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THE GOOD-NATURED MAN: A CHARACTER STUDY IN  
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THE GOOD-NATURED MAN:

A CHARACTER STUDY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

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degree of

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BY

JOHN K. SHERIFF

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1972

THE GOOD-NATURED MAN:  
A CHARACTER STUDY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

APPROVED BY

Jeffrey Marshall  
Rudolph C. Bambar  
Daniel S. Smith  
Bruce Shaffer  
Alan K. Velie

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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## Introduction

The Good-Natured Man was an incarnation in Restoration and eighteenth-century literature of moral values which became more valuable and more idealistic as they became less practical. One needs only to recall how many times writers of the period 1660-1800 used such terms as appearance, art, dissimulation, and hypocrisy to recognize that the age was acutely conscious of the split between Christian and other ethical ideals and actual practice. And just as the fallen Adam can truly appreciate the unfallen one because experience makes innocence valuable, so the society which recognizes its fallen condition is best qualified to appreciate the moral values which are no longer compatible with current social values. As it became more and more clear in society that moral values had little influence on actual human conduct, they were defended more and more vociferously. After Hobbes denigrated human nature and motivation, the literate community in England became very much concerned about the "social hypothesis"--the natural sociability of man. And when Locke likewise "struck at all fundamentals,

threw all order and virtue out of the world, and made the very idea of these . . . unnatural, and without foundation in our minds," eighteenth century thinkers saw their "ground for morality" threatened and rallied to its defense. The character of the Good-Natured Man is both the product and device of those ministers, philosophers, and artists who reevaluated human nature and tried to restore or preserve belief in the value of moral goodness by giving it a basis in nature. The characteristics and qualities of the Good-Natured Man were first defined by the Latitudinarian divines. Then Shaftesbury demonstrated that, theoretically, if all these characteristics were embodied in one person, that person would live happily and harmoniously with his own physical, psychological, and spiritual nature, with his society, and with the natural universe. The writers of belle lettres brought the Good-Natured Man to life as a character, placed him in society and recorded his joys, conflicts, successes, and failures.

My purpose is to describe and interpret the character and function of the Good-Natured Man in selected eighteenth-century novels, plays, and essays. I shall trace the Good-Natured Man's emergence as a distinctly



eighteenth-century British character, but I shall not trace in detail the genealogies of particular good-natured characters. I shall attempt to discover what the Good-Natured Man is like when he appears, what themes are implicit in his character and presence, and what effect he has on the tone, plot, and theme of certain works, that is, what function the character has as part of the organic unity of given works. I believe this study will provide some insights through a different angle of vision into literature and life in eighteenth-century England.

## Chapter I

### Theological and Philosophical Background

Louis Bredvold has commented that the history of an idea sometimes appears to be analogous to the life history of living organisms. "Like plants and animals, ideas flourish best in appropriate environments and climates, and like them ideas reveal their real nature in their growth and evolution."<sup>1</sup> But even when, at a fairly mature point in its "growth and evolution," the "real nature" of an idea can be understood, one still can only speculate about its roots or ancestors and about which provide the most nourishment and vitality to the organism. The idea of man's natural goodness did not begin as a seed or germ in the seventeenth century. The idea is as ancient as Adam and a comprehensive study of the ideological origins of the Good-Natured Man as he appears in eighteenth-century literature and writings would no doubt cover the entire period of recorded human history. But in the Restoration period and the eighteenth century conditions in England seem to have been particularly favorable to the growth and evolution of the ideas of

"goodness" and "nature" as they relate to man. And the attitude toward the idea of man's natural goodness and the complex of doctrines which the idea incorporated were unique and new in the world.

In order to understand the ideological background that conditioned the portrayal of the Good-Natured Man in eighteenth-century English literature, we must first review the growth and evolution of the concept of "natural goodness" in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. If this background can be sketched with sufficient clarity and with adequate but not confusing detail, it will function for us as the map of the fortifications of the town and citadel of Namur did for Uncle Toby--not in procuring for us a hobbyhorse, but in giving clarity to our discourse and allowing us to show more precisely where a particular concept or character fits into the overall scheme of things.

Even after the Restoration, Calvinian theology and dogma were the orthodox religious views. Therefore, man was generally thought to be sinful and depraved because of the fall of Adam. The good man retained his virtue only by perpetual suppression and discipline of his nature, and, of course, only by the grace of God was that

suppression possible. This uncomplimentary view of man was endorsed by Thomas Hobbes who asserts in Leviathan (1650) that self-interest, or "egoistic /passion/ of pride and self-esteem," is the true motive of all man's actions and that the natural passions of man, if not controlled by government, would lead to a state of constant social war. He says concerning morality:

. . . moral philosophy is nothing else but the science of what is good and evil in the conversation and society of mankind. Good and evil are names that signify our appetites and aversions, which in different tempers, customs, and doctrines of men are different; and divers men differ not only in their judgment on the senses of what is pleasant and unpleasant to the taste, smell, hearing, touch, and sight but also of what is conformable or disagreeable to reason in the actions of common life. Nay, the same man in divers times differs from himself, and one time praises--that is, calls good--what another time he dispraises and calls evil. . . .<sup>2</sup>

There are other theses in Hobbes' writings that further reduce the dignity of man. One thesis supports universal determinism. He asserts that the universe and the creatures in it are mechanical. Men's actions are the automatic results of forces operating through them. Thus, Hobbes clearly and quite convincingly proposed that man is not essentially good or naturally social, that morality is relative, and that what is traditionally considered the worst in man is, in fact, his real nature.

