

# *Sensus communis* de Shaftesbury

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“Les quatre grands poètes Platon le Pere Malbranche milord Shaftesbury Montagne” (Montesquieu, *Pensées* 1092). La tutela de John Locke y la reticencia de Shaftesbury: “The Temper of the Pedagogue sutes not with the Age. And the World, however it may be *taught*, will not be *tutor'd*. If a Philosopher speaks, Men hear him willingly, while he keeps to his Philosophy”. ¿Un humanista platónico o —como defiende Jonathan Israel— un ilustrado radical? “Truth, is supposed, may bear *all* lights.” Shaftesbury entre Bayle y Diderot: de las conversaciones en Rotterdam a la traducción de *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit* al francés. Las *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711): tratado, carta, ensayo, consejo, soliloquio, investigación, rapsodia, miscelánea. “There is nothing so foolish and deluding as a *partial Scepticism*.” Razón, sentimiento e imaginación: la cultura visual de Shaftesbury. “All Politeness is owing to Liberty”: de la *Politeness* de Shaftesbury a la *Zärtlichkeit* de Lessing. Las dos filosofías.

*Sensus Communis: un ensayo sobre la libertad de ingenio y humor* (1709). Desde la política: “... where absolute Power is, there is no PUBLICK.” Hacia la estética: “For all Beauty is TRUTH”.

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1

Der Weg der Geistesgeschichte schreitet nicht von Gipfel zu Gipfel fort – und der Gang der Ideengeschichte lässt sich nicht zureichend verfolgen, wenn man lediglich von der Betrachtung der großen philosophischen »Systeme« ausgeht und sich, wie die Geschichte der Philosophie es noch immer zu tun gewohnt ist, mit ihrer Darstellung begnügt. Man darf, wenn man die Bedeutung der Ideen verstehen will, an ihrer immanenten Bildung nicht Vorbeigehen, und diese erschließt sich nur, wenn man nicht von vornherein und ausschließlich die Höhepunkte der großen Systeme ins Auge faßt, sondern seinen Weg durch die Täler nimmt, um sich von ihnen, in allmählichem und geduldigem Aufstieg, zur Höhe emporzuarbeiten.

[El camino de la historia del espíritu no avanza de cima en cima y no podemos seguir adecuadamente el curso de la historia de las ideas si, como sigue siendo habitual en la historia de la filosofía, solo tenemos en consideración los grandes "sistemas" filosóficos y nos contentamos con su representación. Si queremos comprender el significado de las ideas no debemos pasar por alto su formación inmanente, lo que solo se consigue cuando, en lugar de concentrar nuestra atención únicamente en los hitos más elevados de los grandes sistemas, seguimos nuestro camino por los valles y desde allí, en un ascenso gradual y paciente, llegamos a la cumbre.]

ERNST CASSIRER

*Die platonische Renäissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge (in fin.)*

2

Hence Hobbes, Locke, etc., still the same man, same genus at bottom. —‘Beauty is nothing.’ —‘Virtue is nothing.’ —But these are the greatest realities of things, especially the beauty and order of the affections. These philosophers [...] may be called by one common name, viz., barbar[ians]...

SHAFESBURY

*Second Characters or the Language of Forms*, p. 178

3

Thus have I endeavour'd to tread in my Author's steps, and prepare the Reader for the serious and downright Philosophy, which even in this last commented Treatise, our Author keeps still as a Mystery, and dares not formally profess. His Pretence has been to advise Authors, and polish Styles; but his Aim has been to correct Manners, and regulate Lives. He has affected Soliloquy, as pretending only to censure Himself; but he has taken occasion to bring others into his Company, and make bold with Personages and Characters of no inferior Rank. He has given scope enough to Raillery and Humour; and has intrench'd very largely on the Province of us Miscellanarian Writers. But the Reader is now about to see him in a new aspect, “a formal and profess'd Philosopher, a System-Writer, a Dogmatist, and Expounder.” —*Habes consitentem reum*. So to his Philosophy I commit him. Tho, according as my Genius and present Disposition will permit, I intend still to accompany him at a distance, keep him in sight, and convoy him, the best I am able, thro' the dangerous Seas he is about to pass.

SHAFESBURY

‘Miscellany III, Chapter II, Preparation for Philosophy’ (*Characteristicks*, ed. Uyl, 3.114-116)

4

[The two real distinct philosophies] the one derived from Socrates and passing into the old Academic, the Peripatetic and Stoic; the other derived in reality from Democritus and passing into the Cyrenaic and Epicurean [...]. The first therefore of these two philosophies recommended action, concernment in civil affairs, religion, etc.; the second derided all and advised inaction and retreat, and [with] good reason. For the first maintained that society, right and wrong was [*sic*] founded in nature and that nature had a meaning and was [...] well-governed and administered by one simple and perfect intelligence. The second, again, derided this and made Providence and Dame Nature not so sensible as a doting old woman. The first of these philosophies is to be called the civil, social, theistic; the second, the contrary.

