescensions, Poorness, & Wretched Servility" (539,8).

This is a programme which brings us back to Socrates. The letter to Locke shows him as the only example actually named, and "y^e Socratick Spiritt" is the mark of true philosophy there. After his death this spirit "sunk much" and did not resurface "till more late days". In other words, the sociability of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius (they are not named in the letter) was, for Shaftesbury, "*stoical* truly Socratick". The practice of philosophy as progress towards goodness for the benefit of the commonwealth, training as prerequisite for all that is good and honourable in a citizen, self-control as the foundation of all virtue, care of self as a civic duty – these are notions very familiar to the Earl from the Greek texts which shaped his understanding of Socrates.⁵⁰

Shaftesbury clearly later fell back on some of the exercises when writing for publication and publicly recommended, for example, the type of 'surgery' he had practised in private.⁵¹ In this sense the notebooks did become a sort of functional model. Whether or not they were from the very start a conscious preparation – "un entraînement qui mobilise des techniques stoïciennes pour mettre l'auteur en mesure de publier sa seule doctrine, au sens propre, celle des *Caractéristiques*"⁵² – is debatable. Their initial role as solitary therapy for one who is "A PATIENT, & under Cure" (248,21), as corrective in "the Study of Happiness" (285,11) seems incontestable.

50 See e.g. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1,2,23; 1,5,9 (and the Earl's own *Chartae Socraticae* 109); Plato, *Apology* 29E or *Alcibiades I* (its authorship for Shaftesbury not in doubt) 127E ff. and 132B ff.

51 See e.g. *Soliloquy* 42 [156] ff. The *Askémata* passages revised for use in later publications were marked in the notebooks by Shaftesbury himself.

52 Jaffro (1999), 340.

{ Ἐν σοὶ μὲν τις κόσμος ὑφίστασθαι
 δύναται, ἐν δὲ τῷ Παντὶ ἀκοσμία;
 M. L. 4. §. 27.¹

The Elements² are combin'd, united, & have a mutual dependance one upon another. all things in this world are united. for, as the Branch is united & is as one with the Tree; so is the Tree with the Earth Air & Water w^{ch} feeds it, & with the Flies Worms & Insects w^{ch} It feeds.³ for these are made to it. and as much as the Mold is fitted to the Tree, as much as the strong & upright Trunk of the Oak or Elm is fitted to y^c twining & clinging Branches of the Vine or Ivy; so much are the leaves, the seeds, the fruits of these Trees fitted to other Animalls, & they again to one another. All holds to one Stock. Go farther: & view the System of the bigger World. See the mutuall dependance, the relation of one thing to another; the Sun to the Earth, the Earth & Planets to the Sun; the Order, Symmetry, Regularity, Union, & Cohærance of the WHOLE.⁴

¹ MA 4,27: “Can it be that a certain order subsists within yourself, but disorder in the whole?”

² The text marked by Shaftesbury was used, in modified form, in *The Sociable Enthusiast* 167–9) in the “new Model of a Sermon upon this System of Divinity” (ibid. 159) presented in the *Inquiry* (see note 4 below). For a detailed discussion of the changes made to the passage between 1698 and 1711 – largely stylistic in character – see Meyer, 99–101 and 683. Extracts from this same paragraph and from the following (ends 87,24) were entered by Shaftesbury into his book of excerpts: → Appendix III.

³ This last thought was omitted in the version written for *The Sociable Enthusiast*, but the image resurfaces there later, slightly modified, in Theocles’ meditation: “let us turn our Eyes towards these smaller, and more Curious Objects; the numerous and devouring Insects on the Trees” (303).

⁴ “IN the same manner if the whole system of Animals, together with that of Vegetables, and all other things in this world of ours [...] has a relation to, or a dependence on any thing else whatsoever (as it has, for instance, with respect to the Sun, and Planets round that Sun) then is the Earth but a PART of some other System [...] a SYSTEM OF ALL THINGS”: *Inquiry* (1699) 51.