But already in the seventeenth century there were those who objected to this view of human nature and by objecting began a theological and philosophical controversy. One of the unique characteristics of the Restoration and eighteenth century is that for nearly a century and a half the chief British philosophers devoted much if not all of their activities to ethical investigation. The Cambridge Platonists, such as Henry More, John Norris, and Ralph Cudworth, first spoke out in defense of the innate goodness of man. A generation after them Latitudinarian divines, such as Benjamin Whichcote, John Tillotson, and Isaac Barrow, included in their sermons against puritan dogma and the offensive political, social, and moral doctrines of Hobbes a series of accolades of man's natural goodness.

R. S. Crane has studied and documented extensively the contributions of the Latitudinarians.<sup>3</sup> He points out that in the 1660's and 1670's Isaac Barrow preached a number of sermons against both Hobbes and the Augustinian attitudes propagated by both Lutheran and Calvinistic dogma. During the 1680's it became a recognized duty of the preacher when delivering a sermon on charity to picture human beings "in an amiable light as creatures naturally disposed to impulses of pity and benevolence."<sup>4</sup>

For example, Whichcote says in one of his sermons that "Nothing is more certainly true than that all vice is unnatural, and contrary to the nature of man. All that we call Sin, which is naught and contrary to the Reason of Things, is destructive of Human Nature; and a man forceth himself when he doth it."<sup>5</sup> And Tillotson was convinced that "Nothing is more unnatural than sin; 'tis not according to our original nature and frame, but it is the corruption and depravation of it, a second nature superinduced upon us by custom."<sup>6</sup> Out of the Latitudinarian sermons also grew another popular conception concerning the Good-Natured Man, that is, that the benevolent emotions may be enjoyable to the individual who allows himself to feel them. Tillotson is representative rather than unique when he says, "There is no sensual Pleasure in the world comparable to the Delight and Satisfaction that a good man takes in doing good."<sup>7</sup>

Ernest Tuveson has pointed out that compiling numerous statements similar to those above may be misleading. With examples from sermons by John Norris and Henry More, Tuveson illustrates that even though the divines sounded liberal in speaking of "goodness" as being as "natural" as gravity or sight, as seemingly inevitable in man as

the operation of natural law in the cosmos, they never really absorbed morality into nature or identified conduct in the world as the purpose of existence. They still saw good as merely participation in a transcendental God. The Latitudinarians carry the naturalizing tendency further than do the Cambridge Platonists, but in their sermons the need for grace and redemption is always discernible in the background. Even Barrow, who was perhaps the most liberal of all, frequently points out that the soul must undergo spiritual awakening before its goodness can be released.<sup>8</sup>

However, without a doubt latitudinarian preaching was influential in bringing about a change in attitude toward human nature and a new emphasis on altruism. The recurrent drift of latitudinarian writings, though the writers may have been for the most part unconscious of it, was toward a kind of Pelagianism. Pelagius had maintained in his debate with St. Augustine that the potentialities and innate goodness of human nature remain since creation and that, because of long neglect of good education, customs, and conduct, corruption and wickedness have entered. Likewise, the Latitudinarians affirmed that human nature was noble and that social affections and the capacity for

moral goodness were inherently part of human nature. Part of the Pelagian doctrine (which was condemned as heresy in 431 A. D.) was that man could by the exercise of his will act righteously, do good works, and thereby earn salvation. Similarly the Latitudinarians affirmed that man's passions and inclinations have "a vehement tendency to acts of love and good will."<sup>9</sup>

Martin Battestin, who discovers in latitudinarian sermons the moral basis of Henry Fielding's art, asserts that the manifestation of good nature in a comprehensive and energetic charity which had as its goal the betterment of society no less than salvation of individual souls became the core of latitudinarian Christianity. "What the latitudinarians meant by charity, however, was not mere alms-giving, but an active, universal love of humanity, embracing friend and enemy, expressed by practice and not merely by profession, and limited only by the opportunity and power of the individual."<sup>10</sup> Thus, for the Latitudinarians the practice, purpose, and meaning of religion was charity, that is, a disinterested, active, and universal benevolence, and the "great root of all the disorders and mischiefs in the world" was "self-love in all its various forms detrimental to society--avarice,



ambition, vanity, hypocrisy."<sup>11</sup>

Of course, the Latitudinarians had to do battle with foes other than the puritans and Hobbes. Their position that the tender passions would naturally motivate charitable actions flew directly into the teeth of the strict rationalism and insensitive detachment of the Stoic ideal. On the other hand, some sceptical idealists, like Rochester in his "Satyr Against Mankind" for example, saw in reason a faculty which served only to make men worse than animals whose impulses they shared.<sup>12</sup> In order to defend their belief in the dignity of man, the Latitudinarians had to defend the sub-rational drives of human nature, to redefine the nature and function of reason, and to show that both sentiment and reason fit "naturally" into the divinely ordained, rational laws of the universe.

