

# The Construction of a Bestseller: The Case of Thomas Nettleton's *Some Thoughts Concerning Virtue and Happiness* (1729)

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**Abstract:** Scholars have tended to interpret Thomas Nettleton's bestselling *Virtue and Happiness* (1729) as an Epicurean work. In contrast, I argue that this book was constructed partly from extensive paraphrases of the writings of Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson. It both reflected and shaped emerging tendencies in eighteenth-century English thought by propounding a distinctive new moral synthesis mid-way between Lockean hedonism and Shaftesbury's ethic of benevolence. Nettleton also adapted some traditions of Anglican devotional literature to make them compatible with Shaftesbury's emphasis on the pursuit of virtue for its own intrinsic excellence, creating an ethic centred around practical improvement on earth.

**Keywords:** Epicurus, Francis Hutcheson, Isaac Newton, John Locke, the third Earl of Shaftesbury

## 1. Introduction

*Some Thoughts Concerning Virtue and Happiness* (1729) was a popular work of moral philosophy and conduct literature. Written by the Yorkshire-based physician Thomas Nettleton, this work quickly became a bestseller. The book was reprinted thirteen more times under the title *A Treatise of Virtue and Happiness*.<sup>1</sup> It received laudatory reviews in the *History of the Works of the Learned* (August 1737) and *The Monthly Review* (January 1752).<sup>2</sup> From Edinburgh to Bath, numerous circulating libraries stocked the work.<sup>3</sup> It was quoted and recommended as reading in a variety of educational writings, from the third edition of Henry Grove's *System of Moral Philosophy* (1755) to James Cunninghame's *Strictures on Military Discipline* (1774).<sup>4</sup> *Virtue and Happiness* was often praised in poetry. The Scottish poet Thomas Blacklock's 'On the Cultivation of Taste' (1760) remarked that 'Nettleton shall show, | What native joys from sacred Virtue flow'.<sup>5</sup>

Other eighteenth-century authors were more critical of Nettleton's moral philosophy. Samuel Johnson condemned him for 'pursuing the same train of thinking and reasoning' as the third Earl of Shaftesbury, a renowned Neo-Stoic philosopher, and Francis Hutcheson, an adaptor of Shaftesbury and the Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University.<sup>6</sup> Johnson objected to what he regarded as Nettleton, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson's idealistic vision of humanity as having the desire to promote the common good for reasons other than the self-interested pursuit of pleasure. Some of Johnson's contemporaries accepted his assessment of *Virtue and Happiness*, but later commentators made a very different objection to Nettleton's moral framework.<sup>7</sup> In the early nineteenth century, Archibald Campbell, a professor at the Princeton Theological Seminary, connected Nettleton's conclusions with the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus's reduction of happiness, or the highest good, to pleasure—a view that was different from that of Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Christian Scholastics who regarded virtue and the perfection

of human capacities as the primary characteristic of the flourishing life.<sup>8</sup> Campbell presented Nettleton as departing from this tradition of moral philosophy, remarking that the Epicurean theories of ethics are 'exhibited in their most plausible dress by Nettleton'.<sup>9</sup>

Modern scholars have concurred with Campbell's interpretation of Nettleton and have largely presented him as a clearly Epicurean writer.<sup>10</sup> Nettleton was, however, curiously reticent about his intellectual debts. He did not refer directly to any modern authors in any editions of the *Virtue and Happiness*.<sup>11</sup> His title page included a quotation from Horace's *Satires* I. IV on acting rightly: 'This is the better course: if I do that, I shall fare more happily; thus I shall delight the friends I meet.'<sup>12</sup> The preface to the second edition presented a quotation from Horace's *Epistles* I. I on how the pursuit of virtue profits the rich and poor alike.<sup>13</sup> Given Horace's well-documented Epicurean allegiances, these quotations on virtue as the means to a more delightful and profitable life might support the scholarly tendency to connect Nettleton with this tradition.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the language of *Virtue and Happiness* was modern. It clearly reflected newer eighteenth-century intellectual tendencies. Nettleton himself signalled these debts. In the second, 1736 edition of *Virtue and Happiness*, he recommended the work to the 'impartial reader' on the grounds that: 'it pretends to no more than to serve as a key or introduction to what has been written by the most celebrated authors on this subject.'<sup>15</sup>

Who then were these 'most celebrated authors'? This article presents extensive textual evidence to reveal that Nettleton regularly paraphrased Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson as well as adopting the language of Newtonian natural philosophy. In doing so, it reveals how a bestselling work like Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* was written as a composite text, drawing from multiple different intellectual traditions in tension with each other. Eighteenth-century philosophers tended to draw a strong distinction between Locke's philosophical hedonism in which the pleasures of heaven were the highest rational incentive and Shaftesbury and Hutcheson's vision of humanity as benevolent and valuing virtue for its own sake, a distinction that was sometimes unpacked in terms of the division between Epicureanism and Stoicism.<sup>16</sup> Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* attempted to carve a middle way between these two positions. He argued that virtue is valuable because it is pleasurable but that this valuation of virtue stems from a natural faculty that apprehends the intrinsic beauty of virtue. Hutcheson had also proposed such a 'moral sense' that immediately and pre-reflectively motivates humanity to promote the good of others, but Nettleton seems to have adapted this theory in order to answer the common objection that he reduced virtue to an instinct. He averred that this moral sense was guided by reason and moulded by rational considerations of the pleasures that would result from its exercise. He also reproduced a moderated version of Shaftesbury's critique of the mercenariness of pursuing eschatological rewards and the corrupting influences of some forms of Christianity.

