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Moral Development in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), "What Is Man?" (1906), and "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" (1969).

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a **Master degree in Literature and Civilization**

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Dedication

No work is more exhilarating than that carried out with the moral and emotional support of those close to us.

I dedicate this work to my dear parents, who have believed in me and blessed me with love, support, and education.

To my brother and sisters, for their endless patience and encouragement throughout this journey.

To my friends, Wissam and Mohamed, for being my army of support and motivation.

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Declaration

I am aware of and understand the university's policy on plagiarism and I declare that this thesis is the result of my own work. I also attest that this work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Challane Imene

Abstract

The present paper investigates the moral dilemmas in three of Mark Twain's works: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, "What is Man?", and "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger." This study is conducted with a special focus on Mark Twain's moral position. Therefore, the principal objective behind this study is to demonstrate the affiliation between the hedonist doctrine and Mark Twain's ideas. Furthermore, it also seeks to bring some clarifications regarding the alleged ideological shift that Mark Twain underwent over the course of his career.

Key words: Moral dilemmas, hedonism, text interpretation, moral position, ideological change.

List of Abbreviations

HF: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

“WM”: “What is Man?”

“MS”: “No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger”

TS: The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

General Introduction

Mark Twain is known for his valuable philosophical contribution in literature; in fact, he tackled philosophical subjects like human nature and their moral sense. The subject of morality has been very prevalent throughout his writing career.

Although some might see an alteration in Mark Twain's views on morality during his life, it is undeniable that the basis of his moral theory has been consistent throughout all his works. The Mark Twain, who wrote *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, in the late seventies and early eighties of the 19th century, was not conspicuously different in moral perspective from the one who wrote "What Is Man?" and "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger." It is clear that Mark Twain's "moral didacticism" is not only visible but also consistent throughout his works (Flowers xi); this is a debatable statement since many have led researches to prove a moral change in Mark Twain's writings.

There is a considerable amount of literature on Mark Twain's oeuvre. Most studies focused mainly on humour, racism, and moral quest. Frank C. Flowers in his PhD dissertation "*Mark Twain's Theories of Morality*" (1942), analysed the moral and philosophical principles in Twain's fiction and essays. The study highlights Mark Twain's extreme pessimism as the only explanation of his attitude to morality but fails to recognize other possible reasons.

From another point of view, Van Wyck Brooks in his seminal book *The Ordeal Of Mark Twain* (1920), explores what he calls Twain's "pessimistic cynicism" (06). However, Twain's pessimism was not for melancholic or cynical purposes but for educational purposes which reinforces his didactic work.

Bernard Devoto, in *Mark Twain at Work* (1942), went deeper into Mark Twain's life. He attempted to uncover some unfortunate events that Twain went through; the death of his two daughters Susy and Jean and the loss of his fortune. According to Devoto, the misfortunes that Twain went through have affected his philosophy and directed it to a pessimistic turn.

From a different perspective, Carl Dolmetsch in *Our Famous Guest: Mark Twain in Vienna* (1993), tackled another aspect of Twain's life. He discussed Mark Twain's Vienna sojourn in September 1897, prompted by the musical studies of Clara; Mark Twain's daughter. Carl Dolmetsch argued that critics have often dismissed Twain's stay in Vienna as unnoteworthy and infertile. According to him, Vienna's atmosphere has proven to be very inspirational to Mark Twain; "What Is Man?" and *The Mysterious Stranger* are inspired by his Viennese visit. Furthermore, although many attribute Twain's moral pessimism in his late writings to personal misfortunes and financial trouble, Carl Dolmetsch rejects this view and offers an alternative presumption. He argues that the metamorphosis in Twain's moral outlook and writing style was triggered by the evolution of consciousness he experienced abroad, mainly in Vienna, and the influence of nihilist and hedonist ideas.

This literature review shows that few researchers have addressed the possible influence of hedonism on Mark Twain but have failed to explore its impact on his ethical and moral views expressed in his novels, short stories, and essays.

The current research, therefore, investigates the moral and ethical dilemmas in three selected texts. It attempts to answer the following questions: What is the relationship between *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), "What Is Man?" (1906), and "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger" (1969) in terms of moral outlook? Is

there an affinity between hedonism and Mark Twain's ideas? Did Mark Twain undergo a moral and ideological change in his latest works?

Our research is a re-reading of selected writings by Mark Twain. It aims at filling the gap concerning Mark Twain's moral direction and his ideas and beliefs on society's moral conduct by trying to study a new aspect of our selected texts.

Hedonism as such is not a literary theory; it is a doctrine. It claims that pleasure and pain motivate us to accomplish any action. Jeremy Bentham, in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1781) argued that: "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain, and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do" (14).

The word hedonism, according to *the Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, comes from the ancient Greek word 'ἡδονή' 'hēdonē' (Weijers), meaning pleasure, and derived from "hedys", which means "sweet" or "pleasant" ("Hedonism" 377). In ethics, this term relates to all the theories in which the principal objective is pleasure. In fact, many thinkers believed that the hedonist meaning of pleasure had to do with physical pleasure; nonetheless, hedonists acknowledge pleasure drawn from love, fame, sympathy, knowledge, and so on. The earliest known form of hedonism goes back to the Cyrenaics in the 4th century, led by Aristippus who pleaded that the objective behind a good living is to pursue momentary pleasure. Protagoras stressed on the fruitlessness of anticipating future pleasure, "The true art of life is to crowd as much enjoyment as possible into each moment" (377); thus, good living is pursuing as much pleasure as possible in each present moment (377).

Aristippus's philosophical hedonism was later adopted by many other philosophers. Hobbes claimed that: "happiness lies in the successful pursuit of our

human appetites” (Ryan and Deci 144), while Donatien Alphonse François, Marquis de Sade argued that the “pursuit of sensation and pleasure is the ultimate goal of life” (144). Bentham asserted that “it is through individuals’ attempting to maximize pleasure and self-interest that the good society is built” (144).

In the 18th century, Jeremy Bentham restored hedonism in both its psychological and moral aspect under his theory of utilitarianism, Individuals’ sole and greatest aim in life is pursuing pleasure. Philosophical hedonists emphasize on hedonistic theories of well-being, the good living of the one living it. For hedonists, only pleasure is fundamentally valuable and only pain is singularly invaluable (Weijers).

Contemporary literary hermeneutics, a theory of interpretation and a literary theory, will be used to understand Twain’s philosophy as reflected in our corpus. The selected texts, then, will be treated like philosophical writings to unveil Mark Twain’s ethical opinions and the moral dilemmas present in his works. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* defines it as a methodological discipline that deals with the interpretation of “human actions, texts, and other meaningful material” (Mantzavinos). Hermeneutics has long been used as a tool to unfold whatever problems humans aspire to resolve throughout history; thus, it is only natural for its tools to have fluctuated, just like the set of matters it has looked into. The conception of hermeneutics as more of a systematic endeavour goes back to the exegesis of the Homeric epics. This ancient exegesis was characterized by allegorisis; a method that looked into the nonliteral interpretation of authoritative texts, it aimed at grasping the hidden sense that goes beyond the surface meaning. Allegoresis was extensively exercised from the 6th century BC to the Neoplatonistic and Stoic schools and even later (Mantzavinos). The practice of hermeneutics has

long been a part of human history; its importance comes from the human need to interpret thoughts and texts. Although Hermeneutics has been defined in diverse manners, the basic objective behind it, remains the understanding and interpretation of texts (Donkor 1). Since our work deals with the literary treatment of the philosophical themes and ideas like morality and hedonism, literary hermeneutics will be used to explain Twain's attitude to morality in our corpus.

In terms of structure, the thesis is divided into three chapters and a general conclusion. The first chapter analyses *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* while the second chapter explores "What Is Man?" The last chapter, however, elucidates the moral content in "No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger." The General Conclusion sums up the major ideas and findings and stresses the significance of this research and its contribution to Twain's studies. It also highlights the limitations of the study and possible ways of approaching Twain's writings.