Clearly, the drift in religious and ethical writing was away from both the orthodox belief that "the true ground of morality can only be the Will and Law of God"<sup>13</sup> and the Hobbesian belief that morality is a strictly human creation based on desire, interest, experimentation, and contract. At the same time there was a synthesis of the two views taking place. Or, to speak in broader generalities, the drift was away from the Hebrew-Christian world view

and toward the Greek-Renaissance world view. The Hebrews handed down the ideas that God is the all-powerful center of the universe who created the world and began history, that God controls the world continually and intervenes personally into history, that God is the source of morality and all law, that the Bible contains all that man can or needs to know about the world, and that man should be willing to live with mystery and not ask questions since God is beyond his understanding. After the Puritans who supported this ideology were ousted from power at the time of the Restoration, the Greek or Renaissance ideology rose to eminence. Less attention was given to the other world and more was given to this one. Faith in the supernatural diminished, faith in the natural increased, and concern about joy and happiness in life replaced concern about salvation. The secular and scientific spirit rose to the fore.<sup>14</sup>

Thus it is not surprising that it came to seem desirable to base morality not upon God's will or the prospect of rewards and punishments in the hereafter, but upon human nature and what was known as "the nature of things."<sup>15</sup> Although the Latitudinarians would not go this far, the British moral philosophers did. It became an agreed tenet

of English philosophy "that if one supposes the goodness, righteousness, justice, or piety is what it is only because it is commanded by God . . . then it makes no sense to say of Him that He is good or right or just or pious, for it is then merely being said of Him that He is what He is. . . . If we are to give a foundation for morality at all," we must decide that God wills what is good, right, just or pious. These notions were either antecedent to or contenable with God's willing them, and, if so, deserve to be investigated in their own right without reference to God or the Bible. That is basically the logic behind the autonomy of ethics.<sup>16</sup>

But there was also another cause for "naturalizing" morality, the same cause that had drawn so much talk about "nature" from the Latitudinarians--Hobbes. "Since Hobbes had founded what looked like a plausible ethical theory on the basis of investigation of 'nature'--that is to say, on the basis of an attempt to inquire into rightness, goodness, and justice without respect to the commands of God--it became incumbent upon subsequent authors to do so also."<sup>17</sup> Whatever the reasons, the change in the base of morality from God to nature was the major event which signaled the appearance and significance of the Good-Natured Man. "The supposition that moral values depend

upon the divine will rather than the nature of man leads to the doctrines of free will, sin, the Fall, and moral disorder. The belief that moral values depend upon the nature of man rather than the will of God leads to the doctrines of natural virtue and moral order."<sup>18</sup>

The British moralists all agreed that it was necessary to come to terms with Hobbes' arguments and to find the base of morality in nature, and, consequently, in human nature; however, they disagreed as to what faculty in man perceives moral distinctions--sentiment or reason. As a result, two schools of moral thought arose, and, of course, the ethical controversy increased in complexity. The rationalists were convinced that they founded morality on human nature in that man has as his fundamental characteristic the ability to reason, and thereby the ability to understand truth. To follow reason and to follow nature were for them the same thing. The sentimentalists stoutly maintained that in order to follow human nature one ought to follow it naturally, instinctively, automatically. It is primarily the sentimentalists who belong in the genealogy of the Good-Natured Man.

Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, who was a pupil of Locke, an admirer of the Latitudinarians,

and the editor of Benjamin Whichcote's Sermons (1698), is for our review of the background of the Good-Natured Man the most important of the moralists. His collected works, Characteristics (1711), went through eleven editions before 1790, and certainly he had great influence on the philosophy and literature of the eighteenth century. The exact nature of his influence has been called into question. It was long assumed that the influence of Shaftesbury "consisted in his originality, the newness of his theory of the 'moral sense' in particular."<sup>19</sup> The traditional opinion, held by such critics as C. A. Moore and W. E. Alderman, was that most if not all the distinctive elements of the sentimental benevolism of the eighteenth century already existed at the beginning of the century in the writings of Shaftesbury, that Shaftesbury's writings were popular in intellectual circles throughout the century, and that therefore Shaftesbury and his immediate disciples, particularly Hutcheson, provided the ideology behind the creation of good-natured characters by literary artists and conditioned the response of the public to these characters. But R. S. Crane has shown that most of the moral theory in Shaftesbury's writings had already been advanced by Latitudinarians

before Shaftesbury was even born. A. R. Humphreys was convinced that Shaftesbury "was ahead of his time only in the confidence with which he articulated what many were feeling." And Martin C. Battestin has argued that the direct influence of Shaftesbury on at least one major artist of the period--Henry Fielding--was negligible.<sup>20</sup>

However, Shaftesbury is important to us because, as the earlier critics recognized, his philosophy contains more completely than any other the ideas and enthusiasms that are behind the appearance of the good-natured characters and the ethical controversy in eighteenth-century England. Moreover, Shaftesbury was the first to bring together the ideas about benevolent human nature advanced by the divines, the naturalistic view of ethics, and the new world-view of science. The divines had advanced the proposition "that virtue is centered in a natural impulse toward humanitarian feelings for and sympathy with one's fellows, that the exercise of this virtue is accompanied by an inward feeling of satisfaction and joy, while the spectacle of distress produces sympathetic pain."<sup>21</sup> Shaftesbury's "moral sense" is essentially not different from this "natural impulse" or from what Henry More had earlier called the "boniform faculty." But Shaftesbury

goes on to show how these ideas are in harmony with the universal system, that is, he reinterprets morality, as a part of a perfect universe which has a myriad of parts harmoniously operating according to unalterable laws. This is his unique contribution.

