SHAFTESBURY AS A PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHER

SHAFTESBURY, FILÓSOFO APLICADO

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Abstract: Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury (1671-1713), the British Enlightenment philosopher, put on the agenda the practice of philosophy. The most important Modern Socratic made philosophy important for this happiness-driven century in a way that his contemporaries could not. Not only did he use philosophy to educate a new class of citizens, but he made philosophy necessary for virtue and virtue indispensable for happiness. In contradistinction to his tutor, John Locke, and his followers who made pleasure the content of happiness, Shaftesbury's combined neo-Stoicism and neo-Aristotelianism accounted for his equating virtue with happiness, thus making of philosophy as "the study of happiness" a necessity for all.
Keywords: Enlightenment, Happiness, Philosophy, Pleasure, Virtue, Shaftesbury, Locke.

Resumen: Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury (1671-1713), filósofo ilustrado ingles, agendó dentro de su obra la práctica de la filosofía. El socrático más relevante de la modernidad hizo de la filosofía algo relevante para estos siglos focalizados en la felicidad. No sólo usó la filosofía para educar a un nuevo tipo de ciudadanos sino que la convirtió en un instrumento necesario para alcanzar la virtud e hizode la virtud un elemento indispensable para la felicidad. En oposición a su tutor, John Locke, y a sus seguidores, quienes forjaron al placer como la base de la felicidad, la combinación de neo-estoicismo y neo-aristotelismo de Shaftesbury igualaron virtud y felicidad y así transformó a la filosofía, entendida como "estudio de la felicidad", en una necesidad básica.
Palabras clave: Ilustración, felicidad, filosofía, placer, virtud, Shaftesbury, Locke.

Introduction

Philosophical practitioners who search for antecedents of their work usually point to Greek and Hellenistic philosophies. The Enlightenment is the proximate source of the current practice of philosophy, however, granted that the Enlightenment's revival of Hellenistic philosophy is a subject to fathom. This article introduces the practical vision of philosophy held by the most important Socratic of the Modern era, the British Enlightenment philosopher Anthony Ashley Cooper Shaftesbury

(1671-1713). In order to do justice to his innovative vision of philosophy, I introduce it against the background of the representative thought of his age. To that purpose, I briefly outline the Enlightenment's revolutionary view of reason and happiness, elaborate on its most important philosopher (also Shaftesbury's mentor), John Locke, and trace the latter's influence on other eighteenth-century philosophers. I present Shaftesbury's practical philosophy and his controversy with Locke and his followers. Finally, I assess the Shaftesburean legacy by comparing the thought British Enlightenment philosopher's thought with the contemporary practice of philosophy using four criteria: audience, politics, happiness, and virtue.

The Enlightenment: John Locke and its followers

The roots of many of the features of modern culture are found in the ideas of the Enlightenment. This Europeanwide, eighteenth-century movement is described by Immanuel Kant as "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage", from his inability to use innate understanding without guidance from another person. The Enlightenment stressed the autonomy of reason as the tool through which human thought and action may be explored. The individual who generated ideas thought in an enlightened way.

The term *Enlightenment* has become most closely associated with France, where thinkers such as Voltaire argued for the primacy of reason. Their purpose was to "regenerate" humankind, to emphasize the superiority of what Jean Jacques Rousseau called "the greatest happiness of all" over individual concerns. In his *Happiness: A History*, Darrin M. McMahon explains this characteristic of the Enlightenment: “Whereas classical sages had aimed to cultivate a rarified ethical elite—attempting to bring happiness to a select circle of disciples, or at most to the active citizens of the *polis*—Enlightenment visionaries dreamed of bringing happiness to entire societies and even to humanity as a whole”[1].

Enlightened authors wrote more about happiness than any previous period in western history. In doing so, they hoped to break with all

[1] MCMAHON, Darrin M.: *Happiness: A History*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, NY (USA), 2006, p. 212.

previous norms, dispelling the mystery and mystique that had surrounded the concept of happiness for centuries. Whereas earlier ages had cloaked it in religion or fate, Enlightenment authors would unveil it in its natural purity. And whereas previous ages had searched for happiness in faith, enlightened observers would aim to see it clearly in its own right."[2]

From the combined precedents of Renaissance humanism and innovative Christian theology, influential voices drew conclusions on the possibility of pleasure and felicity on earth. Neither the reward of the next world nor the gift of good fortune or the gods, happiness was above all an earthly affair, to be achieved in the here and now through human agency alone. The work of forging this new conception, which contrasted both with the tragic and the Christian condition, was a collective enterprise, elaborated slowly over the course of centuries[3]. But for many Enlightenment thinkers, such as Jean Le Rond D'Alembert, Isaac Newton's physics and John Locke's metaphysics taken together presented a portrait of nature that convinced their more radical interpreters that, when allowed to run as it should, the world was leading us on a happy course[4]. Locke revealed the universal laws that governed the workings of thought which, bearing on his views on happiness, constitutes the backgroud against which his dissident pupil, Shaftesbury, developed another vision of happiness that will make philosophy a practical discipline.

