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Cyrus' Strategy: Shaftesbury on Human Frailty and the Will

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Cette duplicité de l'homme est si visible qu'il y en a qui ont
pensé que nous avons deux âmes.

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Lafuma 629, Sellier 522).

There are passages in Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks* that seem excessively formal, dull, lengthy, and outdated. Here, I deal with one of these negative accomplishments that readers usually bypass in favour of apparently more substantial pages. In *Soliloquy, or Advice to an Author*, Shaftesbury tells the "Story of an Amour" in order to illustrate, among other things, the claim that lovers are not able to practice soliloquy, that is, the Stoic discipline of self-examination. The story draws on Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*: Cyrus entrusts his captive, Pantheia, to his favourite, the young Araspas. Pantheia is depicted as "the most beautiful Princess in the world" (*Soliloquy* 70 [176]). Araspas, who was the first among Cyrus' companions to notice the extraordinary beauty of the captive, boasts that he can withstand the challenge of keeping her company, and that he has full control over his passions and feelings. Cyrus, although sceptical about Araspas' alleged self-mastery, leaves Pantheia under his guard. It should be noted that Cyrus' doubts are not motivated by his thinking Araspas particularly weak and vulnerable to lust; on the contrary, he holds him in high esteem. The reason for Cyrus' scruple is rather the consideration that each individual, even the best, is unprepared for the encounter with beauty.

What happens is, as one might expect, that Araspas falls gradually in love with Pantheia. Most significantly, Araspas has moral reasons for loving her. She is not only beautiful, but also morally good: "He found her in every respect deserving, and saw in her a Generosity of Soul which was beyond her other Charms" (*Soliloquy* 76 [181]). In a sense, Pantheia demonstrates the Platonic equation of the good, the beautiful, and the true. Unfortunately, Araspas' attraction to the latter metaphysical entity rapidly degenerates into uncontrolled sexual rage, to such an extent that he

contemplates raping Pantheia. Of course, Shaftesbury's terms are more euphemistic than mine:

At first he offer'd not to make the least mention of his Passion to the Princess. For he scarce dar'd tell it *to himself*. But afterwards he grew bolder. She receiv'd his Declaration with an unaffected Trouble and Concern, spoke to him as a Friend, to dissuade him as much as possible from such an extravagant Attempt. But when he talk'd to her of *Force*, she immediately sent away one of her faithful Domesticks to the Prince, to implore his Protection. (*Soliloquy* 76 [181-82])

Then Cyrus summons Araspas for a debriefing.

That is just the skeleton of the story. Proper nouns do not appear in Shaftesbury's adaptation. Cyrus is the "VIRTUOUS young Prince of a Heroick Soul," or, more concisely, "the Prince." Araspas is referred to as "a young Nobleman," Pantheia is "the Princess" (*Soliloquy* 70 [176-77]). The eunuch that Pantheia sends to denounce Araspas to Cyrus is modernised as a domestic. Moreover, we should pay attention to the fact that Shaftesbury does not explicitly quote his source. The reference to Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* was added by later editors or translators of *Characteristicks*. Oddly enough, the index to the 1711 edition refers to the story in the entry "Prince: Story of an Heroick Prince" (it is also advertised by a redundant entry "Heroick Prince: a Character and Story"!). The entry "Xenophon," albeit more relevant, does not refer to this passage of *Soliloquy* (*Index* 424, 376, 458). The reason for this, I think, is that Shaftesbury devised a story that may be read both as a modern romance or drama and a Socratic dialogue, for we might think of a constellation of dramas, novels, or poems which our "Story of an Amour" somewhat echoes. To mention a few of them: Shakespeare's poem *The Rape of Lucrece*, his *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Cymbeline*, Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, or Montalvo's *Amadis de Gaula*. These implicit references are consistent with Shaftesbury's general project of introducing and acclimatising his readership (ladies included) to Socratic philosophy. There is not the slightest geographical or historical clue in the way Shaftesbury rewrites Xenophon that would point to antiquity and would exclude a medieval, Renaissance, or even contemporary context. As readers of *Soliloquy* well know, Elizabethan drama plays an important role in that work, since Shaftesbury stresses that the ancient practice of soliloquy has been preserved by "our modern Dramatick Poets" (*Soliloquy* 46 [158]), especially by Shakespeare. To be sure, the story of Araspas and Pantheia would have been a perfect script for an Elizabethan drama. One piece of evidence for this is the following: the story from Xenophon is one of the tales we find in William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566), a repertoire of plots, from Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Latin authors, on which many seventeenth century dramas drew. One of Shaftesbury's German disciples, Wieland, was well aware of the dramatic interest of this story: he gave his own version of it in *Araspas und Panthea* (1758).¹