According to Shaftesbury, man is not a machine whose life is determined by forces working through him. Man still has his free will and is not forced to act in harmony with the great whole. But man is so constructed that if he does behave "naturally," he will promote his own happiness and the happiness of all creatures in the universe. Shaftesbury's concern for the "social hypothesis"--the natural sociability of man--is central to his system of belief. The "connatural ideas"<sup>22</sup> within man correspond to the order of which he is part. They confirm and are confirmed by it; they give man a ground for morality in his nature itself, free him from dependence upon the revealed will of an arbitrary God, and relieve him of the relativism that sees all law as the arbitrary invention of man.<sup>23</sup>

In Book One of An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit (1699), Shaftesbury defines the moral sense as "a real Antipathy or Aversion to Injustice or Wrong, and . . .

a real Affection or Love towards Equity and Right, for its own sake, and on the account of its own natural Beauty and Worth" (I, 20). This moral sense theory brings together the Hobbesian and Latitudinarian ideas of "interest" and "goodness." The following quotation supports this assertion and most of what has been said thus far about Shaftesbury's moral theory:

We know that every Creature has a private Good and Interest of his own; which Nature has compel'd him to seek, by all the Advantages afforded him, within the compass of his Make. We know that there is in reality a right and a wrong State of every Creature; and that his right-one is by Nature forwarded, and by himself affectionately sought. There being therefore in every Creature a certain Interest or Good; there must be also a certain End, to which every thing in his Constitution must naturally refer. To this End, if any thing, either in his Appetites, Passions, or Affections, be not conducing, but the contrary; we must of necessity own it ill to him. And in this manner he is ill, with respect to himself; as he certainly is, with respect to others of his kind, when any such Appetites or Passions make him any-way injurious to them. Now, if by the natural Constitution of any rational Creature, the same Irregularitys of Appetite which make him ill to Others, make him also to Himself; and if the same Regularity of Affections, which causes him to be good in one sense, causes him to be good also in the other; then is that Goodness by which he is thus useful to others, a real Good and Advantage to himself. And thus Virtue and Interest may be found at last to agree. (Inquiry, I, 3-4)

Thus, for Shaftesbury the source of morality is man's natural affections, not his reason. In order "to deserve the name of good or virtuous,"



a Creature must have all his Inclinations and Affections, his Dispositions of Mind and Temper, suitable, and agreeing with the Good of his Kind, or of that System in which he is included, and of which he constitutes a PART. To stand thus well affected, and to have one's Affections right and intire, not only in respect of one's self, but of Society and the Publick: This is Rectitude, Integrity, or VIRTUE. And to be wanting in any of these, or to have their Contrarys, is Depravity, Corruption, and VICE. (Inquiry, I, 24)

Therefore, goodness or virtue consists "in a certain just Disposition, or proportionable Affection of a rational Creature towards the moral Objects of Right and Wrong" (Inquiry, I, 18). Any consideration of personal rewards or punishments robs actions of their moral value. The moral value lies in the immediate affection or relish for the good.

Contrary to what Bernard Mandeville would lead one to believe, Shaftesbury was well aware that this "disposition" was not evident in the nature of most men in his society. His accounting for this fact recalls the Pelagian arguments of the Latitudinarians. Since a "Sense of Right and Wrong" is as "natural to us as natural Affection [i.e. feeling] itself," and is the "first Principle of our Constitution and Make," it cannot be taken away by anything except "contrary Habit and Custom (a second Nature)." And, of course, this same "Force of Custom and Education in opposition

to Nature" can create a wrong sense of right and wrong (Inquiry, I, 20-21).

In Book Two of An Inquiry Concerning Virtue Shaftesbury deals with the motives to embrace virtue (i.e. goodness) and the obligations to be virtuous. Here he goes to great length to prove that private interest, or self-love, and public interests, or social concerns, are the same. He divides the affections or passions into three groups: "Natural Affections, which lead to the Good of the Public"; "Self-Affections, which lead only to the Good of the Private"; and "Unnatural Affections," which do not lead "to any Good of the Public or Private" (Inquiry, I, 29-30). Both of the first two are necessary but either can become excessive and destroy its own end. Moral goodness depends on a proper balance between the first two. In regard to the "Natural Affections" he argues that "To have the Natural Affections (such as are founded on Love, Complacency, Goodwill, and in a Sympathy with the Kind or Species) is to have the chief means and power of Self-Enjoyment, the highest possession and happiness in Life" (Inquiry, I, 50). For the pleasures of the mind are superior to those of the body, and the mental pleasures are no other than natural affections of their effects. In regard to the "Self-Passions"

he argues "that by having the Self-Passions too intense or strong, a creature becomes miserable" (Inquiry, I, 54).

Shaftesbury concludes his work by claiming his "Moral arithmetick" has as much evidence to support it "as that which is found in Numbers, or Mathematicks."<sup>24</sup> It is a simple matter of addition and subtraction; "To be wicked or vitious, is to be miserable and unhappy," and "Everything which is an Improvement of Virtue, or an Establishment of right Affection and Integrity, is an Advancement of Interest, and leads to the greatest and most solid Happiness and Enjoyment" (I, 63,64).

