

# MacIntyre's Transition into Modernity as Reflected in the Novels of Jane Austen and E.M. Forster

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Many brilliant and accomplished philosophers have graced the Western world during the last century but perhaps none with the comprehensive vision of Alasdair MacIntyre. With a vast knowledge not only of his field, but also history, sociology, theology and literature, MacIntyre provides a granular yet sweeping body of work that traces the rise and fall of the meaning of virtue from Greek times to the present day. His seminal book, *After Virtue*, suggests that an Enlightenment-originated philosophical shift resulted in modern societies that have largely lost the comprehension of morality as it had at one time been understood.<sup>1</sup> Mere fragments of a once-

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whole conceptual scheme survive which, he says, lack the contexts that gave them significance.<sup>2</sup> This transition was effected through the minds of Hume, Kant, Nietzsche and others who sought to develop their philosophies independent of teleology and metaphysics. Much of MacIntyre's work centers on three philosophical and moral standpoints, that of: Aristotle (primarily as interpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas), Morality (also identified as encyclopaedia), and expressivists (also called emotivists). Aspects of each, which he sees as the three key philosophies at work in modernity today, are explored in *After Virtue* then developed and broadened in his later books. But how did these philosophies descend from the ivory-tower realm to become established in the broader culture? How have these ideas been transformed into the language of story through literature?

Nietzsche recognized the influence of literature as a carrier of philosophical ideas, as did Diderot, Rousseau and Sartre; these and countless other philosophers have wielded its power. So clear to Plato was its influence that he suggested a good society required the state to censor "bad" material.<sup>3</sup> MacIntyre not only suggests that narrative is the stuff of human life, but he references many novelists in his works, including Jane Austen and E.M. Forster. The first he lauds as "the last great representative of the classical tradition of virtues,"<sup>4</sup> and the latter he quotes derisively. These two novelists come to our aid as we seek to understand MacIntyre's writings. In both Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Forster's *A Room with a View*, we find the story of a young woman torn between loving and marrying one of two men, with each love interest embodying positive and negative characteristics of the moral and philosophical positions of the authors. Remarkably, both protagonists correlate with the two versions—Neo-Aristotelian and expressivist—that MacIntyre presents as contrasting rational agents in his most recent book, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*. Comprehensively, these works trace a transition in the meanings of virtue and morality from a "virtue traditionalist" novelist in the early nineteenth century to an expressivist

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1 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), Prologue vi.

2 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Prologue vi.

3 Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (The Project Gutenberg EBook, Book II. August 27, 2008), [www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1497/1497-h/1497-h.htm).

4 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 243.

writer in the early twentieth. Forster's love of Austen illustrates an aspect of this movement, and elements of what MacIntyre calls *Morality*, the ethics of late modernity, are also woven into both stories. By examining *Mansfield Park* and *A Room with a View*, we see a parallel with MacIntyre's progression from an Aristotelian "whole" to the fragmented realms of *Morality* and expressivism, a study which not only reveals how these philosophies inhabit literature but also establishes the integrity and superiority of Austen's moral vision.

To comprehend adequately this deterioration, one must first understand the three philosophies MacIntyre addresses. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre suggests that we live in a new version of the dark ages, "a condition of which almost nobody recognizes and which perhaps nobody at all can recognize fully."<sup>5</sup> This bleak hypothesis is not his final word on the matter but instead an invitation for readers to journey with him through the history of philosophy and culture, coming gradually to understand how we have arrived at our modern predicament. What predicament is that? It is a time when expressions of morality exist as clashing opinions and rationally interminable disagreements; when the undergirding fabric of moral meaning has been lost. Moral precepts, says MacIntyre, "were once at home in, and intelligible in terms of, a context of practical beliefs and of supporting habits of thought, feeling, and action."<sup>6</sup> He describes this now-missing context as one in which moral judgements were governed by impersonal standards justified by a shared conception of the human good. In its place is a doctrine he calls emotivism, which says that "all evaluative judgements and more specifically all moral judgements are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character."<sup>7</sup> In other words, for emotivists, moral judgements can be neither true nor false and therefore can never have real rational justification. While MacIntyre primarily lays the responsibility for the loss of a common moral sensibility at the feet of Enlightenment thinkers, including Hume and Nietzsche, *After Virtue* pinpoints a time at the turn of the twentieth century when emotivism made a celebrated entrance. Its immediate progenitor, says MacIntyre, was G.E. Moore, who published his philosophical treatise,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 243.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, Prologue ix.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 11.