In the opening book of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
(1689), the British philosopher supplied a critique of innate ideas and principles and set out an empirical basis for knowledge[5]. His rejection of innate ideas and the idea of *tabula rasa* wiped our slate free of sin. A

[2] MCMAHON, Darrin M.*: Happiness: A History*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, NY (USA), p. 212.
[3] For the Christian vision of happiness, see MCMAHON, Darrin M.: *Happiness: A History*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, NY (USA), 2006. For the vision embodied in Greek tragedies, see NUSSBAUM, Martha C.: *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1986.
[4] D'ALEMBERT, Jean Le Rond: *Preliminary Discourses to the Encyclopédia of Diderot*, SHWAB, Richard N. (translation and introduction), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL (USA) and London (UK), 1995 [1751], pp. 81-83.
[5] See CAREY, Daniel: *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 2006, chapter 2.

Calvinist by birth who never completely renounced his faith, Locke always retained a healthy understanding of the human potential for egotism and self-regard, yet rejected the idea of Calvinist sin.
His theory of mind dealt a crushing blow to the view that individuals were inherently deficient, tending naturally towards corruption. And if not impeded by original sin, what as to prevent them from successfully pursuing happiness?

In the chapter "Power" in Book 2 of the *Essay*, Locke employs the phrase "the pursuit of happiness" four times. The force that draws people near and moves them is "happiness and that alone". The "general Desire of Happiness operates constantly and invariably" upon all human beings, keeping them forever in motion[6]. Happiness is a sort of emotional gravity, a universal force which moves desire. Desire is "scarce distinguishable from" uneasiness—Locke's term for "all pain of the body" and "disquiet of the mind". As we are continually attracted to pleasure and continually repulsed by pain, "*Happiness* then in its full extent is the utmost Pleasure we are capable of, and Misery the utmost pain"[7].

Whereas Christian moralists had argued for centuries that pleasure was dangerous, and pain our natural lot, Locke reversed this proposition. God had designed human beings to seek pleasure and feel pain naturally, he claimed. And this was as it should be: "Pleasure in us, is what we call Good, and what is apt to produce Pain in us, we call Evil"[8]. Thus, "in Locke's divinely orchestrated universe, pleasure was providential. It helped lead to God"[9].

Locke mitigated his hedonism, however, by emphasizing that through reason, the "true candle of the Lord", human beings could be

[6] LOCKE, John: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, NIDDITCH, Paul (ed.), Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1991 [1689], pp. 258, 283.
[7] LOCKE, John: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, NIDDITCH, Paul (ed.), Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1991 [1689], p. 258.
[8] LOCKE, John: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, NIDDITCH, Paul (ed.), Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1991 [1689], p. 259.
[9] MCMAHON, Darrin M.: "Pursuing an Enlightened Gospel: From Deism to Materialism to Atheism", in FITZPATRICK, Martin, JONES, Peter, KNELLWOLF, Christa, and MCCALMAN, Ian (eds.), *The Enlightenment World*, Routledge, New York, NY (USA), 2004, pp. 164-176.
[9] LOCKE, John: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, NIDDITCH, Paul (ed.), Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1991 [1689], p. 274.

persuaded to take a long view of their happiness. Moreover, he continued to see the highest happiness as that of the world to come, unable, like many, to dispense with the Christian doctrine of ultimate rewards[9].

The influence of Locke's view of happiness explains the primacy of pleasure in eighteenth century thought[10]. Along with Baruch Spinoza, Locke influenced materialistic theories, such as Julien Offray de La Mettrie's and Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach's [11].

Julien Offray de La Mettrie describes in *Man a Machine* (1947) organic machines composed of matter endowed with the ability to think. As human beings are more advanced than animals and plants, but not different in kind, they should follow the dictates of nature. They are simply machines intended for happiness. Pleasure is the same as sensuality, which is the same as happiness: it is always the same feeling, only its duration and intensity differs. The more long-lasting, delicious, enticing, uninterrupted and untroubled this feeling is, the happier one is[12].

Another example is Paul-Henri Thiry Baron d'Holbach, whose *Système de la nature* is a materialist and atheist tract. Sharing La Mettrie's materialism, Holbach refuses to leave any space at all for spirit or soul. The idea of God is an obstacle for our well-being. Happiness, measured exclusively in pleasure's terms, is the reward of freeing ourselves from God. Released from repression, guilt and false belief, pleasure can finally flow free[13].

