

Concepts Related to Physical, Mental and Emotional Conditions

Temper (Disposition, Nature)

People are born with a certain temperament. One may be naturally good-tempered (good-natured), in which case one deserves no credit for it, or naturally ill-tempered (ill-natured), in which case one must struggle to regulate it.

Humour

The word may be used as another synonym for “nature” (“an ill-humoured woman”), but also refers to what we would call “mood”—one can be normally good-natured but be “in an ill humour” on a particular day.

Faculties and Senses

Temperament is often associated with a particular faculty (ability): Imagination is identified with the Sanguine-Melancholy line and Calculation is identified with the Choleric-Phlegmatic line. Disorders in these faculties are associated with out-of-balance temperaments. Most faculties are independent of temperament (intelligence, wit, penetration, sensibility, judgment, reasoning, etc.), but there will always be supportive or disturbing interactions between them. The senses are the means of perception; accurate perception gives the faculties the information needed to make appropriate judgments and decisions.

Constitution

One is born with certain physical strengths and weaknesses (a tendency towards sickness or health, a tendency to under or over produce a particular “humour,” a tendency to low or high spirits, etc.). One’s constitution is easily thrown out of balance, with illness as an almost inevitable result. One cannot change one’s constitution, but one must do everything under one’s control to support health and prevent imbalances: good diet, rest, exercise, etc.

Spirits

“Spirits,” in the physiological sense, are actual fluids (volatile, like vodka or gin): (1) “natural spirits” are derived from food by the liver; they provide the energy for the maintenance and growth of the body (vegetative functions); (2) the natural spirits are refined by the heart to “vital spirits”; they provide the impetus for physiological movement (muscle contraction, digestion, etc.); (3) the vital spirits are further refined by the brain to “animal spirits”; they connect the mind and emotions to the body, allowing for the physical expression of our thoughts (speech), emotions (facial expressions, laughter, tears, etc.) and sensations (reflexes)

Situation/Circumstance(s)

“Situation” is what we might call “the environment”—our physical location, the people around us, our socioeconomic status, education, experiences, information, etc. Because one may not have a great deal of control over one’s situation, some of the consequent impacts on one may be inevitable.

Case Notes

Temperament

MP

Mrs. Norris is easily irritated and angered (when she finds out that Mrs. Price has had another child, when she finds out that the Grants eat better than she and Mr. Norris did, when Edmund arranges to include Fanny in the Sotherton excursion). She also has a very sharp tongue.

(I, 4) “. . . Mrs. Norris in promoting gaieties for her nieces, assisting their toilettes, displaying their accomplishments, and looking about for their future husbands, had so much to do as, in addition to all her own household cares, some interference in those of her sister, and Mrs. Grant’s wasteful doings to overlook, left her very little occasion to be occupied even in fears for the absent.”

(I, 1) “Had there been a family to provide for, Mrs Norris might never have saved her money; but having no care of that kind, there was nothing to impede her frugality, or lessen the comfort of making a yearly addition to an income which they had never lived up to. Under this infatuating principle, counteracted by no real affection for her sister, it was impossible for her to aim at more than the credit of projecting and arranging so expensive a charity; though perhaps she might so little know herself, as to walk home to the Parsonage . . . in the happy belief of being the most liberal-minded sister and aunt in the world.”

Analysis: Mrs. Norris has a classic choleric temperament (which is out of control). In addition to being irritable and angry, she is also activity and prudence run mad. Her temperament is so far out of balance that she cannot exercise the imagination needed to have insights into herself or empathy for others.

Lady Bertram is indolent to the point of inertness (I, 2) and has very low-Wattage emotions (III, 13). She also greatly dislikes change and fuss.

(I, 3) “Lady Bertram did not at all like her husband to leave her; but she was not disturbed by any alarm for his safety, or solicitude for his comfort, being one of those persons who think nothing can be dangerous, or difficult, or fatiguing to any body but themselves.” (III, 13) “The sufferings which Lady Bertram did not see, had little power over her fancy.”

Analysis: Lady Bertram has a classic phlegmatic temperament (which is out of control). She is not only almost completely inactive and disengaged, but also incapable of sympathetic imagination.