Chapter 1: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* illustrates how the protagonist Huckleberry Finn's moral sense is fashioned by the external influences of the society he belongs to. Critics have agreed on the fact *HF* was written over a period of seven years. Twain himself, in a series of letters, addressed to William Dean Howells, has mentioned in several instances, the writing process of the book. In August 1876 in one of the letters, Twain indicated that he had already started writing another:

began another boys' book—more to be at work than anything else. I have written 400 pages on it—therefore it is very nearly half done. It is Huck Finn's Autobiography. I like it only tolerably well, as far as I have got, & may [pigeon-hole] or burn the MS when it is done. (7)

Moreover, on July 20, 1883, he stated in another letter that he was close to completing a work that he had finished two or three years before that date and that he would soon finish it. He explained that the work would be a companion to *TS*:

Am away along in a big 433 one that I half-finished two or three years ago. I expect to complete it in a month or six weeks or two months more. And I shall like it, whether anybody else does or not . . . It's a kind of companion to Tom Sawyer. There's a raft episode from it in the second or third chapter of life on the Mississippi. (76)

The statements of Mark Twain, in several letters, throughout the years have explicitly demonstrated that he has worked on *HF* intermittently over a period of seven years. What is more, he expressed his appreciation of the work regardless of what anyone might think of it. Walter Blair "When was *Huckleberry Finn* Written?" (1958) supports the previous

statements, and further asserted that although critics disagree on the number of periods in which *HF* was written, all seem to agree that it was written between 1876 and 1883.

The Protagonist of this work Huckleberry Finn, a young boy whom we discover formerly in a previous work called *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), was presented as the “juvenile pariah of the village” (Twain 45) and “son of the town drunkard” (45). He was first introduced to the reader as Tom Sawyer’s best friend. Following the enormous success of his novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), Mark Twain wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a sequel.

Huck Finn manages despite the 19th-century customs to escape from the “*sivilized*” world with a runaway slave called Jim. Befriending a slave at that time was against the common racial consciousness of the South, which led him straight to a moral dilemma, between what is dictated by society and what is prescribed by consciousness and duty. Despite his innocence and lack of comprehension of social codes, it must have been strenuous to defy social paradigms that have long been installed in society.

Before discussing the moral dilemmas discussed in this work, it is of prime importance to define morality and ethics and what it has to do with it. Ethics is derived from the Greek word ‘*ethos*’ meaning character (Moyers 07). *The Cambridge Dictionary* defines ethics as follows: “the study of what is morally right and wrong or a set of beliefs about what is morally right and wrong.” In fact, the term is used to refer to the philosophical study of morality. It is mainly concerned with the set of rules that shape and guide human conduct. The main interest of this field includes the essence of values and qualifying acts to be ethically correct or wrong (Gyekye).

Ronald J. Engel and Joan Gibb Engel explain in *Ethics of Environment and Development: Global Challenge and International Response* that ethics as a field was first structured in ancient Greece by Aristotle. M. Patrão Neves in the *Encyclopaedia of Global Bioethics* claim that the German philosopher Albert of Saxony, in the 13th century, was the first to make the distinction between morality and ethics. He used the expression '*ethica utens*' which is Latin for "ethics as a rule of life", namely antagonistic to '*ethica docens*' referring to "subject matter for teaching a philosophical reflection, analytical and critical, about action" (2). The former refers to the use of morality in everyday life; the latter refers to the field of study which is concerned with ethics.

Throughout history, the definition of ethics knew many changes. The concern of ethics expanded from '*praxis*' to '*techné*', an action that affects not the agent but external agents. Hence, the field expanded to not only other domains of human action but also broadened in relation to other living creatures like animals and plants. In the Middle Ages, the concept of religion had to be considered. In the Modern era, the concept of liberty had to be acknowledged, and virtues had to be replaced by values (2).

Morality, in contrast, originates from the Latin word '*moralis*' which means customs or manners. *Cambridge Online Dictionary* defines morality as "a set of personal or social standards for good or bad behaviour and character." It is the subject of study of ethics. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* suggests dividing morality into two broad senses: a descriptive meaning and a normative meaning. First, the descriptive meaning refers to certain codes of conduct advanced by a society or a group. However, the second meaning of morality is the normative

meaning which refers to “a code of conduct that, given specified conditions would be put forward by all rational persons” (“Definition of Morality”).

Ethics and morality, very often, are used interchangeably. However, philosophers like Martin Heidegger and Paul Ricoeur tend to consider ethics “as the foundational level of human action . . . Moral refers to the normative level of human action” (Patrao 10). This means ethics try to explain why people behave the way they do; morals attempt to describe the manner how people should behave.

Paul Weiss, in “Morality and Ethics” (1942), made a distinction between a moral man and an ethical one. According to him, morality is conforming to an already well-established set of norms, as set up by the group of people he belongs to. Ethics, in contrast, requires the man to willingly contain himself to live for the sake of an ideal good. Morality, then, is concerned with conformity to an already established set of beliefs, held in common by a group of people.

Mark Twain wrote *HF* two decades after the Civil War ended. The story offers a portrait of 19th century American society and their attitudes toward slavery. It is worth mentioning that even at the time of the writing of the story, African-Americans hardly made any progress; the Civil War did not impact the inherent racist notions that were present in pre-Civil War, so racism was still heavily present.

The novel takes place in the South, primarily along the Missouri River in the mid-1800s. The book tells the story of thirteen-year-old Huck Finn, an adventurous boy living in the slave state of Mississippi, who runs away from home and floats down the Mississippi River along with a runaway slave named Jim. The two undertake a series of adventures and meet several people along the way. Huck Finn

undertakes a journey of moral and identity discovery making him questions many institutions such as religion, racism, and social mores.

HF was severely criticized for its frequent use of the word ‘*nigger*’. The recurrent usage of the term throughout the book has led to the banning of the work categorizing it as racist and offensive towards African Americans; nevertheless, it is important to contextualize the use of this term and remind that the writer used vernacular dialects to depict the mid-1800s period in the South. The word was not considered vulgar; it was an accepted part of the vernacular. It was not initially used as a racial slur but had later acquired its offensive connotation of racial inferiority by Twain's day, and so the use of the term was not for racist motifs but to realistically depict slave state slang.

Although many praise the moralistic views that Huck Finn brings about, Julius Lester, despite being a strong antagonist of book banning, stated in his article “Morality and Adventures of Huckleberry Finn” (1984), that as a black parent he feels sympathy towards those who seek the banning of the book. Additionally, he demands, at the very least, that *HF* be removed from required reading lists in schools. He further affirmed that the education of his children is going to be enhanced by not reading *HF* (43). By the same token, Julius Lester declared being incapable of separating literature, as good as it might be written from morality, that he particularly distinguishes from bourgeois values that he describes as narrow and continuously seek to govern other people's behaviour, creation of necessity of conformity to abide social cohesion. Julius Lester further explained that if a book is to “serve as the axe for the frozen sea within us, as Kafka wrote. *HF* is not the axe; it is the frozen sea, immoral in its major premises, one of which demeans blacks and insults history” (43). Literature, therefore, should serve a moral purpose, and *HF* not

only fails to fulfil that, but the authors even deem it immoral as it belittles and degrades blacks and insults history. Furthermore, the critics feel irritated by the parallels that Twain made between slavery and Huck being held captive by his father.

The novel begins with a statement by Mark Twain saying: “PERSONS attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot” (6). Yet most scholars have focused mainly on the moral content that the book contains. Michael Lackey, “Beyond Good and Evil: Huckleberry Finn on Human Intimacy” (2002), strongly disagrees on the idea that morality should be used as a measure to assess the value of the book. In this case, all the previous assumptions and readings that used morality as a tool to measure the value of *HF* have failed to grasp Mark Twain’s pivotal theme. The author argues that Mark Twain's purpose through the book was not to provide a surrogate morality. On the contrary, his aim was to banish and shatter morality (492). Twain in *HF*, the scholar continues, reveals how morality “alienates humans from humans” and “the possibility of living beyond good and evil” (494).