Nevertheless, Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* was not only a work of moral philosophy: it drew upon a tradition of Anglican conduct literature that had emerged in the mid-seventeenth century. This genre of writing sought to provide practical advice and pleasure-based incentives for controlling the passions. Nettleton's work was replete with such advice but often separated it from the emphasis of these earlier works on eschatological sanctions and the aid of divine grace. *Virtue and Happiness* thus exemplifies a confluence of eighteenth-century intellectual concerns. It was part of an emerging project of finding room for benevolence and selflessness within a broadly Lockean framework. It indicated the demand for popularised versions of new philosophies. It seems to have

reflected a desire for moral advice more directed towards human betterment in this world, even if Nettleton was careful not to go as far as Shaftesbury in downgrading the moral value of the next life. By presenting these arguments, this article not only provides the first sustained analysis of a work that was woven into the warp and weft of British intellectual life but also demonstrates that many of the same cultural and philosophical forces that shaped the Scottish Enlightenment were present to some extent in early eighteenth-century England.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson in Nettleton's Virtue and Happiness*

The complexities of Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* reflected the diverse engagements of his life. Born in Dewsbury in West Yorkshire, Nettleton had received a degree of M.D. from the University of Leiden. As a result, when he settled in Halifax, his medical practice was attended with 'great success'. He married Elizabeth Cotton on 30 March 1708 and had several children with her. He had taught mathematics to Nicholas Sanderson, later the Lucasian professor of mathematics at Cambridge, before he attended university.<sup>18</sup> He appears to have maintained this acquaintance because the life of Saunderson published with his *Elements of Algebra* (1740) was based partly upon information from Nettleton.<sup>19</sup> His epitaph in Dewsbury church emphasized his wider connections to philosophical circles in England, claiming that his devotion to human learning was 'abundantly confirmed by his long-standing friendship with the greatest men Sanderson, Halley, and Newton'.<sup>20</sup>

Nettleton also contributed to the medical and natural philosophical learning of mid-eighteenth-century England. He was an early exponent of inoculation (now known as variolation): the practice of giving patients a mild form of smallpox to provide them with immunity to the more serious variations of the disease. He began variolation during an epidemic of smallpox in West Yorkshire in 1721. To defend this practice, he collected statistics on its effectiveness.<sup>21</sup> He published an account of his successes in using inoculation in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society in 1722.<sup>22</sup> By June of that year, he was comparing his results with the number of uninoculated individuals who died of smallpox. He expanded on this evidence in December 1722.<sup>23</sup> He also published a paper on the effects of height upon mercury in barometers.<sup>24</sup> These medical and mathematical pursuits would inform what his burial epitaph lauded as his 'elegant representation of virtue and happiness'.<sup>25</sup>

Nettleton's elegant treatise was also published amidst an intensifying debate about moral obligation in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Much of this debate centred on wrestling with the ethical implications of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). Although modern scholars are divided about the subtleties of Locke's ethic, most of his critics and his disciples in the 1690s and early eighteenth century shared similar views about some core features of his moral philosophy. He was widely viewed as outlining an ethic centred around the pursuit of pleasure, culminating in the most delightful rewards of the next life.<sup>26</sup> One of the most influential critics of Locke's hedonism was his own tutee: Shaftesbury. In a series of works, from the *Inquiry Concerning Virtue* (1699) to the *The Moralists* (1709), Shaftesbury implicitly critiqued what he regarded as Locke's self-interested ethic centred around rewards in the next life. Shaftesbury averred that virtue is in itself the highest good and self-sufficient for happiness, so these heavenly rewards were at best an additional incentive to be good.<sup>27</sup>

This concern about the rise of a self-interested ethic was widespread and intensifying in the early eighteenth century. When the Dutch physician Bernard Mandeville sought to demonstrate the inherent selfishness of human beings in the *Fable of the Bees* (1714), Hutcheson responded by reconstructing aspects of Shaftesbury's moral theory in his *Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725).<sup>28</sup> In contrast to some early eighteenth-century readings of Shaftesbury, Hutcheson did accept a Lockean hedonistic understanding of happiness, but he sought to demonstrate that man could be motivated by selfless affections distinct from the pursuit of individual flourishing. He argued that humans possess an innate moral sense of what is right, analogous to the aesthetic sense of beauty. This moral sense drives humans to act before considering the pleasure that might result from the action.<sup>29</sup>

Hutcheson's emphasis on the affections, however, led his critics to aver that he undermined the reasoning component of ethics. John Balguy, a prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral, asked in his *Foundation of Moral Goodness* (1728): 'if Virtue be only kind *Instincts*, or *Affections*, or *Actions consequent upon them*; how shall we be able to disprove or deny the Virtue of Brutes?'<sup>30</sup> Those who adhered to a Lockean hedonism argued against Hutcheson by contending that using reason to discern the best way to achieve the highest pleasure is the basis of morality. John Clarke, the Cambridge-educated master of the grammar school in Hull, argued in a 1726 treatise that virtue is the habit of pursuing the most rational pleasures, which culminate in the rewards of the next life. Socrates himself had, according to Clarke, confessed that he was 'but little disposed to the Practice of Benevolence, but by the Cultivation and Improvement of his Reason', he arrived at a belief in God as 'a rewarder of all those that diligently seek him'.<sup>31</sup>

Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* seems to have been designed to provide a middle ground in these increasingly fierce debates and to reconcile philosophical hedonism and social benevolence. Framed as an anonymous letter to an unknown clergyman, the preface to the first edition of *Virtue and Happiness* declared that the book only presented a '*rough Draught or Picture of human Nature*'. Nettleton purportedly wrote the letter at the request of a friend who had asked that he write 'a short Scheme of those Thoughts in *Morality*, which I have sometimes offered to you in Conversation'. Those thoughts at first appeared to be resolutely Lockean. The first sentence declared: 'By reflecting on what passes within ourselves, we know that we do not only Perceive those Ideas which are in our Minds, so as to be able to compare them one with another, and to discern their various Relations, Agreements, and Disagreements.'<sup>32</sup> In a similar manner to Locke, Nettleton also described these notions as arising at first through '*Sense*'. Nettleton continued in this Lockean vein, remarking that these ideas affect humanity by creating either 'Pleasure and Delight' or 'Uneasiness and Pain'. These two alternative mental states were described as constituting 'our *Happiness*' or 'our *Misery*' as well as determining the '*Affections or Passions*'.<sup>33</sup>

These first pages appear to be a compressed and simplified exposition of chapter 20 of Book II of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), 'Of Modes of Pleasure and Pain'. This inference is supported by the next paragraph, which closely paraphrases section 2 of that chapter. Nettleton declared:

Pleasure is called Good, and Pain Evil, but these Terms are continually applied to Objects; for whatever is apt to raise or excite Pleasure in us, is in itself and immediately Good; as that which may procure us objects of Pleasure, is called mediately Good. On the contrary we name that Evil which gives us Pain and Disturbance, and that is mediately and consequentially Evil, which will procure us any Evil, or deprive us of any Good.<sup>34</sup>