P

(II, 5) “. . . here [in **Mrs. Smith**] was that elasticity of mind, that disposition to be comforted, that power of turning readily from evil to good, and of finding employment which carried her out of herself, which was from Nature alone.”

Analysis: Mrs. Smith is fortunate in having a temperament and faculties that naturally tend toward balance. She can adapt well to changes in her situation, thus suffering less from stress.

(I, 11) **Capt. Benwick**'s "disposition [is] of the sort that must suffer heavily [as a result of his loss], uniting very strong feelings with quiet, serious, and retiring manners, and a decided taste for reading and sedentary pursuits."

Analysis: Benwick has a temperamental inclination to melancholia, aggravated by the reading of Romantic poetry. Anne "prescribes" reading that takes him out of himself and strengthens his endurance.

NA

(I, 2) "[**Catherine**'s] heart was affectionate, her disposition cheerful and open, without deceit or affectation of any kind."

(II, 15) "Catherine's disposition was not naturally sedentary, nor had her habits been ever very industrious; but whatever might hitherto have been her defects of that sort, her mother could not but perceive them now to be greatly increased. She could neither sit still, nor employ herself for ten minutes together, walking around the garden and orchard again and again, as if nothing but motion was voluntary; and it seemed as if she could even walk about the house rather than remain fixed for any time in the parlour. Her loss of spirits was a yet greater alteration. In her rambling and her idleness she might only be a caricature of herself; but in her silence and sadness she was the very reverse of all that she had been before."

Analysis: Though naturally of a sanguine temperament, after her return home Catherine exhibits the classic symptoms of melancholia. Her mother also attempts the "prose non-fiction cure."

Constitution

NA

(I, 1) "[**Mrs. Morland**] was a woman of useful plain sense, with a good temper, and, what is more remarkable, with a good constitution. She had three sons before Catherine was born; and instead of dying in bringing the latter into the world, as any body might expect, she still lived on—lived to have six children more—to see them growing up around her, and to enjoy excellent health herself."

Analysis: Catherine "comes from good stock." Not only does she have a strong, healthy constitution herself, but she is likely to keep it through her childbearing years, as her mother has, and her children are likely to be strong and healthy, too.

Spirits

P&P

(I, 9) "**Lydia** was a stout, well-grown girl of fifteen, with a fine complexion and a good-humoured countenance . . . She had high animal spirits, and a sort of natural consequence, which the attentions of the officers . . . had increased into assurance."

Analysis: Lydia is well endowed with natural spirits (she is thriving physically), vital spirits (she is healthy), and animal spirits (she is not shy about speaking (and acting) out): (II, 18) "The rapture of Lydia on this occasion . . . [is] scarcely to be described . . . Lydia flew about the house in restless ecstasy, calling for everyone's congratulations, and laughing and talking with more violence than ever."

Injury

P

(I, 7) **Little Charles Musgrove** sustains a bad fall. An apothecary is sent for.

Diagnosis: His collarbone is dislocated and his back is injured.

Treatment: The apothecary repositions the collarbone and recommends careful nursing.

Implications: Mary's inability and/or unwillingness to devote the attention needed to ensure the best outcome for her child could have lasting consequences.

(I, 12) **Louisa** defies the laws of physics and lands on her head after jumping off the high part of the new Cobb. "There was no wound, no blood, no visible bruise; but her eyes were closed, she breathed not, her face was like death." A surgeon is summoned and she is carried back to the Harvilles' lodgings. "Louisa's limbs had escaped. There was no injury but to the head." (If she had broken a bone, the consequences could have been much more severe—a compound fracture meant almost certain infection (typically gangrene), leading to amputation and/or death.)

Diagnosis: Concussion and shock.

Treatment: Careful nursing while everyone waits around until she wakes up. The surgeon cannot do anything at all to speed her recovery.

Implications: In her recovery, Louisa experiences increasingly long intervals of consciousness (II, 1) and then a kind of nervous instability and weakness (II, 2 and 10)). Her behavior has led to presumably permanent physical debility. It's a miracle that she didn't die on the spot.

