# LAURENCE STERNE'S ETHIC OF HAPPINESS:

# AS EXEMPLIFIED IN HIS SERMONS, IN *TRISTRAM SHANDY* AND IN EARLY STERNEANA

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## ABSTRACT

In a period where the eighteenth-century ethical worldview represented radically different and incompatible ways of conceiving of happiness in one and the same perspective, this thesis examines the key role played by the writing of Laurence Sterne in understanding happiness as it evolved from the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism, to the subjectivist, psychological concept of happiness advocated by Enlightenment philosophers. It demonstrates how enquires into the nature of happiness, and how to attain it, form a cornerstone of Sterne's sermons, a prominent theme in his novel *Tristram Shandy* and a preoccupation in much Sterneana. Its central argument is that, unlike most of his contemporaries, Sterne grasped the flawed logic and the worrying implications of the century's new subjectivist ethical impulse which became a defining characteristic of the Enlightenment. It examines how Sterne elaborates happiness within the framework of Christian *eudaemonism* in his sermons and articulates the ethical shortcomings of its rival, subjectivist concept of happiness. It examines how Sterne interrogates the new subjectivist happiness in *Tristram Shandy* and argues that he ultimately reconciles happiness and virtue by accommodating the subjectivist concept of happiness within the moral framework of Christian *eudaemonism.* It examines how Sterne refutes the notion that hedonism can be verified as an ethical principle, and that experiential happiness can ever be a criterion for guiding our actions. The novel's joyful portrayal of its characters' hobby-horsical pursuits means that the entelechy which gives the novel its ethical direction can, at times, appear ambiguous. In its examination of Sterneana, this thesis demonstrates that the two ways of conceptualizing happiness, (the subjectivist and the ethical) are often played out in the social and sexual sphere. The scribblers censure what they perceive to be the immoral and irreligious conduct of Sterne and his fictional creations or, alternatively, embrace him as a fellow rake, hedonist or sexual libertine. By utilizing parody, satire and the signifiers of erotica, the scribbling fraternity connect Sterne, and his alter-egos Yorick and Tristram, to a larger pattern of clerical and sexual misconduct. Sterneana also employ various iterations of the narrative of seduction in order to articulate conflicts that arise, not from the sum of shared values or a shared definition of happiness but conflicts arising from unshared values, unshared conceptions of happiness and therefore unshared ends.

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

For Sterne citations, unless another edition is specified, the Florida Edition is used. References to the first two volumes of the Florida Edition, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman: The Text*, are presented in-text, and references to other volumes are presented in footnotes, using the following abbreviations plus page number(s):

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|---|---|
| *TS* | *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman: The Text*. Edited by Melvyn New and Joan New. Vols. 1 & 2. The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1978.<br>(Sterne's original volume and chapter, followed by Florida Edition page numbers) |
| *TSN* | *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman: The Notes*. Edited by Melvyn New, Richard A. Davies, and W.G. Day. Vol. 3. The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1984.<br>(Florida Edition page numbers only) |
| *Sermons* | *The Sermons of Laurence Sterne: The Text*. Edited by Melvyn New. Vol. 4. The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996.<br>(Florida Edition sermon number, followed by Florida Edition page numbers) |
| *SN* | *The Sermons of Laurence Sterne: The Notes*. Edited by Melvyn New and Joan New. Vol. 5. The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996.<br>(Florida Edition page numbers only) |
| *Letters* | *The Letters of Laurence Sterne: Part One, 1739-1764*. Edited by Melvyn New and Peter de Voogd. Vol. 7. The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009.<br>*The Letters of Laurence Sterne: Part Two, 1765-1768*. Edited by Melvyn New and Peter de Voogd. Vol. 8. The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009.<br>(Florida Edition Part 1 or 2, Sterne's letter number, Florida Edition page numbers) |

## INTRODUCTION

As a veritable commonplace in Anglican religious discourse,[1] it is hardly surprising that inquiries into the nature of happiness, and the best way to attain it, should form a cornerstone of the Reverend Laurence Sterne's sermons,[2] as well as a prominent theme in his novel the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, *Gentleman* (1759-1767).[3] The theme of happiness as inner 'contentment',[4] as having the ability to diminish all worldly concerns, is also at the root of Sterne's philosophy of life:

> I shall spend every winter of my life, in the same lap of contentment, where I enjoy myself now—and wherever I go—we must bring three parts in four of the treat along with us—In short we must be happy within—and then few things without us make much difference—This is my Shandean philosophy.[5]

As the third Earl of Shaftesbury famously observed, 'if Philosophy be, as we take it, *the study of happiness*, must not everyone […] philosophize?'[6] As recent scholarship on happiness has firmly established, inquiries into the nature of happiness, and the means by which happiness might be attained, were something of an eighteenth-century obsession.[7] Indeed, not since ancient antiquity

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[1] For example see Edward Young, 'The Safe Way to Happiness, Present as Well as Future. In Two Sermons', in *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, 2 vols (London: R. Knaplock, J. Round and J. Tonson, 1720), 366–435; Robert South, 'Sermon I. Proverbs III. 17: Her Ways Are Ways of Pleasantness', in *Twelve Sermons Preached Upon Several Occasions*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, 2 vols (London: Printed by Tho. Warren for Thomas Bennet, 1704); James Harris, 'Meditation on Happiness', in *The Elegant Entertainer, And Merry Story-Teller: Being A Valuable Collection Of Diverting and Instructive Tales, Fables, and Other Curious Articles, In Prose And Verse, Etc.* (London: N. Young, 1767), 204–9.

[2] See 'Inquiry After Happiness', the first sermon in Sterne's collection. *Sermons*, 1.3-11.

[3] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman: The Text*, ed. Melvyn New and Joan New, vols 1 & 2, The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1978).

[4] Sterne recalls here a phrase from the final chapter of volume VII of *Tristram Shandy: '*Why could I not live and end my days thus? Just disposer of our joys and sorrows, cried I, why could not a man sit down in the lap of content here...' (TS VII.43.651).

[5] See Sterne's Letter to Mr Robert Ralph Foley (banker, dated 16 November 1764). *Letters*, I.143.399.

[6] Anthony Ashley Cooper third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Laurence E. Klein, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 336.

[7] There is a growing body of scholarship on happiness in the eighteenth century. These works include Darrin M. McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Grove Press, 2006) and Adam Potkay, *The Passion for Happiness: Samuel Johnson and David Hume* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000). A number of scholars have made the claim that happiness is an obsession in the eighteenth century. Vivasvan Soni, for example, writes that 'there can be no question that the eighteenth century was obsessed with happiness in a dramatic and unprecedented way'. Vivasvan Soni, *Mourning Happiness: Narrative and the Politics of Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 2.

had so much been written on the subject of happiness by so many. Sermons, treatises, disquisitions, essays, poems, sketches, epistles, pamphlets, novels, dialogues, allegories and reflections on happiness, all poured from the presses in unprecedented numbers. This rich and heterogeneous discourse drew on a variety of sources; ancient and modern, religious and secular.[8]

In the context of this intense preoccupation with happiness, I will examine how the works of Laurence Sterne play a key role in our understanding of the concept of happiness as it evolved during the course of the eighteenth century. I will demonstrate how Sterne's writing interrogates two radically different, opposed and incommensurable ways of conceptualizing happiness that uneasily co-exist within the same eighteenth-century worldview. The first concept, which I refer to as *eudaemonist* happiness, is patently evaluative and comprehends happiness as an ethical project; as man's *summum bonum* or 'highest good' and is privileged in Sterne's collected sermons.[9] The second, new or emergent conception, which I refer to as *subjective* happiness, construes happiness as an experiential, psychological state or *feeling* and is interrogated by Sterne in his comic novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. This conception, which has two main variants, locates happiness and ethical judgment in man's essential nature: either in his psychology of pleasure and pain (in an intuitive, aesthetic, moral sense) or in his reason (now understood as calculative). It is my contention that Sterne critiques another variant of *subjective* happiness in his novel, *A Sentimental Journey,*[10] and while I indicate my approach in the conclusion, a more detailed analysis of happiness in Sterne's second novel (and the Sterneana that respond to its publication) is beyond the scope of this thesis. It will, however, explore how two of the eighteenth-century's rival conceptions of happiness are manifest in Sterne's sermons and his fiction, as well as in a legion of

[8] McMahon, *Happiness*, 200. McMahon recommends Robert Mauzi, *L'idée du Bonheur dans la Littérature et la Pensée Françaises au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994) for a general introduction to this vast literature.
[9] Note that the usual English translation of the Greek word *eudaemonia* is '*happiness*'. The word happiness can *also* signify a subjective psychological state or 'feeling' in the English language, I therefore specify the terminology I use here to avoid ambiguity.
[10] Laurence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy and Continuation of the Bramine's Journal: The Text and Notes*, ed. Melvyn New and W.G. Day, vol. 6, The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002).

pseudonymous imitations, continuations and satirical exploitations that respond to its publication. Since the authors of these productions represent, for Sterne, 'the herd of the world' who fail to understand him,[11] I will examine the assumptions about happiness that lie behind their accusations that *Tristram Shandy,* and its author Laurence Sterne, are immoral, hedonists or libertines.

## The *Eudaemonism* of Classical Theism and the New *Subjective* Happiness

In order to understand how the new *subjective* conception of happiness came about, and how it comes to be disarticulated from virtue, it will be instructive to compare it with the happiness or *eudaemonia* of classical ethics that it defines itself in opposition to. In *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, the philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre, identifies the moral scheme which underpins 'classical theism' as that inherited from the Ancient Greeks and exemplified by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*.[12] For Aristotle, happiness is 'an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue'[13] and an enviable condition 'to which all men properly aspire'. It directs men's concern 'to what will produce living well and finely'; it is 'living well and doing well'.[14] Happiness is not a fleeting feeling or an emotion but rather the product of a life well lived; it is the summation of a full and flourishing existence that is sustained to the end of one's days.

Within the teleological scheme of Aristotle's ethics there is 'a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature.'[15] The science of ethics thus enables a man to comprehend how he can make the transition from the first state to the

[11] See Letter to Dr. John Eustace dated Feb. 9. 1768 in which Sterne introduces the concept of multiple handles to a literary work and where he appears to have little sympathy for 'the herd of the world' who grasp the wrong handle and thus fail to 'understand' him. *Letters*, II.241.645-6.
[12] Alasdair Chalmers MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 2006), 52.
[13] Aristotle, *The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J. A. K Thomson and Hugh Tredennick (London: Penguin, 1988), 76 (I.vii.1098a15-17).
[14] Aristotle, 66 (I.iv.1095a20).
[15] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.

second. Ethics, on this view, presupposes 'some account of potentiality and act, some account of the essence of man as a rational animal and above all some account of the human *telos*.' The precepts and injunctions (or virtues and vices)[16] thus instruct a man how he can move from potentiality to act; to realise his true nature and to reach his true end. If he defies these ethical precepts and injunctions he will be frustrated, incomplete and unfulfilled, having failed 'to achieve that good of rational happiness which it is peculiarly ours as a species to pursue'.[17] In Aristotle's formulation, man's truest *good* or *supreme end* embodies a conception of man's fulfilment as a rational animal. Since reason, for Aristotle, is what distinguishes man from plants, non-human animals and non-living things, his essential purpose must involve its fruitful cultivation. For Aristotle, reason instructs a man what his true end *is* as well as *how* he can reach it. To this end, men's desires and emotions are to be put in order and educated by the use of such precepts and by the cultivation of 'those habits of action which the study of ethics prescribes'.[18]

In summary, we have in Aristotle's ethics a tripartite, teleological scheme in which human nature in its uneducated or unregenerate state (man-as-he-happens-to-be) is initially discrepant with the precepts of ethics that are specifically designed to transform him into man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-*telos* or purpose. As MacIntyre points out, each element in this syllogistic structure requires reference to the other two 'if its status and function are to be intelligible'.[19]

When Medieval Christian theologians attempt to synthesize the thought of the ancients with the teachings of the Bible, they adopt Aristotle's teleological framework. St. Thomas Aquinas employs Aristotle's ethical framework in his formulation of Christian happiness, and while Augustine disputes the means by which happiness is attained, he nevertheless concedes the 'end' of his pagan

[16] 'Virtues' and 'vices' are the usual translations of Aristotle's 'excellences' (*aretai) and '*errors' (*hamartia)*. However, these terms are not to be construed too closely as equivalents. The Greeks lacked a concept of sin and while most ancient philosophers agreed that happiness 'eudaemonia' included the moral excellences, the relationship to non-moral 'excellences' was complex and contested.
[17] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 52.
[18] MacIntyre, 52.
[19] MacIntyre, 53.

predecessors.[20] Thus, in medieval Christian ethics, Aristotle's tripartite scheme is added to, and modified, but its underlying teleological structure remains essentially the same, since this is able to accommodate both secular and transcendental conceptions of the human good.[21] The happiness of Christian ethics is now analogous to the *blessedness* of salvation and can now only be achieved in the transcendental realm. The Christian concept of sin is added to the Greek concept of error (*hamartia*) and the Christian theological virtues are added to the cardinal virtues of antiquity. As MacIntyre observes, throughout the period in which the theistic version of classical morality predominates, moral utterance has:

> Both a twofold point and purpose and a double standard. To say what someone ought to do is at one and the same time to say what course of action will in these circumstances as a matter of fact lead toward a man's true end, and to say what the law ordained by God and comprehended by reason enjoins. Moral sentences are thus used within this framework to make claims which are true or false. Most medieval proponents of this scheme did of course believe that it was itself part of God's revelation, but also a discovery of reason and rationally defensible.[22]

Thus, in both classical and medieval Christian ethics, happiness refers to an exalted state where the life of the individual is aligned with his *truest good* and is the consummation of a well-lived, or virtuous life. Within the Aristotelian tradition, and its medieval variants, the conception of a whole human life as the subject of objective and impersonal evaluation involves at least one central functional concept.[23] In this tradition to call a particular action 'good' or 'just' is to say that it is what a good man would do in such a situation; hence this type of statement is factual.[24] In medieval

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[20] See Darrin M. McMahon, 'From the Happiness of Virtue to the Virtue of Happiness: 400 B.C. - A.D. 1780', *Daedalus* 133, no. 2 (2004): 5–17.

[21] Although Aristotle defends a non-theistic moral account, he conceives of morality as involving genuine truths.

[22] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 53.

[23] Functional concepts are those like 'watch' or 'farmer' that are defined in terms of the purpose or function which a 'watch or 'farmer' are characteristically expected to serve. It follows that a watch cannot be defined independently of that of a good watch. The criterion of something being a watch and of something being a good watch are not independent of each other. Aristotle takes it as a starting point for ethical enquiry that the relationship of 'man' to 'living well' is analogous to that of 'harpist' to 'playing the harp well'. To call x good is to say that it is the kind of x which someone would choose who wanted an x for the purpose for which x's are characteristically wanted. The presupposition of this use of good is that every type of item which it is appropriate to call good or bad – including persons or actions – has, as a matter of fact, some given specific purpose or function.

[24] Within this tradition moral and evaluative statements can be called true or false in precisely the way in which all other factual statements can be.

Christian *eudaemonism* and its variants, happiness is similarly held to be an evaluative or an objective account[25]; as to say that a life is 'flourishing', 'well-lived', 'virtuous' or 'good' implies that one has some kind of *agreed* standard or criteria against which the 'well-lived', 'virtuous' or *'good'* life can be measured.[26] It is at one and the same time 'an objective measure of human *well-being* and a value-laden concept of flourishing'.[27] Within the Aristotelian tradition, and its medieval Christian variants, to achieve happiness is to achieve the reason or purpose of one's being and is an ethical project rather than a psychological one. Although human excellence or virtue, as a good of the soul, is the psychological basis for carrying out the activities of a human life well. Of living a *good* or flourishing human life.[28] The tripartite structure of untutored human nature-as-it-happens-to-be, human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its *telos,* and the precepts of rational ethics as the means for the transition from the one to the other, remains crucial to the theistic understanding of evaluative thought and judgment. The divine moral law is still what moves a man from one state to the other but now only grace enables him to obey its precepts as man's reason is corrupted by the Fall.[29]

However, as MacIntyre notes, this scheme does not survive when Protestantism and Jansenist Catholicism (and their immediate late medieval predecessors) appear on the scene, as these embody

[25] In Simon Kirchin, *Metaethics* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), the author analyses at least four definitions of 'objective' (and 'subjective') used by philosophers. The notion of 'consensus' could roughly be taken to be as universally agreed by ancient philosophical theory and popular thought.
[26] For Aristotle, 'excellence' can be applied to any number of things, such as knives or racehorses. What makes something 'excellent' is its ability to do well that which it is for. So, knives that cut well or racehorses that win races are examples of excellence or virtue.
[27] Kenan Malik, *The Quest for a Moral Compass: A Global History of Ethics* (London: Atlantic, 2015), 34.
[28] The link between happiness and virtue in classical *eudaemonia* (and its Christian variants) depends upon the acceptance of two central ideas: that human *excellence* is a good of the soul (rather than a material or bodily good) and that the most important good of the soul is moral virtue. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Chapter 8, Book 1, Aristotle makes the distinction between external goods (those of the body) and those internal goods (of the soul). He states that his account of happiness agrees with those philosophers who hold it as a good of the soul.
[29] McMahon, 'From the Happiness of Virtue'. McMahon outlines in detail how the shift towards happiness on earth occurred within the Christian tradition as well as without. MacIntyre's historical analysis lacks this religious detail, however, I definitely agree with the main lines of his interpretation.

a new concept of reason.[30] Anti-Aristotelian science now set new boundaries to reason. Reason is now calculative and while it can assess truths of fact and mathematical relations, in the realm of practice, it can speak only of *means* not of *ends.*[31] The teleological view of human nature, of man having an essence which defines his true end now belongs to the despised conceptual scheme of scholasticism. Once the notions of essential human purposes, *final end* or functions disappears from morality in the eighteenth century, it begins to appear implausible to treat moral judgments as factual statements. The 'joint effect of the secular rejection of both Protestantism and Catholic theology and the scientific and philosophical rejection of Aristotelianism', notes MacIntyre, was 'to eliminate any notion of man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-*telos'*.[32] This is very important since the whole point of ethics is to enable a man to move from his present untutored or unregenerate state to his true end. By eliminating any notion of man's *telo*s, the two remaining elements have no clear relationship. Since these moral precepts and injunctions were part of a scheme in which their purpose was to correct and improve human nature, they are ones that human nature has strong tendencies to disobey and are not likely to be those that could be deduced from true statements about human nature as it is in its uncorrected or unregenerate state.

Without its teleological framework, the whole project of morality in the eighteenth century becomes incoherent. 'Detach morality from that framework and you will no longer have morality; or at the very least, you will have radically transformed its character'.[33] In their transition from a context in

[30] The term reason was much disputed in the eighteenth century. It is sometimes used for 'true and clear principles', sometimes for 'clear and fair deductions from those principles', sometimes for the 'cause', particularly the 'final cause' and sometimes for 'a faculty in man': that faculty whereby man is supposed to be distinguished. Some support their commitment to reason with a not altogether clear notion of innate knowledge: such as 'inbred notices that God hath implanted in our souls' or 'impressed upon it from without'. Adam Potkay notes that David Fate Norton distinguishes seven principle senses of 'reason' in Hume's philosophical writing, including "reason as probable reasoning, factual reasoning, or probability"; "Reason as instinct" (with reference to the psychological as opposed to logical features of inferential thought); and "Reason as a calm, reflective passion". Potkay, *Passion for Happiness*, 82.

[31] Cf. Charles Taylor: "We could say that rationality is no longer defined substantively, in terms of the order of being, but rather procedurally, in terms of the standards by which we construct orders in science and life. For Plato, to be rational we have to be right about the order of things. For Descartes [and Locke, and most subsequent philosophers] rationality means thinking according to certain canons" (156). Potkay, 81.

[32] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 54.

[33] MacIntyre, 56.

which moral judgments were understood as governed by impersonal standards and justified by a shared conception of the human good, moral rules and precepts now lacked status, authority and justification. The meaning of key moral and evaluative expressions such as 'happiness', 'virtue', and even 'ought' became other than they once were.

It became the self-appointed project of the philosophers of the Northern European Enlightenment to assign moral rules and precepts a new authority and justification. Yet, as I illustrate in the following chapters, what they actually provided were several rival and incompatible accounts. In their attempt to secure morality within a particular understanding of human nature, the pursuit of happiness takes on a whole new meaning. Sovereign in his own authority, happiness is now what any individual conceives it to be:

> Were all the Concerns of Man terminated in this Life, why one followed Study and Knowledge, and another Hawking and Hunting; why one chose Luxury and Debauchery, and another Sobriety and Riches […] because their *Happiness* was placed in different things.[34]

> For if there be no Prospect beyond the Grave, the inference is certainly right, *Let us eat and drink*, let us enjoy what we delight in, *for tomorrow we shall die*.[35]

John Locke was one of the first to entertain the proposition that pleasure and happiness might be considered good in and of themselves, as an 'unconditional' good rather than 'conditional' goods. Indeed, historians have emphasized the influence of the philosophy of Epicurus (interpreted by the French priest Pierre Gassendi) and that of Newtonian science on Locke's work. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke presents his famous conception of the mind as a *tabula rasa.* Man, he contends, is born without innate ideas or the corruptions of original sin and is animated by sensations of pleasure and pain. In the celebrated chapter 'Power' in Book 2 of Locke's *Essay*, McMahon has observed that:

> Locke uses the phrase 'the pursuit of happiness' no fewer than four times. And he indeed employs a variety of Newtonian metaphors – stones that fall, tennis balls hit by racquets, and billiard balls struck

[34] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 268-9 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 54).
[35] Locke, *ECHU*, 270 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 55).

> by cues – to describe the ways in which human beings are propelled, and propel themselves, through the space of their lives. The force that moves them, we learn, the power that draws them near, is the desire for happiness, which acts through the gravitational push and pull of pleasure and pain. We are drawn by one and repulsed by the other and it is right that it is so. For in Locke's divinely orchestrated universe, pleasure is providential; it is a foretaste of the goodness of a God who desires the happiness of his creatures.[36]

Yet fatally, Locke's formulation conflates feeling good with being good. 'Pleasure in us', he says, 'is what we call *good*, and what is apt to produce pain in us, we call evil.' And further, that '*Happiness* then in its full extent' is simply 'the utmost Pleasure we are capable of'.[37] Happiness is now construed as a subjective, psychological state or affective experience; the sustaining of which becomes the highest good. The virtue morality of classical theism thus becomes detached from a shared conception of human ends and becomes uncritically identified with the pursuit of subjective pleasure. As Roy Porter observes, thinkers of the Enlightenment sought to displace the Christian concern with 'How can I be saved?' into the pragmatic one of 'How can I be happy?'[38] In his attempt to Christianize important Epicurean assumptions, Locke makes the happiness of God qualitatively of a kind with the pleasures we experience here. Locke's happiness is something one can savour, relish and feel. Moreover, in the absence of a better world to justify this one, men will pursue, says Locke, 'all that delight them; wherein it will be no wonder to find variety and difference'.[39] As one man's pleasure is another man's pain, one could easily conclude that good and evil were merely matters of taste. By identifying the classical theist concept of happiness with experiential, subjective pleasure, Locke unwittingly disarticulates happiness from virtue. The shift in thinking of morality as an external standard against which human nature can be measured to thinking of morality as itself a part of human nature radically transforms the concept of happiness. The eighteenth-century perspective was thus ethically incoherent as it contained, within one and the same worldview, two rival, opposed and incommensurable concepts of happiness.

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[36] McMahon, 'From the Happiness of Virtue', 14.
[37] Locke, *ECHU*, 258 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 42).
[38] Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2001), 22.
[39] Locke, *ECHU*, 1991269 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 55).

**Influences**

As by now should be evident, an important influence on my enterprise here are arguments made by the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. In a chapter entitled 'Fact, Explanation and Expertise', a casual reference to Laurence Sterne not only caught my attention but also suggested the topic of this thesis:

> There is indeed therefore something extraordinary in the coexistence of empiricism and natural science in the same culture, for they represent radically different and incompatible ways of approaching the world. But in the eighteenth century both could be incorporated and expressed within one and the same world-view. It follows that that world-view is at its best radically incoherent; that keen and cold-eyed observer Laurence Sterne drew the conclusion that philosophy – albeit unwittingly – had at last represented the world as a series of jokes and out of these jokes he made *Tristram Shandy*. What obscured the incoherence of their own world-view for those about whom Sterne joked was in part the extent of their agreement on what was to be denied and excluded from their view of the world. What they agreed in denying and excluding was in large part all those aspects of the classical view of the world which were Aristotelian.[40]

In the above passage, MacIntyre singles out Laurence Sterne as being one of the few thinkers in the eighteenth century that grasped the epistemological incoherence of a worldview in which empiricism and natural science uneasily co-exist. Yet the reading of Sterne I propose here, focuses less on his grasp of its epistemological incoherence than on his recognition of its ethical incoherence.[41] On Sterne's recognition, as evidenced in his texts, of his century's contradictory views about happiness; and its shift in moral and evaluative concepts. My concern in this thesis is to demonstrate Sterne's awareness that moral judgments, which were once understood as governed by impersonal standards justified by a shared, prior conception of the human good, were increasingly being deprived of their context and justification. Furthermore, it interprets the

[40] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 81.

[41] Throughout this thesis I use 'ethics' and 'ethical' to signify the broad project of living well or flourishing. This classical, *eudaemonist* understanding of ethics remained prevalent in eighteenth-century thought. As Adam Potkay explains, 'In the eighteenth century, moral philosophy still aimed at directing people to their own good, or flourishing, or happiness.' Potkay, *Passion for Happiness*, 5.

existence of two incompatible conceptions of happiness (within one and the same perspective) as symptomatic of a wider ethical incoherence in the eighteenth-century worldview.

**Ethics, Literature, Theory**

It is in this context, when the underlying logic of *eudaemonism* becomes incoherent and when Enlightenment models of knowledge and ethics fail to offer any shared or substantive vision of the human good; that the new genre of the novel emerges as a form of ethical thinking.[42]

In recent decades, after years of what David Parker describes as the 'suppression' or 'virtual absence' of explicit ethical and evaluative discourse by current literary theory, there has been a growing recognition that the 'evaluative criticism of particular texts is an important part of what literary studies are about'.[43] An important indicator of this rise in the fortunes of evaluative discourse is 'a focus, in different disciplines, on the relative absence or loss of traditional evaluative concepts'.[44] In the literary sphere, the relationship between the rise of literary theory and the decline of ethical criticism has been documented by Wayne C. Booth in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction.*[45] Booth's account of ethical criticism is one of a partly 'Banned Discipline', yet this is one where those who try to ban it, nevertheless participate in it, since 'no one seems to resist ethical criticism for long'.[46] The view that literary theory 'lacks any sense that moral practice much

[42] Ian Watt sees the novel's rejection of traditional plots and historical actors as central to the new form. The rise of the novel, he argues, coincides with the rise of the bourgeoisie, the expansion of literacy, and the growth of science and philosophical realism; all developments that stimulated demand for a form of literature that would depict the activities and experiences of ordinary life. See Ian A. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1994).
[43] David Parker, *Ethics, Theory and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4. For an opposing view see Richard Posner, who argues that 'The proper criteria for evaluating literature are aesthetic rather than ethical' in Richard A. Posner, 'Against Ethical Criticism', *Philosophy and Literature* 21 (1997): 1–27. Reprinted in Stephen K. George, ed., *Ethics, Literature, & Theory: An Introductory Reader*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), Chapter 5: 63-77, 63.
[44] Parker, *Ethics, Theory*, 4.
[45] Wayne C. Booth, *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
[46] Booth, 3-6.

matters' is also supported by Martha Nussbaum who observes that while the sub-disciplines of philosophy (such as epistemology and metaphysics) all inform contemporary literary theory, moral philosophy is absent. She further suggests that this is, itself, significant:

> But in the midst of all this busy concern with other types of philosophy, the absence of moral philosophy seems a significant sign. And in fact it signals a further striking absence: the absence, from literary theory, of the organizing questions of moral philosophy, and of moral philosophy's sense of urgency about these questions. The sense that we are social beings puzzling out, in times of great moral difficulty, what might be, for us, the best way to live – this sense of practical importance, which animates contemporary ethical theory and has always animated much of great literature, is absent from the writings of many of our leading literary theorists.[47]

The assumption behind their argument is the charge that for decades, in the English-speaking world, philosophy was concerned almost exclusively with largely theoretical issues (of epistemology and metaphysics) and that this type of stultifying, abstract enterprise encouraged moral philosophers to occupy themselves with inventing increasingly ingenious counterexamples to one abstract theory or the other. They further suggest that this type of philosophizing, which only occasionally made contact with the practical concerns of life, had a negative effect on the discipline of literary criticism. Their arguments appear to come down to the degree to which ethical evaluation in literary criticism is 'explicitly' concerned with the practical 'art of life', since Booth already concedes that ethical criticism is frequently 'implicit' in much literary criticism. It also depends upon the degree to which ethical criticism draws upon the traditional concepts of virtue ethics which have practical application to a character's 'choice of life', since Nussbaum also concedes that the question of 'the best way to live' is one that has always 'animated great literature'. As others have noted, it may be that this fresh sense of the ethical value and advantages of fiction (with its attention to the particularities of character, context and contingency) is more a rediscovery of what was already evident to eighteenth-century novelists and their literary critics.[48] A similar argument of neglect has been more convincingly made with regard to readings of the relationship between the Shandean subject and

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[47] Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 169-71.

[48] For example the novelist Henry Fielding held that by 'observing minutely' we will be instructed in the 'art of life'. Henry Fielding, *Amelia* (London: Penguin Books, 1987), 14.

the external world in *Tristram Shandy*. As Brian Norton has rightly observed, scholarship on Sterne has tended to focus on the epistemological and cognitive dimensions of this problem, while its ethical significance has gone largely unexplored.[49] Melvyn New sought to address this imbalance by devoting a section on ethics in an edited collection, explaining, 'My creation for the 'ethical face' of Sterne, and my affording it pride of place as the culmination of a gathering of recent studies, is in large part my response to this tendency among modernists to avoid the subject'.[50] In calling for the importance of literature as an ethical experience and a lesson in ethical evaluation, Nussbaum returns us to the ancient idea that art can teach us how to live and that a dynamic interaction between literary and ethical theory can but benefit both disciplines. In *The Fragility of Goodness,* Nussbaum demonstrates that Greek thinkers of the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E. were deeply concerned with the dilemma of how one's happiness can be ensured, despite the unpredictability of luck. With the ethical problem of how happiness can be achieved, despite the effects of external contingency.[51] Part of her argument is that literary and philosophical texts are interrelated and that literary works, in virtue of their form as well as their content, make a distinctive contribution to ethical thought. The vision that moral philosophy is, at its best, a combination of literature and traditional philosophical reflection is shared by the philosopher Anthony Cunningham:

> By taking literature seriously as a philosophical discourse, we do not supplant philosophy. Rather, a marriage of literature and traditional philosophical reflection opens the door to a richer conception of moral philosophy that can speak to the heart of what matters in a human life and character.[52]

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[49] Brian Michael Norton, *Fiction and the Philosophy of Happiness: Ethical Inquiries in the Age of Enlightenment* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2012), 35.

[50] *Critical Essays on Laurence Sterne*, ed. Melvyn New, Critical Essays on British Literature (New York; London: G.K. Hall; Prentice Hall International, 1998), 13. For two good exceptions see Donald Wehrs, 'Levinas and Sterne: From the Ethics of the Face to the Aesthetics of Unrepresentability', in this collection, and David Mazella, 'Be wary, sir, when you imitate him': The Perils of Didacticism in *Tristram Shandy*,' Studies in the Novel 31, 2 (Summer 1999).

[51] Martha Craven Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[52] Anthony Cunningham's 'The Heart of What Matters' in George, *Ethics, Literature, & Theory*, 132.

In her recognition of the methodological and stylistic limitations of philosophical texts, Nussbaum suggests that fictions can do what philosophical tracts and treatises never can. Since fictions are uniquely alert to the fabric of human ethical experience. They:

> Display to us the complexity, the indeterminacy, the sheer difficulty of moral choice […] This task cannot be easily accomplished by texts which speak in universal terms – for one of the difficulties of deliberation […] is that of grasping the uniqueness of the new particular. Nor can it easily be done by texts which speak with hardness or plainness which moral philosophy has traditionally chosen for its style—for how can this style at all convey the way in which the 'matter of the practical' appears before the agent in all of its bewildering complexity, without its morally salient features stamped on its face?[53]

This view of literary complexity is consistent with a growing recognition that the novel's attention to particularity, to details of individual psychology and individual circumstances make it an obvious ethical instrument for the examination of different models for the art of life and hence an appropriate vehicle for the study of the new *subjective* conception of happiness. This is echoed by Cunningham:

> By providing detailed depictions of the complex interior life of fictional characters embroiled in the messy business of living, fine literature directs our attention to the subtleties and nuances of what should rightly command our attention. By reading the right kinds of novels in the right way, we can literally read for life, thereby honing our capacity to see clearly and choose wisely when it comes to real life.[54]

Leaving aside the authors' value-laden definition of 'fine' or 'great' literature as that which draws upon 'traditional philosophical discourse' which directs the reader's attention to the 'subtleties and nuances' of morally salient features, the idea that the novel can be a more appropriate vehicle to examine alternative models for 'the art of life' is one that I, and I suggest Sterne, would broadly agree with. Whilst the sermons exhort its congregation to follow the only one true happiness (as their function is didactic) *Tristram Shandy*, as a novel, has the scope to interrogate the new, subjective conception of happiness as an alternative to Christian *eudaemonism* as an ethical choice of life. Cunningham's theoretical enterprise, like my own, is 'Aristotelian in spirit' in that it treats

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[53] See Martha Craven Nussbaum, 'Flawed Crystals: James's The Golden Bowl and Literature as Moral Philosophy', *New Literary History* 15, no. 1 (1983): 25–50.
[54] Cunningham in George, *Ethics, Literature, & Theory*, 131-2.

literary characters (such as Tristram, Toby and Walter) as character portraits that can provide us with the right stuff for concrete, particular deliberation in all its ethical complexity. This approach views literature as providing us with 'thick descriptions'[55] of ways of life and forms of character that can be accessed in no other way. It also takes Aristotle's insistence on 'right feeling' seriously by employing narrative shaping and style to bring us into the emotional lives and the value conflicts of characters:

> An insightful novel will not simply depict emotions as important elements of the characters in the story; because of the way it is told, the story itself will elicit emotions in the reader, and such emotions are a constitutive part of ethical judgment. As Aristotle insisted, right feeling is absolutely essential for right judgment and, ultimately, for good character and right living. By helping us to feel along with and for the characters engaged in the often complicated, perplexing, vexing business of living, a novel's style effectively blurs the conceptual line between style and content.[56]

In the philosophical sphere, as I have outlined, the relative absence or loss of traditional evaluative concepts has been confronted by Alasdair MacIntyre.[57] In providing a genealogy of this that goes back to the Enlightenment, he claims that its legacy is a modern sort of 'conceptual amnesia'.[58] He rejects the post-Enlightenment philosophical tradition on the grounds that it needlessly consigns value to the emotional-volitional side of human experience while giving undue prestige to the rational.[59] Once we accept this split, says MacIntyre, we are condemned to accept some variant of what he calls an 'emotivist' justification of value and morality.[60]

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[55] See Simon Kirchin, ed., *Thick Concepts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). For a classic introduction, see Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture (1973)', in *Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 3–30.

[56] Cunningham in George, *Ethics, Literature, & Theory*, 134.

[57] Stanley Cavell also confronts this issue in a chapter entitled 'An Absence of Morality' in his book, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy.* Cited by Parker, *Ethics, Theory*, 4.

[58] The term 'conceptual amnesia' was coined by Cora Diamond, 'Losing Your Concepts', *Ethics* 98, no. 2 (1988): 255–77.

[59] 'Even Kantianism and utilitarianism which emerge as the dominant modes of moral philosophy constrict the field to 'calculative' or 'procedural' reason which claims to direct moral choice by rational algorithms that are themselves substantively value neutral.' Parker, *Ethics, Theory*, 8.

[60] 'Emotivism' is the doctrine that all moral judgments are mere preferences. It cannot provide traction on moral issues as it conflates subjective preference and moral claims, as if moral claims had no more general authority.

MacIntyre's work has been influential for critics such as Nussbaum and Cunningham who call for a return to Aristotle's virtue ethics (albeit with a modern inflection) as an alternative source to the Kantian and rationalist tradition. As we no longer live in the sort of society that is 'maximally homogenous and minimally given to general reflection',[61] a useful contribution to the re-establishment of ethical discourse is Bernard Williams' notion of '*thick* evaluative concepts'.[62]

Guided by Charles Taylor's contention that there is a historical correlation between a culture's 'notions of the good' and its 'modes of narrativity'[63] and Michael Prince's claim that the loss of a metaphysical dialectic in the British Enlightenment leads moral philosophers to seek out new modes of cultural mediation,[64] I explore in this thesis how the changing conception of happiness in the eighteenth century is reflected in Sterne's different modes of writing.

The first chapter will examine how Sterne's sermons privilege the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism wherein happiness and virtue are closely aligned. It will illustrate how his homilies follow the tripartite, moral structure inherited from Aristotle, to recommend one universal, religious path to the attainment of happiness; an ideal, abstract conception where 'true' happiness is drawn as perfect, eternal and transcendental. It will also explore how Sterne reconciles the century's increasing expectation for experiential, earthly happiness with the 'true' happiness of Christian salvation.

The second chapter will examine how *Tristram Shandy* interrogates the new, subjective conception of happiness that defined itself in opposition to the traditional Christian *eudaemonist* conception. It will illustrate how Sterne mobilizes the resources of comic fiction to explore the role that character,

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[61] Bernard Arthur Owen Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 142.
[62] Parker, *Ethics, Theory*, 17.
[63] Charles Taylor, *Sources of The Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 105.
[64] Michael Prince, *Philosophical Dialogue in the British Enlightenment: Theology, Aesthetics and the Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 257.

contingency and context play in the possibilities and barriers to the attainment of subjective happiness. It will also explore how Sterne reconciles the pursuit of subjective happiness with virtue by subordinating it to the 'true happiness' of Christian Salvation.

The third chapter will demonstrate how material that responded to the initial publication of *Tristram Shandy* (such as parodies, pseudonymous imitations, satires, continuations and prints which are collectively known as *Sterneana*) reflect the contradictory assumptions about happiness they perceive in Sterne's different modes of writing. As these productions exploit, often for their own satiric and bawdy purposes, what they allege to be the immoral, hedonist or libertine philosophy of happiness they discern in the clergyman-author, his novel and his fictional creations, this chapter will interrogate the assumptions about happiness that lie behind such representations.

# CHAPTER ONE: THE SERMONS

## Happiness in the Sermons of Laurence Sterne

'True happiness' is 'only to be found in religion – in the consciousness of virtue – and the sure and certain hopes of a better life.'[1]

This chapter will argue that the sermons of Laurence Sterne elucidate and re-affirm a moralized conception of happiness at the very time when this is being challenged by the new, subjective and experiential conception of happiness. It will demonstrate that Sterne's sermons privilege the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism where there is an assumed identity between the moral quality of an individual's life and his or her subjective state of mind, where happiness and virtue are still closely aligned. It will demonstrate that the ethical system of the Anglican, Latitudinarian church can broadly be described as *eudaemonist,* as although the term '*eudaemonist*' can mean one of several different theses,[2] these all share the same underlying teleological, internal, syllogistic like structure which is outlined in the introduction. A brief chronology of the publication history of the sermons will be provided and a consideration of Sterne's role as editor. This chapter will include an overview of the main critical debates that surround the sermons: their composition, their derivative nature, their style, their religious orthodoxy and their vision of human nature. What is generally meant by the terms 'Latitudinarian' and 'Latitudinarianism' will be examined to further understand how the Christianized concept of *eudaemonist* happiness establishes the broad parameters within which Sterne's concepts of happiness and pleasure must ultimately be understood. The way Sterne reconciles the growing expectation of happiness on earth with the 'true' happiness of transcendental Christian Salvation will be established before the chapter is concluded with a few

[1] *Sermons*, 1.10, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[2] See Sterne's use of *recta ratio* in, 'The Abuses of Conscience Considered', *Sermons*, 27.255-67. See also Arthur H. Cash, 'The Sermon in Tristram Shandy', *ELH* 31, no. 4 (1964): 395–417; C. J. Fauske, 'On Being Orthodox: The Sermons of Laurence Sterne and the Church of England Context', in *Divine Rhetoric: Essays on the Sermons of Laurence Sterne* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2010), 53–6.

words on the method of argument commonly found in sermons, treatises and non-narrative treatments of happiness.

**A Brief Chronology of the Publication History of the Sermons**

*The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* were published in seven volumes: the first four were edited by Sterne in 1760 and 1766 respectively, while the three posthumous volumes were edited in 1769 by Sterne's daughter Lydia under the title *SERMONS by the Late Rev. Mr. STERNE*.[3]

The publication of volumes I and II of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* on 22 May 1760 probably represented what Sterne considered as the finest homilies of his clerical profession. Although he had earned a local reputation as a moving and popular sermonist during his twenty-year career as a clergyman in York, prior to this collection Sterne had published only two sermons under his own name: one in 1747 and the other in 1750. 'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered'[4] was a charity sermon preached on 17 April 1747 at the Church of St. Michael-le-Belfry in York and printed by Caesar Ward for John Hildyard in July of that year.[5] 'The Abuses of Conscience' sermon preached at the annual assizes at York Minster on 29 July 1750, was printed by Caesar Ward for John Hildyard in the form of a six-penny pamphlet shortly afterwards.[6] Sterne later incorporated these into *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick.* 'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered' makes an appearance in volume I and the second sermon is published in volume III as 'The Abuses of Conscience Considered'.

[3] On the publication and reception of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* see Arthur H. Cash, *Laurence Sterne: The Later Years* (London: Methuen, 1986), 38-44 and on Lydia's edition see Cash, *The Later Years*, 339-43.
[4] *Sermons*, 5.40-56.
[5] Kenneth Monkman, 'Towards a Bibliography of Sterne's Sermons', *The Shandean* 5 (1993): 32–109, 38-9.
[6] Monkman, 39-40.

Printed in 1760 for R. and J. Dodsley in London, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* consist of a total of fifteen sermons, six sermons in volume I and nine sermons in volume II. The sermons in volume I comprise: 'Inquiry After Happiness', 'The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning Described', 'Philanthropy Recommended', 'Self Knowledge', 'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered' and 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple'.[7] These are numbered I – VI.

The sermons in volume II comprise: 'Vindication of Human Nature', 'Time and Chance', 'The Character of Herod', 'Job's Account of the Shortness and Troubles of Life, Considered', 'Evil-speaking', 'Joseph's History Considered', 'Duty of Setting Bounds to our Desires', 'Self-examination' and 'Job's Expostulation with his Wife'.[8] These are numbered VII- XV.

The market for sermons in the eighteenth century was fairly glutted and Sterne appreciated that the public's interest in *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* had largely been generated by the successful publication of the first two volumes of his satirical novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, 1760.[9] Sterne had ingeniously incorporated 'The Abuses of Conscience Considered' sermon that he had published ten years earlier into volume 2 of the first instalment of the novel.[10] In his Preface to the sermons he acknowledges that his reason for printing the sermons 'arises altogether from the favourable reception, which the sermon given as a sample of them in TRISTRAM SHANDY, met with from the world.'[11] This strategy was hailed as 'masterly' by one reviewer who thought it was an 'expedient' by which it will probably be read by many 'who would peruse a sermon in no other form'.[12] While Horace Walpole considered the sermon 'the best thing in the book', he qualified this by adding that it was 'oddly coupled with a good deal of bawdy' and furthermore that 'both were

[7] Monkman, 43.
[8] Monkman, 48-9.
[9] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1760).
[10] *TS*, II.XVII.140-64.
[11] Laurence Sterne, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1760), Preface.
[12] William Kenrick, 'Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy', *Appendix to the The Monthly Review* 21 (December 1759): 561–71, 568.

the composition of a clergyman'.[13] This second remark, an implied pejorative, was also to greet the publication of the first two volumes of his sermons in May 1760.

Monkman notes that for the text of the 'The Abuses of Conscience Considered' sermon which appears in the novel, Sterne wrote the sermon out by hand as copy text. Sterne made significant changes to the version in his novel but when it reappeared in 1766, in volume IV of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, the original printing of 1750 served as the copy-text with only three small substantive changes.[14] Sterne clearly employed the sermon in the novel as a sort of 'trailer' to the public as he had intimated in volume two of *Tristram Shandy* that other such sermons might be had. If 'the character of parson Yorick, and this sample of his sermons is liked', says Tristram, 'there are now in the possession of the *Shandy* Family, as many as will make a handsome volume, at the world's service,—and much good may they do it.'[15]

That Sterne wished to capitalize on the success of *Tristram Shandy* to better launch his sermons 'out into the world' is corroborated by an advertisement which appeared as early as the 4 March 1760 in the York *Courant*. It was announced that 'Tristram Shandy' would soon be publishing the 'DRAMATICK SERMONS OF Mr. YORICK'. Although the adjective 'dramatic' would eventually be dropped altogether, the impulse to exploit the voracious public appetite for his novel (the next instalment of which was not promised until the following year) was presumably behind Sterne's decision to publish the first two volumes of his sermons with two title pages. The first of these attributes the sermons to Parson Yorick while the second acknowledges the authorship of 'Laurence Sterne, A.M. Prebendary of York, and Vicar of Sutton-on-the-Forest, and Stillington near York'.[16]

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[13] Letter to Sir David Dalrymple, 4 April 1760 in W. S Lewis, Charles Hodges Bennett, and Andrew G. Hoover, eds., *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Sir David Dalrymple* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1951), 66.
[14] Monkman, 'Sterne's Sermons', 41.
[15] *TS*, II.XVII.167.
[16] In *Later Years*, Cash relates how Sterne had forgotten to inform the printers that he also had the title of curate of Coxwold. Cash, *The Later Years*, 40.

The prestige of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* was further enhanced by its frontispiece, an engraving of the portrait of Sterne by the fashionable portraitist Sir Joshua Reynolds. Their joint concern to make the most of a fashionable name in conversation is implied in advertisements that appeared in the London papers on 19 April, before the portrait of 'the Editor' being the 'Rev. Mr. Sterne' had even been finished by Reynolds[17]:

Speedily will be published.
In two volumes, Price 5s sewed,
(With a Portrait of the Editor, engraved.
From a Painting by Mr. REYNOLDS)
THE SERMONS of Mr. YORICK.
Published by the Rev. Mr: STERNE,
Prebendary of York,
Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pall-mall.[18]

Another sign of Sterne's success was the list of some 660 subscribers to the first two volumes of the sermons that was prefixed to the first edition. This included dukes, duchesses, earls and countesses, lords and ladies, six bishops and notables such as Charles Burney, Lord Chesterfield, John Gilbert Cooper, David Garrick, William Hogarth, Soame Jenyns, Joshua Reynolds, Sir George Saville, Charles Townsend, William Warburton, John Wilkes, and William Whitehead.[19] Within two months, a second edition of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* appeared on 21 July 1760, and eight more editions of volumes I and II, excluding pirated or package editions, were published before Sterne's death on 18

[17] Sir Joshua Reynolds began his portrait of Laurence Sterne (now in the National Portrait Gallery 5019 Oil on Canvass, 50 1/8 x 39 1/2) on 20 March 1760 and finished it a few weeks later on 21 April 1760. It was passed to Reynolds's usual engraver, Edward Fisher, who began work on a mezzotint the very next day. Cash records that Reynolds permitted an engraving of the portrait by Simon François Ravenet to be included in the forthcoming edition of Sterne's sermons. See Arthur H. Cash, *Laurence Sterne: The Early and Middle Years* (London: Methuen, 1975), 300-7.

[18] This advertisement appeared in the 19-22 April 1760, edition of the *London Chronicle* (issue 518) and a similarly worded one appeared in *The Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, April 19-22 1760 (issue 2199) and in the *Daily Advertiser* dated 23 April 1760. These all predate the advertisement which appeared in the *Public Advertiser* on 24 April 1760, which René Bosch cites as the earliest evidence of the engraving being proposed as an illustration to the sermons. René Bosch, '"Character" in Reynolds's Portrait of Sterne', *The Shandean* 6 (1994): 8–23.

[19] Cash, *The Later Years*, 9-40.

March 1768. As Melvyn New observes, 'there were more lifetime editions of these first two volumes of sermons than of *Tristram Shandy*, which had only six editions by 1768.'[20]

Sterne's decision to publish the first two volumes of his sermons with two title pages, however, had unintended consequences. While the content of the sermons was praised, it was the manner of their publication that caused offence and discomfited readers. Owen Ruffhead of the *Monthly Review* complained that Sterne's marketing strategy designed to effect a connection in the reader's mind between his collection of sermons and his bawdy novel was an 'outrage against Sense and Decency'. He rhetorically asks whether the 'solemn dictates of religion' are now 'fit to be conveyed from the mouths of Buffoons and ludicrous Romancers?' Furthermore, Ruffhead wondered whether 'any man [would] believe that a preacher was in earnest', who mounted 'the pulpit in a *Harlequin's coat?*'[21] By first attributing the sermons to Parson Yorick then subsequently acknowledging their authorship by a 'Prebendary of York and Vicar of Sutton-on-the-Forest', the two opposed, incommensurable concepts of happiness were suddenly brought into sharp relief. As a Prebendary of the Church of England, Sterne represents the happiness of religion, whereas Y*orick*, a fictional character from a comic novel, is more representative of the experiential and hedonist conception of happiness. The paradox of a clergyman authoring a bawdy novel thus contaminated both, in the eyes of many reviewers.

The second instalment of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* which comprised of volume III and IV was published on 18 January 1766, with an even larger subscribers' list. Since late 1761, with the publication of volumes V and VI of *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne's bookseller had changed from Dodsley to the firm of Becket and De Hondt. It is only natural then that Becket and De Hondt should publish volumes III and IV of the sermons as well. The instalment consisted of twelve sermons in total, with six in volume III and another six in volume IV. Sterne concludes his fourth volume with 'The Abuses

[20] *SN*, 3.
[21] Owen Ruffhead and William Rose, 'Sterne's Sermons', *The Monthly Review, Or, Literary Journal: By Several Hands.* 22 (May 1760): 422–75, 422.

of Conscience Considered' sermon. As already noted, this sermon was first published in 1750 and appears in volume II, Chapter XVII of *Tristram Shandy*.

Volume III comprised: 'The Character of Shimei', 'The Case of Hezekiah and the Messengers', 'The Levite and his Concubine', Felix's Behaviour Towards Paul, Examined', 'The Prodigal Son' and 'National Mercies Considered'. These were numbered I – VI.[22] Volume IV comprised: 'The History of Jacob, Considered', 'The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Considered', 'Pride', 'Humility', 'Advantages of Christianity to the World' and 'The Abuses of Conscience Considered'. These were numbered VII - XII.[23]

The final three volumes of sermons, published under the title *Sermons by the late Rev. Mr. Sterne*, were seen through the press by Sterne's daughter Lydia who enlisted the help of his friend John Hall Stevenson.[24] Becket, it appears, had queried the quality of the sermons as well as the extent of their borrowings and he was reluctant to meet Lydia's price for the copyright as he had taken seriously Sterne's reference to the 'sweepings of the Author's study' in the advertisement to 'The Abuses of Conscience Considered'. In the end, the sermons were published by a consortium of Becket, William Strahan, and Strahan's partner, Thomas Cadell.[25] Whilst it was probably a matter of necessity that Mrs Sterne and Lydia should make as much as possible out of Sterne's posthumous sermons, as Monkman observes 'there seems to have been some deviousness in the way they went about both the begetting of the text and the disposing of it'.[26] The sermons duly appeared on 3 June 1769 in three volumes, containing eighteen sermons in total; six in volume V, six in volume VI and six in Volume VII. In a letter to his wife instructing her how to make the most of his effects, Sterne had intimated to her that there were enough sermons to make at least three volumes.[27]

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[22] Monkman, 'Sterne's Sermons', 74.
[23] Monkman, 76-7.
[24] Cash, *The Later Years*, 339-43.
[25] Cash, 340-1.
[26] Monkman, 'Sterne's Sermons', 87.
[27] *Letters*, II.XL.736.

Volume V comprised: 'Temporal Advantages of Religion', 'Our Conversation in Heaven', 'Description of the World', 'St. Peter's Character', 'Thirtieth of January' and 'Untitled. [God's forbearance of sin.]'. These are numbered I – VI.[28] Volume VI comprised: 'Trust in God', 'Untitled' [the sin of murder], 'Sanctity of the Apostles', 'Penances', 'On enthusiasm' and 'Eternal advantages of Religion'. These are numbered VII – XII.[29] Volume VII comprised: 'Asa: a thanksgiving sermon', 'Follow peace', 'Search the Scriptures', 'Untitled' [Efficacy of Prayer], 'The ways of Providence justified to man' and 'The Ingratitude of Israel'. These are numbered XIII – XVIII.[30]

In honour of Sterne's memory, the subscribers' list totalled more than 700 names. When eventually published and advertised by large extracts in the *London Chronicle*, of which Strahan was printer and part proprietor, the sermons met with a lukewarm response.[31] The *Monthly Revi*ew for July said, 'For aught that appears, either in the matter or the manner of these posthumous performances, they might have been the work of Mr. Sterne's curate'.[32] Nevertheless, a second edition was called for in 1769 before the end of the year.[33]

**Sterne as Editor**

New has argued that 'there is some evidence that Sterne may have corrected the first edition' but 'no evidence that he took any interest after that'.[34] Wilbur Cross makes the point that Sterne could hardly have spent much time revising his sermons for the first edition since 'Had he wished it there was no time for rewriting them during the months he was in London marching from one great house

[28] Monkman, 'Sterne's Sermons', 86-7.
[29] Monkman, 89.
[30] Monkman, 90-1.
[31] 'The London Chronicle', 16 May 1769.
[32] Anonymous, 'Sterne's Sermons, Vols. V. VI. VII.', ed. Ralph Griffiths, *The Monthly Review, Or, Literary Journal. By Several Hands.* 41 (July 1769): 73.
[33] Cash, *The Later Years*, 343.
[34] Cash, 3.

to another'.[35] Sterne had replied in Chapter IV of Volume III of *Tristram Shandy* (January 1761) to the criticism which the publication of the first instalment of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* had attracted.[36]

Cross suggests that Sterne worked on volumes III and IV of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* from the end of April 1765 to their publication on 18 January 1766.[37] This is seconded by New who believes that the twelve sermons of volumes III and IV are 'the only ones Sterne laboured over to any extent in preparing his sermons for the printer'.[38] Lansing Hammond also conjectures that Sterne worked over existing manuscripts and fragments, combining and recombining elements from an extensive commonplace book; a view of Sterne's process of sermon composition that I am inclined to agree with. Melvyn New also shares the belief that Sterne kept a commonplace book, although he points out in his notes to the sermons that James Downey 'does not'.[39]

The sermons which open and close the first two volumes, 'Inquiry After Happiness', and 'Job's Expostulation with his Wife' define *'true happiness'* to the congregation and locate its '*true source'*. The sermons that begin and end the third and fourth volume, 'The Character of Shimei' and 'The Abuses of Conscience Considered', recommend the control of one's desires and the contraction of one's pleasures as a means towards the attainment of happiness (in both this world and the next), while the posthumous volumes expound the advantages and pleasures that will accrue to those who live a moderate, religious and virtuous life.

As their editor, it is highly probable that Sterne arranged his sermons to conform to the moral framework of *eudaemonist* happiness as there are three thematic strands in the sermons which

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[35] Wilbur L. Cross, *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1929), 245.
[36] *TS,* III.IV.189.
[37] Cross, *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, 369.
[38] *SN*, 4.
[39] *SN*, 38. See also Lansing van der Heyden Hammond, *Laurence Sterne's Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 65-73 and James Downey, 'The Sermons of Mr Yorick: A Reassessment of Hammond', *English Studies in Canada* 4, no. 2 (1978): 193–211, 209-10.

correspond to the tripartite, teleological structure of the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism. The first strand differentiates 'true happiness' (the final end of Christian salvation) from 'deceptive' happiness which it characterizes as an experiential, subjective state of satisfaction or pleasure. It traces 'true happiness' to its origin or source in God and argues against ethical hedonism; against the idea that pleasure could ever be considered as man's highest value or chief ethical good. The second strand outlines some of the facilitators and impediments to man's attainment of happiness and claims that the exercise of virtue (controlling one's desires and contracting one's pleasures) is the best means to attain it. The third strand describes the advantages of a moderate, virtuous, religious life over that prescribed by 'heathen' or 'freestanding' moralities. This strand argues against the claim of the so called 'pagan philosophers' that virtue is its own reward and approves the practices of Anglicanism as against those practiced by the Catholics or Dissenters.

As Regina Maria Dal Santo has verified,[40] the incidence of the terms 'happiness' and 'pleasure' (together with its synonyms) illustrate the predominance of this topic in the sermons. Sterne employs the word 'happiness' 138 times, 'happy' 38 times, 'pleasures(s)' 85 times, 'enjoyments' 38 times, 'joy' 30 times and the verb 'to enjoy' 17 times.

## The Critical Debate Over the Composition of the Sermons

The date of composition of the sermons has been the subject of much controversy. Holographs of two sermons from the final volumes have survived, namely that of the 'Temporal advantages of religion' and 'Penances'.[41] In both manuscripts alternative readings in Sterne's hand exist, often without cancelling the original. This suggests that either the printer was given a free hand to select between available revisions or that Sterne's daughter Lydia made the choices and prepared a

[40] Regina Maria dal Santo, 'Sterne, Tillotson, and Human Happiness', *The Shandean* 25 (2014).
[41] *Sermons,* 28.268-75, 'Temporal advantages of religion', and *Sermons,* 37.347-56, 'Penances'.

printer's copy herself.[42] Of those sermons published during Sterne's lifetime, not one manuscript survives as they simply disappear at the printer's. Monkman conjectures that Sterne probably supplied the printer with 'the home-made "notebooks" he had long kept, as most clergymen did, to read from or refer to in the pulpit'.[43]

In his comparison of Sterne's forty-five extant sermons with their putative sources, Lansing Hammond argues that 'it must have been during the years between 1737 and 1745 that practically all his discourses, at least in rudimentary form, were set down on paper'.[44] Hazarding a guess that 'the period concurrent with his first admittance to the priesthood would be the normal time for his most serious and sustained attention to his churchly duties' Hammond concludes that Sterne 'would then have felt the greatest need for reading and for compiling sermons.' He also adds that with the single exception of Swift's *Sermons*, first published in 1744, that 'Sterne made no use in his own discourses of any writing which had not already appeared in print before 1733'.[45] Hammond also advances the premise in his study that the sermons of the first four volumes contain fewer borrowings and are generally of a much higher quality than those of the posthumous volumes. He concludes that they were written late in his sermon-writing career and were therefore the fruit of Sterne's improved writing skills.[46]

James Downey provides an accurate assessment of the flaws in Hammonds' argument when he observes that Sterne appears to have continued to write sermons after 1750, 'just as he continued to preach them until his voice began to fail him in the early 1760s'. He notes that while there is 'circumstantial evidence relevant to establishing the dates of composition of nine sermons' for the other thirty-six sermons 'it is impossible to do more than guess at when they were written'. Downey

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[42] *SN*, 6-7.
[43] Monkman, 'Sterne's Sermons', 108.
[44] Hammond was the first scholar to catalogue Sterne's sources in *Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (1948). His work was later completed by Melvyn New in the Florida Edition of the sermons.
[45] Lansing van der Heyden Hammond, *Laurence Sterne's Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, Yale Studies in English 108 (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1970), 56-7.
[46] Hammond, 18.

goes on to refute Hammond's suggestion that Sterne's sermons underwent any sudden qualitative, methodological, or stylistic change in the mid-1740s, or at any time thereafter, and says that the evidence, such as it is, implies that Sterne was 'still capable of plagiarizing freely in sermons prepared in the 1760s'. To the assumption that the sermons published posthumously in 1769 (V-VII) were written earlier than those that Sterne himself published, Downey conjectures that Sterne 'obviously knew where his greatest strength and uniqueness as a sermon writer lay when he made his selection in 1760 and again in 1766, for he included all his "dramatic" sermons in the volumes he himself published.'[47]

For New, all the sermons have their roots in 'a sermon-writing career that coincides with the start of Sterne's clerical career in 1737 and ended probably in 1765 with his final acts of revision'.[48] To try to date the composition of Sterne's forty-five sermons any more precisely, says New, even those sermons where a 'delivery date' is available, is 'inappropriate and misleading'. A sermon delivered in 1763, he adds, 'might well contain numerous paragraphs written as early as 1740'.[49] Since Sterne's sermons can all be accommodated within the framework of Christian *eudaemonism,* I am persuaded that New is correct in his view that Sterne's published sermons are drawn from a stock that Sterne developed, revised and continually reworked throughout his clerical career.