The novel represents the moral codes common at the time. Thus, when they make up their minds to help free Jim from the Phelps’ hut, Tom reminds Huck that the only way to do it is by digging a hole using two case knives, even if it case a lot of time: “It ain't right, and it ain't moral, and I wouldn't like it to get out” (Twain 238). This moral stance that Tom sustains is exactly what caused Huck’s amazement earlier on. Tom never accepts to go against the moral dictation of the book, yet easily accepts to help steal Jim. Huck, unaware that Jim was already freed by Mrs. Watson, conceives Tom’s behaviour as a violation of the book. In the

following chapters, Tom suggests they use picks instead of case-knives to free Jim; a thing that Huck strongly disproves: “Ticks is the thing, moral or no moral; and as for me, I don't care shucks for the morality of it . . . and I don't give a dead rat what the authorities thinks about it nuther” (Twain 238). Huck broke the moral law starting from the moment he decided to free Jim from slavery; nevertheless, it is only in this instance that he realises the change occurring within him (Lackey 494-495).

In order to understanding Huck’s rejection of morality, one must go back to the beginning of the journey. The greatest battle occurring in Huck’s consciousness was when he had to decide whether or not to denounce Jim. Although from a contemporary moral stance, one might perceive slavery as wrong, in the book’s era, allowing a slave to run away *was* morally condemned by the social constructions of the time, and this is what stirs up his consciousness every time: “But you knowed he was running for his freedom, and you could a paddled ashore and told somebody” (91). Huck was aware of the moral condemnation that his acts had and how to correct them and yet he didn’t. Michael Lackey explains that

Twain's decision to have Huck's conscience upbraid him for something so clearly reprehensible as slavery underscores, not that the conscience is an impartial judge of objective moral values, but that it is a social construction, a receptacle of his culture's values and ideology. (495)

Twain wanted to demonstrate that our consciousness is not an objective judge of moral value but rather that “consciousness is socially constructed” (495). Contrarily to Michael Lackey, Leo B. Levy disputes the possibility of “rehabilitating conscience” (495) to act separately from morality and for the better good of

humanity. Leo B. Levy believes that Mark Twain in this work distinctively separates “societal conscience and a true conscience, conventional morality and true morality” (495), yet argues that for Twain both are just as lethal as one another (495). Huck, throughout the novel, is repeatedly reminded by his conscience of social constraints as the following extract shows:

What had poor Miss Watson done to you, that you could see her nigger go off right under your eyes and never say one single word? What did that poor old woman do to you, that you could treat her so mean? Why, she tried to learn you your book.” (Twain 91)

Miss Watson had taught Huck Manners, morals, religious matters that can be summed in what he calls the book; the things he learned trigger within him struggle unaware of what is really right and what is wrong (Lackey 496). The influence of social constraints, however, is so strong that it almost made Huck denounce Jim and turn against his friend. The moral dilemma that Huck faces is not morality versus morality; in fact, it is morality versus friendship. Twain clearly advances how accepting morality means turning away from friendship while accepting friendship means rejecting morality (Lackey 496).

Mark Twain did not intend for Huck Finn either to be a beau ideal of morality or a model of hatred; instead, he aimed at presenting a simple illustration of a crisis that every young man undergoes during his journey to growth. His intention through the book was to present the reader with a relatable character like Huck Finn, who grew away from society’s influence and only recently integrated society and did not fully comprehend the pressure to follow the moral code.

On the other hand, Mark Twain depicts a typical case of a blind follower of social values, who is Tom Sawyer. As explained earlier, social mores are a sort of adopted ideology that must be blindly followed but never questioned. Tom Sawyer, in multiple instances, adopts the morality that he learned *thoughtlessly* without questioning it because that is what he grew up with.

A superficial reading of *HF* is sufficient to think that Huck is completely disoriented. Huck Finn in multiple occurrences finds himself in dispute with the dictations of morality. Yet, Huck often trespasses the moral code without caring for the moral condemnation of his acts. Huck's sole concern is his little person. Selfishness is the unequivocal trait that characterizes him. It repeatedly flows to the surface. A close analysis of the numerous decisions that Huck Finn made is sufficient to deduce that he always looked out for himself from the very start; he is all that he worries about, even in situations where he seems to help Jim he helped himself.

Going back to the very start, during his stay at the widower's household, Huck was exposed to reading, religious and moral lessons, and other boring things that he never truly fathomed. In fact, all the activities he enjoyed were forbidden. For instance, Huck enjoyed smoking and befriending Tom Sawyer. On one occasion, Miss Watson threatened Huck that he would go to hell if he continued to behave the way he did; an idea that did not annoy Huck because at least then he would have fun with his friends away from the unpleasant company of Miss Watson (Twain 12).

Huck Finn is extremely self-centred and selfish, ungrateful for all what Miss Watson offered him, and he didn't hesitate to offer her to Tom Sawyer's gang: "I

was most ready to cry; but all at once I thought of a way, and so I offered them Miss Watson—they could kill her” (Twain 17). Despite the fact that Miss Watson has always done so much good to him. Unable to attain any thrill from what Miss Watson offered, he wished her death to get rid of the burdensome things she imposed on him.

Huck is a hedonist; he is driven by pleasure and indifferent towards the way his actions might affect others. Throughout the novel, Huck Finn faces the impasse of whether or not to give away Jim. Several times he was close to giving him away but he did not. Jim’s interest is never the aim nor is the utmost interest of society. It has always been about Huck and his well-being. The first time Huck thinks of giving away Jim, what troubled him was his guilty conscience and how bad he felt, for he would be doing wrong to Jim’s “righteous owner” Mrs. Watson; after all she has done so much good to him which leads him to decide to deliver Jim. In fact, what dissuaded him is the guilty conscience of betraying his friend. Is Huck really facing a moral dilemma here? Morality has never been comprehended by him; at multiple times, he was told how wrong it would be to befriend Tom Sawyer or to smoke and several other things, and yet he had no issue to break this moral code because the pleasure he attained from this action was far superior to the abiding of rules.

If one looks closely, it is rather a feeling of gratefulness and guilt that makes Huck think of delivering Jim. It is the same guilty conscience at the thought of betraying Jim that dissuades him. What Huck faces is two annoyances, one of doing wrong by Miss Watson and another doing wrong by Jim. He weighs the pros and cons and decides that the anguish he will feel for delivering Jim will weigh greater than the trouble of doing wrong by Miss Watson. Thus, morality is not what guides

Huck, but is mere pleasure and pain. He constantly seeks pleasure, not moral abidance; after all, what he has done was not because of a moral dictation from consciousness, but simply the desire to feel free which would give him pleasure and he felt free on that raft with Jim. We realize that Huck is guided by his consciousness and what feels good to him not by morality; in fact, he is not at all in favour of morality if anything he continuously rejects it.

Twain demonstrated the devastating impact of morality. He showcased the harm that morality could cause and how freeing it could feel to detach oneself from it. More so, he intended to show that life should go on not stop at society's dictations. Although Twain did not openly display his moral theory in this book, one can clearly see the growing seeds of Twain's moral direction. He did not praise morality nor give us an ethical hero; on the contrary, Huck's character is anti-moralist in its essence and rather looks out for what is good by him.