1 Mark-Georg Dehrmann has drawn my attention to Wieland's drama. In his *Wieland and Shaftesbury* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913), Charles Elson locates one of Wieland's sources in Shaftesbury's

The topic of this paper, of course, is not the recourse to narratives in philosophical writing, but 'Shaftesbury on the Will'. What, then, is the connection between the two? In *Characteristicks*, the story borrowed from Xenophon is in fact an appetiser to the only explicit passage on the will (understood as an object of moral psychology). Moreover, in the 1711 index to *Characteristicks* the entry on 'Will' (in the psychological sense) points to the conclusion (*Soliloquy* 80-82 [185]) of the 'Story of an Heroick Prince' (*Index* 456). My aim in this paper is to set out what we learn from that story about Shaftesbury's views on the will and especially about the question of whether the will is free. It should not surprise Shaftesbury's readers to learn that, for him, a good story can teach philosophy as well as, if not better than, a methodical argument. However, I will start with the methodical argument, namely with the few explicit lines that Shaftesbury devotes to the question concerning the freedom of the will, in *Soliloquy*, and also in *The Moralists*. Then I will return to the story of Araspas and Pantheia, trying to make more explicit what the story reveals about the question of the will. The focus will be on the figure of Cyrus, the "Heroick Prince," who does not occupy the foreground of the story but is in fact crucial, in an attempt to assess the significance of Cyrus' strategy. Finally, I wish to distinguish between two conceptions of freedom from the passions.

Shaftesbury's Conception of the Will

Shaftesbury does not consider the will to be a sovereign faculty. For him, as for John Locke, the will simply entails the power of choice or assent. Such a power is completely subordinate to evaluative beliefs (to use a contemporary expression). We recognise here the traditional claim that human choices are determined by the apparent good.² Because of this subordination of the will to the appearance of the good, and given the absence of direct control over that appearance, such intellectualist conceptions of the will leave little space for the concept of free will; at least, they invite a more subtle construal of freedom. The will is necessitated (or at least determined) by passions only through its rational nature, that is, its submission to judgements, even to wrong or false ones, such as passions. It can become a slave to the passions only because it is always a slave to judgement. In the passage that immediately follows the "Story of an Amour" in *Soliloquy*, Shaftesbury describes the will as the plaything for which two siblings contend: reason and its elder brother, appetite (both belonging to the family of intellectual states). As Shaftesbury puts it: "Will, so highly boasted, is at best, merely a Top or Foot-Ball between these Youngsters" (*Soliloquy* 84 [187]). This rules out any strongly libertarian, either Cartesian or Kantian, interpretation of Shaftesbury's conception of freedom.³

Soliloquy (see pp. 121-22).

2 See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 4-5: although we do not have direct control over the appearance of the good, we are at least partly responsible for being disposed to favour or not favour that appearance.

3 In a letter to Stanhope, dated 7 November 1709, to which I will return below, Shaftesbury does not hesitate

The will being determined by judgements, be they correct or not, implicit or explicit, the freedom of judgement (that is, of thinking) must be necessary and perhaps sufficient (in favourable conditions) to warrant freedom of action. Thus, freedom of the will is only a shortcut for the will being necessitated by judgements that we are free to make. I think that on this topic Shaftesbury sticks to the traditional suspicions about the concept of free will and would not contradict John Locke's criticism of the notion (not to mention other authors who explicitly hold necessitarian conceptions), perhaps even endorsing his teacher's claim that freedom of action, especially our power to suspend our desires, can be grounded only in freedom of thought. Of course this does not entail that Locke would approve of Shaftesbury's own conception of the will, especially of the astonishing connection he makes between this discussion of the will and the debate on personal identity, as we will see shortly.