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[10] See PORTER, Roy: "Enlightenment Pleasure", in PORTER, Roy and MULVEY ROBERTS, Marie (eds.), *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, New York University Press, New York, NY (USA), 1996.

[11] For Locke's influence on the French Materialists, see YOLTON, John W.: *Locke and French Materialism*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991.

[12] LA METTRIE, Julien Offray de: *Anti-Seneca or the Sovereign Good*, in THOMSON, Ann (ed. and trans.), *Machine Man and Other Writings* (1996) Cambridge (UK), Cambridge University Press, 1750, p. 120.

[13] Holbach differentiated himself from La Mettrie's egoism, however, by maintaining that "Nature", flanked by "virtue", "reason", and "truth", will reveal to all right-thinking minds that happiness lies in more than the subjective fulfilment of individual desire. "Man cannot be happy without virtue", where virtue is defined as our willingness to "communicate happiness" to others (HOLBACH, Paul Henri Thiry, Baron d': *OEuvres Philosophiques*, JACKSON, Jean-Pierre (ed.), 3 vols., édition Alive, Paris, 1999. Vol. II, p. 358). It is in our self-interest to serve the interests of those around us. By making our fellows happy, so we render ourselves. This conclusion was shared by Denis Diderot and the Utilitarians; yet, as Charles Taylor notes, it is in no way obvious and does not follow from the

In making these claims about the centrality of pleasure, Holbach and La Mettrie are drawing self-consciously on the tradition of the Greek philosopher, Epicurus, as did before them Locke, albeit through the writings of the French priest Pierre Gassendi [14]. For all his endorsement of pleasure, Epicurus was no hedonist, however, but rather an ascetic, who counselled a rigorous curtailment of desire so as to steel the self against disturbance, and guard against self-inflicted pain. The aim of the Epicurean sage is ataraxic, the freedom from anxiety, the minimization of pain[15]. Whilst philosophy is helpful for Epicurean happiness, I argue, it is not necessary for hedonism. Thus, the sigificance of happiness in the Enlightenment's thought was not sufficient to make philosophy a practical activity, because of the pervasive view of pleasure as the content of happiness held by Locke and his followers. It is to Shaftesbury, Locke's dissident pupil, to whom we should turn in order to find the genuine ground of the practice of philosophy in the Enlightenment.

Shaftesbury as a Practical Philosopher

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), was raised and educated in his grandfather's household by John Locke, according to the principles laid in the latter's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Anthony's grandfather founded the Whig party, which he

premises of Holbach and company. If human being are pleasure-seeking machines, corrupted by nature to maximize their own enjoyment at every turn, why should they work to maximize the pleasure of their fellows? See TAYLOR, Charles: *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA (USA), 1989, pp. 329-327.

[14] La Mettrie paid repeated and open homage to Epicurus in such works as *The System of Epicurus*, *The Art of Enjoying Oneself*, *The School of Sensual Pleasure*, and the *Anti-Seneca* (also entitled *The Discourse on Happiness*). In *The Art of Enjoying Oneself*, he distinguishes however between the vulgar hedonist, who favours abundance without conscience, and the philosophic hedonist, who chooses quality with consciousness.

[15] Defying the more general classical tendency to separate matter and mind, Epicurus, and more explicitly his Roman successor Lucretius, had taught that the world was a swirling mass of atoms which comprised both body and soul. The soul was not a substance apart, nor was it intended for an afterlife. When one accepted this basic truth, Epicurus argued, one could dispel the false fears of divine punishment or eternal damnation that caused us continual anxiety and pain, allowing us to focus instead on the more enlightened goal of attaining pleasure.

generally supported although not unconditionally so. Reviving the ancient ideal of the active philosophical life, Shaftesbury attempted to harmonize a political life with a philosophical one, alternating between intense public service and periods of philosophical retreats, up until he abandoned London for health reasons (1711). Shaftesbury founded the "moral sense" school of ethics, according to which natural affection for virtue predisposes human beings to act virtuously. Although much of Shaftesbury's work differed from the dominant style of philosophical discourse of his era and the philosophical tradition since then, his philosophy was very much in vogue during the first half of the eighteenth century, so much so that Oliver Goldsmith was prompted to write that Shaftesbury had "more imitators in Britain than any other writer I know"[16].