SHAFESBURY

‘To Pierre Coste’ (1 de octubre de 1706), *The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regime*, p. 359

5

Estar muerto no tiene nada de horrible. Y por quanto el morir no es más que el paso que lleva a estar muerto, tampoco el morir puede tener nada de horrible. Lo único que puede resultar horrible, y resulta horrible, es el morir así o así, en este preciso momento, en esta disposición, por voluntad de este o aquel, con oprobio o tortura. Mas ¿acaso por eso en el morir mismo es la muerte lo que produce ese horror? Nada más lejos; el más deseado punto final de todos esos horrores es la muerte y hay que atribuir a la pobreza del lenguaje [*der Armut der Sprache*] el que se nombre a esos dos estados, el estado que conduce inevitablemente a la muerte y el estado mismo de la muerte, con una y la misma palabra. Sé que esa pobreza puede convertirse a menudo en una fuente de lo patético [*eine Quelle des pathetischen*] y que, en consecuencia, el poeta encuentra en ello su conveniencia; pero lleva sin discusión ventaja la lengua que rechaza un patetismo fundado en la confusión de cosas tan diferentes, evitando ya de entrada tal confusión al servirse de denominaciones distintas. Parece que el griego antiguo, la lengua de Homero, era una lengua así. Para Homero, una cosa es Κῆρ y otra Θανάτος,

pues no habría unido con tanta frecuencia Θανατον και Κηρα si ambas hubieran significado una y la misma cosa. Por Κηρ entiende la necesidad de morir, que muy a menudo puede llegar a ser triste como es el caso de la muerte temprana, violenta, afrontosa, a destiempo, y por Θανατος la muerte natural que no va precedida de Κηρ alguna o bien el estado de muerte sin connotación alguna de la Κηρ que haya precedido. Los romanos también distinguían entre *lethum* y *mors*. [...] Quiero recordar el eufemismo de los antiguos, su delicadeza [Zärtlichkeit], que los lleva a sustituir las palabras que suscitan directamente una idea asquerosa, triste, horrible.

G. E. LESSING

‘Wie die Alten den Tod gebildet’, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. K. Lachmann y F. Muncker, Walter de Gruyter, Berlín y Nueva York, 1979<sup>2</sup>, XI 1-55 (‘Cómo los antiguos se imaginaban la muerte’, *La Ilustración y la muerte. Dos tratados*, ed. A. Andreu, Debate/CSIC, Madrid, 1992, pp. 33-36)

## 6

Ye Fields and Woods, my Refuge from the toilsome World of Business, receive me in your quiet Sanctuaries, and favour my Retreat and thoughtful Solitude.—Ye verdant Plains, how gladly I salute ye!—Hail all ye blissful Mansions! Known Seats! Delightful Prospects! Majestick Beautys of this Earth, and all ye Rural Powers and Graces!—Bless'd be ye chaste Abodes of happiest Mortals, who here in peaceful Innocence enjoy a Life un-envy'd, tho Divine; whilst with its bless'd Tranquillity it affords a happy Leisure and Retreat for Man; who, made for Contemplation, and to search his own and other Natures, may here best meditate the Cause of Things; and plac'd amidst the various Scenes of Nature, may nearer view her Works.

O glorious Nature! supremely Fair, and sovereignly Good! All-loving and All-lovely, All-divine! Whose Looks are so becoming, and of such infinite Grace; whose Study brings such Wisdom, and whose Contemplation such Delight; whose every single Work affords an ampler Scene, and is a nobler Spectacle than all which ever Art presented!—O mighty Nature! Wise Substitute of Providence! empower'd Creatress! Or Thou empowering Deity, supreme Creator! Thee I invoke, and Thee alone adore. To thee this Solitude, this Place, these Rural Meditations are sacred; whilst thus inspir'd with Harmony of Thought, tho unconfin'd by Words, and in loose Numbers, I sing of Nature's Order in created Beings, and celebrate the Beautys which resolve in Thee, the Source and Principle of all Beauty and Perfection.