Shaftesbury subscribes to Socratic intellectualism not only in his conception of the will, but also in his understanding of moral integrity, which he tends to merge with personal identity. In *The Moralists*, the connections between moral constancy, the pursuit of truth, and the discipline of judgement, are clearly put in the mouth of Theocles:

Why *chuse*, or why *prefer* one thing to another? You will tell me, I suppose, 'tis because we fancy it, or fancy *Good* in it. Are we therefore to follow every *present* Fancy, Opinion, or Imagination of Good? If so, then we must follow that at *one* time, which we decline *at another*; approve at *one* time, what we disapprove *at another*; and be at perpetual Variance with our-selves. But if we are not to follow *all* Fancy or Opinion alike; If it be allow'd, 'That of *Fancys*, some are *true*, some *false*;' then we are to *examine* every Fancy; and there is some *Rule* or other, by which to *judg*, and *determine*.
(*Moralists* 374 [435-36])

Shaftesbury does not use the term "will" in this passage, but the vocabulary of choice and preference is synonymous. His claim is that every practical choice is necessitated by "Opinion." More precisely, evaluative beliefs govern all our significant preferences (if we leave aside trivial or arbitrary preferences about things which do not matter). We choose A rather than B *because* we believe that A is better than B. If we judge that A is better than B, then we are determined to choose A, provided that we are rational. In this case, there are two options: either our judgement is true or it is false. If it is false, then our conduct is governed by a mistake: in that case, it is difficult to say that we control our conduct. If our judgement is true, there are again two options: either it is true by chance, or because we are careful in our judgements. If it is true by chance, then our conduct is governed by a happy coincidence, so that it can hardly be said we are exercising control. In case it is true because we are careful in our judgements, we exercise *some* control over our conduct *in so far* as it is necessitated by an evaluative judgement that is true *because* we exercise control over the way in which that

to praise Hobbes's approach ("a Genius, and even an Original among these latter Leaders in Philosophy") to the problem of liberty and necessity, which he contrasts with Locke's hesitations on the topic. Should we be surprised by the fact that a Stoic philosopher approves of a necessitarian philosophy?

judgement is passed. Here, we see the causal connections between the use of reason, the truth value of judgement, and the indirect control we enjoy over our preferences.

There is also a causal link between the indirect control of the will and practical rationality, that is, consistency between our successive preferences. In the above passage from *The Moralists*, it appears that if we practice self-examination, which is a rational discipline (by which we examine our evaluative beliefs even and especially when they are implicit evaluative beliefs, that is, passions), then, in favourable conditions, the truth value of our judgements is warranted and our preferences are necessitated by stable opinions. The conclusion of this argument should be that the practice of soliloquy, which consists in a thorough examination of our evaluative beliefs, is a necessary condition for being practically rational, that is, for having consistent preferences across time. In Shaftesburian jargon this reads as follows:

If there be no certain *Inspector* or *Auditor* establish'd within us, to take account of these Opinions and Fancys in due form, and minutely to animadvert upon their several Growths and Habits, we are as little like to continue a Day in the same *Will*, as a Tree, during a Summer, in the same *Shape*, without the Gardner's assistance, and the vigorous application of the Shears and Pruning-Knife. (*Soliloquy* 82 [185-86])

Today, we are reluctant, for good reasons, to conflate the question concerning the constancy of the will with that of personal identity through time; but Shaftesbury does not hesitate to jump from one to the other. As Kenneth Winkler states, "this constancy, unity, or integrity is a form of identity or selfhood."⁴ Winkler is commenting on the following passage from *Soliloquy* (a passage that draws on *Askêmata* 282-83):

Let me observe therefore, with diligence, what passes *here*; what Connexion and Consistency, what Agreement or Disagreement I find *within*: 'Whether, according to my present *Ideas*, that which I approve this Hour, I am like to approve as well the next: And in case it be otherwise with me; how or after what manner, I shall relieve my-self; how *ascertain* my *Ideas*, and keep my Opinion, Liking, and Esteem of things, *the same*.'" (*Soliloquy* 222 [299-300])