Although he was educated under Locke's care, Shaftesbury resisted the implications of his mentor in his collected writings, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc.* (1711)[17]. He returned to a form of reasoning favoured by the Ancients, a Neo-Stoicism combined with Neo-Aristotelianism with emphasis on Socrates as the founder of these schools. The most important Socratic of the Modern times, Shaftesbury maintains that "the most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system"[17]. Despite the Greek and Roman sources of Shaftesbury's thought, Shaftesbury's main purpose is to address contemporary needs. More interested in reforming the morals, manners and taste of his day than in discursive reasoning, he aims to promote liberty by devising a cultural program for a post-courtly European culture. To this end, he criticizes the court, ridicules the church, and rebukes contemporary philosophy for its aloofness from practical affairs and neglect of its role as moral and political educator.

[16] GOLDSMITH, Oliver: "The Augustan Age of England", in *The Bee 8*, Nov. 24 1759. P. 15. Shaftesbury not only profoundly influenced eighteenth-century thought in Britain—Hutcheson, Butler, Hume, and Adam Smith were all heavily impacted by his concept of the moral sense; but Shaftesbury's work had a significant influence on French deists such as Voltaire and Rousseau; and he was influential in Germany through his concept of enthusiasm that impacted the Romantic idea of the creative imagination which was held by Lessing, Mendelssohn, Goethe, Herder, and Schiller.

[17] SHAFTESBURY, Anthony Ashley Cooper: *Soliloquy*, iii, 1; CR I, p. 189.

In the notebooks[18], Shaftesbury considers three different ways of thinking about philosophy: first, subtle speculation, which would put it on a par with mathematics and the sciences; second, the study of happiness, with happiness conceived as something dependent on external goods, and so philosophy itself would be concerned with those external goods; third, the study of happiness, with happiness conceived as something dependent solely on the mind, as the Stoics taught. Shaftesbury is drawn to the last of these, conceiving philosophy as a therapeutic activity whose aim is to help us overcome "disquiet, restlessness, anxiety".

Shaftesbury tells us that his "design is to advance something new, or at least something different from what is commonly current in philosophy and morals"[19]. Hardly distinguishable from good education, philosophy for Shaftesbury is a practical endeavor. He intends to bring philosophy back to the everyday world, an aspiration that explains the themes, design and style of his work. Like Hobbes and Locke, who strengthened their influence by writing in plain language, Shaftesbury aims to reach a lay audience unfamiliar with philosophical terminology. He endeavors to rescue the philosophical tradition of the Cambridge Platonists from their dull and pedantic folio volumes, in order to make it available to individuals of culture and sensibility. Bemoaning philosophy's fate in the modern world, Shaftesbury complains that,

> She is no longer active in the world nor can hardly, with any advantage, be brought on the public stage. We have immured her, poor lady, in colleges and

[18] SHAFTESBURY, Anthony Ashley Cooper*: The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury,* RAND, Benjamin (ed.), Swan Sonnenschein, London (UK), and Macmillan, New York, NY (USA). Reedited, Routledge/Thoemmes Press, London (UK), 1992 [1900]. The notebooks are journals of self-examination. Organized topically, they offer an irregular record of Shaftesbury's inner life, mostly between 1698 and 1704. They are tools for selfinvestigation and also for self-command, amounting to a kind of moral workbook. Shaftesbury wrote much of the material in the notebooks while immersed in deep intellectual engagement with the Roman Stoics Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. For the notebooks see KLEIN, Lawrence E.: *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1994, pp. 70-90. For Shaftesbury as Stoic, see TIFFANY, Esther: "Shaftesbury as Stoic", in *Publications of the Modern Language Association XXXVIII*, 1923, pp. 641-684.

[19] SHAFTESBURY, Anthony Ashley Cooper: *Miscellany*, III, i; CR II, pp. 251-252.

> cells, and have set her servilely to such works as those in the mines. Empirics and pedantic sophists are her chief pupils[20]

It appears he convinced his contemporaries of the importance of his project, for Joseph Addison, the editor of the *Spectator*, is a close reader of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, and subscribers are duly informed of the paper's policy to bring "philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses"[21].

Shaftesbury maintains that a more polite approach than the lecture or the sermon is required for a more effective philosophy. For Shaftesbury, "politeness", a term referring to the conventions of both good manners and refined conversation, fulfils the fundamental rhetorical necessity of making concessions to the knowledge, interests, and attention span of an audience. In this respect, Laurence Klein explains, Shaftesbury aims to regulate "style or language by the standard of good company and people of the better sort"—members of the English upper orders, wealthy though not necessarily landed gentlemen, educated and literate though not necessarily learned, men of the world who could naturally be reached through humor, playfulness, variety and open-endedness[22]. Thus, Shaftesbury replaces the magisterial manner with a polite form of writing that is more informal, miscellaneous, conversational, open-ended and skeptical.