**The Debate Concerning the Derivative Nature of the Sermons**

Determined to expound a view of religion already defined by Latitudinarian theologians before him, Sterne explicitly states in his *Preface* to the first two volumes of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, that he has no intention of expressing 'many new thoughts' upon 'old and beaten subjects'. It is well, he

[47] Downey, 'The Sermons of Mr Yorick', 209-10.
[48] *SN*, 5.
[49] *SN*, 5.

adds, if the reader 'has new language; in three or four passages'.[50] As Lansing Hammond,[51] in his investigations into the sources of Sterne's sermons and Melvyn New in his encyclopaedic notes to the Florida edition of the sermons have extensively documented, Sterne drew directly upon Anglican discourse as it developed in the seventeenth century and on the eighteenth-century 'chorus' that imitated and emulated that discourse.[52]

As New has emphasized, it was standard practice at the time for clergymen to adapt or refashion phrases, passages, ideas and topics, or even to copy verbatim from the sermons of eminent or respected divines.'[53] Hammond cites an example of this practice in the 'Temporal advantages of religion.'[54] And while this discourse remains unique, 'even in the list of Sterne's achievements', Hammond observes, 'many other instances can be cited' where 'extracts from different sources have been combined and put to new use'.[55] In his sermons on happiness, Sterne's acknowledged sources are to John Tillotson (1630-1694), Samuel Clarke (1675-1729), Edward Young (1683-1765) and John Norris (1657-1711).

In extenuation of Sterne's 'consultation with the traditional discourse' which even he concedes 'has not been sufficiently accounted for or concealed', New explains that the sermons 'were not, with two exceptions, originally meant for publication'. When Sterne rushed to London in early 1760 to capitalize on his novel's success, says New, he selected the best sermons that he had 'no known intention of publishing prior to that moment'.[56] This inference is undoubtedly based on New's

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[50] Sterne, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, Preface.
[51] Hammond, *Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (1948).
[52] *SN*, Preface, xiv.
[53] Hammond, *Sermons of Mr. Yorick* (1948), 65-6. Hammond notes that in the 'Temporal advantages of religion' Sterne manages to dexterously assemble a 'mosaic' by transposing 'fragments' of text from five different writers. It joins together, he says, 'such dissimilar titles as Blair's "A Competency Promised to the Just," Young's "Safe Way to Happiness, Present as Well as Future," Clarke's "Uprightness a Man's Greatest Security," Tillotson's "Advantages of Religion to Particular Persons," and Norris's "Importance of a Religious Life Considered."'
[54] Hammond (1948), 65-6.
[55] Hammond (1948), 65-6.
[56] *SN*, Preface, xv.

assumption that printed discourse did not usually have the same extensive and unacknowledged verbatim borrowings as 'commonplace Sunday sermons'. Although he could also be taking Sterne's own testimony at face value when he says in his *Preface* to *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* that 'not one of them was composed with any thoughts of being printed'.[57] Hammond also extenuates Sterne's extensive 'appropriations' but his defence of this practice is largely based on an appreciation of the changing history of literary ethics. As Hammond explains, Sterne wrote his compositions at a time when borrowing material for a sermon from previous writers on the same topic was actively encouraged rather than frowned upon. In support of his contention, Hammond cites the advice given to 'young clergymen' by Bishop George Bull (circa 1708) who instructs his charges:

> Not to trust at first to their own compositions, but rather to furnish themselves with a provision of the best sermons which the learned divines of our church have published; that by reading them often, and by endeavouring to imitate them, they may acquire a habit of good preaching themselves.[58]

The derivative nature of Sterne's sermons is seconded by New, who claims that one would be 'hard pressed' to find in Sterne's sermons 'a passage that could not have appeared in Tillotson or Clarke --- or for that matter, in Wilkins or William Wollaston, Edward Stillingfleet or John Sharp'. Indeed, one hears, he says, Sterne's voice in the writing of them all, which is why Sterne's borrowings 'are so difficult to detect and why they meld so seamlessly into his own work.'[59] In borrowing his ideas from an ongoing Anglican discourse, says New, Sterne 'was doing what I believe a vast majority of clergymen tried to do; avoid error and controversy'. For New, Sterne's skill in joining 'diverse voices into unified and quite effective wholes, are of a piece with eighteenth-century Anglican pulpit oratory, reflecting theologically-based principles of sermon composition'.[60]

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[57] Sterne, *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick*, Preface.
[58] Edward Burton, ed., *The Works of George Bull, DD. Lord Bishop of St. David's: To Which Is Prefixed The Life of Bishop Bull by Robert Nelson*, vol. 7 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1827), 558-9. Cited by Hammond, *Sermons of Mr. Yorick (1948)*, 75.
[59] *SN*, Preface, xiv.
[60] *SN*, Preface, xvii.

While New contends that 'Sterne's theology was undoubtedly shaped by his reading of Tillotson and Clarke's sermons', he qualifies this statement with a reminder that these authors were 'always addressing a far more sophisticated congregation' and that 'their aim was larger than Sterne's':

> Nothing less, in fact, than to define the moderate and moderating position that would be the Anglican Church of the next century.[61]

My own view is that Yorick's comment on preaching in *Tristram Shandy* supports the argument that Sterne's more down to earth homilies were more appropriate to his less exalted environment, audience and purpose:

> To preach, to shew the extent of our reading, or the subtleties of our wit—to parade it in the eyes of the vulgar with the beggarly accounts of a little learning tinselled over with a few words which glitter but convey little light and less warmth—is a dishonest use of the poor single half hour in a week which is put into our hands—'Tis not preaching the gospel –but ourselves.[62]

Yorick's suggestion that such preachers are primarily concerned to display their own abilities and intellectual learning is wholly consistent with Sterne's emphasis in the sermons on practical religion rather than on salient points of theology or doctrine. The most Sterne laid claim to in his *Preface* was that his sermons set out 'old truths' in a new way. In dedicating his first published sermon, 'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered' to the Dean of York in 1747, Sterne wrote:

> There can be little left upon the subject of Charity which has not been often thought and much better express'd by many who have gone before; And, indeed, it seems so beaten and common a Path, that it is not an easy Matter for a new Comer to distinguish himself in it by any Thing except the Novelty of his Vehicle.[63]

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[61] *SN*, Preface, xiii.
[62] *TS*, IV.XXVI.377.
[63] *Sermons*, 5.40, Dedication to the Dean of York, Richard Osbaldestone in 'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered'.

**Sterne's Style in the Sermons**

While New and Hammond make a compelling case that Sterne's sermons are highly derivative of earlier sermons in the Latitudinarian tradition, they generally tend to understate the way in which Sterne transformed his source material.

Sterne frequently refashions borrowed material and often reconstitutes it in his own sermon by giving this material either a different emphasis or an original context. Sterne frequently imposes on this source material a more 'conversational', 'emotional' or 'dramatic' air. Margaret Shaw observes that Sterne appears to delete words and phrases that he feels are 'ill-suited to his own lighter and more conversational style'.[64] More than one reader has noted how Sterne skilfully modulates each transition from a borrowed to an original passage in such a way as to keep the whole of his discourse in tune with itself.[65] Judith Hawley observes that Sterne's adaptations clearly suggest his concern to maintain a characteristic style. An idiolect, she says, that lends the borrowed text 'an idiosyncratic air of spontaneity'.[66]

Sterne's sermonic persona and style is also an expression of a dominant theory of preaching. One where engaging the passions of his auditors is equally important as engaging their judgment or reason. In 'Eternal advantages of religion'[67] Sterne reflexively demonstrates his conformity to the structure of the sermon as it developed in the early Restoration when he informs his congregation that he will re-touch 'the principal arguments of the discourse' on the text of Ecclesiastes xii.13, before he proceeds 'to the general use and application of the whole'.[68] Sterne's method of outlining

[64] Margaret R. B. Shaw, *Laurence Sterne: The Making of a Humourist, 1713-1762* (London: The Richards Press, 1957), Chapter VIII.
[65] *TS*, IV.XXV.374.
[66] Judith Hawley, 'Review Essay of Melvyn New, Ed., The Sermons of Laurence Sterne, The Florida Edition of the Works of Laurence Sterne, Vols 4 and 5', *Essays in Criticism* 48 (1998): 80–8.
[67] *Sermons*, 39.368-74, 'Eternal Advantages of Religion'.
[68] *Sermons*, 39.368, 'Eternal Advantages of Religion'.

the main arguments involved in his exposition of scripture is consistent with the advice of James Arderne who reminds the sermonist that:

> We must solicit […] not with the understanding alone, but at the same time with the affections of the soul […] Religion is a way of pleasantness […] Beware that it come not too faintly and coldly from you; the design is to inflame and kindle the affections.[69]

In-fact passages to 'inflame and kindle the affections' are frequently found in sermons designed to dispose a congregation towards giving alms to the poor, the sick or the orphaned. Charity sermons such as 'Philanthropy Recommended',[70] 'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered',[71] 'Vindication of Human Nature',[72] 'The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Considered',[73] and 'Follow Peace'[74] all exploit man's desire for happiness as an inducement to virtue. As I shall later detail, such sermons connect the moral justification for righteous conduct with the motivation for conducting oneself that way, by imaginatively demonstrating the satisfaction (or pleasure) that is attendant on one's charitable or benevolent conduct towards others.

In 'The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Considered',[75] Sterne employs passages of highly charged emotion to exploit the connection between man's sympathy for the distress of others, his capacity to react to what he perceives as 'unfairness' and his propensity to be both 'risk or loss averse' as well as a 'reciprocal thinker'. Preached on the 3rd May 1761 as a charity sermon to benefit the poor children of St. Andrew's Foundling Hospital in Holborn,[76] Sterne presents a scene in 'The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Considered' which explicitly contrasts 'two of the most opposite conditions that could be brought together from human life'. Having stated his reluctance to hazard 'a question which must bring tears into so many eyes', Sterne nevertheless proceeds to

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[69] James Arderne, *Directions Concerning the Matter and Stile of Sermons*, ed. John Mackay (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), 15-6. Cited by New in *SN*, 399 (Note 368).
[70] *Sermons*, 3.21-30, 'Philanthropy Recommended'.
[71] *Sermons*, 5.40-56, 'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered'.
[72] *Sermons*, 7.65-73, 'Vindication of Human Nature'.
[73] *Sermons*, 23.214-24, 'The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Considered'.
[74] *Sermons*, 41.384-9, 'Follow Peace'.
[75] *Sermons*, 23:214-24, 'The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Considered'.
[76] *SN*, 248.

enquire of his auditors whether they have ever been 'wounded' by the loss of a 'friend', by 'the stroke of death' or have ever been 'torn away from the embraces of a dear and promising child'. He reminds his wealthy congregation[77] of their own vulnerability since 'nature is the same in all conditions and lots of life' and proceeds to invite them to imagine 'a child' (perhaps *their* child) 'thrust forth in an evil hour, without food, without raiment, bereft of instruction'.[78] Through his affecting depiction of poor wretches in the utmost distress, Sterne encourages his auditors to identify with his characters and to actively respond to their plight as he iterates 'the link of dependence' that joins man to man. In his portrait of one man 'exalted above the level of mankind, to the highest pinnacle of prosperity,---to riches' and of a second man, his opposite, 'a creature in all the shipwreck of nature,----helpless,---undone,---in want of friends, in want of health,--and in want of everything',[79] Sterne exploits the core insight that concerns about 'fairness' are deeply rooted in the nature of mankind and that benevolent acts or 'gifts' to another are closely connected with judgments of the intended recipient's desert. [80] In a deft negotiation of the difficulties involved in addressing a prosperous congregation in a mercantile society, Sterne makes it clear in his sermon that it is not the possession or the enjoyment of riches that constitute the sin (since riches like other conditional goods are 'an instance of GOD's blessing') but rather the sin is in the 'wasteful and dishonest perversion of them to pernicious ends'. Ends which are, he notes, frequently 'the very opposite ones for which they were granted, ---to glad the heart, to open it, and to render it more kind'.[81] In contextualising the situation as one which demands a moral response not a market or commercial one, Sterne suggests that money can be instrumental to the attainment of certain

[77] St. Andrews was the favourite charity of both the London elite and of the artistic community. Figures such as Hogarth, Dashwood and Wilkes were included on its board of Governors. See *SN*, 249.
[78] *Sermons*, 23.214-24, 'The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Considered'.
[79] *Sermons*, 23:218.
[80] See discussion of 'the inequality aversion hypothesis' formulated by the philosopher John Rawls in Paul Anand, *Happiness Explained: Human Flourishing and Global Progress* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 92-6.
[81] *Sermons*, 23.219.

valued outcomes, but that money for its own sake is most definitely not their measure. The 'snare the rich man had fallen into', says Sterne the sermonist, 'is a lack of compassion for those in want'.

In detailing 'the dangers to which great riches naturally expose mankind' Sterne also draws upon man's propensity to be 'risk or loss averse' as he reminds his auditors that 'guard it by entails and settlements as we will, the most affluent plenty may be stripped'.[82] Since men generally adapt better in life to gains than losses, they will naturally feel a greater concern to avoid any negative or adverse changes to their situation or circumstances. As man frequently exhibits a tendency to punish those individuals who he judges as wholly self-regarding as well as those individuals who pursue only their own self-interest, Sterne's well-heeled auditors may well be reluctant to exhibit a similar lack of generosity to that of the 'rich man' who is so negatively depicted in the sermon. In addition to the implicit threat of retribution against those whose actions or inaction betray a lack of generosity (whether the author of such retribution be one's neighbours or God) the sermon also appeals to the concept of 'reciprocity' where a 'gift' is embedded in some larger concept of exchange.[83] In some accounts of reciprocity, giving may return a previous favour or anticipate some beneficial act in the future. In Sterne's account of reciprocity, the expectation of return is not confined to a named individual but to the workings of a providential God. It is predicated on the belief that assistance would be given to the generous if they find themselves in similar circumstances of need. This is confirmed by Sterne's iteration of the scriptural rule '*That whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also unto them'.* This injunction is designed to elicit a moral, charitable response from the audience and encourage them to identify with his characters were their situations reversed. The possibility of receiving material benefits in this life, as well as gaining the happiness of salvation in the afterlife, are rooted in the idea of virtuous conduct. Having primed his congregation to give generously to the collection plate (which will now be circulated among them) Sterne draws

[82] *Sermons*, 23.223.
[83] See Anand, *Happiness Explained*.

his 'Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Considered' to a close. In typical fashion, the clergyman takes his leave on a note of pathos:

> As we have felt for ourselves,---let us feel for CHRIST'S sake----let us feel for theirs: and may the God of all comfort bless you.'[84]

A similar scene of woe and affliction is depicted in the Lenten sermon 'The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning Described'.[85] Although the focus here is not so much on the dead man 'ready to be carried out' or 'the indulgent father of a numerous family',[86] as on the gathered mourners who are attending a funeral. The mourners' recognition of man's common sorrow and suffering is signified by their 'serious and devout frame of mind' as they enter the 'gate of affliction'. Their 'pensive' heart becomes full of 'religious impressions' and is deeply smitten with 'sense' and 'a love of virtue'.[87] 'Could we in this crisis', says Sterne:

> Whilst this empire of reason and religion lasts, and the heart is thus exercised with wisdom and busied with heavenly contemplations---could we see it naked as it is---stripped of all its passions, unspotted by the world, and regardless of its pleasures---we might then safely rest our cause.[88]

Sterne reminds his congregation that Solomon's determination in favour of 'the house of mourning' is not renouncing pleasure 'for its own sake' but because the experience is 'fruitful in virtue' and thus 'becomes the occasion of much good'. Although without this end, Sterne importantly owns, sorrow has no use 'but to shorten a man's days'.[89] By facilitating his auditors to imaginatively identify with those in 'the house of mourning', Sterne encourages his congregation to 'cool and sober' reflections which in turn will bring them to a greater awareness of God. A similar impulse is undoubtedly behind Sterne's propensity to deliver a biblical narrative in a succession of 'dramatic' or 'vivid' little scenes. In the 'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered'[90] (a sermon

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[84] *Sermons*, 23:224, 'The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus Considered'.
[85] *Sermons*, 2.12-20, 'The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning Described'.
[86] *Sermons*, 2.19.
[87] *Sermons*, 2:20.
[88] *Sermons*, 2:20.
[89] *Sermons*, 2:20.
[90] *Sermons*, 5:40-56, 'The Case of Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath Considered'.

that is indebted to Bishop Hall's *Contemplations*) Sterne interweaves Bible narrative, Hall's commentary and his own interpretation of the conflicting motives which lie behind the actions of the principal characters.[91]

The 'emotive' appeal of many of Sterne's sermons which use man's pursuit of happiness and pleasure as an inducement to virtue was not lost on the *Critical Review* of 1760. Its reviewer praised *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* as 'good-humoured appeals to the heart' in contrast to the dry, scholarly productions of those 'learned divines… who look for the formality of heads, explications, proofs, and controversial quibbles'.[92] This appears to confirm a 'generational shift' from the scholarly, ornate and individual styles of writers like More and Cudworth to the plain, popular and collective style of Wilkins and Tillotson. However, the evidence for this line of thinking is not conclusive. While it is true that the eighteenth-century Anglican sermon-writer was instructed 'to abandon the doctrinal disputes that had engulfed most of the seventeenth century in religious warfare' as well as the 'elaborate style and minute scholarship that had marked this earlier period',[93] there were still important differences in method, emphases and tone between individual writers who belonged to the same generation of Latitude-men.[94]

Influential on the substance of Sterne's sermons are the ideas developed by a group of Latitudinarian divines. This group, which includes members from both generations and of which Tillotson was the central figure, not only share a more humanist ethos about the nature and function of religion but they also share a belief that their views 'should be made evident through plain and

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[91] Joseph Hall, 'Contemplations upon the Principal Passages of the Holy Story', in *The Works of the Right Reverend Joseph Hall*, ed. Philip Wynter, vol. 2 (Oxford: University Press, 1863), 37–42.
[92] Tobias George Smollett, ed., 'Art. 17. The Sermons of Mr. Yorick.', *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature; London*, Art. 17. The Sermons of Mr. Yorick., 9 (May 1760): 405–7, 405.
[93] *SN*, Preface, xiii.
[94] See Isabel Rivers, *Whichcote to Wesley*, vol. 1, 2 vols, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 38.

rational exposition'.[95] The key assumptions of this group, that holiness and happiness are identical or analogous; that the essence of religion is morality; that the practice of its precepts is pleasant and in man's best interest; and that religion is both reasonable and natural to man; are manifest in the sermons of Sterne. The writing of this group was very much a shared enterprise, and this effectively results in 'a certain anonymity of expression which makes it difficult and indeed pointless to try to establish which member of the group originated a particular argument'.[96]

Although the theology of Sterne's sermons is highly derivative of earlier sermons in the Latitudinarian tradition, this material was consciously shaped by Sterne. While New is right to urge 'extreme caution' before one asserts 'that any particular sentence or sentiment in the *Sermons* is uniquely *Sternean*,'[97] his sense of caution more probably reflects the extreme difficulty involved in separating the expression of theology from the stylistic preferences or rhetoric in which it is embedded.

In his role as editor of the Florida edition of Sterne's *Works*, and in his role as editor of the Florida edition of the *Sermons,* New has argued that Sterne's sermons are unexceptional and theologically orthodox discourses. His notes to the sermons are the culmination of years spent documenting Sterne's numerous 'appropriations' from the didactic discourse of eminent Anglican figures and divines. It is therefore unsurprising that New should insist that Sterne's sermons are absolutely in accordance with mid-eighteenth-century Anglican Latitudinarian discourse and are, moreover, those that you would expect from a clergyman who follows the sermonising practices developed by those such as Archbishop John Tillotson and Bishop John Wilkins.[98]

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[95] See Rivers, 38. Rivers notes that this small influential group, of which Tillotson was a central figure, includes members from two generations of latitude-men, among them Whichcote, Wilkins, Patrick, Fowler, Stillingfleet and Barrow.
[96] Rivers, 38.
[97] *SN*, 17.
[98] *SN*, 17.

**The Issue of Sterne's Orthodoxy (the Argument That Sterne's Latitudinarian Views Constitute Mainstream Anglicanism)**

Elizabeth Kraft, who absorbs and extends New's argument that the sermons are 'continuous with mainstream Anglican tradition', asserts that 'Sterne's credo' as extracted from the sermons is consistently grounded in religious doctrine. In *Laurence Sterne Revisited,* Kraft claims that for a literal listing of the beliefs of Sterne and his contemporaries 'we need but look to the Thirty-Nine Articles or even the *Ten Commandments*, supplemented by the *New Testament* teachings of Christ'. Kraft reduces ideas that she admits 'have a complicated theological history' to seven core beliefs that she describes as 'the foundation of a system of practical religion'. These beliefs, she observes 'were in no way unique to Sterne' rather 'they were shared by many, if not most, eighteenth-century Christians'.[99] Yet a growing number of commentators have recently argued that this insistence on the conventionality or orthodoxy of Sterne's sermons is somewhat overstated, particularly when the responses of some of Sterne's early readers are considered. In sum, notes Goring:

> During the decade when Sterne's *Sermons* were first published, a range of readers declared these 'orthodox' works to be variously indecent, jocular, frivolous, witty, humorous, imaginative, peculiar, unlike sermons, ingenious, original, and distinctively the work of the same man who created *Tristram Shandy*.[100]

In her review of the Florida edition of the *Sermons* Judith Hawley points to New's omission of Sterne's original and provocative title with the inference that this is a clear attempt to minimize what could be construed as unusual or unconventional about them.[101] Yet as I indicated earlier, this species of objection pertains more to the manner of their publication than to the religious content of the sermons. It refers to Sterne's 'impropriety' in issuing spiritual texts under the name of his jesting alter-ego Yorick, rather than to any religious objection or antagonism. Hawley also charges New

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[99] Elizabeth Kraft, *Laurence Sterne Revisited*, ed. Herbert Sussman, Twayne's English Authors Series (New York: Twayne, 1996), 29.
[100] Paul Goring, 'Thomas Weales's The Christian Orator Delineated (1778) and the Early Reception of Sterne's Sermons', *The Shandean* 13 (2002): 87–97, 90.
[101] Hawley, 'Review Essay of Melvyn New', 80-8.

with downplaying the personal and biographical dimension of the sermons in his notes, which presumably speaks to the question of Sterne's religious or authorial sincerity.[102] This seems to be fair comment, given Sterne's uncontested history of sexual infidelities and documented associations with rakes and notorious sceptics, but I also appreciate that a greater emphasis on this dimension in his notes would take New away from his explicitly stated remit.[103] It has also been mooted that some assessments of the putative unorthodoxy of the sermons is because their reception was mediated by each reviewer's attitude towards *Tristram Shandy* as well as to matters such as Sterne's general reputation. It is certainly true that, as an Anglican clergyman, Sterne had preached his sermons for many years prior to the publication of *Tristram Shandy* (1759-60) from pulpits in York and Sutton-on-the-Forest without them ever having attracted a whiff of controversy. As New has posited, some reactions were undoubtedly 'contaminated' by the bawdiness of Sterne's novel and by his subsequent notoriety since the sermons were generally encountered by most readers after his fiction.[104] Indeed, in this respect the early responses merely foreshadow more recent critics whose interpretation of the sermons are coloured by their construction of *Tristram Shandy* and/or the reputation of its author. New's further argument that interpretations of Sterne's 'un-typicality' is due to a reader's unfamiliarity with Latitudinarian theology, has recently been put under pressure.

Paul Goring has argued that at least one clergyman, who was a contemporary of Sterne's, had found *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* 'eccentric' and 'improper'.[105] Thomas Weales, a clergyman apparently located within the same theological and homiletic tradition as Sterne, found the sermons to be individualistic, sportive and clearly the work of a writer who wished to exhibit both his wit and his literary dexterity. Weales takes particular exception to what he sees as Sterne's unseemly literary embellishments, and he also condemns Sterne's licentiousness 'in the personification of abstract terms'. In short, Weales finds Sterne to be a vain, egotistical and flashy sermonist who either 'hasn't

[102] Hawley, 80-8.
[103] Ian Campbell Ross, *Laurence Sterne: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[104] *SN*, Preface, xii.
[105] Goring, 'Early Reception of Sterne's Sermons', 93.

mastered (or not sought to master) the register required for religious writing'.[106] While the ire of Weales appears to be directed mainly towards Sterne's homiletic idiolect or rhetorical style, William Rose of the *Monthly Review* questions whether volumes III and IV of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* even fall within the category of 'sermons' at all.[107]

Some contemporary readers judged the sermons according to their own religious convictions or brand of Protestantism. In this vein William Cowper records that 'though I admire Sterne as a man of genius, I can never admire him as a preacher'.[108] Nevertheless, he considered Sterne's sermons as not without merit as 'moral performances'.[109] Yet the not uncommon view that Sterne's sermons were at best 'moral essays' should, argues Ian Campbell Ross, at least qualify the view of Sterne as an entirely orthodox Anglican preacher.[110]

One of the first scholars to detect a new positive perspective on happiness, on man's feelings in the sermons was Ronald S. Crane.[111] He particularly noticed their portrayal of human benevolence and their insistence that the passions are positive when under rational control. By concentrating on the charity sermons, Crane noted that benevolence is described as an innate feeling that is kindled by sympathy and compassion towards fellow creatures, which leads to the improvement of virtue. In his opinion, this portrayal, emerging from the writings of latitudinarian clergymen, contributed to the rise of 'sentimentalism' in literary works. This portrayal of man as a benevolent creature suggests his natural capacity to feel pleasure in doing good and the enjoyment of anticipated rewards in a bright future condition. For Crane, this process culminates in 'self-approving joy', the feeling of satisfaction that each individual perceives in self-satisfaction. Crane's

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[106] Goring, 93.
[107] William Rose, 'Yorick's Sermons', *The Monthly Review; Or, Literary Journal: By Several Hands.* 34 (March 1766): 207–15.
[108] William Cowper's Letter to Joseph Hill, 3 April 1766, quoted in Alan Barber Howes, ed., *Sterne: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1974), 171-3.
[109] Howes, 171-3.
[110] Ross, *Laurence Sterne*, 329.
[111] Ronald S. Crane, 'Suggestions Toward A Genealogy of the "Man of Feeling"', *ELH* 1, no. 3 (1934): 205–30.

article attracted a fair amount of criticism, especially from Donald Greene[112] and Gregory F. Scholtz.[113] In his evaluation of Crane's position, Greene points to the non-innovative nature of eighteenth-century sermons that describe human nature as benevolent and to the Augustinian perspective that predominated in the Anglican church of this period. In contrast to Crane, he holds that beliefs in benevolence and in the essential beauty of the emotions can be traced back to the Bible. Greene also recalls him to the central role of Articles IX and XIII which profess the postlapsarian depravity of human nature and the impossibility of good works providing retrospective justification. He also mentions the difficulty the latitudinarians experienced in reconciling Augustinianism with the tradition of Anglican rationalism. While sermon writers like Richard Hooker (1544-1600) trusted the proper exercise of reason when applied to matters of religion and allowed for the possibility of sympathy they felt, nevertheless, that these suppositions did not free man from his innate sinfulness. Scholtz adopts a middle position between Crane and Green, as he holds that latitudinarian clergymen see salvation as based on assent to revealed religion but also on conformity to divine law. This, he asserts imposes only what is possible on mankind and works towards the improvement of both individuals and of society in general. Scholtz also claims that the Latitudinarians were on a mission to reform manners as part of their agenda to produce a morally upright society. It is this, he holds, which induces them to fully embrace and promote a life of virtue that complies with God's Holy Law. This is echoed in Sermon 7, 'Vindication of Human Nature', where Sterne leaves the topic of benevolence aside, in order to enjoin his auditors to consider the future consequences should they give themselves up to passions that will be judged by 'a just GOD overlooking'.[114]

The intermediate position of Scholtz is persuasive as it most accurately conforms to the tripartite structure of classical *eudaemonism.* It retains a keen awareness of human depravity (a subject of

[112] Donald Greene, 'Latitudinarianism and Sensibility: The Genealogy of the "Man of Feeling" Reconsidered', *Modern Philology* 75, no. 2 (1977): 159–83.
[113] Gregory F. Scholtz, 'Anglicanism in the Age of Johnson: The Doctrine of Conditional Salvation', *Eighteenth-*Century Studies 22, no. 2 (1988): 182–207.
[114] *Sermons*, 7.65-73.

disagreement between Crane and Greene) and yet promotes the advantages and the happiness that results from living a religious and virtuous life. The emphasis of Sterne's sermons on the virtuous and beneficial actions of man is not because Sterne believes that mankind is innately good but rather that he wishes to encourage the right application of the divine gifts of reason, conscience and scripture in order to move him from his actuality to his potentiality. The definition of 'orthodox' is 'following or conforming to the traditional or generally accepted rules or beliefs of a religion, philosophy, or practice',[115] so the validity of the argument that Sterne's sermons are entirely 'orthodox', 'mainstream' or' new' is dependent upon the extent to which the tenets of the Latitudinarians conform to, or depart from, accepted eighteenth-century Anglican theology. This involves at least some appreciation of the changing emphases of Anglican theology.

**What is Generally Meant by 'Latitudinarian' and 'Latitudinarianism'**

Latitudinarian precepts have their historical roots in the attempt by a group of eminent Anglican divines of the Restoration to redirect key aspects of Anglican thought away from its Reformation legacy and to reduce the doctrine of the Christian religion into a few plain, 'reasonable', 'self-evident' moral fundamentals. These 'moderate churchmen' or 'latitudinarians' as contemporary opponents referred to them, wished to re-direct Anglican thought away from the dominant Calvinist Reformation tradition that stressed the depravity of human nature and salvation through grace of God's elect, to an emphasis on the 'divine residue' in the human constitution. The Latitude-men held that Christ's redemption was open to all and they emphasized the capacity of human reason and free will to co-operate with divine grace to achieve the holy and happy life. They also upheld the principles of liberty of conscience, the right of free enquiry into matters of faith, and the moral life as the essence of Christianity. These precepts were established by the early reformers,

[115] Angus Stevenson, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

reaffirmed by William Chillingworth (1602-44) and were further developed by two generations of latitude-men.

In the *Religion of Protestants, A Safe Way to Salvation,* published in 1638, Chillingworth tackled the central intellectual problem of the Reformation. This was the question of what God required of man for his Salvation, or what 'the criterion of truth' or the 'rule of faith' was in religion.[116] To the assertion that the doctrine of Infallibility should be applied to the Church since without absolute authority religion and faith would fail, Chillingworth replied that if he 'knew any one Church to be infallible' then he would 'quickly be of that Church'.[117] By admitting that 'we [Protestants] pretend not at all to any assurance that we cannot erre', but rightly understand those things that are plain, whether Fundamental or not Fundamental', Chillingworth allowed for the possibility of error in matters of faith.[118] Furthermore, he allowed that there may be degrees of faith or certainty.[119] For the hypothesis: 'That all the articles of our Faith were reveal'd by God', Chillingworth concluded that we can only achieve 'moral certainty reliant on probability and the general consent of mankind'.[120] For Chillingworth, as for Aristotle, the criteria of 'moral certainty' can only be that which accords to 'the degree of certainty appropriate to the matter at hand'. Religious faith then, on his account, does not involve, nor could it, an 'inappropriate' standard of certainty.[121] Religious truth is left alone when it appears to exceed the grasp of rational enquiry. Thus, moderate Anglicans of the seventeenth century were prepared to accept that in religion no absolute certainty was to be found. As Carol Stewart notes, Chillingworth also held that 'unwitting error need not mean eternal damnation' claiming that a loving God would not punish those whose faith was less than absolute, or those who were unwittingly guilty.[122] So to maintain unity within the Church of England, moderate

[116] Carol Stewart, 'The Anglicanism of *Tristram Shandy*: Latitudinarianism at the Limits', *JECS Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28, no. 2 (2005): 239–50, 242.
[117] William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants* (London: Printed for Iohn Clark, 1638), 150.
[118] Chillingworth, 157.
[119] Chillingworth, 157.
[120] Chillingworth, 36.
[121] Chillingworth, 325.
[122] Chillingworth, 131.

Anglicans from the 1640s onwards urged tolerance towards religious difference and stressed the simplicity of doctrine.[123]

The terms 'latitude-men' and 'latitudinarian' were first used in the 1650s and early 1660s as pejoratives to describe the position of a relatively small group within the Church of England.[124] The first generation of latitude-men were students at Cambridge before the Civil War and fellows and heads of colleges during the Interregnum while the second, who were strongly influenced by the first, were students during the late 1640s and the 1650s predominantly at Cambridge.[125] Benjamin Whichcote (1609-83), Henry More (1614-87), John Smith (1616-52), Ralf Cudworth (1617-88) and John Wilkins (1614-72) are important figures in the first group while Simon Patrick (1626-1707), John Tillotson (1630-94), Isaac Barrow (1630-77), Edward Stillingfleet (1635-99), Edward Fowler (1632-1714), Joseph Glanvill (1636-80) Edward Fowler and Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715) were important figures in the second.

The stance of the Latitude-men developed as response to the climate that prevailed during the Interregnum. Latitude was a reaction against both Calvinist doctrine and the restrictions that were placed on the Church of England during the Cromwellian period. Unlike other groups, these moderate churchmen were able to work within the establishment and in 1662 they found conformity on the terms of the *Act of Uniformity.* The main provisions of this Act were episcopal ordination and 'assent and consent' to the *Book of Common Prayer*.

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[123] John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558-1689* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 50.
[124] Rivers, *Whichcote to Wesley*, 25. She also notes: 'initially for very different reasons' the latitudinarians were regarded with suspicion both by the nonconformists and by the group 'who had been loyal to the Church of England in the 1650s and were to become known as high churchmen'. Rivers, 26.
[125] See Tulloch, 'Rational Theology (1872)', in *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. Frederick J. Powicke, vol. 2 (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1926), as cited in Rivers. Isobel Rivers makes a number of objections to the label 'Cambridge Platonists' that has customarily been used from the nineteenth century onwards to refer to this group of divines. She points out that this was not a label that their contemporaries would have used and that it serves to exclude figures like John Wilkins, who were not educated at Cambridge but who was nevertheless an important figure of the first generation of Latitude-men. She also maintains that it emphasizes 'one particular facet of their interests at the expense of others' and also adds that it 'obscures the continuity of interest between the first and second generations'. See Rivers, *Whichcote to Wesley*, 28.

The origin of the latitudinarian label is explained in several key works that were published in the 1660s and 1670s. In *A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude-men,* published in 1662, Simon Patrick writes:

> They were always looked upon with an evil eye by the successive usurping powers, and the general out-cry was, that the whole University was over-run with Arminianisme […] in opposition to that hide-bound, straight-lac'd spirit that did then prevail, they were called Latitude-men; for that was the first original of the name, whatever sense hath since been put upon it.[126]

Patrick economically articulates the Latitude-men's concern to liberate themselves from the restrictions of Calvinist theology and to propagate a more humanistic view of religion. The Latitude-men shared a hostility to predestinarian theology and would frequently interpret the Bible alongside, and in the light of, classical ethics. They praise those philosophers and writers who define man as a rational and a social being who is capable of free choice and of imitating God. And while they hold that human faculties are impaired by the Fall, they nevertheless believe that these are not wholly vitiated. The exercise of his 'right reason' (a gift of God like faith) will enable a man to know God and to discern the good. Although man cannot follow the good without God's freely given grace.

In Patrick's identification of Latitude with 'Arminianisme', he not only locates the source of their more optimistic view of human nature in the writing of seventeenth-century Arminian theologians, but he also suggests that their modification of the Calvinist doctrine of human depravity is the defining characteristic of Latitude during this period.

Those nonconformists who were prepared to join the Church of England on the terms of the *Act of Uniformity (1662)* had, in theory, two legal means by which they might be accommodated: comprehension and indulgence or toleration. The first option entailed changes in discipline and ceremony while the second allowed freedom of worship to those who had no wish to be comprehended within the Church of England. The Latitude-men's definition of Christianity as a

[126] Simon Patrick, *A Brief Account of the New Sect of Latitude-Men* (London: Sine nomine, 1662), 5.

largely moral religion that is less concerned with ecclesiastical organisation or points of doctrine and more concerned with the precepts required to live a good and virtuous life is a part of a concerted attempt to promote greater religious unity within the Church of England. Thus, in terms of discipline, the latitude-men saw questions of ecclesiastical organisation and ceremony as secondary, as 'things indifferent'. That is, not things of no importance but things that are not prescribed in Scripture and that the state has the right to determine. Their emphasis on morality as the essence of religion can be duly seen in Edward Fowler's description of Latitude in *The Principles and Practices, of Certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England* (1670):

> None have with more strength of reason demonstrated, that the grand designe of the Gospel is to make men good: not to intoxicate their brains with notions, or furnish their heads with a systeme of opinions; but to reform mens lives, and purifie their natures.[127]

Yet despite this stress on the simplicity of their doctrine the Latitude-men were regarded with suspicion by both non-conformists and high churchmen. The first group characterised them as 'heathen moralists' while the second group regarded them as 'betrayers' of the Church of England from within. Joseph Glanvill's account of 1676 reflects both the latitudinarian sympathy for non-conformists and the hostility that was directed towards them because of this by their high church colleagues:

> One of the most Common names given them was Latitudinarian from a word that signifies compass or largeness, because of their opposition to the narrow stingy Temper then called Orthodoxness; and their opinion of the lawfulness of Compliance with the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of Bensalem [England], which had been cast out with so much detestation as Anti-Christian and Abominable. These were the first occasions of that name, which was very hatefull to them, because it signified a Fundamental Contrariety to their Spirits and Opinions. But afterward among them that knew not those persons, it came to be taken in a worse sense, and Latitudinarian went for one of a large Conscience and Practice […] When they came to be better understood, they were called Cupri-Cosmits, which word hath its derivation from the place of their Rise [Cambridge], and the disposition of their Spirits, which was Catholic and general, not Topical or confined to opinions and Sects.[128]

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[127] Edward Fowler, *The Principles and Practices, of Certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England, Part 1* (London: Printed for Lodowick Lloyd, 1670), 18.

[128] Joseph Glanvill, a passage from an unpublished manuscript entitled 'Bensalem being A Description of A Catholick & Free Spirit both in Religion and Learning. In a Continuation of the story of the Lord Bacon's New Atlantis'. The greater part was first published by Cope in Joseph Glanvill and Jackson I Cope, '"The Cupri-Cosmits": Glanvill on Latitudinarian Anti-Enthusiasm', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (1954), 271.

Ultimately, because of high church opposition, the movement for comprehension failed. In 1689, the *Toleration Act* guaranteed Protestant dissenters limited indulgence. Latitudinarian support for the toleration of Protestant dissenters, while it secured this groups' friendship, only served to increase the enmity of their high church colleagues.

As Gilbert Burnett confirms in his history, Latitudinarian bishops 'were represented as men, who designed to undermine the Church, and to betray it'.[129] High churchmen frequently characterised Latitudinarians as 'indifferent' not only to the institutions and forms of religion but to its content as well. This can be illustrated by the example of Charles Leslie who maligned the views of the Latitudinarian Archbishop John Tillotson as one whose religion 'is none; that is nothing that is positive, but against every thing that is positive in other religions'.[130]

In its development from a minority movement at Cambridge in the 1660s to the most powerful group within the Church of England in the 1690s, aspects of Latitudinarian thought inevitably changed and developed. Burnett also records that by the 1690s the Latitudinarians had become the dominant office holders in the Church of England:

> They declared against superstition on the one hand, and enthusiasm on the other. They loved the constitution of the Church and the Liturgy, and could well live under them: But they did not think it unlawful to live under another form. They wished that things might have been carried with more moderation. And they continued to keep a good correspondence with those who had differed from them in opinion, and allowed a great freedom both in philosophy and in divinity: From whence they were called men of Latitude. And upon this men of narrower thoughts and fiercer tempers fastened upon them the name of Latitudinarians.[131]

Whilst Latitudinarianism had begun life in opposition to the dominant broadly Calvinist Reformation tradition, such was its success that its revisionist Arminian teachings came to typify Anglican thought in the eighteenth century. Thus, claims made by New and Kraft et al, that the sermons of Sterne are

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[129] Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time*, vol. 2, 2 vols (London: Printed by J. Downing and H. Woodfall, 1734), 126.
[130] Charles Leslie, *The Charge of Socinianism Against Dr. Tillotson Considered* (Edenburgh: s.n., 1695); published after Tillotson's death. Cited by Rivers, *Whichcote to Wesley*, 26.
[131] Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time*, vol. 1, 2 vols (London: Printed by J. Downing and H. Woodfall, 1724), 188. This was published posthumously in 1724.

'mainstream' or 'orthodox' should be interpreted in the light of this historical and religious convergence, to a period in the eighteenth century where the central tenets of Latitudinarianism and Anglicanism broadly coincide.

**Latitudinarian Moderation (Moderate Principles in Religion)**

In his employment of the word 'moderation' in the above passage, Burnett also articulates the repeated Latitudinarian characterization of their religious position as 'moderate'. As self-styled exponents of 'moderate principles' in religion, the Latitudinarians saw themselves as occupying a middle position between two extremes: Roman Catholicism on the one hand and 'enthusiasm' on the other. Roman Catholicism is characterized by its abuse of the absolute authority invested in the church, its ceremonies and its officials. It is also characterized by what the Latitudinarians' interpret as the unthinking obedience and irrational superstition of its followers. The term 'enthusiasm' is generally used to denote any effort from within the Church of England to attribute spiritual authority to the individual worshipper. It signifies sectarian religious sects or movements like the Quakers or the Methodists who privilege or emphasize an individual's special or personal relationship to God. A relationship that is marked by some sort of 'conversion experience' or an 'extraordinary manifestation of the spirit'. In this context Latitudinarianism styled itself as *the via media* or 'the middle way' between 'authoritarianism and anarchy, both spiritual and political in function and intent'.[132] It saw itself as balancing the authority of doctrine with the liberty of the individual conscience.

For the Latitudinarian 'of a cool head and sound judgment',[133] who possesses 'such a frame and temper of mind' as will lead him 'peaceably through this world',[134] the notion that one can

[132] Kraft, *Laurence Sterne Revisited*.
[133] *Sermons*, 25.242, 'Humility'.
[134] *Sermons*, 25.235.

distinguish God's influence 'from the efforts and determinations of our own reason' is, says Sterne, 'the product of a distempered fancy'.[135] The Methodist who claims a special relationship with God resulting from a personal manifestation of his spirit clearly regards himself as superior to others and as a consequence is guilty of spiritual pride. For Sterne, religious pride is 'the worst of all pride—hypocrisy, self-love, covetousness, extortion, cruelty and revenge'.[136]

**Sterne's Allegiance with the Latitudinarian 'Middle Way' of Religious Practice as Evidenced in the 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple'**

In his Lenten sermon against spiritual pride, the 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple',[137] Sterne celebrates Latitudinarianism as the correct 'middle way' of religious practice. He follows Clarke and Tillotson in prioritising 'moral duties' above 'ceremonial duties' in religion as his sermon denounces both the ritualism of the 'Roman Church' and the vice of spiritual pride associated with 'enthusiasm'.

Sterne begins the sermon by relating the parable of the 'pharisee and the publican' which compares the conduct and the 'different degrees of merit' of the two men as they go into the temple to pray. The pharisee is the embodiment of spiritual pride in that his worship is all outward pomp and show. Standing 'with an air of triumph and self-sufficiency' the pharisee thanks God that he is not like other men. He congratulates himself that he is not made like the 'extortioners', the 'adulterers', the 'unjust' or like the equally reviled 'publicans' (or tax collectors). Meanwhile, the publican stands 'afar off' in the temple and with 'a heart touched with humility from a just sense of his own unworthiness' he begs 'God to be merciful' to him a confessed sinner. 'The publican', concludes our Saviour, 'went down to his house justified rather than the other'.[138]

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[135] *Sermons*, 25.241.
[136] *Sermons*, 6.58, 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple'.
[137] *Sermons*, 6.57-64.
[138] *Sermons*, 6.58, 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple'.

In looking more minutely into the justice of Christ's determination that 'The publican went down to his house justified rather than the other',[139] Sterne explains that the pharisee is 'one of that sect' (a Roman Catholic) who 'by the austerity of their lives, their public alms-deeds, and greater pretences to piety than other men' had 'wrought themselves into much credit and reputation' in the world. Epitomising the sin of spiritual pride, the pharisee believes that God has 'fashioned him in a different mould' from the rest of his species and that he has been 'raised above the temptations and desires to which flesh and blood are subject'. The publican, in contrast, 'pleads no merit of his own----enters into no comparison with others,---or justification of himself with GOD'. He is 'humble' with 'the inward testimony of a good conscience' and therefore epitomises the virtue of religious humility.[140]

The cause of the pharisee's spiritual pride is, says Sterne, 'his mistaken notion of the true principles of his religion' since he was under the impression that the whole of it 'was comprehended in the two articles of paying tythes and frequent fasting'. With the rest of his sect the pharisee was instructed to observe 'external rites of no merit in themselves—but to stand exempted, from the more troublesome exactness in the weightier matters of the law'. Those, says Sterne, 'of eternal and unchanging obligation'.[141]

The 'fatality common to all such abuses of religion', notes Sterne, 'is to make it to consist in external rites and ceremonies more than inward purity and integrity of heart'. These outward things are easily put in practice, so it easily betrays the professors of it into a groundless persuasion of their own godliness or spiritual superiority. When 'religion is clogged and bore down by such a weight of ceremonies --It is much easier', he adds, to 'put in pretentions to holiness upon such mechanical system as is left of it, than where the character is only to be got and maintained by a painful conflict and perpetual war against the passions.' As Sterne elaborates:

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[139] *Sermons*, 6.58.
[140] *Sermons*, 6.60.
[141] *Sermons*, 6.62.

> 'Tis easier, for instance, for a zealous papist to cross himself and tell his beads, than for a humble protestant to subdue the lusts of anger, intemperance, cruelty and revenge, to appear before his maker with that preparation of mind which becomes him.[142]

As Christ's example in the *Sermon on the Mount* enjoins the virtue of humility, the reliance of the Roman Catholic Church on 'ostentatious ceremonies and gestures' offers a direct route to the sin of spiritual pride. As Sterne explains in 'Humility', pride was the 'passion through which sin and misery entered into the world' and gave our enemy the 'triumph of ruining our nature'. The restoration of which, explains Sterne, can only be achieved by bringing our soul 'back to its original temper of Humility'.[143] Furthermore, exclaims Sterne, man's nature hardly justifies such pride when one considers that even 'the best of us fall seven times a day'.[144] If pride 'is not made for a creature with such manifold imperfections' still less, he asserts, is religious pride 'a dress which still worse becomes him' and ''tis that to which he has the least pretence'.[145]

Sterne cautions that it is dangerous and delusive to be caught by the 'pomp of such external parts of religion' and in what could be interpreted as a clear rebuke to 'high church' Anglican colleagues Sterne admits that:

> Even in our own Church where there is the greatest chastity in things of this nature ---and of which none are retained in our worship but what, I believe, tend to excite and assist it---yet so strong a propensity is there in our nature to sense, and so unequal a match is the understanding for the impressions of outward things,---that we see thousands who every day mistake the shadow for the substance, and was it fairly put to the trial would exchange the reality for the appearance.[146]

While high church divines, like Daniel Waterland (1683-1740), conceded that 'moral duties' had their value they nevertheless held that the observance of 'positive' or ceremonial duties was 'a matter of prior importance'. Dr Waterland was Master of Magdalene College until a year or two before Sterne went up to Cambridge in 1733,[147] and Sterne would undoubtedly have been aware of his long-running controversy on the matter with Dr Samuel Clarke (1675-1729). Indeed, it is surely relevant

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[142] *Sermons*, 6.63, 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple'.
[143] *Sermons*, 25.239, 'Humility'.
[144] *Sermons*, 6.61, 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple'.
[145] *Sermons*, 6.60-1.
[146] *Sermons*, 6.63-4, 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple'.
[147] Ross, *Laurence Sterne*, 5.

that Sterne appropriates Locke's contrast between the shadow and the substance from one of Clarke's discourses. In urging his auditors to thus distinguish between the 'primary' and the 'secondary' qualities of religion, Sterne cautions those even in his 'own church' against yielding to the general tendency of mankind to mistake 'external appearance' for 'inner worth'.[148]

The controversy over the relative value of 'positive duties' and 'moral duties' was continued by Clarke's supporters after his death in 1729 and erupted into a pamphlet war. Clarke's posthumously published *An Exposition of the Church Catechism*[149] and Waterland's *The Nature, Obligation, and Efficacy, of the Christian Sacraments, considered,*[150] were widely quoted against each other[151] at Cambridge and the controversy was still alive when Sterne went up in the autumn of 1733.

To bring religion back 'to that cool point of reason' Sterne calls, in the 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple', for a proper 'distinction betwixt the means of religion and religion itself'. Lest in time, he says, the ceremonial part 'eat away the moral part' and leave 'nothing but a shadow behind'.[152]

Demonstrating his allegiance to the Latitudinarian approach to the rites and ceremonies of the Anglican Church, Sterne concludes his sermon by a pointed espousal of both Clarke and Tillotson's view that ritual and ceremony are largely 'instrumental' to the moral:

> Though the instrumental duties of religion are duties of unquestionable obligation to us---yet they are still but INSTRUMENTAL DUTIES, conducive to the great end of religion---which is to purify our

[148] Hammond, *Sermons of Mr. Yorick (1970)*, 83 and 112.
[149] Samuel Clarke, *An Exposition of the Church-Catechism* (London: Printed by W. Botham, for James and John Knapton, 1729).
[150] Daniel Waterland, *The Nature, Obligation, and Efficacy, of the Christian Sacraments, Considered: in a reply to a Pamphlet; intituled, An Answer to the Remarks upon Dr. Clarke's Exposition of the Church-Catechism* (London: Printed by Sam. Aris for John Crownfield, 1730).
[151] Clarke, *Exposition of the Church-Catechism* provoked Waterland to reply with his pamphlet: Daniel Waterland, *Remarks upon Doctor Clarke's Exposition of the Church-Catechism* (London: Printed by Sam. Aris for John Crownfield, 1730). This elicited an anonymous rejoinder. Waterland responded to this with his tract entitled *The Nature, Obligations and Efficacy, of the Sacraments, Considered*. His anonymous opponent (thought to be the Reverend Arthur Ashley Sykes) duly countered this and Waterland subsequently replied in kind with a supplement to his tract on the *Sacraments.*
[152] *Sermons*, 6.63-4, 'Pharisee and Publican in the Temple'.

> hearts—and conquer our passions—and in a word, to make us wiser and better men---better neighbours—better citizens—and better servants to GOD.[153]

It is surely significant that Waterland had expressly denounced Archbishop Tillotson's own words on the subject as 'in error' in *The Nature, Obligation, and Efficacy, of the Christian Sacraments, considered* (1730).[154]

In doing this, Sterne signals his allegiance to the central tenet of the Latitudinarian church that the moral life is the essence of religion. The Latitudinarian interpretation of Christian doctrine is essentially moral and although Latitudinarian divines accept that it contains 'mysteries' above reason, they tend to either play these down, interpret revealed religion in the light of natural religion, or demonstrate the essential congruity of the two. This can be partly attributed to their view that it is not profitable to talk about what is 'incomprehensible' and partly because the Latitudinarians hold that man was created a rational being, despite the effects of sin, who is endowed with an innate knowledge of God, of good and evil and knowledge of moral duties. These truths or moral laws that are written in the heart are held to be universal, self-evident, indelible and indisputable. Moreover, this knowledge or 'right reason', which is separate from and antecedent to knowledge received from biblical revelation, is discoverable by the active process of ratiocination and deduction.[155] In Latitudinarian thought, reason is both divine implantation and a faculty of ratiocination. It is both the divine moral law and the means of interpreting it and guiding men to follow it. As such it is closely associated with their view of man's conscience.

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[153] *Sermons*, 6.63-4.

[154] Waterland, *Christian Sacraments, Considered*, 4. 'The Archbishop states that: Natural and Moral Duties are approved of God for them-selves, on their own Account, and for their own sake, upon Account of their own natural and intrinsical Goodness; but the ritual and instrumental Parts of Religion are only pleasing to God in order to these, and so far as they tend to beget and promote them in us'.

[155] As Tillotson says 'the nature of man's mind and understanding, which hath this notion of a Deity born with it and stamped upon it; or, which is all one, is of such a frame, that in the free use and exercise of itself it will find out God'. Sermon 1, 'The Wisdom of Being Religious', in John Tillotson, *The Works of Dr. John Tillotson, Late Archibishop of Canterbury*, 10 vols (London: Printed by J. F. Dove for Richard Priestley, 1820), vol. 1, 33.

Although there was a definite shift in the period away from 'right reason' towards 'reasoning' as the primary meaning, the Latitudinarians do not consider this dual conception of reason as either contradictory or mutually exclusive. Indeed, the felt congruity between these two very different conceptions of reason explains Tillotson's reply to those critics who claimed that Latitudinarianism, with its lack of positive emphasis on the Christian mysteries, is nothing more than 'mere morality'. 'This is scripture morality, and Christian morality', he replied, 'and who hath any thing to say against that?'.[156]

Sterne's insistence on the 'mediating' and 'moderating' function of the Latitudinarian church underpins many of his expressions of belief. It encapsulates not only his conception that the Latitudinarian Church is correctly positioned between two 'extremes' but it also encapsulates the difficulty that is faced by Anglican centrism. When Sterne argues against Roman Catholicism in the sermons, he celebrates the piety of the 'inner man', but when he argues against Protestant non-conformists or Methodists, he emphasizes the importance of external 'rites' or 'ritual'. The adoption of a particular emphasis in a sermon is thus contextually contingent and is 'an elasticity that defines […] the essence of Anglican homiletics'.[157]

### *Eudaemonism* as Evidenced in an 'Inquiry After Happiness'

For Sterne, as for the Latitudinarians, moderation is not only a ruling principle of theology, but it is also a ruling principle of ethical conduct and feeling. The scriptural inspiration for this is most probably *Philippians 4:5:* 'Let your moderation be known to all men'. Although, the first origin of this principle is undoubtedly Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* where 'virtue' is defined as lying 'within the

[156] Tillotson, vol. 3, 217: Sermon 42, 'Against Evil Speaking', preached before the King and Queen at Whitehall, Feb. 25, 1693.
[157] *SN*, 114 (n.62.19-21).

mean' and happiness (*eudaemonia*) is defined as 'an activity of soul in accordance with perfect virtue'.[158]

The first two sermons, an 'Inquiry After Happiness' and 'The House of Feasting and the House of Mourning Described' were specifically chosen by Sterne to initiate his public presentation as a sermon-writer,[159] as they serve to explicate both his theological and ethical framework. In their subordination of earthly pleasure to the 'final end' of transcendental happiness or holiness, they signal that Sterne's conception of 'true happiness' is a Christianized version of Aristotle's *eudaemonist* happiness. This is confirmed by Sterne's contention in an *'*Inquiry After Happiness' that 'true happiness' is 'only to be found in religion---in the consciousness of virtue---and the sure and certain hopes of a better life'.[160]

As a sermon against the vanity of human wishes, an 'Inquiry After Happiness' subordinates transitory, earthly pleasure for the happiness or 'blessedness' of eternity when it differentiates 'true happiness' from 'deceptive happiness'. While all men wish to attain happiness, notes Sterne, they often mistake the way.

In an echo of Aristotle's famous dictum that happiness constitutes man's *final end or supreme good,*[161] an 'Inquiry After Happiness' begins its explication of Psalm iv.5,6,[162] with the common opinion that 'the great pursuit of man is after happiness'.[163] He 'searches for it, as for hid treasure'

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[158] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 24.
[159] See New, 371.
[160] *Sermons*, 1.10, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[161] 'Verbally there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and faring well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise. For the former think it is some plain and obvious thing, like pleasure, wealth, or honour; they differ, however, from one another'. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 5. (1095a17-26).
[162] The Biblical text explicated in this sermon is Psalm iv. 5,6.: '*There be many that say, who will shew us any good?*' ---*Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us'.* Sterne signposts the argument of the sermon to his auditors by explicating each part of the psalm in turn.
[163] This idea is also a cornerstone of John Norris' theology, *Practical Discourses Upon Several Divine Subjects: Volume Three* (London: Printed for S. Manship, 1693) as Melvyn New points out. The Cambridge Platonist holds that 'the general desire of Happiness' is 'the natural Bias of every soul'. *SN*, 62.

in 'every stage of his life' and 'courts it under a thousand different shapes' and guises. Some, it seems, look for happiness in the 'gay and youthful pleasures of life' or 'in the indulgence and gratification of the appetites' while others, equally mistaken in Sterne's view, seek it in the satisfactions to be found in material or social goods: such as wealth, power or status.[164]

Yet the insight that happiness constitutes man's final end or supreme good, as Aristotle was aware, actually settles nothing when there is general confusion as to what it is that happiness consists in.[165] The notion of happiness is generally so ill-conceived that it admits of no satisfactory analysis. While all agree that everyone wants to be happy, observes Immanuel Kant, the concept of happiness 'is such an indeterminate one that even though everyone wishes to attain happiness, yet he can never say definitely and consistently what it is that he really wishes and wills'.[166]

While Sterne accepts Aristotle's premise that every man aims at happiness, 'that it is the strongest desire of his nature', he opens his sermon by adopting the stance of the bulk of mankind who often misconstrue happiness as pleasure: as a kind of simple, non-evaluative, conscious experience or feeling.[167] This move effectively postpones any serious concern his congregation should have with the overall formation of their lives 'to the second part of the discourse' where he will drive his Christian message home by advising 'every man who would be happy, to fear GOD and keep his commandments'.[168]

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[164] *Sermons*, 1.3-11, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[165] Julia Annas observes that it is just this lack of content or 'thinness' of the concept of *eudaemonia* which has historically allowed both ancient and modern ethical systems to provide different, often competing accounts of what *happiness* is. See Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). For a recent discussion on the difference between '*thick'* and *'thin'* ethical concepts see Kirchin, *Thick Concepts.*
[166] Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 27.
[167] In the sermon, Sterne exploits the fact that the Greek word *eudaemonia* is usually translated as *happiness* in English. While its usage varies, in modern usage particularly, happiness most often refers to a *feeling*. For ancient philosophers, happiness means not so much feeling a certain way, or feeling a certain way about how one's life as a whole is going, but rather one's overall functioning and the carrying out of certain activities. Synonyms for *eudaemonia* are *flourishing*, *living well* and *doing well,* which all seem to signal that *happiness* is the ancient sense is concerned with the activities and excellences of character associated with human living.
[168] *Sermons*, 1.11, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.

Sterne implicitly employs the *eudaemonist* conception of happiness in his opening sermon to distinguish 'feeling good' from 'being good'. As the formal demands of classical *eudaemonia* seriously conflict with both feeling and desire satisfaction accounts of happiness, this makes it apposite in an argument against ethical hedonism. Sterne's opening question as to whether happiness properly applies to feelings, the satisfaction of desires or to lives, will eventually be settled in his conclusion when Sterne exhorts his congregation to form both themselves and their lives by following the dictates of the Christian religion. In the modern conception of happiness, what is happy is not just lives but moments and fleeting experiences. In the ancient way of construing things, one cannot be *eudaemon* one moment and not the next. The application of the term 'happiness' for both the feel-good (hedonic) kind and the *eudaemonia* derived from ancient ethical discourse, can be confusing.