As Winkler notes: "It is tempting to say that all this has nothing to do with the classical philosophical problem of personal identity, a problem about the conditions for a thing's persistence over time."⁵

I suggest we distinguish a normative sense of 'being oneself' or 'remaining the same person', from the metaphysical sense, that is, from personal identity. The normative sense is that of constancy of will: under favourable conditions, I do now just what I have decided to do, and I will do tomorrow what I decide now. If I suffer from weakness of will, then I am not always myself in the normative

4 Kenneth P. Winkler, "'All Is Revolution in Us': Personal Identity in Shaftesbury and Hume," *Hume Studies*, 26 (2000), 3-40 (p. 5).

5 Winkler, "'All Is Revolution in Us'", p. 12.

sense of being myself, although I am myself in the metaphysical sense: I do not lose my personal identity. The interesting problems of what Jon Elster calls the 'multiple self' are those of normative identity, not of personal identity.⁶ Shaftesbury directly connects personal identity and normative identity. But the fact that we may deem identity in the normative sense more important than identity in the metaphysical sense does not entail that we conflate the two. As we will see, identity in the former sense is precisely what Araspas lacks in the story from Xenophon. At the beginning of the passage, Cyrus' advice to Araspas was: "Be ever the same Man" (*Soliloquy* 74 [180]). Of course, he does not lack personal identity since he remains accountable to Cyrus and Pantheia for all his actions and words throughout the story.

I will not elaborate on Winkler's very interesting reconstruction of Shaftesbury's conception of selfhood, with which I agree on almost every point but one: Winkler does not pay enough attention to the role of evaluative judgement and to the impact on Shaftesbury's conception of selfhood of the cognitivist claims (1) that evaluative judgements are liable to be true or false and (2) that practical rationality is the effect of truth once all obstacles are removed. I think that for Shaftesbury the ultimate basis of moral identity, constancy, or integrity, lies in our access to the permanence and stability of truth. As he suggests in *Soliloquy*, "Uniformity of Opinion ... is necessary to hold us to *one Will*" (82 [186]). If we do not do our best to have true evaluative judgements, then we will lack normative identity.

In *The Moralists*, Theocles gives an interesting counterexample to the careful use of evaluative judgements in the form of "*modern Scepticks*" that claim to question any evidence in religious matters but "are the readiest to take the Evidence of the greatest *Deceivers* in the World, *their own Passions*":

Having gain'd, as they think, a Liberty from some seeming Constraints of Religion, they suppose they employ this Liberty to Perfection, by following the first Motion of their Will, and assenting to the first Dictate or Report of any prepossessing *Fancy*, any foremost *Opinion* or *Conceit* of GOOD. So that their Privilege is only that of being perpetually amus'd; and their Liberty that of being impos'd on in their most important Choice.

6 *The Multiple Self: Studies in Rationality and Social Change*, ed. Jon Elster (Cambridge, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1986). In his introduction to this volume (see pp. 9-17), Elster suggests interesting distinctions between several ways of understanding the multiplicity of selves: 'Selves' (the term is employed as an abbreviation for subsystems of preferences within a person) may be successive (raising problems of personal identity through time), parallel (as when our self in the real life peacefully coexists with what we are in a long-lasting role-playing game), 'Faustian' (when there is a violent internal conflict between our desires, as if there were two different centres of decision in us), or hierarchical (when we would like to be rather this better self than that other self, that is, when we would prefer to have other preferences). Elster's conception of practical rationality and irrationality may shed light on Shaftesbury's story: Araspas suffers from his lack of normative identity through time, which culminates in a case of 'Faustian' self. The solution, which he is aware of, but is not yet able to implement, would consist in substituting the succession, or Faustian conflict, with a hierarchy.

(*Moralists* 88-90 [230-31])

Shaftesbury obviously thinks that such a 'liberty' is not real freedom, which should be understood as a response to truth, or at least as an effort towards truth.

One important consequence of this very ambitious conception of selfhood is that only philosophers (in the non-professional sense of people that are capable of self-knowledge)⁷ may be practically rational.