This was a paraphrase of what Locke had written in the *Essay*:

Things then are Good or Evil, only in reference to Pleasure or Pain. That we call *Good*, which is apt to cause or increase Pleasure, or diminish Pain in us; or else to procure, or preserve us the possession of any other Good, or absence of any Evil. And on the contrary we name that *Evil*, which is apt to produce or increase any Pain, or diminish any Pleasure in us; or else to procure us any Evil, or deprive us of any Good.<sup>35</sup>

Nettleton added the clarification that objects conducive to pleasure are 'mediately Good' and pleasure itself is 'immediately Good', but Nettleton otherwise often used the same words to convey the same conclusions in the same order. Good was that which 'is apt to raise or excite Pleasure in us', rather than that 'which is apt to cause or increase Pleasure', but Nettleton was clearly extracting his position directly from Locke's *Essay*.<sup>36</sup>

Nettleton continued to rely upon Lockean ideas as he outlined his fundamental presuppositions. As with Locke, Nettleton argued that the strongest 'Impressions received into our Minds from the various Objects' conveyed 'either *Pleasure*, or *Pain*'.<sup>37</sup> Locke had asserted that: 'The uneasiness a Man finds in himself upon the absence of any thing, whose present enjoyment carries the *Idea* of Delight with it, is that we call *Desire*.'<sup>38</sup> Nettleton had imbibed this moral psychology. He remarked that the '*Absence* of Good gives us Grief and Uneasiness, whenever its *Idea* presents itself to the Mind'.<sup>39</sup> As with Locke, Nettleton made this uneasiness the primary determinant of the will, averring that man always seeks to 'shun and escape, so far as we are able, every painful and uneasy Sensation'.<sup>40</sup>

Some of Nettleton's language in his discussion of human motivation reflected his connections to Newton and the Royal Society. He remarked that for a motive to put us into '*Motion*' or 'change our present State', it is 'necessary that the Force should be sufficient to overcome the *Resistance*'.<sup>41</sup> The 'Force or Eagerness wherewith we pursue any Good' was proportionate to the depth of the desire.<sup>42</sup> To continue in an action, 'it is not necessary that the *Idea* should be always present to the Mind, because when we are once put into Motion, we shall continue in the same state, till some new Impression do produce a Change'.<sup>43</sup> Yet 'the more frequently the *Idea* of Pleasure is presented to our View, the more *Impatience* of Desire will be increased, and our Motion *accelerated*'.<sup>44</sup> Although these statements were broadly in line with Locke's account of human motivation in Book II chapter 20 of the *Essay*, Nettleton was evidently aligning this philosophical framework with Newton's laws of motion. After all, he referred to how the force of desire overcomes resistance, motion induces changes to states, humans continue in motion until another force influences them, and motion accelerates if the force is continuously exerted.

Nettleton's subtle reworking of the ethical parts of Locke's *Essay* was reflected in his discussion of the state this desire for pleasure drove humanity towards: happiness. He premised that: '*Happiness* is what we aim at in all our Actions, which consists in Ease and Relief from *Pain*, and in the Enjoyment of the greatest and most lasting *Pleasure*; and *Wisdom* denotes a Capacity of pursuing this great End by the best Means.'<sup>45</sup> Conceptually, this statement remained close to sections 4I–44 in Book II chapter XXI 'Of Power', in Locke's *Essay*, where he described happiness as a state in which pleasure predominates over pain.<sup>46</sup> In fact, however, this statement was closely paraphrased from Hutcheson's *Inquiry*. In the preface to this work, Hutcheson had asserted the significance of happiness in a way that was paralleled in Nettleton's work: '*We generally acknowledge, that the Importance of any Truth is nothing else than its Moment, or Efficacy to make Men happy, or to give them the greatest and most lasting Pleasure; and Wisdom denotes only a Capacity of pursuing*

*this End by the best Means*.<sup>47</sup> Although Hutcheson was often interpreted as opposed to a Lockean ethic, this quotation was seamlessly integrated into a broadly Lockean argument, which gives the impression that Nettleton was extracting quotations from a commonplace book under specific subject headings, such as happiness.

Nevertheless, even in this strongly hedonistic section, there were signs of a more complex engagement with other traditions of moral thought. He turned the Lockean idea that earthly happiness must always be disturbed by continual impositions of uneasiness into an implicit refutation of Epicurus. For Epicurus, happiness lay in the absence of pain, in cultivating virtue to avoid mental anguish and bodily torment (in eighteenth-century phrasing: to achieve tranquillity of mind and indolence of body). By contrast, Nettleton averred that 'if all Pain could be taken away, the Pleasures remaining would but be few, and those too so very dull and insipid, that we should be reduced to a State of perfect *Indolence* and *Inactivity*'.<sup>48</sup> According to Nettleton, therefore, not only would the Epicurean state of contented tranquillity not be particularly pleasant, but it would turn man into a lazy and inactive creature. The second note of tension within this section is that Nettleton's argument was partially paraphrased from Shaftesbury. Nettleton had conveyed his notion that unfulfilled desire was painful in the following passage:

The Uneasiness of *Desire*, when it is long protracted, and cannot acquire what it earnestly seeks, must occasion continual *Misery*; as *Aversion* must in the same manner cause continual *Grief* and *Calamity*, when that which it earnestly shunn'd, and would have escaped, remains present, and is altogether unavoidable. Yet these Pains are very necessary and useful, if they are not too long continued; being the Springs of all our *Motions*, and the *Removal* of them, when we obtain what we desired, or are delivered from what we feared or endured, affording a *Pleasure* answerable to the proceeding *Pain*.<sup>49</sup>

Shaftesbury's fourth miscellany on the connections between his treatises in the *Characteristicks* deployed a similar phrase to convey the same idea of the mixed nature of human satisfaction:

Thus Love (which implys Desire with Hope of Good) must afford occasion to Grief and Disturbance, when it acquires not what it earnestly seeks. And Hatred (which implys Aversion, and Fear of Ill) must in the same manner occasion Grief and Calamity, when that which it earnestly shun'd or wou'd have, escap'd remains present, or is altogether unavoidable.<sup>50</sup>

Nettleton directly re-used Shaftesbury's phrase about how hatred creates misery when what is 'earnestly shun'd or wou'd have, escap'd remains present, or is altogether unavoidable'.<sup>51</sup> Once again, it seems as if he was drawing upon a quotation used to exhibit a particular subject in a commonplace book, rather than systematically reproducing Shaftesbury's conclusions.