By initially taking happiness to be earthly pleasure, Sterne replicates for didactic purposes 'the bulk of mankind' who all too often pursue their 'mistaken good' instead of their 'true' one. Like Jacob who took his father's promise of happiness 'in the fullest latitude', the bulk of mankind err on this point. The happiness Jacob's father was referring to was 'in a great measure spiritual' and is 'not altogether such as a carnal mind would expect'.[169] By reflecting on the 'insufficiency of most of our enjoyments toward its attainment' Sterne follows Aristotle's epistemological method of 'starting with the *endoxa'* as he duly starts his 'Inquiry After Happiness' with the common beliefs and experiences of the ordinary 'unreflective majority'.[170] Yet the assumption, implicit in the sermon, that a 'final end' does in fact exist for a being of man's essential nature is an important one, as it allows questions about the pursuit of happiness to occupy the 'right' place in his ethical inquiry. This, of course, will involve the specification of man's *telos* or purpose which, for Sterne as a Latitudinarian clergyman, is man's true fulfilment in the happiness of Christian Salvation. However,

[169] *Sermons*, 22:204, 'The History of Jacob, Considered'.
[170] This follows Aristotle's epistemological method of 'starting with the *endoxa'* (man's ordinary opinions or common beliefs). See Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics.*

before such insights can be utilised by his auditors, Sterne must provide a persuasive account of what happiness is, and of course, of what it decidedly is not. As only the dissatisfied will feel the desire to act or live differently, Sterne's focus on the 'disappointments' and 'insufficiencies' of '*most* of our human enjoyments' is undoubtedly intended to get an 'ethical grip' on the discontented members of his congregation.

In his examination of 'some of the most received plans' on which happiness 'tis generally sought' by the bulk of mankind, Sterne suggests that happiness can far too easily be taken to be one's immediate experience of what might be called a happy feeling.[171] Yet if happiness is construed as pleasure: as a simple, uniform subjective, feature of momentary conscious experience of the kind subscribed to by the empiricist John Locke,[172] it can quickly lead to the idea that one can be happy doing virtually anything. While the 'extravagant man' in the sermon feels happy prostituting his 'wealth upon the passions' his contrary, the miser, feels happy 'holding' his money 'fast to him'. As the experiencing individual is the sole authority over what it is that makes him feel happy, happiness on this account is effectively reduced to whatever one happens to like.[173] Yet, as Sterne clearly recognises, what one happens to like is all too frequently subject to change.

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[171] Philosophers usually call this type of happiness *hedonic*. The word *hedonic* is related to *hedonism* and both terms come from the Greek root *hedone* (pleasure). The word *hedys* means 'sweet' so this type of *happiness* is concerned with the sweetness of our experience. This could be the sweet pleasures of eating and drinking, or the sweetness of lying with a lover.

[172] John Locke and many of his followers may be interpreted as sharing the simple picture of pleasure on which pleasure is understood as a kind of simple, uniform feature of momentary conscious experience, the ultimate goodness and motivating power of which, in the context of early modern empiricist philosophy and associationist psychology, are self-evident or observationally obvious. The view that Locke seems to hold has its antecedents in the ancient hedonism of Epicurus, atomism in physics and empiricism about knowledge which were revived and Christianized in the Renaissance. This was promoted by Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) whose writings and followers influenced Locke when he visited the Netherlands while writing *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. (See text translations in Kraye, 1997, Part VI). The view that pleasure is an isolable experience in consciousness had counterparts among those ancient hedonist materialist philosophers who thought of pleasure as some smooth or gentle stimulation, motion or physiological change. See J. C. B Gosling and C. C. W Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 41 and 394.

[173] C. D Broad, *Five Types of Ethical Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1930), 237-8 suggests that pleasure is experience wanted or liked at the time.

In his survey of the life of man 'from the time he is come to reason, to the latest decline of it in old age',[174] Sterne provides an illustration of Aristotle's insight that what a man finds pleasure in will generally change as he ages or matures in years. From the moment he is 'got loose from his tutors' we shall find him 'engaged, and generally hurried on in such a succession of different pursuits, and different opinions of things, through the different stages of his life---as will admit of no explication'.[175] Inviting his auditors to mark 'the impressions' made upon the senses of the youth 'by diversions, music, dress and beauty', Sterne observes that if they leave him for a few years 'till the edge of appetite is worn down' they will 'scarce know him'. Talking 'of no other happiness' but 'what centres in projects of making the most of this world and providing for his children' he is next found 'setting up for a man of business and conduct'.[176] The gayer pleasures of youth', he now reflects, far from answering his expectations of happiness, too often leave 'a terrible sting' behind them. Since he experienced, by his own confession, more 'bitter than sweet' in every experiment he had tried, he now concludes that 't'was well if you escaped without pain' in the enterprise. Indeed, even where 'the balance lay on the other side' he would tell you, says Sterne, that 'there could be no true satisfaction where a life runs on in so giddy a circle'.[177] As feelings by their very nature do not endure for very long, experiential happiness is fleeting. Pleasant feelings or pleasant episodes, he notes, inevitably 'slip from under us'.[178]

Furthermore, not only is the experience of this type of happiness transitory but it is also subject to the principle of adaptation.[179] As Solomon's experience, recounted by Sterne in the sermon, duly testifies the burst of pleasure that he initially receives from the possession of wealth ultimately fails to satisfy him. His reaction demonstrates that not only are pleasant feelings or episodes virtually impossible to sustain by their very nature, but also that reports of one's experiential happiness or

[174] *Sermons*, 1.3-11, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[175] *Sermons*, 1.3-11.
[176] *Sermons*, 1.3-11.
[177] *Sermons*, 1.3-11.
[178] *Sermons*, 1.3-11, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[179] The 'principle of adaptation' is sometimes referred to as 'the law of diminishing returns'.

pleasure are often subject to the law of diminishing returns.[180] This decrees that while extreme poverty correlates with a reported lack of life satisfaction or subjective well-being, if one is already rich any additional wealth has a negligible effect. Solomon, it seems, has adapted to his circumstances and any subsequent increase in wealth has virtually no effect on him. Solomon remains as happy (or in his case as 'disappointed') as he was before. As Sterne confirms, the enjoyment of his riches adds 'not one cubit to his happiness'.[181] It is clear that in Sterne's conception, happiness is not the guaranteed, or even the inevitable, outcome of transient, momentary pleasurable feelings.

Furthermore, if one directly aims at experiential happiness, the 'paradox of hedonism' decrees that such an action is likely to fail in hedonist terms. This is the claim articulated by the philosopher Henry Sidgwick that those motivated in favour of pleasure will usually get less of it.[182] The idea that happiness, so conceived, is elusive and cannot be directly sought, is confirmed by Sterne who notes that the 'faster' it is pursued, 'the faster the phantom fled before him'.[183] Sterne's example of the 'reformed sensualist' Solomon in an 'Inquiry After Happiness', can also be interpreted as a rejection of the idea that 'true happiness' can be construed merely as the subjective satisfaction of one's desires.[184] As part of Sterne's argument that 'true happiness' is not simply reducible to pleasure, the case of Solomon refutes the idea that achieving happiness has something to do with just getting what you want or desire. When 'everything is thus planned by himself, and executed according to

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[180] Studies of Subjective Well-being (SWB) by positive psychologists like Ed. Diener and Seligman suggest that while being poor correlates with a reported lack of subjective well-being, if one is already rich, additional income has a negligible effect.

[181] *Sermons*, 1.3-11, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.

[182] Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th ed. (London: Macmillan, 1907), 48. Sidgwick made the observation that happiness cannot be attained directly as it is not something we can set as a goal within life. He holds that it is rather a side effect of the choices that we make, of the way we go about the business of living.

[183] *Sermons*, 1.3-11, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.

[184] This is a different thing from arguing that desire-satisfaction and pleasure are not connected. For example, in the extrinsic experience account of pleasure, philosophers take 'Pleasure […] as a feeling which is at least implicitly desirable'. Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 127. Annas notes that it is possible to think of happiness as desire-satisfaction 'If we are prepared to think of such happiness in the spirit of the suggestion that it is subjective – as something on which each of us is the authority. That I am happy if I think I am, since I am getting what I want'. Julia Annas, 'Happiness as Achievement', *Daedalus* 133, no. 2 (2004): 44–51, 44.

his wish and direction, surely', says Sterne rhetorically, 'he is arrived to the accomplishment of his wishes, and has got to the summit of all human happiness?'[185] Yet despite Solomon having his every whim or desire satisfied, happiness is decisively denied to him, since he 'neither lives the merrier, sleeps the sounder, or has less care and anxiety upon his spirits, than at his first setting out'.[186]

Indeed, granting even earthly happiness to anyone on the grounds of the satisfaction of their desires, as Sterne is only too aware, would entail granting happiness to anyone who gets what he wants, whatever the nature of his desires happen to be. As the formulation of happiness as 'the satisfaction of one's desires' lacks specific content, it would allow happiness both to the sermon's 'epicure' and to its reclusive 'philosopher' alike, as long as they were each getting what they most desired. As the ethicist Julia Annas explains, happiness on the desire-satisfaction account would quickly 'lose any purchase as an idea that could serve to rank or judge lives'.[187] If the lives of Herod, Noah and Cain are all deemed happy if they are all getting what they each want or desire, 'then any comparative, evaluative judgments about their lives can't involve the idea of *happiness'*. Reducing happiness either to a kind of feeling or to the condition of having one's desires satisfied, not only disables one from evaluating or ranking lives[188] but it also prevents one from evaluating the happiness of the lives of those whose desires are widely construed as defective. While the pleasures of sadistic activity may be said to lack moral value, as one would not normally hold that a torturer lived a flourishing, or happy life, it is nevertheless difficult to refute the sadist's claim that he experiences pleasure or that he derives a particular satisfaction from such activities. Sterne's condemnation of the 'tyrants' of the Romish Church, who appear 'to have taken pleasure in the pangs and convulsions of their fellow-creatures',[189] serves as an illustration that experiencing

[185] *Sermons*, 1.3-11, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[186] *Sermons*, 1.9.
[187] Annas, 'Happiness as Achievement', 44.
[188] Annas makes this point and says that some feelings or desires are based on faulty information or faulty reasoning. Some desires, she says, may be unresponsive to the individual's reasoning powers because of addiction or obsession and some desires may be deformed by social or cultural pressures. Annas, 44.
[189] *Sermons*, 10.100, 'Job's account of the Shortness and Troubles of Life, Considered'.

pleasure *in* one's way of life is not the same as living a morally good *or eudaemon* life. In 'utter despair of ever accomplishing what he wants' man is at a loss to know 'where to lay the fault, whether in the incapacity of his own nature, or the insufficiency of the enjoyments themselves', notes Sterne.[190] The 'wise man' would 'extricate himself' from this circle 'as soon as he can' and should 'look forwards'. While giving in to the temptation of present desires may yield transitory pleasure or satisfaction in the here and now, this will be at the cost of a proper concern for the moral orientation of one's life. More-over since God, the transcendent source of moral value, places on the human realm 'a demand to realise aims and attain ends likewise located beyond the boundaries of this world and its circumstances'[191] for Sterne's Christian congregation, giving into temptation may cost them their immortal souls.

Sterne's comment that a man should 'look forwards' effectively directs his auditors to reflect upon their eternal 'supreme end' or 'final good' and to unify both their life and their concerns under this heading. The happiness of *eudaemonia* thus gives form or shape to one's life and is something to be cultivated by living a life of virtue. It seems appropriate then that Prodicus' *Choice of Hercules*,[192] an allegory that makes happiness depend upon a choice between two opposing alternatives, should be identified as the ancient ethical prototype which lies behind Sterne's 'Inquiry After Happiness'. It is probably why this allegory is also the vehicle of choice for a pictorial satire on the religious commitments of the clergyman-author of 'a bawdy book', as I later argue in chapter three.

As Aristotle acknowledges, when life has an overarching ethical end or *a supreme good,* one's activities, aims and values can be sequenced or prioritized coherently. To be good, for the ancients, is to fulfil one's proper role in the order of things. Indeed, for Aristotle, knowledge of the supreme

[190] *Sermons*, 1.5, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[191] A. C. Grayling, *What Is Good?: The Search for the Best Way to Live* (London: Phoenix, 2004), 1.
[192] Prodicus of Ceos was a Sophist who lived in the fifth century B.C., whose allegory *The Choice of Hercules* is known from Xenophon's Memorabilia (Reminiscences of Socrates), Book II, I. Hercules is the Latin form of the Greek Heracles ('glory to Hera).

good is of great importance to us in the conduct of our lives.[193] Orientating one's life not only demands reflection on what it means to live a good life but it also requires a prior conception of our essential purpose and of how our actions or endeavours may actively shape this. Reflecting on such matters has the potential to unify one's life: to integrate one's past, present and future. However, when life is experienced solely in the here and now, as a series of unconnected, episodic pleasures with no thought for the future, one's life will lack meaning, unity and purpose as the pursuit of present gratification or pleasure is defective as an aim that can structure an entire life.

Sterne contends that 'there is a plain distinction to be made between happiness and pleasure' and implicitly rejects ethical hedonism by arguing that the 'true happiness' of man's 'final end' cannot be reduced to pleasure. In the case of Christian Salvation, Sterne goes on to claim that 'true happiness' and 'pleasure' do in fact coincide. Though 'there can be no happiness without pleasure---yet the converse of the proposition will not hold true', notes Sterne.[194] This formulation is ambiguous and has been variously taken to articulate the idea that pleasure is either a constituent in happiness, or it supervenes on happiness as a reward for a life of virtue. Alternatively, following the ideal of happiness that Aristotle elucidates, this could be interpreted as an identification between the supreme good and the supreme pleasure. For Aristotle, the activity that constitutes happiness is the exercise of wisdom and moral virtue.[195] Pleasure is identical with the unimpeded exercise of an appropriate state: so that happiness, considered as the unimpeded exercise of these two states (wisdom and moral virtue) is simultaneously the life of virtue, wisdom, and pleasure.[196] As the philosopher Anthony Kenny observes, in making this identification between the supreme good and the supreme pleasure:

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[193] Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, 2 (I.i.1094a18-24).
[194] *Sermons*, 1.10, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[195] Wisdom and moral virtue are exercised inseparably so they are not competing but collaborating contributors to happiness.
[196] Aristotle, see *Eudemian Ethics*, 7.15.1249a21 and *The Nicomachean Ethics,* E.10.7.1177a23.

> Aristotle entitles himself to be called a hedonist: but he is a hedonist of a very unusual kind and stands at a great distance from the most famous hedonist in ancient Greece, namely Epicurus.[197]

For the Epicureans the supreme good and value is pleasure, as virtue is only ever instrumental to attaining their ultimate end of pleasure. In marked contrast, for Sterne (and the Latitudinarians) their supreme good and value is the holiness of Christian Salvation. In the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism, therefore, the condition aimed at is transcendental and ethical, although its simultaneous identification with the supreme pleasure (the eternal bliss of heaven[198]) is also employed as an inducement to virtue and religion.

For Sterne, earthly pleasure is not necessarily good or bad in itself, as he gives earthly pleasure a legitimate place *within* an individual's life in a number of his sermons. In 'Philanthropy Recommended'[199] Sterne emphasizes that the best kind of pleasure is the pleasure of doing good. Indeed, elsewhere in the sermons he notes that pleasure is necessary as man's embodied state is one that stands in need of 'frequent repairs, 'proper recruits' and innocent 'indulgences'. As a Latitudinarian who embraces Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, Sterne reminds his congregation that pleasure must be exercised temperately as 'whenever such indulgencies become criminal, it is seldom the nature of the actions themselves,--but the excess which makes them so'.[200] Whilst the joyousness of life in Christ, both here and in the hereafter, is the central message of many of Sterne's sermons, he also argues that pleasure must be kept within the limits of virtue (the principle of moderation) and that, more importantly, its pursuit must not be allowed to distract us from the 'true happiness' of Christian Salvation. The sermons thus promote the religious and moderate life (the *via media* between extremes) as a way of enjoying this world as well as the next. If one uses the

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[197] Anthony Kenny, *Ancient Philosophy: A New History of Western Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 277.
[198] In Aristotle, 'happiness' or 'blessedness' that is directly connected to the gods (more exalted than *eudaemon* and less subject to chance) is termed *makarios*. This promise of happiness as greater than could ever be imagined on earth animated the Gospels and the New Testament beatitudes. See McMahon, 'From the Happiness of Virtue', 9.
[199] *Sermons*, 3.21-30, 'Philanthropy Recommended'.
[200] *Sermons,* 37.353, 'Penances'.

'gifts' that God has made available, the Scriptures and *recta ratio*, one can enjoy the pleasures of life without falling into excess.

An 'Inquiry After Happiness'[201] adopts a number of techniques that are common practice in religious treatises and non-narrative discourses on happiness. As already outlined, the purpose of Sterne's sermons is the practical, didactic one of instructing his congregation as to the 'correct' Latitudinarian way to achieve man's final end or chief good. As such they are concerned with how a man should conduct himself during his mortal life so that he is best positioned to achieve the 'true happiness' of salvation in the transcendental, heavenly kingdom to come.[202] It has always been the teaching of religion that such happiness can only have its source in that which is, by nature, infallible. 'True happiness' in the sermons is thus perfect, unalloyed, eternal and infinite. This concept of happiness is an ideal conception in that it is composed entirely of good or positive elements. In its abstract formulation, happiness belongs only to attributes that belong to all happy lives, so in this sense, there is only one single happiness. This contrasts with happiness in the empirical, or human sense. This happiness is a happiness that may sometimes be attained by man; although it is imperfect, transitory and a concept that is not necessarily incompatible with a world that contains suffering and pain. In its concrete formulation, it refers to the experiential happiness within one specific life with all its individual experiences or features, and where the happiness of one individual may differ markedly from that of another.

By applying the standards of ideal happiness to empirical or humanly realizable happiness, Sterne arrives at the pessimistic conclusion that happiness rarely, if ever, exists on earth. This view is further supported by the claim that pleasure is nearly always connected with pain and that it is hard, if not impossible, to discover a life in which good and bad do not co-exist. This strategy often goes hand in hand, as it does in an 'Inquiry After Happiness' with a short survey of the 'modes of pleasure'

[201] Although I illustrate these techniques by referring to an 'Inquiry After Happiness', Sterne uses these techniques in many of his sermons; see *Sermons*, 7.65-73, 'Vindication of Human Nature'.
[202] Here a particular (theological) theory of how to attain happiness pervades the concept of happiness itself.

that individual's such as the epicure or the philosopher aim at, together with a survey of the successive pursuits engaged in by man 'in every stage of his life' (such as 'the gayer pleasures of youth'). Each of these are swiftly eliminated as Sterne points out how they all fail to deliver the promised sustained state of happiness. During the course of the sermon, Sterne implicitly exploits the fact that the term happiness in the English language is used to express both abstract and concrete concepts. This ambiguity creates the illusion that there is only one happiness that belongs to all happy lives (that of transcendental, Christian salvation) and only one way to attain it (a life of religion and virtue, and the receipt of God's freely given Grace).[203]

While discussions on happiness in the sermons frequently involve lively descriptions of the characters that populate them, illustrating Sterne's sound grasp of human psychology and accurate observations of life, for his most important characterizations he draws upon the 'wisdom literature' of the Old Testament. This material, or 'wise counsel', is the voice of reflection and experience rather than that of direct command or didactic preaching. Its emphasis on practical instruction and its focus on the practical issues of life is what probably endeared it to Sterne. Of all reputations for wisdom, that of Solomon's is pre-eminent. This is undoubtedly why, of all the biblical characters employed by Sterne in his sermons, Solomon is the most prominent. In an 'Inquiry After Happiness' it is Solomon, the son of David, the King in Israel, who pronounces judgment on the ends for which men live. As the embodiment of Old Testament wisdom, Solomon's reputation rests not only on his contribution to the Bible (in particular to the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes) but on his patronage of the arts. Through marriage with the Pharaoh's daughter, Solomon had close ties with Egypt. His court in Israel, a celebrated centre for the exchange of learning, was where the Queen of Sheba famously came to put him to the test. He was certainly a man who had tasted life to the full.

[203] The sermons also exploit the subjective and objective facets of happiness in its recognition that what may be true of a happy or pleasurable moment or experience, may not be true of a happy life. See discussion of the various conceptual and semantic ambiguities of happiness in Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *Analysis of Happiness*, trans. Edward Rothert and Danuta Zielińskn, vol. 3, Melbourne International Philosophy Series (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976).

Solomon had tasted power, fame, riches and sensual pleasures a-plenty but importantly, he had experienced life both with God and without him. For Sterne, there is no one better qualified to pronounce upon life, happiness and the 'emptiness of human pleasure'.[204] For Solomon, there is no pleasure or satisfaction in life apart from God. Indeed, a recurring phrase in his own proverbs is 'to fear God and keep his commandments'. This is the starting point of the Proverbs (1:7), pivot of all the wisdom literature (see Job 28:28 Psalm III:10, Proverbs 9:10) and is an expression to which Ecclesiastes moves to its conclusion. The meaning of this phrase is given as follows:

> Secular philosophy tends to measure everything by man, and comes to doubt whether wisdom is to be found at all, but the Old Testament with this motto turns the world the right way up, with God at its head, his wisdom the creative ordering principle that runs through every part; and man, disciplined and taught by that wisdom, finding life and fulfilment in his perfect will.[205]

In a collection of sermons that establish the priority of transcendental happiness over the subjective, experiential, fleeting happiness of earth, it is fitting that Solomon's assertion that man's fulfilment and happiness is found in obeying the commandments of God, should conclude an 'Inquiry After Happiness'. What is interesting about the scriptural exegesis of Solomon's phrase is that it implies Sterne's recognition that the shift from thinking of morality as an external, transcendental standard against which human nature can be measured, to thinking of morality as derived from actual human experience (such as the subjective experience of pleasure) was so weak that it was no real standard or ethical criterion at all.

In summary, this chapter establishes that the sermons of Laurence Sterne play a key role in elucidating and re-affirming the moralized conception of happiness at the very time when this is being challenged by the new, subjective, experiential, hedonist conception of happiness. It confirms that the ethical system of the Latitudinarians is a Christian modification of Aristotle's classical *eudaemonism,* as it employs many of its concepts and retains its underlying teleological, tripartite moral structure. The key assumptions of Latitudinarianism are: that holiness and happiness are

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[204] *Sermons*, 1.6, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[205] David Alexander and Pat Alexander, eds., *The Lion Concise Bible Handbook* (Tring: Lion, 1980), 158.

identical or analogous; that the essence of religion is morality; that the practice of its precepts is pleasant and in man's best interest; and that religion is both reasonable and natural to man. The Latitudinarian concept of happiness, that Sterne promotes in his sermons can thus be described as *eudaemonist* on the grounds that: happiness is more a function of virtue than feeling, virtue is defined as 'lying within the mean' and the 'true happiness' of Christian salvation is taken to be man's 'final end' and chief ethical good. For Sterne, 'true happiness' is 'only to be found in religion---in the consciousness of virtue---and the sure and certain hopes of a better life'.[206]

Because Sterne wishes to encourage the right application of the divine gifts of reason and conscience, yet simultaneously retain a keen awareness of human depravity, his sermons focus on the advantages and happiness that result from living a religious and virtuous life. The sermons emphasize virtuous and beneficial actions and are more concerned with practical divinity than the inscrutabilities or the mysteries of religion. The three practical issues pertaining to happiness that Sterne's sermons address are: a) the true source of happiness and how people often mistake their way to it; b) how happiness can be achieved and maintained through virtue, both in this world and the next; and c) the advantages that are to be had from living a religious and virtuous life. In their expression of the possibility that one can rightly enjoy this life and still obtain 'true' happiness (Salvation) in the next, the sermons reflect a more humanist conception of human nature that validates the notion that man is made for happiness. Although the sermons focus on the eternal advantages to be had by living a moderate and religious life, they also promote the religious and moderate life (the *via media* between extremes) as a way of enjoying this world. By using the 'gifts' that God has made available, the Scriptures and *recta ratio*, the sermons advance the possibility that one can enjoy the pleasures of life without falling into excess. However, in their subordination of earthly pleasure to the 'true' happiness of transcendental salvation, the sermons are clear that

[206] *Sermons*, 1.10, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.

pleasure must never be allowed to distract man from his chief ethical good, the happiness of Christian Salvation (his *summum bonum*).

This chapter identifies the techniques that Sterne employs in the service of his ideal concept of happiness that were commonly practiced in religious treatises on happiness and in non-narrative discourses. It also demonstrates his use of Solomon's character as the embodiment of Old Testament wisdom. More significantly, this chapter establishes that Sterne recognised the ethical shortcomings of the new, subjective, hedonic, concept of happiness and implicitly addresses them in his sermons. In an 'Inquiry After Happiness', Sterne interprets the new subjective happiness as a kind of simple, non-evaluative, conscious experience or feeling, such as that famously advanced by John Locke. As explained, Sterne not only suggests that the subjective concept of happiness is defective as an aim that is capable of structuring an entire life but, more importantly, he strongly insinuates that its lack of ethical content or substantive, shared vision of the human good renders it totally unable to evaluate a man's character, his conduct or his life. Sterne's repeated assertion in his sermons that there can be no happiness without virtue, speaks to a larger anxiety that in some quarters this assumption (that had held for millennia) could no longer be taken for granted.

## CHAPTER TWO: TRISTRAM SHANDY

### *Tristram Shandy* and Subjective Happiness as the New *Summum Bonum*

When William Paley told a group of fellow students at Cambridge that "the summum bonum of human life… consists in reading *Tristram Shandy*",[1] he gives expression to the new, subjective, psychological understanding of happiness, where happiness is construed as the utmost pleasure that one can conceive, the sustaining of which is now one's 'highest good' or *summum bonum*.[2] Indeed, no eighteenth-century novel evokes the new conception of happiness more joyously than *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767). As illustration of this, one has only to consider the eccentric, hobby-horsical pursuits of the *Shandys*. In particular, the bowling-green fortifications of Uncle Toby (and his faithful servant Trim) who his nephew recalls ambling 'round the little circle of thy pleasures' (*TS*, III.XXXIV.265). That the pleasure of riding one's hobby-horse is conceived of in terms of the new, subjective conception of happiness is immediately confirmed by Sterne's description of Toby and Trim enjoying their mutual 'track of happiness' for many years and 'sometimes every month':

> In this track, I say, did my uncle *Toby* and *Trim* move for many years, every year of which, and sometimes every month, from the invention of either the one or the other of them, adding some new conceit or quirk of improvement to their operations, which always opened fresh springs of delight in carrying them on. (*TS*, XI.XXII.537)

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[1] Cited by Alan Howes who notes that William Paley was later to become famous as the author of *Evidences of Christianity*. Alan Barber Howes, *Yorick and the Critics: Sterne's Reputation in England, 1760-1868* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1971), 2.

[2] As Martha Nussbaum notes, where happiness is taken to be the name of a feeling of contentment, satisfaction or pleasure and where happiness is made the supreme good, this is assumed to be by definition a view that gives supreme value to psychological states rather than to activities. Nussbaum also asserts that most Greeks would understand *eudaemonia* to be something essentially active, 'of which praiseworthy activities are not just productive means, but actual constituent parts. For Nussbaum, 'the view that *eudaemonia* is equivalent to a *state* of pleasure is an unconventional and *prima facie* counterintuitive position in the Greek tradition'. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, 6.

That each character's hobby-horse is one that only he is fitted for, and is able to enjoy, is highly significant since the Shandys' pursuit of happiness stands at the epicentre of the eighteenth-century challenge to the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism. The new, hedonic concept of happiness sought not only to challenge the traditional concept that had held sway for centuries, and which Sterne promotes in his sermons, but had also put in question all that the classical concept of happiness had historically implied: that a single supreme good or *summum bonum* is valid for all individuals, that it originates from a single source, and that it is capable of objective or impersonal, third person validation.

As happiness is construed as a feeling of pleasure or satisfaction; whether a man is happy or not depends not only what happens to him in life but also on the way in which he reacts to what happens to him in life. On how his essential character, the product of a whole complex of factors, shapes and is shaped by, his contingent circumstances or lot in life. In tracing how his character is formed through the conditions of his conception, delivery and childhood experiences, Tristram seeks not only to understand his biological creation but to comprehend what sort of a character he is (*TS*, I.VI.9).

For the characters who populate Sterne's novel, the choice of happiness cannot be made without reference to the contingencies of circumstance and desire, to their embodied constitution, abilities, personality traits, dispositions and inclinations. This chapter will argue that by using the device of the *hobby-horse*, Sterne implies that a man's experiential happiness is shaped by his disposition, and conversely, that his disposition is shaped by the sources of happiness he has found:

> A man and his HOBBY-HORSE, tho' I cannot say that they act and re-act exactly after the same manner in which the soul and body do upon each other: Yet doubtless there is a communication between them of some kind, and my opinion rather is, that there is something in it more of the manner of electrified bodies,--and that by means of the heated parts of the rider, which come immediately into contact with the back of the HOBBY-HORSE.—By long journies and much friction, it so happens that the body of the rider is at length fill'd as full of HOBBY-HORSICAL matter as it can hold (*TS*, I.XXIV.86)

Since a '*Momus glass'* or a window[3] cannot be set in the human breast to observe the soul in 'all her motions' and because 'our minds shine not through the body, but are wrapt up here in a dark covering of uncrystalized flesh and blood', if we are ever to discover a man's character then 'we must go some other way to work' (*TS*, I.XXIII.82-3). The nature of a man's hobby-horse, and his relationship to it, is therefore intrinsic to an understanding of his character and psyche. This is supported by Sterne's contention in the novel that if a man's character is to be drawn at all, it must include his hobby-horse or 'ruling passion':

> If the characters of past ages and men are to be drawn at all, they are to be drawn like themselves; that is, with their excellencies, and with their foibles—and it is as much a piece of justice to the world, and to virtue too, to do the one, as the other. —The ruling passion *et les egarements du coeur*, [and the wanderings of the heart][4] are the very things which mark, and distinguish a man's character;—in which I would as soon leave out a man's head as his hobby-horse.[5]

The relationship between Sterne's hobby-horse and his concept of a ruling passion has historically been viewed as problematic.[6] However, Sterne does appear to make an identification between the two. The concept of a ruling passion is posited in Sterne's sermon, 'The Character of Herod', where he advises those who are called upon to judge a man's character to determine whether one principle or passion 'leads' the others in his psyche. If so, he continues, one should separate this from the other parts and then take notice 'how far his other qualities, good and bad' are brought to serve and support it. For want of this distinction, Sterne observes:

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[3] When Sterne refers to a 'Momus glass' he alludes to a story told by Lucian in *Hermotimus or Concerning the Sects*. A craftsman, Hephaestus, put together a man and Momus reproofed him for not making a window in the man's chest which could be opened to let everyone see his desires and thoughts and if he were lying or telling the truth. Momus is the Greek personification of mockery and fault finding. See *TSN*, 118.

[4] 'The wanderings of the heart' an allusion to Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, *Les égarements du coeur et de l'esprit: ou, Mémoires de Mr de Meilcour* (A Paris: Chez Prault, fils, 1736). As Howe notes there is no firm evidence that Sterne was actually influenced by the content of this racy, cynical work in the libertine tradition. Howes, *Yorick and the Critics*, 83. He did meet Crébillon in Paris in 1762 (see *Letters*, I.82.232-7 and 1.86.251-7).

[5] Sterne's letter to Dr.**** (an unidentified physician) dated 30 January 1760. *Letters*, I.45.114.

[6] *TSN*, 123. The Florida editors explain that the relationship between Sterne's hobby-horse and his concept of the ruling passion is problematic. They point out that his sermon, 'The Character of Herod', posits a view of character in opposition to that which suggests that a man is a 'compound of good and evil', but state that they merely note here Sterne's possible identification of the two.

> We often think ourselves inconsistent creatures, when we are the furthest from it, and all the variety of shapes and contradictory appearances we put on, are in truth but so many different attempts to gratify the same governing appetite.[7]

As each character in *Tristram Shandy* is drawn to what they believe will bring them experiential happiness, the nature of their hobby-horse, and their relationship to it, will be partly defining. Sterne suggests that we all, actually or potentially, have numerous desires, appetites and inclinations which are often conflicting and mutually incompatible. We therefore have to decide between the rival claims of our rival desires before we prioritize or order these. The choice of hobby-horse, and its place in one's psyche and life, is therefore revealing. Subjective happiness is thus the product of how one's character (with all its fluctuating circumstance-governed desires and inclinations) mediates, and is mediated by, the contingent circumstances of life. The recognition that a man's hobby-horse can play a vital part in the assessment of his character is expressed in Tristram's claim that 'if you are able to give but a clear description of the nature of the one, you may form a pretty exact notion of the genius and character of the other' (*TS*, I.XXIV.86). By telling the story of the Shandys, Tristram is telling the story of himself; since he is also formed (socially, culturally, morally and emotionally) by the Shandy family dynamic. In fact, he is nearly de-formed by the Shandy pursuit of subjective happiness. Tristram's nose is squashed because of his father's obsession with theories, and he is circumcised by a falling sash window because its lead was being melted for Toby's siege.

Tristram's hobby-horse, like that of Sterne's, is 'scribbling away' at my *Tristram*.[8] In the context of a reflexive and self-referential novel that reflects upon the biological and literary processes of creation, it is noticeable that Tristram's hobby-horse (and that of his father and uncle's) is conveyed by way of sexual analogy. As a 'caressing prefacer' Tristram sets out to stifle 'his reader, as a lover sometimes does a coy mistress into silence' (*TS*, III.XX.232-3). By using the analogy of a sexual

[7] *Sermons*, 9.86, 'The Character of Herod'.
[8] 'I am scribbling away at my Tristram. These two volumes are, I think, the best.—I shall write as long as I live, 'tis in fact, my hobby-horse'. *Letters*, I.84.205 (21st September 1761).

seduction Tristram probably intends to suggest that the reader's continuing interaction with the text (the intercourse of writer and reader) will eventually result in mutual pleasure.[9] Tristram's remark that a writer 'may go backwards and forwards as he will' (*TS*, V.XXV.457) is another comparison of the sexual and literary acts of creation, the rhythm of sex being likened to the rhythm of his narrative. In a similar vein, Tristram indicates the purpose of his digressions by an analogy with the sexual inventiveness of a bridegroom whose appetite is renewed by variety rather than cloyed by monotony:

> Digressions, incontestably, are the sun-shine;—they are the life and soul of reading;---take them out of this book for instance,--you might as well take the book along with them;—one cold eternal winter would reign in every page of it; restore them to the writer;---he steps forth like a bridegroom,—bids All hail; brings in variety, and forbids the appetite to fail. (*TS*, I.XXII.81)

Walter's purchase of a rare book to gratify his appetite for hypotheses, is likened to the consoling and comforting effect of procuring the sexual services of a prostitute as he 'solaced himself' with Bruscambille's treatise on long noses 'after the manner, in which, 'tis ten to one, your worship solaced yourself with your first mistress,—that is, from morning even unto night' (*TS*, III.XXXV.266). The pleasure that Toby anticipates from the inherent possibilities of his bowling green fortifications is also conveyed by way of sexual analogy: 'Never did lover post down to a beloved mistress with more heat and expectation, than my uncle *Toby* did, to enjoy this self-same thing in private' (*TS*, II.V.113). Tristram compares writing with masturbation in his quip that 'matter grows under our hands' (*TS*, V.XVI.446) and while pondering why it is that he frequently digresses and mentions things that are 'neither here nor there', he instructs the reader to 'ask my pen,—it governs me,—I govern not it' (*TS*, VI.VI.500). Sterne's sexual innuendos (on 'pen' and 'noses') suggests that the workings of pleasure often lie beyond the horizon of our conscious awareness and voluntary control. Sterne's allusion to the sexual impulse in his hobby-horse, is suggestive of how pleasure attaches our

[9] Unfortunately, what he actually conveys in this analogy is a view of seduction where women are represented as passive objects of male sexual aggression who are 'stifled' into 'silence' and submission. Since a woman's reluctance to engage in sexual relations is taken to be 'feigned' (coy) and her 'silence' is taken as consent, she actually expresses no sexual desire or pleasure of her own.

attention to salient stimuli and activities in a way that is compatible with what philosophers seeking to explain pleasure's ability to motivate desire directed towards others, have supposed. Tristram's obsession with sexuality (and sexual dysfunction) like other mind-body interactions in the novel raise the issue of just how far erotic behaviour can be controlled. As James Rogers observes erection, as an example of mind-body interaction, is a challenging conceptual problem:

> A point nicely exemplified by the difficulties of explaining erection, particularly in trying to see how a physiological process can be controlled by the imagination but not apparently by will.[10]

When it comes to hobby-horses, says Tristram, every man will choose one to his own taste:

> For my hobby-horse, if you recollect a little, is no way a vicious beast […] 'Tis the sporting little filly-folly[11] which carries you out for the present hour […] which a man makes a shift to get a stride on, to canter it away from the cares and solicitudes of life—'Tis as useful a beast as is in the whole creation—nor do I really see how the world could do without it— (VIII.XXXI.716)

As Bentham observes:

> One man's happiness will never be another man's happiness: a gain to one man is no gain to another: you might as well pretend to add 20 apples to 20 pears.[12]

If, as Locke had argued, 'pleasure in us, is that we call *Good*, and what is apt to produce Pain in us, we call *Evil*',[13] then one might well conclude that good and evil are merely matters of taste. Why one man 'followed Study and Knowledge, and another Hawking and Hunting; why one chose Luxury and Debauchery, and another Sobriety and Riches' is simply 'because their *Happiness* was placed in different things'.[14] It is this sort of reflection that prompts Locke to discount the inquiries of the ancients after a single specification of man's *telos*, or *summum bonum*. They might just as well have disputed, says Locke, 'whether the best Relish were to be found in Apples, Plumbs, or Nuts.'[15]

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[10] James Rogers, 'Sensibility, Sympathy, Benevolence: Physiology and Moral Philosophy in *Tristram Shandy*', in *Languages of Nature: Critical Essays on Science and Literature*, ed. Ludmilla J. Jordanova (London: Free Association Books, 1986): 117–58, 118.
[11] Foolish or ridiculous notion; foolish hobby.
[12] See Gerald J. Postema, *Utility, Publicity, and Law: Essays on Bentham's Moral and Legal Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 105.
[13] Locke, *ECHU*, 1991259 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 42).
[14] Locke, *ECHU*, 269 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 54).
[15] Locke, *ECHU*, 269 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 55).

If happiness is construed as the satisfaction of one's desires, or as a matter of satisfying one's private appetites, as Dr Johnson's *Dictionary* substantiates,[16] then the enjoyment of a *good* must be determined by the *taste or the palate* of the individual doing the tasting, savouring or the relishing. This point, that in the subjective, hedonic, formulation of happiness sovereignty resides in the subject (in the individual doing the relishing or the savouring) is one that is not lost on Sterne who transforms the Latin *'De gustibus non est disputandum'* (over tastes let there be no dispute) into 'that is, there is no disputing against Hobby-Horses' (*TS*, I.VII.12).[17]

As the teleological framework of Aristotle ceases to be persuasive, and the categorical status of expressions of divine law increasingly fall into disrepute, the paradigm in which ethical discourse has meaning is increasingly abandoned. As an eighteenth-century Anglican clergyman, Sterne is uniquely placed to recognize that evaluative and ethical concepts like happiness were transforming their character and meaning. In the context of classical theism, as MacIntyre explains, moral judgments were simultaneously hypothetical and categorical in form. They were *hypothetical* in that they expressed a judgment as to what conduct would be appropriate for a human being (what they *ought* to do if they did not want their essential desires and *telos* to be frustrated) and *categorical* insofar as they reported the contents of the universal law commanded by God (what they *ought* to do because it is what God's law enjoins). As Sterne was aware, once this 'ought' element is taken away, moral judgments lose any clear status. Ethical discourse itself becomes logically incoherent as there is now no clear relationship between man's untutored nature and the virtues and vices which are intended to reform it. This logical 'incoherence' is famously recognized by the Scottish philosopher David Hume, who provides its classic formulation:

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[16] Dr Johnson's entry for Happiness in *A Dictionary of the English Language* includes the following definition from Locke: 'The various and contrary choices that men make in the world, argue that the same thing is not good to every man alike: this variety of pursuits shews, that every one does not place his happiness in the same thing.'

[17] Latin translation given by New: '[*De gustibus non est disputandum*] "There is no disputing about tastes."' *TSN*, 60.

> In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs ; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible ; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it shou'd be observ'd and explain'd ; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.[18]

Hume poses the conundrum of how we can possibly move from a descriptive statement about how things are in the world (an *is* statement) to a prescriptive statement instructing us what ought to be done (an *ought* statement). Hume notices that in every system of morality that he knows, propositions about what *is* the case have a way of slipping into propositions about what *ought* to be the case. Since the relationship between the two is now unclear, a new status and justification for morality is required which will make an appeal to the virtues rational. Otherwise, as MacIntyre notes, they become available as forms of expression for 'an emotivist self' and can appear as mere instruments of individual desire and will.[19] A new teleology or categorical status must be found in order to vindicate our moral injunctions, and this is exactly what the philosophers of the Enlightenment set out to provide.

In an attempt to bridge the conceptual gap between the set of virtues and vices they had inherited, and any convincing reason why mankind should adhere to these injunctions, Enlightenment philosophers endeavoured to locate morality in mankind's original nature. To root morality in an individual's psychology with all its fluctuating, circumstance-governed desires, emotions and inclinations. For the Enlightenment moralist, morality is located in either man's sentiments (his attraction to pleasure and aversion to pain) or in his reason (now conceived of as procedural). The division between *is* and *ought,* which represents a 'severing' of the world of *fact* from the world of

[18] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature; and, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Thomas Hill Green and Thomas Hodge Grose, vol. 2, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1874), 245.
[19] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 60.

*value* goes some way to explain how the sphere in which happiness is pursued gradually becomes disengaged from the sphere of morality and commandment.

This chapter will explore how Sterne gives expression to the new subjective, psychological, experiential conception of happiness in *Tristram Shandy* by focusing on how happiness shapes and is shaped by man's physical and mental constitution, his contingent circumstances and his lot in life. Through the device of the hobby-horse, it will explore how experiential pleasure may shape one's life and how one's life may shape one's pleasures. It will examine to what extent a man's subjective experience of happiness depends upon the nature of his mental responses (as the Stoics contend) and whether his ideas and perceptions affect his ability to bear the shocks and cross-accidents of this scurvy world. It will discover the extent to which Tristram's experience of happiness is affected by his family dynamic and will consider how an individual's character can either facilitate or impede not only his own experiential happiness but the happiness of others. I will consider whether happiness is a matter that is mostly of our own making and to what extent happiness can be augmented by improving one's character or removing impediments. I will also consider the nature of the relationship between the *eudaemonist* happiness Sterne privileges in his sermons and the new subjective happiness that seeks to replace it. However, I shall first conduct a brief excursus on the composition, publication and reception of *Tristram Shandy*.

## A Brief Summary of the Composition, Publication and Reception of *Tristram Shandy (1760-7)*

During 1759, Laurence Sterne started writing his comic satire in order, he later writes in a dedication to his work:

> To fence against the infirmities of ill health, and other evils of life, by mirth; being firmly persuaded that every time a man smiles,—but much more so, when he laughs, that it adds something to this Fragment of Life.[20]

In May 1759, Sterne offered the first volume of his work for the sum of £50 to a London bookseller and publisher Robert Dodsley (1703-1764). In a letter to him, dated 23 May 1759, Sterne describes the design of his novel:

> The Plan, as you will perceive, is a most extensive one,---taking in, not only, the Weak part of the Sciences, in wch the true point of Ridicule lies—but every Thing else, which I find Laugh-at-able in my way[21]

At this time, Dodsley declined to publish the novel as he saw its satire as representing too much of an economic risk for a single volume. Sterne did some rewriting to make his satire less personal and local, but he was determined not to 'spoil' his book. In writing a satire, Sterne confided to an unidentified physician, he had 'hopes of doing the world good by ridiculing what I thought deserving of it'.[22] In fact, Sterne was aware, as early as 1759, that 'wit' from a cleric might well be criticized. His response to his friend's well-intentioned criticism of his manuscript (that he should exercise the prudence and judgment that befits a clergyman in his writing) was that this would ruin the originality of his book. Furthermore, he replied, 'A Very Able Critick & One of My Colour too' had told him that the very idea that 'I would consider the colour of My Coat, as I corrected it… would render MY Book not worth a groat'.[23]

In October of the same year, Sterne wrote to Dodsley informing him of his plan to publish two small volumes of his novel (of the size of *Rasselas*)[24] in York at his own expense, in order he said to feel the 'Pulse of the World'.[25] This was a pragmatic move on Sterne's part as Dodsley agreed to take half of

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[20] *TS*, 'Dedication to Mr. Pitt'. Sterne prepared his dedication for the second edition, published by James Dodsley on 2 April 1760.
[21] Sterne's letter to Robert Dodsley dated 23 May 1759 in *Letters*, I.34.80. See also *TSN*, 64.
[22] Sterne's letter to Dr.**** (an unidentified physician) dated 30 January 1760. *Letters*, I.45.114-7.
[23] Sterne's reply to an unidentified friend dated summer 1759. *Letters*, I.35c.94-5.
[24] Samuel Johnson's *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, published on 19 April 1759 was published in two small octavo volumes by Dodsley and William Johnston. Sterne copied most of its format for *TS.*
[25] Sterne's letter dated 5 October 1759 in reply to Robert Dodsley's refusal to buy his manuscript and describing changes made. *Letters*, I.36.96-7.

these copies to sell in London. *Tristram Shandy* was published in York in late December 1759 and two hundred copies were sold in two days.[26] It was favourably reviewed in the London periodicals and the copies that Dodsley had taken to sell in London were quickly sold.

William Kenrick's unsigned piece, in the *Monthly Review,* praised Mr Shandy's fondness for digressions and his 'striking and singular' characters. He also expressed his particular approbation of an author who could introduce an 'excellent moral sermon' into a work of this nature, 'by which expedient, it will probably be read by many who would peruse a sermon in no other form'.[27] The *Critical Review* for January 1760 commended its characters and its diverting digressions,[28] while the *London Magazine* for February predicted that 'thou wilt be read and admir'd […] by the best, if not the most numerous class of mankind.'[29] In fact, the book was already being admired 'by the best class of mankind' as a letter praising it (which Sterne had composed for Kitty Fourmantel to send to David Garrick) had introduced it to the best of London society.[30]

On 4 March 1760, Sterne arrived in London and on the 8th of March a formal agreement was made with James Dodsley (1724-1797) the brother of Robert Dodsley. He sold the copy-right of the first four volumes of *Tristram Shandy* for £630 and agreed to write a new volume every year. This sum was later amended, so Sterne received a total of £830 in return for the first four volumes of *Tristram Shandy* in addition to a volume of the sermons which he published under the pseudonym of Yorick. This was almost three times the annual income Sterne received as a clergyman, so he was determined to make the most of the opportunity that this afforded him. James Dodsley immediately published a second edition with a frontispiece by William Hogarth and a dedication to 'The Right

[26] Letter 43 to David Garrick dated 1 January 1760. *Letters*, I.43.109-10.
[27] Kenrick, 'Tristram Shandy', 561-71.
[28] Tobias George Smollett, ed., 'Art. 14. The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman.', *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature; London* 9 (January 1760): 73–4.
[29] Edward Kimber, ed., 'The Monthly Catalogue, for February, 1760.', *London Magazine, or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer, 1747-1783; London* 29 (February 1760): 111–2.
[30] Letter dated 1 January 1760 which Sterne wrote for Catherine Fourmantel to send to David Garrick. *Letters*, I.43.109-10.

Honourable Mr. Pitt' that Sterne had composed while he was in London, and which was published on 2 April 1760. He says that if he is ever told that the book:

> Has made you smile, or can conceive it has beguiled you of one moment's pain—I shall think myself as happy as a minister of state;—perhaps much happier than any one (one only excepted) that I have ever read or heard of.[31]

*Tristram Shandy* certainly caused a stir and was everywhere pronounced a sensation. A critic commenting on the author's fame in the *Imperial Magazine* observed that no man could equal Mr Sterne as a satirist of men's hobby-horses or ruling passions:

> Mr. Sterne doubtless possesses in the highest degree the art of ridiculing the ruling passions, or hobby horses, as well as the vices and follies of mankind. No man is equal to him in the 'ridentem dicere verum',[32] and, I think, he and his work may both justly be styled originals.[33]

Sterne became a celebrity almost overnight. However, none of the reviewers were aware that Sterne was a clergyman when they wrote favourably about the book during the first two months of 1760. As subsequent reviews tend to confirm, had they known this fact, they would have been much harsher in their criticism of a bawdy book that was written by a member of the Anglican clergy. Furthermore, once Sterne was known as a personality through his visits to London, no reviewer, and even fewer readers, could again keep the personality and character of Sterne distinct from his work. Laurence Sterne had now become entangled (and conflated) with the fictional characters Yorick and Tristram Shandy in the public mind.[34] This confusion was partly of his own making as Sterne had already signed himself 'Yorick' in a letter in 1759, and in subsequent letters he refers to himself as 'Tristram', 'Shandy', or 'Yorick'.[35] The alleged impropriety of Sterne's conduct in London quickly assured his notoriety. Indeed, he was doubly censured for being a clergyman. To add to this, from April 1760 onwards, a flood of pamphlets and books imitating, criticizing, explaining

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[31] *TS*, 'Dedication to Mr. Pitt'.
[32] 'Speaking the truth while laughing'. See Horace, *Satires*, I.i.24.
[33] An unidentified critic signing himself 'D.', 'On the Present State of Literature in England', *Imperial Magazine*, Sup 1760, 687.
[34] For an account of this triple identity, see 'An Account of the Rev. Mr. ST****, and His Writings', *The Grand Magazine*, no. 3 (June 1760): 308–11, 309.
[35] See Letter no 37 to Catherine Fourmantel signed 'Yorick' dated York 1759. *Letters*, I.37.100.

and parodying *Tristram Shandy* began to appear. Sterne's first reaction that the shilling pamphlets would be good publicity for his book soon gave way to his conviction that 'the scribblers use me ill'.[36] In the same letter to William Warburton which was ten days after he announced that he had begun his third volume, he reiterated his intention not to give offence or to violate decency or good manners in his work:

> Be assured, my lord, that willingly and knowingly I will give no offence to any mortal by anything which I think can look like the least violation either of decency or good manners; and yet, with all the caution of a heart void of offence or intention of giving it, I may find it very hard, in writing such a book as '*Tristram Shandy*', to mutilate everything in it down to the prudish humour of every particular. I will, however, do my best; though laugh, my lord, I will, and as loud as I can too.[37]

On 28 January 1761, Volumes III and IV of *Tristram Shandy* were published. In the third volume of this instalment Sterne replies to his critics.[38] He purports to be unconcerned by their attacks and promises to receive their criticism with good humour. In a letter to his friend, Stephen Croft, Sterne wrote that 'one half of the town abuse my book as bitterly as the other half cry it up to the skies'.[39] Intelligence of Sterne's profession often made a discernible difference as to how his work was received by the critics. Having become aware that the book was 'a production of a Dignitary of the Church of England', Owen Ruffhead of the *Monthly Review,* takes Sterne to task for his impropriety of character, lack of discretion and for the indecency of his book. As part of his lesson on discretion, Ruffhead quotes from Hobbes' *Leviathan* (chapter 8) on the difference between wit and judgment.[40] The *Critical Review* for April praised its 'pertinent observations on life and characters, humorous incidents, poignant ridicule, and marks of taste and erudition' but thought that the work, 'patterned on Rabelais' had a 'general want of decorum'. While the first instalment 'had merit, but was extolled above its value' the other 'has defects, but is too severely decried.'[41]

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[36] Sterne's Letter to William Warburton dated 9 June 1760. *Letters*, I.59.152.
[37] *Letters*, I.59.152.
[38] This criticism was occasioned by the manner in which Sterne had published the first instalment of his sermons. See Ruffhead and Rose, 'Sterne's Sermons' in *Monthly Review.*
[39] Letter from Sterne to Stephen Croft dated 17 February 1761, *Letters*, I.69.183-5.
[40] Owen Ruffhead, 'Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy. Vols. III IV.', *The Monthly Review, Or, Literary Journal. By Several Hands.* 24 (February 1761): 101–16.
[41] *The Critical Review: Or, Annals of Literature; London* XI (April 1761), 314-7.

On 21 December 1761, volumes V and VI of *Tristram Shandy* were published. These were generally treated more kindly by the critics. The *Critical Review* for January 1762, declared that it was impossible for any reader not to see that 'these volumes can be the production of no other than the original author of *Tristram Shandy*' since:

> We find the same unconnected rhapsody, the same rambling digression, the eccentric humour, the peculiar wit, petulance, pruriency and ostentation of learning, by which the former part was so happily distinguished.[42]

John Langhorne of the *Monthly Review*, writing in the same month, observes that while the fifth and sixth volumes of this work 'are not so much interlarded with obscenity as the former; yet they are not without their stars and dashes, their hints and whiskers'. Nevertheless, 'in point of true humour', he concedes, these volumes 'are much superior to the third and fourth, if not to the first and second'.[43] In this opinion he is in agreement with Sterne, who while still 'scribbling' his Tristram records that 'these two volumes are, I think, the best'.[44] Langhorne goes on to praise the episode of Le Fever which he feels does 'great honour to the abilities and disposition of the Author'. This sentiment was clearly shared by others as the episode was widely reprinted in newspapers and periodicals.

In a defence of its humour mounted in volume four, Sterne advances the claim that his book is healing in that the laughter it induces 'beguiles' both the reader (and the writer) of pain:

> If 'tis wrote against any thing,—'tis wrote… against the spleen; in order, by a more frequent and a more convulsive elevation and depression of the diaphragm, and the succussations of the intercostal and abdominal muscles in laughter, to drive the *gall* and other *bitter juices* from the gall bladder, liver and sweet-bread of his majesty's subjects, with all the inimicitious passions which belong to them, down into their duodenums. (*TS*, IV.XXII.360)

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[42] *The Critical Review: Or, Annals of Literature; London* XIII (January 1762), 66-9.
[43] John Langhorne, 'Tristram Shandy, Vol. V, VI.', *The Monthly Review; Or, Literary Journal: By Serveral Hands.* 26 (January 1762): 31–41.
[44] Sterne's letter to Lady -- dated 21 September 1761. *Letters*, I.74.205-6.

By adopting the analogy of a physician who can cure the body or mind of his patient, Sterne is drawing upon an old tradition employed by satirists to justify their work.[45] In fact, the state of his own declining health was a serious concern during this period as he departed for Paris on 2 January 1762, in hopes of recovering it.[46] Shortly after his arrival in France, it was falsely reported that Sterne had died.[47] Although a formal denial of the author's death was issued within a week, this was not quick enough to prevent a poetic tribute from being published.[48]

Sterne returned from France in June 1764; although he did not publish volumes VII and VIII of *Tristram Shandy* until 23 January 1765. In a letter to his Parisian banker, Robert Foley, Sterne tells him to expect 'a laughing good tempered Satyr against Traveling' and promises in his seventh volume 'as odd a Tour thro' france, as ever was projected or executed by traveller or travell Writer, since the world began'.[49] An unsigned notice in the *Critical Review,* describes the author's account of his journey as 'unconnected' and 'unmeaning',[50] while Ralph Griffiths of the *Monthly Review* condemned it as 'a dull expedient for filling up half a score pages'.[51] Although Griffiths had high praise for Sterne's characters and for the story of Uncle Toby's courtship of the widow, he strongly decries these volumes for their obscenity. In censuring the author of *Tristram Shandy* for his 'bawdyisms' and his 'obscene asterisms', he accuses Sterne of 'officiating as pimp to every lewd idea excited by your own creative and abominable ambiguity'. Indeed, his parting shot in this review is his conviction that Sterne's 'excellence lay in the PATHETIC' and that 'the little story of Le Fevre has done you more honour than every thing else you have wrote, except your Sermons'.[52]

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[45] See classic study of this analogy, Mary Claire Randolph, 'The Medical Concept in English Renaissance Satiric Theory: Its Possible Relationships and Implications', *Studies in Philology* 38, no. 2 (1941): 125–57.
[46] No 77 Sterne's letter to Elizabeth Sterne dated December 28, 1761. *Letters*, I.77.214-6.
[47] London chronicle, II (Feb, 2-4 and 11-13, 1762, 117, 145).
[48] 'On the Report of the Death of the Reverend Mr. STERNE,' in Lloyd's Evening Post, x. 158.
[49] Sterne's letter to Robert Foley, his Parisian banker, dated 11 November 1764. *Letters*, I.141.391-2.
[50] *The Critical Review: Or, Annals of Literature; London*, XIX (January 1765), 65-6.
[51] Ralph Griffiths, 'Tristram Shandy, Vols. VII. and VIII.', *The Monthly Review; Or, Literary Jornal: By Several Hands.* 32 (February 1765): 120–39, 130-9.
[52] Griffiths, 120-39.

In an alleged act of 'penance' for his '7 & 8 graceless Children',[53] and 'to keep up a kind of balance' in his *Shandaic* character, Sterne decides to beget 'a couple of more ecclesiastick ones' upon the public.[54] Accordingly, volumes three and four of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* appear in January 1766, as Sterne is making his second continental tour. When Volume IX of *Tristram Shandy* was published 29 January in 1767, many of the periodicals had very little to say about the author's work that was new. In the *Monthly Review*, Ralph Griffiths claims to have discovered that the prototype of the author's humour is not Cervantes or Rabelais but 'HARLEQUIN' and that his book can only be designated as 'the PANTOMIME OF LITERATURE.'[55] The reviewer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* observes that the ninth volume 'consists of the same whimsical extravagancies that filled the other eight' and while he censures Sterne as a dabbler in bawdry and nastiness the reviewer stops short of concluding that *Tristram Shandy* is either inflaming or immoral.[56]

In his battles with the critics, and in his dialogues with his readers, Sterne defends himself (and his book) from charges of immorality, obscenity and a general want of decorum or 'taste'. As Sterne's fictional narrator Tristram exclaims 'All I know of the matter is,---when I sat down, my intent was to write a good book' (TS, III.XX.227). In doing this, Sterne effectively challenges the subjective concept of 'taste',[57] just as he interrogates the new, subjective concept of happiness.

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[53] An allusion to vols VII and VIII of *Tristram Shandy*.

[54] Letter no 154 Sterne's letter to Thomas Hesilrige on 5 July 1765. *Letters*, II.154.442-3.

[55] Ralph Griffiths, 'Tristram Shandy, Vol. IX.', *The Monthly Review; Or, Literary Journal: By Several Hands.* 36 (February 1767): 93–102.

[56] *Gentleman's Magazine* for February xxxvii (1767), 75-6.

[57] An unsigned notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for February xxxvii (1767), 75-6, makes the connection between 'subjectivity', 'taste', 'pleasure' and the concept of 'decorum' explicit: 'In questions of taste**,** however, everyone must determine for himself; and what is humour is as much a question of taste, as what is beauty. It is probable that the greatest part of those who have lavishly praised this work spoke from their feeling, their praise therefore being only in proportion to their pleasure, with respect to them, was just; but it has been censured rather from judgment than feeling, and as its *bad* is an object of judgment, though its *good* is an object of taste, it may certainly be determined how far this censure has been just. It has been charged with gross indecency, and the charge is certainly true; but indecency does no mischief, at least such indecency as is found in *Tristram Shandy*; it will disgust a delicate mind, but it will not sully a chaste one: It tends as little to inflame the passions as *Culpepper's Family Physician*; on the contrary, as nastiness is the strongest antidote to desire, many parts of the work in question, that have been the most severely treated by moralists and divines, are less likely to do ill than good, as far as Chastity is immediately concerned.'