This view of what constitutes morality, whether original with Shaftesbury or not, is, with variations peculiar to each work and author, the view illustrated, tested, or contradicted by the literary artists of eighteenth-century England. Of course, particular writers were influenced by persons or works not mentioned above in creating good-natured characters,<sup>25</sup> and after the deluge of good-natured characters in literary works, some writers were probably unaware of the influences discussed above. The foregoing is intended only to give a brief account of the several ideals that were brought together and incorporated into a character whose very presence gave a major theme to

eighteenth-century writers--what happens to a good, natural, unfallen man in a corrupt, unnatural, fallen society?

\* \* \* \* \*

After Shaftesbury, it is no longer possible to speak with any certainty about the influence of specific writers on the popular or general ideal of the Good-Natured Man. However, it is enlightening to see the immediate background of the Good-Natured Man, the sentimental ethics of the Latitudinarians and Shaftesbury, in the larger perspective of the ethical debate which spans from before the Latitudinarians to the end of the eighteenth century. Of course, the debate is too extensive and intricate to follow here in detail.

After the Reformation an authoritative answer to the question "What should I do?" was no longer possible. Therefore, the search was on for a means to distinguish between right and wrong. Ralph Cudworth, who was one of the first to bring the ethical rationalism of the Greeks into British moral philosophy, asserts that man has "a Superior Power of Intellection and Knowledge of a different Nature from Sense, which is not terminated in mere Seeming and Appearance only, but in the Truth and Reality of things, and reaches to the Comprehension of that which Really and

Absolutely is, whose Objects are the Eternal and Immutable Essences and Nature of Things, and their Unchangeable Relations to one another."<sup>26</sup> This belief in a "Superior Power of Intellection," later called "Rational Intuition" by Richard Price,<sup>27</sup> which guides man's conduct by means of immediate rational perception of right and wrong rests on faith in the "Nature of Things," that is, on the faith that the distinction between good and evil is a natural one, that a thing is good because it has an eternal and immutable nature of goodness. Cudworth attempts to show that moral good and evil, justice and injustice, honesty and dishonesty cannot possibly be arbitrary things made by will, human or divine, and without foundation in nature. Even God cannot make a thing white without whiteness or round without roundness, "that is, without certain Natures" (II, 247). For "that which implies a Contradiction is a Non-Entity, and therefore cannot be the Object of Divine Power. And the Reason is the same for all other things, as just and unjust; for every thing is what it is immutably by the necessity of its own Nature; neither is it any Derogation at all of the power of God to say, that he cannot make a thing to be that which it is not." Thus, Cudworth maintains that man knows what he ought to do

because reason guides him by means of immediate rational perception of right and wrong. At the basis of all moral obligation there must be a rational perception of what ought to be (II, 255).

The rationalists' position is further supported by Samuel Clarke who holds that judgments about rightness and wrongness are a priori and determined by the fact that there are eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things which are the same to every rational being that considers them. For example, "'Tis undeniably more Fit, absolutely and in the Nature of the thing itself that all Men should endeavor to promote the universal good and welfare of All, than that all Men should be continually contriving the ruin and destruction of All."<sup>28</sup> Clarke and Cudworth would agree with William Wollaston that "Truth is but a conformity to nature: and to follow nature cannot be a combat truth," and "To deny things to be as they are is a transgression of the great law of nature, the law of reason."<sup>29</sup>

Critics of the rationalists' theory argue that reason is insufficient as a moral guide because even if it can apprehend moral truth, it cannot account for moral obligation and action.<sup>30</sup> Hume later uses this argument very effectively, but all the rationalists offer what

they consider adequate explanation of "rational motivation" to good actions. The typical explanation is that the rational perception of the fitness of an action in relation to the agents and objects involved in itself makes the action an obligation. For example, John Balguy says that if the "Moral Fitness of certain Actions be not a Reason for the doing of them, I see not how any Thing can be a Reason for any Thing." Richard Price says, "Obligation to action, and rightness of action, are plainly coincident and identical." And Samuel Clark says, "Some things are in their own nature Good and Reasonable and Fit to be done; . . . these receive not their obligatory power, from any Law or Authority, but are only declared, confirmed and enforced by penalties, upon such as would not perhaps be governed by right Reason only." Immorality for the rationalists is not acting in accord with what reason recognizes to be the right course of action. Therefore, it is necessary for reason to control passions if one would be moral.<sup>31</sup>

One sometimes forgets that the debate between the rationalists and the sentimentalists is a bickering within a single camp, and both camps valued both reason and benevolence, but in varying degrees. The sentimentalists

never disagreed with the utilitarian aspect of the rationalists' position: we should always try to bring about the greatest good for the species as a whole.