In the second part of *Virtue and Happiness*, however, Nettleton's Shaftesburian and Hutchesonian reading began to exert a more unmistakable influence on the character of his argument. He began by enquiring into 'the several *Senses* or *Powers* of *Perception* we are endowed with'. To this end, he proposed a hierarchy of pleasures, rising from the lowest sensual pleasures to the 'Pleasure and Delight, from the View and Contemplation of our complex Ideas'. Such ideas impressed upon the mind because of their '*Beauty*': their fitness for a designed end. He argued that this capacity to delight in harmony and order 'may more properly be term'd an *internal Sense*, or a *Sense of Beauty*'.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, Nettleton did not merely reproduce Hutcheson's moral sense. He also seems to have been attempting to answer the criticism that Hutcheson's moral sense had reduced ethics to an instinct by emphasizing its rational aspects, which he described in terms of sympathy. He declared that one of the reasons for this sympathy is that: 'Happiness depends upon that of others, and by a kind of Sympathy, he naturally rejoices at their Welfare, and the Sight of their Misery gives him Pain; which raises strong Desires to promote the one, and to avert or remove the other.' Relying upon this premise, Nettleton made a clear departure from the Lockean framework that was so prominent in the early part of *Virtue and Happiness*. Locke had argued that moral good consists in following fixed rules culminating in the laws of God.<sup>53</sup> Nettleton instead described moral good as the pursuit of public good:

As that is termed *Good* or *Evil*, with respect to a particular Person, which tends to promote his own private Happiness or Misery, so those Dispositions and Actions of rational Agents are called *morally Good* or *Ill*, which are judg'd to be beneficial or hurtful to others, or to the whole *Species* or *Kind*.<sup>54</sup>

For Nettleton, however, this moral good was inseparably connected to rationality. He declared that the public good was inseparably connected to individual happiness because 'the Consciousness of having done such Actions ourselves, affect us with a most exquisite Pleasure'. The '*Moral Sense*' did not only include the 'the sympathetic Sense' or the natural inclination to be affected by the moral actions of others. It also included '*Conscience*' or 'the Approbation of a Man's own Mind and Consciousness of his own Virtue and Merit'. Although man might at first be motivated by intuitions, such conceptions had to be rationally investigated in order to form part of the good life.<sup>55</sup>

Throughout the remainder of the second part of *Virtue and Happiness*, Nettleton dwelt on the importance of the social affections in a way that either explicitly echoed Shaftesbury or Hutcheson. He declared that 'as soon as he is capable of Reflecting, he will be pleased and delighted with every Shew and Representation of the Social Passion; think nothing more amiable than this; nor any thing more odious than the contrary; and thereby clearly disclose a *Sense of Right and Wrong*'.<sup>56</sup> This was a loose paraphrase of Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue* wherein he had argued that 'if you give to this Creature a reflecting Faculty, it will at the same instant approve of Gratitude, Kindness, and Pity; be taken with any shew or representation of the social Passion, and think nothing more amiable than this, or more odious than the contrary'.<sup>57</sup>

Nettleton avoided what was widely regarded as Hutcheson's pitfall of reducing morality to an instinct by emphasizing the necessity of reason overcoming the sources of moral error: conflicting passions, poor education, bad habits, and oppressive customs. Reason could 'discover to us, which are the most natural, as well as the noblest and most lasting Pleasures'. Such 'due Consideration will raise *Desire*'. Crucial to these reflections was the hierarchy of pleasure: that 'As the Pleasures of the *Mind* are preferable to those of the *Sense*, so of all mental Pleasures the most exquisite and valuable are those of the *social Kind*'.<sup>58</sup> In making these claims, Nettleton inserted a rational component into his theory. As he declared, 'this internal Sense of Beauty ought always to be under the Conduct of *right Reason*, that the Affections arising from thence may not be excessive, or out of Proportion'.<sup>59</sup>

In the third part of *Virtue and Happiness*, Nettleton dwelt more extensively on the social implications of his adapted theory of the moral sense. In the beginning of this part, he reiterated:

Whenever we see any of our own *Species*, we are pleased and delighted with the Appearance; for there is a Beauty in the *human Form*, superior to any thing else, in the whole Creation. And when no opposite Affections do interfere, we feel by *Sympathy*, the same Passions where-with we perceive others to be touched. We cannot but rejoice to see them pleased and happy, as on the contrary it gives us Grief and Anguish to view their Misery and Pain; which moves us so far as in us lies, to promote their Welfare, and to do them all Offices of Kindness and Humanity: And this Exercise of *Benevolence* has been shewn to be the greatest and most exquisite Pleasure.<sup>60</sup>

Nettleton contended that the benevolent affections were more powerfully focused on 'those of the same Nation and Community' as well as 'our Neighbours and Acquaintance'.<sup>61</sup> One of Nettleton's justifications for this claim was once again paraphrased from Hutcheson's *Inquiry*. Nettleton remarked:

The highest Improvement of Benevolence is *Gratitude*, for Nature has determin'd us most powerfully to love and esteem the moral good Qualities of others which affect ourselves; and has given us the strongest Impressions of *Good-will* towards those who are kind and beneficial to us; so that it is no small Encouragement to do Acts of Kindness and Beneficence, when the *Benefactor* is sure to gain, one Time or other, an addition to his Happiness, by a suitable return from the Persons oblig'd; or if that is not in their Power, by a constant Acknowledgment, and the sincerest Expressions of *Love* and *Gratitude*, which from the meanest of Mankind is always extremely pleasing and delightful.<sup>62</sup>

Hutcheson had likewise argued that:

Nature has more powerfully determin'd us to *admire* and *love* the *moral Qualities* of others, which affect our selves, and has given us more powerful Impressions of *Good-will* towards those who are beneficent to our selves; which we call *Gratitude*; and thus has laid a Foundation for *joyful Associations* in all kinds of *Business and virtuous Friendships*.<sup>63</sup>

In this way, Nettleton's efforts to include a greater rational component within Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense did not prevent him from adopting the same theorisation of the boundaries of human affection.