Deity (First Retreat)

It follows, therefore, that as the Plant or Tree has a Nature, the World or Univers must have a Nature. and here arises the question. *What sort of a Nature should this be?* There are in this World three sorts: a Vegetative, a Sensitive, & a Rational.¹ Should the Nature of the Univers, w^{ch} contains & brings forth all other Natures, be itself merely Vegetative & Plastick, like that of a Tree or of a Fœtus? or, should it be only a degree further, & be sensitive, as an Animall? or should it be yet further, & be rationally, but imperfectly so, as Man. or, if this seem still utterly mean & absurd; should not the Nature of the Univers w^{ch} exhibits Reason in all that we see; w^{ch} practices Reason by a consummate Art & Prudence in the Organization & [16] Structure of things; and (what is more) w^{ch} produces Principles of Reason & raises up Intelligences & Perceptions of several degrees in the Beings that are but of a moments duration, that start out of it as it were & sink into it immediatly; should not this Sovereign Nature of the Whole, be a Principle itself of much greater understanding & capacity than any else? should not the most extensive sight or knowledg w^{ch} we are acquainted with, & the highest Wisedome w^{ch} we admire be as nothing in comparison of that Originall one from whence all is deriv'd? and should not that Affection w^{ch} we see in all Natures towards their Offspring & Productions, towards what is more remotely united to them, or what is strictly any part of themselves, be much inferiour to that Affection of the Supream Nature towards all, & to what is produc'd & administer'd by it, as every thing is? and what is this in one word, but that GOD is: that He is One & Simple, infinitely Wise, & perfectly Good?²

Things are finite or Infinite: if Infinite, that w^{ch} we call *the Whole* is infinite: if Finite, still that w^{ch} exists is *the Whole*. the next is: of what kind or Nature is this *Whole*? is it like that of a Stone or of scattered pieces of Sand? then that had remaind for ever its Nature nor could it ever have given rise to other Natures or Principles that unite & conspire together,

¹ Aristotle's *anima vegetativa*, *sensitiva*, and *cognitiva* (*De anima*, Book 2); in Cudworth the "climbing stairs of entity and perfection", "of living and animate above senseless and inanimate, of rational things above that" (*The True Intellectual System of the Universe* V,1); for Whichcote the "*Inanimates*", "*Sensitives*", and "*Intelligent Agents*" (*Select Sermons*, e. g. 96). Line 6, "Plastick": → 123,5.

² MS: "infinitely (Intelligent Rationall) Wise, & perfectly Good?".

as Plants, Vegetables, Animall-Bodyes & the like. is it therefore only a Vegetative Nature? then [17] that had remain'd its Nature: it might have flourish'd, & grown, & thriven, as those other Natures, & might have bore its fruit, & varied itself a thousand ways: but w^{ch} way should such a Nature have produc'd Reason? w^{ch} way should it bring Perception out of itself, if it were not in itself. therefore the Nature of the Univers is Intelligent. — therefore (says one) there is indeed Intelligence in Things, or in the Nature of Things & as eternally belonging to them. But the Whole (says he) is not united as you suppose. so that there is not therefore *One Intelligence*. — Let us hear then. are not the small Fibers of this Root conspiring together & united? — they are — but, with what? — with the Plant — and the Plant with what? — with y^c Earth & other Plants — and the Earth & other Plants with what? with Air, Water, Animalls & other things around: the Animalls themselves with one another and with the Elements in w^{ch} they live & to w^{ch} they are fitted; as either by Wings for the Air, by finns for the Water, & other things of that kind.¹ in short, all these conspire together, and so all other things, whatever they be, in this world. and is it not y^c same with the World itself in respect of the Sun & Planets? how then? is there beyond this, any thing or Nothing? if Nothing; then this is the Whole, and then y^c Whole is *as One*, & has *one Nature* — But there is more beyond this — undoubtedly there is so. and shall that & this have no relation nor mutuall dependence? shall not the Cohærence & Union be y^c same, to infinite? or, shall we come at last to something in y^c Whole w^{ch} has no relation to y^c rest of things, & is independent? [18]

inf. 286. → 234,27

It remains, therefore; that all things cohære & conspire: all things are in One, & are comprehended in the Nature of the Univers. this Nature is either meerly Vegetative; & then it could have produc'd only things of the same species: or if there be in the Univers Beings of another kind, that is to say such as have perception & intelligence; by what should they be produc'd unless by a like Nature? But there is no other Nature to produce any thing but the Nature of the Univers; therefore the Nature of

¹ The lines 14–16 (“the Animalls” to “that kind”), marked by Shaftesbury, were incorporated into the revised text of 86,5–16 in *The Sociable Enthusiast* (see above, 86, n. 2 and Meyer, 100).