Philosophy, insists Shaftesbury, should make people effective participants in the world. Neither an intellectual discipline for specialists nor a profession, it is rather wisdom accessible to every thoughtful individual: "If philosophy be, as we take it, the study of happiness, must not everyone, in some manner or other, either skillfully or unskillfully philosophize?"[23] In order to philosophize more skillfully, we should become more rational, and this is achieved only by using our reason. We

[20] SHAFTESBURY, Anthony Ashley Cooper: *Moralists*, I, 1; CR II, pp. 4-5.
[21] Quoted in BRETT, Richard L.: *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory*, Hutchinson's University Library, London (UK), 1951, p. 41.
[22] KLEIN, Lawrence E.: *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1994, p. 75; and KLEIN, Lawrence E.: "Introduction", In SHAFTESBURY, Anthony, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc.* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1999, p. xiii.
[23] SHAFTESBURY, Anthony Ashley Cooper: *Moralists*, iii, 3; CR II, p. 150; see p. 153.

may be convinced to use our reason more often, were we to converse openly with one another, using wit and humor to convince and especially to refute each other. Shaftesbury never doubts that a genuinely free interplay of ideas ensures that the best will prevail; only bad ideas suffer when subjected to free and humorous treatment:

> I can very well suppose men may be frightened out of their wits, but I have no apprehension they should be laughed out of them. I can hardly imagine that in a pleasant way they should ever be talked out of their love for society, or reasoned out of humanity and common sense. A mannerly wit can hurt no cause or interest for which I am in the least concerned; and philosophical speculations, politely managed, can never surely render mankind more unsociable or uncivilized[24]

Philosophy is a practical activity in pursuit of moral self-knowledge and moral transformation. Virtue is a noble enthusiasm that forms an inward harmonious beauty. This sort of morality cannot be taught directly, but rather necessitates an indirect approach. As no one likes admonition, humor is necessary for an author intended on giving moral advice, as well as for the inward conversation of soliloquy, whose purpose is self-criticism and self-maturation. Finally, humor is necessary for conversation, because rationality is furthered through the use of reason, reason in turn is developed through criticism, and only humorous criticism is effective because it overcomes resistance. Thus humor plays an important role in solliloquy, conversation, and writing.

Becoming moral involves becoming a kind of "self-improving artist". The "wise and able Man" is he who "having righter models in his eye, becomes in truth the architect of his own life and fortune"[25]. Shaftesbury's moral theory culminates in an aesthetics of creative "inward form", and his legacy is none other than the Greek idea of the beauty of morals.

Stoic reflection on the beauty of the universe established a principle of order in the creation which was matched by the unity of human nature, evident in shared convictions in matters of taste, morality, and a recognition of the divine. Shaftesbury reasserts the notion of innateness,

[24] SHAFTESBURY, Anthony Ashley Cooper: *Essay*, ii, 3; CR I, p. 65.
[25] SHAFTESBURY, Anthony Ashley Cooper: *Moralists,* iii, 2; CR II, p. 144.

attempting to shield it from Locke's critique by insisting on the existence of natural disposition toward virtue. He rejects Locke's unsociable portrait of human beings as motivated by self-interest. Shaftesbury not only objects to Locke's views on innateness, he also turns against his positive theory of morals. In particular, the assumption that mankind requires rewards and punishments to maintain any degree of moral commitment offends him. Locke has situated human beings as appetitive agents who merely obeyed the law prudently, but for Shaftesbury disinterestedness is consonant with our nature. Locke relies increasingly on Scripture to remedy the deficiencies of human reason, that is, the failure to pursue notions of duty with adequate attention. Shaftesbury's anti-clerical stance leads him to make religion a moral affair, but it is not dependent on a revealed text.

In characterizing human nature, Shaftesbury turned decisively against the Epicurean tradition he associated with Hobbes and Locke. In his correspondence Shaftesbury suggests that there are only two real schools of philosophy in antiquity: a hedonist tradition uniting Epicurus and the Cyrenaics, and a Socratic tradition uniting Academics, Peripatetics, and Stoics[27]. For Shaftesbury, Aristotle and the Stoics are part of a single Socratic philosophical tradition united by their commitment to virtue and rejection of pleasure as the *telos*.

Shaftesbury seeks to reinstate some forms of innateness in order to guarantee a distinction between virtue and vice which was rooted in nature. In particular, Shaftesbury reintroduces the Stoic notion of "prolepsis". A prolepsis was a natural "anticipation" or inclination which made it possible to recognize certain ideas or to hold certain beliefs. Effectively, it was an innate idea or common notion, but which did not guarantee moral knowledge *per se*. The "prolepsis" supplied criteria, but required some cultivation and development, which the practice of philosophy should provide.