“Thy Being is boundless, unsearchable, impenetrable. In thy Immensity all Thought is lost; Fancy gives o'er its Flight: and weary'd Imagination spends it-self in vain; finding no Coast nor Limit of this Ocean, nor in the widest Tract thro' which it soars, one Point yet nearer the Circumference than the first Center whence it parted.—Thus having oft essay'd, thus sally'd forth into the wide Expanse, when I return again within my-self, struck with the Sense of this so narrow Being, and of the Fulness of that Immense-one; I dare no more behold the amazing Depths, nor sound the Abyss of Deity.—

“Yet since by Thee (O Sovereign Mind!) I have been form'd such as I am, intelligent and rational; since the peculiar Dignity of my Nature is to know and contemplate Thee; permit that with due freedom I exert those Facultys with which thou hast adorn'd me. Bear with my ventrous and bold Approach. And since nor vain Curiosity, nor fond Conceit, nor Love of ought save Thee alone, inspires me with such Thoughts as these, be thou my Assistant, and guide me in this Pursuit; whilst I venture thus to tread the Labyrinth of wide Nature, and endeavour to trace thee in thy Works.”—

SHAFESBURY

‘The Moralists’, Part III, Sect. 1 (*Characteristicks*, ed. Uyl, 2.193-4)

7

'Tis real Humanity and Kindness, to hide strong Truths from tender Eyes. And to do this by a pleasant Amusement, is easier and civiller, than by a harsh Denial, or remarkable Reserve. But to go about industriously to confound Men, in a mysterious manner, and to make advantage or draw pleasure from that Perplexity they are thrown into, by such uncertain Talk; is as unhandsom in a way of Raillery, as when done with the greatest Seriousness, or in the most solemn way of Deceit. It may be necessary, as well now as heretofore, for wise Men to speak in *Parables*, and with a double Meaning, that the Enemy may be amus'd, and they only *who have Ears to hear, may hear*. But 'tis certainly a mean, impotent, and dull sort of Wit, which amuses all alike, and leaves the most sensible Man, and even a Friend, equally in doubt, and at a loss to understand what one's real Mind is, upon any Subject.

[...] 'Tis the Habit alone of Reasoning, which can make a *Reasoner*. And Men can never be better invited to the Habit, than when they find Pleasure in it. A Freedom of Raillery, a Liberty in decent Language to question every thing, and an Allowance of unravelling or refuting any Argument, without offence to the Arguer, are the only Terms which can render such speculative Conversations any way agreeable.

[...] In matter of Reason, more is done in a minute or two, by way of Question and Reply, than by a continu'd Discourse of whole Hours.

[...] If Men are forbid to speak their minds seriously on certain Subjects, they will do it ironically. If they are forbid to speak at all upon such Subjects, or if they find it really dangerous to do so; they will then redouble their Disguise, involve themselves in Mysteriousness, and talk so as hardly to be understood, or at least not plainly interpreted, by those who are dispos'd to do 'em a mischief. And thus Raillery is brought more in fashion, and runs into an Extreme. 'Tis the persecuting Spirit has rais'd the bantering one: And want of Liberty may account for want of a true Politeness, and for the Corruption or wrong Use of Pleasantry and Humour.

[...] that Respect which is due to common Society.

[...] Whatever Savages they may appear in Philosophy, they are in their common Capacity as Civil Persons, as one can wish. Their free communicating of their Principles may witness for them. 'Tis the height of Sociableness to be thus friendly and communicative.

[...] what shou'd hinder us from diverting our-selves with the Fancy of one of these *modern Reformers* we have been speaking off? What shou'd we say to one of these *Anti-zealots*, who, in the Zeal of such a cool Philosophy, shou'd assure us faithfully, "That we were the most mistaken Men in the world, to imagine there was any such thing as natural Faith or Justice? for that it was only *Force* and *Power* which constituted *Right*. That there was no such thing in reality as Virtue; no Principle of Order in things above, or below; no secret *Charm* or Force of Nature, by which every-one was made to operate willingly or unwillingly towards publick Good, and punish'd and tormented if he did otherwise."—Is not this the very Charm it-self? Is not the Gentleman at this instant under the power of it?—"Sir! The Philosophy you have condescended to reveal to us, is most extraordinary. We are beholden to you for your Instruction. But, pray, whence is this Zeal in our behalf? What are *We* to *You*? Are *You* our *Father*? Or if *You* were, why this Concern for *Us*? Is there then such a thing as *natural Affection*? If not; why all this Pains, why all this Danger on our account? Why not keep this Secret to Your-self? Of what advantage is it to *You*, to deliver us from the Cheat? The more are taken in it, the better. 'Tis directly against your Interest to undeceive *Us*, and let us know that only private Interest governs *You*; and that nothing nobler, or of a larger kind, shou'd govern us, whom you converse with. Leave us to our-selves, and to that notable *Art* by which we are happily tam'd, and render'd thus mild and *sheepish*. 'Tis not fit we shou'd know that by *Nature* we are all Wolves. Is it possible that one who has really discover'd himself such, shou'd take pains to communicate such a Discovery?