**The Formation of Tristram and the Malleability of Happiness**

'Sport of small accidents, *Tristram Shandy*! that thou art, and ever will be!' (*TS*, III.VIII.196)

Through his depiction of the conditions of Tristram's conception, delivery and early development, Sterne illustrates that the early formation of his inborn nature (and hence his potential for subjective happiness or misery) is the product of a host of factors (many of which may be matters of chance for Tristram) such as the substance of his genetic inheritance and the quality of his early childhood environment.

Sterne opens the novel with its protagonist, Tristram,[58] laying the blame for his personal misfortunes at the foot of his parents' bed. In wishing that either his father or mother 'had minded what they were about' when they begot him (*TS*, I.I.1), Tristram raises the possibility that the copulatory act can determine the future happiness or misery of the child. Tristram's account of how his parents' mis-managed the important matter of his conception and of the subsequent effect of this upon his life suggests that the constitution of each individual is substantially formed by the time they come into the world. As well as inherited physiological traits, he also inherits a set of psychological ones, such as his cognitive faculties and his affective disposition. Not only is the 'production of a rational Being was concern'd in it', says Tristram, but 'possibly the happy formation and temperature[59] of his body, perhaps his genius and the very cast of his mind' (*TS*, I.I.1).

Sterne's source,[60] and an important repository of the idea that the conditions of the copulatory act can affect the future of the child, is Pierre Charron's *De la sagesse* (*Of Wisdome),* translated by

[58] Although we do not learn his name until Chapter 4.
[59] As New points out, the word *temperature* was used interchangeably with *temperament* throughout the century; see for example page 175 in *Tristram Shandy* and OED, s.v. '*Temperature'. TSN*, 41.
[60] Although the idea that the conditions of conception determine the future of the child was commonplace, one repository is Pierre Charron, *Of Wisdome: Three Books*, trans. Samson Lennard (London: Printed for Edward Blount and Witt Aspley, 1612). New feels that this is Sterne's likely source as he 'definitely quotes' from this work in the last chapter of *Tristram Shandy* (*TS*, IX.XXXIII.806). It would not have been uncharacteristic of Sterne to have had him in mind, New believes, because he had already used his work eight years earlier when he began the novel. See *TSN*, 39 and 549-51.

Samson Lennard (1612). In his preface, Charron observes that 'A man would little think of what power and importance this beginning is, for if men did know it, there would be more care taken, and diligence used therein than there is.' This sentiment is clearly shared by Sterne's eponymous hero, Tristram, who begins 'the history of himself' *ab Ovo* by complaining about his parents' lack of due care and attention to this very important matter. In his treatise on how to generate a child of wisdom, Charron identifies two 'hindrances' to the enterprise which he calls 'Natural, and Acquired'. The first, 'which is Natural, proceedeth from the original temper and temperature… of the seed of the Parents' (extreme variations in which are said to lead to feebleness or folly) and the second hindrance to acquiring a 'good sonne' regards 'their education and instruction after they are born, and come to some growth'.[61] Charron's text implicitly recognises that a child brings certain innate capacities, abilities, dispositions and traits into the world which could be said to form his original nature, constitution or inborn character.

Indeed, when Tristram speculates that 'for aught they knew to the contrary, even the fortunes of his whole house might take their turn from the humours and dispositions which were then uppermost' (*TS*, I.I.1) he raises the possibility that one's happiness in life, and even the happiness of one's family, is irrevocably shaped by the nature of a man's original or inborn constitution. When Tristram asserts that 'you have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits' (*TS*, I.I.1) he takes it for granted that his reader is acquainted with contemporary scientific debates surrounding human generation and gestation. Indeed, as Louis A. Landa has shown in his essay on the background of Sterne's 'little gentleman', the debate on the opposed ideas of the ovists and the animalculists on human generation were in wide currency in the eighteenth century and lie behind Tristram's speculations on the homunculus.[62] As Tristram understands the situation, should any accident occur to the 'little

[61] Charron, fols. a3–a4 and 458-9, cited in *TSN*, 39-40.

[62] Louis A. Landa argues in his essay that Sterne is not distorting scientific views in the opening section of *Tristram Shandy* but is following contemporary debates on human conception by respected biologists of the late seventeenth century such as Harvey, Swammerdown, Malpighi, Leeuwenhoek and de Graaf whose embryological views were accepted and widely disseminated in the eighteenth century. See Louis A. Landa,

gentleman' on his journey to the womb, it cannot but affect one's disposition or temperament. What if, he conjectures:

> My little gentleman had got to his journey's end miserably spent;—his muscular strength and virility worn down to a thread;—his own animal spirits ruffled beyond description,—and that in this sad disorder'd state of nerves, he had laid down a prey to sudden starts, or a series of melancholy dreams and fancies for nine long, long, months together. (*TS*, I.I.3)

The relevance of his ruminations on the motions and activity of the 'animal spirits' [63] to his own cognitive faculty, affective disposition and prospect for future happiness soon become clear to the reader. As the animal spirits 'are transfused from father to son' and determine 'nine parts in ten of a man's sense or his nonsense, his successes and miscarriages in this world' it is thus crucial that they should escort or conduct the homunculus 'safe to the place destined for his reception' (*TS*, I.I.1-2). Unfortunately, his father's spirits were 'scattered and dispersed' by his mother's unseasonable question, and this laid the foundation 'for a thousand weaknesses both of body and mind, which no skill of the physician or the philosopher could ever afterwards have set thoroughly to rights' (*TS*, I.I.2-3).

For Juvenal, a sound body and a sound mind leads to a state of happiness:

> A sound mind in a sound body is a short but full description of a happy state in this world: he that has these two has little more to wish for, and he that wants either of them will be but little the better for anything else.[64]

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'The Shandean Homunculus: The Background of Sterne's "Little Gentleman"', in *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature: Essays in Honor of Alan Dugald McKillop* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 49–68.

[63] For an explanation of Sterne's scientific concepts and terms scholars have cited Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* where the animal spirits are described as a 'subtile vapour, which is expressed from the *Bloud*, and the instrument of the soule, to performe all his actions; a common tye or *medium* betwixt the body and the soule'. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 5th ed. (Oxford: Printed for Henry Cripps, 1638), 14-5. The animal spirits are more scientifically viewed in the entry of the *Chambers Cyclopaedia* as 'a fine subtile juice, or humour in animal bodies; supposed to be the great instrument of muscular motion, sensation, &c.', cited in *TSN*, 41.

[64] Locke cites Juvenal Satires x 356 in his introduction in John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education and Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Ruth Weissbourd Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 10 (Book I, Sect. 1).

The prospects for Tristram being able to experience a 'happy state in this world' have already been jeopardized, it seems, by the deficiencies of his pre-natal constitution. As once these spirits are 'set a-going', says Tristram, 'whether right or wrong' in the 'different tracks and trains you put them into' they tread 'the same steps over and over again' and 'presently make a road of it' which once they are used to it 'the Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it' (*TS*, I.I.2).

Locke's passage concerning a habitual train or association of ideas[65] is used by Sterne to articulate the notion that Tristram's pre-natal constitution (with its natural capacities, traits, propensities and prevailing dispositions) exerts such a bias upon his inborn nature that his happiness or misery in the world will inevitably be shaped by it. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690),[66] Locke famously refutes the 'doctrine of innate ideas' which holds that ready-made knowledge of truths are stamped on the mind before birth. For Locke, the mind is a *tabula rasa* or blank page, and all our knowledge is derived from the raw materials of experience through the medium of our senses.[67] As Roy Porter memorably puts it, for Locke the mind:

> Is not like a furnished flat, prestocked before occupation […] but like a home put together piecemeal from […] acquisitions picked up bit by bit.[68]

Locke's mechanistic theory of mind holds that our conceptions of the world are syntheses of the simple ideas we originally receive from sensation and reflection (introspection). However, Locke did not hold that all our ideas are derived directly from the external world. Many come from observing the activities of our minds as they react to, and consider, the ideas they receive from outside. By noticing, reflecting and reasoning, we acquire more complex ones. Locke addressed 'the association

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[65] Locke, *ECHU*, 1991396 (Book II, Chap. XXXIII, Sect. 6).

[66] John Locke (1632-1704) published his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in late 1689 although it is dated 1690.

[67] 'Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say, white Paper, void of all Characters, without any *Ideas*; How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless Fancy of Man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of Reason and Knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, From *Experience*: In that, all our Knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives it self.' Locke, *ECHU*, 1991104 (Book II, Chap. I, Sect. 2).

[68] Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason: How the Enlightenment Transformed the Way We See Our Bodies and Souls* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 7.

of our ideas' as an afterthought. This is where syntheses are made without good grounds (and without our conscious awareness) under the influence of our inclinations, custom and education. Locke's doctrine of the 'association of ideas' is the mechanism whereby one idea automatically conjures up its associate:

> *Ideas* that in themselves are not at all of kin, come to be so united in some Men's Minds, that 'tis very hard to separate them, they always keep in company, and the one no sooner at any time comes into the Understanding but its Associate appears with it; and if they are more than two which are thus united, the whole gang always inseparable shew themselves together.[69]

The 'wrong and unnatural Combinations of *Ideas'* was regarded by Locke as a potentially dangerous form of madness which was not typical of the way that the mind usually worked. He saw the passive association of ideas as responsible for irrational fears and superstition which filled the head 'with false Views', the reason with 'false Consequences' and was 'the foundation of the greatest […] Errors in the World'.[70]

> This strong Combination of *Ideas*, not ally'd by Nature, the Mind makes in it self either voluntarily, or by chance, and hence it come in different Men to be very different, according to their different Inclinations, Educations, Interests, *etc*. Custom settles habits of Thinking in the Understanding, as well as of Determining in the Will, and of Motions in the Body; all which seems to be but Trains of Motion in the Animal Spirits, which once set a going continue on in the same steps they have been used to, which by often treading are worn into a smooth path, and the Motion in it becomes easy and as it were Natural. As far as we can comprehend Thinking, thus *Ideas* seem to be produced in our Minds; or if they are not, this may serve to explain their following one another in an habitual train, when once they are put into that tract, as well as it does to explain such Motions of the Body.[71]

As we later learn in Chapter IV, the novel begins with an example of the 'association of ideas' as Mr Shandy, who was 'one of the most regular men in every thing he did', wound the house clock on the first Sunday of every month and had likewise 'brought some other little family concernments to the same period, in order […] to get them all out of the way at one time' (*TS*, I.IV.6-7). Tristram describes the effect of the repeated association of these two events on the mind of his mother who:

> Could never hear the said clock wound up,—but the thoughts of some other things unavoidably popp'd into her head*,—& vice versa:*—which strange combination of ideas, the sagacious *Locke,* who

[69] Locke, *ECHU*, 1991395 (Book II, Chap. XXXIII, Sect. 5).
[70] Locke, *ECHU*, 400-1 (Book II, Chap. XXXIII, Sect. 18).
[71] Locke, *ECHU*, 396 (Book II, Chap. XXXIII, Sect. 6).

> certainly understood the nature of these things better than most men, affirms to have produced more wry actions than all other sources of prejudice whatsoever. (*TS*, I.IV.7)

Although Locke rejects the doctrine of *innate ideas,* he does accept that man is born with *innate capacities* and *dispositions.* In his study of the philosophy of the Enlightenment, Anthony Gottlieb explains that Locke's distinction between innate capacities and dispositions (which Locke accepted) and ready-made knowledge of truths that are stamped on the mind before birth (which Locke attacked) is often overlooked or blurred.[72] In his *Essays on the Law of Nature* Locke declares that man is equipped with an 'inborn constitution' which comprises his faculties of sense perception, reasoning and understanding.[73] In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education,*[74] a treatise addressed to the education of the sons of the English gentry of the late seventeenth century,[75] Locke accepts that the characters and dispositions of children are partly inborn:

> God has stamped certain characters upon men's minds, which, like their shapes, may perhaps be a little mended but can hardly be totally altered and transformed into the contrary.[76]

Locke allows that the inherited or inborn nature of a child may be altered or modified but cannot be fundamentally changed by education. Indeed, he also suggests that some individuals are so favoured by their 'happy constitutions' (their biological inheritance) that this is enough to carry them towards what is 'excellent' in life:

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[72] Anthony John Gottlieb, *The Dream of Enlightenment: The Rise of Modern Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 2017), 145.
[73] John Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, ed. W. von Leyden (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954), 199. (Begun in 1660).
[74] John Locke published *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* in 1693 but it was considerably expanded in 1695.
[75] Locke writes that the principle aim of his discourse is 'how a young gentleman should be brought up from his infancy.' Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 12 (Book I, Sect. 6). Its content is thus limited by gender, class and era in certain respects. For example, his treatise recommends that the child should be privately tutored at home, which pertains to the situation of the gentry. His treatise seeks to find the likeliest method 'to produce virtuous, useful, and able men in their distinct callings: though that most to be taken care of is the gentleman's calling.' Locke holds that 'if those of that rank are by their education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into order.' Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 8 (Dedication to Edward Clarke of *Chipley*, Esquire). However, while Locke repeatedly asserts how his method is suited 'to our English gentry' it should be noted that the work is not directed exclusively to any particular class as its moral virtues are for 'a gentleman or a lover of truth'. Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 141 (Book III, Part D, Sect. 189).
[76] Locke, *Some Thoughts,* 40-1 (Book II, Part A, Sect. 66).

> There are some men's constitutions of body and mind so vigorous and well framed by nature that they need not much assistance from others, but by the strength of their natural genius they are from their cradles carried towards what is excellent, and by the privilege of their happy constitutions are able to do wonders[77]

For Locke, those '*native propensities*' and 'prevalencies of constitution' which may not be conducive to the attainment of happiness may nevertheless be 'much mended' and turned to good purposes 'with art'.[78] As he confidently asserts, 'of all the men we meet with, nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education'.[79] The 'difference to be found in the manners and abilities of men', he observes, is owing 'more to their *education* than to anything else'.[80] As an author of a treatise on education, Locke's emphasis on its benefits for producing 'virtuous, useful, and able men in their distinct callings' is unsurprising. While Locke recognizes that each child is born with a unique blend of abilities, capacities, traits, dispositions and proclivities, he clearly holds that the expression of these propensities *can,* and generally *ought* to be modified or controlled. In fact, Locke implicitly conflates utility with moral worth when he asserts that a youth's behaviour should be modified purely instrumentally in the light of what will bring them the greatest benefits, results or subjective happiness in their allotted calling or profession.

Following Locke's injunction to nicely 'observe your son's *temper,* and that when he is under least restraint, in his play and as he thinks out of your sight',[81] Walter discerns 'a most unaccountable obliquity' in his manner of setting up his top and justifying the principles upon which he had done it. In a tone 'more expressive by half of sorrow than reproach' Walter sees it 'verified in this, and from a thousand other observations' he had made that his son's misfortunes 'began nine months before

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[77] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 10 (Book I, Sect. 1).
[78] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 76 (Book II, Part B, Sect. 102).
[79] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 10 (Book I, Sect. 1).
[80] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 25 (Book II, Part A, Sect. 32).
[81] 'Begin therefore betimes nicely to observe your son's *temper*, and that when he is under least restraint, in his play, and as he thinks out of your sight. See what are his *predominant passions* and *prevailing inclinations* […] These *native propensities*, these prevalencies of constitution, are not to be cured by rules […] though with art they may be much mended and turned to good purposes. But this, be sure, after all is done, the bias will always hang on that side that nature first placed it.' Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 76 (Book II, Part B, Sect. 102).

ever he came into the world' and that he should 'neither think nor act like any other man's child' (*TS*, I.III.4).

Walter fears that his son's inborn nature has been irrecoverably damaged by the contingent circumstances which interrupted the manner of his actual begetting. Although Tristram appears to agree with his father's view, the fact that he wonders why he had never accounted for his son's peculiarities as being derived from 'blood' or from 'family likeness' implies that he sees his inborn nature as largely the 'chance' product of his genetic inheritance. While father and son disagree as to its actual mechanism, they both agree that one's inborn nature, and hence one's happiness or misery in this world, is predominantly the outcome of 'chance'. Accordingly, in the face of what Walter fears to be an ineradicable pre-natal 'bias [that] will always hang on that side that nature first placed it',[82] the best that he can do to promote his son's welfare (following the advice of Locke) 'is to make the best of what nature has given, to prevent the vices and faults to which such a constitution is most inclined, and give it all the advantages it is capable of'.[83]

It would seem that Tristram's inborn nature or temperament impels him toward happiness or misery no less than those contingent events he will later encounter in the family environment. Tristram complains that he 'was begot and born to misfortunes' (*TS*, I.XV.46) and that this has negatively impacted both his mental and physical constitution throughout his life:

> From the first hour I drew my breath in it, to this, that I can now scarce draw it at all, for an asthma I got in scating against the wind in *Flanders;*--I have been the continual sport of what the world calls Fortune (*TS*, I.V.8)

Although Tristram concedes that 'Fortune' has never made him feel the weight of any great or signal evil he nevertheless affirms that the accumulation of misfortunes and cross-accidents has seriously blighted his life:

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[82] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 76 (Book II, Part B, Sect. 102).
[83] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 41 (Book II, Part A, Sect. 66).

> That in every stage of my life, and at every turn and corner where she could get fairly at me, the ungracious Duchess has pelted me with a set of as pitiful misadventures and cross accidents as ever small HERO sustained. (*TS*, I.V.8-9)

The universe of the novel is one in which suffering and pain manifestly exist and where inscrutable forces constantly act to subvert human wishes and aims. In the face of this suffering, he can only lament: 'Unhappy *Tristram!* child of wrath! child of decrepitude! interruption! mistake! and discontent!' (*TS*, IV.XIX.354). In the case of his material circumstances and status Tristram avows that 'it could not well have fared worse with me' (*TS*, I.V.8). He is clearly unsatisfied with his material, social and historical lot and implies that he has suffered from unfavourable circumstances and a decisive lack of opportunity throughout his life. This 'planet is well enough', he says, 'provided a man could be born in it to a great title or to a great estate; or could any how contrive to be called up to publick charges, and employments of dignity or power, but that', he adds, 'is not my case'. (*TS*, I.V.8) He also wishes that the time and manner of his begetting could have been 'a little alter'd' or that it could have been put off for 'some twenty or five-and-twenty years longer, when a man in the literary world might have stood some chance' (*TS*, I.XXI.72). While Tristram concedes that his evaluation of his lot in life is subjective, as 'every man will speak of the fair as his own market has gone in it', he affirms it over again 'to be one of the vilest worlds that ever was made' (*TS*, I.V.8).

Tristram clearly suffers the world he inhabits. The novel depicts a world in which pain and suffering are pervasive and are woven into the very fabric of man's existence. Moreover, this sentiment is often expressed by way of sartorial metaphor which 'couples' and 'un-couples' the interior and exterior aspects of mankind's experience:

> What is the life of man! Is it not to shift from side to side?—from sorrow to sorrow?—to button up one cause of vexation!—and unbutton another! (TS, IV.XXXI.399)

Sterne's metaphor articulates a view that is commonly expressed in Sterne's sermons, that suffering is the universal lot of mankind. As Walter's famous lament on human affliction suggests it is a pervasive and inescapable part of human existence:

> When I reflect, brother *Toby*, upon MAN; and take a view of that dark side of him which represents his life as open to so many causes of trouble—when I consider, brother *Toby*, how oft we eat the bread of affliction, and that we are born to it, as to the portion of our inheritance (*TS*, IV.VII.332)

As scholars have noted, although Walter generally prefers naturalist explanations for phenomena his discourse upon man paraphrases Sterne's sermon *Trust in God*.[84] In the Christian *eudaemonist* conception where 'true happiness' is transcendental, happiness on earth (if it comes at all) is generally fleeting. For Tristram the 'distresses with which, as an author and a man', he is 'hemm'd in on every side' are 'unavoidable' (*TS*, VII.VI.663). Given man's mortality, and the fragile and transitory nature of his existence, only those fortunate individuals who manage to avoid or endure its many 'hard jostlings' can be designated happy:

> THOUGH man is of all others the most curious vehicle, said my father, yet at the same time 'tis of so slight a frame and so totteringly put together, that the sudden jerks and hard jostlings it unavoidably meets with in this rugged journey, would overset and tear it to pieces a dozen times a day (*TS*, IV.VIII.333)

Yet a man's experiential happiness does not necessarily correlate with his external circumstances or his lot in life, as it is also contingent upon the internal constitution of his character. Whether a man is happy or not depends not only on what happens to him in life but also on the way in which he reacts to what happens to him in life. That the impact of the same vexation will vary depending upon the way it is perceived or 'packaged' is implicitly acknowledged by Tristram:

> The different weight, dear Sir,—nay even the different package of two vexations of the same weight,—makes a very wide difference in our manners of bearing and getting through with them. (*TS*, IV.XVII.349)

Yet despite this, Tristram believes that he has no control over his response to the trials and tribulations that beset his life, and as a consequence, over his experiential happiness. This is because he attributes both the formation of his character and his material circumstances to the unfortunate effects of chance. While he may be correct in his assumption that his inborn nature (itself a result of the interplay of his genetic blueprint and the contingent environment in which this

[84] Sterne's sermon 'Trust in God'. *Sermons*, 34.322-30.

is realized) has been formed by circumstances beyond his decisive influence or control, it is noticeable that Tristram fails to accept any responsibility for either the character which he subsequently forms during the course of his adult life, or for the circumstances in which he finds himself in his maturity. Since a man's character comprises of his faculties, personality traits, dispositions, proclivities and habits of mind (some of which may be innate and some of which may be acquired) his character may be modified by chance, by the various ups and down of his life, or by the passage of time. Yet, Tristram sees himself purely as an impotent victim who is unable to exert any control over his character, the happiness of his life, or over his narrative. His failure to recount his life, even though we do get plenty of his opinions, is sadly inevitable from almost the inception of his work.[85] Furthermore, he is decidedly pessimistic about his prospects for future happiness in what he perceives to be a 'scurvy and disastrous world' (*TS*, I.V.8). Not only does Tristram lament that he is the 'Sport of small accidents' but his defeatist prediction is that he 'ever will be!' (*TS*, III.VIII.196). Predictably, Tristram's response to his mother's enforced country lye-in, which denies her the attention of the leading *London* man-midwife (or *accoucheur*) of the age, is to complain about the disadvantageous effect this had upon himself. Since 'as reasonable as it was', says Tristram, 'I have ever thought it hard that the whole weight of the article should have fallen entirely, as it did, upon myself' (*TS*, I.XV.46).

Tristram is not alone in laying the fault of his unhappy condition elsewhere as his father shares his propensity to blame invisible and inscrutable forces for the majority, if not all, of his woes. When Walter complains that 'not one single thing has gone right this day!' he swears that it is because 'some retrograde planet' was hanging over his unfortunate house and 'turning every individual thing in it out of its place' (*TS*, III:243). Like Tristram, Walter is also quick to shift the blame for his various misfortunes onto others. While Tristram blames his parents for his miserable condition, Walter Shandy blames his wife. Not only does he blame Mrs Shandy for being the 'first cause' of the *coitus*

[85] In interpreting Tristram as only partially in control of a narrative which Sterne completely controls, I agree with Wayne Booth; see Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1991), 221-40.

*interruptus* which disperses the 'memory, fancy, and quick parts' of his son (*TS*, IV.XIX.354) but he also blames his wife for transmitting onto her foetus 'that nonsensical anxiety of hers about lying in in town' (*TS*, IV.XIX.355).

In Elizabeth Carter's translation of the *Enchiridion* of the late Stoic Epictetus, the propensity to lay the fault for one's condition upon others is the act of an 'uninstructed Person':

> Men are disturbed, not by Things, but by the Principles and Notions, which they form concerning Things. Death, for Instance, is not terrible, else it would have appeared so to Socrates. But the Terror consists in our Notion of Death, that it is terrible. When therefore we are hindered, or disturbed, or grieved, let us never impute it to others, but to ourselves; that is, to our own Principles. It is the Action of an uninstructed Person to lay the Fault of his own bad Condition upon others.[86]

While Tristram asserts that he has no control over either events or himself, Epictetus asserts that one can control what one does with one's *impression* of events. Indeed, the assertion of the Stoics that an individual's perception of things is sovereign when it comes to happiness is signalled by Sterne's use of Epictetus for his motto on the title-pages of the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy:* 'Not things, but opinions about things, trouble men'. [87]

As Brian Norton has successfully argued, Sterne's novel is steadfastly centred on the theme of happiness as an ethical problem. On the ethical question of how our ideas and perceptions affect our ability to bear a world of falling sash windows and chestnuts.[88] Norton's treatment of the 'improbable' incident of Phutatorius and a piping-hot chestnut, is the starting point for my own discussion of subjective happiness, as it comically examines the Stoic idea that a man's happiness or misery in this world depends solely upon the nature of his mental responses.

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[86] Judith Hawley, ed., *The Writings of Epictetus*, trans. Elizabeth Carter, vol. 2, 6 vols, *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999), 287.
[87] The *Enchiridon* of Epictetus (Chapter 5). The Florida editors' state that Sterne is known to have had access to Charles Cotton's translation of the *Enchiridon* of Epictetus where this is translated as: 'MEN (says an ancient Greek Sentence) are tormented with the Opinions they have of Things, and not by the Things themselves.' (1.40.285). *TSN*, 37.
[88] Brian Michael Norton, 'The Moral in Phutatorius's Breeches: *Tristram Shandy* and the Limits of Stoic Ethics', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 18, no. 4 (2006): 405–23.

**Phutatorius and the 'Improbable Incident' of the Piping-hot Chestnut**

The incident, where a piping-hot chestnut falls through the aperture that Phutatorius left open in his breeches, is narrated in three brief chapters in the novel. Like Tristram's mishap with the sash window and the wound that Uncle Toby received at Namur, the episode is one of Sterne's digressions that concern a particular piece of male anatomy; an organ acutely sensitive to pleasure and pain. The episode, centred on Phutatorius, whose name means copulator, is a comic refutation of the Stoic ideal of imperturbability: on the idea that happiness is dependent solely on the nature of the relationship that holds between the perceiving subject and the object of perception.

The Stoics, who worked within the *eudaemonist* framework of classical ethics, defined happiness as *ataraxia* or imperturbability: the freedom from disturbance. Their focus was on the way in which an individual's mental responses can either facilitate or impede them in their attainment of subjective happiness. They held that the point of philosophy was to order one's priorities so that one can live life 'in accordance with nature'. For the Stoics the world is rationally organized by a beneficent god or providence and everything in it unfolds according to fate in an inexorable chain of cause and effect. To live 'in accordance with nature' is to understand that fate rules the world and that much of what happens is beyond one's control. This injunction is fundamental to the Stoic conception of happiness as it produces the correct mental attitude of resignation and acceptance. For the Stoics, learning to live with the inevitable is fundamental to the achievement of happiness.

Epictetus drew a distinction between the things under our control, such as our thoughts, judgments, desires and goals, and those 'externals' that are not under our control such as our possessions, reputation and our automatic bodily processes. For the Stoics:

> The happy man is not he whom the crowd deems happy, namely, he into whose coffers mighty sums have flowed, but he whose possessions are all in his soul.[89]

[89] Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Letters From a Stoic*, trans. Richard Mott Gummere (Enhanced Media, 2015), 95.

Virtue is the only thing which makes the soul flourish and vice is the only thing that can harm it. In order to concentrate on what is essentially within one's power the Stoics advocate that one's emotions should be redirected, or ideally, totally suppressed (*apatheia*). If one can avoid uncontrolled or misdirected passions and limit one's concerns to matters of the soul and virtue then:

> No one will ever put compulsion or hindrance on you, you will blame none, you will accuse none, you will do nothing against your will, no one will harm you, you will have no enemy for no harm can touch you.[90]

Phutatorius's accident takes place at the Visitation dinner, where Walter, Toby and Yorick have come to ask the learned doctors (school-divines, officials, advocates, proctors, registers, commissaries) whether undoing Tristram's mis-naming is possible. During dinner, a waiter carries one or two hundred hot roasted chestnuts to the table wrapped up in a clean damask napkin and sets them directly before Phutatorius (since it is well known that he is especially fond of them). 'Half a dozen hands all thrust into the napkin at a time' and in the ensuing scramble one of the chestnuts is sent rolling off the table and drops perpendicularly into that particular aperture in Phutatorius's breeches which 'the laws of decorum do strictly require… to be universally shut up' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.380). Unaware of the cause of what was going on below but instantly aware of its effect, Phutatorius struggles to bear the pain 'like a stoick'. He is unable to maintain his composure as he is thrown 'quite off his guard'. He leaps 'incontinently up' and cries out the oath 'Zounds' to the great surprise of the other dinner guests (*TS*, IV.XXVII.382). As the oath 'Zounds' is short for 'God's wounds'[91] this ironically links the failure of Phutatorius's stoic struggle against pain to the idea of Christian suffering.

Sterne offers a mechanistic account of what transpired in Phutatorius' brain between the time that the chestnut lands in his galligaskins and his pained outburst when all his attention went 'to the place in danger'. While the sensation of heat on his manhood is accompanied initially by pleasure,

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[90] Epictetus, *The Enchiridion*, trans. P. E. Matheson (Los Angeles, CA.: Enhanced Media, 2015), 7.
[91] See *TSN*, 324 for an account of 'Zounds' as a stock oath.

this rapidly turns into pain as the intensity of the heat increases. Had his imagination remained 'neuter', suggests Sterne, he might have endured it. But when a fresh glow of pain conjures the idea that this sensation might well be the result of the teeth of a 'detested reptile' as by a burn, Phutatorius panics (*TS*, IV.XXVII.382). He could no more help swearing this oath, says Tristram, than he could the cause of it.

Phutatorius fails as a Stoic because he is unable to control his impressions. Instead of redirecting or suppressing his reaction to the sensation of pain (an 'external' which the Stoics held to be irrelevant to happiness) he makes the wrong use of his impressions and allows his unfettered imagination (rather than his reason) to govern his response. Indeed, the sensation of pain is not something that mortal man can easily ignore. Even Montaigne, an advocate of Stoicism, affirms that 'pain is the worst disaster that can befall our being' and that 'it lies within us not to destroy pain'.[92] For most of mankind the prolonged or intense experience of pain seriously undermines the Stoic ideals of *ataraxia* (freedom from disturbance) and *apatheia* (the eradication of feeling). For many Christians, Stoicism errs in that it greatly overestimates mankind's ability to govern their impressions. As Donald Greene observes 'its lofty estimation of man' makes Stoicism 'inimical to traditional Christian thought'.[93] For embodied man, suggests Sterne, subjective happiness cannot be rendered immune to the painful realities of chance, or indeed, to the mediating effect of one's character.

The Stoics were inconsistent in their view that some things are within our control and that other things are not, since if their conception of fate is correct (that everything is the result of prior causes) then nothing at all is under our control. In this respect, Tristram's pessimistic assessment of his potential for happiness can be construed as fatalistic, since he traces his unhappy condition to the effect of a prior event or circumstance (which is itself the effect of a sequence of still earlier events

[92] Michel Eyquem de Montaigne and Michael Andrew Screech, *The Complete Essays* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 59.
[93] Donald Greene, 'Johnson, Stoicism, and the Good Life', in *The Unknown Samuel Johnson*, ed. John J. Burke, Jr. and Donald Kay (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 23–28.

and circumstances). In claiming that his unhappiness is caused by a series of unfortunate accidents that extend back indefinitely to a time before he is even born, Tristram seeks to evade any personal responsibility for the nature of his adult character or for his circumstances or lot in life.

Gottlieb explains[94] how the Stoic Chrysippus attempts to combine a belief in fate with a belief in personal responsibility. Chrysippus claims that there is one sense in which we are free and responsible and another sense in which we are not. We are not free, he says, in the sense that before we think or do anything what we are going to think or do is already fixed by earlier causes (by our natures, abilities and traits). However, some of those causes have to do with our own characters (our preferences, voluntary choices and habits of mind) so in this sense our thoughts and actions are our own. Gottlieb explains that Chrysippus illustrates his point with an example of a cylinder which is pushed down a slope. The cylinder keeps rolling because it has been pushed (the cause of its movement) so given this prior event it is bound to roll. But another part of the cause of its movement lies in the fact that it is a cylinder and not a cube. A gentle push may not have been enough to get a cube moving (as its shape makes it harder to roll) so part of the cause of its motion (whether it is a cylinder or a cube) lies in its own nature. It rolls because it is a cylinder and not just because of a prior cause provided by the push. It is in this sense that some of the causes of our thoughts and actions lie in our natures. They can be explained by our character, just as the behaviour of a cylinder can be explained by the actions of external forces.

Character, for the Stoics, is the product of fate so his attempt to reconcile what is effectively determinism with the notion of personal responsibility, as Gottlieb acknowledges, is not wholly satisfactory.[95] In his *Analysis of Happiness*, Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz also highlights the place of character in the achievement of happiness:

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[94] I am indebted here to Anthony Gottlieb's chapter on Stoicism and for Chrysippus's illustration of a rolling cylinder. See Anthony John Gottlieb, *The Dream of Reason: A History of Western Philosophy from the Greeks to the Renaissance* (London: Penguin, 2016).
[95] Gottlieb, 331.

> Happiness does not depend only on external sources, but also on internal conditions, not only on man's lot, but also on his personality.[96]

Tatarkiewicz considers the relationship that pertains between fate, character and chance. He understands a man's *fate* as the complex of events which make up the course of his life and over which he has no decisive influence. *Chance* is construed as a man's *external fate,* and his character is construed as his *internal fate* (since he has no power of decision over those things either).[97] If this formulation is applied to Tristram's case then: *if* his life is governed by fate, then it is not by his *external fate* (chance) alone, because this is supplemented by his *internal fate* (character). Neither is it governed by his *internal fate* (character) alone, because that is modified by *external fate* (chance).

The fact that (the adult) Tristram could have acted differently if he had so chosen, gives a satisfactory and sufficient notion of freedom of action. It is irrelevant whether this is causally determined as long as it is not coerced or contrary to his wishes. An action that is free in this sense leaves Tristram subject to normal moral assessment. While upbringing, social constraints, natural limitations, and inhibitions all conspire to make the human agent rather unfree in some obvious ways, this lack of freedom is a contingent matter. If Tristram was differently placed, or lived in a different society, or in a vastly different time, he would not be constrained in those particular ways. In any case, he can still act against his current constraints if he dared, though it might be dangerous or unwise to do so. This reflection allows one to see that the concept of freedom of agency lies at the very root of ethics. Ultimately, Tristram is responsible for his choices, values and aims, and for the acts that follow from those. Without this basic axiom, all talk of ethics is empty.

As Montaigne observes, we must be able to exert some measure of control over our character otherwise we could not be the object of moral judgment or assessment:

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[96] Tatarkiewicz, *Analysis of Happiness*, 194.
[97] Tatarkiewicz, 195-6.

> If this were not so, what could have brought us to respect manly courage, valour, fortitude, greatness of soul and determination?[98]

Given that Tristram could modify his preferences, voluntary choices and habits of mind in ways that facilitate his subjective experiential happiness, his situation is not as simple as fatalism (he cannot do anything about his happiness as it is wired into his disposition or temperament) nor Stoicism (he should control his emotions and attitudes because the rest is not up to him). Nor is it the case that Tristram can just 'think' himself happy (deluding himself in the face of disaster) as by so doing he robs himself of the responsibility to make changes and choices that could genuinely improve his subjective happiness and sense of well-being.

**Happiness and the Mind-Body Relationship**

For Epictetus, the conceptual gap between our assessments and the external world is couched in terms of a clear internal-external divide. Imperturbability is an achievable goal for the Stoics, since for them, we do not experience the world (or our body) without the mediation of our own assessments. Since the Stoics hold that only that which is in our power (our judgments, desires and goals) can fundamentally affect our happiness, the corollary of this position (which Sterne facetiously adopts in his reply to his critics) is that nothing outside our mind or volition can hinder or impede our happiness unless we choose to let it.

In response to an attack on the author and the novel by the *Monthly Review,*[99] Tristram writes himself into the role of a Stoic whose inner equanimity renders his happiness immune to external blows or criticism:

> A Man's body and his mind, with the utmost reverence to both I speak it, are exactly like a jerkin, and a jerkin's lining;—rumple the one—you rumple the other. There is one certain exception however in

[98] Montaigne and Screech, *The Complete Essays*, 59.
[99] Ruffhead and Rose, 'Sterne's Sermons', 422-5. An unsigned review of the first volume of the sermons which criticised the manner of their publication under the title of Sterne's Sermons / Sermons of Mr. Yorick.

> this case, and that is, when you are so fortunate a fellow, as to have had your jerkin made of a gum-taffeta, and the body-lining to it, of a sarcenet or thin persian. (*TS*, III.IV.189-90)

Among those 'exceptions' listed in the text are celebrated figures of Stoic history:

> *Zeno, Cleanthes, Diogenes Babylonius, Dyonisius Heracleotes, Antipater, Panaetius* and *Possidonius* amongst the Greeks;—*Cato* and *Varro* and *Seneca* amongst the *Romans*;—*Pantenus* and *Clemens Alexandrinus* and *Montaigne* amongst the Christians (*TS*, III.IV.190)

In addition to those Stoics named by Tristram are 'a score and a half of good honest, unthinking, *Shandean* people as ever lived' who 'all pretended that their jerkins were made after this fashion' and that:

> You might have rumpled and crumpled, and doubled and creased, and fretted and fridged the outsides of them all to pieces;—in short, you might have played the very devil with them, and at the same time, not one of the insides of 'em would have been one button the worse, for all you had done to them. (*TS*, III.IV.190)

Tristram then declares that he believes in his conscience 'that mine is made up somewhat after this sort':

> For never poor jerkin has been tickled off, at such a rate as it has been these last nine months together,—and yet I declare the lining to it,—as far as I am a judge of the matter, it is not a three-penny piece the worse […] had there been the least gumminess in my lining,—by heaven! it had all of it long ago been fray'd and fretted to a thread. (*TS*, III.IV.190)

He then upbraids his critics for slashing his jerkin and promises to receive such attacks 'with good temper':

> You Messrs. the Monthly Reviewers!—how could you cut and slash my jerkin as you did?—how did you know, but you would cut my lining too? (*TS*, III.IV.190)

In his response to Tristram's claim of a stoic indifference to criticism, Owen Ruffhead of the *Monthly Review*[100] admonishes the author of *Tristram Shandy* for his indecency, lack of discretion and the impropriety of his character. He cynically employs Sterne's sartorial metaphor against both the man and the work, when he suggests that a peep at the dirty lining of his jerkin will reveal the truth about his moral character, since where discretion or sensibility is wanting, every virtue is deficient'. By

[100] Ruffhead, '*Tristram Shandy*. Vols. III IV.', 101-16.

repurposing the dichotomies of Sterne's sartorial metaphor (mind/body, internal/external, author/text) the reviewer sets out (for allegedly didactic purpose) to 'rumple the *lining of his jerkin'*. This is to 'make the owner ashamed of exposing it', he says, for 'all the world may see that it is in a filthy pickle'. Ruffhead insinuates that author's dirty mind (and its outward manifestation his dirty text) require a thorough clean. He urges Mr Shandy to hide his jerkin 'for shame', or at the very least, to 'send the lining to the Scowerer's' as once it is thoroughly cleaned 'you will find it as apt to fray and fret as other people's'. The reviewer implies that the only reason that the author of *Tristram Shandy* is impervious to the censure of his critics is because the lining of his jacket (his mind) has been stiffened or occluded (perhaps by its proximity or intimacy with the wearer's corrupting bodily urges) with 'such a thick scale of nastiness' that 'there is no coming at a single thread of it'. He insinuates that this stoic indifference (which Tristram predicates on a separation between his jerkin and its lining) is merely 'simulated' by an impenetrable barrier of filth (obscenity). The fact that Tristram qualifies his adoption of Stoicism (when he says that Shandean people 'pretended' that their jerkins were made after the Stoic fashion and that his jerkin is only 'somewhat after' the Stoic sort) suggests that the mind-body division of Stoicism is untenable for Sterne, and that despite claims to the contrary, he is not wholly impervious to the reviewer's criticism.

Although their first review of *Tristram Shandy* was intended 'to warn Mr Shandy to hide his dirty lining', says Ruffhead, this counsel is clearly lost on 'a giddy mortal, who has no sense of decency'. As the 'wanton brat' has since been 'publicly owned by its reverend Parent', he adds, it is part of his reviewer's duty to 'animadvert on any 'flagrant impropriety of character'. This he identifies as Mr Shandy's deviation from the path of discretion. From that intellectual virtue which allows one to judge what is fitting to 'time, place, and persons'. While a man's secret thoughts might run over all things holy, profane, clean or obscene without blame, he says in a paraphrase of Hobbes, this is not

the case when it comes to written discourse.[101] If, after all, he says, this 'gumtaffeta jerkin has been a kind of heir-loom in the Shandean family':

> Yet only imagine to yourself, what an antic figure it must cut upon a prunella gown and cassock! As well might a grave Judge wear a Jockey's cap on his full-bottomed periwig, or a right reverend Bishop clap a grenadier's cap over his mitre.[102]

Certainly, in *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne betrays an interest in how we are 'formed' both biologically and psychologically, and like others of the age, he interrogates the nature of the mind-body relationship. The conceptual scheme which underlies the *reviewer's* conviction that the substance of *Tristram Shandy* has been tainted or coloured by the lack of discretion and the obscenity of its author's mind, is itself predicated on Sterne's interactionist stance that the 'soul and body are joint-sharers in every thing they get' (*TS*, IX.XIII.764). However, the question as to the exact nature of this interaction is raised by Sterne's reversal of the 'direction of influence' in another sartorial metaphor. In response to the jibe that the author's mind has corrupted the body or substance of his text, Tristram observes that 'A man cannot dress, but his ideas get cloath'd at the same time' (*TS*, IX.XIII.764). When Tristram asserts that if a man 'dresses like a gentleman' then every one of his ideas 'stands presented to his imagination, genteelized along with him' (*TS*, IX.XIII.764) he is making a claim for 'enclothed cognition'; that a wearer's clothes can influence his psychological and authorial processes.[103] This raises important questions about the relationship between subjectivity and materiality as it invites the reader to speculate on the symbolic meaning of the clothes, on the physical and psychological experience of wearing them, and on the potential influence that being dressed 'like a gentleman' may have on the wearer's cognitive or creative processes and hence on his writing. According to Johnson's *Dictionary,* the term 'gentleman' has at least three variations of

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[101] In his review, Owen Ruffhead quotes and paraphrases from chapter 8 of *Leviathan* by English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679).
[102] Ruffhead, '*Tristram Shandy*. Vols. III IV.', 123.
[103] Hajo Adam and Adam D. Galinsky introduce the term 'enclothed cognition' to describe the systematic influence that clothes have on the wearer's psychological processes and on task completion. See Hajo Adam and Adam D. Galinsky, 'Enclothed Cognition', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 48, no. 4 (July 2012): 918–25.

meaning.[104] The first refers to ancestry or rank, in that it denotes a man of good birth or extraction (though not noble). The second refers to demeanour, bearing or mien, and denotes the elegance of a man's manners, the moral probity of his character and the nicety of his taste. Whilst the third is a term of complaisance, used out of obliging courtesy and a desire to please (a use which Johnson notes is 'sometimes ironical'). In a bawdy novel whose title explicitly states that its protagonist is 'a gentleman', the reader might well speculate on the constraints, if any,[105] that wearing the attire of a gentleman might impose upon the body, psyche and writing of our fictional narrator (and upon Sterne as an author). Upon what the notion of an author's ideas 'being genteelized' might be intended to signify about the moral propriety and social respectability of his text. Tristram's endeavour to define himself as an author through the nature of his clothes, to make dress and text appear as metaphorical equivalents, is further illustrated by his invitation to examine his laundry; if your 'honours' and 'reverences' would like to know 'whether I writ clean and fit to be read', says Tristram, 'you will be able to judge full as well by looking into my Laundress's bill, as my book' (*TS*, IX.XIII.764).

Since wearing a clean shirt enjoys a privileged status during this period as a signifier of respectability,[106] it is unsurprising that Sterne should use this sartorial metaphor to suggest the purity of his own, if not his narrator's, intent. Tristram claims that in one single month he 'can make it appear' that he 'dirtied' thirty-one shirts by 'clean writing' for which he was 'abus'd, curs'd, criticis'd and confounded' (*TS*, IX.XIII.764). Although his shirt (which he says only 'seems' to be dirty)

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[104] Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*.

[105] Interestingly, an argument that recognizes 'encloathed cognition' (the notion that an author's attire affects the substance of his writing) but argues against it appears in the *Sentimental Magazine* by an unknown author of a biographical sketch of Laurence Sterne. This biography replies to charges made by Owen Ruffhead and William Rose (in Ruffhead and Rose, 'Sterne's Sermons', 422-5 which reviewed the first vol of the sermons) against Sterne's publication of his 'dramatic' sermons under the name of Yorick. The Reviewer asks whether any man would believe 'that a Preacher was in earnest, who should mount the pulpit in a Harlequin's coat?' This line of criticism is continued when the reviewer claims that that the real prototype of *Tristram Shandy* is Harlequin, since 'so motley a performance' as *Tristram Shandy* can only be denominated the PANTOMIME OF LITERATURE'. Griffiths, 'Tristram Shandy, Vol. IX.', 93-102. In response to this criticism the anonymous writer asserts that 'it matters very little in what coat a man mounts the pulpit, if his doctrine is good'. *Sentimental Magazine*, 2 (Jan. 1774) 4-7. He explicitly separates the substance of a text from questions about its style or manner of publication.

[106] See *TSN*, 105. A clean Shirt considered as a sign of respectability.

can be construed as an assertion that his comic text is, in actuality, a moral one (clean), we are nevertheless left with the suspicion that Tristram's assertion of 'innocence' is feigned. The fact that reviewers of the novel have been less than unanimous in their judgment as to its morality[107] serves to highlight what Jennie Batchelor has described as the 'profoundly unstable' nature of meaning in both sartorial and written texts in the eighteenth century.[108] The sartorial metaphor of the 'subjectively' dirty shirt of a gentleman is emblematic of the novel's humour. Sterne's comic method comprises a number of techniques that are explicitly designed to exploit the 'impure' mind of the reader (such as the use of double-entendres, sexual innuendos and asterisks to mask bawdiness). As many of his comic techniques have their precedent in works by Rabelais, Cervantes, Swift, Burton and Montaigne, Sterne's metaphor of the 'seemingly' dirty shirt of a gentleman is probably intended to signify that the wit, satire and bawdy humour in *Tristram Shandy* falls just the 'right side' of the line that demarcates acceptable from unacceptable (and moral from immoral) gentleman's reading and writing. Certainly, a notable device that serves to distance and shield Sterne as author from the charge of indecency is his use of a fictional narrator. Throughout the novel, no incident or word, be it 'nose', 'whisker' or 'crevice', remains 'innocent' as Tristram draws the reader's attention to jokes, innuendos and double-entendres that they may have missed, or simply have failed to recognise. 'I declare, by that word I mean a Nose, and nothing more or less', says Tristram (*TS*, III. XXXI.258). In the case of Toby's unconscious identification of 'crevice' with the 'right end of a woman' Tristram returns to this point later in the text in case the reader had missed it (*TS*, III.XXXI.258). Sterne leads his reader on to imagine the worse and then skilfully explicates himself from fulfilling their expectations. In this way accusations of impropriety or indecency are redirected from its author (and, hopes Tristram, from its fictional narrator) to its reader; a fact which Tristram highlights when

[107] See Howes, *Yorick and the Critics*, for an overview of critical responses to *Tristram Shandy*. Most only have a problem with a bawdy book being authored by a clergyman.
[108] See Jennie E. Batchelor, 'Reinstating the "Pamela Vogue"', in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, ed. Jennie E. Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 163–75, 163.

he invariably feigns surprise at the reader's impurity. It is Sterne's comic method that enables him to claim that he has 'writ clean' and that it is the reader's mind that is dirty and not his 'shirt'.

The reviewer's emphasis on the author's lack of 'taste' (savour) and on the prevailing disposition or temperament of his mind (temperature, heat) is one that resonates with the sartorial metaphor employed by Montaigne in his subjectivist gloss on the philosophy of Epictetus:

> Whatever comes to us from outside takes it savour and its colour from our internal attributes, just as our garments warm us not with their heat but ours, which they serve to preserve and sustain.[109]

Montaigne uses Epictetus' motto: 'That the taste of good and evil things depends in large part on the opinion we have of them' as the opening sentence of his *Essay*.[110] For Sterne, who conned his Montaigne as much as his 'pray'r book',[111] the conflation of the gustatory ('taste') with the ethical ('good and evil') in Montaigne's inscription of Epictetus's motto, is significant.

Once happiness is treated as a subjective gustatory experience rather than the vehicle of an ethical evaluation, it reflects the relativist's position that in matters of 'taste' it is inappropriate to talk of error.[112] If a man asserts that riding his hobbyhorse makes him feel happy, then he cannot be wrong in this opinion, as his experience of happiness or pleasure is subjectively true for him. In such cases, subjective truth tracks an individual's sincerity and as such, it is not a matter for third party, impersonal, evaluative judgment.

Through its exploration of subjective happiness, *Tristram Shandy* interrogates the way men's inner and outer lives are shaped by powerful and invisible forces. It also articulates an important truth in

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[109] Montaigne and Screech, *The Complete Essays*, 71.
[110] Montaigne and Screech, 54. I would like to point out that the word 'taste' is rendered as 'relish' in New's translation of this motto. See *TSN*, 37.
[111] See Sterne's Letter to the Reverend Robert Brown in 1760 where he writes: [As} 'for my coning Montaigne as much as my pray'r book… there you are right again.' *Letters*, I.64.168.
[112] Of course, many eighteenth-century thinkers appeal to the notion of 'aesthetic taste' in order to build 'social consensus'.

the novel, that an individual's character can either facilitate or impede not only his own experience of happiness, but the happiness of others.

**Happiness and the Shandy Family Dynamic**

'I have ever a strong propensity, said my father, to look into things which cross my way, by such strange fatalities as these' (*TS*, II.XV.138-9)

Tristram traces many of his woes directly to the occasion of his birth and to childhood accidents that happened within the Shandy family home. Yet, these accidents may have as much to do with the internal family dynamics of the Shandys, and specifically the character of Tristram's father, than they have to the random workings of chance. Indeed, a careful examination of the circumstances which lead up to Tristram's birth will reveal how these have been largely shaped by Walter's personality. It will also reveal how the series of events that culminate in the squashing of baby Tristram's nose have been largely orchestrated by Walter's character, by his cognitive and emotional habits of mind and by his relationship to his hobby-horse.

'Personality' is something that psychologists infer from behaviour in order to explain differences between individuals and which aid them in predicting how an individual with a specific personality trait might act in a given context or situation. Traits are consistent and stable patterns in the way an individual thinks, feels and behaves. As Tatarkiewicz observes, a man's personality (made up by his dispositions) may exert a dual influence over his happiness. Firstly, because it may predispose him to feel either joy or sorrow, and secondly, because it shapes a man's life in such a way as to cause him joy or sorrow. The first is suggestive of Tristram, whose natural disposition and temperament may incline him towards experiencing sorrow (as his name suggests)[113] whilst the second is

[113] The name Tristram can be transliterated as 'sorrowful child'. See *TSN*, 93-4.

suggestive of Walter, whose irascible, disagreeable personality shapes his life in such a way as to cause him ( and those around him) sorrow. In order to appreciate how Walter 'curates' an environment for himself and others (perhaps unintentionally) that reflects and reinforces the perversity of his personality, it is instructive to begin with an account of a clause in Mrs Shandy's marriage settlement.

The article provides that if Mrs Shandy becomes pregnant, her husband undertakes to pay the expenses of her journey to, and confinement in, London. This is duly summarized by Tristram: 'My mother was to lay in, (if she chose it) in *London*' (*TS*, I.XV.45). The inclusion of 'if she chose it' here is actually misleading as the reader quickly learns that despite the 'fortune' that Mrs Shandy brings to the marriage, she has very little power over the circumstances in which she is to give birth. Marriage in *Tristram Shandy* is depicted largely as a social institution that is primarily concerned with negotiating property rights and only secondarily concerned with matters of love or sexual affection. This is reflected by the fact that Sterne devotes Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen to detailing the content and the implications of a clause in this settlement. This consists of a financial penalty:

> In order to put a stop to the practice of any unfair play on the part of my mother, which a marriage article of this nature too manifestly opened a door to, and which indeed had never been thought of at all, but for my uncle *Toby Shandy*;--a clause was added in security of my father, which was this:--- "That in case my mother hereafter should, at any time, put my father to the trouble and expence of a London journey upon false cries and tokens;---that for every such instance she should forfeit all the right and title which the covenant gave her to the next turn (*TS*, I.XV.46)

Walter calculates that Mrs Shandy should forfeit her rights under this article as her false pregnancy (a year before Tristram was born) had put him to an expense of a London journey under 'false cries and tokens'. Although Tristram offers the explicit judgment that this penalty clause inserted on the suggestion of his uncle 'was no more than what was reasonable', close scrutiny of the circumstances in which Walter resolves to enforce this penalty clause upon his wife and an examination of the emotional context in which he eventually tells her of his decision to discipline her, reveals some rather disagreeable aspects to Mr Shandy's personality. This is reflected in the fact that Sterne

devotes Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen to Walter Shandy's decision to act upon this clause, so that it is not until the end of Chapter Eighteen that the scene is finally set for Tristram's delivery.

Walter Shandy's frame of mind during each stage of the return journey from London to the country on what he considers to be a '*Tom Fool*'s errand' is carefully delineated by Sterne. That our hero wishes to appear impartial as to whether his mother was 'deceived or deceiving' in the matter of her false pregnancy is confirmed by his assertion that 'it no way becomes me to decide' (*TS*, I.XV.47). What is beyond dispute, however, is the fact that his father was in a 'pettish kind of a humour' (TS, I.XVI.47). In fact, his father's pessimistic outlook and propensity to interpret this event as some sort of loss to himself (whether this be financial, experiential or familial) is amply illustrated in Tristram's account of the first few stages of this 'fruitless' excursion.

For the first 'twenty or five-and-twenty miles' of the journey his father 'did nothing in the world but fret and teaze himself, and indeed my mother too, about the cursed expence' which he felt might well have been saved, but what 'vexed him more than every thing else' was the time of year that he found himself carried 'up to town much against the grain' (*TS*, I.XV.46-7). His father is particularly annoyed, it seems, because this was towards the end of September when his 'wall-fruit, and green gages especially, in which he was very curious, were just ready for pulling'. In a similar vein, for the next two whole stages of the journey, his father complains about the 'heavy blow he had sustain'd from the loss of a son' who he had fully reckoned upon in his mind as 'a second staff for his old age, in case *Bobby* should fail him' (*TS*, I.XVI.47).

In the stage from Stilton to Grantham, Tristram illustrates his father's emotional sensitivity to imagined slights to his reputation when he describes him as sorely provoked by 'the condolences of his friends' and by the 'foolish figure they should both make at church the first *Sunday*' (*TS*, I.XVI.48). Indeed, in the stage from '*Grantham,* till they had cross'd the *Trent*' his father remained 'out of all kind of patience at the vile trick and imposition which he fancied my mother had put upon him in

this affair' (*TS*, I.XVI.48). This section of the journey also illustrates Walter's propensity to ruminate as he continually repeats the negative thought that if his wife was deceived herself, 'what weakness!' Thereafter, observes Tristram, the word *weakness* set his imagination 'a thorny dance' and 'set him upon running divisions upon how many kinds of weaknesses there were' until finally, his father does nothing but 'syllogize within himself for a stage or two together, How far the cause of all these vexations might, or might not, have arisen out of himself' (*TS*, I.XVI.48-9).

Whilst this moment of introspection is uncharacteristic in Walter, it offers a fleeting hope to the reader that he might actually recognise that the sorrow he experiences in life is mostly of his own making. Unfortunately, Walter's potential for self-awareness and experiential happiness continues to be unrealized as, true to form, and like father like son, he blames everyone but himself for his miserable condition. As Sterne duly emphasizes, Walter's negative habits of mind serve only to intensify his anger and resentment. His irascible temperament, when combined with his negative habits of mind (his focus on losses, emotional catastrophizing and constant rumination) will affect not only his own affective experience on the journey of life but also that of his long-suffering wife (who bears the brunt of his hostility and who is stuck in the coach beside him). As the name Walter can signify 'a pleasant companion' the irony of Sterne's depiction of Walter is clear.[114]

Although Mr Shandy travelled homewards in 'none of the best of moods' he nevertheless kept 'the worst part of the story still to himself;---which was the resolution he had taken of doing himself the justice, which my uncle *Toby's* clause in the marriage settlement empowered him' (*TS*, I.XVII.49). By invoking this clause in the settlement Walter insinuates that Mrs Shandy has practiced 'unfair play' upon him. However, the justice of Walter's insinuation has been put in question by Charles H. G. Macafee's observation that Sterne's depiction of Mrs Shandy's 'false pregnancy' is a condition that is well recognised:

[114] The name 'Walter' signifying a 'pleasant companion' as cited in *TSN*, 94.

> A most accurate description of a well-recognised obstetric condition, namely pseudocyesis. In this condition the patient falsely believes herself to be pregnant, believes that she has all the subjective symptoms and produces the objective signs by abdominal distension.[115]

Under the circumstances, most spouses would give Elizabeth Shandy the benefit of the doubt. Instead, Walter resolves (in that very moment) to invoke this particular clause in their marriage deeds. This behaviour goes beyond what is reasonable. That this is indeed the case is implied by Sterne's use of irony when he calls Walter's decision to exact revenge upon his wife 'justice' (which ought to be impartial and considered) when in fact his decision is made when he is 'chagrin'd and out of temper' (*TS*, I.XVII.49). Indeed, the suspicion that Walter's decisions are affected more by his ire and his obstinacy than by any impartial notion of justice or wisdom is duly confirmed by Sterne In Tristram's elucidation of his father's '*beds of justice*' for which 'the first *Sunday* night in the month, and the *Saturday* night which immediately preceded it' were set apart in order to debate everything of importance with his wife (*TS*, VI.XVII.524). An example of his usual method of decision-making is provided by Tristram who summarizes the two beds of justice which his father had held in order to debate the occasion of his son being put into breeches. Although his father's resolution had been '*pro'd* and *conn'd*, and judicially talked over betwixt him and my mother', says Tristram, it was in fact 'determined at once,---in a kind of huff, and a defiance of all mankind' (*TS*, VI.XVI.522). In fact, Walter is frequently characterized in the novel by his habit of 'pishing', 'huffing' or 'pshawing' by which he vents his feelings of impatience, irritation and general contempt.[116] It is significant that it is not until thirteen months later (when he is again displeased and irritated by his wife's ill-timed question on the night that Tristram is begot) that Mrs Shandy 'had the least intimation of his design' (*TS*, I.XVII.49). As the pair lay in bed afterwards 'talking over what was to come', Walter takes the opportunity to inform his wife that 'she must accommodate herself as well as she could to the

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[115] C. H. G Macafee, 'The Obstetrical Aspects of Tristram Shandy', *The Ulster Medical Journal* 19, no. 1 (1950): 12–22, 15 cited in *TSN*, 83.

[116] Walter employs various combinations of such interjections in the novel. See *TSN*, 49, which cites 'pshawing and pishing'; *TSN*, 271 'My father pish'd and pugh'd'; *TSN*, 709 'would pish, and huff, and bounce, and kick'; *TSN*, 756 'he pish'd fifty times'. Tristram refuses to say whether his father's interjections are a mark of modesty or contempt (*TS*, IV.XIV.345).

bargain made between them in their marriage deeds' (*TS*, I.XVII.49). It is determined (not agreed) that Mrs Shandy will be confined in the country at Shandy Hall.