In his answer to the critique of innateness, Shaftesbury reinstates norms of sociability, moral affection, and the divine, inspired by a Stoic conception of human nature that identified internal resources in the form of prolepses. Recalling his opponents to a more sociable norm characterized by a certain levity in religious conflicts, his allowance for ongoing dispute in religion is dependent on preserving a territory of

genuine agreement which he located in human nature and its inbuilt tendency to recognize principles of virtue, design, order, and beauty. Yet, and this is the crucial part of my argument, in order to form virtue or taste, criticism is necessary together with practice and cultivation. And, following Epictetus' view of ethics, reason was required to ensure the "right application of the affections". Thus, philosophy as a guide to better reasoning is necessary in order to educate moral agents. Philosophy is necessary for virtue, and as virtue constitutes happiness, philosophy in turn is necessary for happiness. Moreover, philosophy is also sufficient for happiness, according to Shaftesbury, as the mark of religion was ethics alone[28].

The view that makes philosophy necessary for happiness distinguishes Shaftesbury from the majority of the Enlightenment's thinkers[26], I argue. This controversy begins with Locke, whose hedonistic, as opposed to Epicurean, view of happiness makes philosophy unecessary for the reach of happiness.

Shaftesbury's conception of civility and politeness supports a narrower interest than Locke's, however. To be sociable was to be a part of an elevated collective, a body of like-minded individuals who achieved a consensus on moral, social, and political questions. Sociability, like taste, resulted from the cultivation of innate capacities and would not be achieved by all. Shaftesbury's account of sociability, as Hans-Georg Gadamer pointed out, has more in common with the German concept of *Bildung*, a process of raising up[30]. Indeed, Shaftesbury's philosophy is at the origin of this concept, as was recently shown by

[26] He was emulated, among others, by Adam Smith. True happiness, Smith believed, showing his partial indebtedness to the Stoics, lay in "tranquility and enjoyment", which had less to do with economic condition that it did with virtue (SMITH, Adam: *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, RAPHAEL, D.D. and MACFIE, A. L. (eds.), Liberty Classics, Indianapolis, IN (USA), 1987. P. 149; see GRISWOLD, Jr., Charles A.: *Adam Smith and the Virtues of the Enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK), 1999, pp. 217-227. Far from laying in wealth, the "beggar who suns himself by the side of the highway" may well possess the same happiness as kings (SMITH, Adam: *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, RAPHAEL, D.D. and MACFIE, A. L. (eds.), Liberty Classics, Indianapolis, IN (USA), 1987, p. 185. Thomas Jefferson, who studied closely Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, observed toward the end of his career that "happiness is the aim of life, but virtue is the foundation of happiness", echoing Benjamin Franklin's observation that "virtue and happiness are mother and daughter" (quoted by MCMAHON, Darrin M.: *Happiness: A History*, Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, NY (USA), 2006, p. 330.

Rebekka Horlacher[31]. I would like to probe other ways in which Shaftesbury is a precursor of the current practice of philosopher as well as ways in which he differs from it.

Shaftesbury and the Contemporary Practice of Philosophy

Darrin M. McMahon sums up the Enlightenment's view of happiness as follows:

> No less an enlightened figure that Voltaire continually paid deference to the contingency and uncertainty of human experience, refusing to discount entirely the "fatality of evil." Similarly, Immanuel Kant, the celebrated author of "What is Enlightenment?" mocked the facile association of happiness with reason and virtue, even denying that happiness was the goal of the human life. But many persons of the time saw happiness in nature where previous centuries had seen salvation in God. Convinced of the natural harmony of the universe, and of humankind's ability to control it, they put forth a world in which happiness was part of the order of things. Human beings could be happy, they believed; they should be happy. And if they were not, then something was wrong—with their institutions, their beliefs, their bodies, their minds. In this respect, at least, we continue to walk in the Enlightenment's way[27]

As far as happiness is concerned, we continue to walk in the Enlightenment's way. What is, then, the relation of the current practice of philosophy with the Enlightenment's goal of happiness? And, more specifically, with Shaftesbury's view of happiness as virtue? I propose to answer these questions with the use of four criteria: audience, politics, happiness, and virtue.

Audience: When philosophical practitioners search for antecedents of their work, they tend to refer to Greek and Hellenistic philosophies. But Greek philosophers were not egalitarian in relation to philosophy: Socrates used to choose very carefully his students and practiced in their presence his elenchus mostly on prominent men of the city; his goal was to reveal publicly their ignorance in order to allow his students to infer their own ignorance. Plato believed philosophy was for the few, and

[27] MCMAHON, Darrin M.: "Pursuing an Enlightened Gospel: From Deism to Materialism to Atheism", in FITZPATRICK, Martin, JONES, Peter, KNELLWOLF, Christa, and MCCALMAN, Ian (eds.), *The Enlightenment World*, Routledge, New York, NY (USA), 2004, p. 175.