Moreover, the work as demonstrated above tells the story from the perspective of an uneducated boy. Be that as it may, many critics have pointed out that Twain's viewpoint is echoed through Huck Finn's character. James L. Colwell not only affirms the complex relation between Huck Finn and Mark Twain but goes further to authenticate his claims by reporting the opinions of different scholars on the subject, including Leslie Fiedler and Van Wyck Brooks. Leslie Fiedler claims that: "The author of Huckleberry Finn is Mark Twain, and Samuel Clemens is only the author of Mark Twain" (qtd. in Colwell 72). Correspondingly, Van Wyck Brooks believes that Huck is merely Twain in disguise:

Through the character of Huck, that disreputable, illiterate little boy, as Mrs. Clemens no doubt thought him, [Twain] was licensed to let

himself go . . . Huck's illiteracy, Huck's disreputableness and general outrageousness are so many shields behind which Mark Twain can let all the cats out of the bag with impunity. (Colwell 72-73)

Hence, this shows that Twain concealed himself behind the uneducated character of Huck in order to expose his true opinions and views. Mark Twain was well aware of the deep sees he was getting into in *HF*; thus, he undertook a strategic path of humour and the perspective of an uneducated boy to criticize: the social mores of southern states, the hypocrisy of the religious institution, and the unbearable treatment of the African American community.

The following chapter explores another Twain “What Is Man?” a gospel as Mark Twain calls it and a book he truly believed in and in which he fully explained his moral opinions in a raw way, since he did not intend to publish it with his name. The analysis of this book will be of great significance and will demonstrate Twain’s moral maturing and openness to discuss moral subjects.

Chapter Two: “What Is Man?” (1906)

Written in the form of a “Socratic dialogue” (Klotz 1), Mark Twain’s “WM” provides a quite different argument for mankind’s nature as well as the basis of their moral faith. Men, in this text, are selfish pleasure-seeking machines. “WM” (1906) not only brings about a critique of human morals but goes further to deny notions like ethics, courage, and religion. This chapter studies Mark Twain's view of man being an impersonal machine and their aim in life being the pursuit of happiness.

“WM” is a work that Mark Twain has conducted early in his carrier, and put off its publication for 25 years. In the third volume of his autobiography, Twain pointed out that he never planned to publish it because he was aware of the negative reception that it would have (126-128). During his stay in Vienna in 1898, he began sketching the outline of what would later become “WM”. He stated in his autobiography:

I wrote out and completed one chapter, using the dialogue form in place of the essay form. I read it to Frank N. Doubleday, who was passing through Vienna, and he wanted to take it and publish it, but I was not minded to submit it to print and criticism. I added a paragraph or a chapter now and then, as time went by, and at last, in 1902 I finished it; and I further finished it, in 1904. (Twain 127)

Mark Twain ended up publishing the work anonymously in 1906, at the De Vinne Press. J. W. Boswell, chief of one of De Vinne’s departments, unaware of who wrote the book took out the copyrights in his name. in this regard, the book was printed in a limited edition of 250 copies (Twain 127-128).

Twain's "WM" deals with a subject of great controversy that was common in Europe since René Descartes's influential philosophical and autobiographical treatise *Discourse on the Method* (1637), in which Descartes denied the existence of thought and reason amidst animals and argued that the bodies of animals are fundamentally machines obeying mechanical laws (Hatfield). This argument was further developed by the French philosopher and physician Julien Offray de La Mettrie in *L'homme Machine* (1748), which is an important work regarding materialist philosophy in the determinist tradition of Thomas Hobbes. De la Mettrie further developed the assertion about animals being mechanical agents, into including Man in the equation, claiming that similar to animals, man is a machine ("Mark Twain").

Mark Twain in "WM" made arguments concerning the moral instinct of human beings, how meaningless and inexistent human morals are. In his response to Hartford club members, who accused him of stripping man of his dignity, Twain stated in the third volume of his autobiography: "they said I was trying to strip man of his dignity, I said I shouldn't succeed, for it would not be possible to strip him of a quality he didn't possess" (Twain 127). In this passage, Twain denies the notions of altruism and ultimate good, love, and courage and defends selfishness and pleasure. He explained that there is no heroism in human actions nor self-sacrifice since man is intrinsically a pleasure-seeking machine. Besides, he maintains that pain and pleasure are what drive man's actions. He gave an example of how actions are primarily done out of self-interest in this long passage:

O.M. Very well. Now let us add up the details and see how much he got for his twenty-five cents. Let us try to find out the

REAL why of his investing. In the first place, HE couldn't bear the pain which the old suffering face gave him. So he was thinking of HIS pain--this good man. He must buy a salve for it. If he did not succor the old woman HIS conscience would torture him all the way home. Thinking of HIS pain again. He must buy relief for that. If he didn't relieve the old woman HE would not get any sleep. He must buy some sleep--still thinking of HIMSELF, you see. Thus, to sum up, he bought himself free of sharp pain in his heart, he bought himself free of the tortures of a waiting conscience, he bought a whole night's sleep--all for twenty-five cents! It should make Wall Street ashamed of itself. On his way home his heart was joyful, and it sang--profit on top of profit! The impulse which moved the man to succor the old woman was--FIRST--to CONTENT HIS OWN SPIRIT; secondly to relieve HER sufferings. Is it your opinion that men's acts. (Twain 07)

Mark Twain broke down what can be seen as an altruist action to show its purpose. The only reason the man gave up his money to help the woman was that that would give him a feeling of satisfaction; it is not sufficient to superficially analyse actions, and one has to dive deeper and weigh the pros and cons. In this case, keeping money would cause him pain and culpability. From this, we can understand that the only reason this action of helping the woman was done was because he would first and foremost attain a feeling of fulfilment from it; however, ignoring it would have caused him "pain", According to Twain, everything emanates from two things: pleasure and pain.

Accordingly, all actions that strike one as purely altruist are in reality in favour of the self-altruist. The only reason the altruist action was done in the first place was for the self-interest of the altruist; thus, defying the purpose of self-altruism (Crews 62). Hence, the arguments and statements advanced in “WM” coincide with the basic principles of hedonism.

“WM” is structured like a Socratic dialogue, representing an exchange between a young man and an old man, who the reader easily identifies as Mark Twain. At the time of writing this essay, Mark Twain was more than seventy years old; representing his ideas and ideology through the character of the old man. The young man, on the other hand, represents the reader.

It is important to note that this work is divided into two main sections: “Man the Machine” and “Personal Merit”. In these two parts, the old man elucidates what man as a machine represents. The old man, in his definition of “man”, uses these two expressions “man the machine” and “personal merit” several times, and they are often associated with one another. The use of the term ‘*machine*’ lowers man to the lowest of scales depriving him of all that makes him human. He uses the first expression to show the mechanism and organization that precedes any human actions. The short story explains that men have almost no control over but a small percentage of training that slightly changes the acts or mostly the way the action is done. Therefore, men act according to their inner settings; what the author calls “*programming*”; a concept which refers to the things they have gone through, their raising, the people they lived with, and their experiences that interfere and influence their behaviour, as Twain puts it: “We are creatures of outside influences—we originate nothing within. Whenever we take a new line of thought and drift into a

new line of belief and action, the impulse is always suggested from the outside” (12).

A machine does not take any personal merit from its performance since it in itself is impersonal and functions according to “the law of its make” (Twain 02). Since men are the originators of nothing, just like the machine, they cannot take credit for anything, and so things like heroism cannot be attributed to humans. Men cannot take credit for anything because everything they do is completely external to their desire.

The essay concludes with one thing: “do right for your own sake and be happy in knowing that your neighbour will certainly share in the benefits resulting” (27). Morality comes to one ultimate thing: doing what is right by one’s self. Not only does that bring good upon you, but it is also the way of doing good by the community.

It should be emphasized here that the topic of man as a machine and abnegation of morals within the human race is a recurrent theme in Twain’s writings. Twain in the first volume of his autobiography tackled the subject and once more talked about the inferiority of the human race. Moreover, he discussed man’s conceit in regards to their superiority as this passage shows: “We have no respect worthy evidence that the human being has morals. He is himself the only witness . . . For ages it was a mean animal indeed that was not vastly his superior in certain splendid faculties” (186). Nevertheless, despite the intellectual superiority of man in comparison to animals, he notes that: “by grace of his intellect he is incomparably the richest of all the animals now. But he is still a pauper in morals— incomparably the poorest of the creatures in that respect” (187). That is to say,

man's only asset is his intellect; nevertheless, his morals are questionable for he is most inadequate in the field of ethics.