Illness

E

(II, 1) "**Jane** caught a bad cold . . . so long ago as the 7th of November, . . . and has never been well since. A long time, is not it, for a cold to hang upon her? . . . she is so far from well, that her kind friends the Campbells think she had better come home, and try an air that always agrees with her; and they have no doubt that three or four months at Highbury will entirely cure her . . . it is certainly a great deal better that she should come here . . . Nobody could nurse her, as we should do."

Diagnosis: A bad cold, persisting because of a tendency towards upper respiratory tract illnesses (a phlegmatic constitution).

Treatment: Get out of town and breathe country air (and her own country, at that).

Implications: Jane's habitual pallor and occasional fatigue suggest a consumptive tendency. Her "low" spirits and physical condition require raising and support. Mrs. and Miss Bates believe that they can give her this kind of careful attention and nursing.

(I, 13) "[**Harriet**] had gone home so much indisposed with a cold, that, but for her own earnest wish of being nursed by Mrs. Goddard, Emma could not have allowed her to leave the house. . . . She was very feverish and had a bad sore-throat . . . Emma was just describing the nature of her friend's complaint;--'a throat very much inflamed, with a great deal of heat about her, a quick low pulse, &c. and she was sorry to find from Mrs. Goddard that Harriet was liable to very bad sore-throats, and had often alarmed her with them.' Mr. Elton . . . exclaimed, 'A sore-throat!—I hope not infectious. I hope not of a putrid infectious sort.'"

Diagnosis: Inflammation of the throat, possibly of an infectious (putrid, morbid) tendency.

Treatment: Bed rest and nursing (possibly "lowering" measures such as bleeding and purging).

Implications: Recurrent illnesses imply a constitutional weakness; she needs to take extra precautions to protect herself (no sitting outside in cold weather or walking in wet grass).

MP

(III, 13) “**Tom** had gone from London with a party of young men to Newmarket, where a neglected fall, and a good deal of drinking, had brought on a fever; and when the party broke up, being unable to move, had been left by himself at the house of one of these young men, to the comforts of sickness and solitude, and the attendance only of servants.”

Diagnosis: Fever as a result of a post hoc fallacy.

Treatment: Unwanted isolation and lack of nursing.

“Instead of being soon well enough to follow his friends, as he had then hoped, his disorder increased considerably.”

Diagnosis: Uncontrolled inflammation resulting from neglect (no helpful “lowering”).

Treatment: Continued neglect.

“Tom’s extreme impatience to be removed to Mansfield . . . had probably induced his being conveyed thither too early, as a return of fever came on, and for a week he was in a more alarming state than ever.”

Diagnosis: Relapse of fever due to exertion.

Treatment: Supportive care and nursing (mostly by Edmund).

“At about the week’s end from his return to Mansfield, Tom’s immediate danger was over, and he was so far pronounced safe as to make his mother perfectly easy;” however, the physician was concerned about “some strong hectic symptoms which seemed to seize the frame on the departure of the fever. . . . [Edmund and Sir Thomas] were apprehensive for his lungs.”

p. 430 “. . . there was also . . . nerves much affected, spirits much depressed to calm and raise.” Tom experiences a great deal of “irritation and feebleness.”

Diagnosis: Possible consumptive tendency (fast, weak pulse, “slow” fever, pallor, weakness, restlessness).

Treatment: “Raising” now required.

(III, 17) “[Tom] was the better for ever for his illness. He had suffered, and he had learnt to think, two advantages that he had never known before He became what he ought to be, useful to his father, steady and quiet, and not merely living for himself.”

Implications: Tom has developed self-control (he can regulate his temperament and take proper care of himself).

P

(II, 6) “[The Crofts] come [to Bath] on **the Admiral’s** account.”

Diagnosis: “He is thought to be gouty.”

Treatment: Most likely the “water cure”: Drink the water. Sit in the water. Wrap the body in sheets soaked with the water. “He was ordered to walk, to keep off the gout.”

Implications: The Admiral is following the recommendations of his physician, but he is not going to extremes or even worrying excessively about his condition. He is a sensible man, and Mrs. Croft is doing everything that she can to support him

(II, 5) **Mrs. Smith** “had been afflicted with a severe rheumatic fever, which finally settling in her legs, had made her for the present a cripple. She had come to Bath on that account, and was now in lodgings near the hot baths.”