Joseph Butler, who seems to fit either school because it is a matter of little importance to him whether the moral faculty is rational or sentimental, serves to remind us what the two schools had in common and to provide a transition from one to the other. In Dissertation II: Of the Nature of Virtue (1736) he says:

That which renders beings capable of moral judgment, is their having a moral nature, and moral faculties of perception and of action. . . . It is manifest [that a] great part of common language, and of common behavior over the world, is formed upon supposition of such a moral faculty; whether called conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason; whether considered as a sentiment of the understanding or a perception of the heart; or, which seems the truth, as including both. Nor is it at all doubtful, in the general, what course of action this faculty, or practical discerning power within us, approves, and what it disapproves. For as much as it has been disputed wherein virtue consists, . . . yet there is in reality an universally acknowledged standard of it. (I, 245-246)

We have already treated Shaftesbury, but a brief contrast of him to the rationalists will not be repetitious. Shaftesbury argues that the feeling or motive a person has in doing an act, not the action itself, determines whether the person is good or not. As has been pointed out, a person is good or bad according as he has natural affections,



or benevolence, and self-affections, or self-love, in the right proportions. Francis Hutcheson restates Shaftesbury's standard for moral action thus: "We never call that Man benevolent, who is in fact useful to others, but at the same time only intends his own Interest, without any ultimate desire of the Good of Others. If there be any benevolence at all, it must be disinterested; for the most useful Action imaginable, loses all appearances of Benevolence, as soon as we discern that it only flowed from Self-Love, or Interest."<sup>32</sup>

The rationalists' answer to this position as late as 1758 was:

Benevolence, it has been shewn, is of two kinds, rational and instinctive. Rational benevolence entirely coincides with rectitude, and the actions proceeding from it, with the actions proceeding from a regard to rectitude. . . . But instinctive benevolence is no principle of virtue, nor are any actions flowing merely from it virtuous. As far as this influences, so far something else than reason and goodness influence, and so much I think is to be subtracted from the moral worth of any action or character. . . . Wherever the influence of mere natural temper or inclination appears, and a particular conduct is known to proceed from hence, we may, it is true, love the person, as we commonly do the inferior creatures when they discover mildness and tractableness of disposition; but no regard to him as a virtuous agent will arise within us.<sup>33</sup>

Of course, Bernard Mandeville, who was much closer to Samuel Butler in style and to Hobbes in theory than to any

of the eighteenth-century moral philosophers, debunked the very idea of man having a moral nature and delivered a delightful and calculatedly nasty satire on both schools of ethical theory as early as 1705 in The Grumbling Hive, which was expanded to The Fable of Bees in 1714. Mandeville asserts that the state emerged not, as Hobbes and Locke suggested, from social contract in which all men participate as equals, but from the ingenious manipulation by a few technicians of the frailty of others. "Skillful politicians are the tamers of man; they teach him sociability by flattering him into self-sacrifice, that is, by offering him a more exquisite mental gratification than the senses can attain."<sup>34</sup> Some iconoclastic statements characteristic of Mandeville are that the "moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begat upon pride," that "Sagacious moralists draw men like angels, in hopes that the pride at least of some will put 'em upon copying after the beautiful originals which they are represented to be," and that Shaftesbury's "notions . . . are generous and refined," a "high compliment to human-kind," capable of inspiring us with a high sense of the dignity of human nature--"What a pity it is that they are not true."<sup>35</sup> Because of Mandeville's style and his unconventional,

discouraging, sardonic views, the affect of The Fable of Bees was to stir the sentimentalists to greater vehemence, just as Hobbes had stirred his opponents, and thereby to further the acceptance of sentimental moral theory.<sup>36</sup>

However, Mandeville, even more than Hobbes, attacked the very foundation of Restoration and eighteenth-century moral philosophy by asserting that neither society nor morality has its basis in nature unless it is in the selfish nature of men. He believed that moral virtue and social state were created by human art (largely by the artful manipulation of the masses by the perceptive and skillfully deceptive politicians). And just as many of Hobbes' ideas became acceptable when espoused by Locke, many of Mandeville's ideas were further accepted when espoused by Hume and Adam Smith.

Until Hume's Treatise of Human Nature (1738) the rationalism of such moral philosophers as Locke and Samuel Clarke remained dominant in ethical theory. The wide acceptance, some of it unconscious, of deism is one manifestation of this dominance. It was generally held that there was a religion of nature, capable of purely rational demonstration, though its relation to revealed religion and the established creed was never clearly

understood. But Hume destroyed the base of the rationalists theory and the deistical system and provided a convincing defense of the sentimental views.<sup>37</sup> He argues convincingly that reason is not a dependable guide in making moral judgments or in understanding physical nature. In Book One of A Treatise of Human Nature (1738), he says concerning the physical world, or the "Not-Ourselves," that if there is a real "nature," a real order of experience, we cannot know whether our ideas of it are correct or distorted. Reason can never show any connection of one object to another or the relation between ideas and things. All our reasoning about connections, as of cause and effect, is merely due to custom operating on our imaginations. The criterion for judging between true and false ideas about the physical world is subjective, and the only objective standard for approval or disapproval is a consensus among average educated men.