Since man is a machine, according to Twain, it does not mean there is no space for a small percentage of free will. Twain referred to two terms, which are temperament and training. Temperament has to do with personality traits and characteristics of a person like anger, patience, educations, generosity, and so on. All these features are integrated into individuals differently and affect decision making. People, as said earlier, act according to their programming. What might cause happiness to one, might cause pain to another. This is related to the personal nature or temperament, to use Twain's terminology, of each person and affects decision making. Temperament is related to experiences that affect a person in a certain way. The following passage describes how man is unavoidably composed of temperament and training:

O.M. There was once a pair of New England boys-- twins. They were alike in good dispositions . . . At eighteen George was a sailor before the mast, and Henry was a teacher of the advanced Bible class. At twenty-two George, through fighting-habits and drinking-habits . . . and out of a job; and Henry was superintendent of the Sunday-school. At twenty-six George was a wanderer, a tramp, and Henry was pastor of the village church. Then George came home and was Henry's guest. One evening a man passed by and turned down the lane, and Henry said, with a pathetic smile, "Without intending me a discomfort, that man is always keeping me reminded of my pinching poverty, for he carries heaps of money about him, and goes by here

every evening of his life." That OUTSIDE INFLUENCE--that remark--was enough for George, but IT was not the one that made him ambush the man and rob him, it merely represented the eleven years' accumulation of such influences, and gave birth to the act for which their long gestation had made preparation. It had never entered the head of Henry to rob the man--his ingot had been subjected to clean steam only, but George's had been subjected to vaporized quicksilver. (28)

The Old Man in the example above alluded to 'the twins', which are temperament and influence. However, one went to study abroad and the other stayed and had gone through some obstacles. The environments they were exposed to were different. In this respect, their characters were altered by the life experiences they have gone through. On the other hand, there is this element that man does control. It is called training. This element does not necessarily influence the decision making or affect obeying the temperament which is inescapable since it takes a lot of training to alter slightly but never to change entirely the temperament of a person. It nonetheless affects the way actions are done and how one feels about the action.

In This Regards, man is made of two agents: temperament that refers to the innate characteristics of man, and training, that corresponds to everything a person goes through, the experiences, the people one socializes with, and the education one receives. Every action one does is not the result of one decision or one situation, but it is a result of a lifelong influence that pushes man to behave in a certain way.

For instance, the Old Man gave the example of a man with a short temperament and his maid getting older. As the maid got older, her tasks got sloppy

and she began to forget things. The man could not stop himself from scorning the old maid. However, his mother got upset by this action, so he tried to control his temperament. It was tough because he could not control his character, but he could control the way he submitted to it. Through training, the man managed to not scorn the old maid but just request gently for what he wanted. However, it is worth noting that even with training one cannot escape his temperament because as the old man explained “[e]verything has its limit—iron ore cannot be educated into gold” (Twain 02). No matter how effective training can be, it can never change entirely the essence of one’s temperament.

Man’s weakness and selfishness can never be controlled. Therefore, instead of chasing what one cannot change like temperament, fake heroism, and a non-existing notion of altruism, one can only attempt to train their ideas in a way that he will find his pleasure, which is inescapable, and by accepting this reality, actions will ultimately benefit the community.

In his philosophical dialogue “WM”, Twain rejected notions of free will and tried to prove the unpreventable mechanical determinism that forbids any space for free will or moral choice (Crews 62). The Old Man in this passage claims to be teaching the same gospel that all the great religions have always been teaching:

Diligently train your ideals upward and still upward toward a summit where you will find your chiefest pleasure in conduct which, while contenting you, will be sure to confer benefits upon your neighbor and the community"

Y.M. Is that a new gospel?

O.M. No.

Y.M. It has been taught before?

O.M. For ten thousand years.

Y.M. By whom?

O.M. All the great religions—all the great gospels.

Y.M. Then there is nothing new about it?

O.M. Oh yes, there is. It is candidly stated this time. That has not been done before. (24)

The Young Man throughout this dialogue rejects the Old Man's denial of heroism and his perseverance to prove that man's aim behind altruism is pleasure rather than self-sacrifice. This Gospel's preaching about man being a pleasure-seeking machine is very different from other religions that preach ideals of courage, altruism, and love, all of which the Old Man insists on being the results of temperament and training.

Many philosophers like Bernard Devoto, Carl Van Doren, and Edward Wagenknecht focussed on Mark Twain's argument for determinism; discussions about the dialogue seem to ignore Mark Twain's re-imagination of determinism and free will, far from offering a nihilistic reading of life. The old man proposed a possibility for change through insistence on change, which is the cause of the joy of the old man (Crews 62).

Some authors like Bernard Devoto had their own opinion on the moral change and deterministic opinions that Twain has showcased in his latest work. Bernard Devoto in describing Twain's later years (1890-1906), writes:

A series of disasters brought about a reorientation of his personality and gave his talent a different slope. His publishing firm failed; his fortune and his wife's were dissipated in the failure of the Paige typesetting machine; his health broke and, a bankrupt at the age of sixty, he had to make a heart-breaking effort to pay off his debts; his oldest daughter died, his youngest daughter developed epilepsy; his wife declined into permanent invalidism. His world toppled in ruins round him . . . There is a new Mark Twain, the author of *What Is Man?* and *The Mysterious Stranger*. (Jones 01)

Thus, according to Bernard Devoto “WM” is merely the consequence of unfortunate events, surrounding the latest years of Twain’s life.

Alexander E. Jones in his article “Mark Twain and the Determinism of *What is Man?*” (1957) maintained that a close reading of “WM” is sufficient to deny the previous claims. In fact, he explained that the ideas and beliefs held in “WM” were harboured by Twain during the most prosperous years of his life. Delancy Ferguson confirmed this affirmation and stated that Twain’s gospel arose from “sources deeper than bankruptcy and bereavement” (qtd. in Jones 2). Alexander E. Jones stated that according to Merle Johnson’s studies, Twain had been reflecting on questions of determinism long before he wrote “What Is Man?” as early as 1880. Dixon Wecter, however, revealed that “as early as 1882, in an unpublished dialogue between negroes written on his river trip, Mark Twain sketched out the logic elaborated sixty years later . . . in *What Is Man?*” (qtd. in Jones 2). In 1907, in the third volume of his autobiography, Twain declared “I have talked my gospel rather freely in conversation for twenty-five or thirty years, and have never much minded

whether my listeners liked it or not” (126). This goes to show that the ideas discussed in “What Is Man?” are the result of a farsighted contemplation, rather than the outcome of inauspicious life happenings.

To draw the link between Twain’s “WM” and biblical texts, Crews stated that the existential question ‘what is man?’ has been asked five times in the Bible, demonstrating the insignificance of man when compared to the greatness of creation. According to Crew, Twain echoes this biblical anthropology throughout this work. For instance, he believes that the only difference between a man and a rat is that “one is a complex elaborate machine, the other a simple and limited machine” (Twain 33). Similarly to what was stated in Ecclesiastes, which is amongst the 24 books of the Tanakh Hebrew Bible (Crews 63). Ecclesiastes argues that “the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity” (qtd. in Crews 63). The parallels between the work and the Bible are abundant in Twain's essay. These similarities go to the heart of the Old Man's philosophy. In this regard, Twain wrote:

[W]hatsoever a man is, is due to his make, and the influences brought to bear upon it by his heredities, his habitat, his associations, he is moved, directed, commanded, by exterior influences—solely. He originates nothing, himself—not even an opinion, not even a thought.