P&P

(I, 7) “I [**Jane**] find myself very unwell this morning, which, I suppose, is to be imputed to my getting wet through yesterday excepting a sore throat and head-ache there is not much the matter with me.’ . . . Miss Bennet had slept ill, and though up, was very feverish and not well enough to leave her room.”

Diagnosis: A bad cold resulting from exposure to cold and damp.

Treatment: Attentive nursing.

(I, 7) “Mr. Bennet [said,] . . . ‘if your daughter should have a dangerous fit of illness, if she should die, it would be a comfort to know that it was all in pursuit of Mr. Bingley, and under your orders.’ “Oh, I am not afraid of her dying. People do not die of little trifling colds.””

Analysis: Yes, they do, especially if they are left to the mercy of the Bingley sisters for nursing. Mr. Darcy’s later praise of Elizabeth for her attentiveness to her sister here is well deserved; willingly taking on the risks and labor involved with nursing is a mark of a loving nature and a sign of good character. In contrast, Mrs. Bennet can be blamed for putting Jane in danger, and Mr. Bennet should be blamed for making a joke out of that danger.

NA

(II, 9) “My mother’s [**Mrs. Tilney**’s] illness,” [Henry] continued, “the seizure which ended in her death *was* sudden. The malady itself, one from which she had often suffered, a bilious fever—its cause therefore constitutional. On the third day, in short as soon as she could be prevailed on, a physician attended her, a very respectable man, and one in whom she had always placed great confidence. Upon his opinion of her danger, two others were called in the next day, and remained in almost constant attendance for four-and twenty hours. On the fifth day she died.”

Diagnosis: Fever arising from a constitutional tendency to biliousness.

Treatment: Most likely bleeding (“lowers” the fever) and purging (removes the “excess” bile).

Implications: Her family members and physicians did everything that they could; unfortunately, some of us are afflicted with weak or sickness-prone constitutions, which we can do nothing about. (Since her medical attendants very likely contributed to (if they were not actually responsible for) her death, ensuring that everything was done may not have been the wisest move for General and Henry Tilney.)

S&S

(I, 16) “[**Marianne**’s] eyes were red and swollen She avoided the looks of them all, could neither eat nor speak, and after some time, . . . she burst into tears and left the room. This violent oppression of spirits continued the whole evening. She was without any power, because she was without any desire of command over herself.”

(II, 7) “[Elinor] reached [Marianne] just in time to prevent her from falling on the floor, faint and giddy from a long want of proper rest and food; for it was many days since she had any appetite, and many nights since she had really slept; and now, when her mind was no longer supported by the fever of suspense, the consequence of all this was felt in an aching head, a weakened stomach, and a general nervous faintness. A glass of wine . . . made her more comfortable ‘Exert yourself, dear Marianne,’ [Elinor] cried, ‘if you will not kill yourself and all who love you. . . .’ ‘I cannot, I cannot,’ cried Marianne.”

(III, 6) “In such moments of precious, of invaluable misery, [Marianne] rejoiced in tears of agony to be at Cleveland; and . . . she resolved to spend almost every hour of every day . . . in the indulgence of such solitary rambles. . . . Two delightful twilight walks on the third and fourth evenings of her being there . . . especially . . . where there was something more of wildness than in the rest, where the trees were oldest, and the grass was the longest and wettest, had—assisted by the still greater imprudence of sitting in her wet shoes and stockings—given Marianne a cold so violent, as, though for a day or two trifled with or denied, would force itself by increasing ailments, on the concern of every body Though heavy and feverish, with a pain in her limbs, a cough, and a sore throat, a good night’s rest was to cure her entirely.”

(III, 7) On the seventh day after her arrival, the apothecary, Mr. Harris, is sent for. He diagnoses “her disorder to have a putrid tendency” and mentions “infection.” Mrs. Palmer reacts rationally for once and immediately leaves with her baby. Marianne also pushes herself into a downward spiral: “the idea of what tomorrow would have produced, but for this unlucky illness [their journey home], made every ailment more severe.” For three more days Marianne continues much the same; then, on the following morning, Mr. Harris declares her “materially better. Her pulse was much stronger, and every symptom more favourable than on the preceding visit.”