WHEN a Revolution of this kind, tho not so total, happens at any time in a Character; when the Passion or Humour of a known Person changes remarkably from what it once was; 'tis to *Philosophy* we then appeal. 'Tis either the Want or Weakness of this Principle, which is charg'd on the Delinquent. (*Soliloquy* 202-4 [285])

Even in this very broad sense of 'philosophy', equating it with the capacity of self-knowledge or self-control, the claim that personal integrity and practical rationality depend on philosophy, which seems to entail a kind of elitist perfectionism, is very difficult to accept. Fortunately, this is not Shaftesbury's last word on the topic: that very ambitious view is implicitly qualified in the "Story of an Amour," to which I will now turn my attention.

What We May Learn from the Story

At the beginning of the story, the "young Nobleman" thinks that we can control the passion of love at will, that we are free to choose the objects of love. He even claims that "in many Cases we absolutely command it" (*Soliloquy* 72 [178]). So he decides, or rather thinks he decides, not to fall in love. Also he decides, or rather thinks he decides, to respect Pantheia as long as she is under his guard. The problem (practical irrationality) resides in the fact that he is not able to maintain the same will throughout the story. He would need to learn how to remain free in the experience of passion. The reason why Araspas' promise to control his desire fails is not that he is wicked or vicious: it is simply that direct control of this sort is impossible. Being fascinated by the "imagin'd Presence" (*Soliloquy* 68 [175]) of the object of his love, all the lover's thoughts are determined by that image. What I call an 'image' here is just the objective counterpart of the passion of love. As such, it is evaluative. It is the image of the lovable in the sense of what apparently deserves to be loved, which includes the implicit claim that the object is lovable.

Now we may understand why the passionate lover cannot practise the art of soliloquy, even when he is alone, and thus also why Araspas, even though he grasps some aspects of the notion of a divided self at the end of the story, is still not able to go further. Practising soliloquy amounts to

7 "As we have more or less of this Intelligence or Comprehension of our-selves, we are accordingly more or less *truly* MEN" (*Soliloquy* 204 [285-86]).

questioning the 'image', casting doubt on the evaluative claim that this 'image' implicitly includes: you cannot be simultaneously ravished by the 'image' of the lovable and critical about it as this would amount to believing at one and the same time that the object is eminently lovable and that it is doubtful that is so. Soliloquy is an analytical activity that is incompatible with the enthusiastic way in which love values its objects, and thus the "*self-discoursing Practice*" (*Soliloquy* 54 [164]) is out of Araspas' reach.

The conclusion in Xenophon is particularly interesting for Shaftesbury because it suggests that Araspas comes close to understanding the Socratic division of the self and the necessity of self-examination: after the debriefing, Araspas tells Cyrus:

'O SIR!' reply'd the Youth, 'well am I now satisfy'd that I have in reality within me *two distinct separate Souls*. This Lesson of Philosophy I have learnt from that villanous Sophister LOVE. For 'tis impossible to believe, that having one and the same Soul, it shou'd 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, 'tis then we act handsomly; when *the Ill*, then basely and villanously. 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*.'⁸ (*Soliloquy* 80 [184])

We must pay attention to the fact that it is only with Cyrus' 'assistance' that Araspas can hope to exercise self-control. He is not able, by himself, to establish the hierarchy of selves.

The Araspas-Pantheia story also epitomises the relations between enthusiasm (under the guise of love), laughter (Cyrus' smile in Xenophon), criticism, and soliloquy (as that which Araspas is incapable of). Thus, the story illuminates the structure of the first volume of *Characteristicks*: enthusiasm (the subject of the first piece) is externally criticised by wit and humour (as explained in the second piece, *Sensus Communis*), before being capable of internal criticism (*Soliloquy*).

Here is what Araspas learns from his experience of weakness of will: that he has the concept, or more accurately the preconception, *prolēpsis*, of the division of the self (one necessary condition for 'soliloquy'). Shaftesbury hints at the Stoic concept of preconception when he notes: "Not that our Courtier, we suppose, was able, of himself, to form this *Distinction* justly and according to Art' (*Soliloquy* 80 [185]). Araspas has some confused notion of the multiple self, but he does not apply it correctly. He conflates the hierarchy of selves with an incoherent succession of selves.