*Principia Ethica*, in 1903. Moore writes that he has “endeavoured to discover what are the fundamental principles of ethical reasoning,”<sup>8</sup> ultimately claiming to have been the first philosopher to solve the problems of ethics by attending to its precise questions. His accomplishment involved, among other things: determining that the idea of “good” is innate in the human person and cannot be explained; a firm belief that metaphysics can have no bearing at all on the question of, “What is good?”; and a conclusion that “personal affections and aesthetic enjoyments include *all* the greatest, and *by far* the greatest goods we can imagine.”<sup>9</sup> The last point, in fact, he calls “the ultimate and fundamental truth of Moral Philosophy.”<sup>10</sup> The emotivism that grew out of Moore’s ideas, which MacIntyre calls an earlier and less philosophically sophisticated form of expressivism,<sup>11</sup> today takes many forms. One of the most eye-opening of MacIntyre’s illustrations regarding “the good” points to the ideas of philosopher Harry Frankfurt, who suggests that “there can be no rationally warranted criteria for establishing anything as inherently important.”<sup>12</sup> What we should care about, Frankfurt says, depends only upon what we do care about, thus placing what we love or desire as man’s highest value.<sup>13</sup> This expressivist philosophy is contrasted in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* with “Morality,” which MacIntyre describes as the morality of advanced modernity.<sup>14</sup>

MacIntyre locates the roots of Morality in the “encyclopaedia” of late nineteenth century Scotland in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*.<sup>15</sup> One of the most notable aspects of encyclopaedia is the assumption of assent of all educated persons to a single conception of rationality seen as part of a history of inevitable progress (as judged by a standard that had emerged from that history). Morality, thus understood, MacIntyre says, “was a distinct and relatively autonomous area of beliefs, attitudes, and

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<sup>8</sup> G.E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2004), Preface.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 189.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 17.

<sup>12</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 45.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 138.

<sup>15</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry, Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition* (London: Duckworth, 1990), 27.

rule-following activity, ordered in accordance with a scheme of rigid compartmentalization of life.”<sup>16</sup> In this scheme, the moral was sharply distinguished from the aesthetic, religious, economic, legal and scientific.<sup>17</sup> It was primarily a matter of rule-following supported by negative prohibitions with strong notions of impropriety.<sup>18</sup> A prime example is the Victorian mindset.

While in *Morality* a single conception of rationality is presumed, such a presumption is false, making underlying conflict inevitable. In *Ethics in the Conflicts of Morality*, MacIntyre characterizes in *Morality* the “recognition of an inescapable tension between the requirements of what are taken by some to be unconditional and exceptionless moral rules and the requirement that we maximize well-being or happiness or some aspect of these.”<sup>19</sup> As in emotivism, there is no underlying teleology or impersonal grounding in these injunctions, but the proponent of *Morality* cannot see, and would never agree, to this characterization. Instead, MacIntyre says, the tension is dealt with by indefiniteness in commitment and oscillation. In contrast to these philosophies that spur interminable disagreements, MacIntyre presents an integrated alternative to the fragmentation of emotivism and *Morality*.

He proposes Aristotelian Thomism as a rational structure that once did—and can again—provide a unified answer to the universal question, “How shall we live?” Fundamental to the philosophy is a *telos*, or end, tied to the concept of human flourishing. Aristotle suggests that this flourishing is found when a person persists in moving toward a perfected human life consisting of the highest human good, which he calls *eudaimonia*, a state of well-being in man himself and in relation to the divine.<sup>20</sup> In this scheme, there is a truth about how one is to act particularly and how it is best in general to live our lives. This movement is not only relational but narrative, extending through one’s lifetime and indicating a unity of life. Through it, MacIntyre says, one becomes initiated into a variety of practices at home, at school or in the workplace, growing into a practical reasoner by learning how to use “good” and its cognates.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin. (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1999) 9.

Aristotle says "...the human good proves to be activity of the soul in accord with virtue, and indeed with the best and most complete virtue."<sup>21</sup> It is this comprehension of virtue that MacIntyre finds in the works of Jane Austen.