Having established the emotional context of Walter Shandy's decision to act upon the clause in the marriage settlement, Sterne goes on to reveal the underlying motives, feelings and values behind the couples' disagreement as to which local operator should attend their son's delivery. As Mrs Shandy knew from experience that 'twas to no purpose to make any remonstrance' and as she is powerless in any case to change the situation Mrs Shandy 'resolved to sit down quietly, and make the most of it.' As 'the famous Dr. *Maningham*[117] was not to be had', Mrs Shandy 'took her measures accordingly' and began to cast her eyes upon the local midwife (*TS*, I.XVII.50). Elizabeth Shandy is often portrayed in the novel from the viewpoint of her husband who depicts her as passive, unintelligent and as something of an irritant to him. It is therefore unsurprising that her son, following this example, should also question her grounds (and her capacity) to decide which of the local attendants would best serve her interests. Tristram's initial response is to implicitly question the logic of her decision: 'my mother, I say, was absolutely determined to trust her life and mine with it, into no soul's hand but this old woman's only', notwithstanding that there is a 'scientific operator' within 'so near a call as eight miles' (*TS*, I.XVIII.50). Furthermore, this operator, says Tristram, had not only 'wrote a five shillings book upon the subject of midwifery' in which he 'had exposed, not only the blunders of the sisterhood' but had, moreover, added 'improvements for the quicker extraction of the foetus in cross births, and some other cases of danger which belay us in getting into the world' (*TS*, I.XVIII.50). Given the option of either an 'ignorant old woman' or a 'scientific operator' to deliver him, Tristram finds it hard to grasp the criteria upon which his mother

[117] Sir Richard Manningham, M.D., F.R.S. (1690-1759). For his prestige as an early eighteenth-century version of the fashionable accoucheur, or leading man-midwife see Adrian Wilson, 'William Hunter and the Varieties of Man-Midwifery', in *William Hunter and the Eighteenth-Century Medical World*, ed. William F. Bynum and Roy Porter (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 362. Melvyn New adds that the fact that he died in 1759 'probably recalled him to Sterne'. See *TSN*, 85.

determined her choice. This implicitly suggests that his perspective, like that of his father, is heavily gender-inflected in favour of male theory and expertise.

Tristram next implies that his mother, feeling herself deprived of the best professional attention of a London, male *accoucheur* (Dr. *Maningham*) refuses to take up with the 'next best in degree to it' (being the provincial Dr Slop) in favour of 'heroine it' into 'so violent and hazardous an extreme' by choosing the attention of an old, 'ignorant' midwife (*TS*, I.XVIII.51). In fact midwives, far from being a risky option were not only highly experienced but were familiar with the standard treatises on midwifery of their day. This is conceded by Tristram who acknowledges that the old midwife really had 'some little claim to be depended upon' as:

> In the course of her practise of near twenty years in the parish, brought every mother's son of them into the world without any one slip or accident which could fairly be laid to her account. (*TS*, I.XVIII.51)

Sterne's comment that the midwife trusted 'a great deal' to 'dame nature' (*TS*, I.VII.10) is similarly intended to signal her familiarity with the relevant midwifery treatises and obstetrical manuals of the day as this practical advice is always given in such texts.[118] There was also a requirement, as depicted in the novel, for midwives to be licenced by ecclesiastical authorities. As a precursor to applying to the bishop, the midwife's experience, professional knowledge and character would all have been thoroughly assessed by the parson and probably by the churchwardens of the parish as these could all typically be called upon to act as her character witnesses.[119]

Whilst these facts had a certain weight with Walter, they 'did not altogether satisfy some few scruples and uneasinesses' which he had in relation to Mrs Shandy's choice (*TS*, I.XVIII.51). In *Midwives and Medical Men*, Jean Donnison explains that the man-midwife became recognized

[118] *TSN*, 55.
[119] *TSN*, 55.

throughout Europe only in the early 1600s, when the main objection against their attendance at deliveries was the issue of female modesty:

> Men-midwives were called mainly to difficult cases, or engaged to be present in readiness for any emergency. However, many women had strong objections to male attendance even in these circumstances, and were, it was said, prepared to die rather than admit a man into the lying-in room. For this reason various stratagems---not too difficult in the half darkness in which the chamber was customarily kept ---might be resorted to… out of deference to the woman's modesty, the man-midwife commonly worked blind, with his hands under a sheet, a practice which sometimes led to serious error.[120]

The idea that it is Mrs Shandy's 'female modesty' that lies behind her rejection of Dr Slop, and that this is an element of a classless female sexuality, is articulated by Uncle Toby who hints that perhaps his sister 'does not choose to let a man come so near her ****'; which Tristram quickly translates as 'Backside' or '*Cover'd-way*' (*TS*, II.VI.116). That Elizabeth Shandy's objection to Dr Slop is not occasioned by this 'female modesty' is verified by the fact that her first preference was for the fashionable, refined and titled 'Sir Richard Manningham'. In 'Of Forceps, Patents, and Paternity: Tristram Shandy', Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean explain that by the eighteenth-century obstetrical discourse and practices had class-specific resonances:

> Class divisions in obstetric discourse… produce class ambiguities in the novel… to which the character of Slop is crucial. Since both the forceps and male obstetric practice extend back into the seventeenth century, and since the eighteenth-century evidence gives us considerable debate *among* men-midwives themselves, as well as between female and male midwives, class relations produce divisions in the practices of the so-called "revolution in obstetrics".[121]

Mrs Shandy's modesty, it seems, is a construction of her 'gentility'; as she will only allow a certain kind of man to come so near her****. In 'Of Forceps, Patents, and Paternity' its authors' explain that by the middle of the eighteenth century a fashionable snobbery among those aspiring to gentility became attached to the attendance, even in normal deliveries, of a male *accoucheur.* In their comment on a distinction, made by Wilson, between the upwardly mobile William Hunter of the 1760s (who specializing in natural births, emphasized a policy of non-interventionism) and his

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[120] Jean Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men: A History of Inter-Professional Rivalries and Women's Rights* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 10-1 quoted in *TSN*, 85.
[121] Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, 'Of Forceps, Patents, and Paternity: Tristram Shandy', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 23, no. 4 (1990): 522–43, 533.

teacher, William Smellie, who was famous for his forceps (and who specialized in the traditional province of difficult births of the male practitioner) they note that 'Hunter distinguishes his practice from Smellie's in not so much technical, as class-specific ways: *It is not the mere safe delivery of the woman will recommend an* accoucheur, but a sagacious well-conducted behaviour of tenderness, assiduity and delicacy.'[122] Furthermore, as Landry and MacLean note, Wilson associates this notion 'of a genteel (and lucrative) practice, largely composed of normal deliveries, with Hunter's famous non-interventionism.'[123] Mrs Shandy's preference for the fashionable Dr Manningham effectively combines the genteel custom of booking a titled, socially refined and elegant *accoucheur* in advance, who knows how to attend to 'a lady' with an equally desired policy of non-interventionism in normal births. Instead, she is faced with the embarrassing prospect of being attended by the provincial, squat and clumsy Dr Slop – a practitioner who is unlikely to be as experienced as the old midwife in normal births, whose bedside manner is unlikely to 'satisfy' a genteel lady, and worst of all, is closely associated with those detested obstetrical 'instruments of salvation'.

One cause of Walter's 'uneasiness' on this score, sounds suspiciously self-regarding as he realises that 'should any evil betide his wife and child in lying-in at *Shandy-Hall*', that he would be loaded 'with the whole blame of it' (*TS*, I.XVIII.52). This charge against him, as Walter is aware, is 'unanswerable'. While it is undeniable that it was Toby's suggestion to insert a forfeiture clause in the settlement, it was Walter's decision alone to enact it. Furthermore, if anything should go wrong in her lying-in, his reputation would be at the mercy of moral luck; [124] since 'the world judged by

[122] Quoted in Landry and MacLean, 533. See Wilson, 'William Hunter and the Varieties of Man-Midwifery', 362.
[123] Landry and MacLean, 'Of Forceps, Patents, and Paternity', 533. Also in *TSN*, 86, where the Florida editors cite Donnison's claim that the celebrated William Hunter is said to have shown his students his forceps, rusty from disuse, with the warning 'where they may save one, they murder twenty' in Jean Donnison, *Midwives and Medical Men: A History of the Struggle for the Control of Childbirth* (London: Historical Publications, 1988), 43.
[124] Walter appears to be interpreting his situation as a case of 'moral luck' where the chance outcome affects the moral assessment of an action.

events' and they would all be of the opinion that 'considering the fortune which Mr. *Shandy* got with her', it 'was no such mighty matter to have complied with' (*TS*, I.XVIII.52).

In an effort to place his father's motives in the best possible light, Tristram assures the reader that his concerns about the midwife are purely 'disinterested' and that his preference for Dr Slop is rooted in sound ethical and political principles. He affirms that the reason why his father is 'so extremely anxious about this point' is 'not merely to shelter himself, nor was it altogether for the care of his offspring and wife', but rather concern 'for the public good, from the dread he entertained of the bad uses that an ill-fated instance might be put to' (*TS*, I.XVIII.52). What prompts his father 'to guard against the least evil accident' in his 'mother's lying-in in the country' is apparently that any such instance would adversely affect the balance of power within their marital relationship:

> That any such instance would infallibly throw a balance of power, too great already, into the weaker vessels of the gentry, in his own, or higher stations;--which, with the many other usurped rights which that part of the constitution was hourly establishing,--would, in the end, prove fatal to the monarchical system of domestic government established in the first creation of things by God. (*TS*, I.XVIII.54)

As Wilfred Watson argues, this is one of Sterne's several allusions in *Tristram Shandy* that identify Walter as an advocate of the patriarchal system of domestic government famously championed by the English political writer Sir Robert Filmer (d.1653).[125] This defends the divine right of kings on the theory that the government of a family by its father is a natural right and thus is the true model of government. Watson also identifies Filmerian thought in the novel's discussions of the conjugal origins of society (*TS*, V.XXXI.466), in the argument concerning the 'natural relation between a father and his child' (*TS*, V.XXXI.467-8) and in its debate about the meaning of the fifth commandment (*TS*, V.XXXII.468-70). Locke famously argued against Filmerian ideas in his *Two treatises of Government* and, as Watson explains, by 1760 many who had previously accepted Filmer's views on the

[125] Sterne's allusions to the ideas of the English political writer Sir Robert Filmer (d. 1653) are discussed by Watson in Wilfred Watson, 'The Fifth Commandment; Some Allusions to Sir Robert Filmer's Writings in Tristram Shandy', *Modern Language Notes* 62, no. 4 (1947): 234–40.

patriarchal theory of monarchy no longer found it tenable and so distanced themselves from it. The name of Filmer, it seems, became something of a by-word for an outmoded or obscure political system inasmuch as it was employed both as a means of ridiculing a political opponent and as a general term of abuse.[126] The disclosure that Walter aspires to the outmoded ideal of a patriarchal autocracy in his domestic household because he sees other models of government as 'troublesome' is significant in that it suggests that he is a victim of his own stagnant, casually misogynist prejudices, as well as being the satirical embodiment of them. Walter's assertion that the mother '*is not the principal agent*' in generation' (*TS*, V.XXXI.468) echoes Filmer's view that '*God at the Creation gave the Sovereignty to the man over the woman, as being the Nobler and Principle Agent in Generation.*'[127] This was contrary to the opinion of Locke, who held that once the father had done his part, 'it must certainly owe most to the Mother'.[128] As Watson observes, Locke's argument against Filmer in his *Two Treatises*, is similar to Yorick's argument in the novel against Walter, namely, that Mrs Shandy is not 'serviceable' to his purpose:

> I hope 'tis no Injury to call an half Quotation an half Reason, for God says, *Honour thy Father and Mother*; but our Author contents himself with half, leaves out *thy Mother quite*, as little serviceable to his purpose'.[129]

Walter's first concern ought to be for the comfort and safety of his wife and then his child. In keeping with the catechism provided in the *Book of Common Prayer* Walter's duty towards his neighbour (let alone his wife) is to love her as he loves himself, and to do to all mankind as he would they should do unto him. In other words, to exercise empathy and compassion. Yet, his own priorities seem to carry him in a very different direction. Tristram's narrative reveals that what

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[126] Watson speculates that Sterne could have become aware of Filmer's ideas through Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1690) which was written against Filmer's *Patriarcha* and which kept Filmer's name before the public well into the eighteenth century. Peter Laslett, the modern editor of Filmer, writes in his introduction: "For over two hundred years the name of Sir Robert Filmer has been a byword—a byword for obscurity" and points out that his outmoded system was used as a means of ridicule. Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha and Other Political Works*, ed. Peter Laslett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949), 1. Cited in *TSN*, 90 and 378-81.

[127] Filmer's position as quoted in John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London: Printed for Awnsham and John Churchill, 1698), I, Section 55, 198.

[128] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government,* I, Section 55, 198. See *TSN*, 380.

[129] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 163 cited in *TSN*, 379.

ought to be the happy prospect of his birth is converted into a wretched power struggle: 'my father was for having the man-midwife by all means,---my mother by no means' (*TS*, I.XVIII.55). Tristram's description of his father as having that 'strong spice' in his temper 'known by the name of perseverance in a good cause,---and of obstinacy in a bad one' (*TS*, I.XVII.50) further supports the reading that Walter pursues a course of his own regardless of whether it is wrong or right. At the very least, it raises doubt as to Walter's ability to discern an ethically 'good' cause from an ethically 'bad' one. This struggle for 'sovereignty' over the pregnant female body can be interpreted as a comic enactment of the historical struggle being waged within the medical profession between female midwifery as folk practice and male-midwifery as obstetrical practice.[130] This is often seen as the context for the tetchy nature of the relationship in the novel between 'the old midwife' and the 'scientific operator' (or '*Accoucheur*, if you please, quoth Dr. *Slop*') (*TS,* II.XII.130). However, as Landry and MacLean convincingly argue, Sterne's engagement with the debates of midwifery that condition Tristram's birth, should not be interpreted as one that is strictly gendered.[131] Even though his father 'begg'd', 'intreated' and 'placed his arguments in all lights', his mother insists on her privilege in this matter 'to choose for herself' (*TS*, I.XVIII.55). In theory, Mrs Shandy wins the argument on the grounds that women suffer the pain of childbirth for the good of the species:

> Bear the whole burden, and suffer so much acute pain for the advantage of our families, and the good of the species,---they claim a right of deciding, *en Soveraines*, in whose hands, and in what fashion, they chuse to undergo it. (*TS*, II.XVIII.168)

However, while Elizabeth Shandy has secured the midwife's attendance (by way of a compromise) it is agreed that Dr Slop is to sit in the back parlour and drink a bottle of wine with Mr Shandy and Toby. By 'express treaty, solemnly ratified' Dr Slop is to be 'no more of an auxiliary in this affair' and

[130] Cash's 1966 article sees Dr Slop taking over from the incompetent midwife as another victory in the progress of male scientific authority. Arthur H. Cash, 'The Birth of Tristram Shandy: Sterne and Dr. Burton', in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century: Papers Presented at the David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra. 1966*, ed. R. F. Brissenden (Canberra: Australian National Univ. Press, 1968), 133–54.
[131] Landry and MacLean, 'Of Forceps, Patents, and Paternity', 527.

'not so much as that,--unless the lean old mother of a midwife above stairs' cannot manage without him (*TS*, II.XVIII.168). As Landry and MacLean observe:

> This passage reenacts its historical moment in detailing how professional medical assistance at the birth requires a compromise between Walter Shandy's scientific experimentalism and his wife's commonsensical empiricism; she wants the experienced hands of a woman, he wants the authority of a male narrator of obstetrics.[132]

Although Walter refuses to pay the expense of a journey to London, he readily assents to defray five guineas for Dr Slop to act in an emergency. This shields Walter against all blame should an accident occur during his wife's lying-in at Shandy Hall but, more importantly, it allows him to indulge his hobby-horse for theories and hypotheses.

At the end of Chapter Eighteen the scene is set for Tristram's delivery. When the mistress falls into labour, Susannah is sent to fetch the old midwife and Obadiah is despatched to fetch Slop's 'new-invented *forceps*' and other 'instruments of salvation and deliverance' (*TS*, II.XI.127). Although Slop defends his 'new-invented forceps' as 'the safest instruments of deliverance' (*TS*, II.XIX.180) and maintains that vast improvements have been made of late in 'the safe and expeditious extraction of the *foetus'* (*TS*, II.XVIII.169), the reader is rightly suspicious of such assertions. In fact, an argument often used by midwives against their male counterparts was their use of obstetrical instruments. Sterne's comments on these 'instruments of salvation' are replete with irony, as Cash points out,[133] since the primary function of the tire-tete and the crotchet (*TS*, II.XI.127) is to extract a foetus by crushing or attaching to its skull. Furthermore, the forceps were often compared to a lobster's claw, so it is not only conceivable but likely that these should damage the face, breech or genitals of some poor infant.[134] Dr Slop's earlier, impromptu (possibly inebriated) display of his forceps hardly inspires confidence in either his instruments, or in his ability to use them. Events soon prove that the reader's scepticism on both counts is not misplaced. Dr Slop's clumsy technique with his forceps

[132] Landry and MacLean, 526.
[133] Cash, 'The Birth of Tristram Shandy', 146-7.
[134] Cash, 136.

results in the flesh being ripped from Uncle Toby's hands, and when he is later called upon in an emergency to intervene in the child's delivery,[135] his grip on his instruments accidentally slips and baby Tristram's nose is damaged. The cause of his faulty grip on his 'vile instruments' was a cut he made earlier to his thumb as he sliced the knot in the string that Obadiah had tied around his bag of obstetrical lumber. In fact, Sterne's comic portrayal of Slop's bungling is mild in comparison to the graphically illustrated literature on the subject. The *Art of Midwifery Improv'd [1746*] conjures up an intoxicated, pitiless operator wielding obstetrical instruments of torture and death:

> A Man in Liquor, almost void of the use of his Senses, both void of Pity and Compassion, furnished with a Knife, a Hook, an Iron Forceps, and other Instruments horrible to Sight… come to the Assistance of one in Agony… commonly first begins, with rash Oaths to hurt the Mother, then kill the living Infant, then with a great deal of Pain to draw it out in Pieces…[136]

Walter's advocacy of Dr Slop as his wife's sole attendant appears to be contrary to the concern that he should have for his wife's well-being. Slop's status as an emergency 'auxiliary' is a compromise for Walter, as he originally petitioned for this 'man of science' with whom 'he could better deal with' and who was 'the fittest for' his 'purpose' to *replace* the old midwife (*TS*, II.XIX.179-80). The dominant (Protestant) medical opinion of the day decreed that it was a physician's duty to save both mother and child, if possible, but if that was impracticable then the mother's health took precedence. The suspicion is that Walter's priorities in life are conditioned by his Lockean hobby-horse and that as a result his notions of needful 'obstetrical' intervention (*TS*, II.XIX.180) differ markedly from those 'of the sisterhood, who are not easily to be put out of their way' (*TS*, II.XIX.179).

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[135] As Cash persuasively argues, the fact that Mrs Shandy's pains have stopped and the 'child is where it was' are clues to a difficult birth. Cash, 151-2, says 'Her labour has been short, stopping two hours and ten minutes after it began. It was a critical labour from the first, as evidenced by Susannah's sudden, fearful flight for the old midwife. The short violent labour indicates that Mrs Shandy's waters had suddenly broken. Consequently, the baby has moved well down towards the pelvis. The head presents, as the midwife well knows, for she has been attempting some sort of manual extraction and has had a grip, which did not hold, upon the head. The difficulty is clear: Tristram's head is too large for the opening […] The possibilities have been narrowed to two: Tristram must be delivered by the forceps or by the *tire tete*.' Cited by New in *TSN*, 227.

[136] *Art of Midwifery Improv'd* [1746], 14.

The groundwork of Walter's theory, described as one 'of a very singular nature', is carefully delineated by Sterne as it reveals Walter's inherently flawed method of reasoning:

> Now, as it was plain to my father, that all souls were by nature equal,--and that the great difference between the most acute and the most obtuse understanding,--was from no original sharpness or bluntness of one thinking substance above or below another,--but arose merely from the lucky or unlucky organization of the body, in that part where the soul principally took up her residence […] in, or near, the cerebellum. (*TS*, II.XIX.173-4)

Although 'the best of philosophers' may agree with his opinion thus far, from this point onwards he 'took a road of his own' and sets up 'another *Shandean* hypothesis upon these cornerstones they had laid for him' (*TS*, II.XIX.175). As part of the novel's satire on learning and the process of logical reasoning,[137] Sterne enacts Walter moving from a position of scientific consensus (that the cerebellum is the seat of understanding) to the fallacious conclusion that delivering a child head-first (during natural childbirth) must be avoided at all costs. The steps in his chain of reasoning are that the head-first method will cause the head to be crushed, which will cause injury to the brain and will result in the child's intellectual impairment. For Walter, after the conditions of conception and the importance of a child's Christian name, this particular theory is the *Causa sine qua non* [the indispensable cause without which a certain result is impossible]:

> That next to the due care to be taken in the act of propagation of each individual, which required all the thought in the world, as it laid the foundation of this incomprehensible contexture in which wit, memory, fancy, eloquence, and what is usually meant by the name of good natural parts, do consist; that next to this and his Christian name, which were the two original and most efficacious causes of all;--that the third cause, or rather what logicians call the *Causa since qua non,* and without which all that was done was of no manner of significance,--was the preservation of this delicate and fine-spun web, from the havock which was generally made in it by the violent compression and crush which the head was made to undergo, by the nonsensical method of bringing us into the world by that part foremost. (*TS*, II.XIX.175)

It is the nature of a hypothesis, observes Tristram, that once a man has conceived it:

> It assimulates every thing to itself as proper nourishment; and, from the first moment of begetting it, it generally grows the stronger by every thing you see, hear, read, or understand. (*TS*, II.XIX.177)

[137] The seminal work on the novel's satire on learning is D. W. Jefferson, '*Tristram Shandy* and the Tradition of Learned Wit', *Essays in Criticism* I, no. 3 (1951): 225–48.

Although the correlation of two events does not imply causation, this distinction is lost on Walter Shandy as the explanatory force of his hypothesis suddenly becomes clear to him. It accounts for his eldest son, Bobby, who came into the world 'with his head *foremost*' being a 'lad of wonderful slow parts' and the 'greatest blockhead in the family' (*TS*, II.XIX.177-9). As Walter's hypothesis answers for 'drivellers' and other 'monstrous' conditions he reasons that it must also explain 'geniuses' at the other end of the intellectual spectrum:

> What a blaze of light did the accounts of the *Caesarian* section, and of the towering geniuses who had come safe into the world by it, cast upon this hypothesis? (*TS*, II.XIX.178)

Walter's hypothesis on the compression of a child's head forms the foundation of his fascination with the more gruesome aspects of obstetrical discourse and procedure. He becomes totally obsessed with the caesarean section (with its 'incision of the *abdomen* and *uterus'*) as this now runs in his head, 'for six weeks together'. In a passage that linguistically conveys Walter's 'scientific detachment' from the feelings and concerns of his wife, he satisfies himself (against all evidence to the contrary and in the absence of antibiotics) 'that wounds in the *epigastrium*, and those in the *matrix,* were not mortal;--so that the belly of the mother might be opened extremely well to give a passage to the child' (*TS*, II.XIX.179). Medical treatises of the day make it clear that Protestant physicians would only perform caesareans when the child was alive and the mother was beyond saving. His casual mention of this procedure to Mrs Shandy 'merely as a matter of fact' is emblematic of his breath-taking insensitivity and lack of compassion. More significantly, it signals his propensity to ignore the suffering of others when his attention is caught in the powerful grip of his hobby-horse. In fact, his advocacy of caesarean delivery as a means to gratify his hobby-horse, is not only selfish but unethical (in a Kantian sense).[138]

The characterisation of Walter illustrates that the exercise of empathy demands a triad of related abilities. In modern parlance these are *cognitive empathy (sympathy), emotional empathy*

[138] In using Mrs Shandy as a *means* to an *end* rather than as an end in herself, and Hobbesian in prioritising the motive of self-interest.

(empathy) and *empathic concern* (compassion).[139] The exercise of empathy involves a combination of man's cognitive faculties, his emotional capacities, and the motivation or valuing to act upon the dictates of the previous two. Walter exercises *cognitive empathy* (which allows him to 'read' his wife's perspective, thoughts and feelings[140]) when he infers his wife's mental state from seeing her physically 'turn as pale as ashes at the very mention' of a caesarean section. He also exercises this capacity when he quickly drops the subject and 'thought it as well to say no more of it' (*TS*, II.XIX.179). Although Walter is able to inferentially reconstruct the subjectivity and inner condition of his wife by observing the outward and non-verbal signs of her emotional distress, he fails to display any *emotional empathy* as at no point in his depiction of Walter's reaction to Mrs Shandy's distress does Sterne suggest that he has any emotional affinity with her, or that his emotions appear 'attuned to' or 'resonate' with those of his wife.[141] In truth, he displays a distinct lack of *empathic concern* towards his pregnant wife as he is not compassionate enough to relieve her distress, or to mobilize himself to offer reassurance or some other assistance. Although Walter is capable of exercising emotional empathy (on occasion) towards Toby, exercising two elements of the empathy triad is not a satisfactory model of ethical conduct. In marked contrast, Sterne's characterisation of Uncle Toby in the story of Le Fever, renders him an exemplar of both ethical conduct and Christian virtue.

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[139] Model of empathy as a triad of abilities taken from Daniel Goleman. Daniel Goleman, *Focus: The Hidden Driver of Excellence* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

[140] In Adam Smith's account of sympathy, sympathy arises when we imagine how we would feel in the circumstances of others. This is sometimes called a projective account of sympathy as Smith's version opens up the possibility that our feelings on another person's behalf may not match their actual feelings as *imagining* oneself into a set of circumstances is different from actually experiencing those circumstances. See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Printed for Andrew Millar, in the Strand; and Alexander Kincaid and J. Bell, in Edinburgh, 1759).

[141] In David Hume's account, sympathy consists in feeling what others *actually* feel in their circumstances. This is sometimes called a contagion account of sympathy. See David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

**Happiness: Locke and the Project of Self-Creation**

'Men's happiness or misery is most part of their own making'[142]

Tristram, as a gentleman, writes 'as a man of erudition' (*TS*, II.II.98) and he takes it for granted that his reader is well educated and will be familiar with the 'animal spirits' (*TS*, I.I.1). He asks 'Sir Critick' and those 'gentry of refined taste' whether they are familiar with Locke's '*Essay*' (*TS*, II.II.96-8). He describes this as a 'history' of 'what passes in a man's own mind' (*TS*, II.II.98). It is therefore significant that Tristram observes that those who attempt to draw character, who take copies mechanically, 'are your great historians' (*TS*, I.XXIII.85). Tristram repeatedly refers to himself as 'a historian' and implies by this that he is an impartial, truthful, factual and mechanical re-constructer of events in the same way that Locke claims to reconstruct the mind. The generic blurring between fictional discourse and historical discourse alerts the reader to the kind of truth claim that the text offers, as Tristram feels that he has a moral duty to the reader to consider what is involved when 'a man sits down to write a history':

> Could a historiographer drive on his history, as a muleteer drives on his mule,---straight forward […] he might venture to foretell you to an hour when he should get to his journey's end;---but the thing is, morally speaking, impossible: For, if he is a man of the least spirit, he will have fifty deviations from a straight line to make with this or that party as he goes along, which he can no ways avoid. He will have views and prospects to himself perpetually solliciting his eye, which he can no more help standing still to look at than he can fly (*TS*, 1.XIV.41)

When it comes to matters of controversy, all that concerns him 'as a historian', is to 'represent the matter of fact, and render it credible to the reader' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.381). When Uncle Toby mistakes the bridge intended for baby Tristram's nose for the bridge in his own fortifications our empirical chronicler determines to give the reader 'an exact account' of the associative road which led to this error in his relative's mind (*TS*, III.XXIII.244). When describing his uncle's 'most extream and unparallel'd modesty of nature', Tristram stops and corrects himself in his use of the word 'nature' so that he 'may not prejudge a point which must shortly come to a hearing'; namely, whether 'this

[142] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 10 (Book I, Sect. 1).

modesty of his was natural or acquir'd.' (*TS*, I.XXI.74). Tristram's way 'is ever to point out to the curious, different tracts of investigation, to come at the first springs of the events I tell' (*TS*, I.XXI.74). He also claims that his history remains within the boundaries of credulity (and prioritizes the criteria of 'probable evidence' over 'truth') when he avers that he would not shake his credit 'in telling an improbable truth, however indisputable in itself' (*TS*, I.XI.25). However, Tristram's claim to impartiality is immediately undermined by the reader's realization that everything in the novel is refracted or mediated through Tristram's consciousness. Tristram employs historiographical strategies as he admits that he is selective, 'as no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all;---so no author […] would presume to think all' (*TS*, II.XI.125), but he is also exhaustive, as he claims to document every event in the historical continuum when he attempts 'to come at the first springs of the events' that he tells (*TS*, I.XXI.74). Tristram is hardly impartial as he frequently acts as an apologist for the motives and actions of his father. In fact, it is in moments like this that the reader becomes aware of an experiencing mind whose thoughts, affections, prejudices and sexual preoccupations, intrude between themselves and the events of the novel that are being narrated. As Arthur Cash and John Traugott argued more than sixty years ago, *Tristram Shandy* is saturated in Locke's philosophy and psychology. This is immediately evident in Sterne's portrayal of Tristram's mental processes, where the continuous, spontaneous and unedited flow of his ideas is indebted to Locke's psychology of a 'train', 'chain' or 'succession' of ideas which continually flow through the mind.[143] If the mind, as Locke supposed,[144] is in a constant or incessant state of flux so that it cannot retain one idea for any length of time it would be unnatural, as Cash suggests, for Tristram to dwell for long on any one particular subject.[145] Likewise, Lockean psychology underwrites Tristram's habit of digression which structures the novel.[146] While the

[143] Arthur H. Cash, 'The Lockean Psychology of *Tristram Shandy*', *ELH* 22, no. 2 (June 1955): 125–35.
[144] Locke, *ECHU*, 1991186 (Book II, Chap. XIV, Sect. 13-15) and 182 (Book II, Chap. XIV, Sect. 3).
[145] Cash, 'The Lockean Psychology of *Tristram Shandy*', 131.
[146] Cash, 131. Locke, *ECHU*, 1991186 (Book II, Chap. XIV, Sect. 13-15) and 182 (Book II, Chap. XIV, Sect. 3).

Shandys may be creatures of ultimately contingent desires, habits and connections, for Locke, these can be examined and where necessary better ones can be created to replace them.

As Charles Taylor has recently argued, Locke's reified concept of the mind allowed him to advocate a program of 'radical disengagement' from one's activity of thought, unreflecting desires, tastes and habits, which opens the prospect of self-remaking, to see ourselves as 'objects of far reaching reformation'.[147] In Locke's mechanistic, objectifying concept of the mind, syntheses made by the association of our ideas have no validity as these are made without our awareness under the influence of passion, custom and education. As these syntheses are the vehicles of all our thoughts and of our representation of the world, we should seize control of these away from passion, custom and authority and assume independence and responsibility for our own thinking.

As Taylor notes, Locke's procedure is radically reflexive and involves the first-person standpoint. It involves disengaging from one's own spontaneous syntheses or beliefs in order to submit them to scrutiny. They can then be re-assembled by following the reliable rules or mathematical truths established by deduction and the empirical rules of probable evidence. Locke, like other anti-teleological proponents before him, adopts a hedonist theory of motivation and explains human value, motivation and the moral concepts of good and evil in terms of simple affective feelings of pleasure and pain.[148] For him, '*Happiness* then in its full extent is the utmost pleasure we are capable of, and *misery* the utmost pain.'[149] For Locke, pleasure and pain are now good and evil: 'Things then are good or evil, only in reference to pleasure or pain'.[150] And that this is what motivates us: 'Pleasure and pain and that which causes them,---good and evil, are the hinges on which our passions turn'.[151] However, what moves us, for Locke, is not the prospect of good but

[147] Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 171.
[148] Locke, *ECHU*, 1991229-75 (Book II, Chap. XX and XXI).
[149] Locke, *ECHU*, 258 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 42).
[150] Locke, *ECHU*, 229 (Book II, Chap. XX, Sect. 2).
[151] Locke, *ECHU*, 229 (Book II, Chap. XX, Sect. 3).

'uneasiness'.[152] Taylor explains that Locke thinks of desire as a kind of uneasiness but realized that not all things which are good for us provoke uneasiness in their absence. For a good to motivate us, explains Taylor, it must first arouse an 'uneasiness' in us, as it moves us only through its connection with disquiet.[153] Where modern psychologists speak of habits, Locke speaks of the association that each of us makes between this 'inner unease' (desire satisfaction or pleasure) and certain goods as our 'relish'.[154]

As Locke believed that the mind can suspend the execution of any of its desires, we have the opportunity to examine and weigh our notions and beliefs following rational canons of evidence. This will reform our relish (our associative mechanism) so that it gains motivational weight. To stand back from ourselves and our existing 'relish' thus allows us the possibility to remake ourselves in a more rational way. It is in this more radical sense, I argue, that Locke's claim should be understood in *Tristram Shandy.*

> 'Men's happiness or misery is most part of their own making'[155]

If our subjective happiness is a matter that is mostly, but not wholly up to us, then Sterne's *Shandean* philosophy reminds us that we must actively contribute to its attainment:

> We must bring three parts in four of the treat along with us---in short we must be happy-within---and then few things make much difference---this is my *Shandean* philosophy.[156]

Part of the treat of experiential happiness that we must bring along with us is our faculty of attention. As this faculty provides the mechanism that underlies our awareness of the world, our awareness of the emotional experiences of others, and the voluntary regulation of our inner

[152] Locke, *ECHU*, 250 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 31).
[153] Locke, *ECHU*, 252 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 33).
[154] Locke, *ECHU*, 1991270 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 56).
[155] Locke, *Some Thoughts*, 10 (Book I, Sect. 1).
[156] Sterne's letter to Mr Foley dated 16 November 1764 in *Letters*, I.143.399.

thoughts and feelings,[157] the exercise of this faculty is crucial to the attainment of subjective happiness. The idea that a man's happiness or misery may depend upon what it is he actually focuses upon, is articulated in the novel by the high level of narrative engagement and participation that Sterne demands from his reader. From the very first chapter of the novel Sterne highlights the necessity of his reader to fully exercise their cognitive faculties. As Tristram does not actually tell us what takes place in this chapter, it is made abundantly clear to the reader that in order to make sense of Sterne's text and to access its humour, he is required to give it his full attention, draw his own inferences and make his own deductions. 'True Shandeism', we are reminded, incites laughter and adds something vital to this fragment of life:

> True *Shandeism*, think what you will against it, opens the heart and lungs, and like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely through its channels, and makes the wheel of life run long and cheerfully round. (*TS*, IV.XXXII.401)

In a letter to his friend Sancho, concerning the shortness and troubles of life,[158] Sterne claims that he accommodates himself to whatever befalls him in this world:

> I am a resigned Being, Sancho, and take health and sickness just as I do light and darkness, or the Vicissitudes of Seasons. That is, just as it pleases God to send them—and accommodate myself to their periodical returns as well as I can—only taking care, whatever befalls me in this silly world—not to lose my temper at it. This I believe Friend Sancho to be the truest philosophy, for this we must be indebted to ourselves, but not to our fortunes.[159]

As both Toby and Walter articulate in *Tristram Shandy*, mankind possesses an 'inner resource' or a secret spring:

> That great and elastic power within us of counterbalancing evil, which like a secret spring in a well-ordered machine, though it can't prevent the shock—at least it imposes upon our sense of it. (*TS*, IV.VIII.334)

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[157] My discussion of the faculty of attention is heavily influenced by Daniel Goleman. Attention has a number of varieties (such as selective attention, sustained concentration, alerting, orienting and open awareness) is foregrounded throughout the novel.

[158] See Sterne's Sermons on this theme: Job's Account of the Shortness and Troubles of Life, Considered (sermon 10); Job's Expostulation with his Wife (sermon 15).

[159] *Letters*, 2.214.598.

This inner resource is mankind's ability to adjust his focus. To scrutinize and revise his way of looking at the world and, where possible, to change the nature of his response to it. Through his 'Shandean philosophy' of being happy within, Sterne seeks to deflect the impact of 'the catalogue of all the cross-reckonings and sorrowful *items* with which the heart of man is overcharged' (*TS*, IV.VII.332). If Tristram does practice the radical reflexivity that Taylor regards as central to Locke's philosophy, then it takes the form of laughter rather than control. Sterne suggests that the state of experiential happiness is attained not by denying, suppressing or governing one's impressions of pain and suffering (as the Stoics hold) but by willingly adopting a broader, more inclusive, flexible and more positive focus and perspective on life. By being open to the experiences of affection, laughter and mirth, the impact of life's ills (for both himself, and his reader) will at least be softened. In fact, overcoming the bias of what Daniel Kahneman refers to as our 'focusing illusion'[160] appears to be an effective way to experience happiness as one is living one's life. Kahneman's thesis holds that the more narrowly we focus on a particular aspect of our lives, such as our health, the greater its influence will be on our current experience. By focusing on one particular aspect (e.g., our ill-health) we neglect all the other aspects of our experience (such as our relationship to others and the essential meaning and purpose of our life) and assign this one aspect inordinate significance in our felt satisfaction and happiness in the here and now. By adopting a broader perspective and a more inclusive focus (typically one that also spans a longer period of time) it prevents one from thinking that a specific factor (like one's illness) is more critical to our experiential happiness than it actually is. Sterne's Christian teleological perspective, which requires ordering his psyche and his life in accordance with his prior specification of happiness, allows him to view his mortal life and its travails with cheerfulness and good temper as this is ultimately a preparation for the eternal bliss and 'true happiness' of salvation). Indeed, his consciousness of his obedience to God's law, with its promise of a future reward in the hereafter, is arguably what enables Sterne to meet every circumstance with

[160] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2012).

cheerfulness and good temper. To experience happiness as he is living his life by focusing on its compensations and its pleasurable diversions.

As Montaigne observes, if we do have such a choice to deflect ills to the good, then:

> We would be curiously mad to pull in the direction which hurts us the most, endowing sickness, poverty or insolence with a bad and bitter taste when we could give them a pleasant one.[161]

In the world of *Tristram Shandy*, the reader is expected to maintain an open, flexible awareness and likewise to exercise their intellectual curiosity. Should the reader fail in their half of the enterprise, says Tristram, then the fault is entirely their own. His way:

> Is ever to point out to the curious, different tracts of investigation […] with the officious humility of a heart devoted to the assistance merely of the inquisitive;--to them I write,—and by them I shall be read…' (*TS*, I.XXI.74)[162]

As part of Sterne's comic method, the demand for the reader's attention and of his mental participation renders him a joint creator and sharer of meaning with the writer. As Tristram explains:

> The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself. For my own part, I am eternally paying him compliments of this kind, and do all that lies in my power to keep his imagination as busy as my own. (*TS*, II.XI.125-6)

As Wayne Booth observes, Sterne is an author who implies that the reader is essentially their equal in the imaginative enterprise, and who generally expects, and requires, 'a full re-creative activity' that is comparable to his own.[163] Indeed, Sterne's narrator not only invites his readers to actively exercise their cognitive and affective faculties (*TS*, II.XI.126) but he also encourages them to physically participate in his imaginative enterprise by 'rubbing their hands', 'blowing their noses' and by giving him 'all the help' that they can (*TS*, IX.XX.773). Sterne's fictional narrator also invents a

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[161] Montaigne and Screech, *The Complete Essays*, 52.
[162] For other appeals to the curious in the novel see also pages 5, 196 and 627 in the Florida edition of *Tristram Shandy*. For the possible significance of these appeals see Melvyn New, 'The Dunce Revisited: Colley Cibber and *Tristram Shandy*', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, no. 72 (1973): 547–59.
[163] Booth, *The Company We Keep*, 184-5.

specific reader or listener who he addresses directly and to whom he likewise targets particular remarks.[164] The narrator's confidential asides to the reader foster an air of intimacy and allow Sterne to write about sexual acts and sexual pleasure as if Tristram is sharing a confidence with a friend, rather than as a writer who is currently engaged in producing a discourse for public consumption. 'As you proceed further with me', says Tristram, 'the slight acquaintance which is now beginning betwixt us, will grow into familiarity; and that, unless one of us is in fault, will terminate in friendship' (*TS*, I.VI.9). Sterne not only invents a host of readers and manipulates them to serve his varied purposes, but he frequently provides these readers with dialogue to which Tristram wittily responds. The reader is encouraged to infer by a process of induction that his mother's question '*Pray, my dear* […] *have you not forgot to wind up the clock?*' interrupts the act of sexual intercourse. His father's irritated response 'Did ever woman, since the creation of the world, interrupt a man with such a silly question?' allows Sterne's narrator to bring in an imaginary reader who conveniently asks, 'Pray what was your father saying?' By making the supposed or 'mock' reader ask the leading question, it enables the narrator to supply the answer 'Nothing' (*TS*, I.I.2). The reader is left to infer exactly what Walter was doing by revisiting the first paragraph and is also invited to deduce, from the prosaic nature of Mrs Shandy's question, that she is neither immersed in nor enjoying the experience.

As well as encouraging the reader to consciously exercise their faculties of attention and logical reason, Sterne also signals the information he supplies to his reader within in his text. The female

[164] This imagined reader is sometimes male and sometimes female. In Chapter II of volume I, the reader is called 'dear Sir,' and in Chapter IV there is suddenly a female listener who is referred to as 'Madam'. In Chapter VI the reader is again addressed as 'Sir' and also 'my dear friend and companion'. Tristram constructs a polyphonic community of 'readers' or 'auditors' who almost have the status of characters *in Tristram Shandy*. As well as 'Sir', 'Madam' and 'my dear friend and companion', there is 'gentle reader', 'dear Jenny', 'Julia' ,'the Christian reader', 'your connoisseurship', 'good folks', 'your graver gentry', 'your reverences', 'your worships', 'Sir Critick', 'hypercritic', 'day-tall critic', 'thrice able critics', 'readers in the world', 'monthly Reviewers!', 'Garrick' and lastly 'any one Duke, Marquis, Earl, Viscount or Baron in these his Majesty's dominions'. It is as if Sterne is utilising the psychology of the 'mixed pulpit' since Tristram's 'conversation' like a good sermon, is an admixture of careful crafting yet seeming extempore speech. This unites the individual reader (such as 'my fair lady') with society ('your Lordships') and with the wider literary world beyond the confines of a writer's study (such as the 'Monthly Reviewer').

reader, as Helen Ostovich notes, is particularly singled out by Tristram and is used as something of a scapegoat throughout the novel.[165] He also accuses 'Madam' of being inattentive in her reading as he says that he has already told her in the previous chapter that his mother '*was not a papist*' (*TS*, I.XX.64). This episode follows a similar pattern to Tristram's account of *coitus interruptus* in the opening chapter in that he encourages the reader's active involvement in his plot by providing key information in a deliberately obscure or convoluted way. Having accused the female reader or 'Madam' of inattention in the matter of his mother's religion, Tristram then provides her with dialogue in which she replies 'Papist! You told me no such thing, Sir' (*TS*, I.XX.64). Once she has turned back to re-read the chapter as directed, Tristram criticises her 'vicious taste' in reading for 'adventures' more than for 'deep erudition' (*TS*, I.XX.65). This technique of inventing a 'mock reader' is used by Sterne to facilitate the linking explanation that Tristram, as narrator, initially omits. Eventually, the hidden logic of baptism in the womb is acknowledged, as Tristram hopes that 'all good people, both male and female […] may be taught to think as well as read' (*TS*, I.XX.66).

In addition to encouraging his reader to fully access the comedy of his text by applying their attentive and cognitive faculties, Sterne emphasises the diverse responses of his characters to specific circumstances. This can be seen in the context of Sterne's account of Phutatorius and the incident of the chestnut (the central events of which we are by now familiar). This is consistent with Michael Prince's observation that prose writers in the eighteenth century increasingly 'turn to the "evidence" supplied by the responses of characters to specific events and circumstances' as 'the

[165] As Helen Ostovich notes, the female reader is accused by Tristram of professing modesty and is then chided by him because she clearly lacks it. She (and by extension all readers) is constantly alerted to bawdy or potentially obscene elements in the narrative. Tristram uses double entendre to pretend that her imagination, and hence the reader's, is prurient and that his, in contrast, is innocent. These techniques help to distance Sterne, as author, from charges of impropriety or indecency. The female reader is also used to stimulate the reader's curiosity about the exact nature of Tristram's relationship to Jenny and he disingenuously implies that only her contaminated mind 'ravished by Satan' could lead her to infer that an improper liaison exists between them. Similarly, she is cautioned to 'govern her fancies' when he mentions Toby's breeches ripped between the legs. See Helen Ostovich, "Reader as Hobby-Horse in *'Tristram Shandy'*" in New, Melvyn, ed., *Tristram Shandy: Contemporary Critical Essays*, New Casebooks (London: Macmillan, 1992), 155-173.

appeal to transpersonal criteria of judgment becomes less confident'.[166] In a detailed account of the disparate reactions and 'reasonings' of the learned doctors upon hearing the oath of Phutatorius, Sterne demonstrates that men do not experience the world unmediated.

The chapter which concerns the incident of the chestnut opens with the word 'Zounds!', which is uttered by Phutatorius from the opposite side of the table, 'in a construction of look, and in a tone of voice, somewhat between that of a man in amazement, and of one in bodily pain' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.378). Tristram's narration, which starts at the end of the event itself, is frozen in time at this surprising monosyllable. The event, as well as its cause, remains unexplained to the reader whilst Tristram relates the various 'reasonings' of 'the learned body' upon this utterance. By placing the reader's immediate focus upon the conjectures of the onlookers, on the subjects doing the perceiving rather than the object of perception (the sound), Sterne draws attention to the way that men habitually create, on questionable grounds, the world that they inhabit. By demonstrating how the learned doctors construct very different interpretations of the same event or sound, Sterne demonstrates that our preconceptions often have 'as great a power over the sounds of words as the shape of things' (*TS*, VIII.XXXII.717). In demonstrating how our conceptions of the world are mediated by our instinctual interests, biases, prejudices and habits of mind, Sterne indicates how the contingencies of human character and desire continually frustrate any attempt to ground 'consensus' in their unaided logic or reason. As the world is not experienced without the mediation of our preconceptions, the nature of a man's character and its relationship to the contingencies of desire and self-interest is not, implies Sterne, without significance.

The 'uncanonical' oath Z------ds, which 'drew every one's ears towards it', was the 'last word of all others in the dictionary' to be expected either in this place or on this occasion (*TS*, IV.XXVI.377). The onlookers' previous experience was unable to provide them with any reliable guide as to either the

[166] Prince, *Philosophical Dialogue*, 19.

cause of the sound or its meaning. In the absence of contextual familiarity, those 'who had very nice ears, and could distinguish the expression and mixture of the two tones as plainly as a *third* or a *fifth*, or any other chord in musick' judged the oath according to the criteria of musical expression (*TS*, IV.XXVII.378). They felt that while 'the *concord* was good in itself' that it 'twas quite out of the key, and no way applicable to the subject started'. Others 'who knew nothing of musical expression' and who 'merely lent their ears to the plain import of the *word*' imagined that *Phutatorius*, who was somewhat of a 'cholerick spirit' was just going to 'bemawl *Yorick* to some purpose' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.378) for the cutting of his sermon into slips and 'giving them about him to light their pipes' (*TS*, IV.XXVI.376). Drawing upon what they knew about the nature of Phutatorius's disposition, about his relationship with Yorick and about the latter's treatment of the sermon, they concluded that 'the desperate monosyllable' was 'the exordium to an oration' which they judged from the sample, 'presaged but a rough kind of handling' of Yorick (*TS*, IV.XXVII.378). However, seeing Phutatorius stop short 'without any attempt or desire to go on', a third party began to suppose 'that it was no more than an involuntary respiration, casually forming itself into the shape of a twelve-penny oath—without the sin or substance of one'. Meanwhile, others in contrast, looked upon it 'as a real and substantial oath propensly formed against *Yorick*, to whom he was known to bear no good liking'. Walter, who generally viewed things in a singular light, philosophized mechanically that the oath which already 'lay fretting and fuming' in the 'upper regions *of Phutatorius*'s purtenance' was squeezed out by the sudden influx of blood driven into the right ventricle of his heart 'by the stroke of surprize which so strange a theory of preaching had excited' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.379).

By pointedly asserting 'how finely we argue upon mistaken facts!' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.379) Sterne suggests that the greatest impediments to man's attainment of happiness usually lie within. While the mechanisms that produce our thoughts, feelings and assessments may seem as if they are the outcome of well-reasoned or rational thought, they are influenced by drives and processes which often lie beyond the horizon of our conscious awareness. As Tristram observes 'there was not a soul

busied in all these various reasonings upon the monosyllable' who did not take it as a fundamental axiom that '*Phutatorius's* mind was intent upon the subject of debate which was arising between *Didius* and *Yorick'* (*TS*, IV.XXVII.379). In inductive reasoning (from effect to cause) the mind selects the patterns, resemblances and regularities that it observes or experiences and extrapolates these onto present or future experiences in order to formulate or predict their probable cause. Given the central assumption of the onlookers that Phutatorius was intent upon the subject of debate between Didius and Yorick, the fact that Phutatorius was known to be of a 'cholerick' disposition who bore 'no good liking' to *Yorick,* supports their initial assumption. So too does the learned doctors' observation that Phutatorius 'looked first towards the one, and then towards the other, with the air of a man listening to what was going forwards' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.379). Their subsequent observation, that Phutatorius 'skrewed up every nerve and muscle in his face, to the utmost pitch the instrument would bear, in order, as it was thought, to give a sharp reply to *Yorick,* who sat over-against him' appears to be consistent with the previous assumptions. Yet despite this accumulation of 'evidence', their conclusion as to the cause of his oath is erroneous. The propensity to err in our focus and our reasoning is inherently human, suggests Sterne, since our perceptions are mediated by particularities of character and desire, as well as our habits of thought and feeling. On the basis of the available evidence, asks Tristram rhetorically, 'who would not have thought the same?' Yet the observers' selection of the 'salient facts' (and the causal inferences they draw from these) are greatly mistaken since *Yorick,* it seems*,* was 'never once in any one domicile of *Phutatorius's* brain'. The 'true cause' of Phutatorius's exclamation, says Tristram, 'lay at least a yard below',[167] as the whole of his thoughts and attention were focused instead on 'a transaction […] within the precincts of his own *Galligaskins*' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.379).

In addition to illustrating how men's mental faculties are limited and are frequently flawed, Sterne reminds us that men's moral assessments generally fare no better. When Yorick picks up the

[167] The term 'yard' means 'penis' ('the membrum virile' in Latin).

chestnut that Phutatorius had flung down in wrath, his action is construed by the latter as a plain acknowledgement that it was he who had slipped 'the chestnut in' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.384). 'The look of something more than suspicion, which *Phutatorius* cast full upon Yorick as these thoughts arose, too evidently spoke his opinion' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.384). Since Phutatorius is naturally supposed by the onlookers 'to know more of the matter than any person besides', his prejudice against Yorick quickly becomes the general one. As Yorick's dislike of Phutatorius's treatise on concubines was well known and as it 'had done hurt in the world', the prank was thought to be a master stroke of Yorick's arch-wit (*TS*, IV.XXVII.384). Phutatorius's implied threat and fixed resentment against Yorick could be viewed as an expression of his 'cholerick' disposition. Moreover, his mistaken belief that Yorick was the instigator of the incident suggests that Phutatorius's judgment is already prejudiced against Yorick. That he suffers from a 'confirmation bias'; being an automatic mental routine whereby someone searches for evidence that supports their belief or mental paradigm and ignores evidence to the contrary.

In fact, Phutatorius's evaluation of Yorick as 'morally bad' or 'morally culpable' is partially the result of 'circumstantial luck' in that his moral assessment is largely based on the fact that Yorick is in the wrong place at the wrong time. His motive in picking up the offending chestnut so that it is not wasted could even be seen as praiseworthy, but his motive for this action is misconstrued. This is an example of the general delusion of mankind that their moral assessments are infallible. In fact, 'attribution errors' are common as the motives of men are not transparent. Yorick is well-known for the just (if unwise) exercise of his wit and for his antipathy towards the author of an obscene treatise. However, when it comes to the attribution of blame, Phutatorius overrates the part that motive plays in his assessment and underrates the part played by the circumstantial context.[168] Furthermore, the extent to which Phutatorius is culpable for this misjudgment is mitigated by a 'singularity' within Yorick's own character. This is his reluctance, however in his power, to set the

[168] Called attribution errors.

'inventor, the propagator and believer of an illiberal report' straight (*TS*, IV.XXVII.385). As a consequence of this it was Yorick's 'misfortune all his life long to bear the imputation of saying and doing a thousand things of which […] his nature was incapable'. As it is the agent's intentions, not just the consequences of those intentions, that we consider when we apportion praise or blame, the fact that Yorick is able (but unwilling) to explain the affair 'to his honour' is significant (*TS*, IV.XXVII.385). Interestingly, Tristram blames Yorick (and alternately likes him) for this flaw. The fact that he 'blames him' suggests that Tristram recognises that Yorick has the freedom (and thus the responsibility) to 'set a story right with the world' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.385).[169] Yorick's failure to explain himself when he realises that his intentions have been misconstrued renders him partly to blame for the unpleasant consequences that generally ensue from such a failure. Tristram's admission that he 'likes' Yorick for this neglect as his 'spirit was above it', implies that he construes Yorick's failure to justify his motives as an expression of the Christian virtue of humility. It is also evidence of Yorick's faith in a theologically informed standard for ethical conduct rather than a solely mundane, human one. In fact, comments on the reader's assessment of human nature in the novel are frequently tinged with irony: 'As the reader (for I hate your *ifs*) has a thorough knowledge of human nature' the reader will grasp, says Tristram, what Yorick does not: 'that a person laughed at, considers himself in the light of a person injured' (*TS*, I.XII.30-1). As Sterne frequently reminds us, nothing is unmediated or infallible in a world that, unaccountably, equates feeling good with being morally good, and *vice versa*:

> But there is a fatality attends the actions of some men: Order them as they will, they pass through a certain medium which so twists and refracts them from their true directions—that, with all the titles to praise which a rectitude of heart can give, the doers of them are nevertheless forced to live and die without it. (*TS*, I.X.24)

With this in mind, Sterne offers alternative interpretations of Phutatorius's actions in the chestnut incident that judge him as morally culpable. The first interpretation sees him blameworthy for an

[169] Freedom is construed here as freedom from external constraint in that he could have chosen to do otherwise.

'act of omission' as he fails to close the aperture in his breeches. The neglect of which, says Tristram, should be taken as 'a warning to all mankind' because it had 'opened a door to this accident' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.381). His laxity in this particular *punctilio* is morally significant as it suggests that Phutatorius lacks sexual continence. The second interpretation is proffered by Acrites and Mythogeras whose pronouncements suggest that he is guilty of an 'act of commission'. They are both of the opinion that the incident is a judgment upon Phutatorius for publishing a 'filthy and obscene treatise *de Concubinis retinendis'* (*On Keeping Concubines*) of which he was giving a second edition to the world 'that identical week' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.381). The idea behind the law of *contrapasso*[170] is that punishments in Hell should correlate to the sins committed on earth. By pronouncing the chestnut incident as a 'judgment' upon him, Acrites and Mythogeras thereby imply that its outcome is an instance of the working of Providential justice in that it punishes Phutatorius for his lustful and sinful ways. In publishing his 'filthy treatise' he is guilty of concupiscence and so his punishment is commensurate; the act of 'chucking the chestnut hot into *Phutatorius's* ***--*****' is seen as 'a sarcastical fling at his book' the doctrines of which, notes Tristram, 'had inflamed many an honest man in the same place' (*TS*, IV.XXVII.384).

The belief that one should get what one deserves and that one's punishment should fit the crime appear to be basic axioms that underlie much of our thinking about morality. Since Phutatorius's 'filthy and obscene treatise' had inflamed the virile member of 'many an honest man' it seems only fitting that this part of his own anatomy should be inflamed by the scalding heat of a piping-hot chestnut. However, the incident could also be interpreted as an instance of 'resultant luck'. This is where the chance outcome of an action (the hot chestnut falling into the open aperture of Phutatorius's galligaskins) affects others' evaluation of it as morally significant.[171] In its punishment of a character's vice by an ironic twist of fate (itself brought on by a character's less than praiseworthy actions) the chestnut incident is a paradigm case of the working out of 'poetic justice'.

[170] The law of contrapasso is famously used by Dante in his *Divine Comedy.*
[171] Resultant luck.

Particularly as the ironic twist of fate, in Phutatorius's case, is also driven by his character flaw: the overindulgence of his appetites (both sexual and gastronomical). It also demonstrates that the entelechy that gives ethical direction to this incident (and to the novel as a whole) appears to be deliberately ambiguous.

## Happiness: and the Place of One's Hobby-horse

A character's hobby-horse, and its place in an individual's psyche and his life, is the central terrain in a novel that ultimately champions the *eudaemonist* happiness of Christian virtue over the subjective, experiential, happiness of ethical hedonism. Walter is a character who appears to place a high value on his reason, on deductive logic and empirical science. Yet Sterne makes it clear that Walter is not interested in a proper exchange of ideas, as his aim in all the pains he was at in these philosophical lectures was:

> To enable my uncle *Toby* not to discuss,—but comprehend—to *hold* the grains and scruples of learning,—not to *weigh* them.' (*TS*, III.XL.281)

Indeed, the patent absurdity and irrationality of Walter's hypotheses and their continual demolition by events indicates that he is a victim of his hobby-horse:

> When a man gives himself up to the government of a ruling passion,—or, in other words, when his HOBBY-HORSE grows head-strong,—farewell cool reason and fair discretion! (*TS*, II.V.106)

Although Walter is clearly fond of his brother, their heated exchange about the affair of Aunt Dinah shows that 'where an hypothesis was concerned' Walter would always put his hobby-horse before the feelings of others (*TS*, II.XII.132).

While what a man places his subjective happiness *in* may be the 'very thing' which marks and distinguishes a man's character, Sterne clearly signals in *Tristram Shandy* that taking in only his 'hobby-horsical likeness' is an inadequate way to assess his *moral* character:

> I could not give the reader this stroke in my uncle *Toby*'s picture, by the instrument with which I drew the other parts of it,—that taking in no more than the mere HOBBY-HORSICAL likeness;—this is a part of his moral character. (*TS*, II.XII.131-2)

In his explicit separation of the hobby-horsical part of a man's character from the moral or virtuous part, Sterne makes an important distinction. While the hedonic happiness of a hobby-horse can be, when properly directed, a desirable and legitimate constituent *within* a human life, for Sterne, it can never be a man's telos or his *summum bonum* (highest ethical good). This would give supreme value to a psychological state or a fleeting experience rather than to a condition that is morally praiseworthy. Sterne denies that we can establish an ethical criterion in pleasure, in marked contrast to Locke, who conflates man's ethical good with a hedonic conception of happiness which he defines 'as the utmost pleasure'. In doing this, Locke commits what the philosopher G. E. Moore calls in his *Principia Ethica* (1903) the 'naturalistic fallacy' which involves identifying ethical concepts with natural concepts; in taking 'good' to mean the same as 'pleasurable'.[172]

The idea that Walter could, and should, engage in Locke's radical reflection in a bid to remove impediments to his happiness and improve his character in virtue is articulated by the 'moral lesson' of the squeaky hinge on the parlour door (*TS*, III.XX-XXI.230-41). The squeaky hinge in question is one that can be easily fixed (and his honour saved for ever) by 'three drops of oyl with a feather, and a smart stroke of a hammer' (*TS*, III.XX.239). Despite resolving 'every day for at least ten years' to have it mended and submitting to 'hourly grievances' and misery upon its account, Walter fails to attend to the task:

> Inconsistent soul that man is!—languishing under wounds, which he has the power to heal!—his whole life a contradiction to his knowledge!—his reason, that precious gift of God to him (instead of pouring in oyl) serving but to sharpen his sensibilities,—to multiply his pains and render him more melancholy and uneasy under them!—poor unhappy creature, that he should do so!—are not the necessary causes of misery in this life enow, but he must add voluntary ones to his stock of sorrow;—

[172] See Andrew Fisher and Simon Kirchin, eds., *Arguing About Metaethics* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 23-65. Part I: The open question argument, contains an extract of Moore's argument and contributions to the debate by William Frankena and Frank Snare. For Moore, it is still an open question to ask whether what is pleasurable is also good; hence the identification must be mistaken. Although most commentators hold that the open question argument lacks precision, or is no argument at all, they also typically agree that Moore was onto something.