What we learn from Araspas' experience: the necessity of strategies in the absence of any direct and full control of our passions. Of course, Araspas might eventually apply the preconception of the divided self correctly, and practise soliloquy. But I think we learn more from Cyrus than from

8 Interestingly, Shaftesbury introduces the terms 'reason' and 'will' in his translation, these being absent from Xenophon's version in this particular context.

Araspas. Therefore, we should focus our attention on Cyrus' discreet attitude at the very beginning of the story, when Araspas informs him about Pantheia's unrivalled beauty:

What appear'd strange to our young Nobleman, was, that the Prince, during this whole relation, discover'd not the least Intention of seeing the Lady, or satisfying that Curiosity, which seem'd so natural on such an occasion. He press'd him; but without success. 'Not see her, Sir! (said he, wondring) when she is so handsom, beyond what you have ever seen!' 'FOR that very reason, reply'd the Prince, I wou'd the rather decline the Interview. For shou'd I, upon the bare Report of her Beauty, be so charm'd as to make the first Visit at this urgent time of Business; I may upon sight, with better reason, be induc'd perhaps to visit her, when I am more at leisure: and so again and again; till at last I may have no leisure left for my Affairs.' (*Soliloquy* 72 [177-78])

Cyrus' freedom is a freedom of attention rather than a freedom of the will in general. Aware that he would not resist the attraction of beauty, he is only free to look away. Although certainly wiser (or, to put it correctly, less of a fool) than Araspas, Cyrus is not absolutely wise, since, when he looks away, the reason for his absence to the situation is not a presence to the realm of philosophy. His lack of attention to beauty is not justified by the experience of real beauty. In short: Cyrus is not, or not yet, a philosopher. This is why his art of looking away is very different from that of "Hercules at the Crossroads" in Carrachi's painting or that of the deeply meditating (inward-looking) Hercules of Sebastiano Ricci. Contrary to Hercules, Cyrus is not contemplating in himself the image of moral beauty. He is doing something different: exercising precaution.

One strategy for coping with our vulnerability to practical irrationality is to avoid 'admiration' (the term appears several times in the "Story of an Amour," which is very significant), but to use 'aversion' instead. Not only admiration of false beauties, but also 'contemplation' of the truly beautiful, could lead us astray. Enthusiasm is dangerous, even when it is 'philosophical'. Shaftesbury follows traditional Stoic caution: 'contemplation' of the moral good, which reinforces the moral stature of those already virtuous, is dangerous for the beginner.⁹

However, we should consider Cyrus' strategy as more than a second best alternative to Stoic self-control. Let us compare three conceptions of self-control:

9 See Shaftesbury, "*Pathologia*, A Theory of the Passions," edited and translated by Laurent Jaffro, Christian Maurer, and Alain Petit, *History of European Ideas* (2012), DOI:10.1080/01916599.2012.679796, 5: "Hence ADMIRATION is the greatest cause of all vices, and that which increases and strengthens them. CONTEMPLATION on the other hand (which is the highest affair and which is utterly difficult and dangerous for beginners), supports and favours all virtues and, so to speak, perfects them. And surely it always puts beauty right in front of our eyes and makes us participate in the Divinity, become similar to God and approve of Divine government." On the distinction between admiration and contemplation, see Christian Maurer and Laurent Jaffro, "Reading Shaftesbury's *Pathologia*: An Illustration and Defence of the Stoic Account of the Emotions", *History of European Ideas* (2012), DOI:10.1080/01916599.

(1) Araspas' first thoughts on the subject: he has the naive belief that the will is entirely free and can directly dominate the passions, and this leads him to risk his morality and integrity in a direct confrontation.

(2) Cyrus' avoidance strategy: well aware of "human Frailty" (*Soliloquy* 78 [183]), Cyrus indirectly and negatively controls his passions by avoiding a confrontation with their objects.