(2)

According to Michael Crews, this is what makes the old man so cheerful. His philosophy lifts all the burdens from man. They are insignificant, everything except for the temperament is completely exterior to him and since temperament is

merely programming that is sketched out to secure spiritual comfort, “starting from his birth until his death, a man never does a single thing which has any FIRST AND FOREMOST object but one—to secure peace of mind, spiritual comfort, for HIMSELF” (7). This spiritual comfort is the basis of human actions whether it is good or bad, and since he is unable to control it, it is crucial for any program of moral improvement to consider it.

Hedonism, as explained in the introduction, is seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. However, the old man’s philosophy goes a bit further than that as we read in the essay: “there is something that he loves more than he loves peace—the approval of his neighbors and the public. And perhaps there is something which he dreads more than he dreads pain—the disapproval of his neighbors and the public” (7). Unlike Hedonism, in Mark Twain’s philosophy, satisfying the community procures him even more peace of mind, and what is worse than pain is the disapproval of the community. This is what Michael Crews calls ‘other model selfhood’, which is acquired through training (64). Twain lifts all burdens from man; he seems to suggest that our inability to manipulate things and things happening exterior to our will discharges us from any kind of moral responsibility.

At last, this chapter has tackled Mark Twain’s philosophy in “WM” and exposed the recurrent beliefs bearing to the work being the ensue of inauspicious life happenings. What is more, it corrected its baseless condemnation and revealed the true origin of this work.

Chapter 3: “No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger”

This chapter deals with Twain’s latest work entitled “No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger”, which deals with religion, life, morality, and reality. Our purpose is to examine the inherent selfishness and constant search for pleasure and demonstrate, through an analysis of characters, Twain’s philosophy concerning human morals and nature.

“MS” was published posthumously. The story is a peculiar mixture of supernatural events that take place at the dawn of the age of modern printing in Europe. It is important to bear in mind that “MS” has not received the expected critical attention in contrast to Twain's other literary works. That may be due to the reputation of the work labelled as an ‘experimental’ text. Joseph Csicsila and Chad Rohman claim that “perhaps equally responsible for the deficiency in critical attention paid to “MS”, over the last thirty years is its reputation as something of an “‘experimental’ text” (2). The ‘experimental’ classification of the work, according to them, is partially rightful; for the reason that Twain’s latest works, that he produced in the last half of his life, delve into new “imaginative terrains” (2) that were unheard of within the American literary art. The ‘experimental’ label originated from the critics classifying “The Great Dark” (composed in 1898), “The Autobiography of Eve” (1901-1906), “3,000 Years Among the Microbes” (1905), and “MS”, as experimental works due to their peculiar and distinctively different nature from Twain’s other writings. However, Joseph Csicsila and Chad Rohman assert that despite the experimental label, and individualistic nature, works like “MS” contain many of the central constituents of “Twain’s literary art” (2).

The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts is undoubtedly controversial, not only for the circumstances surrounding its publication but also for its content. Mark Twain had been working on a new story prior to his death, from 1897 to 1908; however, he never seemed to be able to finish it. Three drafts of the story had been written, carrying three different names: *The Chronicle of Young Satan*, *Schoolhouse Hill*, and “MS”. The publishing history of “MS”, subtitled “Being an Ancient Tale Found in a Jug, and Freely Translated from the Jug,” can be described to be as complex as the story itself. In 1916, a story entitled *The Mysterious Stranger* had been published by Twain's editors, and the story was presumed to be Mark Twain's latest novel. However, in the 1960s, some scholars with John S. Tuckey at the head of the team, rigorously examined the story and revealed that the story entitled *The Mysterious Stanger*, was a heavily revised version of the manuscripts that Mark Twain had written (Landau 6-9). Most critics stated that the modification went too far as it altered the intentions of Twain's original story, hence, the work is now considered fraudulent. In 1969, the authentic version “MS”, based on Twain's original manuscript, was published for the first time (6-9).

The story of “MS” is set in an Austrian village, in the late fifteenth century. It is narrated by August Feldner, who is also a character in the book. August Feldner is a sixteen-year-old apprentice in a desolate old castle; where the print shop is established. The castle was inhabited by many people; amongst them, the print master and his family, the many workers of the print shop, in addition to a magician. The story begins with August recalling the magical events that took place in the castle following the arrival of a strange boy, who presumed his name to be “Number 44, New Series 864,962” (Twain 273).

The Story of “MS” takes place at the time when the Habsburg’s ruler Frederik III was dominating the Austrian region. This latter had inherited the position of arch-duke of the Austrian lands in 1424. Then, in 1440 he was elected king of Germany, and in 1452 he became Roman Emperor. Readers, who are familiar with the history of Austria, will notice similarities between king Frederik and the character of the magician; both have an enthusiastic interest in astrology, alchemy, and magic. As Soon as Frederik died in 1493, he was succeeded by Maximilian, who similarly to his father, ruled not only as archduke of Austria but also as king of Germany and Emperor of Rome. The Habsburg dynasty had reached its peak under the reign of Maximilian in the sixteenth century. Maximilian used diverse strategic tactics such as marriage, military pressure, and treaties to expand the Austrian territories: the Netherlands, Hungary, Bohemia, Burgundy, Spain, and the Spanish empire; including colonial holdings in the Americas, thus becoming a major European force (“No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger”).

Steven Kreis, in “Lectures on Modern European Intellectual History” (2000), studied the invention of the printing press and its effect on Europe. He stated that in the 15th century Johannes Gutenberg, the son of a noble family in Mainz, Germany, invented the first printing press. Gutenberg used to be a stonecutter and goldsmith. However, by 1452, he borrowed money and began his famous Bible project. He managed to print two hundred copies of the two-volume Gutenberg Bible. Some of these bibles were printed on vellum. The most expensive and beautiful Bibles were sold at the 1455 Frankfurt Book Fair, most of these printed bibles did not survive, and barely fifty copies are available today. The printing press knew a widespread despite the great efforts that Gutenberg made to make sure the technique would stay a secret. By 1500, about 2500 European cities

had obtained presses. In fact, German masters had an early advance at first, but the Italians were not long to catch up and even challenge them.

Steven Kreis studied the effects of the printing press that did not only augment the production of books but also decreased their costs. Consequently, it allowed widespread information to a much larger segment of the population; who were enthusiastic about the reception of any kind of information. Libraries could hold on to great numbers of books with affordable prices for the masses. Printing also promoted the circulation of information and the perpetuation of knowledge, which was one of the key elements for the advance of science, technology, and scholarship. The creation of the printing press opened up a whole new dimension and ground for the spread of knowledge within the great population. The researcher further explained that the earliest books dealt with religious topics; on the other hand, the printing press allowed the creation of a new type of knowledge; pertaining to the medical domain, ethical subjects, and other kinds of topics. It prevented the corruption of texts that used to be handwritten and made it possible for scholars to make progress in various domains.

As soon as Twain's manuscripts got published in 1969, heavy criticism fell upon the Paine-Denuka text and how far they had gone in their alteration of the work. John Tuckey, who exposed the deceitful version, asserted that the Paine-Denuka version went too far, and most of all, it went against Twain's intentions. Other critics and reviewers like Sholom J. Kahn asserted that the Paine-Denuka version should disappear and that the original manuscript should prevail in libraries. Tuckey stated that only literary curiosity should be given to the fraudulent version; for those interested in the authors' editors' relationship, and the effects that these editorial relationships can have on the authors' personal and literary reputation.

Alternatively, James M. Cox defended the work of Albert B. Paine and Frederick Duneka asserting that although they did not go along with Twain's intention, they did end up with good work, and considering the condition of the manuscripts, Twain clearly trusted Paine and gave him the freedom to edit the work in the way he wanted (Landau 65-66).