One of the most celebrated authors of the last millennia, Austen produced seven novels. Writing brilliant novels was not her foremost goal, however, says James Collins, author of "What Would Jane Do?", but it was instead providing moral instruction. And while morality looms large in the overarching themes of her novels, he notes that "even the smallest act or the briefest dialogue or the mere description of a character's manner of dress is freighted with moral content."<sup>22</sup> Viewed by MacIntyre as a writer who, like Aquinas, effectively unites the Christian and Aristotelian themes, it is this "that makes Jane Austen the last great effective imaginative voice of the tradition of thought about, and practice of, the virtues which I have tried to identify."<sup>23</sup> The daughter of an Anglican rector, Austen has a Christian viewpoint that, while never blatant, is woven throughout her works and unquestionably provides her grounding in the virtues. And while evidence of her authentic faith can be found in recorded comments and writings, morality is primarily her focus. Peter J. Leithart suggests in his book, *Miniatures & Morals: The Christian Novels of Jane Austen*, that what "most interests Austen about Christianity, however, is its public and institutional dimension, its role as a national 'teacher' of morals."<sup>24</sup> In no other novel is morality, seen as principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong, more evident than in *Mansfield Park*.

Austen, who published this third novel in 1814, did not live in an idyllic world untouched by the shifts of modernity. Around her churned the post-Enlightenment conflicts that MacIntyre describes, ones that consequently provide fodder for the book's moral tensions and the conflicts faced by Fanny Price, Austen's protagonist. In *Constancy & the Ethics of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park*, Joyce Kerr Tarpley explains that this "shift from absolute to relative truth, from laws of God to laws of the state

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>22</sup> James Collins, "What Would Jane Do?" *The Wall Street Journal*, November 14, 2009, [www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703683804574531863687486876](http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703683804574531863687486876).

<sup>23</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 240.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Leithart, *Miniatures & Morals: The Christian Novels of Jane Austen* (Moscow, ID: Cannon Press, 2004), 33.

of nature, from revelation to reason, and from an eternal to a temporal highest good (or end) describes the context of the modernity in which Fanny Price suffers, learns, and grows by developing constancy."<sup>25</sup> As Tarpley sees it, Fanny's constancy is largely comparable with Aristotle's cardinal virtue, *phronesis*, a wisdom relevant to practical action that implies good judgement and excellence of character and habits.

While the idea of constancy may sound appealing to some, Fanny is generally considered the Austen character people most love to hate. Austen's mother found her insipid.<sup>26</sup> And twentieth century literary critic Lionel Trilling suggested that *no one* had ever liked her because she is "overly virtuous and consciously virtuous."<sup>27</sup> In response, Aristotle might suggest to Mr. Trilling that virtue, seen as the sweet spot on a mean, admits no excess. But Fanny is not without admirers. Her greatest contemporary champion, in fact, may be Alasdair MacIntyre himself. While he does not deny that she is charmless, he counters that "she has only the virtues, the genuine virtues, to protect her."<sup>28</sup>

A wealthy family's poor relation, Fanny is brought through their charity to live at Mansfield Park when she is ten.<sup>29</sup> Extremely timid and shy but with a pretty countenance, Fanny is initially horribly unhappy and homesick.<sup>30</sup> Neglected by the family's parents and daughters and told by her insensitive aunt that it is "a wicked thing not to be happy,"<sup>31</sup> Fanny's only consolation is her kind and virtuous cousin, Edmund. A few years her senior, Edmund takes joy in encouraging Fanny. He sees her as clever and with a quick apprehension, good sense and "a fondness for reading that could be an education in itself."<sup>32</sup> In Fanny, one finds the development of an ordering and unity of the virtues. From whence this came is not specified, but Edmund, "recommended the books which charmed her leisure hours...encouraged her taste and corrected her

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<sup>25</sup> Joyce Kerr Tarpley, *Constancy & the Ethics of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>26</sup> "Opinions of Mansfield Park," [www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/opmansfp.html](http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/opmansfp.html).

<sup>27</sup> Lionel Trilling, *The Opposing Self: Nine Essays in Criticism* (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), 212.

<sup>28</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 242.

<sup>29</sup> Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid* 22.

judgement..."<sup>33</sup> Austen writes of Edmund's character that "his strong good sense and uprightness of mind—bid most fairly for utility, honour, and happiness to himself and all his connections."<sup>34</sup> The younger son of Fanny's uncle, Sir Thomas, Edmund is to be a clergyman.