“Towards the evening, Marianne became ill again, growing more heavy, restless, and uncomfortable than before.” Elinor “carefully administer[s] the cordials prescribed” and watches Marianne sink into a heavy slumber. Marianne then becomes delirious, with a faster and weaker pulse. Mr. Harris “would not allow the danger to be material, and talked of the relief which a fresh mode of treatment must procure.” When he returns later, he sees that “[h]is medicines had failed;--the fever was unabated; and Marianne only more quiet—not more herself—remained in an heavy stupor. . . . He judged [further advice] unnecessary; he still had something more to try, some fresh application, of whose success he was almost as confident as the last. . . . Mrs. Jennings . . . scrupled not to attribute the severity and danger of this attack, to the many weeks of previous indisposition which Marianne’s disappointment had brought on.”

At about noon, however Marianne begins to improve: her pulse strengthens, her breathing steadies, her normal skin tone returns, etc. “Marianne was in every respect materially better, and [Mr. Harris] declared her entirely out of danger.”

(III, 10) “When the weather is settled, and I have recovered my strength,” said [Marianne], “we will take long walks together every day. . . . I mean never to be later rising than six, and from that time till dinner I shall divide every moment between music and reading. I have formed my plan, and am determined to enter on a course of serious study. . . . By reading only six hours a-day, I shall gain in the course of a twelvemonth a great deal of instruction which I now feel myself to want.”

“My illness has made me think I considered the past I saw that my own feelings had prepared my sufferings, and that my want of fortitude under them had almost led me to the grave. My illness, I well knew, had been entirely brought on by myself, by such negligence of my own health, as I had felt even at the time to be wrong. Had I died,--It would have been self-destruction.”

Pregnancy and Childbirth (or “It’s a Natural Process—What Could Go Wrong?”)

P (II, 3) “And there was a **Mrs. Wallis**, at present known only to them by description, as she was in daily expectation of her confinement.” She is nursed by Mrs. Rooke.

E (III, 17) “**Mrs. Weston**’s friends were all made happy by her safety.”

S&S (II, 9) “[Willoughby] had left the girl whose youth and innocence he had seduced, in a situation of the utmost distress, with no creditable home, no help, no friends, ignorant of his address! He had left her promising to return; he neither returned, nor wrote, nor relieved her.”

Mrs. Palmer travels from Cleveland to London a couple of months before the birth of her child.

Means of Preventing Illness and Maintaining Health

E

(I, 2) “[Mr. Woodhouse’s] own stomach could bear nothing rich, and he could never believe other people to be different from himself. What was unwholesome to him, he regarded as unfit for any body.” Ergo, wedding cake is a kind of WMD.

(I, 3) “Such another small basin of thin gruel as his own, was all that he could, with thorough self-approbation, recommend [to his guests], though he might constrain himself. . . to say, ‘Mrs. Bates, let me propose your venturing on one of these eggs. An egg boiled very soft is not unwholesome. . . . Miss Bates, let Emma help you to a *little* bit of tart—a *very* little bit. Ours are all apple tarts. You need not be afraid of unwholesome preserves here. I do not advise the custard. Mrs. Goddard, what say you to *half* a glass of wine? A *small* half glass—put into a tumbler of water? I do not think it could disagree with you.” Elements of a balanced (and balancing) diet: bland, easily digested protein and carbohydrates, low in fat and sugar and high in fiber, but adequate to support the “spirits”, with very little “raising” alcohol.

(II, 3) “Emma thinks of sending them a loin or a leg; it is very small and delicate . . . but still it is pork—and . . . unless one could be sure of their making it into steaks, nicely fried . . . without the smallest grease, and not roast it, for no stomach can bear roast pork—I think we had better send the leg; and then, if it is not oversalted, and it is very thoroughly boiled . . . and eaten very moderately of, with a boiled turnip, and a little carrot or parsnip, I do not consider it unwholesome.” The healthy diet is also low in salt, with limited amounts of lean, non-red meats and lots of boiling to make the food easily digested.