Hume treats reason similarly in his moral theory. In Book Two of the Treatise he proves in theory that reason can neither produce or prevent any action or affection. Early in Book Three he argues that morals do influence actions and affections and, therefore, morals cannot be derived from reason. "As long as it is allow'd, that

reason has no influence on our passions and actions, 'tis in vain to pretend, that morality is discovered only by a deduction of reason." For Hume, moral judgment, like belief in ideas, "is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cognitive part of our natures," "is more properly felt than judg'd of."<sup>38</sup>

Hume, like Shaftesbury, contends that man has natural dispositions and motives that cause him to approve of certain things. Man has a feeling of approval with regard to benevolent actions because there is a natural passion in human nature to approve of these actions. Also like Shaftesbury, Hume believes that motives, or affections or passions, are the causes of actions and are the ultimate objects of praise and blame. "'Tis evident, that when we praise any actions, we regard only the motives that produced them, and consider the actions as signs or indications of certain principles in the mind and temper."<sup>39</sup> And when there is no motive to do actions of a particular sort, no moral praise or blame is attached to a person for doing or not doing actions of that sort.

However, unlike Shaftesbury, Hume recognizes that there are no natural motives to do many of the actions to which men have assigned the ideas of vice and virtue.

Therefore, Hume has to account for artificial motives. His argument runs something like this: Human needs far exceed human abilities; therefore, men find it advantageous to organize into societies and are induced to observe the rules of justice, property, and promises from self-interest. As society grows into a tribe or nation, men lose sight of the interest they have in maintaining order and may follow their lesser and more present interests, but they "never fail to observe the prejudice we receive, either mediately or immediately, from the injustice of others." Even when injustice is at a distance and can in no way affect their interests, it is still displeasing because it is "prejudicial to human society, and pernicious to every one that approaches the person guilty of it." Men share each other's "uneasiness by sympathy; and as everything, which gives uneasiness in human actions, upon the general survey, is call'd Vice, and whatever produces satisfaction, in the same manner, is denominated Virtue; this is the reason why the sense of moral good and evil follows upon justice and injustice. . . . Thus self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice, but a sympathy with public interest is the source of moral approbation, which attends that virtue."<sup>40</sup>

Sympathy is for Hume, then, "a sentimental intuition of customary motives and attitudes." That which is moral is not discoverable through reason alone but "an imaginative insight through the association of ideas . . . is necessary to achieve this knowledge. As we perceive actions in others similar to our own, we form an idea of the emotions of others, and the idea is transformed into an impression, and becomes through association with ourselves a real passion of our own. . . . Man is always a social being, neither egoistic or selfless but always in some sympathetic relation (in normal behavior). Reason being not an active faculty, becomes the slave of passions, in the respect that reason can do nothing without passional intuition."<sup>41</sup>

Hume sums up his own position and its practical effects:

. . . when you pronounce any action or character to be virtuous or vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of approval or blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compar'd to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind: And this discovery in morals, like that other in physics, is to be regarded as a considerable advancement of the speculative sciences; tho', like that too, it has little or no influence on practice. Nothing can be more real, or concern us more, than our own sentiments of pleasure and uneasiness; and if these be favourable to virtue, and unfavourable to vice, no more can be requisite to the regulation of our conduct and behaviour.<sup>42</sup>

The contribution, if it can be called that, which Hume makes to moral philosophy is of profound importance. The rationalists' belief in reason as a moral guide rests on their faith in the "nature of things"; Shaftesbury's belief in "affections" or sentiments as a guide rests on his faith in the nature of man as a part of and in harmony with the nature of things; but Hume, though he recognizes that man has the natural motives of benevolence and self-interest, can find no basis for much of morality except custom. Hume certainly belongs to the "sentimental school," for he believes that man does have a sense of virtue, but just as with ideas about physical reality, it is conditioned by social standards and customs. Basil Willey says that before Hume "Nature and Reason go hand in hand; after him, Nature and Feeling."<sup>43</sup> This is no doubt true, but more important for us is the fact that before Hume both the rationalists and the sentimentalists thought they had discovered an absolute basis for morality, for an authoritative answer to the question "What should I do?" But Hume concludes, much like Hobbes, that morality is relative, a human artifice.

Adam Smith's moral philosophy is indicative of the direction sentimental ethics takes after Hume. Smith



was a friend and student of Hume and he succeeded Hutcheson, the great disciple and popularizer of Shaftesbury, as professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow. In The Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759) he says that the conscience, as Butler calls it, or the moral sense, as Shaftesbury and Hutcheson call it, or "the demigod within the breast--the great arbiter of conduct," as Smith himself calls it, is built up psychologically by means of sympathy. But to sympathize does not mean the same thing to Smith as it did to Hume. Sympathy is the center of Smith's moral theory and means, among other things, "fellow feeling" or our feelings for others, our sensitivity to others' opinions of us and our conduct, and our acceptance of their way of evaluating the propriety of our actions. Smith's theory becomes very complex and though he talks a great deal about sympathy, approbation, utility, and propriety, his standard of morality never becomes clear. Louis Bredvold is stating at least a half-truth when he says that "the demigod turns out to be merely seeing ourselves in the mirror of our neighbors' opinions of us. . . . It seems that conscience is after all the still small voice that tells us only that someone is watching us."<sup>44</sup> And Smith's ideas do seem very similar

at points to the Darwinian notion that one's conscience is formed by the praise and blame of his fellow men. But even though Smith recognizes that the standards of conduct are formed by the ordinary opinions of the world, sympathy, which he cannot account for clearly, affects conscience and causes the spontaneous moral sentiments to contribute blindly to promote the greatest possible amount of happiness for mankind.<sup>45</sup> The awareness of others' feelings and opinions, then, is not a deterministic influence but a creative one in that it allows the imagination to form a picture of others' sorrows and joys, and thereby makes possible the sympathetic involvement of one person with another. Thus, in Smith's ethical theory, morality is based on natural sympathy and an awareness of the ordinary customs and opinions of the world.