The bulk of the novel takes place about seven years after her arrival at Mansfield Park when Fanny, humble and gentle, is coming of age and blossoming into a lovely and virtuous young woman. Besides her personal integrity, what most sets Fanny apart from the other characters in the book is her moral perceptiveness. Tarpley suggests that she has an "instinctive recognition and acceptance of a higher law."<sup>35</sup> The result is that Fanny has a keen eye for the immoral.

It is during this time when a charming young man, Henry Crawford, and his attractive sister, Mary, enter the neighborhood and become fixtures at Mansfield Park. Edmund has two sisters who, under the tutelage of their aunt, writes Austen, are entirely deficient in the less common acuirements of self-knowledge, generosity, and humility.<sup>36</sup> They were admirably taught, the author suggests, in everything but disposition.<sup>37</sup> The eldest, Maria, is engaged to a wealthy man she does not love, and Henry Crawford takes the opportunity to begin a passionate flirtation with her, for he finds the sisters to be "an amusement to his sated mind."<sup>38</sup> Austen writes that "had he been more in the habit of examining his own motives, and of reflecting to what the indulgence of his idle vanity was tending; but, thoughtless and selfish from prosperity and bad example, he would not look beyond the present moment."<sup>39</sup> The ever-observant Fanny watches their interactions with horror and comes to see Henry as superficial and corrupt.

In the meantime, Edmund reveals a growing fascination that turns into love for Henry's elegant and charming sister, Mary. Fanny, who secretly loves Edmund, watches Mary's behavior closely. What she, and initially Edmund, see reveals a lack of virtue and a tainted mind.<sup>40</sup> Though

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 21.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 248.



Mary seems to love Edmund, she belittles his occupation in the clergy, and in turn, the religion it represents.<sup>41</sup> In his infatuation, Fanny observes with distress, he no longer sees her faults and gives her merits that she does not have.

Ultimately, Henry Crawford jilts Maria, and falls passionately in love with Fanny, who does not requite his love. When she declines his offer of marriage, her principled uncle encourages her to accept Henry.<sup>42</sup> Out of respect and gratitude, she deeply wishes to honor any requests made by her uncle, but Fanny wisely and courageously refuses to ally herself with Henry. She in turn is sent to live with her poor and unrefined parents so that she may gain a better perspective.<sup>43</sup> When Fanny again puts off the impatient Henry, he leaves and ultimately meets up again with a now-married sister of Edmund, Maria. She runs off with him, exposing both of their true characters. In her response to the situation, the character of Henry's sister, Mary, is also revealed to Edmund, and he is done with her.

To Fanny's Christian moralist, Henry and Mary introduce what Austen most likely saw as the encroachment of a modern decline in moral qualities. MacIntyre, in fact, describes Henry as "the dissimulator *par excellence*."<sup>44</sup> But it is particularly with Mary's character that Austen contrasts Fanny. Of Mary, she writes: "Miss Crawford...was careless as a woman and as a friend;"<sup>45</sup> "...Miss Crawford, still shewn a mind led astray and bewildered, and without any suspicion of being so; darkened, yet fancying itself light;"<sup>46</sup> "She had only learnt to think nothing of consequence but money;"<sup>47</sup> "Her's are faults of principle...of blunted delicacy and a corrupted, vitiated mind."<sup>48</sup> Fanny is clearly hard on Mary, but the latter ultimately proves the heroine right. Tarpley notes the comparison of the two women, suggesting that "by representing with Fanny Price the growth and development of a Christian mind and (primarily) with Mary Crawford the secular mind with which it must

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 301.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 341.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 241.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 240.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 340.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 405.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 423.

contend in the modern world, Austen establishes the testing ground for the practice of virtue to be a mental one."<sup>49</sup> It is a battleground of minds, she says, in which truth, or reality, is at issue.<sup>50</sup> A parallel may once again be suggested to MacIntyre's depiction of the conflicts of modernity.

While Mary particularly embodies a form of expressivism, Fanny's uncle, Sir Thomas, exhibits aspects of Morality. He is authoritarian and rules-based. He demands right conduct but does not foster the development of virtues in his children. As the book concludes, he is found suffering, realizing that "he had sacrificed the right to the expedient, and been governed by motives of selfishness and worldly wisdom."<sup>51</sup> It is through such suffering and self-reflection that he grows into a better man.