> struggle against evils which cannot be avoided, and submit to others, which a tenth part of the trouble they create him, would remove from his heart for ever? (*TS*, III.XX.239)

For Locke, 'Pleasure and pain and that which causes them –good and evil, are *the hinges* on which our passions turn'.[173] Sterne's reference to 'oyl' is an allusion to the parable of the Good Samaritan (in his sermon 'Philanthropy Recommended'[174]) and to the example of universal benevolence, compassion and charity it teaches:

> That a charitable and benevolent disposition is so principle and ruling a part of a man's character, as to be a considerable test by itself of the whole frame and temper of his mind, with which all other virtues and vices respectively rise and fall, and will almost necessarily be connected.[175]

'By all that is good and virtuous!', cries Tristram, 'if there are three drops of oyl to be got, and a hammer to be found within ten miles of *Shandy-Hall,*—the parlour-door hinge shall be mended this reign' (*TS*, III.XXI.239-40). Locke's 'hinge' thus signifies that Walter is motivated more by the pleasure of his hobby-horse than he is by the virtue of human compassion and charitable action. '"*When things move on bad hinges,* an' please your lordships, *how can it be otherwise?*"' (*TS*, III.XXII.241). The moral lesson of the 'hinge' is that Walter has the wrong hierarchy of values as his hobby-horse occupies the wrong place in both his psyche and in his life.

As ancient and modern philosophers have variously noted, there are good technical reasons why subjective hedonic happiness cannot be regarded as one's highest ethical good; or hedonism be verified as an ethical principle. As George K. Strodach points out in his introduction to the *Art of Happiness* by Epicurus, one of the earliest critics of hedonism was Plato himself. In the Platonic dialogue named Protagoras after the Sophist of that name:

> Socrates has no difficulty in getting Protagoras to admit that if one is to choose successfully between competing pleasures, or between prospective pleasures and pains, there must be an "art of measuring" these against each other. Since the measuring principle or criterion can be none other

[173] Locke, *ECHU*, 229 (Book II, Chap. XX, Sect. 3).
[174] *Sermons*, 3.21-30, 'Philanthropy Recommended'.
[175] *Sermons*, 3.30.

> than knowledge or reason, it is immediately obvious that pleasure is dependent on a principle other than itself and therefore cannot be regarded as the highest good.[176]

If pleasure is dependent on a principle or criterion other than itself, then according to Socrates, it cannot be regarded as the highest ethical good. In what appears to be a parody of Plato's philosophic dialogue and Locke's passage on the act of ratiocination in man,[177] Sterne refutes the notion that a criterion of measure can be established within pleasure itself or within the rival claims of our subjective desires. In the middle of Walter's lecture to his Uncle Toby, in praise of Slawkenbergius, Tristram explains the structure of his father's thought:

> The great and principal act of ratiocination in man, as logicians tell us, is the finding out the agreement or disagreement of two ideas one with another, by the intervention of a third; (called the *medius terminus*) just as a man, as *Locke* well observes, by a yard, finds two men's nine-pin-alleys to be of the same length, which could not be brought together, to measure their equality, by *juxta-position*. (*TS*, III.XL.280-1)[178]

The two brothers do not agree about the criterion for measuring happiness (the third or *medius terminus).* Walter uses the word 'yard', a euphemism for phallus.[179] Since this is also an organ of sexual pleasure it allows Sterne to play upon the idea that the instrument for measuring (his phallus) needs to be superior to those it is measured against. If Locke's simple picture of pleasure as a uniform, conscious experience is accepted, then Walter's measuring instrument is found wanting as it is commensurate and no different from that of anyone else's. As the measuring criterion of pleasure cannot itself be one of the pleasures among which it has to arbitrate, pleasure is dependent on a measuring criterion other than itself. Therefore, pleasure cannot be regarded as the highest good. Similarly, in deciding between the rival claims of our rival desires, we have to decide in what direction these should be educated or ordered. Those principles, or moral precepts (the criterion) by which we do this, cannot themselves be derived from, or justified by reference to, the desires

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[176] George K. Strodach's introduction in Epicurus, *The Art of Happiness* (London: Penguin, 2013), 72.
[177] As scholars have noted, Sterne paraphrases ECHU, IV.17.18: "the principal Act of Ratiocination is the finding the Agreement or Disagreement of two *Ideas* one with another, by the intervention of a third. As a Man, by a Yard, finds two Houses to be of the same length, which could not be brought together to measure their Equality by *juxta*-position".
[178] The 'medius terminus' is a term in a syllogism which does not appear in the conclusion.
[179] The Florida editor's note that Sterne is punning when he uses the word yard as this is recorded in OED, s.v. Yard, sb211: "The virile member, penis." *TSN*, 324.

among which they have to arbitrate. We cannot use our subjective desires themselves as some sort of ethical criterion. In fact, as MacIntyre cautions, one should not accept any view which treats pleasure or experiential happiness as a criterion for guiding our actions. The pleasure or enjoyment itself provides no good reason to embark on one type of activity or life rather than another. Thus, behind Sterne's horses and riders stands the philosophical refutation of the new subjective, psychological conception of happiness as an ethical criterion, and the reduction that this would validate. For Sterne, the moral cannot be derived from the psychological by logical processes, so subjective, experiential pleasure or happiness cannot be regarded as man's highest ethical good.

As a Christian, Uncle Toby provides the teleological framework of classical theism that is implied in the transition from empirical fact to ethical ideal (from *is* to *ought)*. In his answer to the question of why one man's 'nose' is longer than another's, he says that it is because:

> God pleases to have it so […] 'Tis he […] who makes us all, and frames and puts us together in such forms and proportions, and for such ends, as is agreeable to his infinite wisdom. (*TS*, III.XLI.284)

Whilst Walter understands the 'secret spring' by which the mind of man is able to withstand the sorrow and afflictions of earthly existence as a mechanical principle of counteraction or 'counterbalance' (*TS*, IV.VIII.334), Toby construes man's inner resource to be 'Religion': ''Tis by the assistance of Almighty God […] not from our own strength […] we are upheld by the grace and the assistance of the best of Beings' (*TS*, IV.VII.332).

Without the teleological, tripartite framework of Christian *eudaemonism,* such a transition from is to ought is unwarranted. The gap between the virtues and vices and any motive we may have for enacting these is logically unbridgeable. Uncle Toby has his values properly prioritized and aligned with his *summum bonum* of Christian Salvation. This is illustrated by the way he abandons his hobby-horse in order to give succour to Le Fever. In a novel that ultimately champions the happiness of Christian virtue over the new, subjective, concept of happiness, a character's hobby-horse (and its place in his psyche and his life) is the central terrain of Tristram Shandy. In a novel

that can no longer take its reader's belief in a theologically informed standard for ethical conduct for granted, Sterne employs the secular literary device of poetic justice alongside that of divine justice or Providence in order to reinforce the core value of Christian happiness and virtue. As an 'ideal' form of justice, poetic justice parallels that of divine justice in *Tristram Shandy,* in that both ensure that the virtuous (charitable) characters are rewarded and that the sinful (uncharitable) characters are punished.

As Ian Watt suggests, the rise of the novel is itself a reflection of 'the transition from the objective, social and public orientation of the classical world to the subjective, individualist and private orientation' of early modern life and literature.[180] This insight is compatible with the argument of this chapter that Sterne enlists his comic novel to interrogate the century's increasing focus on the subjective, experiential, private happiness of the individual at a time when allegiance to the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism can no longer be taken for granted.

Although *Tristram Shandy* celebrates the new, psychological conception of happiness through the device of the hobby-horse, it also highlights its ethical shortcomings. Whilst experiential happiness is considered as a legitimate good, as a material that has to be directed by wisdom and virtue in both one's psyche and within one's life. Just as Sterne argued in his sermons, experiential pleasure can never be regarded as man's highest ethical good or *summum bonum.*

Michael Prince observes that the loss of a transcendental standard and clear criterion for ethical conduct provides a basis for understanding the eighteenth-century elevation of prose fiction as a dominant mode of moral philosophy.[181] This is consistent with my argument in this chapter that in its exploration of the new experiential concept of happiness, *Tristram Shandy* ultimately rejects the ethical domain where subjective happiness can be pursued instead of virtue. In *The Origins of the*

[180] Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 176.
[181] Prince, *Philosophical Dialogue*, 19.

*English Novel*, Michael McKeon argues that the notion of poetic justice becomes increasingly important after the Restoration as it compensates for the deficiencies of providential justice:

> The impulse to detect God's immediate and tangible effects might be thought to convey not only a conviction of, but also an uncertainty about, his presence. But such an argument becomes fully plausible only when the doctrine of providence becomes concentrated, as it were, into the doctrine of poetic justice… The doctrine of poetic justice will become important for a culture in which divine presence is felt to be in jeopardy… What is therefore unusual about the Restoration is that it should have elaborated this special method – poetic justice – of compensating for the deficiencies of providential justice, rather than having continued to rely on the traditional and orthodox view of the afterlife.[182]

His insight that 'the doctrine of poetic justice will become important for a culture in which divine presence is felt to be in jeopardy'[183] supports my own contention that *Tristram Shandy* is a novel that understands that it can no longer take its reader's belief in a transcendental standard for ethical conduct for granted. In consequence, the entelechy which gives the novel its ethical direction is at times ambiguous, reflecting the eighteenth-century ethical worldview itself, where two rival, incommensurable conceptions of happiness uneasily co-exist. However, by contrasting Walter and Toby's characters, and how each directs his hobby-horsical pleasures in their psyche and within their lives, Sterne incorporates experiential happiness into the moral framework of Christian *eudaemonism.* In Toby's decisive subordination of subjective, experiential happiness (symbolised by his hobby-horse) within his life, to the exercise of Christian virtue, as evidenced in the Le Fever episode, *Tristram Shandy* reasserts the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism in the novel and its transcendental criteria of ethical conduct.

In summary, this chapter demonstrates that in *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne gives expression to the new subjective, psychological, experiential conception of happiness that set itself in opposition to the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism. Whereas treatises and sermons had theorized abstract and ideal happiness, the novel focused on the fact that happiness was a relative thing and delved

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[182] Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel: 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 124-5.
[183] McKeon, 124-5.

into the particularities of character, their constitution and unique psychology. For the characters that populate the novel, the choice of happiness cannot be made without reference to their individual constitution, character, disposition, inclinations and circumstances. Sterne's device of the hobby-horse serves to articulate the variety of forms that subjective happiness could take, since it uniquely fit a character's disposition and the sources of happiness he had found. Indeed, since the source of happiness he has found also influences his character, the choice of hobby-horse, and its place within a character's psyche and life is therefore morally revealing. In *Tristram Shandy* Sterne explores the difficulties involved in the attainment of happiness in a world of cross-accidents and falling sash windows. Given the effects of contingency, the novel concludes that we can never be secure in, or in total control of, our happiness on earth. In his examination of the relationship between the perceiving subject and the object of perception, Sterne sees this as primarily an ethical problem and explores how a character's constitution, ideas, inclinations and temperament can all interact in a variety of ways to affect his subjective happiness. For most characters that populate the novel, their mediated experience of the world usually impedes, rather than facilitates their subjective happiness. In fact, neither our mental processes nor our bodily functions are completely in our power. However, much Tristram wants to blame his parents, or fortune for blighting his constitution and thus his chances of happiness, in the end Tristram and Walter and Phutatorius respond in the way they do because of who they are. Indeed, when it comes to Tristram, the novel suggests that his own character is his internal fate and Walter's character represents his external fate, since his father curates an environment that generates misery not just for himself, but for his wife and his son. Since we don't experience the world without the mediation of our own assessments, our thoughts and judgment are often distorted by our characters, which themselves are the product of a host of other factors. However, while mastering himself might be a long shot for Tristram, Sterne holds that with the transcendental guidance of God and scripture, Tristram could have responded to the contingent events in his life differently. Whilst subjective happiness

within a human life is legitimate, for Sterne pleasure can never be taken as man's *summum bonum*, or supreme ethical good.

## CHAPTER THREE: STERNEANA

This chapter argues that the co-existence of two opposed, incommensurable ways of conceptualizing happiness within the same eighteenth-century perspective is clearly manifest in the body of material known as Sterneana. I conduct a brief excursus on the scholarship of Sterneana, and a 'representative chronology' where I highlight some of the significant features of this material. I examine how representations of Sterne and his novel are routinely polarized in Sterneana according to their perceived virtue or vice and how Sterne (and his alter-egos Tristram and Yorick with whom he is habitually conflated) are variously censured or celebrated for their presumed sexual hedonism, libertinism or immorality, depending upon the understanding of happiness that its particular author adopts. I will briefly explore how Sterneana connects Sterne, as the clergyman-author of a salacious book, to a larger pattern of clerical corruption and misconduct, and those whose authors discern an affinity between *Tristram Shandy* and the themes and tropes of erotica.[1] I next offer some analyses of Sterneana that are emblematic of a 'choice' between *eudaemonist* happiness and the happiness of hedonism.

The paradox that an Anglican clergyman had penned a bawdy (some said indecent) book positively invited the parodies, imitations, erotic adaptations, commentaries, open letters, prints, spurious volumes, continuations, sequels, pseudo-reactions and fugitive pieces,[2] that deluged from the press upon publication of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, *Gentleman.*[3] As a reviewer in *The*

[1] 'Sternean erotica' refers to texts that form a relationship to, or mimic, facets of Sterne's literary style and which involves the simplification of his narrative focus to emphasize the sexual. It often includes a reductive focus on genitalia and sexual action.

[2] In *Memoirs of the Bedford Coffee-House By a Genius*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for J. Single, 1763), 21, 'fugitive pieces' are described as those 'the titles of which are scarce remembered by any but him [the writer] and his publishers'.

[3] The first two volumes of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (London edition) were published by Robert Dodsley on 3 April 1760, having been placed on sale in York a few days earlier. The first two volumes of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (York edition) were printed by Ann Ward in December 1759. The first two volumes of *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* were published in April/May 1760.

*Grand Magazine* was quick to recognize, the novel's success with the scribblers was prompted by one 'extraordinary circumstance':

> Had the author of *Tristram Shandy* remained unknown, the work would have few, if any, imitators: But the extraordinary circumstance of its being avowed by a *clergyman,* and what is stranger still, of its being patronized by *Bishops,* has encouraged every scribler [sic] to mimic the reverend writer's manner.[4]

In *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S*----- (1761)[5] its author facetiously adopts the perspective of an outraged Christian moralist to censure Sterne as a Pastor of the Church of England for 'affixing his name' to *Tristram Shandy* which he ostensibly interprets as a work 'of the most obscene, irreligious and immoral tendency':

> It will be scarce credited by Posterity, if your Name should be handed down to them in the Biographical Annals of this Time, that in the Beginning of the glorious and virtuous Reign of GEORGE the Third, whose Piety and good Sense went Hand in Hand in rewarding Merit and punishing Vice; when the Clergy of this Land had met in Convocation to address his Majesty, applaud his religious and upright Conduct, and point out such Objects of evil Tendency to Religion and Morality, as were still remaining, in particularizing irreligious and obscene Books: I say, it will scarce be credited, that at this very Period, a Pastor of the Church of *England,* should write, publish, and affix his Name to Works of the most obscene and immoral Tendency; and that *(hitherto)* so far from having been punished, or made an Example of to deter others from following his Precedent, he has actually met with Reward and Recompence on every hand; and what is most incredible of all — *Promotion* even in the *Church,* on account of the Publication of these very Works. Whatever Opinion Foreigners may have hitherto entertained of our religious Worship and Discipline; — however prophane, *Romish* and schismatic Writers may have represented us; — and whatever Reason we may, by our irreligious and inattentive Conduct, have given to these Reproaches, surely there never was so severe and just a Sarcasm upon our Religion or ourselves, as the Reception which *Tristram Shandy* and its Author have met with.[6]

As its author indignantly observes, not only has this 'Pastor of the Church of *England*' escaped punishment for publishing a book of 'evil tendency' to both religion and morality, but moreover, he has met with reward. Furthermore, he says, the clergy's favourable reception of *Tristram Shandy* and its clergyman-author, brings both religion and the nation into disrepute. Indeed, the 'pervasiveness of the sexual and the scatological'[7] in a book that was 'patronized by Bishops'

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[4] 'An Account of the Rev. Mr. ST****, and His Writings', *The Grand Magazine*, no. 3 (June 1760): 308–11.

[5] *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----. Upon the Publication of His Fifth and Sixth Volumes of Tristram Shandy. By a Layman* (London: Printed for G. Burnet, 1761), 19-20.

[6] *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S*-----, 19-20.

[7] Frank Brady, 'Tristram Shandy: Sexuality, Morality, and Sensibility' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Autumn, 1970, Vol 4, No 1 (1970), 41. Brady notes that A. R. Towers and Robert Alter also investigate sexual and scatological allusions in *Tristram Shandy*. See A. R. Towers, "Sterne's Cock and Bull Story," ELH, 24 (1957), 12-29; and Robert Alter, "Tristram Shandy and the Game of Love," American Scholar, 37 (1968), 316-323.

indicates that the scribbling fraternity were responding to a worrying lack of ethical coherence in the thinking of their age, even if they could not always explicitly articulate exactly what this was.

As explained in the previous two chapters, the shift of thinking of morality as 'a standard against which human nature can be measured, to that of thinking of morality as itself a part of human nature'[8] radically transformed the concept of happiness. As a result, two opposed conceptions of happiness as one's *summum bonum* or chief good, uneasily co-existed within the same eighteenth-century perspective. William Paley's praise that 'the *summum bonum* of human life… consists in reading Tristram Shandy'[9] articulates the view that Sterne's comic novel was interpreted by the scribbling fraternity as exemplifying the new, experiential, hedonist conception of happiness as the chief ethical good in life. This conception is in marked contrast to the happiness of Christian salvation, which the scribblers expect a 'Pastor of the church of England' to promote in his writing, a happiness that is more a function of virtue than feeling. As the author of a salacious or bawdy novel, Sterne could easily be interpreted as an advocate of the new hedonist concept of happiness which posed a direct threat to that of Christian *eudaemonism* - the happiness he ought to advocate as a member of the clergy. Indeed, a number of scribblers, like the writer of *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----,* adopted the perspective of a Christian moralist to articulate this very point. Such authors not only chided him for championing the kind of happiness that was of the selfish, hedonist and immoral kind, but also for his moral culpability for promoting a happiness that directly undermined the tenets of his own religion. While Christian *eudaemonists* held that virtue is necessary for happiness and that ethical evaluation is established by the 'external' authority of God, philosophers of the Enlightenment located happiness and moral evaluation in man's untutored nature, in his feelings in the psychology of pleasure and pain, or in an intuitive, aesthetic moral sense.

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[8] Michael B. Gill, *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[9] Cited by Howes, *Yorick and the Critics*, 2.

In *The British Moralists on Human Nature and The Birth of Secular Ethics*, Michael B. Gill confirms that ethical thinking first becomes disengaged from a Christian framework and then from religious and theological commitments altogether.

> In 1600, almost all English-speaking moral philosophy was completely embedded in a Christian framework. But by 1700, some philosophers had begun to develop moral positions that, while still fundamentally theistic, lacked any distinctively Christian elements. And by 1750, still other philosophers had begun to advance accounts of morality that were disengaged not only from Christianity but also from belief in God.[10]

As explained in the previous chapter, in Locke's psychology man has a basic drive to pursue pleasure and avoid pain. 'Pleasure in us is what we call good, and what is apt to produce pain in us we call evil.' Upon this foundation all subsequent action is learnt by experience and fixed by association. 'Happiness in its full extent is simply the utmost pleasure we are capable of'.[11] This radical transformation had a profound influence on the thought of the eighteenth century, as Darrin McMahon explains:

> There was virtue in pleasure, Locke's readers came to believe, and pleasure in virtue. Being good meant feeling good. Arguably, there was no more widespread Enlightenment assumption. Moral sense theorists like Frances Hutcheson and Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui shared it, as did the Unitarian Joseph Priestly and the psychologist David Hartley. David Hume maintained as much, alongside the French philosophers Helvétius and Condillac and the Italian legal theorist Cesare Beccaria. And of course there was Bentham with his felicific calculus of pleasure and pain, to say nothing of Jefferson and Franklin.[12]

Many thinkers, as Roy Porter notes, were influenced by Locke's *Essay* but did not necessarily share its key assumptions.[13] By the latter half of the century, the Lockean model of mind had been developed further by Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714-1780) and Claude-Adrien Helvétius (1715-1771) and had liberated itself from the prevailing norms, prohibitions and metaphysics of religion. The attempt by philosophers of the Enlightenment to create the mind anew was intended to

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[10] Gill, *The British Moralists,* 2.
[11] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
[12] McMahon, 'From the Happiness of Virtue', 14.
[13] On the importance of Locke and the primacy of pleasure in the eighteenth century, see Roy Porter, 'Enlightenment and Pleasure', in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts, Themes in Focus (London: Macmillan, 1996), 1–18.

demonstrate that all psychological reality is a transformation of simple sense perception. However, the dangers of this mode of thinking, as Ernst Cassirer explains, is a levelling of form as well as value. The old hierarchies of the mind were levelled, with the psychological and the material becoming equal in value and validity.[14] This collapse of the psychological into the biological, completed by the 'sensationist'[15] philosophers, encouraged the view that pleasure was predominately sensory.

The tendency to produce subjective pleasure or happiness was thus the ultimate yardstick of right and wrong, of good and evil. The pleasure of sex was also re-conceptualized. Since man was made by nature for pleasure, these thinkers held, then sex as man's most natural pleasure must be his chief earthly good:

> These naturalistic and hedonist assumptions – that nature had made men to follow pleasure, that sex was pleasurable, and that it was natural to follow one's sexual urges – underpinned much Enlightenment thought about sexuality.[16]

There were of course radicals, who pushed the logic of the pleasure-pain calculus to its ultimate extreme. The Marquis de Sade notoriously argued that if pleasure was good and pain was bad then the most intense forms of pleasure (whether sexual or deviant) should be embraced with enthusiasm. As Sade exhorts in his *Dialogue between a Priest and a Dying Man (1782)*:

> Renounce the idea of another world; there is none, but do not renounce the pleasure of being happy and of making for happiness in this.[17]

If the world could offer nothing better than pleasure, then pleasure should be pursued to the utmost, he reasoned. Although Sade and his ilk were decried as scandalous and condemned as libertines, the quest for the experiential pleasure of being happy remained unabated.

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[14] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 25-26.
[15] According to the doctrine of 'sensationism' not only all of one's thoughts but even the basic operations on these thoughts derive from sensation.
[16] Roy Porter, 'Mixed Feelings: The Enlightenment and Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *Sexuality in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 4.
[17] Marquis de Sade, *Dialogue Between a Priest and a Dying Man*, ed. Maurice Heine, trans. Samuel Putnam (Chicago: P. Covici, 1927), 52.

For Locke, the universe was divinely orchestrated, and pleasure was providential in that pleasure was a foretaste of the happiness to come. Happiness, as he conceives it, is a consequence of, and an encouragement to religion. Pleasure not only served salvation but could be treated as an end in itself, as man's *summum bonum*. However, Locke naively imagined that men would judge the virtue of present pleasures and pains against the pleasures expected in an afterlife to come:

> Open [men's] eyes upon the endless unspeakable joys of another life and their hearts will find something solid and powerful to move them. The view of heaven and hell will cast a slight upon the short pleasures and pains of this present state, and give attractions and encouragements to virtue, which reason and interest, and the care of ourselves, cannot but allow and prefer. Upon this foundation, and upon this only, morality stands firm.[18]

However, in his *Essay*, Locke posits a world without religion or theology: 'For if there be no Prospect beyond the Grave, the inference is certainly right, let us eat and drink, let us enjoy what we delight in, for tomorrow we shall die.'[19] Although this may not have been Locke's intention, rendering happiness the equivalent of pleasure effectively uncoupled human conduct (and sexual conduct in particular) from Christian dogma and theology. As McMahon observes, in such a world, why men and women should do anything that did not feel good to do so, or why they should perform virtuous actions was not immediately apparent.[20]

As a result of the attempt to root morality in psychology by the moral philosophers of the first half of the eighteenth century, morality was increasingly regarded as a matter of conformity to human nature:

> Ethics was not so much obeying the commandments as acting rationally upon desires. And the new philosophers emphasized that – contrary to rigorist Christian teachings – human nature was not corrupt consequent upon original sin; human instincts, passions and appetites rather were naturally benign. There was pleasure to be derived from altruism, sympathy, benevolence and sociability. Virtue was, in short, integral to a psychology of pleasure – indeed its own reward.[21]

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[18] John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity, as Delivered in the Scriptures* (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1824), 150.
[19] Locke, *ECHU*, 270 (Book II, Chap. XXI, Sect. 55).
[20] Darrin M. McMahon, 'From the Happiness of Virtue to the Virtue of Happiness: 400 B.C. - A.D. 1780', *Daedalus* 133, no. 2 (2004): 5–17.
[21] Roy Porter, 'Enlightenment and Pleasure', 10.

**A Brief Review of the Scholarship on Sterneana**

The craze for all things Shandy swept London in the spring of 1760 at the height of the novel's popularity and resulted in a flurry of pamphlets, poems, parodies, commentaries, visual satires and other ephemera. Although this material was mostly ignored by Sterne's early biographers it was collected by John Claud Trewinard Oates (1912-1990) whose archive is currently held at the University of Cambridge Library. While the critical reviews and commentaries printed in newspapers and the periodical press offer an excellent resource for assessing responses to both the author and his work, a more complex picture can be discerned from the material encompassed in Sterneana. Its primary value lies in the connections these productions make between Sterne's novel and the religious, philosophical, social, cultural and sexual preoccupations of the day. This makes this material an excellent resource for assessing emergent concepts of happiness and shifts in moral evaluation. Its original scope is summarized by J. C. T. Oates when he writes of his own collection:

> I have instead collected chiefly imitations, translations, and books of the kind known as *ana*: and I confront the visitor not with the important books which he wishes to see but with the trivial books of which he has never heard.[22]

Sterneana now extends well beyond the imitative pamphlets, critical commentaries and printed matter 'known as *ana*' that Oates describes. It encompasses diverse materials (such as prints, songs, book illustrations, dramas, jokes, card games, dances, soup recipes and objects bearing Sterne related images) which provide a range of perspectives that supplement those in printed Sterneana. Although Sterneana now includes responses to *A Sentimental Journey*, in this thesis I focus solely on items relating to *Tristram Shandy* and to Sterne himself. Oates's archive complements other resources and materials held elsewhere such as those held in the British Library, the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford, and at Shandy Hall in Coxwold. Alan B. Howes provides extracts of those early responses to *Tristram Shandy* that he judges significant in his survey of its critical heritage, [23]

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[22] John Claud Trewinard Oates, *Shandyism and Sentiment 1760-1800* (York: Printed for the Cambridge Bibliographical Society and sold by the Laurence Sterne Trust, 1968), 3.
[23] See Howes, *The Critical Heritage* and Howes, *Yorick and the Critics*.

but the impression conveyed by Arthur Cash and Wilbur Cross when they refer to Sterneana in their biographies of Sterne, is that this sort of fare is not worth reading.[24] Oates, reflecting the critical attitude of his day, felt compelled to apologise for the nature of the visual and printed material in his collection as he justifies his enterprise on the grounds that its 'quality is irrelevant, since a vogue is necessarily trivial, even when it is practised with such ardour that it appears to be a cult'.[25] Some items have been reprinted by the Garland Press and are listed on the English Short Title Catalogue. In addition, institutions are increasingly making their items available online via resources such as Eighteenth-Century Collections Online. In her doctoral thesis, *Tristram Shandy: Creation et imitations en Angleterre au XVIIIe siècle* (1991), Anne Bandry-Scubbi focuses on early Sterneana.[26] Her numerous articles and analyses of responses to *Tristram Shandy* found in the Oates Collection indicate both the extensiveness of this field and the variability of readers' assessments.[27] Rene Bosch's study of early eighteenth-century Sterneana, *Labryrinth of Digressions,* builds upon Bandry-Scubbi's foundational work in this field. His categories of Sterneana range from Swiftian satire to sentimentalism, as he explores how *Tristram Shandy* was perceived and influenced by its early imitators.[28] Warren Oakley introduces two new critical concepts to eighteenth-century literary study in his *A Culture of Mimicry.* This study examines the personal stories and creative techniques employed by literary mimics, as well as the consequences of their actions upon the posthumous perception of Sterne.[29] *Adaptations of Laurence Sterne's Fiction: Sterneana 1760-1840*, by Mary C. Newbould, is an invaluable resource for any scholar in this field. She places her examination of

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[24] Cross, *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*, 207-13; Cash, *The Later Years*, 33-7.
[25] Oates, *Shandyism and Sentiment 1760-1800*, 4.
[25] John Claud Trewinard Oates, 'On Collecting Sterne', *The Book Collector*, 1953, No. 4.
[26] Anne Bandry, 'Tristram Shandy: Créations et Imitations en Angleterre au XVIIIe Siècle' (Paris, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1991).
[27] Anne Bandry, 'First Reactions to Tristram Shandy in the Oates Collection', *The Shandean* 1 (1989): 27-47 and Anne Bandry, 'Later Reactions to Tristram Shandy in the Oates Collection', *The Shandean* 2 (1990): 27–44; Anne Bandry, 'Imitations of Tristram Shandy', in *Critical Essays on Laurence Sterne*, ed. Melvyn New, Critical Essays on British Literature (New York; London: G.K. Hall; Prentice Hall International, 1998), 39–52.
[28] René Bosch, *Labyrinth of Digressions: Tristram Shandy as Perceived and Influenced by Sterne's Early Imitators*, trans. Piet Verhoeff (Amsterdam; New York, NY: Rodopi, 2007).
[29] Warren L. Oakley, *A Culture of Mimicry: Laurence Sterne, His Readers and the Art of Bodysnatching*, vol. 73, MHRA Texts and Dissertations (London: Maney Publishing, 2010).

Sterneana within the context of its production and demonstrates how literary adaptation operates across generic and formal boundaries.[30]

The ongoing appeal of Sterneana to scholarship is evident in the attention it continues to attract. Occasionally items that are thought forever lost re-emerge and new items of Sterneana are discovered. This was the case with my own discovery of *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie* (1760) that found its first discussion in *The Shandean.*[31] My recent identification of *The Rake of Taste, or the Elegant Debauchee* (1760)[32] as an item of early Sterneana was also announced in the *Shandean*[33] and finds its first analysis here in this thesis.

**Sterneana, Parody and Happiness**

A great many responses to Sterne's writing are filtered through parody. In the past, as G. D. Kiremidjian observes, the parodist was seen as:

> Some sort of scrofular, scurrilous second-rater who failed to make the grade himself and now indulges his spleen by jeering, mocking, and ridiculing his helpless subject.[34]

A similar perspective is adopted by W. B. Gerard who writes, in his privileging of Sterne's original, that 'rubbish imitations' serve to 'heighten the modern reader's appraisal of the original' which only serves to 'reinforce the conviction of the uniqueness of Sterne's innovation and ability'.[35] Gerard's

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[30] Mary-Céline Newbould, *Adaptations of Laurence Sterne's Fiction: Sterneana, 1760-1840* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

[31] Sharon Hayward, 'Discovered: Tristram Shandy in a Reverie [Note]', *The Shandean* 21 (2010): 143; Sharon Hayward, 'Tristram Shandy in a Reverie', *The Shandean* 22 (2011): 132–51. This pamphlet's existence is noted in Oates, *Shandyism and Sentiment 1760-1800*, 8-9; Cash, *The Later Years*, 37; Bandry, 'Tristram Shandy: Créations et Imitations', 249; and Bosch, *Labyrinth of Digressions*.

[32] *The Rake of Taste: Or the Elegant Debauchee: A True Story* (London: Printed for P. Wicks, in Pater-Noster-Row, 1760).

[33] See Sharon Hayward, 'A Shandean Rake', *The Shandean 31 (2020), 162.*

[34] G. D Kiremidjian, 'The Aesthetics of Parody', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 28, no. 2 (1969): 231–42, 232.

[35] William Blake Gerard, '"Betwixt One Passion and Another": Continuations of Laurence Sterne's A Sentimental Journey, 1769-1820', in *On Second Thought: Updating the Eighteenth-Century Text*, ed. Debra Taylor Bourdeau and Elizabeth Kraft (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007): 123–38, 136.

view has an affinity with that espoused by Margaret Rose for whom parody exposes the most salient features of a text to critical scrutiny and can often bring its readers to re-revisit its source(s) in a totally new way.[36] The modern reputation of parody is now much brighter, perhaps because it acknowledges the level of craftsmanship involved in its successful accomplishment. The idea of parody as a homage to its author has usually been advanced on the grounds that the parodist has invested time in getting to know the structural conventions of its subject. Dr Johnson provides a concise definition of parody as: 'A kind of writing, in which the words of an author or his thoughts are taken, and by a slight change adapted to some new purpose'.[37] The practice of parody is particularly relevant then, to the study of Sterneana, and to Sterne's own practice as a writer. As I establish in previous chapters Sterne robs, appropriates, refashions and re-contextualizes quotations, passages, texts, forms and all manner of genres within that of his own.[38] For John Ferriar, author of *Illustrations of Sterne* (1798), his parodic use of quotations (culled from all manner of historical, legal, scientific and literary texts) was a mark of Sterne's unoriginality.[39] Yet as a legion of scribbler productions will testify, *Tristram Shandy* positively lends itself to parodic appropriation. This can be seen in Sterne's reflection on plagiarism in the novel:

> Tell me, ye learned, shall we for ever be adding so much to the *bulk*---so little to the *stock?* Shall we for ever make new books, as apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring only out of one vessel to another? (*TS*, V.I.408).

The joke, of course, is that Sterne has copied this passage from Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, who in turn had copied it from an even more obscure source. As mentioned in my previous chapter, a veritable volley of names, precursors and influences flew out in reviews of the

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[36] Margaret A. Rose, *Parody, Meta-Fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 24; 114-5.
[37] Definition of 'Parody' in Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which the Words Are Deduced from Their Originals, and Illustrated in Their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers: To Which Are Prefixed a History of the Language, and an English Grammar*, 9th ed., 2 vols, Johnson's Dictionary (London: Printed for J. Johnson, W.J. and J. Richardson, R. Baldwin, 1806).
[38] The wide array of sources that Sterne incorporates into all his writings is exemplified by the extensive notes to the University of Florida Press edition of his Works.
[39] John Ferriar, *Illustrations of Sterne, 1798* (New York: Garland, 1974), 5.

novel (Cervantes, Rabelais, Burton, Swift, Rochester and Scarron) in an attempt to fix its identity within a recognisable tradition.[40] For one correspondent, this is somewhere between the 'dirtiness' of Swift and the 'looseness' of Rabelais.'[41] The scribblers allege that the author of *Tristram Shandy* almost out-rochestered 'Rochester himself' in his obscenity.[42] Margaret Rose proposes *Tristram Shandy* as an 'exemplary meta- fictive work' since it exploits parody's potential for self-referentiality.[43] In its formal reflexivity and foregrounding of the process of writing, Sterne's novel can be interpreted as a text that lays bare in its own construction the rules of novelistic form. In Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel*, *Tristram Shandy* is the parodic exception that proves the realist rule since it deviates from the standards of prose composition that held sway in the middle of the century. This, he observes, foregrounds the process by which the novel achieved its status.[44] Parody is frequently employed to ridicule or expose the techniques of a text's construction. Indeed, in a parody of Sterne's writing style in his sermons, he foregrounds the clergyman's use of pathetic interjections:

> His sermons* are written professedly, upon the divine principle of philanthropy; and there are two apostrophes in them, which are both striking and affecting. In the midst of a most moving description of a complicated family distress, he suddenly interrupts himself with this humane exclamation: *Look down, O God, upon their afflictions!* And then proceeds with his narrative**. Again he is telling the story of the good Samaritan, and after these words, *by chance there came by a certain priest*, he cries out, *Merciful God! that a teacher of thy religion should ever want humanity!****. For my part, were I a bishop, I would not indeed prefer him as a *Cure* (though I am glad that he does not want one) because of his *Tristram*, but I would certainly make him my Vicar-General, on account of his Yoric [*sic*].[45]

Indeed, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as Kiremidjian observes, parody could be a weapon of considerable force in political and intellectual struggles:

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[40] The comic tradition of what D. W. Jefferson has famously called 'the tradition of learned wit' was that most often invoked by eighteenth-century critics in order to classify Sternean parody. D. W. Jefferson, 'Tristram Shandy and the Tradition of Learned Wit', *Essays in Criticism* I, no. 3 (1951): 225–48.

[41] From an anonymous letter dated 15 April 1760, that was 'discovered' and reproduced in the European Magazine, 21 (1792), 169.

[42] 'An Account of the Rev. Mr. ST****, and His Writings', 309.

[43] Rose, *Parody, Meta-Fiction*, 103-25; 52.

[44] Ian A. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1994).

[45] Richard Griffith, *The Triumvirate: Or, the Authentic Memoirs of A. B. and C.*, vol. 1, 2 vols (London, 1764), XVI-XVII. Griffith's footnotes to this passage *'Yorick's Sermons' [sic], **'Sermon 2d, page 41' (i.e*., Sermons*, 2.18, not quoted correctly), ***'Sermon 3d, page 53' (i.e*., Sermons*, 3.24).

> Beyond the rarefied intellectual pleasure derived from reading a good parody, its sole value appears to lie not in the parody itself but in its effect as critique, that is to say, in the sharpness of the insight afforded into the weaknesses, the eccentricities, the disharmonies, and incongruencies of the work parodied.[46]

In this case, the parodist critiques the flaws, mistakes, conceits, idiocies, absurdities and inconsistencies he discerns.[47] Parody, as Kiremidjian notes, is frequently used as a means of 'expressing the inexpressible', so it is entirely fitting in a period of largely unacknowledged and unexpressed ethical incoherence, that parody becomes in Sterneana, a major mode of expression 'for a civilization in a state of transition and flux'.[48]

## A Representative Chronology: Sterne and *Tristram Shandy* in *Sterneana;* Caught Between Virtue and Vice

As has been very well documented, [49] the first instalment of the *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman,* was a publishing sensation and the scribblers were quick to borrow its acclaim.[50] Following the strategy of those who market their 'miserable compositions' by hanging out some famous name 'for a show cloth'[51] their title-pages ape Sterne's in format or layout and invariably claim some direct, or tangential, association with the author, or his fictional creations.[52]

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[46] Kiremidjian, 'The Aesthetics of Parody', 232.
[47] Kiremidjian, 234.
[48] Kiremidjian, 242.
[49] Kenneth Monkman, 'The Bibliography of the Early Editions of Tristram Shandy', *The Library* 5–XXV, no. 1 (1970): 11–39, 12-14. Cash, *Early and Middle Years,* 294-6. *Life,* 1-19.
[50] The term 'scribbler' or 'hack' (frequently associated with 'Grub-Street') is used to denote eighteenth-century writers of a certain social and cultural position. Although there certainly were reactions written by 'gentlemen writers' it is generally held that these works were written predominately out of commercial motives. There is a debate as to whether these terms are still appropriate to use in an age distanced from classicist and early modern prejudices. For an account of eighteenth-century hack-writing as a sub-cultural phenomenon, see Pat Rogers, *Grub Street: Studies in a Subculture* (London: Methuen, 1972).
[51] George Alexander Stevens, *The History of Tom Fool* (London: Printed for T. Waller, 1760). The author comments on this strategy of the pamphleteers in his 'Dedication to Tristram Shandy', VI, xi.
[52] Peter de Voogd and John Neubauer's description of certain types of Sterneana as 'pseudo-Sterne' suggests the extent to which these productions involve a masquerade of authorship and promote a presumption of an association with their model. See Peter Jan de Voogd and John Neubauer, eds., 'Introduction: Sterne Crosses

Responses in the early spring of 1760 include: *Explanatory Remarks upon the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* by Jeremiah Kunastrokius, 'Animadversions on *Tristram Shandy*', *Two Lyric Epistles: One to My cousin Shandy, On his coming to TOWN; and the other to the Grown Gentlewomen, The Misses of **** by Cousin Shandy (John Hall-Stevenson), and The Clockmakers Outcry against the Author of the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy.* Sterne's plan was to have the first two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* (that were printed in York in December 1759) sold by his London publisher Robert Dodsley. Within days, Sterne had launched its advertising campaign by drafting a letter for his mistress, Catherine Fourmantel, to send to David Garrick the leading theatrical figure of the day.[53] As a fictional character in *The Grand Magazine* observes, even hostile reviewers of *Tristram Shandy* mimic elements of what was increasingly recognized as Sterne's characteristic, idiosyncratic style. Indeed, many of these fugitive pieces betray a tension between censuring Sterne for his lewdness and cashing in on the success of his typographical and bawdy eccentricities. 'While you appear to censure the author', Mr Cynicus remarks to his associate, 'you indiscreetly imitate his manner'.[54]

When Sterne travelled up to London, in March 1760, he was enthusiastically embraced by many of its leading lights and figures of fashion. As Sterne gleefully records, he had 'the greatest honours paid me, & most civilities shewn me, that were ever known, from the Great'. Furthermore, he boasts, he was already engaged to 'ten Noble men & men of fashion to dine'.[55] Sterne's marketing strategy had clearly worked, as Garrick had spoken well of the book[56] and a second edition was published by Dodsley in London on 3 April 1760. 'Tristram is the Fashion' he joyously declared to

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the Channel', in *The Reception of Laurence Sterne in Europe* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 1–9: 1-9, 7.
Peter de Voogd develops the 'pseudo-Sterne' in 'Fake Beauties of Sterne', a paper given at the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Annual Conference, University of Oxford (2006).

[53] On Catherine Fourmantel, see Cash, 291-3.

[54] 'An Account of the Rev. Mr. ST****, and His Writings', 311.

[55] Sterne's letter dated March 8, 1760, *Letters*, 47.127.

[56] Letter to Garrick from Sterne dated January 27, 1760. *Letters*, 44.111.

Kitty, his transient stage-singer mistress.[57] Although his fictional narrator, Tristram, was as yet unborn he was definitely making a scandalous noise in the world:

> Who is it has made more noise in the world than ever Elizabeth Canning,[58] or the renowned King of Prussia[59] did, but Tristram Shandy? Who is more thought of, heard of, talked of, by dukes, dutchesses, Lords, ladies, earls, marquises, countesses, and common whores, than Tristram Shandy?[60]

Although the first flood of Sterneana started to abate, the London presses continued to trickle them out. Examples include: *A Letter from the Rev. George Whitefield, B.A. to the Rev. Laurence Sterne; A Genuine Letter from a Methodist Preacher*; *The History of Tom Fool*; 'An Account of the Rev. Mr. St****, and His Writings'; *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie*; *Tristram Shandy at Ranelaugh*; *The Life and Opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy*; *The Rake of Taste, or the Elegant Debauchee*; and *Yorick's Meditations*. Sterne's fictional characters are frequently found in Sterneana in the company of both the note-worthy and the notorious. This reflects the important ways in which Sterne's novel was linked to contemporary figures, movements and genres. Tristram can be found cavorting with a variety of historical, contemporary and fictional characters (drawn from both literary and popular culture) in a variety of geographical locations. Indeed, some of Tristram's associates would not be out of place in the pages of the *Newgate Calendar, or the Malefactors' Bloody Register* [61] or Jack Harris's *List of Covent Garden Ladies*.[62] Shandean rakes, whores, and licentious parsons are transported to a variety of locations, mirroring the sort of public entertainments and commercial diversions that the Georgian pleasure-seeker of means aspired to enjoy. Tristram can be found strolling and fornicating in the gardens at Ranelagh, riding his horse through St James's Park, reporting on the hanging of an Earl from Westminster Hall, visiting bookshops, conversing in coffee houses, drinking in taverns, carousing at Drury Lane play-houses, and indulging in the carnal

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[57] Laurence Sterne to Catherine Fourmantel, 50 (March 1760), *Letters*, 1.50.135. Cash, *The Later Years*, 47-52.
[58] Elizabeth Canning was involved in one of the most sensational criminal mysteries of the eighteenth-century.
[59] King of Prussia.
[60] Theodosius Forrest, *Ways to Kill Care: A Collection of Original Songs, Chiefly Comic. Written by Young D'Urfey* (London: Printed for the Author, 1761), iii-iv. Oates, *Shandyism and Sentiment 1760-1800*, 11-2.
[61] *The Newgate Calendar*, or, *The Malefactors' Bloody Register*.
[62] Harris' List of Covent Garden ladies or Man of Pleasure's Kalendar for the year 1793. Harris's list rolled off the printing presses for thirty-eight years (1757-1795).

pleasures of a Covent Garden bawdy house. Indeed, one of the distinctive features of Sterneana is its absorbency and reflexivity with regard to contemporary philosophical, religious and scientific debates as well as public events.

In *The Clockmakers Outcry against the Author of the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*,[63] Sterne is compared to one of 'Priapus' lecherous priests in Pagan times' and berated for lewdly exhibiting to his readers not only the picture of a couple in 'actual flagranti' which they say is calculated to excite libidinous images, but what is worse, a picture of his parents to whom he owes more respect.

They also object to the physiology of procreation in *Tristram Shandy* on the grounds that this constitutes an espousal of the 'accursed doctrine of materialism'.[64]

> The Next step of all declared libertines, in order to give a full swing to their lustful passions, and not be liable to their grating follower, Remorse; is to espouse the accursed doctrine of Materialism, which the author of TRISTRAM dives headlong into [...] Thus in the very first paragraph of this perverse work the standard of copulation is erected, and the belief of the immortality of the soul kicked out of doors. A hopeful beginning truly![65]

Since materialism denies the existence of anything except matter, this effectively calls Sterne's religious orthodoxy into question. John Yolton records, in *Thinking Matter,* that a connection between deistic or atheistic materialism and libertinism was increasingly recognised by the defenders of Christianity.[66] The idea that thinking could be understood to be a property of matter was seen as undermining morality and as an argument used by rakes. By persuading the ladies that they had no immaterial or immortal soul, they hoped to succeed in their seduction. The eighteenth-

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[63] Anonymous, *The Clockmakers Outcry Against the Author of The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy: Dedicated to the Most Humble of Christian Prelates* (London: Printed for J. Burd, 1760). Published 9th May 1760.

[64] Landa explains how Sterne at this point 'has put the homunculi into the context of long-continued theological debate concerning the human embryo and its relationship to the sacraments necessary for salvation'. The clockmakers ignore Sterne's qualifications in this passage, choosing rather to be alarmed at the consequences which follow from what they take to be his view of the relation between the body and the soul. See Landa, Louis A, 'The Shandean Homunculus: The Background of Sterne's "Little Gentleman"' in *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Literature: Essays in honor of Alan Dugald McKillop, ed.* ed. Carroll Camden (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1963), 59.

[65] *The Clockmakers Outcry*, 19.

[66] John W. Yolton, *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983), 42-43 and 119-20.

century presumptive link between free-acting and freethinking ensured that Sterne, in his dual role as an Anglican preacher and as an author of a salacious book, was suspected of impropriety in both. This connection is made by Dr Johnson in his *Dictionary* in which he defines a libertine as: 'licentious' and 'irreligious'; and a rake as: a loose, disorderly, vicious, wild, gay, thoughtless fellow; a man addicted to leisure'.[67]

That sex is a central preoccupation in *Tristram Shandy* is undeniable. Tristram's characterisation as a man who takes self-confessed pleasure in lewd innuendo is one that could easily be misconstrued by those first readers (who only had the benefit of perusing the first two volumes) as a proponent of sexual libertinism, as a rake who regards the corporeal pleasures of sex as his highest value. In the novel Tristram's disposition, as a man who takes pleasure in bawdy talk and sexual innuendo, is traced to the conditions of his conception. The anonymous *History of the Human Heart, or the Adventures of a young Gentleman* published in 1749,[68] also traces the amorous disposition of its hero's character by exploiting the device of pica. Its hero, Camillo, whose sexual adventures occupy most of the novel, acquires his sexual appetite before birth. The young gentleman's history is begun while he is still in the loins of his father as he is 'in being twenty minutes and fifteen seconds after ten in the morning' of the 14th of August 1685, when the union of marriage was solemnized. During the wedding night he shifted sides and 'nimbly skipped into the ovaria of his mother'. A decade later, as Maurice Johnson observes, Sterne comically exploits the same idea, as Tristram's woes originate from the dispersal of the animal spirits. Camillo's passion for the fair sex, which he exhibits at an early age, is transferred from his mother's pregnant longings. The belief in a woman's power to imprint upon her baby whatever was in her imagination at the moment of conception, or during

[67] Dr Johnson's *Dictionary.*

[68] *The History of the Human Heart* is included in Henry Spenser Ashbee's bibliography of erotica as it was reprinted with obscene engravings in 1769. It was printed again in 1827, by William Dugdale, with a title change in order to make it an attractive companion purchase to Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (otherwise known as *Fanny Hill* ). Now called The *Memoirs of a Man of Pleasure; or, the Amours, Intrigues, and Adventures of Sir Charles Manly,* it was cited at Edward Duncombe's prosecution for obscene libel in 1835. It was reprinted with its original title by an associate of Duncombe, Edward Avery, in a limited edition in 1885.

pregnancy, still had a wide currency in both popular culture and pseudo-scientific or para-medical literature such as *Aristotle's Masterpiece, Marten's Gonosolgium Novum* and *Chamber's Cyclopaedia.* By suggesting that the fate of humanity is perilously dependent upon the irrational thoughts of the female sex *Tristram Shandy* follows the tradition of satire against women in erotica. Julie Peakman identifies the years between 1730 and 1760 as particularly fruitful for erotica which exploits, assimilates and satirises many of the scientific ideas published in the *Transactions* of the Royal Society.[69] It was not unusual to find in erotica an anachronistic mixture of conceptual models of human conception, anatomy and reproduction happily accommodated within the same text, as these authors frequently selected those models and theories that best fit their satirical purposes.[70] As in *Tristram Shandy*, *The History of the Human Heart* parodies Locke's theory of the association of ideas as 'little master is furnished with a brace of appetites'. Camillo's sexual initiation begins when the friction of being scrubbed in the bath by his maid gives him an erection. When he later learns the word for the corresponding female part, says the author, a relation between these two 'ideas' is then established. With tongue in cheek, the author points out to the reader that the emotions felt on these occasions were caused by the connection of the 'ideas' and not by the connection of the things themselves'.

The author of the *Life and Opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy, of Bow Street, Gentlewoman*, published on 24 June 1760,[71] saw a similar connection between Sterne's novel, the philosophy of Locke, and libertinism. In an epistolary version of a whore biography, Miss Sukey Shandy declares herself to her half-brother Tristram as being 'a libertine woman of pleasure'.[72] She acknowledges that her 'opinions are pretty free' and claims that 'in this respect we are brother and sister; for it is allowed

[69] Julie Peakman, *Mighty Lewd Books: The Development of Pornography in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
[70] For instance, Karen Harvey argues that the transition from a one-sex model of sexual difference to a two-sex model identified by Thomas Laqueur in scientific writing does not conform to the same pattern in erotica.
[71] *The Life and opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy, of Bow-Street, Gentlewoman* (London, Printed for R. Stevens, at Pope's Head in Paternoster-Row, 1760).
[72] *The Life and opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy*, 27.

by all the world that your morals hang a little loose about you'.[73] In a secularized parody of a religious confession she relates her 'amorous adventures' to her brother which combine elements from *Tristram Shandy* with those from *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure.*[74] Like Fanny, Sukey regards sexual pleasure as a secular religion and asserts that 'ev'ry woman's in her heart a rake'.[75] She shares Locke's empiricist, simple, picture of pleasure as a uniform feature of momentary conscious experience, the ultimate goodness and motivating power of which is self-evident or observationally obvious. This notion of pleasure, where the only difference lies in its source, is implied in Sukey's assertion that 'one handsome young fellow is full as good as any other handsome young fellow'. As Sukey makes 'but very little difference between men; any man that is handsome enough to please, is handsome enough for me'.[76] For the Sensationists, pleasure is good and pain is bad and for Sukey sexual pleasure was the *primum mobile* of human action. She 'always looked upon what passes upon the world for modesty, as altogether unworthy of a woman of spirit'.[77] With regard to her 'virtue' she confirms that she is now without 'what lady Wishfort says, raises women up to angels when preserved, and when lost debases them below the lowest brutes, below men'. Commenting on the sexual double standard (where female virtue is narrowed to her virginity and where her chastity is unequally valued) she observes that:

> I must own, that my principles were always such, that neither then could, nor can I now think, virginity a thing of so much importance; nor could I ever conceive how the loss of it should be destructive, not preceded by a ceremony, and sanctified by a few words muttered by a man in black. This may perhaps be looked upon as professing libertinism; but for my part I always loved to speak my mind, and am of as noble and independent a spirit as Calista herself.[78]

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[73] *The Life and opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy*, 17.
[74] John *Cleland, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure.*
[75] An allusion to Alexander Pope's Moral Essay, Epistle II.
[76] *The Life and opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy* , 48.
[77] *The Life and opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy* , 18.
[78] *The Life and opinions of Miss Sukey Shandy*, 15-6. Sukey's reference to Calista, the female protagonist in Nicholas Rowe's tragedy, The Fair Penitent (1703) suggests that Sukey believes that she is above social censure.

With a title that highlights Sterne's practice of blurring the lines between himself as author and his fictional creations, 'A Poetical epistle to Doctor Sterne[,] Parson Yorick[,] And Tristram Shandy' (penned by James Boswell) rejoices at the novel's unprecedented literary and social success:

By Fashion's hands completely drest,
He's everywhere a welcome Guest:
He runs about from place to place
Now with my Lord, then with his Grace
And mixing with the brilliant throng,
He straight commences Beau Garcon.
In Ranelagh's delightfull round
Squire Tristram oft is flaunting found
A buzzing whisper flys about,
Where'er he comes they point him out;
Each Waiter with an eager eye
Observes him as he passes by:
That there is he, do Thomas! Look
Who's wrote such a damn'd clever Book.[79]

In a notice to 'the nobility and Gentry of all Europe' Jeremiah jocularly declares in his *Explanatory Remarks* that the author will deal with their invitations to dinner 'strictly in order of seniority', or 'upon a footing, according to their alphabetical succession'.[80] In their early responses to *Tristram Shandy*, the scribblers' repeatedly suggest that the novel's commercial success is a result of its scandalous improprieties. Indeed, they insinuate that the book's widespread popularity, founded

[79] 'A Poetical epistle To Doctor Sterne [,] Parson Yorick[,] And Tristram Shandy', verses penned by James Boswell in 1760. Bodlein MS, Douce 193, 11r.
[80] Laurence Sterne, *Explanatory Remarks Upon the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy: Wherein, the Morals and Politics of This Piece Are Clearly Laid Open, By Jeremiah Kunastrokius, M. D.* (London: Printed for E. Cabe, 1760).

upon the impropriety of much of its sexual innuendo and satirical humour, is wholly inconsistent with the world's pretension to virtue:

> It was a paradox, past their reconciliation, that the world should go mad after Tristram Shandy, the facetious Tristry, ---and patronize virtue, with such solemnity and rigour.[81]

Taking their cue from the pervasive sexual innuendo and physiological humour in *Tristram Shandy*, the first pamphleteer to ape the Shandean style in such a way as to signal that they interpreted Sterne's novel as 'gentleman's reading'[82] was *Explanatory Remarks upon the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*. This pamphlet, published on 23 April 1760, was ostensibly written to Enlighten those 'seven hundred and fifty incomprehensible readers' to the indecency of Sterne's text. Sterne's joke as to why Elizabeth 'does not care to let a man come so near her ****' is closely paraphrased for the pleasure of its own readers. Jeremiah has already explained that 'backside' and 'covered way' cannot be the answer to the puzzle as their letters do not fit the four asterisks supplied. By leaving Toby's sentence unfinished in *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne certainly encouraged his imitators to be obscene. Jeremiah next invites his readers to supply the place with 'the third, the twentieth, the thirteenth, and the nineteenth letters of the English alphabet' which he says 'certainly compose the word, thou it is not to be found in any Lexicon extant – I hope'.[83]

'Animadversions on *Tristram Shandy',* published in April 1760,[84] claims that Shandy's chief purpose is 'to write Cantharides'[85] and cites as evidence the content of John Hall- Stevenson's *Two Lyric Epistles: One to My cousin Shandy, On his coming to TOWN; and the other to the Grown*

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[81] *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie. Containing, Among Other Choice Things, His Thoughts on the Two Late Remarkable Trials and the Delinquents. To Which Is Added, The Litera Infernalis of Poor Yorick! Recorded by Himself* (London: Printed for J. Williams, 1760), 48.

[82] The boundaries between different genres such as bawdy, erotica and pornography are frequently blurred and often overlap. The broad term 'gentlemen's reading' as used above conflates the categories of 'bawdy' and 'erotica' used separately elsewhere. 'Bawdy' refers to the humorous treatment of sex and 'erotica' refers to texts that foreground's genitalia and sexual action. For a discussion on the various terms see Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture*, Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 19.

[83] *Explanatory Remarks Upon the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy: Wherein, the Morals and Politics of This Piece Are Clearly Laid Open, By Jeremiah Kunastrokius, M. D.* (London: Printed for E. Cabe, 1760), 7.

[84] 'Animadversions on *Tristram Shandy*', *The Grand Magazine*, 3 (April 1760), 194-5.

[85] 'Animadversions on *Tristram Shandy*', 197.

*Gentlewomen, The Misses of **** 'by Cousin Shandy.*[86] In his letter (ostensibly from 'one of the jolly sons of Comus') the author of 'Animadversions' makes his own contribution to Sterne's use of the four asterisks in Toby's commendation of his sister's modesty. Styling himself as a self-confessed admirer of Sterne and his novel, the author proceeds to interpret his technique as an attempt to laugh the world out of vulgar prejudices. On the grounds that 'affected modesty is the offspring of sin', the scribbler begs 'dear *Shandy*' to 'speak out plain in the next edition' with 'the enchanting monosyllable'.[87]

In the spirit of exposing vice, the company of clockmakers in *The Clockmakers Outcry,* complain about the indecency of Sterne's novel and of its coarsening effect on the language of seduction. They fear the moral, religious and commercial consequences for their trade as reputable clocks 'are ordered to be taken down by virtuous matrons' to be disposed of as 'obscene lumber' and as incitements 'to acts of carnality'. Hitherto 'harmless watches are degraded into agents of debauchery' and no modest lady, they claim, dares to mention a word about winding-up a clock without exposing herself to the sly leers and jokes of the family, as this action is now construed as making a proposal – or more likely – a proposition. As a consequence, the popular hawking cry of the 'streetwalkers', 'common whores', and 'prostitutes' when they approach prospective clients is now: 'Sir, will you have your clock wound up?'[88] Indeed, one clockmaker, depicted as a cantankerous old reactionary, complains that the common and approved salute in high life for a lover to his fair-one is now 'my dear, if you are desirous of being *inflated* +, pray grant me the favour

[86] John Hall-Stevenson, *Two Lyric Epistles: One to My Cousin Shandy, on His Coming to Town; and the Other to the Grown Gentlewomen, the Misses of ***** (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley; and sold by M. Cooper, 1760). Published 17th April 1760.
[87] 'Animadversions on *Tristram Shandy*', 194-5.
[88] The quip about the hawking cry of the prostitutes is probably facetious given that they are made in satirical pamphlets such as *The Clockmakers Outcry*, 42. This passage is also reprinted in *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie*, 30. Hayward, 'Tristram Shandy in a Reverie', 141.

of *homunculating* + you' [sic].[89] 'Has ever a civilized people been so affronted with such a domestic scene of constupration?' he rhetorically enquires.[90]

*Tristram Shandy in* a *Reverie,* published on 30 May 1760*,* offers a variation of the four stars joke where Dr. Slop offers the sentence 'A Woman sits right, with her **** before!'[91] Perhaps fearing that his readers were unable to solve the alphabetical clue given in *Explanatory Remarks*, the author of *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie* provides them with an obscene acrostic which, when completed using the Latin alphabet, could leave his readers in no doubt as to the missing word.[92] In *The Rake of Taste, or the Elegant Debauchee*, published in early October 1760, Sterne's 'elegant' use of the four stars is positively commended by two of the four coach passengers who are travelling from London to Bath. Miss Polly Witts, the titular rake's target for seduction, echoes the earlier opinion of 'one of the Jolly sons of Comus' when she avers that 'the very reverend writer' should make his meaning plain. In contrast to the opinion expressed by the two middle-aged and worldly travellers that make up the party, young Polly discerns no 'elegance', 'beauty', or 'gentility in the exclamation' and declares that if Sterne 'chuses to entertain the world, with what all the world chuses to read' [sic], then he should have the courage to speak plain, and give us his sentiments in good honest *English*'. In his treatment of 'female modesty' the author of *The Rake of Taste* depicts Polly enacting the claim made in 'Animadversions' that 'affected modesty is the offspring of sin' as she unwittingly insinuates that Mrs Shandy's **** is frequently travelled (like his majesty's highway) and is available to those who are able to pay the toll[93]:

> How shall we be sure but that when an author talks of a *covered way*, ---he means a *road*, that like his Majesty's highway, is free for all travellers, who are able to pay the toll.---In my opinion, therefore,

[89] *The Clockmakers Outcry*, 40-1.
[90] Johnson's *Dictionary* defines 'constupration' as 'violation and defilement'.
[91] *Tristram Shandy in* a *Reverie,* 13.
[92] See Hayward, 'Tristram Shandy in a Reverie' for a discussion of the relationship between these texts.
[93] The phrase 'able to pay the toll' is a sexual double entendre in that it can be taken in the monetary sense of paying for the services of a prostitute, or in the sense of reaching sexual orgasm. An example of this can be found in *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies* where Miss P-ctor of Cursitor-Street is 'seldom tired of love's game, whilst the *blind boy* can find the way *in*, and is able to pay the *toll,* before he comes *out*;' See Hallie Rubenhold, *The Harlot's Handbook: Harris's List*, 91-2.