(3) Shaftesbury's revival of the Stoic 'self-discourse' (or Socratic 'self-understanding'): passions should be questioned so that the implicit judgements they consist of can be made explicit and thus lose their seductive power. Here, again, the control of passions is indirect, but in a manner that differs from Cyrus' 'avoidance strategy', which consists in the control over external circumstances. It is a control of passion through the control of judgement.

It is clear that the Stoic conception of the control over the passions is quite optimistic about our ability to avoid mistakes and make true evaluative judgements. If we are convinced that human nature is weak enough not to be able to eschew evaluative judgement mistakes, then it could be more prudent to avoid the practical (external) situations in which such mistakes have a high probability of occurring. This is precisely what Cyrus has in mind: "I know the Power of LOVE, and am no otherwise safe my-self, than by keeping out of the way of *Beauty*" (*Soliloquy* 78 [183]). The choice of Hercules, illustrating a maximalist conception of mental self-control, is not the paradigm for the moral choice of ordinary human beings.

Fortunately, it happens that the practical requirement of Cyrus' strategy is identical with one of the requirements of the Stoic soliloquy, that is, the solitude of retreat. When we withdraw from social contexts, from what may be termed contexts of 'enthusiasm' (here, erotic love is a metaphor for other kinds of enthusiasm including that of the philosopher that addresses an audience), in a word when we step back, we obtain one of the conditions for the practice of soliloquy, but we also secure the possibility of Cyrus' strategy. The difference between the two is that the strategy of a virtuous but young man (Cyrus) is compatible with the weak rationality we ordinarily manifest, which, in turn, is incompatible with the practice of soliloquy. It might be wiser to reserve soliloquy for moral heroes (such as Hercules). Cyrus' way lies within reach and its success is guaranteed.

Just before the "Story of an Amour," Shaftesbury remarks that the case of the lover "is like the *Author's* who has begun his Courtship to the Publick" (*Soliloquy* 68 [175]). The public is a central object of philosophical enthusiasm, of which erotic love is a metaphor. We should apply to Shaftesbury's Stoic notebooks, the *Askêmata*, the distinction between Cyrus' strategy and the practice of soliloquy. Of course, the *Askêmata* are principally a record of Shaftesbury's own soliloquies, which condition the constitution of his public authority. However, writing the *Askêmata* is also a good way of postponing meeting the public. The entry "Self" starts with the diagnosis of practical irrationality: "How long is it that thou wilt continue thus to act two different parts, & be two different Persons?" (*Askêmata* 186) This Araspasean situation may be solved in two different ways: by a Herculean recourse to the practice of soliloquy, or by a Cyrusean obedience to 'rules' or 'laws'. These laws are formulated in the 1704 "Parchment", on which Shaftesbury repeats the "terrible

Praecept” of the entry ‘Self’:

To take Pleasure in Nothing.

To do Nothing with Affection.

To promise well of Nothing.

To Engage for Nothing. (*Askêmata* 213, 487)

In this context, Shaftesbury quotes the authority of *Enchiridion* 19: “You may be unconquerable, if you enter into no Combat, in which it is not in your own Power to conquer.”¹⁰ This is clearly what the “Story of an Amour” is all about.¹¹

The recent editors of the *Askêmata* seem to misinterpret a coincidence as a type identity. They correctly comment on the advice “to talk with Self” (*Askêmata* 212) as being synonymous with that of *Soliloquy*. But the fact that the conditions of such “Self-Converse” (*Soliloquy* 56 [165]) are identical with the conditions of strategic reserve leads them to blur the conceptual distinction between the two: “There a ‘wholesom *Regimen* of Self-Practice’ (56 [166]), here it is a ‘terrible’ measure, the ‘Condition & Law’ [*Askêmata* 213] for the preservation of character and self” (*Askêmata* 212n10). I would rather say that the exercitant must have recourse to the constraints of ‘laws’ as long as “Self-Practice” is not fully developed.¹²