Towards the end of the third part of *Virtue and Happiness*, Nettleton turned to summarise his argument. He reiterated that 'we are necessarily determin'd to shun and escape, so far as we are able, every painful and uneasy Sensation; as well as to retain and continue that which is pleasing and delightful'. He proceeded through his earlier propositions about the hedonistic nature of human motivation and the errors that result from the false appearance of pleasure. Reason judged what are 'the most worthy Objects of *Desire*'. Rationality disclosed that the pleasures of the mind are higher than those of the senses. Sympathy and the social passions were uncovered as the most enjoyable.<sup>64</sup> Even in summarising his own views, Nettleton drew upon Shaftesbury. To laud the pleasures of doing good to others, he declared:

But the proportionate and regular State is the truly prosperous and natural one in every Subject contriv'd by Wisdom and Design for the greatest *Utility*, and Advantage, and of all Beauties, the most engaging is that which appears in *real Life*, and results from that Harmony and Proportion of the Sentiments and Affections in the *human Mind*, which is best adapted to the Happiness of every Particular, and also to the general Good of the whole System.<sup>65</sup>

This passage echoed two similar statements from Shaftesbury's third miscellany on the nature of taste. Shaftesbury had declared that 'Tis impossible we can advance the least in any Relish or Taste of outward Symmetry and Order; but we must necessarily acknowledg[sic] that the proportionate and regular State is the truly prosperous and natural in every Subject'. He had continued that 'Thus *Beauty* and *Truth* are plainly join'd with the Notion of *Utility* and *Convenience*'.<sup>66</sup>

The most distinctively Shaftesburian aspect of Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* was his concluding reflections upon religion. He did not dismiss the moral role of religion but suggested that our primary motivations should be the pleasures of the present life. From the order and ultimate harmony of the universe, Nettleton inferred the existence of a divine creator. He acknowledged that 'the Perfection of *Virtue* is in *Religion*, without which it would want its main Security and Support'. Nevertheless, there should be an earthly starting place. Humanity should 'in the first place settle right Notions of what is morally excellent, and cultivate suitable Dispositions within ourselves; otherwise we shall scarce be able to form worthy Conceptions of the *divine Being*'. One error that Nettleton particularly decried was ascribing human passions to God. He drew upon Shaftesbury to describe God's attributes, remarking 'that the highest Goodness must of necessity belong to him, without any of those defects of Passion, those Weaknesses and Disturbances, which are only to be found in finite and imperfect Beings'.<sup>67</sup> In making this statement, he echoed Shaftesbury's argument in his *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* that 'if there really was a God, the highest Goodness must of necessity belong to him, without any of those Defects of Passion, those Meannesses and Imperfections which we acknowledg[sic] such in ourselves'.<sup>68</sup>

Nettleton continued to explain the moral problems of ascribing imperfect passions to God in a Shaftesburian vein. He condemned those who 'absurdly suppose the Deity to be an arbitrary, angry and vindictive Being, revenging himself when offended on others than those who gave the Provocation'. He declared that such a vision of God would 'reverse all Morality, by making those Qualities amiable and adorable which are really odious and detestable'.<sup>69</sup> In other words, ascribing bad qualities to God gave those evils a false lustre. Nettleton's phrasing and argument in this passage closely paralleled Shaftesbury's own condemnation in the *Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* of those who viewed God as 'subject to Wrath and Anger, furious, revengeful; and revenging himself, when offended, on others than those who gave the Offence'.<sup>70</sup> As with Shaftesbury, he condemned the belief that men should act well for the sake of a reward. He asserted that such acts were '*mercenary* and *venal*'.<sup>71</sup> Nettleton did allow some role for eschatological rewards, conceding that 'If he is also convinced from *Revelation*, that moral Goodness will be rewarded in the World to come, this will raise an *additional Desire*'.<sup>72</sup>

Echoing Shaftesbury, Nettleton raised several issues with this over-reliance on eschatological incentives. He claimed that 'if we are mainly influenced by these external Motives, our Attention will be gradually drawn off from the intrinsick Beauty and Excellence of *Virtue*'. If, moreover, the 'Practice of it is represented as no way conducing to our Happiness in this Life, but rather tending in many Cases to make us miserable, we shall no longer chuse it for its own sake, but only as a thing that is mediately Good, which may procure us some Advantage hereafter'.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, conceptions of rewards and punishments were often misused by the clergy. Nettleton raised what he regarded as the issue of the Roman Catholic clergy 'suppressing or perverting the Scriptures' in order to 'make their own Will the Will of God' and to 'distribute his *Rewards* and denounce his *Judgments* as best will suit their Purposes'.<sup>74</sup> Evoking memories of the seventeenth-century wars of religion, he remarked that 'false and injurious Conceptions of the Deity' had led some to

think that they would 'merit *Heaven* by committing the greatest Barbarities upon Earth; not to mention the lesser and more moderate Mischiefs of mutual Hatred, and bitter Antipathy, which different Persuasions seldom fail to bear towards one another'.<sup>75</sup>

Nettleton's Shaftesburian approach to religion shaped his reworking of an older genre of Anglican devotional literature. In contrast to Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson's writings, Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* was as much a practical treatise providing advice to his readers on how to conduct themselves as a theoretical work of moral philosophy. Nettleton signalled his indebtedness to an earlier religious discourse. He referenced in his prefatory remarks to the first edition how he was acting 'the part of a *Preacher*' and giving a '*Sermon*'.<sup>76</sup> As this genre of writing was extraordinarily popular, Nettleton's capable adaptation of it accounts for much of the work's impressive print record.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, Nettleton did not merely reproduce these earlier tropes. He transformed them. The emblematic Anglican devotional work was the *Whole Duty of Man* (1658) by Richard Allestree, the Regius Professor of divinity at the University of Oxford. Drawing upon anti-Calvinist or Arminian ideas, Allestree had argued that Christ's 'main purpose of his coming into the world, was to plant good life among men'. This purpose was aided by divine grace providing assistance to natural motivations and the superior rewards of the next life he had disclosed to mankind. As a result, the *Whole Duty* continually displayed the incentives for holiness in this life and the next and declaimed extensively on the pleasures of virtue. Allestree lambasted intemperance for only producing a 'short and vanishing' pleasure whilst almsgiving was lauded for giving rise to 'a most ravishing pleasure'. Again and again, Christianity was lauded for providing the superior incentives of 'higher and spiritual joys'.<sup>78</sup>