(I, 6) “But it is never safe to sit out of doors, my dear.” (II, 11) “[A] very bad plan A room at an inn is always damp and dangerous; never properly aired or fit to be inhabited.” (III, 6) “Mr. Knightley had another reason for avoiding a table in the shade. He wished to persuade Mr. Woodhouse . . . to join the party; and he knew that to have any of them sitting down out of doors to eat would inevitably make him ill.” Cold (indoors or outside), wind and drafts, and dampness or a musty smell (indicators of decay) can all cause illness. Bad air (miasma) is also unhealthy.

(I, 2) “[Mr. Woodhouse’s] horror of late hours and large dinner-parties made him unfit for any acquaintance, but such as would visit him on his own terms.” Regular hours and habits help the constitution achieve, maintain, or return to balance.

Indicators of Health (or “Why on Earth Is Miss Bingley Talking about Elizabeth’s Teeth?)

“Plumpness” means adequate nutrition and well-supported “spirits.”

A “brilliant (pink-cheeked) complexion” means a well-balanced constitution (skin tone indicates the levels of the different humours in the body; a face that is red all over would be indicating a too-high production of blood, but pink cheeks show just the right amount of the best humour to dominate a constitution).

Graceful posture and motion indicates the appropriate level of “animal spirits.”

Good (a full set of reasonably even), well cared for (not discolored or rotting) teeth were a requirement for a long, healthy life. Without them, one could not eat a balanced, nutritious diet (without boiling everything to death). Decaying teeth and inflamed gums are also direct risks to one’s health: without antibiotics available, any inflammation or infection could spread and cause a serious illness, disability or death. Decaying teeth also cause horrible bad breath (not something one wants in a companion). For the vast majority of people, a visible cavity, an abscess, or a severe toothache meant having the tooth pulled. Broken teeth resulting from falls and other injuries also required pulling.

E (III, 16) “There was a tooth amiss. **Harriet** really wished, and had wished some time, to consult a dentist. Mrs. John Knightley was delighted to be of use; any thing of ill health was a recommendation to her—and though not so fond of a dentist as of a Mr. Wingfield, she was quite eager to have Harriet under her care.” Unless it is a wisdom tooth (quite likely given her age), Harriet could be facing further tooth loss or additional health problems.

P&P (III, 3) “How very ill **Eliza Bennet** looks this morning . . . I never in my life saw any one so much altered as she is since the winter. She is grown so brown and coarse! . . . For my own part . . . I never could see any beauty in her. Her face is too thin; her complexion has no brilliancy . . . Her teeth are tolerable, but not out of the common way.” “Ill” in this comment of Miss Bingley’s does not necessarily mean “sick” (“ugly” is a more likely meaning), but these criticisms all suggest something less than sound health, possibly including a “bad disposition.”

A well-balanced temperament supported good health. The balance points for the four classical humours were indicated by (1) cheerfulness, (2) contentment, (3) tenderness, and (4) activity. A balanced temperament was also required for appropriately directed imagination and prudence.

Understanding Character(s)

In Austen’s works, even simple characters are complicated. However, the specific language and traditional features of the classical temperaments used in character descriptions work as a kind of shorthand, to expand our understanding of the character and give insights into both their behavior and the behavior of other characters towards them.

S&S (II, 12) “**Mrs. Ferrars** was a little, thin woman, upright even to formality in her figure, and serious, even to sourness in her aspect. Her complexion was sallow; and her features . . . naturally without expression . . . she eyed [Miss Dashwood] with the spirited determination of disliking her at all events.” All of Mrs. Ferrars’ behavior is consistent with that of a person with an unregulated choleric (bilious) temperament (controlling, angry, irritable, etc.).

(I, 19) **Mrs. Dashwood** says to **Edward**: “Come, come; this is all an effusion of immediate want of spirits, Edward. You are in a melancholy humour, and fancy that any one unlike yourself must be happy. But remember that the pain of parting from friends will be felt by every body at times, whatever be their education or state. Know your own happiness. You want nothing but patience—or give it a more fascinating name, call it hope. Your mother will secure to you, in time, that independence you are so anxious for.” Mrs. Dashwood is attempting to “raise” Edward from a melancholy mood and correct his distorted imaginings. She prescribes balancing qualities from the phlegmatic and sanguine temperaments. Edward desires an independence so that he may engage in an *occupation*, an sign that he possesses the important positive qualities of the choleric temperament; however, he does not exhibit the extreme qualities that his mother does. Mrs. Dashwood is also showing her own overly sanguine temperament, with her too hopeful imaginings.