In the midst of the cultural contention and in the Aristotelian tradition, Austen gives her characters a higher end. As MacIntyre says, "she turns away from the competing catalogues of the virtues of the eighteenth century and restores a teleological perspective."<sup>52</sup> For Fanny, it is in practicing the virtues as she moves toward this end that ultimately brings her the happiness she desires. Amanda Marie Kubric notes in her article, "Aristotelian Ethical Ideas in the Novels of Jane Austen," that "her heroines pursue and practice virtue not for its utility or because of its own reward but rather for the sake of attaining a kind of higher good, happiness, or fullness in life."<sup>53</sup> At last, of course, Edmund recognizes that he has his ideal wife in his virtuous and constant cousin, Fanny, and "with so much true merit and true love, and no want of fortune or friends, the happiness of the married cousins must appear as secure as earthly happiness can be."<sup>54</sup> Austen concludes not just with a happy ending for Fanny but also a reward for her moral choices.

MacIntyre implies that such a story presents a wholeness to a life. "The virtues and the harms and evils which the virtues alone will overcome," he says, "provide the structure both of a life in which the *telos*

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<sup>49</sup> Tarpley, *Constancy & the Ethics of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park*, 18.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 429.

<sup>52</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 240.

<sup>53</sup> Amanda Marie Kubric, "Aristotelian Ethical Ideas in the Novels of Jane Austen," *Persuasions*, Volume 36, No 1 (Winter 2015). [www.jasna.org/publications/persuasions-online/vol36no1/kubic/](http://www.jasna.org/publications/persuasions-online/vol36no1/kubic/).

<sup>54</sup> Austen, *Mansfield Park*, 439.

can be achieved and of a narrative in which the story of such a life can be unfolded.”<sup>55</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that Austen has found such an enduring popularity for more than 200 years, and so many have sought to make her their own.

In fact, other than Shakespeare and Jesus Christ Himself, there has perhaps been no storyteller whose work has been more coopted in the West than that of Jane Austen. She has been seen as radical, subversive, conservative, feminist, pious, religious, and genteel, and her works have been explored from political, economic, artistic, even homoerotic dimensions. But how has a nineteenth century virtue traditionalist survived the onslaught of modernity? E.M. Forster may provide the answer. In his 1924 article, “Jane, How Shall We Ever Recollect?”, Forster proudly (and surprisingly) announces, “I am a Jane Austenite, and therefore, slightly imbecile about Jane Austen.”<sup>56</sup> So how does he reconcile his emotivist mindset with that of Austen? By picking and choosing. “When the humor has been absorbed and cynicism and moral earnestness both discounted,” writes Forster, “something remains which is easily called Life...” Forster, it seems, picks up on a deeper realm of being, but doesn’t see its interplay with her moral sensibilities. Perhaps this is the modern solution. As James Collins notes, “The contemporary reader who loves Jane Austen sort of blips over the moralizing sections and tells himself that they don't really count.”<sup>57</sup> He says, however, that “ignoring a writer's central concern is a strange way to attempt to appreciate and understand her.”<sup>58</sup> Forster, in fact, replaces her Christian faith with the “personal relations” ideal of the *Principia Ethica*. He suggests in an article about her letters that “the accidents of birth and relationship were more sacred to her than anything else in the world, and she introduced this faith as the groundwork of her six great novels.”<sup>59</sup> Just as Forster picked the aspects of the “Jane” he preferred and applied them to his conception of virtue, the philosophers of the Enlightenment, MacIntyre suggests, did so with morality.

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<sup>55</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 243.

<sup>56</sup> E.M. Forster, “Jane, How Shall We Ever Recollect?” *The New Republic*, January 30, 1924. [www.newrepublic.com/article/113927/jane-shall-ever-recollect](http://www.newrepublic.com/article/113927/jane-shall-ever-recollect).

<sup>57</sup> Collins, “What Would Jane Do?”

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> E.M. Forster, “Then and Now, 1932,” *The Times Literary Supplement*, November 10, 1932. [www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/e-m-forster-jane-austen/](http://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/e-m-forster-jane-austen/).