Aristotle clearly considered the theoretical life of the philosopher-scientist superior to the moral life which is accessible if not to all, at least to those who can appreciate the good and the beautiful. Hellenistic philosophers emphasized the gulf between the wise and the fool, the philosopher and the vulgar. True, in Roman times, philosophy was widely popular, partly due to the relaxation of Hellenistic philosophies' requirements. But those very relaxations were dubious, as was the tendency to refer to philosophers as gurus, with the cult of personality that followed and the dependence this created[28]. For these reasons, Hellenistic philosophies should neither be idealized nor taken as the sole source of the practice of philosophy.

I suggest that the proximate source of the current practice of philosophy is the Enlightenment, granted that the Enlightenment's revival of Hellenistic philosophy is a subject to fathom[29]. The Enlightenment is rarely mentioned in the literature on Philosophical Practice, maybe because of the criticism to which its view of reason is submitted in Post-modernism. The Enlightenment is significant for the practice of philosophy, however, because the democratization of philosophy from the eighteenth century onwards has been instrumental in creating a new class of educated citizens. Today, we are heir to the Enlightenment's goal in that the practice of philosophy can be offered to *all* in its meliorist rather than perfectionist mode[30]. This follows the Enlightement's view of happiness rather than Shaftesbury's, and it is a boon which also limits philosophy's ambitions. This point is further clarified through thinking on the relation between politics and philosophy.

Politics: In her impressive discussion of Hellenistic philosophies in *The Therapy of Desire*, Martha Nussbaum criticizes them for their blindness about the importance of politics and their attempt to perfect individuals one by one, "as if perfect people could in fact be produced

[28] See AMIR, Lydia B.: "¿Que Podemos Aprender de la Filosofia Helenista?", in *Sophia: Revista de Filosofia 5*, 2009, pp. 81-89. Much longer English version found in www.revistasophia.com, 2009, pp. 1-32.

[29] See LONG, Anthony A: *Hellenistic Philosophy*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA (USA), 1986.

[30] See AMIR, Lydia B.: "Taking Philosophy Seriously: Perfectionism *versus* Meliorism", in BARRIENTOS RASTROJO, Jose (ed.): *Philosophical Practice*, X-XI, Sevilla (Spain), 2006, pp. 11-

without profound changes in material and institutional conditions"[31]. Although these philozophers are keen to salvage the ideal of philosophic self-sufficiency, she claims that the success of their enterprise awaits and requires political and social alterations.

To the contrary, Shaftesbury furthered political changes in England which facilitated the relations between politics and philosophy. Those changes promoted the discipline of philosophy as education for a new class of citizens and witty rational discussion as a novel form of popular conversation. In attempting a more profound transformation on himself according to Stoic ideals as witnessed in his notebooks, however, Shaftesbury reached the conclusion that the philosophical self always loses to the social self, which prompted him to renounce the political life in order to perfect himself. His view of philosophy restricted its benefits to the "club" or the small group, which was also the reality of Hellenistic philosophies.

Philosophic advancement is usually more radical than the progress embodied by laws, and in this sense, I suggest, it is superior, although laws make it available at least in principle to more persons. The contemporary dismissal of the ideal of sovereignty, with its emphasis on societal rules and political laws, is yet another manner to undermine the potency of philosophy. Perfectionist visions of philosophy should not be given up, however, especially since the eighteenth century onwards according to John Passmore in *The Perfectibility of Man* we understand by this term a gradual, rather than a radical, change[32].

Happiness: Happiness already possessed a long history by the eighteenth century, yet the idea that institutions should be expected to promote it, and that people should expect to receive it in this life, was a tremendous novelty. It involved nothing less than a revolution in human expectations, while raising, in turn, delicate questions: Just who, precisely, was worthy of happiness? Was it for all? Was happiness a right or a reward?

Today, happiness has become a research field of the social sciences, including psychology, thanks to the recent field of positive psychology.

[31] NUSSBAUM, Martha C.: *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (USA), 1994, p. 505.
[32] PASSMORE, John: *The Perfectibility of Man*, Duckworth, London (UK), 1970, p. 157.

The social sciences concentrate on (subjective) well-being[33]; yet happiness is not the same as well-being; and, happiness is certainly different from another fashionable tenet—the willed well-being called positive thinking[34][35]. *Eudaimonia* or happiness includes an objective, optimal condition for human beings, and does not simply consist in subjective feelings of contentment[36]. Happiness has a normative compound, which is fulfilled by discipline, frustration, and hard work. The flower of a life well-lived, it is not a right but an achievement.