M Fanny has a naturally low degree of “animal spirits”: she is shy and introverted; “. . . [she] cannot act.” She does not easily express herself: “Had she ever given way to bursts of delight, it must have been then, for she was delighted, but her happiness was of a quiet, deep, heart-swelling sort; and though never a great talker, she was always more inclined to silence when feeling most strongly.”

Fanny has a somewhat weak constitution: she may be prone to sickness but is not actually sickly. She suffers from the heat, gets headaches, and is easily fatigued. Fanny also has sensitive (“refined”) nerves: she is easily startled, alarmed, and frightened, and “[t]he living in incessant noise was to a frame and temper, delicate and nervous like Fanny’s, . . . the greatest misery of all.”

Fanny usually interprets what is happening around her in a very pessimistic way. It is Fanny’s imagination, however, that makes it possible for her to understand herself and those who are very different from her: “. . . it was at least a fortnight before she began to understand a disposition so totally different from her own. . . . Fanny soon became more disposed to admire the natural light of the mind which could so early distinguish justly . . . [Fanny], while seeing all the obligation and expediency of submission and forbearance, saw also with sympathetic acuteness of feeling, all that must be hourly grating to a girl like Susan.”

Knowing what Fanny must struggle against, given a strong tendency to melancholy and “lowness,” one can recognize her real heroism in speaking out, standing her ground, and laboring to accept the loss of Edmund. We also have additional evidence (as though we needed it) of the evils that someone like **Mrs. Norris** can produce: by denying Fanny a fire in the former schoolroom that she sits in every day, Mrs. Norris may literally be endangering her life. Mr. Woodhouse would faint in horror if he knew of it.

P&P (III, 16) **Darcy** says to Elizabeth: “I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle. As a child . . . I was not taught to correct my temper. I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit.”

What is Darcy’s “natural” temper? What does his previous behavior show that he needs to struggle against? What does he need to do to “correct” the temperamental flaws that he identifies?

E (I, 1) “The evil of the actual disparity in their ages (and **Mr. Woodhouse** had not married early) was much increased by his constitution and habits; for having been a valetudinarian all his life, without activity of mind or body, he was a much older man in ways than in years; and though everywhere beloved for the friendliness of his heart and his amiable temper, his talents could not have recommended him at any time. . . . His spirits required support. He was a nervous man, easily depressed; . . . hating change of every kind.”

What is Mr. Woodhouse’s “natural” temper? How do his constitution and health impact his mood and behavior? [Bonus question: Is he really sick?]

E (I, 11) “**Mr. John Knightley** was a tall gentleman-like, and very clever man; rising in his profession, domestic and respectable in his private character; but with reserved manners which prevented his being generally pleasing; and capable of being sometimes out of humour. He was not an ill-tempered man, not so often unreasonably cross as to deserve such a reproach; but his temper was not his great perfection. . . . and he could sometimes act an ungracious, or say a severe thing. . . . [His manners] were only those of a calmly kind brother and friend, without praise and without blindness Mr. Woodhouse’s peculiarities and fidgettiness were sometimes provoking him to a rational remonstrance or sharp retort equally ill-bestowed.”

What is Mr. John Knightley’s “natural” temper? Why does he not always get along with Mr. Woodhouse? This description of Mr. John Knightly is given from Emma’s point of view—might it contain an ironic comment on Emma’s judgment of and expectations about others?

In this same passage, **Isabella** is said to be of an extremely sweet temper, “which must hurt his” by (presumably) not correcting it, especially by not making him more tolerant of Mr. Woodhouse’s behavior. But does Isabella always exhibit the soothing manners that her father requires? Is it reasonable to think that his temper can be “corrected” by his wife’s being nastier to him? What does a (realistically) well-regulated temperament look like?