Nettleton utilized parts of this approach to reshaping the passions but never once mentioned the assistance of divine grace and focused almost entirely on the pleasures of virtue on earth. He advised the '*Art of Self-Denial*' as a guard against continually pursuing immediate pleasures. He cautioned his readers to 'check all immoderate Transports from Expectation or Enjoyment, which must quickly have an End, and will as certainly be followed by Uneasiness and Pain'. When he sought to draw his readers from the temptations of following '*Fashion*', he argued that a good reputation is only useful if it is obtained through honourable means. Otherwise, man's guilt at his disingenuousness would rob him of 'that Peace of Conscience which of all worldly Possessions is the most valuable'. He continually returned to the theme that dishonesty 'destroys all inward Peace and Tranquillity' by stimulating guilt.<sup>79</sup> Not only did Nettleton confine himself to the incentives for virtue in this life, but he used this moral advice to make political arguments for toleration. His warning not to entertain unfair opinions of others blurred seamlessly into a declaration that 'we ought never to hate one another for different Opinions concerning Religious Matters, or different Methods of Religious Worship'. These 'Opinions and Practices, which are hurtful to none, nor any way inconsistent with the *publick Peace*' ought 'by no means to be treated with *Rage and Fury*' because the excessive passions of rage and hatred destroy 'Peace and Tranquillity of Mind' so essential for happiness.<sup>80</sup>

The later editions of Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* tended to foreground this practical advice for controlling the passions. The fundamental structure of the argument remained the same, even though he replaced the preface to the first edition and his remarks to his anonymous correspondent with a more general prefatory summary of his concerns.<sup>81</sup> The additions made by Nettleton were often focused on heightening the rhetorical power of, and providing concrete examples for, the original argument. In the first section, for instance, he began his account of the role of pain and pleasure imprinting ideas forcefully upon the mind with the more eloquent statement that 'the numberless images of things'

would not influence humanity without hedonistic incentives. He supported his account of how motivation only arises when one passion becomes stronger than another with reference to the fact that Alexander the Great had only undergone hardship in his conquest of Persia because of his greater love of glory.<sup>82</sup>

At times, Nettleton's reflections seemed to be based on his experiences as a medical doctor. He emphasized the variations of the human constitution and how 'Some have naturally that happy constitution, which gives them a certain cheerfulness and gaiety of spirit'. He discussed how some illnesses 'do particularly affect the brain and the nerves' and thereby discompose the passions. A 'black and dismal' melancholy emerged as a concern. He analysed the formation of the appetites in physiological terms, remarking that 'when outwardly the small tubes and canals are obstructed, and the vital motion of the fluids is disturbed, this causes uneasiness'. At other times, his counsel was framed in a religious language more akin to earlier works of conduct literature. He condemned amusing 'ourselves with shining toys and glittering trifles' and those who 'are so impious as to pay their adoration to bags or heaps of shining metal'.<sup>83</sup>

This vivid and passionate language did not mean that Nettleton had abandoned his earlier focus on the pursuit of virtue in this life. He only subtly reduced his emphasis on his Shaftesburian conclusions. He entirely restructured the final sections of *Virtue and Happiness*. In contrast to the first edition, he did not end with reflections on the misuse of religion. He retained some of his warnings about the corrupting effects of a false idea of God, but he removed his earlier passages about how pursuing eschatological rewards is mercenary and venal. His concerns about the misuse of religion were moreover embedded in the penultimate section. The final section became a summary of his argument that one should always avoid misery and seek 'to obtain the *greatest pleasure our condition will allow of*'. He then turned the final paragraphs of *Virtue and Happiness* into a remark about how earth-bound men could not perceive the ways in which God transforms apparent imperfections to 'the *beauty, order, and perfection of the whole*'.<sup>84</sup> Yet throughout Nettleton's lively depictions of the way to control the passions, he almost never discussed the perennial themes of earlier conduct literature: the assistance of divine grace and the rewards of the next life.

### 3. Conclusion

Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* was thus a transitional text that both reflected and shaped emerging tendencies in English moral culture. His frequent paraphrases of Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson (and his use of Newtonian ideas) reveal the broad resonance of these philosophical notions. In particular, Nettleton's extensive use of Hutcheson's *Inquiry*, only four years after it was published, testifies to the rapid transmission of his philosophy. His close reproduction of these texts suggests that he was either consciously extracting these passages from the books in front of him or that he was regularly drawing upon quotations that he had already ordered by subject in his commonplace book. Yet Nettleton was not a mere follower of these authors. He adapted their ideas. Hutcheson had been condemned for reducing morality to instinct, and Nettleton's solution was to emphasize the importance of reason in directing and moulding the moral or sympathetic sense. In doing so, his work indicates the wider concern of many authors in the early eighteenth century to find ways of making human benevolence compatible with a Lockean philosophical framework. Although Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* has often been presented by modern historians as a straightforwardly Epicurean work, it was in fact an inventive synthesis of a variety of different innovations in early eighteenth-century moral thought.

The popularity of Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* moreover stemmed from his ability to translate these complex philosophical concepts into the rhetoric of Anglican devotional literature. The eloquent language of the second edition and its intimate recommendations for controlling the passions seem to have been ideally suited to a reading public used to reading similar pronouncements in Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man*. Still, Nettleton's relationship with this tradition of writing about human conduct remained ambivalent. Corrupt religious opinions and depraved ideas of God were disruptive forces that discomposed virtue and mental tranquillity. His evident admiration for Shaftesbury ensured that he placed his primary emphasis on the delights of virtue in this life and condemned a mercenary ethic of acting for the sake of rewards in the next life. God ordered Nettleton's moral universe, but the concepts of grace and eschatological reward were largely absent from the account.<sup>85</sup> If an increasing orientation towards earthly improvement was a central feature of the writings of the Scottish Enlightenment, Nettleton's *Virtue and Happiness* reveals a similar English account of the possibility of an ethic focused primarily on the pleasures and communities of this world.

#### 4. NOTES

I am grateful for the very helpful comments of the anonymous reviewers of this journal on this article.