SHAFTESBURY

*Sensus communis* (*Characteristicks*, ed. Uyl, 1.41, 45-8, 57-9)

## 8

Viz. The two *Casaubons*, Is. and *Mer. Salmasius*, and our *English Gataker*: See the first in *Capitolinus*, *Vit. M. Ant. sub finem*. The second in his Comment on *M. Ant.* lib. 1. sect. 13, & 16. *Gataker* on the same place; and *Salmasius* in the same Life of *Capitolinus*, at the end of his Annotations. The Greek word is Κοινονημοσύνη, which *Salmasius* interprets, “moderatam, usitatam & ordinariam hominis mentem quae in commune quodammodo consulit, nec omnia ad commodum suum refert, respectumque etiam habet eorum cum quibus versatur, modestè, modicèque de se sentiens. At contra inflati & superbi omnes se sibi tantùm suisque commodis natos arbitrantur, & prae se caeteros contemnunt & negligunt; & hi sunt qui *Sensum Communem* non habere rectè dici possunt. Nam ita *Sensum Communem* accipit *Juvenalis*, Sat. 8. *Rarus enim fermè SENSUS COMMUNIS*, &c. φιλανθρωπίαν & χρηστότητα *Galenus* vocat, quam *Marcus* de se loquens κοινονημοσύνην; & alibi, ubi de eadem re loquxitur, Μετριότητα καὶ Εὐγνωμοσύνην, qua gratiam illi fecerit *Marcus* simul eundi ad *Germanicum Bellum* ac sequendi se.” In the same manner *Isaac Casaubon*: *Herodianus*, says he, calls this the τὸ μέτριον καὶ ισόμετρον. “Subjicit verò *Antoninus* quasi hanc vocem interpretans, καὶ τὸ ἐφεισθαι τοῖς φίλοις μήτε συνδειπνεῖν αὐτῷ πάντως, μήτε συναποδημεῖν ἐπάναγκες.” This, I am persuaded, is the *Sensus Communis* of *HORACE*, Sat. 3. lib. 1. which has been unobserv'd, as far as I can learn, by any of his Commentators: it being remarkable withal, that in this early Satir of *HORACE*, before his latter days, and when his Philosophy as yet inclin'd to the less rigid Assertors of Virtue, he puts this Expression (as may be seen by the whole Satir taken together) into the Mouth of a *Crispinus*, or some ridiculous Mimick of that severe Philosophy, to which the Coinage of the word κοινονημοσύνη properly belong'd. For so the Poet again (Sat. 4. v. 77.) uses the word *SENSUS*, speaking of those who without *Sense* of Manners, or common Society, without the least respect or deference to others, press rudely upon their Friends, and upon all Company in general, without regard to Time or Place, or any thing besides their selfish and brutish Humour: —Haud illud quaerentes, num sine *SENSU*, / Tempore num faciant alieno.—ἀναισθητῶς, as old *Lambin* interprets it, tho without any other Explanation; referring only to the *Sensus Communis* of *HORACE* in that other Satir. Thus *Seneca*, Epist. 105. *Odium autem ex offensa sic vitabis, neminem lacessendo gratuitò: à quo te SENSUS COMMUNIS tuebitur*. And *CICERO* accordingly, *Justitiae partes sunt, non violare homines: Verecundiae, non offendere*. Lib. 1. de Off. It may be objected possibly by some, particularly vers'd in the Philosophy above-mention'd, that the κοίνος νοὺς, to which the Κοινονημοσύνη seems to have relation, is of a different meaning. But they will consider withal how small the distinction was in that Philosophy, between the ὑπόληψις, and the vulgar αἰσθησις; how generally Passion was by those Philosophers brought under the Head of Opinion. And when they consider, besides this, the very Formation of the word Κοινονημοσύνη upon the Model of the other femaliz'd Virtues, the Εὐγνωμοσύνη, Σωφροσύνη, Δικαιοσύνη, &c. they will no longer hesitate on this Interpretation.—The Reader may perhaps by this Note see better why the Latin Title of *Sensus Communis* has been given to this second Treatise. He may observe, withal, how the same Poet *Juvenal* uses the word *Sensus*, in Sat. 15. *Haec nostri pars optima Sensūs*.

SHAFESBURY  
*Sensus communis (Characteristicks, ed. Uyl, 1.65 n.)*