the Univers is intelligent: and therefore there is a Universall Intelligent & Provident Principle.¹

If it be not yeilded that the Univers is One, or has one Nature, so as to conspire together, & to one End; it will not be denied however that this is proper to the stalk of Grass. if the stalk of Grass has it, then (by what has been said before) the whole Earth has it: and not only the Earth; but the whole System of the bigger World, & as far as we know any thing. Either, therefore, this System & all that exists besides, holds together, is still ONE WHOLE, & is united; or (w^{ch} is strang to imagine) tho' this System of things we see, be thus united; tho' there be such perfect cohærence in this apparent Whole; yet there is incohærence in that GREAT WHOLE & in what remains besides of things: and then either [19] there are no other such Worlds; but what is besides, is Disorder & Confusion: or if there are such Worlds, they are independent. If it be the first; it will still remain that this World is ONE & must (as has been shewn) be intelligent. for, either it has its Intelligence elsewhere (and then there is elsewhere in the Univers a Principle of Intelligence on w^{ch} this world depends) or, it had it from itself: and then it was eternally a Principle of Intelligence to itself: nothing being more certain than this, that what is Intelligent cannot be produc'd out of what is not Intelligent; & that what was never produc'd but was Eternall must remain Eternall. So that according to this it will still remain, as to this World, that in as far as it has a Nature by w^{ch} it is one & united as a Plant or Animall-Body (w^{ch} Nature being utterly different from Disorder & Confusion, it could not have had it thence, and therefore if not from a Principle of that kind elsewhere, it must have had it ever in itself,) and, in as far as it has Sence, Perception, & Intelligence, (w^{ch} if it have not receiv'd from a Principle of that kind, it must be a Principle of that kind to itself) so accordingly it must be said that It has a Nature or Soul not meerly Vegetative, but Knowing & Intelligent. So y^t there is in

¹ → the Earl's letter of 8 February 1709 to Michael Ainsworth: "that which to the Vulgar, is only knowable by Miracles & teacheable by positive precepts & command, to the wise & vertuouse, is demonstrable by the nature of the thing" (SE II 4,391). See also *Select Sermons* 117–18 on "THE EFFECTS OF GOD [...] in the World natural" as part of man's "*natural Knowledge of God*".

this respect a Supream Eternall Mind or Intelligent Principle belonging to this Whole; and this is DEITY.

If there are more such Worlds, & Independent of one another; they are still so many Intelligences & must be Eternall Principles of that kind. But since it is unreasnable & unaccountable thus to multiply Principles; 5 as for instance to say that of the Motion that is in y^e [20] World, there should not be one & the same Principle, but severall; so, with respect to what is Intelligent, it must be unreasnable to think that there is any more than One common Principle of Intelligence; or that there should be Intelligences & Thinking Beings of severall kinds produc'd any where 10 by one such Principle; but that there should not be one common one to all of that kind. Either the Whole, therefore, is not united like this w^{ch} we see; and then however there must be either one Intelligent Eternall Principle, or severall such: Or else the Whole or Infinite of Things is United & is One. and then it follows that there is One Common Principle 15 of Intelligence & Wisedome; One Eternall & Infinite Mind.

Either this that we see is Order, Proportion Harmony,¹ or it is not so: If this be not so; and that neither the Frame of the Heavens, nor the Body of Man demonstrate Order; what else is Order? If it be Order, & consequently of quite a different nature from Disorder; then that w^{ch} was 20 of quite a different nature, & is its Contrary, how should it have produc'd it? If it never was produc'd by Disorder; then It must be a Principle in things, or be proper & naturall to things. [21] If it be naturall to some things, to correspond & unite, then surely to All things: Or say why naturall to some things, if not as well to all? if to all things, then All things are united 25 & have One Nature. If there be a Nature of the Whole, it must be a Nature more perfect than that of particulars contain'd in the Whole; if so, It is a Wise & Intelligent Nature; if so, then It must order every thing for its own good: and since that w^{ch} is best for y^e Univer is both the Wisest & Justest, it follows that y^e Supream Nature is perfectly Wise & Just. 30

¹ → *The Sociable Enthusiast* 161–9, where Theocles uses an evening walk in the fields to argue that the order and proportion visible in nature is only one part of the “order, Union, and Coherence of *the Whole* [...] the UNIVERSAL SYSTEM”.