Forster's history, in fact, traces to the epicenter of emotivist thought. Both *Principia Ethica's* author G.E. Moore and E.M. Forster were members of the small but highly influential Bloomsbury Group. The writer adopted from Moore a belief in the moral priorities of cultivating a sensitive sensibility, analyzing reflectively one's own state of mind and of paying utmost attention to personal relations, particularly his concept of truthfulness, themes that can be found coursing through his novel, *A Room with a View*.<sup>60</sup> Along with these philosophical positions came the idea of a liberation from traditional moral conventions and utilitarian rules of moral conduct.<sup>61</sup>

It was in this context that in 1908 Forster publishes *A Room with a View* and presents the world of Lucy Honeychurch. The book opens in an Italian pension when a conflict immediately arises. Her prim aunt, Charlotte, complains over dinner that she and Lucy were promised a view.<sup>62</sup> An older man, whom the aunt immediately identifies as lower class, responds that he and his son have a view and are pleased to trade rooms with them.<sup>63</sup> The man, a Mr. Emerson, is introduced as peculiar, a man who says exactly what he means.<sup>64</sup> Referencing him, a clergyman staying at the pension notes that "it is difficult to understand people who speak the truth."<sup>65</sup> It is in this way that Forster establishes Mr. Emerson as his "oracle." This socialist atheist and outspoken father of George appears occasionally to deposit pieces of wisdom that reflect the mission of Forster to bring to life the tenets of the *Principia Ethica*. Lucy early inclines toward what she views as his honesty, saying to Aunt Charlotte, that "he is not tactful: yet have you ever noticed that there are people who do things which are most indelicate, and yet at the same time...beautiful?"<sup>66</sup> It should be noted that her puzzled aunt then asks, "Are not beauty and delicacy the same?"<sup>67</sup> As one might suspect, this aunt does not fare well in Forster's story.

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<sup>60</sup> David Sidorsky, "The Uses of the Philosophy of G.E. Moore in the Works of E. M. Forster," *New Literary History*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 246.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 246.

<sup>62</sup> E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* (Overland Park, KS: Digireads.com Publishing, 2017), 3.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*.

Lucy is first introduced to the philosophy of Mr. Emerson while touring the church of Santa Croce. The elderly man, enthused by the subject of religion, tells Lucy that he has brought George up “free from all the superstition and ignorance that lead men to hate one another in the name of God.”<sup>68</sup> He asks that she try to understand his boy and “let herself go.”<sup>69</sup> “Pull out from the depths those thoughts that you do not understand and spread them out in the sunlight and know the meaning of them,” he suggests to the bewildered Lucy.<sup>70</sup> This piece of advice will be one of many that he shares with her.

Soon after, when Lucy has gone (scandalously) alone to an Italian piazza, a man is murdered in front of her.<sup>71</sup> George, who happens to be nearby, carries her to safety, and thus “something” happens between them.<sup>72</sup> Then, during a group outing, Lucy finds herself alone in a field of violets, and George approaches and kisses her.<sup>73</sup> Aunt Charlotte witnesses the affront and ascribes it to his being totally unrefined. The two women quickly depart for Rome.

There, Lucy encounters Cecil Vyse, whom Forster describes as medieval, like a gothic statue—well-educated, well-endowed and rich. Cecil determines that Lucy is like a woman of Leonardo da Vinci, whom, the author says, “we love not so much for herself as for the things that she will not tell us.”<sup>74</sup> He courts her until she at last agrees to marry him. Cecil is a man, says Forster, who wanted to feel that others, no matter who they were, agreed with him.<sup>75</sup> He is also portrayed as supercilious and vain. He comes to dislike many of her family’s friends and begins “wincing” whenever Mrs. Honeychurch speaks.<sup>76</sup> And he sees Lucy, his Leonardo, as a blank canvas on which he will create his masterpiece.

Cecil, it may be suggested, represents a form of Forster’s conception of the Victorian. In his article, “The Uses of the Philosophy of G.E. Moore in the Works of E.M. Forster,” David Sidorsky notes that one

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 96.

of Bloomsbury's higher values was its "rejection of Victorian transcendentalism in religion and absolutism in morals."<sup>77</sup> As noted previously, MacIntyre associates the Victorian ideals with his concept of Morality.<sup>78</sup> In microcosm, the Victorian contrasted with Edwardian Bloomsbury ideals loosely parallel Morality in conflict with emotivism, thus suggesting a corresponding similarity between Cecil and George, the latter whose emotivist ideals are articulated by his father.