It may be relevant to compare Cyrus’ strategy with Rousseau’s solution to practical irrationality and the pathologies of identity. As Rousseau states in his *Confessions*, book IX, “it has been remarked that most men are, in the course of their life, often unlike themselves, and seem to be transformed into wholly different persons.” We do not have direct control over these identity changes. The solution (which Rousseau terms his “*morale sensitive*”) lies in identifying their external causes, which are under our influence to some extent: the purpose is “to search for the causes of these variations and, by concentrating upon those which depend on us, to show how we could direct them in order to render us better and more confident.”¹³ Thus, we draw on the influence circumstances have on our conduct. Let us illustrate this indirect strategy with the example of Rousseau’s retreat to the island of St Peter on Lake Biel in 1765. In *The Confessions*, book XII, Rousseau explains how his wish to break with society, to be “out of the reach of the wicked,” led him to the resolve to imprison himself, thus creating new circumstances able to alter his sentiments.¹⁴ On the lake, Rousseau enjoys

10 I quote from Elizabeth Carter’s translation: “The Enchiridion, or Manual of Epictetus,” *All the Works of Epictetus Which Are Now Extant* (London: S. Richardson and A. Millar, 1758), pp. 434-64 (444).

11 A fuller treatment of the topic with respect to the *Askêmata* would tackle the issues of the multiple self in Shaftesbury’s notebooks and notably the very interesting distinction between natural self and economical self. This I do in Laurent Jaffro, “Shaftesbury on the ‘Natural Secretion’ and Philosophical Persona,” *Intellectual History Review*, 18 (2008), 349-359.

12 I am grateful to Friedrich Uehlein for drawing my attention to ‘laws’ as an illustration of Cyrusean caution.

13 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes, I : Les Confessions, Autres textes autobiographiques* (Paris: Gallimard, La Pléiade, 1959), 408 (my translation).

14 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*, pp. 638-643.

his existence in an intrinsically involuntary state of reverie. To apply Jon Elster's expression, such a state is "essentially a by-product": the deliberate attempt to bring it about is doomed to fail.¹⁵

Rousseau and Shaftesbury share the view that the conditions (that is, solitude and reserve) which tend to preserve us from the regrettable consequences of practical irrationality happen to be also favourable to meditation. However, the focus is different. Let us distinguish between (a) the Cyrusean goal of avoiding risky social encounters and (b) the goal of practising meditation. By primarily aiming at (b), Shaftesbury, in his retreat from the world, devoted to the writing of the *Askêmata*, secondarily achieves (a), whereas Rousseau, by primarily aiming at (a), secondarily achieves (b).

Conclusions

Soliloquy is a means of preparing philosophical enthusiasm. However, there is also a peculiar kind of enthusiasm that is immanent in, and proper to, the practice of soliloquy. Its object is the perfection of the philosopher. The practice of soliloquy may lead to the illusion of the perfect mastery of oneself, exactly as premature 'contemplation' of the good and the beautiful may degenerate into a kind of self-conceit. To avoid such erring ways, we must remain acutely aware of our fragility as perpetual beginners in the discipline of philosophy. From that angle, we have more to learn from Cyrus' modest strategy than from Cleanthes', Zeno's, or Socrates' highly impressive achievements.

To return to my initial comments about the recourse to stories, tales, and fables, it is significant that a careful reading of Shaftesbury's rewriting of the story of Araspas and Pantheia, which epitomises both the structure of the first volume of *Characteristicks* and the dual function of the *Askêmata*, inclines us to qualify his explicit argument in *Soliloquy*. The main lesson is that it is quite risky to believe oneself a perfect Stoic, and that it is safe to postpone meeting the object of our highest aspirations: philosophical enthusiasm without the acute awareness of human frailty would be yet another fanaticism. We are now in a position to understand why, on a subject such as that of liberty and necessity, which is, as Shaftesbury declares to Stanhope, the "Test and Touchstone of a Genius in Philosophy," the author of *Characteristicks* provides us with a long allusive story rather than with an explicit methodical treatment:

But so tender the Subject is, that none who have a real Insight, and withall a Tenderness for Mankind will venture to treat formally of a Matter which can never be got over by low Genius's and can never so much as make a difficulty with any who impartially and intrepidly philosophize.¹⁶

¹⁵ Jon Elster, *Sour Grapes* (Cambridge, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 43-108.

¹⁶ Shaftesbury to James Stanhope, 7 November 1709.