> the very reverend writer should have called *the thing* ****by its proper name,----as he might have found it in *Bailey's* Dictionary;----or, if his modesty,----for which, they say, he is extremely famous,----would, by no means, permit him to write plain *English*, ---he might at least,----like the same venerable dictionary-writer,----in the case above-mentioned, ----have given us a *Latin* explanation of an *English* word;----a word too,---like the thing it describes,----more frequently used,---than any other whatsoever.[94]

Miss Witts' desire for a *Latin* explanation of an *English* word is, perhaps, a hint to those 'incomprehensible readers' of *Explanatory Remarks* and 'Tristram Shandy in a Reverie' who had still not solved the puzzle by using the clues provided by their authors. By using the Latin alphabet, the solution can easily be discovered. Alternatively, Polly's request for 'a *Latin* explanation of an *English* word' to comply with the author's pretentions to 'modesty' could be a pun on the word *pudendum* which is borrowed from the Latin. Whilst *pudendum* may be a more acceptable or polite term for the female genitalia than the word **** (which is the word 'most frequently used') its Latin explanation is*:* 'literally, thing to be ashamed of'.[95]

The author of *Tristram Shandy at Ranelaugh* (1760) advances his own account of female 'modesty' when he blames the novel's many 'obscurities' and 'unintelligible parts' for its bad reputation. By branding everything as 'ludicrous', 'bawdy', or 'filthy' that its readers were unable to 'immediately comprehend' they effectively labelled the book 'quite unfit for the ladies reading'. It is implied by the rakish narrator of this work that women were particularly vulnerable to the seductions of print and simultaneously that the novel's reputation for obscenity results from its female readers' corrupt and wicked imagination rather than from the content of the text itself. Women's imaginations (he claims) being more susceptible than the imaginations of men more easily supply the blank or vacancy. The book's resultant notoriety (and, of course, their corrupt imaginations) now obliges all 'modest ladies' who wish to enjoy the pleasures of *Tristram Shandy* to lock themselves into their bedchambers:

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[94] *The Rake of Taste,* 10-11.

[95] Chambers Dictionary of Etymology, See Pudendum n. external genitals, especially of the female. 1634, borrowing of Latin *pudendum, pl. pudenda, literally,* thing to be ashamed of, neuter gerundive of *pudere* make ashamed, fill with shame, of uncertain origin.

> Into their bedchambers,--on purpose to read---what?---why, that they could not understand—so they read some---and thought the rest—but God forbid their thoughts should be wicked---Well by this means the life and opinions of Tristram Shandy---could,-- you think of it---in less than a month, got the character of being a nasty book ---worse if possible, than Rochester, [96] Swift,[97] Aristotle[98] or even the Attalantis for the year 1760.[99]

As the above examples of intertextuality on female 'modesty' illustrate, the scribbling fraternity were keenly aware of one another's fugitive productions. In reconfiguring or re-contextualising passages that they 'appropriated' from *Tristram Shandy*, the scribblers' cumulatively shape its meaning in an ongoing process of reflexivity. Moreover, the intertextual borrowings from one fugitive production by another imply that some of these pamphlets were more celebrated and influential than others. For instance, the vulgarly named Jeremiah Kunastrokius went on to publish a third and fourth volume of *Explanatory Remarks*, whilst *The Clockmakers Outcry* was reprinted at least three more times.[100]

The mix of the sacred and the profane suggested by the revelation that a clergyman was responsible for writing such a bawdy book, invited the scribblers to speculate on the reason for such an anomaly. The narrator of *Tristram Shandy at Ranelaugh* (a pun on Ranelagh Gardens) suggests that the public's expectation, having read Sterne's novel, is that his sermons are similarly 'loose'. This is exploited by the clergyman, he claims, to betray them 'into their duty' since those who would normally avoid a sermon now rush to peruse them:

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[96] John Wilmot, 2nd Earl Rochester (1647-1680), English poet and libertine.
[97] Jonathan Swift, (1667-1745) Irish satirist and poet.
[98] This is probably a reference to *Aristotle's Master-piece*, a work spuriously attributed to Aristotle which was reproduced in multiple editions throughout the eighteenth century. The same paring of Aristotle with Rochester and Swift occurs in the anonymous pamphlet *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie* (1760), and with Rochester alone in 'Animadversions on *Tristram Shandy*', *The Grand Magazine*, 3 (April 1760).
[99] *A new Atalantis, for the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight,* is a collection of erotic stories. Variations on the title are common in the late 1750s and beyond. Its title is probably taken from Delariviere Manley's satire*, Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of both Sexes*. From *The New Atalantis, an island in the Mediteranean. Written originally in Italian,* first published in 1709. In naming these texts in his own work this scribbler is trading on myths of explicitness in order to lend his work (and Sterne's novel) greater frisson and to add weight to the slander that *Tristram Shandy* is obscene.
[100] Anne Bandry reprinted an edition in facsimile of the fourth edition of *The Clockmakers Outcry*. For details of editions of *Explanatory Remarks*, see Anne Bandry article in *The Shandean.* See also Newbould, *Adaptations of Laurence Sterne's Fiction*, 17.

> Well Sir, by this means the public were work'd up as it were, like the winding of a very large house clock, to such a pitch of anxiety---that do you know ---no sooner were the sermons of Yorick's published—than they were read by all the first people in the kingdom.[101]

As a mark of his approbation for Tristram's reformation of the 'manners and principles' of the public, for extricating them 'from the jaws of the play-house', and for opening wide 'the church doors to all believers', his majesty grants him 'his Royal Licence and Protection' (which 'none but the first people of quality' are allowed) to 'walk, ride, sleep, fish, or swim in St. James's park' and to 'use it in all respects, as if it was the property of his father, and annexed to Shandy-hall'.[102]. In contrast, the juxtaposition of the sacred sermon within a profane novel is strongly objected to by the company of clockmakers who facetiously argue that the presence of 'Yorick's sermon' in the novel testifies to its author's intention to 'disgrace, revile, and overthrow our holy religion', and ultimately, to pave the way for the antichrist:

> His infernal scheme is to overturn church and state: for clocks and watches being brought into contempt and disuse, nobody will know how the time goes, nor which is the hour of prayer, the hour of levee, the hour of mounting guard, &c. &c. &c. consequently an universal confusion in church, senate, playhouse, &c. must ensue and we be prepared for the reign of the dreadful being so long foretold; and of which SHANDY is the undoubted fore-runner [sic].[103]

The charges made in *The Clockmakers Outcry* that Sterne is an 'apostate' and that *Tristram Shandy* is an 'anti-gospel penned by the hand of Antichrist himself' draws on the tradition of anti-clerical satire and are comically reworked in a parody by the author of *A Genuine Letter from a Methodist Preacher in the Country, to Laurence Sterne, M.A., Prebendary of York* (1760).[104] This shilling pamphlet was ostensibly written for the sake of 'the temporal and eternal happiness of the Prebendary of York.[105] This production, purporting to be from the Rev. George Whitefield, was responsible for propelling

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[101] *Tristram Shandy at Ranelaugh: Containing Some Remarkable Transactions That Passed Between That Gentleman and Lady ***** (London: Printed for J. Dunstan, 1760), 10.
[102] *Tristram Shandy at Ranelaugh*, 12-15.
[103] *The Clockmakers Outcry*, 43-44.
[104] *A Genuine Letter from a Methodist Preacher in the Country, to Laurence Sterne, M.A. Prebendary of York. Printed from the Original Manuscript, as It Was Received by the General Post* (London: Printed for S. Vandenbergh, 1760). This appeared as *A Letter from the Rev. George Whitfield, BA to the Rev. Laurence Sterne, MA, the Supposed Author of a Book entitled The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* [sic] (London, 1760).
[105] *A Genuine Letter from a Methodist Preacher.* This quotation is on [viii} of the cover letter dated from 'Thatcham'.

Sterne into the centre of a furious print and pamphlet war that raged throughout the early 1760s. In a parody of a Methodist sermon in letter form, the 'imposter' Whitfield rebukes Sterne for writing a 'profane' book that is calculated to please 'whoremasters and adulterers'. In the style of pulpit oratory, Whitfield suddenly expostulates 'Oh *Sterne!*...'thou art scabby', and proceeds to cite the 'old proverb' that 'one scabby sheep spoils a whole flock'. The reader is left to infer that Sterne is the 'scabby sheep' or 'moral leper' whose leprosy cannot be cured 'by dipping nine times in the river Jordan'[106] and that Whitfield is alluding to the parable of the lost sheep in the Bible (Matthew 18:10-14 symbolizing a sinner who has strayed from God's path) and to II Kings 5:1-15. Whitfield identifies the rest of the flock with the Anglican clergy when he asserts that many pastors of Sterne's own church have 'long since erred and strayed like lost sheep'. In the parable in the Bible the rest of the flock are self-righteous and follow the letter of God's commandments; however, in Whitfield's version, Sterne and the whole of the Anglican flock have 'forsaken the truth [of God]' and seek instead 'after ungodly and sinful fancies'. How 'dreadful must the condition of the flock be', Whitfield asks rhetorically, 'when the shepherd himself is scabby?' In the scripture, the 'shepherd' usually signifies God, however, Whitfield's 'scabby shepherd' is probably an allusion to Thomas Secker (1693-1768) the Archbishop of Canterbury (1758-1768). Thomas Secker was an orthodox eighteenth-century prelate who reputedly 'had a horror of enthusiasm' and, moreover, deprecated its progress.[107] This would appear to make Secker an ideal target for abuse by this 'Methodist' imposter. Furthermore, it seems significant that the allusion to the parable of the lost sheep in the pamphlet has a certain affinity with the Archbishop's rendering of the same in his own sermon.[108] Whitfield denounces *Tristram Shandy* as 'an obscene, profane history' which he claims is the product of a 'cankered mind and a depraved heart'. He explicitly compares Sterne to 'libertine' authors and

[106] Since 'scabby mouth' is a viral disease of sheep, the minister suggests that Sterne is a' moral leper' whose leprosy cannot be cured by being immersed seven times in the river Jordan (unlike the commander Naaman who is cured of leprosy in II Kings 5:1-15 which is symbolic of God's Grace).
[107] Dictionary of National Biography, 1885-1900 Vol 51. Entry on Thomas Secker by John Henry Overton.
[108] The Works of Thomas Secker contain the following passage in sermon xxv: 'The expression, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like a lost sheep, is taken from scripture. I have gone astray, like a lost sheep: seek thy servant. Again, all we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, 402.

censures him for studying 'profane plays' more than the word of God and for having 'profanely prefixed the name of *Yorick* to two volumes of your sermons'.[109] In a reference to Reynolds's portrait of Sterne that was used as a frontispiece to his sermons 'lately published' Whitfield rebukes Sterne for being so puffed up with spiritual pride that he gave the 'likeness of thyself before thy sermons'. The Minister adds, that while 'it is the likeness of something upon earth' he strongly doubts that it will ever be 'the likeness of anything in heaven'. In an inter-textual allusion to the pamphlet *Tristram Shandy at Ranelaugh*, the pastor urges Sterne to stop his 'wanton backsliding' and exhorts him to forsake the path that leads him to lasciviously yield to the temptations of the flesh at Ranelagh Gardens, or to those of his harlot at St. James's Park. Although the minister censures Sterne for being 'wicked and profane' he still regards him as a potential convert to Methodism. Just as Methodists were ridiculed for their attempts to reclaim criminals at Tyburn, the minister adjures the 'scabby sheep' Sterne to present himself 'at the Tabernacle' so that he can be 'new born'. As the actual George Whitefield was known to have written several hymns,[110] the scribbler includes a parody of a hymn upon regeneration, ostensibly to promote Sterne's speedy conversion by the Holy Ghost. In contrast to items of Sterneana that conflate Sterne's authorial persona with that of Tristram or Yorick, the Methodist preacher addresses each of Sterne's personae in turn, when he calls upon 'Mr. *Sterne*, or Mr. *Tristram Shandy,* or Mr*. Yorick'* to 'stay a while' and repent.[111] This could be a warning to Sterne from the imposter Whitfield that no matter what persona he chooses to hide behind that he cannot escape God's judgment for his sin. It could also be a pun on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity (that Sterne is three personae in one, distinct but inseparable).

[109] This comment is topical since Sterne's Sermons had just been published in May 1760. The General Post note is dated 14 July 1760 and the Thatchum Letter is dated 1 July 1760.
[110] George Whitefield, *A Collection of Hymns for Social Worship* (London: Printed by William Strahan, and to be sold at the Tabernacle, 1754).
[111] *A Genuine Letter from a Methodist Preacher, 12.*

The term 'enthusiasm' was used as a smear to discredit religious dissenters as delusional fanatics in the war against superstition and irrationality being fought during this period by Anglican ministers and proponents of the Enlightenment. This stance towards Methodism can be discerned in Sterne's sermons and in his references to Methodism in *Tristram Shandy*.[112] The title page of *A Genuine Letter from a Methodist Preacher* claims that Whitfield's letter was 'Printed from the Original Manuscript, As it was Received By the General Post'. An advertisement follows which claims that the public will expect an account of how the 'following letter came to be published' (v) and a 'legal document',[113] dated 14 July 1760, testifies to the letter's authenticity. The document explains that a gentleman of 'large fortune in *London*' received the letter by the general post, and that the original is in the hands of the publisher. An unsigned cover letter dated 1 July 1760 from '*Thatchum'*,[114] is addressed to 'an acquaintance' of 'Mr. *Sterne*' and summarises the main objections against Sterne and *Tristram Shandy.* These are: that it is a profane book, penned by the Devil himself, calculated to advance the interests of the Prince of Darkness, to lead mankind astray from the path of righteousness and to conduct them instead towards the bottomless pit. The letter writer, who could be an impersonation of William Seward,[115] says he 'cannot conceive how it was possible for a divine of the church of England to write so profane a book'. Furthermore, he is thoroughly convinced that 'no good man could possibly have written the history of *Tristram Shandy*.' He entreats the recipient of his missive to deliver the enclosed letter to Sterne and to join him in prayer 'for the temporal and eternal happiness of the *Prebendary of York'*. The pamphlet was not, of course, delivered to Sterne but its elaborate account of how the 'letter' is received through the 'General Post' is reminiscent of Edmund Curll's collection of erotic fictitious letters: *Post Office Intelligence* (1736) several of which

[112] See *TS,* III.38.273 and *Sermons*, 14.365 (passages 25, 37, 38).
[113] The document uses two stock phrases common to legal documents of the period in order to suggest that the letter has been legally authenticated: *'Know all Men therefore, by these Presents'* and '*in puris Naturalibus'* (in its original state). (vi).
[114] Thatchum is an area associated with John Wesley (1703-1791) and his preachers who formed the Methodist church.
[115] William Seward was a wealthy layman who acted as George Whitefield's fundraiser and publicist.

satirize ungodly and lustful desires in the pious language of Quakers.[116] By highlighting that 'Whitfield's letter' was received by the 'General Post' on its title-page, the scribbler hopes to establish its verisimilitude and to excite the prurience of the reading public. As Wagner explains, the eighteenth century, like its predecessor, did not confine itself to the Catholic Church in its attack on religion. By 1720, its satirical targets had moved from the Puritans to the Church of England and its Dissenters, the Quakers and Methodists:

> If the seventeenth- century satirists had attacked the Puritans as furtive lechers and sanctimonious fornicators, their successors of the next century still had the Quakers as potential targets, and were soon revelling in erotic and obscene attacks against the Methodists.[117]

Anti-clerical satire, employed in numerous fugitive productions, is a staple of erotica and one of the most popular forms of titillating material during this period. Obscene books and erotica could be purchased from book sellers all over London. Much of this material emanated from areas like Covent Garden and Grub Street (which is a real location situated in Moorfields that was populated by pimps, prostitutes, booksellers, publishers, print-shops and a miscellany of writers).[118]

The scribblers continued to greet each new instalment of *Tristram Shandy* upon its publication. The novel appeared in four instalments of two volumes apiece, and a final instalment of a single volume. Sterne's method of publishing his novel in instalments, over a period of more than seven years, afforded his imitators the opportunity to advertise their own fraudulent continuations or supplements to the volumes already published.[119] An example of this is the anonymous *A*

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[116] Peter Wagner, *Eros Revived* (London: Paladin, 1990), 65. Wagner cites *Post Office Intelligence* (1736) 'Being, a Collection of Love-letters, Written by Persons, in all Stations, from most Parts of the Kingdom'. Two letters in this collection base their humour on the juxtaposition of the Quakers' pious jargon with their very human and ungodly desires. The first is a letter from a Quaker lover to his sweetheart and uses biblical language for his declaration of love (Letter No. II). Letter No XXVI is from 'James Wyborne (a Quaker) to his friend William Bastick..Describing the Acts, and Consequences of promiscuous Copulation, metaphorically explained and illustrated by Similies'.

[117] Wagner, 64. See Section on Anti-Religious Erotica, 47-86.

[118] See Henry R. Plomer, *A Dictionary of the Printers and Booksellers… in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1668 to 1725* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922).

[119] Thomas Keymer, 'Dying by Numbers: *Tristram Shandy* and Serial Fiction', printed in two parts in *The Shandean*, 8 (1996): 41-67 and *The Shandean*, 9 (1997): 34-69.

*Supplement to the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent: Serving to Elucidate that Work*.[120] Furthermore, it gave them the opportunity to pre-empt advertised continuations or instalments of *Tristram Shandy* by imitating their form and providing promised content in their own spurious productions.[121] Indeed, John Carr's spurious 'volume III' stands as a testament to his commercial acumen as he rushed to get his volume of Tristram on the market before Sterne could write it himself.[122] Serial publication also allowed *Tristram Shandy* to be responsive to its own reception and to any new or interesting developments. In fact, Sterne is accused, by the author of *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----,* of developing hints that are provided by his own parodists:

> You have the Triumph to find that, hitherto, your very Adversaries have been your Imitators; but what is still more extraordinary, you have now turned the Tables upon them, and in more Places than one, have taken and pursued Hints that were chalked out by your parodists.[123]

Sterne was well aware of the financial implications of the fugitive responses to his work and in the first phase of *Tristram Shandy's* reception he hoped that these pseudonymous spin-offs would help to advertise his book. Initially delighted, he wrote to his friend Stephen Croft, that 'There is a shilling pamphlet wrote against Tristram.----I wish they would write a hundred such'.[124] Sterne was, perhaps, less pleased by the suggestion made in the *Critical Review* that he himself had written *Explanatory Remarks* in order to puff his Tristram; particularly as its reviewer declared himself 'tired with the encomiums bestowed on *Tristram Shandy* by those half-witted critics, who echo report from coffee-house to coffee house'.[125] 'If Tristram Shandy has done any mischief, 'tis in raising such a swarm of filthy pamphleteers, to din the ears and poison the eyes of the public', lamented a reviewer in the *London Magazine.*[126] By the time Sterne wrote to Warburton in June, he was

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[120] *A Supplement to the Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent: Serving to Elucidate That Work. By the Author of Yorick's Meditations* (London: Printed for the Author, 1760).
[121] See Anne Bandry, 'The Publication of the Spurious Volumes of Tristram Shandy', *The Shandean* 3 (1991): 132.
[122] John Carr, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, Volume III* (New York: Garland, 1760).
[123] *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----*, 5.
[124] Laurence Sterne to Stephen Croft (26 April-4 May 1760). *Letters*, 1.55.144.
[125] *The Critical Review: Or, Annals of Literature; London* 9 (April 1760), 319.
[126] *London Magazine,* June.

complaining that 'the scribblers use me ill'.[127] Although Sterne's complaint could, of course, have been prompted more by the Bishop's insistence that a junior clergyman ought to frown upon the dubious admiration of the 'profligate scribblers'.[128]

Volumes 3 and 4 of *Tristram Shandy,* published by Dodsley*,* appeared on 29 January 1761. This instalment initiated yet another flurry of scribbler responses such as: *The Life and Opinions of Bertram Montfichet, Esq.,* and the visual satire 'Tristram Shandys Implements'. As Cash observed, the spawn of *Tristram Shandy* was 'producing another generation.'[129] Although everyone was still 'ready to go mad after *Tristram Shandy*', Sterneana envisages the reading of Sterne's novel as a differentiated experience since readers are imagined enjoying the novel's pleasures in gender-specific ways and spaces:

> The men read him at home, at taverns, at coffee-houses, and even in the streets;--the ladies shut themselves up in their closets'.[130]

In this respect, numerous items of Sterneana reflect the concern of many eighteenth-century writers of erotica that particular texts compelled particular responses. Men are imagined as reading the book in public communities of 'manly good fellowship' like taverns, alehouses, coffee houses and gentlemen's clubs. The all-male, homosocial spaces of clubs served to facilitate the formation of social and political networks and stimulated new practices of sociability which were forged around a range of activities like drinking, singing and gambling (and activities involving erotic books and prostitutes) all of which were deemed 'unsuitable' for women.[131] In contrast, the 'ladies' are frequently imagined in Sterneana as enjoying the pleasures of *Tristram Shandy* in the domestic privacy of their bedchambers or closets. Indeed, concerns about men and women retiring alone to

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[127] Laurence Sterne to William Warburton, 59 (9 June 1760), *Letters*, 1.59.153.
[128] William Warburton to Laurence Sterne, 12 (15 June 1760), *Letters*,1.12.686.
[129] Cash, *The Later Years*, 34.
[130] Sterne, *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie*, 45.
[131] For a corrective to the view of clubs presented in erotica see Valérie Capdeville, 'Club Sociability and the Emergence of New "Sociable" Practices', in *British Sociability in the Long Eighteenth Century: Challenging the Anglo-French Connection*, ed. Valérie Capdeville and Alain Kerhervé (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), Part 1, Chap. 3, 44.

their closet with an immoral novel or book in hand were ubiquitous during the period and, as Roy Porter argues, much writing catalogued the physical perils that awaited those who failed to heed their warnings.[132] As Karen Harvey notes, the reading of suggestive material was considered a serious threat for women in particular and they were frequently warned off plays and romances lest they inflame the passions, deprave the taste of the reader or lead to more acute or dangerous effects. Women 'were thought to have a '*decided taste'* for romances and even female writers of fiction portrayed reading as a standard tool of seduction and a cause of women's moral downfall.'[133] In numerous Sterneana, the scribblers waggishly label *Tristram Shandy* 'an obscene book' and imply that reading it produces the desire for pleasure in a woman that inexorably leads to either masturbation or the search for a sexual partner. However, not all ladies in Sterneana sequester themselves in their closets to read *Tristram Shandy.* The narrator of *Tristram Shandy at Ranelaugh* reports how the novel is the topic of discussion 'at all the tea-tables in town' and that the cry was 'Lord ma'em… have you read Tristram Shandy!' Two ladies at tea employ sexual double-entendres on the male and female genitals, as they ponder the meaning of this 'obscene' and 'filthy' book. Mrs Stitchall speculates what else the author could mean 'by his *Homoncolis* and his *dispuspendum,* but nastiness?' Whilst her companion, Mrs Neverblush, wonders 'what else he could mean by his hobby-horse other than his ***** '.[134]

References to tea-tables and women were intimately connected in eighteenth-century erotica, as tea-drinking was often regarded as an activity associated with female idleness, gossip and frivolous expense.[135] This view is articulated in *Tristram Shandy at Ranelaugh* in which insinuations about the

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[132] Roy Porter, 'Reading is Bad for your Health', *History Today,* 48 (1998), 11-16.
[133] Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century,* 46-7. She cites the example of Delarivier Manley, *Secret Memoirs ad Manners of Several Persons of Quality, of Both Sexes.* From Delarivier Manley, *The New Atalantis*, ed. Ros Ballaster (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1991), 35-7.
[134] *Tristram Shandy at Ranelaugh*, 9. Mrs Stitchall means homunculus, the Latin for 'little man' (a microscopic, but fully formed individual believed by some to be present in the sperm cell). Cf *Tristram Shandy*, I:ch II. Similarly, the term '*dispuspendum'* is her confused version of 'De gustibus non est disputandum', a Latin proverb meaning 'there is no accounting for taste'.
[135] See, Simon Mason, *The Good and Bad Effects of Tea Consider'd* (London: Printed for M. Cooper, 1745), 41-7.

depravity of women's imaginations are coupled with the suggestion that their idle gossip about the meaning of the novel whilst taking tea is a symptom of their intellectual and physical torpor.[136] This impression can be contrasted with the model of reading that is imagined in a dialogue between four gentlemen 'at the Smyrna Coffee House' in which they give an 'An Account of the Rev. Mr. St****, and his Writings' (1760). Sir John describes *Tristram Shandy* as 'an obscene novel' which has 'almost out-rochestered Rochester himself', whilst Doctor Galenicus credits its 'literary depravity' as a 'leading symptom of national corruption and decay'.[137] As members of a gentlemen's club who meet to discuss matters of public concern, Sir Patrick Letterlove, Sir John Freewill, the Rev. Mr. Vicarious and Doctor Galenicus have pretensions to social status and refinement. As Brian Cowan explains, this was because 'Whigg propagandists, such as Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, were working hard to construct an ideal of the coffeehouse as a venue for polite sociability.'[138] The paradoxical juxtaposition of polite manners and libertine impropriety in Restoration culture has long been identified as hallmarks of the age. As Brian Cowan points out, 'some intellectuals of the later Stuart era, such as John Dryden and the third Earl of Shaftesbury, could endorse both politeness and libertinism at various moments'.[139] However, periodicals like the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* were busy disseminating ideals of 'gentlemanly conduct' and 'gentlemanly values' in an effort 'to refine the conduct of the middle classes and to purge the elite of their habits of vice and folly'.[140] According to Philip Carter:

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[136] For a welcome corrective to this view, see Markman Ellis, 'The Tea-Table, Women and Gossip in Early Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *British Sociability in the Long Eighteenth Century: Challenging the Anglo-French Connection*, ed. Valérie Capdeville and Alain Kerhervé (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), 69–87.
[137] 'An Account of the Rev. Mr. St****, and His Writings', 308-11.
[138] Brian Cowan, '"Restoration" England and the History of Sociability', in *British Sociability in the Long Eighteenth Century: Challenging the Anglo-French Connection*, ed. Valérie Capdeville and Alain Kerhervé (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), 23.
[139] See Brian Cowan, '"Restoration" England and the History of Sociability', 19. See also Brian Cowan, 'Reasonable Ecstasies: Shaftesbury and the Languages of Libertinism,' *Journal of British Studies* 37 (1998), 113-38.
[140] Valérie Capdeville, 'Club Sociability', 56.

> What mattered about politeness and what distinguished it from earlier modes was its innovative synthesis of relaxed outer polish with inner moral values, to produce a force of superior sociability.[141]

Therefore, when it came to the possible experience of sexual pleasure in the reading situation, this opportunity for libertine excess could be a potential problem for male readers whose dominant mode of masculinity was based on ideas of moderation and polite self-restraint: 'since pleasure, and men's possible surrender to it, threatened the loss of their manly self-control'.[142] The model of reading imagined in homosocial spaces like the gentlemen's club held at the Smyrna Coffee House, stressed civility and debate (rather than vulgarity) and convivial merriment (rather than masturbation). In such public contexts, as Harvey observes, 'the reading of sexually suggestive material became both a pleasurable and a permissible encounter'.[143] That masturbation inspired by erotic textuality had a history of private enjoyment is testified to by a famous example of a privatized, eroticized form of reading. In the diary of Samuel Pepys's (1633-1703) he reports in a private code his masturbatory encounter with a lewd and roguish book, which he enjoys and afterward burns.[144] By imagining the erotic pleasures of *Tristram Shandy* being enjoyed in gender specific ways and spaces these examples of Sterneana, by contrast with Pepys's closet libertinism, satirically suggest that men are not abandoned enough to read *Tristram Shandy* alone for their private, sexual gratification, whilst women for the most part are.[145]

Volumes 5 and 6 of *Tristram Shandy* appeared on 22 December 1761 but are dated 1762 as Sterne had changed his publishers to T. Becket and P.A. Dehondt.[146] This instalment was greeted by *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----*; *Dialogues of the Living*; *The Life and Amours of Hafen Slawkenbergius*; and *The Life, Travels and Adventures of Christopher Wagstaff*. In *An Admonitary*

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[141] Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain, 1660-1800*, Women and Men in History (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), 47.
[142] Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century,* 36.
[143] Harvey, 36.
[144] Samuel Pepys, *Everybody's Pepys: The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 1660-1669*, ed. O. F. Morshead (London: Bell, 1972).
[145] As instruments of self- and social construction, clubs must balance the demand for self- control and self-discipline with the competing demand of the expression of an individual's true self.
[146] See *London chronicle*, December 22, 1761.

*Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----* (1761),[147] its writer, who signs himself 'a layman' complains that he has lost four hours and four shillings in perusing volumes five and six of *Tristram Shandy.* With regard to Sterne's purpose in writing the novel, he says:

> If you have aimed at purity in these two Volumes, I am sorry for you. ---If you have intended Wit, I pity your Bookseller.[148]

Under the guise of advising Sterne 'as a friend, and even more so as a friend of the public', the author of this admonitory epistle begs him:

> To desist from further exposing yourself, and, corrupting the Morals of the growing Youth of the Age, to suppress all the Volumes that remain in the Booksellers Hands, and as a Recantation of your moral, (not to mention Christian) Errors, make a Bonfire of them.[149]

The question of the novel's moral status is also raised in *Dialogues of the Living* (1762),[150] as the topic under discussion is whether or not *Tristram Shandy* should be included on a list of 'works that do honour to the present age'. Whereas the Right Hon. the Earl of C---D praises *Tristram Shandy* as 'an original work of true humour' which, he says, 'displays great learning, wit, and strength of character', his clergyman opponent disagrees. The Rev. Mr W--N asserts that Sterne's book does not do honour to the present age as 'the originality of it is in its absurdity, the wit is in its obscenity, and there is nothing striking in its characters'. Although the Reverend Mr W--N does allow that the novel contains 'beauties', his verdict is that 'they are few and vanish before the multitude of its blemishes.'[151]

Whilst some scribblers reflect the opinion of the periodical reviewers and incline to the opinion that the episode of Le Fever in volume five is a welcome exception to its 'scores of obscene passages', the

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[147] *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----*, 1-24.
[148] *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----*, 6.
[149] *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----*, 8.
[150] *Dialogues of the Living*, vol. 3 (London: Printed for J. Cooke, 1762), 29-38.
[151] *Dialogues of the Living*, 142.

author of *An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S*----- persistently maintains that Sterne's novel is 'immoral'. Its 'layman' narrator pointedly asks Sterne:

> What Moral can be derived from your motley Performance? Does it enforce any one social Obligation? Does it recommend any one Christian Virtue?[152]

His own answer to the question, with particular reference to the Le Fever episode, is that 'there is not any one moral Inference drawn from it'. The layman's conclusion appears deliberately ambiguous as to whether he is claiming that he himself is unable to draw any moral inference from the Le Fever episode, or alternatively, whether he is claiming that Sterne's affective rendering of it whilst full of sentimental feeling fails to recommend the *practice* of Christian virtue (such as the practice of charitable giving). However, when the layman goes further and suspects Sterne's motive for inscribing the story to Lady Spencer in his dedication, the reader inclines more towards the former rather than the latter construction of his words, especially when he adds that he would not be surprised 'if even the Story of Lefever [sic] had been an indecent one, and that some oblique Hint in it had been thrown at herself'.[153]

1763 saw the appearance of works like the *Memoirs of the Life and Adventures of Tsonnonthouan,* and 1764 heralded *the publication of the Triumvirate* [Richard Griffith]. Volumes 7 and 8 *of Tristram Shandy,* were eventually published on 23rd January 1765. This instalment was greeted by *Miss C—y's Cabinet of Curiosities*,[154] whose 'mighty pretty' cabinet was 'fringed about with curling Ornaments, and precious Jewels---that the greatest Monarchs would have delighted to have laid their hands on'. Volume 9 of *Tristram Shandy* appeared at the end of January 1767 but on 18 March 1768 Sterne died, providing the occasion for producers of Sterneana to lament his death.

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[152] 'An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----', 9.
[153] 'An Admonitary Letter to the Rev. Mr. S-----', 18.
[154] *Miss C—y's Cabinet of Curiosities: Or, the Green-Room Broke Open. By Tristram Shandy, Gent* (London: Printed for William Whirligig, 1765).

**Sterneana and the Choice of Happiness**

I herein offer an analysis of a visual satire of Laurence Sterne which is emblematic of the century's fundamental choice between the two rival conceptions of happiness; the morally evaluative *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism, and the psychological, subjectivist, hedonist conception of happiness that sought to replace it.

The mezzotint[155] 'Tristram Shandy's Implements' (1761)[156] is a satire on Sterne's moral character which portrays him in the act of choosing between the happiness secured by a life of virtue and the happiness of earthly pleasure. In the 'Implements' [Figure 1, page 222] Sterne is depicted as a 'Learned Prebend' who is accompanied by three full- length statues from ancient antiquity; the Farnese Hercules, the naked Capitoline Venus, and a second, partially naked, female statue that is viewed from behind. The image of the 'Prebend' is reproduced, and adapted, from an engraving taken from Joshua Reynolds' famous portrait of Sterne. This image of Sterne appeared as a frontispiece to his sermons that were published on 22 May 1760. In the 'Implements' the image of the 'Prebend' is recognisably Sterne, as he is dressed in his black clerical robes, and he gestures toward an open book on a desk to his left that is labelled 'Yoricks Sermonds' [sic]. Although Yorick's right forefinger of his left-hand rests on his forehead, as if he is deep in thought, his eyes are riveted on the naked body of Venus, whose pudenda is in his direct line of sight. The classical figure of Hercules (who is positioned directly above the figure of Yorick in the centre of the print) has his phallus held erect by way of a string and pulley, and the caption at the bottom of the print reads:

> Behold the Learned Prebend wise and grave,
>
> To bawdy Wit become a selfish slave.

[155] A mezzotint is a printmaking process of the intaglio family which enables half tones to be produced without using line or dot-based techniques like hatching, cross-hatching and stipple. It is often combined with etching and engraving (other intaglio techniques) and was widely used in eighteenth-century England for reproductions of portraits and other paintings.

[156] 'Tristram Shandys Implements', The British Museum, 1761, <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/356900001> [accessed: 10 July 2020].

*Tristram Shandy's* 'implements' are listed after the caption as: *'The fore Stars'*; *'The bomb of his Hobby Horse'*; *'The Clock'* and *'The touch of your Hemanculus'.*

The iconography of 'Tristram Shandys Implements', where the Farnese Hercules is flanked by two classical female statues, immediately recalls the famous allegory of the 'Choice of Hercules' by Prodicus which Xenophon recounts in his *Memorabilia.*[157] In most incarnations of the tale, the adolescent, semi-divine Hercules finds himself at a moral crossroads where he is accosted on the road to happiness by personifications of Duty *(Virtue)* and Pleasure (*Vice*)[158] in the form of two attractive young women who each adjure him to accompany her to the realm of happiness that she represents. The tale concludes when Hercules chooses the life of Virtue (Duty) with hard labour. A choice of life that is eventually rewarded when he is admitted among the immortals on Mount Olympus. By seeking deathless fame instead of a life of gratification and ease, Hercules is understood to have bent his strength in the direction of the good,[159] as befits the son of a deity.

The allegory of 'Hercules' Choice' was a frequent theme in ancient Greek, Renaissance, and eighteenth-century art and literature.[160] Whilst it was generally considered to be too pagan and secular for medieval theologians, the allegory was revived in the Renaissance by Francesco Petrarch (1303-1374) who attempted to synthesize its classical and Christian traditions.[161] He regarded the

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[157] The classic version of the allegory of Hercules' choice appears in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (Reminiscences of Socrates), Book II, I. Xenophon has his friend (and pupil) Socrates relate the tale as if it was told to him by someone else, namely Prodicus of Ceos, Socrates' teacher.

[158] In the eighteenth century, these terms were often taken to be interchangeable.

[159] In pre-Socratic culture, the good for man was conceived as a life of 'honour'.

[160] See Erwin Panofsky, *Hercules am Scheidewege und andere antike Bildstoffe in der neuren Kunst* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1930).

[161] Mommsen explains that medieval theologians of the Middle Ages had two basic issues with Prodicus's version of the 'Choice'. The first issue was that in Prodicus's original tale the two personifications did not accord with the Christian interpretation of the eternal meaning of good and evil as these were what was considered praiseworthy' and 'bad' in a strictly earthly sense, as the Greeks had no concept of sin (*virtus* and *voluptas*). The second issue was that no Christian was given the right, which the story claimed for Hercules, to make an entirely free and wholly individual choice concerning the basic direction of his life. This was granted only to Christ that 'he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good' (Isaiah vii. 15). The ancient concept of a supreme virtue (the *dea virtus*) could be depicted as an anthropomorphic figure, but medieval Christian theologians denounced any deification of *virtus* (e.g., making virtus a goddess). The virtus dei as the power of God was personified by Christ alone. The supreme virtu for medieval thinkers could only be sought in the

allegory as an exemplification of the *bivium* (a 'parting of the ways') in human life, which the ancients had symbolized by the Pythagorean letter Y.[162] The choice became a favourite theme of humanist writers and is evident in Pico Della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man (1486)* which is the best known expression of the belief that man is a being whose freedom allows him to turn himself into what he pleases, angel or beast.[163] Although Petrarch did not manifest the new classical conception of virtue as an entirely free choice that an individual could make (since he traditionally made virtue depend upon divine grace) he and his successors heralded a significant shift in the developing picture of what it was to be human.[164]

The 'choice' has been painted by Nicolas Poussin,[165] Paolo Veronese,[166] Paolo de Matteis,[167] and, as I shall illustrate, Reynolds amongst others.[168] Indeed, Handel and Bach have both put the allegory to

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metaphysical sphere. On the other hand, since individual virtues were to be achieved by man in this world, they could be represented by earthly representations such as the life-like figures of women. Artistic tradition was dominated to the very end of the Middle Ages by the supernatural character of the supreme *virtus dei* on one side and the variety of cardinal, theological and other *virtues* entering the realm of human life on the other. See Theodor E. Mommsen, 'Petrarch and the Story of the Choice of Hercules', Medieval and Renaissance Studies (n. 36), 175-196.

[162] According to Mommsen, Petrarch revived the 'choice of Hercules' and interpreted the tale as a *bivium, or* 'a parting of the ways.' He explains that the ancient symbol of the Pythagorean letter Y was a symbol of human life, and the two upper shafts of the Y are the bivium. The lower shaft of the Y signifies early age in its uncertainty as it has not yet given itself to the virtues or vices. The *bivium* begins at adolescence; its right side is steep but reaches up to the blessed life; the left side is easier but leads down to fall and ruin. See Theodor Ernst Mommsen, 'Petrarch and the Story of the Choice of Hercules', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16, no. 3–4 (1953): 178–92, 183-4.

[163] Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* expressed the belief that man could turn himself into what he pleases, an angel or a beast, since his reason (granted by God's licence to Adam to act as he saw fit) gave him dominion over the sublunary world. See Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. Francesco Borghesi, Michael Papio, and Massimo Riva (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[164] In Mommsen's paper on Petrarch and the choice of Hercules, in which he elaborates and corrects the earlier paper *Hercules am Scheidewege* by Erwin Panofsky, the professor notes that in the *De otio religioso* Petrarch did not manifest the new classical conception of virtue as the choice of a path in life but traditionally made virtue depend on divine grace.

[165] Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) 'The Choice of Hercules', created 1636-7 in France, now held by the National Trust in Stourhead, Wiltshire.

[166] Paolo Veronese (1528-1588) 'Allegory of Virtue and Vice' created circa 1565 in Venice, now held in the Frick Collection, New York.

[167] Paolo de Matteis (1662-1727) 'The Choice of Hercules' created 1712 in Naples, now held in Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

[168] Joshua Reynolds, *David Garrick Between Tragedy and Comedy,* 1760-61 at Waddesdon Manor.

music. The allegory is the subject of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury's Tablature,[169] the inspiration for poems by William Shenstone,[170] Robert Lowth,[171] Thomas Cooke,[172] and William Dunkin[173], and is the vehicle for a political parody in 'The Choice: A Serenata' (1772).[174] For many in the eighteenth century, the *Choice of Hercules* exemplified official moral doctrine as it functioned as a Christian 'exemplar virtutis'.[175] Hercules's earthly life of toil, trial and tribulation was seen as an effect of man's original sin, and his life of virtue and subsequent ascension to join the immortals on Mount Olympus signalled virtue's reward, the transcendental happiness of Christian Salvation. In his educational treatise, David Fordyce cites *Xenophon's Memorabilia* as an example of literature that was 'morally improving' and he recommends the parable as one suitable to be set as an exercise in translation or prosody for students.[176] The educated eighteenth-century gentleman would have been familiar with it as an ancient prototype; a prototype that, importantly, lies behind Sterne's introductory sermon an 'Inquiry After Happiness'.[177] As Wasserman confirms, it was the morally educational aspect of the *choice* that appealed most strongly in the period.[178] As Grayling observes, very few writers in the eighteenth century saw the need to make an explicit case for virtue, or to

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[169] *An Essay on Painting Being a Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules, According to Prodicus: By the Right Honourable, Anthony Earl of Shaftesbury* (London: Printed by John Darby, and sold by J. Roberts, 1714).
[170] William Shenstone, *The Judgment of Hercules, a Poem: By W. Shenstone* (London, 1741).
[171] Robert Lowth, *The Judgment of Hercules, a Poem: By a Student of Oxford. To Which Is Subjoined, the Golden Verses of Pythagoras, translated from the Greek by Mr. Rowe* (Glasgow: Printed and sold by Robert Foulis, 1743).
[172] Thomas Cooke, *The Tryal of Hercules: An Ode on Glory, Virtue, and Pleasure* (London: Printed for M. Cooper, 1752).
[173] William Dunkin, 'The Judgment of Hercules', in *Select Poetical Works of the Late William Dunkin, D.D.: In Two Volumes* (Dublin: Printed by W. G. Jones, in Suffolk-street, 1769).
[174] Jacob Isaacson, *The Choice. A Serenata. As It Was Performed Before a Select Company in Dublin, on the Eve of the Late Session of Parliament. Being a Parody of The Choice of Hercules* (London: Printed for J. Almon, opposite Burlington House, Piccadilly, 1772).
[175] For a survey on the most significant adaptations of Herakles through history, see Karl Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme: The Adaptations of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972).
[176] David Fordyce, *Dialogues Concerning Education*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, 2 vols (London: Printed for E. Dilly, 1757) 411.
[177] *Sermons*, 1.3-11, 'Inquiry After Happiness'.
[178] Earl R. Wasserman, 'The Inherent Values of Eighteenth-Century Personification', *PMLA* 65, no. 4 (1950): 435–63.

explain the rival claims of pleasure.[179] Robert Lowth's version of this allegory is a typical case in point, as the female personifications of *Virtue* and *Pleasure* are presented in such a way that Hercules is not offered a moral choice that is equally weighted. This point is significant because, as we have seen, many authors of Sterneana either criticise Sterne's allegedly hedonist, libertine conception of happiness from the perspective of an outraged Christian moralist, or embrace it as a fellow sexual hedonist and libertine.

In Lowth's poem Hercules is invited to choose one of two paths to happiness: 'Virtue's rough ascent' or 'Pleasure's slipp'ry way'.[180] Significantly, Lowth substitutes the name of *Sloth* (*Vice*)[181] for the ancient goddess of *Pleasure* and it is clear from the opening description of *Virtue* and *Sloth* that the former will triumph. *Virtue* holds an imperial sword, is 'artless and unadorn'd', is 'majestically sweet, and amiably severe'. In contrast, *Sloth* has a 'bold gaze', a 'wanton eye', and a face that is painted with the artificial blush of 'vermil dye'.[182] While *Virtue* wears a robe of white to signify her purity or 'modesty', the diaphanous robe of *Sloth* is designed, in contrast, to enhance her physical charms:

> Her artful robe display'd
> Thro' the clear texture ev'ry tender limb,
> Height'ning the charms it only seem'd to shade;
> And as it flow'd adown so loose and thin,
> Her stature seem'd more tall, more snowy white her skin.[183]

Hercules understands which way his duty lies and he chooses Virtue because the 'celestial fire' of her words purge him from the 'mists of error' which had hitherto obscured the 'right' path to

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[179] A. C. Grayling, *The Choice of Hercules: Pleasure, Duty and the Good Life in the 21st Century* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007).
[180] Lowth, *The Judgment of Hercules*, 4.
[181] For Lowth, *Sloth* and *Vice* are interchangeable terms and are morally equivalent.
[182] Lowth, *The Judgment of Hercules*, 5.
[183] Lowth, *The Judgment of Hercules*, 5.

happiness. *Sloth* (*Pleasure*) is revealed as nothing but a 'false siren' whose deceptive charms are now 'wither'd, pale and gone'.[184]

Handel's oratorio,[185] in contrast, illustrates that pleasure was increasingly being construed as an essential part of human nature and an important component of earthly (and even divine) happiness. The libretto for Handel's oratorio, the *Choice of Hercules,* was originally drawn from Lowth's poem and adapted by Handel's librettist Thomas Morrell.[186] Morrell's version of the allegory, as Grayling points out, considerably weakens the moral impact of Lowth's original.[187] Although the choice of Pleasure is never a viable option in Lowth's version, Morrell paints an alluring vision of the sensory appeal of Pleasure's beauty, charms and surroundings. It opens with Pleasure offering Hercules a home on 'yon Myrtle Plain' where streams glide, a smoking feast is being prepared and her 'laughing train' wait expectantly to serve him:

> SEE Hercules! How smiles yon Myrtle Plain,
>
> Where numerous sparkling Rills meandering
>
> glide,
>
> 'Tis there I fix my jocund Reign,
>
> 'Tis there my laughing Train reside.
>
> There smokes the Feast, enchan'd by Musick's Sound,
>
> Fittest to tune the melting Soul to Love;
>
> Rich Odours breathing choicest Sweets around,
>
> The fragrant Bower, cool Fountain, shady Grove.
>
> Thither thy happy Footsteps will I lead,
>
> Fresh Flowers shall bind thy Brow, fresh Flowers

[184] Lowth, *The Judgment of Hercules*, 15.
[185] Robert Lowth and John Dryden, *The Choice of Hercules, and Dryden's Ode, as Performed by the Castle Society, at Haberdashers-Hall. The Musick by Mr. Handel.* (London, 1758), 3.
[186] For Thomas Morrell's adaptation see Lowth and Dryden, *The Choice of Hercules*.
[187] Grayling, *The Choice of Hercules*, 13.

Shall strew thy Bed.[188]

Perfumes suffuse the cool, shady bower and its erotic atmosphere is enhanced by 'Soft warbling Voices' and 'melting Lays, To Love':

While for thy Arms that Beauty glows,

That Love awakes its purest Fire;

And to each ravish'd Sense bestows

All that can raise or sate Desire.[189]

It is clear that Hercules is also being enticed by the prospect of sexual intimacy. Pleasure is waiting for him aglow in a 'bower', a favourite location for sexual activity, to ravish all those senses that can 'raise or sate' desire. The chorus of Pleasure's attendants cry for Hercules, who is in his sexual prime, to seize these blessings:

Seize, seize these Blessings, blooming Boy!

For all these Blessings are thy own:

Be hail'd the Rose-crown'd King of Joy,

And reign on Pleasure's downy Throne.[190]

The chorus, with its obvious sexual subtext, must have been popular with the audience as its first line 'Come, Blooming Boy' features in advertisements for Handel's performance at the King's Theatre, Haymarket, in 1761.[191] Pleasure adjures him to:

"Enjoy the sweet Elysian Grove,

"Seat of Pleasure, Seat of Love:

"Pleasure that can never cloy;

[188] Lowth and Dryden, *The Choice of Hercules*, 3.
[189] Lowth and Dryden, *The Choice of Hercules*, 4.
[190] Lowth and Dryden, *The Choice of Hercules*, 5.
[191] The *Public Ledger,* March 11, 1761 (issue 364) carried the following advertisement for a performance of Handel's Choice of Hercules: "King's Theatre in Hay-market, 12 March, A Grand Concert of Vocal and Instrumental music, Song, Miss Young 'Come Blooming Boy' in the Choice of Hercules by Mr. Handel, for the benefit and support of decayed musicians and their families."

> "Love the Source of endless Joy.[192]

Pleasure promises Hercules 'endless joy' but she is eventually vanquished by Virtue who appeals to the youth's 'exalted mind' and 'taste refined' for her success:

> Spread your snare elsewhere…
>
> This manly youth's exalted mind
>
> Above thy grovelling taste refin'd
>
> Shall listen to my awful voice.

Although Pleasure has been defeated, Virtue does not have everything her own way in Handel's version. Hercules addresses Pleasure as 'enchanting Siren' and he is very nearly seduced by the melodious sound of her flattery. The beguiling promise of sexual love as his reward for choosing her almost gets the better of him. Whilst he struggles valiantly against 'the soft charm that fascinates' his eye her rival Virtue exhorts him to 'Mount, mount the steep ascent' (an allusion to the Christian conceit of the *bivium* as the straight and narrow way). By obeying the 'awful voice' of Virtue, Hercules forfeits a life of pleasure and ease for the life of duty and trial. As Grayling notes, the librettist and composer between them give Pleasure some of the best lines and airs, so that Virtue's victory 'is an unpersuasive one in Handel's rendering'.[193] As Grayling sardonically observes, Handel's contemporaries would have known what they were supposed to choose, even if they did not really want to, as 'convention unloads its great weight onto Virtue's side of the scales'.[194] Lowth's version of 'the choice' is predicated on a clear dichotomy between virtue and pleasure. In Christian *eudaemonism,* man's desire for pleasure must always be subordinated to the greater ethical goal of happiness (salvation). This entails the recognition that many of his desires, habits, inclinations and actions (in particular those connected to pleasure) are in need of frequent discipline, since mankind does not always instinctively pursue his truest moral good. The view that pleasure must be

[192] Lowth and Dryden, *The Choice of Hercules*, 8.
[193] Grayling, *The Choice of Hercules*, 14.
[194] Grayling, 14.

controlled or directed, both within one's psyche and within one's life, is articulated by Samuel Johnson who observes that the records of literature and history 'exhibit nothing more than pleasure triumphing over virtue and virtue subjugating pleasure'.[195] It is this traditional ethical scheme that lies behind the moral satire of 'Tristram Shandys Implements' which visually represents pleasure [sexual] triumphing over [Yorick's] virtue.

Although Sterne's alter-ego Yorick gestures toward his book of sermons (as if exhorting the viewer to pursue the 'true' happiness of Christian Salvation) this gesture is undermined when they realise that the sermons are not the object of Yorick's rapt attention. The 'Implements' unambiguously portrays the clergyman's desire for carnal pleasure triumphing over his highest, transcendental, ethical good since both Yorick's eyes, mind and body strongly incline in the direction of Venus. 'True happiness', for the Latitudinarians, is the fruit of the alignment of one's character (and its desires, proclivities and actions) with God's overall purpose for one's life (Sanctification). Whilst Yorick's choice of immediate pleasure in the print can be interpreted as his betrayal of his own religious principles, his sin is compounded by a marked lack of internal struggle over his choice. The print suggests that Sterne has wholly forsaken the Christian path of happiness and virtue (his truest good) for the carnal gratifications of pleasure (his mistaken good). It is unlikely, but possible, that the second female in the print viewed from behind and accompanying Venus is a disrobing woman as Bosch suggests. However, it seems more likely if this is the case, that this figure represents a second statue of Venus since this would not essentially change Sterne's basic moral orientation and criticism of him in the print. The Twin Venuses *(Geminae Veneres)* was a well-developed concept in both classical thought and Renaissance Neo-Platonism that embodies a binary representation of heavenly love (*Venus Coelestis*) and bodily love (*Venus Vulgarus*).[196] Sterne's choice of happiness could thus be

[195] James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*.

[196] The dual nature of Venus is first expressed by Pausanias in Plato's Symposium (180 ff). In Greek mythology, the heavenly *Aphrodite Urania* symbolises love aroused by contemplation of the eternal, spiritual and the divine, while the earthly *Aphrodite Pandemos* symbolises the carnal, procreative and sensual love of the material world. See Hall's *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, 318-19.

interpreted as a choice between the dual aspects of love: the *sacred* and the *profane;* a moral choice that is personified by the patroness of divine love and the patroness of prostitutes.

In his article "'Character' in Reynolds' Portrait of Sterne", Rene Bosch argues that Reynolds fashioned his portrait of Sterne in order to align it more closely with the fictional character of Yorick.[197] Reynolds began his portrait of Sterne on the 20 March 1760 and finished it a few weeks later on the 21 April 1760.[198] The portrait was passed to Reynolds' usual engraver, Edward Fisher, who began work on the mezzotint the very next day.[199] The painting was unlikely to have been commissioned as no payments are recorded for the portrait in Reynolds' ledgers.[200] Sterne sat for Reynolds a little more than two weeks after he had come to London to be feted as the author of *Tristram Shandy,* so it is highly probable that they arranged this to cash in on the novel's immense popularity. David McKitterick explains that while oil paintings took pride of place in the Royal Academy, their reputation and influence very much depended upon the trade of reproductive engravings and mezzotints.[201] It was probably agreed that Reynolds would keep the oil painting and that the two of them would share monies generated from the sale of the mezzotints. Reynolds gave his permission for a second engraving from his painting to be included as a frontispiece in Sterne's forthcoming edition of sermons. This was engraved by another of Reynolds' acquaintances, Simon-Francois Ravenet.[202] In launching *The Sermons of Mr. Yorick* into the world Sterne wished to capitalize on both the success of his novel and on Reynolds' reputation as a fashionable portraitist. That this was his strategy is corroborated by advertisements that appeared in the London

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[197] "'Character' in Reynolds' Portrait of Sterne".
[198] The portrait by Reynolds is currently on display in the National Portrait Gallery. NPG 5019. On the portraits of Sterne see Cash, *Early and Middle Years*, 299-333.
[199] See Curtis Letters. He cites Gray's letter to Wharton dated 22 April 1760. This refers to Sterne's portrait by Reynolds 'now engraving'. *Notes to the Letters*, note 2 Curtis, 106.
[200] The fact that there were no recorded payments for this painting is noted in the *National Portrait Gallery Collection Catalogue:* John Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits. National Portrait Gallery*, vol. 1, 2 vols (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1977).
[201] David McKitterick, 'Tristram Shandy in the Royal Academy: A Group of Drawings by John Nixon', *The Shandean* 4 (1992): 85–110.
[202] Only two official engravings were ordered by Reynolds and Sterne to be made of the portrait. See Cash, *Early and Middle Years*, 38-40 and Bandry, 'Tristram Shandy: Créations et Imitations', vol. 1, 229.

newspapers before the portrait had been fully completed and which implied that the sermons were written by his fictional persona Yorick.[203] In addition, the 'character' of Yorick as depicted in *Tristram Shandy* was presented as an autobiographical sketch in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of January 1760 and in the *London Chronicle* for February 1760.[204] In the novel Yorick is a vicar who dies in the first volume from a broken heart. As his name suggests he is a distant relative of Hamlet's jester: 'a man unhackneyed and unpracticed in the world… indiscreet and foolish' whose 'comments had usually the ill fate to be terminated either in a bon mot, or to be enliven'd throughout with some drollery or humour of expression':

> In a word, tho' he never sought, yet, at the same time, as he seldom shun'd occasions of saying what come uppermost, and without much ceremony;---he had but too many temptations in life, of scattering his wit and his humour,--his gibes and his jests about him----They were not lost for want of gathering. (*TS*, I.II.29)

Reynolds was probably aware that his portrait of Sterne would be associated with the fictional character of Yorick. Furthermore, as Rene Bosch convincingly argues, Reynolds's portrait of Sterne could also be read according to a physiognomical notion of 'character'. He cites Nadia Tscherney's comparison of Reynolds' portrait of Sterne with the bust made by Joseph Nollekens (1766) since the latter is based on his actual measurements. Bosch explains that Tscherney's conclusion was that Reynolds had distorted and exaggerated some of Sterne's key facial features in his painting. She identifies a deepening of the eye-sockets, an accentuation of the nose by incomplete foreshortening, and a broadening of the mouth to incline it towards a grin. In doing this, she claims, Reynolds created 'a trenchant analogue to his sitter's individuality'.[205] Bosch argues that the distortions in

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[203] The following advertisement appeared In the April 19th -April 22nd, 1760 edition of the London Chronicle (issue 518) and a similarly worded one simultaneously appeared in *The Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer*, April 19th to April 22nd 1760 (issue 2199) and in the *Daily Advertiser* dated 23rd April 1760: "*Speedily will be published,* In two volumes, Price 5s sewed, (With a Portrait of the Editor, engraved, from a Painting by Mr. REYNOLDS) THE SERMONS of Mr. YORICK. Published by the Rev. Mr: STERNE, Prebendary of York, Printed for R. and J. Dodsley in Pall-mall." Rene Bosch cites the advertisement which appeared in the *Public Advertiser on* the 24th April 1760 as the earliest evidence of the engraving being proposed as an illustration to the Sermons. However these advertisements clearly predate this. See Bosch, 'Reynolds's Portrait of Sterne'.

[204] *Gentleman's Magazine* (January 1760), vol. 30, 35-7, and in the *London Chronicle* of 5 February 1760.

[205] See Nadia Tscherney, 'Likeness in Early Romantic Portraiture', in *Art Journal* (1987), 193-9. Cited by Rene Bosch. Bosch, 'Character in Reynolds's Portrait of Sterne.