1. I will use the shortened title *Virtue and Happiness* to refer to all editions of the work for the sake of convenience. Later editions will be distinguished in the text and in the footnotes. These editions were: [Thomas Nettleton], *Some Thoughts Concerning Virtue and Happiness* (London, 1729); [Thomas Nettleton], *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 2nd edn (London, 1736); [Thomas Nettleton], *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 3rd edn (Dublin, 1737); [Thomas Nettleton], *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 3rd edn (London, 1742); [Thomas Nettleton], *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 4th edn (London, 1743); [Thomas Nettleton], *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 5th edn (Edinburgh, 1749); Thomas Nettleton, *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 3rd edn (London, 1751); [Thomas Nettleton], *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 6th edn (Glasgow, 1751); Thomas Nettleton, *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 4th edn (London, 1757); Thomas Nettleton, *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 5th edn (London, 1759); Thomas Nettleton, *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, new edn (Glasgow, 1759); Thomas Nettleton, *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, new edn (Glasgow, 1766); [Thomas Nettleton], *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, 7th edn (Edinburgh, 1774); [Thomas Nettleton], *A Treatise on Virtue and Happiness*, new edn (Edinburgh, 1776).

2. *The History of the Works of the Learned*, 2 vols (London, 1737–43), I, 153–58; *The Monthly Review or Literary Journal*, 2nd edn, 76 vols (London, 1752–89), VI, 69.

3. *A New Catalogue of Lownds's Circulating Library* (London, 1761), p. 167; *A New Catalogue of Bell's Circulating Library* (London, 1774), p. 136; *A Compleat Catalogue of the Books in the Circulating-Library at Leeds* (Leeds, 1785), p. 7; *A New Catalogue of the Edinburgh Circulating Library* (Edinburgh, 1786), p. 93; *A New Catalogue of the Circulating Library at No. 39, King Street, Cheapside* (London, 1787), p. 132; *A Catalogue of Meyler's Circulating Library, in Orange-Grove, Bath* (Bath, 1790), p. 57; *A Catalogue of the Present Collection of Books, in the Manchester Circulating Library* (Manchester, 1794), p. 13; *A New Catalogue of Palmer and Merrick's Circulating Library, High-Street, Oxford* (Oxford, 1795), p. 99.

4. For a selection of works that utilised Nettleton, see Samuel Bourn, *Lectures to Children and Young People in a Catechetical Method*, 2nd edn (Birmingham, 1739), p. 145; Henry Grove, *A System of Moral Philosophy*, ed. by Thomas Amory, 3rd edn, 2 vols (London, 1755), I, 126; II, 73, 104, 335; George Benson, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Seven (Commonly Called) Catholic Epistles*, 2nd edn

(London, 1756), p. 579; William Dodd, *A Commentary on the Books of the Old and New Testament*, 3 vols (London, 1765–70), III, 1 John 3.16; James Cuninghame, *Strictures on Military Discipline* (London, 1774), p. 209; John Pinkerton, *Letters of Literature* (London, 1785), pp. 407–09; Joshua Toulmin, *Addresses to Young Men* (London, 1803), p. 185; John Witherspoon, *The Works of John Witherspoon, D. D.*, 9 vols (Edinburgh, 1804–05), VII, 151. It was also quoted or paraphrased in George Johnston, *Christianity Older than Creation* (London, 1733), p. 47; George Braithwaite, *The Nation's Reproach* (London, 1733), pp. 26, 43, 47; *Miscellanies, Moral and Instructive, in Prose and Verse* (London, 1787), pp. 42, 91; *The Gentleman's Magazine* (London, 1819), p. 230; *The Triumph, or, the Coming Age of Christianity*, ed. by John Minter Morgan (London, 1851), pp. 84–85, 83–106.

5. Thomas Blacklock, *A Collection of Original Poems* (Edinburgh, 1760), p. 37. See also William Tans'ur, *The Beauties of Poetry* (Cambridge, 1776), p. 174.

6. Sir John Hawkins, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (Dublin, 1787), p. 227.

7. For a contemporaneous work that accepted Johnson's reading, see Robert Alves, *Sketches of a History of Literature* (Edinburgh, 1794), p. 164. For a modern reading of Nettleton along these lines, see Walter Jackson Bate, 'The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth-Century English Criticism', *ELH*, 12.2 (1945), 144–64 (pp. 146–47) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2871777>>.

8. On the seventeenth-century debate over the happiness in the context of the inheritance of Scholastic ideas of the highest good, see: Jacob Donald Chatterjee, 'The Nature, Context, and Reception of Daniel Whitby's Epicurean Ethics Textbook: the *Ethices Compendium* (1684)', *Erudition and the Republic of Letters*, 10.2 (2025), 145–191 <<https://doi.org/10.1163/24055069-10020001>>.

9. Archibald Alexander, *Outlines of Moral Science* (New York: C. Scribner, 1852), 160–61.

10. Brian Michael Norton, 'Ancient Ethics and Modern Happiness: A Study of Three Treatises in Enlightenment Britain', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 38.2 (2014), 47–74; Brian Michael Norton, 'Happiness', in *The Oxford Handbook of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Jack Lynch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 617–30 (p. 626); David Wootton, *Power, Pleasure, and Profit: Insatiable Appetites from Machiavelli to Madison* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 283.

11. To establish this fact, I consulted: Nettleton, *Concerning Virtue and Happiness*; Nettleton, *Treatise*, 7th edn.

12. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, sig. A1<sup>r</sup>; translation from Horace, *Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 59.

13. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 2nd edn, II; Horace, *Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry*, p. 253.

14. See, for instance, Sergio Yona, *Epicurean Ethics in Horace: The Psychology of Satire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Jerome Kemp, 'Fools Rush In: Sex, "The Mean", and Epicureanism in Horace, Satires. 1.2', *The Cambridge Classical Journal*, 62 (2016), 130–46 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1750270516000087>>.

15. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 2nd edn, pp. i–ii.

16. For an example of this distinction, see Thomas Johnson, *Quaestiones Philosophicae in Justi Systematis Ordinem Dispositae*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1735), pp. 180–81.

17. This characterization of the Scottish Enlightenment is taken from John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 47.