Virtue: Closely related to the issue of happiness is the issue of its contents, whether in terms of pleasure or virtue. Locke foresaw the current situation when he described the possibility, which he wanted to rule out, that each person will find pleasure in something different and call that happiness[37]. In order to avoid this relativistic outcome Locke

[33] For well-being and subjective well-being as objects of contemporary scientific research, see EID, Michael and Randy L. LARSEN (eds.): *The Science of Subjective Well-Being*, Guilford Press, London (UK), 2008; HUPPERT, Felicia A., BAYLIS, Nick, and KEVERNE, Barry (eds.): *The Science of Well-Being*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (UK), 2003; and DIENER, Ed, and BISWAS-DIENER, Robert: *Happiness: Unlocking the Mysteries of Psychological Wealth*, Blackwell, New York, NY (USA), 2008. Another version of happiness, which translates *eudaimonia* as personal expressiveness, has been recently added by positive psychologists such as Alan S. Waterman. *Eudaimonia* indeed captures the sense of "happiness", as Richard Kraut argues, and should thus compete with happiness as personal well-being; it is not (relative) personal expressiveness, however; this seems to be a mistranslation into psychological terms that can be assessed or measured in research. See WATERMAN, Alan S.: "Personal Expressiveness (*eudaimonia*) and Hedonic Enjoyment", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 64(4),* April 1993, pp. 678-691. KRAUT, Richard: "Two Conceptions of Happiness", in *The Philosophical Review 99*, 1979, pp. 167-197.

[34] For positive thinking, see FLETCHER, Horace: *Happiness as Found in Forethought Minus Fearthought*, Stone, London (UK), 1897; and the best-seller of PEALE, Norman Vincent: *The Power of Positive Thinking*, New York, NY (USA), Prentice-Hall,

[35] . For a deadly criticism of positive thinking, see EHRENREICH, Barbara: *Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America*, Picador, New York, NY (USA), 2009.

[36] See KRAUT, Richard: "Two Conceptions of Happiness", in *The Philosophical Review 99*, 1979, pp. 167-197. For philosophic views of happiness, see MCGILL, V. J.: *The Idea of Happiness*, New York, NY (USA), Frederick A. Praeger, 1967; QUENNELL, Peter: *The Pursuit of Happiness*, Constable, London (UK), 1988; and BOK, Sissela: *Exploring Happiness: From Aristotle to Brain Science*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT (USA) and London (UK), 2010. Valuable work has been conducted in other languages than English. See, for exemple, in French, COMTE-SPONVILLE, André: *Le Bonheur, désespérément*, éditions Pleins Feux, Paris, 2000; and LENOIR, Frédéric: *Du bonheur: Un voyage philosophique*, Fayard, Paris, 2013.

[37] LOCKE, John: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, NIDDITCH, Paul (ed.), Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1991 [1689], p. 258.

relied on punishments and rewards in the afterlife, making thereby more room for religion that Shaftesbury thought necessary.

It seems that today Shaftesbury has lost his combat against hedonism. And, in contradiction to Epicureans who need their desires pruned, hedonists make philosophy redundant for happiness. Philosophy could make a difference today through the renewed Shaftesburean assertion that virtue is happiness. This may give an edge to philosophical practitioners in their relation to life-coaches and psychologists, who are not trained in ethics and are not familiar in particular with virtue ethics[38]. Those who emphasize the importance of virtue today are mostly religious persons, however, who turn to religion instead than to philosophy. Even those philosophers who adhere to virtue ethics do not currently understand it as requiring working on desires and emotions—a philosophic work—but mainly as involving acceptance of one's emotions and desires[39]. Moreover, if philosophers were ready to maintain with Shaftesbury that virtue is happiness, they would have to give a personal example, which most philosophers are reluctant or unable to give. And, this would require the willingness to embrace a vision of happiness that necessitates philosophic reflection, discipline, and commitment, which may come across as difficult to achieve by many persons. In spite of these difficulties, I believe that this space is where a perfectionist vision of happiness, in contradistinction to the social sciences' view of well-being, can and should be developed, and this is none other than the Shaftesburean legacy.

[38] See AMIR, Lydia B.: "Morality, Psychology, Philosophy", in *Philosophical Practice 1(1)*, 2005. Pp. 43-57; and AMIR, Lydia B.: "Philosophers, Ethics, and Emotions", in *Philosophical Practice 4(2)*, 2009, pp. 447-458.

[39] NUSSBAUM, Martha C.: *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ (USA), 1994, p. 466.

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