Andrea Landau, in *Mark Twain: Devil's Advocate* (2009) pointed out the differences between the Paine-Duneka fake version and the original manuscripts. She also referred to the striking humour that Mark Twain used in the "MS", explaining that the humour which was missing in the Paine version was one of the key elements that distinguished Mark Twain's writings. Andrea Landau criticized the Paine-Duneka version, saying that they were so caught up making sure the text would be accepted by the Christian audience that they missed the whole idea of the text and the role that humour served. She went further on comparing Twain's work with the classic Shakespearean comic relief; the use of comedy and humour to lighten up the mood when dealing with serious subjects. Ostensibly, Mark Twain had no intention of publishing the text within his lifetime, so he broke loose from the amiable old author who wrote children stories and without worrying about the reception amongst the public. Bruce Michelson, equally, labelled the story as "the set-up for one long practical joke" (52) and a great demonstration of how he turned his life experiences into fiction and learned how to use laughter as a weapon.

Following the publication of the manuscripts, "MS" has received a great deal of criticism. *Centenary Reflections on Mark Twain's No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger* (2009), a collection of thirteen essays by some of the most proficient Twain scholars, discussed a great range of topics; from "domesticity and transnationalism, to race and religion. The book echoed a variety of scholarly and

theoretical approaches to “MS”, which was analysed from diverse angles. Some scholars linked their analysis to the melancholic tone that Mark Twain used due to events relating to the grieve and challenging period he had gone in his life when writing the book.

Dwayne Eutsey, in his review entitled “Reflections on No. 44” (2010), described “MS” as “one of the humourist’s most enigmatic literary efforts” (103). Nevertheless, he asserted that the work was very different from the previous works, for it lacked the “comic veneer” that Twain was accustomed to soaking his other works with (104). He further associated the downfall of these workarounds events regarding Twain’s life. In this way, He explained that Twain wrote “MS” in a period in which he was in great sorrow near the end of his life, and since he didn’t intend on publishing it, he felt freed from the humorous layer that usually coated the melancholic profundity that was specific to Twain (103-105).

The work was sternly criticized for its use of blackface; Henry B. Wonham and Sharon D. Maccoy in their essays examined the significance of the inappropriate appearance of blackface in one of the passages; in which Forty-Four dressed up as a stereotype image of a blackface minstrel stage entertaining the audience:

It was a tall man, clothed in the loudest and most clownish and outlandish costume, . . . and the man's mouth reached clear across his face and was unnaturally red, and had extraordinarily thick lips, and the teeth showed intensely white between them, and the face was as black as midnight . . . like a fiend, and keep the bones going, and soon it broke into a song in a sort of bastard English. (Twain 410)

Sharon D. MaCcoy in “I ain’ no dread being: The Minstrel Mask as Alter Ego” (2010) described this abrupt appearance as “shocking, and uncomfortable surprise” (13). She further elaborated on the discomfort originating from the appearance of the figure who is indistinguishably associated with a racial derogation, but more so for its irrelevant appearance in 1490 Austrian village, a context that precedes the European conquests of the New World and Africa (13-14).

The story is told from August Feldner’s perspective. The narrator-protagonist is very disconnected and solitary and does not feel like he belongs to that place. However, as the events go about, he grows in confidence, and befriending the stranger makes him question everything he knows about life. Despite being very humble and simple, he has shown throughout the work a great deal of self-centeredness. August Feldner is the only character that wanted to befriend Forty-Four. Nonetheless, his intentions weren't very genuine as he wanted the relationship to be kept secret to avoid getting in trouble. When he was first seen with Forty-Four, his first concern was the trouble being seen with him would engender: “I was in a bad scrape. He would tell the men, and I should be an outcast, and they would make my life a misery to me” (292); his first reaction was to protect himself and deny the allegations of being friends with Forty-Four.

As we learn to familiarize ourselves with this character, despite his amiable appearance, we find out that he always looks out for himself and admits that the real reasons why he got close to Forty-Four in the first place weren’t that innocent. First, his conscience was torturing him as he pitied how lonely Forty-Four looked, and the other and main reason was that he thought the boy was given superpowers by the Magician, and he speculated that by getting closer to Forty-Four, he might catch the attention of the Magician and be given magical powers too. Thus, his intentions

were selfish; all the actions he had done were to earn, from one hand, a sense of self-gratification, and on the other hand, the fulfilment of personal prosperity. This is not the only instance of egocentricity that this character has revealed, as Forty-Four was appointed to be an apprentice, the other workers wanted to get him in trouble. August Feldner helped Forty-Four by parapsychologically telling him what he had to do; this action made him feel “good and fine and proud” (299), but also relief: “I had saved 44, unsuspected and without damage or danger to myself” (299). As a matter of fact, we understand that this character only does what makes him feel happy even when accomplishing good deeds, and the intentions behind it seem to be centred on making him feel happy and avoiding getting into any harm.

As shown above, the central character and essence of the whole story is centred around a mysterious stranger who holds the name of “Number 44, New Series 864,962”: his identity remains unfathomable and readers know very little about him. It is notable that most of the characters living in the castle disregarded Forty-Four since his arrival at the castle. Most of the inhabitants of the castle envied him and saw him as a rival while others pitied him, yet never dared to approach him, apart from the cook Katrina and the master, Heinrich Stein, who willingly accepted the boy and defied other characters by allowing Forty-four to stay. Katrina gained the feeling of motherhood that she had always been longing for and perceived the stranger as a son while the master, a good-hearted person did not refuse to help that poor creature; like Huck Finn who would not deliver Jim and the man in “What Is Man” who gave his last penny to the old woman to buy himself a calm conscience.

Forty-Four appears out of nowhere and knocks on the castle’s door. At first glance, this character sounds like an innocent poor boy, in a plea for finding a place

where he belongs among the inhabitants of the castle. Although this boy works very hard and does not harm anybody, he is shunned by all the inhabitants of the castle, and they plan to discard him. At the start, he is believed to be given magical powers from the castle's Magician. As the inhabitants' detestation grows towards him, he starts performing magical wonders. However, along the way, he befriends August Feldner and introduces him to whole new dimensions. Thanks to Forty-Four August Feldner observes how humans treat each other, and Forty-Four realizes the extent of human cruelty and the triviality of human religion and morals (Rasmussen 354).

Moreover, one of the strangest things about Forty-Four is his scepticism towards human matters; he denies the substantiality of matters that man perceives as important. He does not stop at that but goes further to call these affairs mere egotism. For instance, when he was asked about the magician's reputation and the reasons why he does not take credit for the extraordinary tricks he is able to perform, he instantly dismisses the importance of such things: "I don't want it. At home we don't care for a small vanity like that, and I shouldn't value it here" (Twain 348). He also demonstrates no interest in faith; he even questions the existence of heaven and hell and mostly the existence of God. In one particular scene, when questioned about the other world, he faintly answers: "There is no other" and "Have you never suspected this, August?" (469). His answer shows how plain and certain this fact is. Mark Twain expresses through this work not only a sense of morality centred around egocentricity and pleasure, displayed through the different events and characters in the story, but also a deep questioning of matters at the heart of human interests.

In this way, Forty-Four's attitude to religion plays a dynamic role in the story; in the first chapters, Twain satirizes the religious institution and exposes its

pretence. The narrator opens his story with a description of the setting as he states that it was the Middle Ages, and the story was set in the age of faith and enlightenment as shown in the following chapter: “Austria was far away from the world, and asleep; it was still the Middle Ages in Austria and promised to remain so forever. Some even set it away back centuries upon centuries and said that by the mental and spiritual clock it was still the Age of Faith in Austria” (255). Yet, paradoxically, his portrayal of the town shows ignorance as explained in the following lines:

Eseldorf was a paradise for us boys. We were not overmuch pestered with schooling. Mainly we were trained to be good Catholics; to revere the Virgin, the Church and the saints above everything; to hold the Monarch in awful reverence, speak of him with bated breath, uncover before his picture, regard him as the gracious provider of our daily bread and of all our earthly blessings, and ourselves as being sent into the world with the one only mission, to labor for him, bleed for him, die for him, when necessary. Beyond these matters we were not required to know much; and in fact, not allowed to. (53)

Twain exhibits the paraxial institution that is the religion that promises enlightenment and yet forbids knowledge and promotes ignorance. As depicted in the previous passage, knowledge was not permitted, the only education they were allowed to receive is whatever the church permits. Thus, they blind people with false promises. Ravenousness and falseness of religion are personified by the controlling and materialistic Father Adolf, who always intervenes when there is someone to punish or when there is a financial profit. Through this character, Twain makes it clear that religious people are both artificial and shallow.