Cecil, by coincidence, later encounters Mr. Emerson and his son, whom he does not know, at a London art gallery. He tells them about a cottage for rent near Windy Corner, Lucy's family home in England, to which she has now returned.<sup>79</sup> Soon George and his father move in, and when George befriends her brother, he visits their home and plays tennis with the younger family members.<sup>80</sup> As they are gathered, Cecil picks up a new book by a woman author who was staying at the pension in Italy and reads out the scene recounting the kiss in the violet field.<sup>81</sup> Lucy realizes that her Aunt Charlotte relayed the story to this woman and is stunned. George takes a private opportunity to kiss her again and express his love to her.<sup>82</sup> George describes Cecil as "only for society and cultivated talk" and says, "that he should know no one intimately, least of all a woman."<sup>83</sup> She asks George to leave and never return.

Later, though, using almost George's exact words, she breaks with Cecil. In despair, she plans a trip to Greece. As Lucy is set to leave, she stops by a clergyman's house, and realizing that he is still giving a sermon, she notes that the church "has lost its charm. And the things one never talked about—religion—was fading like all the other things."<sup>84</sup> At this point in the story, consistent with G.E. Moore's philosophy, Forster moves toward replacing Christian metaphysics with a secular "religion" of personal relations. When she is ushered into the clergyman's study to wait for him, she discovers Mr. Emerson by the fire, who says of George: "I taught him to trust in love... When love comes, that is reality. Passion does

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<sup>77</sup> Sidorsky, "The Uses of the Philosophy of G.E. Moore in the Works of E.M. Forster," 248.

<sup>78</sup> MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*, 27.

<sup>79</sup> Forster, *A Room with a View*, 83.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

not blind. No. Passion is sanity.”<sup>85</sup> The author and Mr. Emerson imply that Lucy has been deceiving herself all along about what she wants, about her passions.

Mr. Emerson’s last words to her, however, turn the tide. “For we fight for more than Love or Pleasure. There is Truth. Truth counts...”<sup>86</sup> Here we come to Forster’s pinnacle for Lucy and affirmation of Mr. Emerson as sage. “He had, she realized, shown her the holiness of direct desire,” writes Forster. “She sees in him the face of a saint who understood.”<sup>87</sup> Once again, the author uses Mr. Emerson to give voice his philosophies. Sidorsky writes that “Forster...like other members of the Bloomsbury group, read Moore’s ethical theory as a prophetic work toward the advancement of truthfulness in personal relationships.”<sup>88</sup> This truth may be understood in Lucy’s journey as her coming to see her deepest feelings and desires and then learning to follow them.

Lucy’s ultimate realization is that she must uncover and respond to her desire by gaining the man she loves.<sup>89</sup> She does gain George, and they marry. But, Forster writes, her decision had caused bitterness, and “...the Honeychurches had not forgiven them...she had alienated Windy Corner, perhaps for ever.”<sup>90</sup> Lucy united with him against her mother’s consent, and they lost their relationship with the clergyman. In the final scene, they are found in the window of their Italian pension, their union rejected by some that they loved, but happy together.

In *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, MacIntyre seeks to help the reader understand how expressivism and Neo-Aristotelianism play out in the human life by contrasting descriptions of two reflective agents. In describing the reflective expressivist, he portrays a woman who is motivated only insofar as her judgements afford expression to her sentiments, feelings, and attitudes.<sup>91</sup> It is through Lucy’s journey that she grows to become a reflection of this expressivist agent as she comes to learn to follow her desires.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 141.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 147.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Sidorsky, “The Uses of the Philosophy of G.E. Moore in the Works of E.M. Forster,” 260.

<sup>89</sup> Forster, *A Room with a View*, 147.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 148.

<sup>91</sup> MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 140.

In contrast, MacIntyre's Neo-Aristotelian reflective agent realizes that the quality of her reasoning relies on her distinguishing genuine from apparent goods.<sup>92</sup> Her ability to differentiate these, MacIntyre says, is a matter of her "moral and intellectual qualities...virtues and vices."<sup>93</sup> Ultimately, he suggests that what she becomes will be closely related to her being a good human being.<sup>94</sup>

It may seem self-evident, but the conclusion of both novels—Lucy with satisfied desires, but in a union rejected by family, and Fanny with her virtues and her love but surrounded by a warm and caring community—offers some hint of the fragmentation of emotivism versus the wholeness of MacIntyre's Aristotelian Thomism. Ultimately, Austen and MacIntyre are on the same page. Each is contrasting the goods of virtue depicted in a teleological structure with the incomplete and faulty philosophies of the modern world that lack a moral unity. To explore these novels and their characters provides a close parallel to MacIntyre's thesis regarding our transition into modernity.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 190.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.



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