Sterne's portrait were probably let in with a view to the physiognomy of the mocking vicar. He also asserts that physiolognomical notions played a substantial part in the reworking of Reynolds' painting by Ravenet, and in the subsequent reception of Ravenet's engravings.[206] Bosch substantiates his claim by reference to Giovanni Battista's *Porta's De Humana Physiognomia* (1592) where he discovers that 'deep set eyes and sunken eye-lids' are taken as signs of 'slyness and untrustworthiness'. The tome similarly explains that a 'very long nose' signifies those who like 'to interfere' and 'mock' others and that 'a broad mouth' betrays 'the godless fool'.[207] In *Yorick's Meditations upon various Interesting and Important Subjects* (1760),[208] the anonymous scribbler refers to Reynolds's portrait of Yorick. In contrast to Tristram, the Yorick of the *Meditations* thinks that a Momus glass is unnecessary to look into a man's inner character because this 'has already been written on the face in God's Almighty's handwriting'.

> Here, methinks, I am interrupted by an impertinent coxcomb, who tells me, with a sneer, that were he to form a judgment of me from the frontispiece of my sermons, he should take me for a sly, knavish, meddling priest Sir, did you ever see me in *propria persona*, upon my word, Sir, that print has not the least resemblance to Yorick. (59-60)

This passage has multiple ambiguities as the joke is based on the fact that this Yorick and Sterne's fictional Yorick are not the same. For readers taken in by the imitator, they are invited to conclude that Reynolds's portrait does indeed resemble 'a sly, knavish, meddling priest' and that Yorick is understandably unhappy about this. For readers aware of the imposture, Yorick's denial that the portrait resembles him in any way, is recognised as him speaking a truth that acts as a cloak for his insults. Either way, Sterne's alter-ego Yorick is portrayed as vain and dishonest. Furthermore, Bosch argues that the facial distortions that Sterne's likeness underwent in successive editions of his works also played an important role in the construction of the Yorick persona. Booksellers usually copied Sterne's portrait from one another's editions so that ever less true variants were continually produced. The sheer number of variants makes it difficult to ascertain their kinship with the

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[206] Bosch, 'Character in Reynolds's Portrait of Sterne', 12.
[207] Bosch, 15.
[208] *Yorick's Meditations upon various Interesting and Important Subjects* (1760).

engravings of either Fisher or of Ravenet. The situation is no clearer when it comes to ascertaining the relationship of the reversals of Sterne's image in a print to a particular engraving (hand to left or hand to right). As Bosch explains, Sterne's features become more obviously caricatured during the process of print reproduction and in some cases they become more animalistic. The nose becomes larger, the eyes sink further between ever more pronounced eye-brows and cheek bones, and his smile turns into a definite grin. Bosch argues that the slanted eyebrows in some of the prints, according to a treatise on the zodiac in *Aristotle's Complete Master Piece,*[209] give him a fox-like appearance which is suggestive of the quality of being cunning or sly. The quality of 'slyness' is ascribed to Yorick by the author of *The Life and Opinions of Bertram Montfichet, Esq.* (1761). Bertram, who claims familiarity with Sterne's face from the Ravenet engraving but who is confused by the relationship between Sterne and his various personae, remarks to 'Tristram':

> I have once seen in a Moco-stone, the head of a leering sly fox, like you in a frontispiece to your cousin Yorick's sermons, peeping out of his den.[210]

In a similar manner**,** 'Tristram Shandys Implements' also plays a part in shaping Sterne's reputation and that of his work. Sterne's portrait in the print is a mirror image of that used in the frontispiece to Yorick's sermons. However, his facial features have been distorted in a similar way to those in Ravenet's engraving. Yorick's nose has been lengthened, the direction of his gaze has been altered, his eye-brows have been slightly arched and his mouth has been transformed into a leering animalistic grin. These distortions combine to suggest that Yorick is a hypocritical, lascivious priest whose desire for sensual gratification is emblematic of the ascendancy of the carnal over the spiritual in his soul. The parodist of the 'Implements' adopts the disapproving stance of a stern Christian moralist who considers the body and its appetite for pleasure as Satan's snare, as a base betrayer that constantly revolts against the soul's best interests. The Reverend Sterne, insinuates

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[209] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Complete Master Piece. In Three Parts: To Which Is Added, a Treasure of Health; or, the Family Physician*, 23rd ed. (Printed and Sold by the Booksellers, 1749).
[210] Bertram Montfichet, *The Life and Opinions of Bertram Montfichet, Esq.* (London: Printed for C. G. Seyffert, 1761), I:4.

the satirist, is entirely lost to the devil. The figure of Hercules in the 'Implements' is likewise identified with *Tristram Shandy's* eponymous narrator by way of his phallus which is held in erection by a mechanical system of string and pulleys. This is probably an allusion to Tristram's impotence in the novel and to his unfortunate circumcision by way of a rapidly falling sash window. The association between Hercules and Tristram is made in several other Sterneana. It may have been inspired by anecdotes in the *Public Ledger* which refer to Tristram as a 'harlequin Hercules' (a comedic pantomime figure[211]) and a 'Hercules in his cradle' (an allusion to the myth where the infant Hercules kills the snakes sent by Juno).[212] Since Hercules' victories over monsters can be interpreted as the triumph of the virtuous mind over vice, the irony of the scribbler's association of the infant Hercules with the infant Tristram is clear. The artificial method of Hercules' arousal in the 'Implements' could be an ironic allusion to Tristram's lack of sexual virility in *Tristram Shandy* as well as his self-confessed lack of potent genes. As Grayling observes, Hercules was hardly an example of the choice that he made in the allegory as his legends 'represent him as a brawling hooligan' and 'an anarchy of brawn and appetite conjoined'.[213] Indeed, he is reputed to have slept with the fifty daughters of Thespius, which he allegedly accomplished by bedding one woman per night, or all them in a single night, depending upon the version of the myth consulted. In some later versions of the myth Thespius supplied his daughters to Hercules himself because he recognised sterling genes when he saw them. This is in marked contrast to the genes inherited by Tristram 'the child of decrepitude!' who was produced into being in the decline of his father's days: 'when the elements which should have temper'd thine, were drying up; and nothing left to found thy stamina in, but negations –'.[214] The depiction of Hercules' artificial arousal in the print could allude to the oft repeated accusation in Sterneana that the effect of reading *Tristram Shandy* is akin to taking an

[211] The 'harlequin-Tristram' label could of course suggest that the novel, like the pantomime, is a debased form of popular entertainment.
[212] See the *Public Ledger*, 28 April 1760 refers to Tristram as a 'Hercules in his cradle'.
[213] Grayling, *The Choice of Hercules*, 11.
[214] *TS*, IV.XIX.354.

aphrodisiac: 'to write Cantharides seems to have been *Shandy's* chief purpose.'[215] This assertion is supported by the list of literary 'implements' or devices employed by the author of *Tristram Shandy,* allegedly, for this very purpose. These are listed after the caption as: *'The fore Stars',' The bomb of his Hobby-Horse',' The Clock'* and *'The touch of your Hemanculus'.* In a choice between the *eudaemonist* happiness of religion and virtue and the happiness of pleasure and sensual gratification as one's highest good, the 'Implements' visually suggests that, by authoring *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne has chosen the latter over the former.

At around the time that 'Tristram Shandys Implements' was produced in 1761, Reynolds completed a portrait of David Garrick who, like Sterne, was a master of self-promotion. The painting, *Garrick Between Tragedy and Comedy* [216] [Figure 2, page 223] is a parodic re-working of Hercules' choice between virtue and vice. The attitude expressed in the painting of Garrick toward sensory and sexual pleasure has a greater affinity with that expressed by Morell in his adaptation of Handel, rather than that expressed by Lowth or, indeed, the author of the 'Implements'. In his painting, Reynolds depicts Garrick between Thalia, the classical muse of Comedy, and Melpomene, the classical muse of Tragedy. Its allegorical meaning was immediately recognised by Horace Walpole in this, the earliest known description of the picture:

> 1761. Reynolds has drawn a large picture of three figures to the knees, the thought taken by Garrick from the judgment of Hercules. It represents Garrick Between Tragedy and Comedy. The former exhorts him to follow her exalted vocation, but Comedy drags him away, and he seems to yield willingly, though endeavouring to excuse himself, and pleading that he is forced. Tragedy is a good antique figure, but wants more dignity in the expression of her face. Comedy is a beautiful and winning girl – but Garrick's face is distorted, and burlesque.[217]

According to Walpole, it was Garrick's idea to adopt this conceit for the painting and it generally conforms to the composition that Shaftesbury outlined in his *Notion of the Historical Draught of*

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[215] This charge is made in 'Animadversions on *Tristram Shandy*', in a letter from an unidentified correspondent to *The Grand Magazine*, 3 (April 1760): 194-8. It is also made in Sterne, *Tristram Shandy in a Reverie,* 44.
[216] Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Garrick Between Tragedy and Comedy,* The canvas measures 148 by 183 cm. It is held in trust by the Rothschild family and is currently on display at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire. On loan to the National Trust since 1995. See David Mannings, 'Reynolds, Garrick, and the Choice of Hercules', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 17, no. 3 (1984): 259–83.
[217] Horace Walpole quotation cited in 'Reynolds, Garrick, and the Choice of Hercules', 259.

*Hercules.*[218] The portrait depicts the 'pregnant moment' where the muses have finished disputing with Garrick and where he is 'wrought, agitated, and torn by contrary passions'. In conformity to Shaftesbury's instructions on the attitudes of the figures in his *Tabulature*, Garrick looks at 'the worthier of these' Virtue (Tragedy) with 'extreme attention' but at the same time 'the action of his body should still incline towards Pleasure (Comedy). Since, for Shaftesbury, 'the action of the body lags behind the mind' this will signify that he has 'some hopes for her yet remaining' and that 'his decision has cost him not a little'.[219] This celebrated moment in the painting of Garrick is captured in lines from the epilogue of Richard Cumberland's play 'The Brothers' performed at Covent Garden in 1769[220]:

> Who but has seen the celebrated strife,
>
> Where Reynolds calls the canvas into life,
>
> And 'twixt the Tragic and the Comic muse,
>
> Courted of both, and dubious where to choose,
>
> Th' immortal Actor stands?[221]

The prologue's contention that the actor is 'dubious where to choose' diplomatically ignores the distinct impression (given to Walpole and many others no doubt) that Garrick yields willingly to Pleasure (Comedy) whilst laughingly apologising to Virtue (Tragedy) that he cannot help following the contours of his nature. Indeed, the contrast between the idealised torso of Hercules, with its well-defined muscles, and the belly of Garrick, straining against the buttons of his doublet, reinforces the sense that Garrick's seduction by Pleasure is all too human. This reflects the reconceptualization

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[218] Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury famously commissioned the artist Paolo de Matteis to illustrate his philosophical treatise, Characteristics. In *A Notion on the Historical Draught or Tablature* he provides detailed instructions for the composition the *Judgement of Hercules* and information on its source, the *'Choice of Hercules'* by Annibale Carracci.

[219] See *A Notion on the Historical Draught or Tablature* in which Shaftesbury's sets out detailed instructions for illustrating the Judgement of Hercules.

[220] Garrick's 1775 play, *The Theatrical Candidates* also alludes to the painting when the two main characters tragedy and Comedy enter into a dispute and the character Harlequin interjects and says that the audience prefers him over them both. See Edgar Wind, 'Harlequin between Tragedy and Comedy', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 6 (1943): 224–5.

[221] From the epilogue of the play *The Brothers*, which ran successfully in Covent Garden in 1769.

of sex during the eighteenth-century as being an essential part of human nature. Garrick was renowned for introducing a more naturalistic and expressive style of acting to the European stage and Reynolds replicates this expressiveness in his distinctive motif of Pleasure (Comedy) who smiles knowingly at the viewer in triumph while she tugs at Garrick's arm. In a demonstration of Reynolds's mastery of the soft colours and sensuous style of Correggio (1489-1534) and of the curving, serpentine lines and theatricality of the Rococo, Pleasure (Comedy) is painted in a low-cut, pink dress and her voluptuous charms are emphasized by the way the light dapples strategically across the flesh of her cheeks, ample breasts and upper arm. In contrast, Virtue (Tragedy) is drawn in a more restrained and neoclassical style, after Guido Reni (1575-1642)[222] as she is dressed formally in strong blue classical robes with both her head and arms covered. Her figure is strongly lit from above as she stands rigid and upright as she is looks sternly at Garrick. The animated features of Garrick and Pleasure (Comedy) form a contrast with the mask-like profile of Tragedy whose declamatory gesture, pointing up to 'the straight and narrow way' as she grasps Garrick's wrist, looks back to the old style of acting from which Garrick had moved away. Edward Fisher created a mezzotint for the painting in 1762 before it was exhibited at the Society of Artists in the latter part of May 1762. According to David Mannings, Reynolds started work on the painting of *Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy* in 1760 and completed it in 1761.[223] Since Reynolds was working on the portrait of Laurence Sterne during the months of March and April 1760, it is possible that Reynolds's work on the two paintings may have overlapped. The painting of Garrick is clearly mentioned in a letter written by Mrs Elizabeth Montagu to Mrs Elizabeth Vessey, in the last days of 1761. Mrs Montagu reveals that she has promised the Earl of Bath (William Pulteney) the company of Laurence Sterne at Reynolds's studio where the author of *Tristram Shandy* is to entertain the Earl while he sits

[222] [The historian] David Mannings has suggested that the painting's composition was inspired by Guido Reni's Lot and his Daughters Leaving Sodom. Mannings, 'Reynolds, Garrick, and the Choice of Hercules', 272-4.
[223] Mannings, 'Reynolds, Garrick, and the Choice of Hercules', 138.

for his portrait. Furthermore, she says, the painting of *Garrick between Comedy and Tragedy* may also be seen there:

> Will you my dear Mrs Vesey go with me tomorrow at half an hour after one to Mr Reynolds… where my Lord Bath is to sit for his picture? Where ye facetious author of Tristram Shandy is to make him smile? and where you may see the historical picture in which the Muse[s] of Tragedy and Comedy are disputing for Mr Garrick?'[224]

Visual satires are frequently determined by the contemporary moment of their appearance, so it is not unreasonable to speculate that several factors combined to inspire the creator of 'Tristram Shandys Implements' (1761) namely: the overlapping of Sterne and Garrick's portraits at Reynolds's studio, Sterne's well-publicised visit in exalted company to admire the painting, and finally the allegory's obvious applicability as a vehicle to satirise what was interpreted as the questionable choice of happiness in a clergyman who has authored a potentially 'hedonist' or immoral book.

In *Dialogues of the Living* (1762)[225] the social embodiments of these two very different concepts of happiness are articulated through a confrontation over the sexual relations and conduct of one of its disputants. It is quickly established that 'The R[ight] H[onourable] The E[ar]l of P---e ' has abandoned his wife, 'Lady P-e' , for a much younger mistress 'Miss H-'. The Earl attempts to deny the accusation, made by the Christian 'Mr R', that his conduct has 'wronged' his wife and 'ruined' his mistress. During the course of the dialogue, the Earl presents himself as someone who identifies happiness with pleasure and who construes the pleasure of sex as the best, highest and the most natural pleasure. Mr R, in contrast, is the epitome of religious conventionality who views his lordship's conduct as 'sinful', 'immoral', 'self-indulgent', self-regarding' and 'irresponsible'. The Earl explains that he left his wife after many years of marriage as his passion for her 'had cooled' in comparison to what it had been when they were newlyweds. He presents the act of leaving his wife as primarily motivated by his concern for *her* happiness (rather than concern for his own). His wife loved him, he says, with 'a pure and sincere passion' but he thought it was far better to part from

[224] Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits*, 15. See also Cash, *The Later Years,* 116.
[225] *Dialogues of the Living*, 29-38.

her than to watch her endure the 'agonizing pain' she experienced in response to the 'slights' he 'afterwards put on her'[226]. This explanation is rejected by Mr R, who retorts that this 'delicacy of passion' which prevented his Lordship from seeing his wife 'unhappy', ought to have directed him *not* to have performed an action that would 'ruin the quiet of one woman' and would, in time, 'destroy the other'. The Christian, who rejects what he interprets as his opponent's self-justifications, condemns the Earl's argument as not only 'poor and weak' but as one that uses 'mere subtle distinctions, which vice requires to quibble away our ideas of virtue, honour, and conscience'.

For Mr R, marriage is a paradigm of the ethical way of life, in that it is a settled state of commitment and obligation between a couple that endures through time, wherein the present is bound both to the past and to the future. This is contrasted with the Earl's hedonist conception of happiness where his own immediate, subjective experience of pleasure (construed in sensual terms) is the only, or highest, good in the universe (and where the only difference between pleasure and happiness is in its intensity or duration).[227] As the Earl's conduct is based on his present, immediate, experience of pleasure, Mr R asks him what stronger reason his mistress has to expect constancy in him than his wife had when she married him. He is here drawing attention to the transitory nature of human desires, inclinations and feelings, in contrast to the ostensibly binding nature of marriage which is governed by mutual commitments and obligations that are sanctioned by law. He reminds the Earl that during the marriage ceremony he had 'plighted his vows of love and constancy in the most solemn manner'.[228] Furthermore, he had called on the laws, not only of God, but of man, 'to ratify the sincerity of his oaths.' Even if his Lordship considers divine laws to be of no account, he

[226] *Dialogues of the Living*, 29-30.
[227] MacIntyre observes that the philosopher Kierkegaard characterises this as a paradigm of the aesthetic way of life, at the heart of which is 'the attempt to lose the self in the immediacy of present experience' and for whom the paradigm of aesthetic expression 'is the romantic lover who is immersed in his own passion'. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 39.
[228] *Dialogues of the Living*, 31.

says, he must surely recognize the 'laws of the country' since 'adultery is a crime'. When 'laws' like these are broken, asserts Mr R, then:

> No tie however solemn […] can restrain the passions of a vicious man […] all fly before the superior influence of vice.[229]

The Christian moralist's point here appears to be that If God's commandments and the laws of the land are not employed as a standard or a criteria by which to judge (and implicitly regulate) the passions and actions of man then it is difficult to comprehend what will. Significantly, the Earl refuses to dispute with the Christian about 'the laws of God, and man, and marriage, and so forth' as this question, he says, 'can be reduced to more simple principles'. His Lordship then asserts that 'nature' is his highest principle since:

> Nature is a direction above all considerations that can be named.[230]

By this, the Earl implies that he is merely satisfying his natural inclination for sexual pleasure. Yet the notion that simply following unregulated human nature (with its subjective, fluctuating, circumstance-governed and conflicting desires and inclinations) should itself be considered as a standard or as a guide to human conduct is decisively rejected by his shocked Christian interlocutor as 'illogical and absurd':

> Your L[or]dship's is the strangest logic I ever heard, mere begging the question; and is really so very absurd, that it would be a weakness to attempt an answer'.[231]

The Earl insists that while he engaged to love his wife when they were married, he 'can't engage to continue that love longer than human nature would permit him'. His Lordship clearly holds that emotions, desires and inclinations (like 'love' or 'sexual desire') are transitory by their very nature and that a life comprising of a series of immediate, pleasurable satisfactions best conforms to the contours of his nature, to his particular disposition or character. He is what he is, he seems to

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[229] *Dialogues of the Living*, 34.
[230] *Dialogues of the Living*, 34.
[231] *Dialogues of the Living*, 34-5.

suggest, and he sees no reason to change his essential pleasure-seeking nature. As Charles Taylor explains, whereas 'living according to nature' was understood as an ethical injunction by the ancients, in the Enlightenment it was increasingly understood in terms of one's personal and unique nature.[232] His Lordship's appeal to 'human nature' is, perhaps, interpreted by his opponent as a rhetorical tactic, whereby it is invoked to suggest that an act or inclination is good because it is 'natural' to man or bad because it is 'unnatural' to man. As Mr R recognises, this constitutes a bad argument because its unstated primary premise 'what is natural to man is good' is typically irrelevant and has no cogent meaning in practice. In separating 'natural' acts or inclinations from 'unnatural' acts or inclinations, the Earl could be interpreted as employing some covert normative standard of precisely which desires and inclinations are natural to man and which desires and inclinations are not. However, as MacIntyre confirms, the very act of making this distinction undermines any attempt to find a basis for morality in human physiological nature.[233] The question of which of our desires are to be acknowledged as legitimate guides to action and which of our desires are to be inhibited, frustrated, or re-educated cannot be answered by using our desires themselves as some sort of criterion:

> Just because all of us have, actually or potentially, numerous desires, many of them conflicting and mutually incompatible, we have to decide between the rival claims of rival desires. We have to decide in what direction to educate our desires, how to order a variety of impulses, felt needs, emotions and purposes. So those rules which enable us to decide between the claims of, and so order, our desires – including the rules of morality – cannot themselves be derived or justified by reference to the desires among which they have to arbitrate.[234]

The concept that human nature is established (and has no need of correction or future improvement) is what divides the two disputants' conception of happiness. This is apparently confirmed when Mr R asks the Earl whether this is the same 'nature' that directed him to 'ruin' Miss H. His Lordship takes exception to the charge that he has 'ruined' the young woman 'unless ruin', he says, 'is understood by the very vulgarest notions'. [sic] This response can be interpreted as either a

[232] Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* Chapters 20 and 21.
[233] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 40.
[234] MacIntyre, 40.

rejection of the concept of virtue being restricted primarily to an individual's sexual behaviour, where 'being immoral' is equated with 'being sexually lax' (specifically a woman's virtue being equated with her virginity or sexual chastity) and/or it could be understood as a libertine rejection of the accepted morality, conventions and norms of Georgian Britain as sanctified by religion, society and law. The Earl reveals that they 'could *only* enjoy a free liberty in love' and 'gratify their affections' on the continent which implies that their 'affections' were mutual and that sex was consensual. Indeed, the Earl's privileged social, political and financial position enables him to indulge his sexual appetites freely and to circumvent his country's prevailing morals, social conventions and laws. For the Christian rigorist, the loss of a woman's virginity outside of her marriage constitutes her moral ruin. Mr R declares that the Earl's young mistress has forfeited her 'modesty' which he describes as 'a charm that renders a woman 'amiable' and which, significantly, he believes constitutes the 'immediate jewel of her soul'. The metaphor of 'a jewel' expresses a common eighteenth-century double standard which unequally values female virginity and chastity whilst simultaneously accepting male sexual freedom. Mr R goes on to detail the potential consequences to the Earl's mistress should the 'same inconstancy in his disposition' which led him to leave his wife also be the occasion of him leaving her. Returning to his previous point that the legal commitments and obligations of matrimony afford some measure of protection for wives (of the aristocratic and gentry class) against any 'changes that may happen to his affections', the Christian reminds him that Lady P has a marriage settlement. Miss H, in contrast, has no such settlement unless his Lordship makes some specific financial provision for her. His Lordship's muted response to this suggestion indicates that financial provision for his former mistress is not likely to be forthcoming. Should his mistress be discarded and abandoned to the reproaches and calumny of a merciless world, Mr R proclaims that she would be entirely dependent upon her family and friends for the necessaries of life. If his Lordship 'considers his actions by any but the most absurd criteria', Mr R declares, then these 'will appear in their native blackness'. The Christian's reproaches to the Earl on this point are likely to remind the eighteenth-century reader of the popular 'seduction

narrative' famously illustrated by Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa,* repeated in 1790s radical women's novels and in the various memoirs by fictional and real penitent prostitutes.[235] The cultural fascination with the narrative of seduction is similarly evidenced by its obsessive retelling in the 'street literature' that often circulated in cheap print forms during this period; such as in newspapers, miscellanies, chap-books, ballads, and in Sternean erotica. As Katherine Binhammer observes, contradictory and competing versions of the seduction tale co-existed in Britain during the period 1747-1800.[236] The seduction narrative, by its very nature, frequently enacts a confrontation between two characters who hold different conceptions of happiness and different standards for human conduct. The supreme good sought by the Earl is sexual pleasure and the supreme good sought by Mr R is Christian salvation. Although both men pursue happiness, they construe happiness in radically different ways. For Mr R, virtue is necessary for happiness (but not sufficient as the Stoics hold, or instrumental to its achievement as the Epicureans hold). As an Anglican, Mr R believes that a clear conscience is vital for earthly happiness and for 'true' happiness in the afterlife to come. A clear conscience, has an affinity with the Epicurean notion of *ataraxia* (freedom from disturbance) and for the Latitudinarian it arises from the consciousness that one has done one's best (with the aid of God's grace and his moral law enshrined in scripture) to mend the failings in one's character and to act as well as one can in life. From a Christian perspective, the promptings of a guilty conscience and the experience of remorse (prompted by the consciousness of wrongdoing) impedes the achievement of happiness. Even if one escapes punishment on earth (as the sinner is not always punished and the virtuous are not always rewarded in the earthly sphere) justice will eventually be dispensed by an omniscient God in the hereafter. Yet Mr R's reproaches, calculated to

[235] See Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* which articulates the 'domestic woman thesis' where she argues that domestic fiction created the female subject who chooses her own sexual and domestic confinement. See also Katherine Binhammer, *The Seduction Narrative in Britain, 1747-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2*,* whose reading of seduction 'suspends the critical binary that pits female agency against victimization to narrate the murky, open and undefined territory where 'yes' could - but does not always – mean 'yes' for women, and where no one truth about the meaning of seduction yet dominated cultural representations'.

[236] Binhammer, 2.

induce guilt and remorse in those like the Earl who selfishly pursue the fulfilment of their sexual desires with no concern for the suffering they cause to others, fails to act as a deterrent. His Lordship decisively rejects Mr R's Christian conception of happiness and its transcendental criteria for judging human conduct,[237] as the only real good and measure of right and wrong for the Earl is his own subjective, immediate experience of pleasure. The problem with laying 'the ethical' life alongside its hedonist or 'aesthetic' opposite, is that no reason can be given for preferring one to the other that does not already presuppose the ethical perspective. In an enactment of the irreconcilability of the two disputants' concepts of happiness, the dialogue ends in frustration and failure as Mr H declares that 'there is no arguing with a man, whose understanding is clouded with passion'.[238]

Mankind's pursuit of happiness is also a prominent theme of *The Rake of Taste, or the Elegant Debauchee* (1760). This first-person narrative, which I recently identified as an item of early Sterneana,[239] combines a narrative of seduction with a travelogue and explores the social and sexual dimension of the ethical problem of happiness. It was published in October 1760 and was advertised in the London newspapers as available in an octavo 'neat Pocket volume' for two shillings sewed, or for one shilling and sixpence un-sewed ((1s 6d).[240] In a period which saw a rapid expansion in both domestic and continental travel for the purposes of pleasure, work and health,

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[237] As explained in my chapter on Sterne's sermons, Christian salvation is primarily an ethical condition for the Latitudinarians (although they do hold that a state of pleasure supervenes on virtue). While this thesis can be confusing as it incorporates an element of hedonism, it is a strange sort of hedonism which differs from the hedonism of the Epicureans. The ultimate goal (good) of the Epicureans is pleasure and their practice of virtue is merely instrumental to the desired end of pleasure. For the Latitudinarians their ultimate good is ethical (Christian salvation) but its achievement is crowned by the pleasure of eternal bliss (experiential happiness). In the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism, experiential happiness or pleasure is *not* the good that is aimed at.

[238] *Dialogues of the Living*, 39.

[239] See Sharon Hayward, 'Rake of Taste', *The Shandean*.

[240] This was advertised in the *London Chronicle* 9-11 October 1760 (issue 594); the *Public Ledger* 22 October 1760 (issue 244) and in *The Whitehall Evening Post* 21-23 October 1760 (issue 2278):

*This Day was published,*
In a neat Pocket Volume, Price sewed 2 s.
THE RAKE of TASTE; Or, The
Elegant Debauchee: A true Story.
Printed for J. Pottinger in Pater-noster-row.

the small, more portable format of *The Rake of Taste* made it an ideal purchase for the traveller in need of amusement. This production was clearly shaped to exploit the popularity of *Tristram Shandy* as it is an '*ape* of the Shandean style and manner'.[241] The reviewer of the 'Monthly Catalogue' in the *London Magazine* adopts the despair of Cicero, as he laments that its publication, and that of its Shandy parent, are emblematic of the declining standards of the times:

> Another ape of the Shandean style and manner; idle, improbable, without wit, and almost destitute of modesty; as it is very manifest its parent is, who has the front to promise more such stuff,---if this attempt meets with encouragement.—O tempora! O mores![242]

A similar sentiment is expressed by the reviewer of the *Lloyds Evening Post* when he declares that:

> Of all the obscene pieces that have of late years disgraced the English Press, this appears to be the dullest, and most contemptible.[243]

This example of Sternean erotica was probably prompted by the widespread perception that Sterne's fictional narrator had the character and the morals of a rake. Tristram's prurience, self-proclaimed preoccupation with pleasure and the 'amours' of his Uncle Toby, all have their counterpart in *The Rake of Taste*, whose eponymous hero asserts that all his 'present business' is 'to give a genuine narrative' of his 'own amours' and those of his 'fellow travellers.' In an attempt to titillate the reader, the un-named rake promises to relate everything that happens to him and his three fellow passengers during the 'two days and one night' that they journey by coach from London to Bath. Indeed carriages, as secure, shady enclosures, are ideal locations for scenes of erotic intimacy to take place.

As the *'Bath* machine' leaves London early one morning in August 1760 the rake describes his fellow travellers. The first is 'Honoria', a widow of forty six, who had now resolved to 'throw off all manner

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[241] *London Magazine's* Monthly Catalogue for October 1760.
[241] The *Lloyds Evening Post and British Chronicle* for 20 October 1760 (issue 510).
[242] *London Magazine's* Monthly Catalogue for October 1760. The Latin phrase 'O tempora! O mores!' (spoken by the Roman Orator Cicero) literally translates as 'Oh the times! Oh the customs!'. A common idiomatic rendering is 'Shame on this age and on its lost principles.'
[243] The *Lloyds Evening Post and British Chronicle* for 20 October 1760 (issue 510).

of restraint' and run into all those pleasures of which she 'had not yet lost the relish'.[244] The second is 'Miss Polly Witts', was a 'woman of sense and education' had 'the utmost beauty to recommend her' and was also 'a pattern of easy virtue.' The third, Obadiah Broadbrim', was a jolly Quaker and a 'luscious old dog' of forty-five. Drawing on anti-clerical satire (which often depicts Quakers as lustful hypocrites) he is said to have 'a good deal of flesh, and very little of the spirit about him' and had professed a religion for the 'purposes of worldly gain' but now, having purchased an estate and having amassed forty thousand pounds for his retirement, he was throwing off that 'affected reserve' which 'makes so considerable a part' of the character of a Quaker. To break the silence and to become better acquainted with one another the company discuss the '*Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy'.* The rake soon sees an opportunity to express his opinion of female moral virtue, or 'modesty':

> Modesty,---ladies,---continued I,---is like wit,---much talked of,---not to be defined; ---in some persons it is accidental,---in others constitutional,---but in a very few---it is the effect of genuine virtue and mature choice.[245]

Obadiah says that instead of a *very few*, the rake should have said *none at all* as 'the Lord knows,---every man is a rogue,---and every woman a whore---in their hearts'.[246] Polly takes exception this slur on female moral virtue and says that that because her conversation is sometimes rather free she hopes he does not imagine that she will depart from the pattern of virtue. In alluding to Pope's famous epistle,[247] Obadiah suggests that like most of mankind, Polly is honest until she is caught. The view that both sexes are equally guilty of sin but that women are better at feigning 'virtue' is articulated in *The Female Rake: or, Modern Fine Lady* (1735).[248] Its author, Joseph Dorman, conveys

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[244] *The Rake of Taste*, 3.
[245] *The Rake of Taste*, 13.
[246] *The Rake of Taste*, 13-14.
[247] Alexander Pope, *Moral Essays*, Epistle to a Lady, II, 215-18:
Men, some to Bus'ness, some to Pleasure take;
But ev'ry Woman is at heart a Rake:
Men, some to Quiet, some to public Strife;
But ev'ry Lady would be Queen for life.
[248] Joseph Dorman, *The Female Rake, or, Modern Fine Lady: An Epistle from Libertina to Sylvia, in Which Is Contain'd The A-La-Mode System* (Dublin: Reprinted in London and sold by J. Wilford, 1735).

its central message by including Pope's famous epigram on its title page.[249] Dorman was also the author of *The Rake of Taste: A Poem* (1736)[250] which he dedicates to Alexander Pope. This production could well have provided the inspiration for the title and the theme for *The Rake of Taste, or the Elegant Debauchee*. The poem categorizes the different kinds of rake that are 'all engaged in the keen pursuit of pleasure' and the 'Rake of Taste' (a category that Dorman places himself in) is a rake who feigns an outward veneer of virtue:

> Here Men, you'll find, engage in Virtue's Cause,
> And speak it easy, to obey her Laws;
> In her alone, prove real Pleasure found,
> And Shew, by her, with Happiness we're Crown'd;
> Guided, by her, no Storms of Life we fear
> And stand unmov'd, tho' Fortune proves severe;
> With scorn look down on ev'ry *mean* that's base,
> For Vice alone, the Virtuous think disgrace:
> The Man of Probity, will brave his Fate,
> And tho' depress'd, he ever will be great.
> Virtue does Joy, and Peace of Mind impart,
> Extends our Views, and elevates the Heart;
> Shews worldly Pleasures, are no more than Name,
> Which to Repentance lead, and certain Shame:
> When Nature calls us to resign our Breath,
> She sets our Names beyond the Pow'r of Death.
> Such is the Language of our *Rakes of Taste*:
> Who wou'd not think such Men, like *Joseph*, Chaste.
> But oh! my Friend, our Passions are too strong,
> We know what's right; but yet pursue what's wrong:
> Our Reason and Philosophy don't prove

[249] Men, some to Business, some to Pleasure take,
But every Woman is, at Heart, a Rake. POPE

[250] Joseph Dorman, *The Rake of Taste: A Poem Dedicated to Alexander Pope, Esq.* (London: Printed by Mrs. Dodd and Mrs. Nutt, 1736).

Sufficient guards, against the Pow'r of Love.[251]

Obadiah proposes a wager, which Polly accepts, that he will pay her one hundred guineas if she preserves herself 'absolutely inviolate' and 'untouched by mortal man—till this time tomorrow'.[252] Having selected Polly as the object of his seduction, the rake embarks on its second stage with alacrity, the pursuit. Accordingly, he flatters, drinks to her health, sings lusty songs and recites poetry to her. The rake swiftly moves on to the next stage, the declaration, where he professes his passionate love for Polly in the most ardent terms. However, by the end of the first day's journey, having arrived at the Globe Inn at Newbury, her seducer starts to feel that he is already 'unequal to the combat' since his 'heart had a far greater share—than the heart of man usually has,--in addresses to the fair sex'.[253] Here, the author raises the possibility that the rake's employment of the conventional tricks of seduction might transform his feelings into authentic love, particularly as the rake goes on to reflect that while it is true that Polly speaks more freely than 'the generality of English ladies' she might well be 'as chaste as the vestal virgin'.[254] Their amorous battle reaches a climax when the rake falls to his knees and pleads with her that if she regards his 'happiness' then she would not leave him 'in so cruel a manner'. Polly clearly understands that what he means by his 'happiness' is his sexual satisfaction as she observes that 'men always made use of the supplicating,---as the prologue to a *very different* posture'.[255] He plants a thousand kisses on her lips 'which unresisting---she permitted' and begs again to be sexually indulged. If a seduction is taken to be the action of inducing a woman to surrender her chastity, then it requires the belief that a woman's consent in sexual relations is necessary. The rake moves onto the next stage of seduction, the vow, and pledges that he will be hers to command for the rest of his life. She in her turn 'makes a trial' of the sincerity of his passion before they retire to their chamber, where the hundred guineas are

[251] Dorman, 12.
[252] *The Rake of Taste*, 17.
[253] *The Rake of Taste*, 57.
[254] *The Rake of Taste*, 58.
[255] *The Rake of Taste*, 61.

'blown to the devil'.[256] Having accomplished the penultimate stage of the seducer's plot, the consummation, the reader eagerly awaits its final resolution. It is at this point, that an excerpt from *Jane Shore: A Tragedy* by Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718) is presented as a warning:

> *Such is the fate unhappy women find,*
> *And such the curse entail'd upon our kind,*
> *That man, the lawless libertine may rove*
> *Free and unquestion'd thro' the wilds of love;*
> *But woman,---sense and nature's easy fool,*
> *If poor weak woman----swerve from virtue's rule,*
> *If strongly charm'd, she leave the thorny way,*
> *And in the softer paths of pleasure stray,*
> *Ruin ensues,---remorse and endless shame,*
> *And one false step, entirely damns her fame.*
> *In vain with tears the loss she may deplore,*
> *In vain look back to what she was before,*
> *She setts, like stars that fall,---to rise no*
> *more.* [257]

Rowe's tragedy is a tale of seduction where the woman is abandoned once she surrendered her virginity as her seducer does not honour his vow of marriage. It introduces a sober note into the rake's narrative and increases the tension. Rowe's tragedy appears to place the moral weight on the woman's consent to the loss of her virginity. The consequences for Polly, if she is wrong about the rake's love for her and the sincerity of his promise of marriage, could be tragically high. It also raises the additional problem of how Polly can really know the rake's heart, and as such it highlights how

[256] *The Rake of Taste*, 66.
[257] *Jane Shore: A Tragedy* by Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718). This was performed at the Drury Lane theatre in 1714.

vulnerable women are to the consequences of mis-reading the semiotics of love, sex and desire. The initial signs are ominous, as the next morning finds the rake musing on the fleeting and transitory nature of human happiness. He also goes out of his way to deceive Polly's brother when this gentleman happens to come into the inn-yard just as the couple are 'on the point of ascending the vehicle of conveyance'. Having good reason to suspect the nature of their relationship, Polly's brother demands to know whether or not he is still to look upon her in the light of a sister. Whether she was as 'innocent' as he had left her, or whether she has 'entailed disgrace and shame' on herself and her family.[258] The rake bribes Betty the maid to testify that the couple slept in separate beds and even goes so far as to remonstrate with the brother that his suspicions are unreasonable. However, Polly eventually confesses all, declaring her passionate regard for the rake, whereupon her brother calls him in. It is established that Polly's fortune, status, care and education make her a worthy match for the rake who in turn assures the brother that his fortune is 'equal to the lady's'. The brother calls upon the rake to act 'as a gentleman' since he has the looks of one. This is presumably the moment when his title as a 'Rake of Taste' means that he knows 'what's right' even though he was caught doing 'what's wrong'.[259] It is finally agreed that the couple will be married when they arrive at Bath. The brother accompanies the couple to get a special licence and does everything in his power to ensure that his sister is safely married, however, the reader is left with the uneasy feeling that this may not have been the outcome of his seduction had Polly's brother not pressured the rake to take responsibility. The narrative expresses an anxiety that the rise in geographical mobility and its concomitant increase in social anonymity serve to weaken the kinship, church and local community structures that traditionally regulate social, sexual and courtship practices. In the absence of these traditional constraints, a woman's hope for the happiness of marriage after she has engaged in sexual relations (and potentially become pregnant) are much more likely to be disappointed. Polly gambled her chastity on the belief that the rake would honour

[258] *The Rake of Taste*, 75.
[259] *The Rake of Taste*, 12.

his promise of marriage. John Rule suggests that it was not that sexual practices had changed, as couples in the labouring classes often engaged in sex after a promise of marriage, but rather that the context had changed:

> Expecting marriage, they [women] continued traditional courting practices, but in the absence of the constraints of the traditional community their expectations were often disappointed.[260]

Indeed, the climax to comic seduction plots, when the lover agrees to the marriage, is often brought about by the intervention of the heroine's family. Kinship structures are represented as central to enforcing the courtship practice of marriage following loss of chastity or pregnancy. The rake is now 'a convert to virtue':

> We are married,---we are happy; we possess a fortune sufficient to cheer and bless the poor around us, and they have our generous assistance… in one word,---love is the entertainment of our life,---and virtue the guide of our actions.[261]

Although Polly loses her chastity before marriage, ultimately she suffers no real consequences as her virtue is retrospectively restored:

> I looked upon her late fall from virtue,---as the natural consequence of warm passions,---irritated, and made more warm by the conversation of the day---and by every art in my power to practice.------ Besides, I was capable of judging so far of her, as to know that she would make, in one respect at least, an excellent wife.[262]

This raises the issue of what actually constitutes virtue in a changing social landscape and also registers the new affective ideology of companionate marriage amongst the higher ranks.

Sterneana displays a wide range of seduction plots with a variety of sexual outcomes and climaxes. Its plots often tell stories of women who are negotiating new terrain. A common thread of the narrative of seduction is that its central encounter is between two characters who pursue happiness but who envision happiness in very different ways. In this respect the narrative of seduction reflects

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[260] John Rule cited in *The Seduction Narrative*, 110.
[261] *The Rake of Taste*, 93.
[262] *The Rake of Taste*, 91.

the incoherent eighteenth-century worldview, with its rival, incommensurable articulations of happiness.

In summary, this chapter establishes that the two rival conceptions of happiness (the *eudaemonist* and the subjective, experiential concept) are clearly manifest in the amorphous body of material known as Sterneana. It argues that Sterneana responded in droves to the paradox that an Anglican clergyman authored a salacious book since this was symptomatic of the fundamental incoherence of the eighteenth-century ethical worldview. In their response to the novel, the scribbling fraternity almost exclusively focus on the sexual and social aspect of happiness. They censure what they perceive to be the immoral and irreligious conduct of Sterne and his fictional creations or, alternatively, they embrace him as a fellow rake, hedonist or sexual libertine. In the sphere of social and sexual relations, allegiance to the *eudaemonist* concept of happiness is often, but not always, articulated by adherence to Christian ideals of moral virtue and sexual conduct. In contrast, allegiance to the new, experiential, conception of happiness in Sterneana is frequently expressed by the rejection of Christian morality by Shandean rakes, whores and libidinous parsons who embrace sexual hedonism and libertinism.

By utilizing parody, satire and the signifiers of erotica, the scribbling fraternity connect Sterne, and his alter-egos Yorick and Tristram, to a larger pattern of clerical and sexual misconduct. Sterneana also employ various iterations of the narrative of seduction in order to articulate the conflicts that arise, not from the sum of shared values and a shared definition of happiness and ethical conduct, but from unshared values, contested definitions of happiness and contested ends. Whilst the incoherence of the eighteenth-century worldview, rooted in the philosophical shift in the assessment of ethical conduct, was largely unrecognized and unacknowledged, it appears to have left its indelible mark on Sterneana.




**Figure 1:** 'Tristram Shandys Implements', The British Museum,

<https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/356900001> [accessed: 10 July 2020]

**Figure 2:** Joshua Reynolds, *David Garrick Between Tragedy and Comedy*, 1760-61 at Waddesdon Manor (National Trust)

## CONCLUSION

As I have established, enquiries into the nature of happiness, and how to attain it, form a cornerstone of Sterne's sermons, a prominent theme in *Tristram Shandy* and a preoccupation in much Sterneana. In the context of the eighteenth-century's obsession with happiness, the writing of Laurence Sterne plays a key role in understanding happiness as it evolved from the *eudaemonist* happiness of classical theism to the subjectivist, psychological concept of happiness advocated by Enlightenment philosophers and those who increasingly validated happiness on earth. As a result, two rival, incommensurable conceptions of happiness uneasily co-existed within the same eighteenth-century worldview and while both camps endorsed the widespread belief that man is made for happiness, they fundamentally disagreed on its nature, its source, and the means to attain it.

In my introduction, I provide a genealogy which traces the distance the period travelled in its views on happiness and the reasons that occasioned this conceptual shift. Happiness, in Sterne's sermons, is elaborated within the framework of *eudaemonist* ethics which inherited its underlying teleological structure and its primary concepts from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics.* It is 'an activity of the soul in accordance with virtue' and an enviable condition 'to which all men properly aspire'. It directs men's concern 'to what will produce living well and finely' and it is 'living well and doing well'. Within the Aristotelian tradition, happiness is not a fleeting feeling or an emotion but rather a product of a life well lived. It is the summation of a full and flourishing existence where a whole human life is the subject of objective and impersonal evaluation. The *eudaemonist* ethical framework of Aristotle was built on a teleological scheme whose underlying structure is tripartite and syllogistic. Each element in this structure required reference to the other two if it was to remain coherent and intelligible. This is important as the new, subjectivist happiness (which evolved in part as a response to its breakdown) introduced a worrying degree of incoherence and inconsistency into

the ethical paradigm of the eighteenth-century, and into the discourse on happiness in the period which reflects it. In the tripartite framework of classical theism, human nature in its uneducated state (man-as-he-happens-to-be) is initially discrepant with the precepts of ethics (the virtues and vices) as these are specifically designed to transform him into man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-*telos*. The virtues aid a man to move from one place to the other from actuality to potentiality. Aristotle's scheme was later modified to accommodate the requirements of Christianity, but its underlying tripartite ethical structure was retained, since this was able to accommodate both secular and transcendental conceptions of the human good. The happiness of Christian ethics is now analogous to the *blessedness* of salvation and can only be achieved in the transcendental realm. Throughout the period in which the theistic version of classical morality predominates, moral utterance has a double purpose and standard. To say what someone ought to do is at one and the same time to say what course of action will lead towards a man's true end, and to say what the law ordained by God (as part of his revelation) and comprehended by reason (as rationally defensible) enjoins. Thus, in both classical and medieval Christian ethics, happiness refers to an exalted state where the life of the individual is aligned with his *truest good (his summum bonum)* and is the consummation of a well-lived, virtuous life.

However, this scheme does not survive the joint effect of the secular rejection of both Protestantism and Catholic theology and the scientific and philosophical rejection of Aristotelianism, as this eliminates any notion of man *telos*, his one true end and supreme ethical good. Without its tripartite framework, the project of morality in the eighteenth-century becomes incoherent as moral judgments governed by impersonal standards and justified by a shared prior conception of the good are now deprived of their context and justification. It thus became the project of the philosophers of the Northern European Enlightenment to assign moral rules and precepts a new authority and justification. Yet what they actually provided were several rival and incompatible accounts. In their attempt to secure morality within human nature, the concept of happiness was radically

transformed. Locke was one of the first to equate happiness with the experience of pleasure and he posited the idea that happiness might be considered a good in and of itself. However, Locke's formulation of happiness that 'pleasure in us' is 'what we call good' and what 'is apt to produce pain in us we call evil' conflates feeling good with being good. The shift in thinking of morality as an external standard against which human nature can be measured to thinking of morality as itself a part of human nature, radically transforms the concept of happiness. Happiness is now construed as a subjective, psychological state or affective experience, the sustaining of which becomes one's *summum bonum*. This manoeuvre effectively disarticulates happiness from virtue and holds out the worrying possibility, a possibility that Sterne was alert to, that happiness might be pursued instead of virtue.

The purpose of Sterne's sermons is the practical, didactic one of instructing his congregation as to the 'correct' Latitudinarian way to achieve 'true happiness' which is man's final end, his *summum bonum* and his chief ethical good. As such they are concerned with how a man should conduct himself so that he is in the best position to achieve Christian Salvation. Since 'true happiness' can only have its source in that which is, by nature, infallible, the sermons recommend one, exclusive path to the attainment of 'true' happiness. This is an ideal conception of happiness as it is perfect, eternal, unalloyed and transcendental. 'True happiness' is composed only of good or positive elements and in its abstract formulation happiness belongs only to attributes that belong to all happy lives, so in this sense there is only one single happiness. Happiness, as it exists on earth, is frequently characterized in the sermons as an inner sense of contentment or tranquility which arises from the consciousness that one has done everything one could to live a morally good, religious life and is on the right path to secure the eternal happiness of salvation (with the aid of God's grace and his revelation). Sterne therefore elucidates and re-affirms the *eudaemonist* conception of happiness during the period when this is being called into question by the new, subjective, concept of happiness. However, as I demonstrate in my analysis, Sterne articulates its ethical shortcomings

in his sermons. In an 'Inquiry After Happiness' Sterne differentiates 'true happiness' from 'deceptive happiness' which he takes to be the new subjective concept of happiness. In his examination of some of the plans on which happiness is sought he suggests that happiness can too easily be taken to be one's immediate experience of a happy feeling. Yet if happiness is construed as pleasure, as a kind of simple, non-evaluative, conscious experience or feeling, such as that famously advanced by John Locke, it leads to the idea that one can be happy doing anything. As the experiencing individual on this conception is the sole authority over what makes him feel happy, happiness is reduced to 'whatever one happens to like'. Yet what one happens to like is frequently subject to change as he illustrates. As feelings by their very nature do not endure for long, experiential pleasure is fleeting. Furthermore, happiness is not only transitory, but it is subject to the principle of adaptation as well as the law of diminishing returns. In Sterne's conception, subjective happiness is not the guaranteed or even the inevitable outcome of transient, momentary, pleasurable feelings. In addition, Sterne suggests that if one directly aims at this type of happiness the paradox of hedonism holds that this action is likely to fail in hedonist terms. He also notes that happiness cannot be construed as the subjective satisfaction of one's desires as this entails granting happiness to anyone who gets what he wants, whatever the nature of his desires or wants happen to be. As 'the satisfaction of one's desires' lacks specific content, it would allow happiness to anyone as long as they were getting what they most desired. This desire satisfaction account could not be used to compare, rank or judge lives as long as each of the men compared were getting what they wanted in their lives. While the pleasures of the sadist could be said to lack moral value, it is difficult to refute the sadist's claim that he experiences pleasure or satisfaction from his vile activities. Finally, Sterne suggests, when life is experienced in the here and now as a series of unconnected, episodic pleasures, that this kind of present gratification is defective as an aim that is able to structure an entire life. For Sterne 'true happiness' is 'only to be found in religion---in the consciousness of virtue---and the sure and certain hopes of a better life'. Indeed, Sterne's reiteration in his sermons that there can be no happiness

without virtue speaks to a larger cultural anxiety that, in some quarters, this assumption (that had held fast for millennia) could no longer be taken for granted.

It is in this context, when the teleological framework of Aristotle ceases to be persuasive and the categorical status of expressions of divine law become increasingly untenable, that the genre of the novel emerges as a form of ethical thinking. In contrast to the single, static and ideal conception of happiness elucidated in philosophical treatises and in Sterne's sermons on happiness, the characters in *Tristram Shandy* seek out a fragile happiness of their own, one that appears fraught with anxiety and mishap. In an attempt to bridge the conceptual gap between the set of virtues and vices they had inherited and some sort of motivation providing a reason why a man should adhere to the injunctions of morality, philosophers of the Enlightenment attempted to locate morality in human nature. They root morality in an individual's psychology with all its fluctuating, circumstance-governed desires, emotions and inclinations. This transforms the concept of happiness. This new subjective, human happiness is one that may sometimes be attained by man, although it is imperfect, transitory and not always incompatible with a world that contains suffering and pain. In its concrete formulation it refers to the happiness of one specific life, with all its idiosyncratic individual features, where the happiness of one may differ profoundly from that of another. This is illustrated by the eccentric nature of each character's hobby-horse, which only he is fitted for, or is able to enjoy. This serves to articulate the variety of forms that subjective happiness was now able to take, each hobby-horse being uniquely tailored to the specifics of character, constitution, temperament, inclinations, circumstances and social reality. In the novel, Sterne explores the difficulties involved in attaining happiness in a world full of cross-accidents and falling sash windows. In the 'improbable' incident of Phutatorius and a piping hot chestnut, Sterne examines the Stoic idea that a man's happiness or misery in this world depends upon the nature of his mental responses. The novel frames the issue of the relationship between the perceiving subject and the object of perception as a stoic struggle to overcome external evils. Phutatorius's inability to govern either his

imagination or his bodily reactions, suggest that our psychological and physiological processes are often beyond our conscious control. For Sterne, man cannot escape his embodiment and the interaction of mind and body makes it impossible to know where one begins and the other ends. As part of a new faith in human agency, and to ensure the inviolability of happiness in the face of external contingency, the Stoics emphasize the superior force of virtue. If the man of virtue is happy, they reasoned, then the man of perfect virtue should be happy come what may – even while he is being tortured on the rack. This ideal of self-sufficiency, which profoundly influenced eighteenth-century thinking about happiness, arises because happiness for the Stoics is not a function of feeling but of virtue. They purchase the invulnerability of happiness in this world, at the cost of making happiness unobtainable. In their failure to come to terms with the fragility of happiness on earth, the Stoics deny that happiness can be constituted by any contingent good that is capable of being lost. Aristotle was aware of the problem posed by luck and contingency to happiness, as the term *eudaemonia* has the sense of good fortune with *daimon* also having the meaning of 'luck'. He concedes a role to chance in happiness when he gives the example of Priam, the king of Troy, as a man who was virtuous but profoundly unlucky. In his final days, Priam witnessed the killing of his sons and the fall of his city, so he could hardly be considered happy. This leaves us with the thought that there may be limits to what we can do to secure our happiness. If we don't have control over our fates, then the possibility of calamity or disaster is something that we cannot avoid. Yet Aristotle also seeks to circumscribe the role of chance by emphasizing the force of virtue within human agency. For Aristotle, even if we cannot guarantee good fortune, it remains that the most excellent or flourishing life is one of virtue. Happiness may be divine and sent by heaven or may be won by virtue but if we have little power over the fortune that heaven sends, we can at least practice virtue. This position, that our character and our behaviour is the largest single factor in determining our happiness, is one that Sterne adopts in *Tristram Shandy.* For Sterne we can in part control our fortune by controlling our actions and responses to the happenings of the world. Although we do not experience the world without the mediation of our characters, as my

analysis of Walter, Tristram and Phutatorius illustrate, in his parable of the 'hinge' Sterne suggests that with God's assistance and a drop of oyl, we can improve ourselves in Christian virtue (in Walter's case the virtue of compassion). Since Sterne believes that whenever an appetite is indulged, it grows stronger, Locke's project of self-creation (although secular) at least holds out the possibility that our habits, instinctual interests and hobby-horses can be reflected upon and partially mended where necessary. The example of Priam is interesting because much eighteenth-century writing on happiness seems to imply that happiness is entirely our own affair and depends purely upon our own internal capacity for experiential happiness, regardless of external circumstance. That, it is the man who thinks it of himself who is happy not others who think it of him. However, this subjectivist reading of happiness, that finds each man is as happy or as badly off as he thinks he is, is highly problematic, as it is rooted in an individual's own psychological experience and thus suffers from a lack of external, impersonal criteria in determining life's goods. In his explicit separation of the hobby-horsical part of a man's character from the moral part, Sterne makes an important distinction. While hedonic, experiential happiness can be a desirable constituent within a human life, it can never be his *telos* or *summum bonum* as this would give supreme ethical value to a psychological state, or feeling, rather than to a praiseworthy condition. As argued, the fact that Toby immediately drops his hobby-horse in order to give succour to Le Fever is symbolic that for Sterne, experiential happiness within a life should always be sub-ordinated to securing the 'true happiness' of Christian Salvation. Michael Prince's observation[1] that the loss of a transcendental standard and clear criterion for ethical conduct provides a basis for understanding the eighteenth-century elevation of prose fiction as a dominant mode of moral philosophy, is consistent with my argument that Sterne in his exploration of the new experiential concept of happiness in, *Tristram Shandy*, interrogates the ethical domain where subjective happiness can be pursued instead of virtue. Although Sterne ultimately reconciles the subjectivist concept of happiness by incorporating this earthly, experiential happiness into the moral framework of Christian *eudaemonism,* the

[1] Prince, *Philosophical Dialogue*, 19.

entelechy which gives the novel its ethical direction is at times ambiguous. However, behind Sterne's horses and riders stands a decisive refutation of the new subjectivist, hedonic conception of happiness as an ethical criterion.

The paradox that an Anglican clergyman authored a salacious book encouraged the scribblers to respond to the novel in droves. This was symptomatic of the incoherence of the eighteenth-century ethical worldview which represented radically different and incompatible ways of conceiving of happiness in one and the same perspective. The rise of utilitarian and naturalistic theories of ethics provided new ways for them to conceptualise and question the link between happiness and virtue. In their response to this aspect of the novel, the scribbling fraternity almost exclusively focus on the sexual and social aspect of happiness. They censure what they perceive to be the immoral and irreligious conduct of Sterne and his fictional creations or, alternatively, they embrace him as a fellow rake, hedonist or sexual libertine. In the sphere of social and sexual relations, allegiance to the *eudaemonist* concept of happiness is frequently, but not always, articulated by adherence to Christian ideas of virtue and sexual conduct. Indeed, in the case of women the category of 'virtue' is narrowed to sexual chastity and/or virginity. In contrast, allegiance to the hedonist conception of happiness in Sterneana is frequently expressed through its rejection or liberation from the prevailing norms, prohibitions and metaphysics of religion by a cast of Shandean rakes, Shandean whores and libidinous parsons. By utilizing parody, satire and the signifiers of erotica, the scribbling fraternity connect Sterne, and his alter-egos Yorick and Tristram, to a larger pattern of clerical and sexual misconduct. Although some productions celebrate Sterne's putative allegiance to the new subjectivist, hedonist concept of pleasure, Sterneana more often condemns Sterne and his fictional creations as scandalous and devoid of virtue. They charge that his sexual pleasure was not happiness but sexual immorality, egoism and vice. Sterneana employ various iterations of the narrative of seduction in order to articulate conflicts that arise, not from the sum of shared values or a shared definition of happiness and criteria of ethical conduct, but from unshared values, contested

definitions of happiness and contested ends. Sterneana illustrates that the assumptions scribblers fell back on to level charges against Sterne and his fictional creations was not the century's new, self-evident conception of happiness as utilitarian pleasure but its moral inheritance from classical theism that had slowly accumulated over the centuries. In this tradition happiness and virtue, happiness and right action, and happiness and godliness were closely entwined. Happiness if it came at all in life, was not a right of being human but a reward for a life well lived. In identifying the 1760s as 'a wilful blind spot' where the belief set in motion by Locke 'that feeling good and being good were one and the same', Darrin McMahon[2] asks why more men and women in the eighteenth century were not able to think through their increasingly contradictory assumptions about happiness. To his credit, Sterne was one of the very few who did grasp that the 'virtue-happiness equivalence' that Locke gave rise to was fallacious. In its acceptance of subjective happiness as the criteria by which the morality of an action could be measured, this erroneous assumption became the defining characteristic of Enlightenment ethics. As evidenced in both his sermons and his novel, Sterne grasped the flawed logic and the implications of the century's new subjectivist ethical impulse. As a practicing clergyman who was well acquainted with the philosophy of Locke, Sterne was unable to shield himself from the uncomfortable truth that making a man happy was quite different to making him good. Indeed, as I have argued in this thesis, he reaffirms in both his sermons and in *Tristram Shandy*, that those who feel good (who are happy or satisfied in the subjective, hedonic sense) could also be bad. It is entirely fitting, in a period of largely unacknowledged and unexpressed ethical incoherence (where two incommensurable concepts of happiness are incorporated and expressed within one and the same worldview) that parody, a form generally utilized by a 'civilization in a state of transition and flux'[3] is a major mode of expression in Sterneana.

[2] McMahon, 'From the Happiness of Virtue', 15.
[3] Kiremidjian, 242.

**Contribution**

I have sought to provide a very different way of thinking about Sterne's part in negotiating the ethical worldview of his age and wonder if problems locating him on the map of moral philosophy says more about the state of moral philosophy in the period. Rather than interpreting *Tristram Shandy* as evidence of Sterne's departure from the ethics of classical theism, I understand the novel as bringing an ancient but powerful insight back into play when he incorporates the new subjectivist pleasure *within* the Latitudinarian framework of eudaemonist. Although he subordinates earthly, subjective pleasure to the pursuit of the 'true happiness' of transcendental Christian Salvation, Sterne nevertheless suggests that the life truly worth living must be so, both in the judgment and experience of the individual living it, as well as in the evaluative, religious judgment of those affected by it.

This thesis, on Sterne's ethic of happiness, could be extended by a detailed analysis of *A Sentimental Journey* and its numerous responses in Sterneana. As a satire on Yorick's moral sentiments, a critique on 'moral sense' theorists, and of the Enlightenment project to locate morality in man's untutored nature, Sterne's novel would provide a wealth of insights. It would repay juxtaposition with *Tristram Shandy* and the sermons and would also make a fruitful comparison with both sentimental and erotica inspired by *A Sentimental Journey* in Sterneana. Indeed, *Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments: The ethical Dimension of the Journey, a seminal work* by Arthur Hill Cash is an obvious place of departure.

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