18. John Watson, *The History and the Antiquities of the Parish of Halifax in Yorkshire* (London, 1775), p. 496.

19. Nicholas Saunderson, *The Elements of Algebra, in Ten Books*, 2 vols (London, 1740), p. ii.

20. Watson, *History and Antiquities*, p. 498. Watson also tells the following amusing anecdote about Nettleton: 'That being in company with several Gentlemen, one of them laying great stress on Dean Echard's account of selling himself to the Devil before the battle of Worcester; affirming

that the bargain was intended to be for twenty-one years, but that the Devil had put a trick upon Oliver, by changing the twenty-one into twelve, and then turning hastily to the Doctor, asked him “What could be the Devil’s motive for so doing?” The Doctor, without hesitation, answered, “That he could not tell what his motive, unless he was in a hurry about the Restoration.” See Watson, *History and Antiquities*, pp. 497–98.

21. For further discussion, see Arthur Boylston, ‘Thomas Nettleton and the Dawn of Quantitative Assessments of the Effects of Medical Interventions’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 103.8 (2010), 335–39.

22. The Royal Society for Improving Natural Knowledge, *Philosophical Transactions*, 91 vols (London, 1667–1802), xxxii, 35–48. The work also became a standalone pamphlet: Thomas Nettleton, *An Account of the Success of Inoculating the Small-Pox; in a Letter to Dr. William Whitaker* (London, 1722).

23. Royal Society, *Philosophical Transactions*, xxxii, 49–52, 209–12.

24. Royal Society, *Philosophical Transactions*, xxxiii, 308–12.

25. Watson, *History and Antiquities*, p. 498.

26. See, for instance, [Richard Willis], *Remarks upon An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1697), pp. 3–6; [Richard Willis], *Second Remarks upon An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1697), pp. 5–8, 19–26; James Lowde, *Moral Essays* (York, 1699), pp. 49–63; [Richard Willis], *Third Remarks upon An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1699), pp. 1–27; Henry Lee, *Anti-Scepticism* (London, 1702), pp. 94–95 and *passim*. For further discussion of the reception of Locke as a philosophical hedonist, see Jacob Donald Chatterjee, ‘Christ Church, Oxford, Anglican Moral Theology, and the Reception of John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, c. 1690–1725’, *History of Universities*, 36.2 (2023), 98–136 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198901730.003.0006>>.

27. [Anthony Ashley Cooper], *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue* (London, 1699), pp. 20, 61, 50; [Anthony Ashley Cooper], *Sensus Communis* (London, 1709), p. 55; [Anthony Ashley Cooper], *The Moralists* (London, 1709), pp. 45–96, 44, 46, 47, 64, 95. For further discussion of Shaftesbury’s moral thought and its contexts, see Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness: Moral Discourse and Cultural Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Tim Stuart-Buttle, *From Moral Theology to Moral Philosophy: Cicero and Visions of Humanity from Locke to Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 89–117.

28. For further discussion of the debate over Mandeville’s *Fable*, see Jacob Donald Chatterjee, ‘One Hundred and Eighty-Two Overlooked British Comments on Bernard Mandeville’s *Fable of the Bees*, 1724–1800’, *Historical Research*, 95.269 (2022), 447–70 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/hisres/htac007>>.

29. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (Dublin, 1725), pp. 221, 107–49. For further discussion of Hutcheson’s moral thought, see Stephen Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal “Ought”: 1640–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 207–43.

30. John Balguy, *The Foundation of Moral Goodness* (London, 1728), p. 12.

31. John Clarke, *The Foundation of Morality in Theory and Practice Considered* (York, 1726), p. 67.

32. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 1.

33. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 1–2.

34. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 2.

35. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 229–30.

36. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 2; Locke, *Essay*, pp. 229–30.

37. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 3; Locke, *Essay*, p. 151.

38. Locke, *Essay*, p. 230.
39. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 3–4.
40. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 4; Locke, *Essay*, pp. 230–31.
41. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 6.
42. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 7.
43. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 8.
44. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 8.
45. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 8–9.
46. Locke, *Essay*, pp. 258–64.
47. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (London, 1725), p. ix.
48. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 11. This argument appears to have echoed Mandeville's ridiculing of the Epicurean end of mental tranquillity: Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, ed. by Frederick Benjamin Kaye, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), I, 184. For further discussion see: Jacob Donald Chatterjee, 'Bernard Mandeville's Critique of Epicurus and the "easie Divines" of the Church of England, 1705–1732', *Intellectual History Review*, 35.4 (2025), 657–84 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17496977.2025.2525695>>.
49. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 11.
50. Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, III, 195.
51. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 11; Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, III, 195.
52. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 36, 36–37, 38.
53. Locke, *Essay*, pp. 351–58.
54. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 40.
55. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 41, 43.
56. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 44.
57. Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, II, 53.
58. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 46, 49, 57, 61.
59. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 58.
60. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 67.
61. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 68.
62. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 79–80.
63. Hutcheson, *Inquiry*, p. 198.
64. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 95, 96, 96–98.
65. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 99.
66. Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, III, 180–81.
67. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 103–04, 106–07.
68. Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, p. 41.
69. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 107.
70. Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks*, II, 48.
71. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 107–08.
72. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 108.
73. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 109.
74. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 110.
75. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. 111.
76. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, p. viii.
77. For further discussion, see Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 305–71.

78. [Richard Allestree], *The Practice of Christian Graces, or, The Whole Duty of Man* (London, 1658), pp. 9, 166, 8, 176, 362, 176. For further discussion of the centrality of pleasure to these Anglican devotional writings, see Jacob Donald Chatterjee, ‘“Celestial Epicurisme’: John Locke and the Anglican Language of Pleasure, 1650–1697’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 37.2 (2021), 303–34 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2021.1904275>>.

79. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 24–25, 26, 92, 100.

80. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 1st edn, pp. 80–85, 86.

81. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 2nd edn, p. iv.

82. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 2nd edn, pp. 3, 17.

83. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 2nd edn, pp. 64–65, 66, 71, 125–26, 70, 205.

84. Nettleton, *Virtue and Happiness*, 2nd edn, pp. 292–300, 319, 327–29.

85. This supports the contention that there were an increasing number of theistic ethics that did not clearly appeal to important Christian concepts in eighteenth-century Britain: Michael B. Gill, *The British Moralists on Human Nature and the Birth of Secular Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 2.

#### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

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