Twain tackled the issue of the mind and the inner cognitive abilities within the human brain. In one scene, Forty-four explains the brain and how it functions:

The way of it is this, he said. You know, of course, that you are not one person, but two. One is your Workaday-Self, and 'tends to business, the other is your Dream Self, and has no responsibilities, and cares only for romance and excursions and adventure. It sleeps when your other self is awake; when your other self sleeps, your Dream Self has full control and does as it pleases. It has far more imagination than has the Workaday-Self, therefore its pains and pleasures are far more real and intense than are those of the other self, and its adventures correspondingly picturesque and extraordinary. (363-364)

Forty-four meanderingly explains that our conscience or what he calls 'dream self' is detached from the outside constraints and engagements, and man's only obligation is directed towards attaining pleasure and evading pain. However, there is another aspect in our conscience that the 'workday self' has to consider involving: societal codes, responsibilities, and worldly affairs. Internally and truly, what humans care about are their selves and pleasure; however, because of the outside influences they are restricted and bound to act a certain way. Forty-Four made a representation of what he calls 'the dream self' and made them full human beings, and these characters he magically created were duplicates of the four workers of the castle. Although these characters physically sound real, they were very different in essence. These characters sought pleasure and did not care about anything except that as displayed in this next passage: "the Duplicates fell to making love to the young women" (366). What also stands out about these

duplicates is their indifference in regards to human matters, and when one of them was questioned about loving Margret to whom he pledged eternal love towards, his answer was quaint for it did not seem to matter enough to keep it in his mind: “Yes. Quite true. I think . . . yesterday? Yes, I think it was yesterday. I am to marry her today. I think it’s to-daanyway, it is pretty soon. The master requires it. He has told me so” (426). He acknowledges that it has no importance when talking about love, marriage, and reputation. Furthermore, the character denied all these matters and openly admits to not caring about them: “Good heavens! It isn't any matter whether you stand disgraced or not?” He shook his head, and said quite simply-“No, it isn't any matter, it is of no consequence” (425).

The seeking of pleasure and avoiding pain a significant theme of this work that Hedonist theory questions. In the text, characters are in the relentless and endless pursuit of pleasure. Twain used the character of Forty-Four to prove that August and the mysterious stranger are two sides of the same coin. The ending of the novel is important; Forty-Four confesses that he is purely an imaginative figure in August’s brain. Forty-Four, then, is probably the fictional projection of Twain, and his views in regards to his unconvicted view of religion, morals, honour are merely the buried beliefs within August that he doesn’t dare to admit. In fact, several authors supported the idea that the narrator of the story is not a separate organism from Forty-Four and that they are in point of fact the same person. Joseph Csicsila in “Life's Rich Pageant: The Education of August Feldner in Mark Twain's ‘No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger’” (1997) argues that Twain’s Forty-Four and August Feldner might just represent “the idea of a wholly intimate alter ego relationship between the two characters” (57) although some like William Gibson and John Tuckey believed that Forty-Four and August Feldner “fused together to

become unified in the last chapter” (57). However, I strongly support Robert Lowery, who believed that “Forty-Four is merely “August's metaphorical perception of himself” (57). Twain’s use of these two characters validates the existence of several layers within the human mind.

Besides, Joseph Csicsila claimed that Mark Twain fictionalized many aspects of not only his life but also his spiritual and cognitive journey to growth; the parallels don’t stop at Forty-Four and August Feldner’s character but go further to include Mark Twain in the equation (56). Kent Rasmussen in his book *Critical Companion to Mark Twain* (2007) likewise highlighted the resemblances between August Feldner and Mark Twain and said that “MS” is an account of Twain’s own experience as a print shop apprentice (355). Twain in his notes shed light on the humiliations he suffered from as an apprentice, similarly to August’s experience (355). Accordingly, August Feldner represents a multidimensional character that Twain used to reveal his earliest questions about life, while Forty-Four’s vision comes closer to draw Twain’s current mental stage when writing this work.

This chapter has clarified the controversy surrounding the publication of Twain's latest and most challenging work. The re-reading of the text has exposed Twain's true sentiment in regard to ethics, religion, and the human mind.

General Conclusion

The present research explored hedonism and moral relativism in Mark Twain's *HF*, "WM", and "MS". One characterizing aspect of Mark Twain's works is the consistent questioning of ethical hypocrisy that costed him considerable backlash.

This paper attempted to prove that Mark Twain believed that human morals were under the control of pleasure and pain. As mentioned in the first pages of this paper, no study has been conducted concerning the affiliation between Mark Twain's writings and hedonism; however, some critics like Carl Dolmetsch and Joseph E. Canavan have pointed out the potential influence that the hedonist theory might have had on Mark Twain.

It is important to note that there is undeniably a change in Mark Twain's literary expression; however, the change does not concern his ideology but rather relates to how openly he expresses his beliefs. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, Mark Twain's moral opinion regarding human ethics has not changed, if anything it became stronger, and he was able to openly discuss them without fear in his latest works that he did not want to publish. In *HF*, he made use of the voice of a young innocent boy to criticize human morals and subliminally demonstrate hedonist ideas. In "WM" he openly discussed the philosophy that goes in a parallel direction with hedonism. Twain was well aware of the critical implication that the controversial dialogue would provoke. In "MS", he exposed the atrocity and ignorance of the pitiful human race and overtly discussed moral subjects and cognitive matters. These three works studied above are a criticism of human society, they offer different views of life and human ethics, and even go further to question the meaning of life and correct behaviour.

Mark Twain's philosophy has never changed, but it rather invigorated throughout the years. Mark Twain was often misunderstood by the general public, who have come to know him only as the writer of *TS* and *HF*. Mark Twain "had to succumb to the overwhelming American atmosphere of chivalry, duty, and gentility" which had led him to withhold from publishing his most ardent attacks on human ethics (Keane 22). He even expressed his great frustration in a letter to his brother Orion in 1880 saying that "when one deceives as often as I have done, there comes a time when he is not believed when he does tell the truth" (Csicsila and Rohman 04). The public had a hard time envisioning Mark Twain outside the persona of the writer of adventure books.

Our research has demonstrated the eminent parallelism between hedonism and Mark Twain's ideas. This provides a good starting point for discussion and further research. Thus, this study could be generalized to other works by Mark Twain. It will be interesting for future research to further investigate hedonism in Mark Twain's other writings. Looking forward, it would be fruitful for future studies to explore Mark Twain's latest writings more carefully, for example "WM" and "MS", and perceive them as more than mere experimental works. Examining the moral composition of these works might prove an important area for further research.

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Abstract in French (Résumé)

Le présent travail explore les dilemmes moraux dans trois textes de Mark Twain: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, “What is Man?”, and “No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger.” Cette étude met l’accent sur la position morale de Mark Twain. Par conséquent, l’objectif principal de cette étude est de démontrer l’affiliation entre la doctrine hédoniste et les idées de Mark Twain. En outre, elle cherche également à clarifier l’hypothèse concernant le prétendu changement idéologique que Mark Twain aurait subi au cours de sa carrière. Etant donné que notre travail étudie l’œuvre de Mark Twain d’un point de vue philosophique, nous appuierons principalement sur l’herméneutique littéraire pour interpréter ces œuvres.

Mots clés: Dilemmes moraux, hédonisme, interprétation de textes, position morale, changement idéologique.