Thus, as the century progressed, the sentimentalists won the field in ethical theory. The progression seems to have been from a morality based on God's commandments, to a morality based on nature, to a morality based on custom and social opinion. In the Cambridge Platonists and Latitudinarians, in Shaftesbury, Hume, and Smith, sentimental ethics had a continuous development. All these writers, except for the "rational" Platonists, placed their

trust in the immediate and instinctive moral sentiment or impulse as the supreme guide to happiness and goodness. And, as Hume pointed out concerning his own theory, the differences in the moral theory of these men should have no practical effect on the conduct of the good man. However man acquired his sentiments they are still the unfailing guide to all that is meritorious. This is not to say that the Good-Natured Man whose character is based on the sentimental ethics of the Latitudinarians and Shaftesbury is treated in literature the same way as a good man whose character is based on the sentimental ethics of Hume and Smith. The shift of the base of morality from nature to custom, the evolution of sentiment or feeling from being the means of perceiving moral distinctions toward being goodness itself, the gradual degeneration of the Good-Natured Man into merely the Man of Sensibility,<sup>46</sup> all have profound effects on the treatment of the Good-Natured Man in literature.

## Notes to Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>The Natural History of Sensibility (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Leviathan (New York: The Bobbs Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), p. 131.

<sup>3</sup>"Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,'" ELH, I (1934), 205-230.

<sup>4</sup>A readily accessible list of specific latitudinarian sermons which amplify man's essential good nature is provided in the footnotes to R. S. Crane's "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling'" cited above.

<sup>5</sup>"The Glorious Evidence and Power of Divine Truth," in The Cambridge Platonists, ed. E. T. Campagnac (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1901), p. 25.

<sup>6</sup>Sermon CXXV, "The Difficulties of a Christian Life Consider'd," Sermons, VII, 323, quoted in Martin C. Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1959), p. 16.

<sup>7</sup>Works, I (1728), 156, quoted in Crane, p. 228.

<sup>8</sup>Ernest L. Tuveson, "The Importance of Shaftesbury," ELH, 20 (1953), 269-270.

<sup>9</sup>The phrase is Samuel Parker's in A Demonstration of the Divine Authority of the Law of Nature (1681), p. 29, quoted in Crane, p. 222.

<sup>10</sup>The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup>Battestin, pp. 19-20.

<sup>12</sup>Tuveson, p. 272.

<sup>13</sup>John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), Book I, Chapter II, Section 6, in British Moralists, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), II, 329. Hereafter in this chapter, all of the references to original sources, except for references to Hume's Treatise, are taken from the Selby-Bigge two volume edition of the works of the eighteenth-century British Moralists. The page numbers refer to the page numbers in this edition.

<sup>14</sup>Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background: Studies in the Thought of the Age in Relation to Poetry and Religion (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967) provides an extensive and specific account of this change in world-view.

<sup>15</sup>Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background: Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 59.

<sup>16</sup>Bernard H. Baumrin, "Introduction to the New Edition," British Moralists, p. xvi-xvii.

<sup>17</sup>Baumrin, p. xviii.

<sup>18</sup>Michael Macklem, The Anatomy of the World: Relations Between Natural and Moral Law from Donne to Pope (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p. 65.

<sup>19</sup>Tuveson, p. 267.

<sup>20</sup>The specific works referred to here are: Moore, "Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England, 1700-1760," PMLA, 31 (1916), 264-325; Alderman, "The Significance of Shaftesbury in English Speculation," PMLA, 38 (1923), 175-195, and "Shaftesbury and the Doctrine of Moral Sense in the Eighteenth Century," PMLA, 46 (1931), 1087-1094; Crane, "Suggestions toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling'"; Humphreys, "'The Friend of Mankind' (1700-1760)--An Aspect of Eighteenth Century Sensibility," RES, 24 (1948), 203-218; and Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art.

<sup>21</sup>Tuveson, p. 268.

<sup>22</sup>Shaftesbury states, "Twas Mr. Lock that struck at all fundamentals, threw all order and virtue out of the world, and made the very idea of these (which are the same as those of God) unnatural and without foundation in our minds. Innate is a word he poorly plays upon; the right word, though less used, is connatural. For what has birth or progress of the foetus out of the womb to do in this case? The question is not about the time ideas entered, or the moment that one body came out of the other, but whether the constitution of man be such that, being adult and grown up, at such or such a time, sooner or later (no matter when) the idea and sense of order, administration, and a God, will not infallibly, inevitably, necessarily spring up in him." From The Life, Unpublished Letters, and Philosophical Regimen of Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, ed. Benjamin Rand (London and New York, 1900) p. 403, quoted in Martin Price, To the Palace of Wisdom: Studies in Order and Energy from Dryden to Blake (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1964), p. 79.

<sup>23</sup>Price, p. 80.

<sup>24</sup>This analogy between morality and arithmetic is also used by Hobbes and by the rationalists, and it reflects the faith they all have that their theories and beliefs are based on nature. For example, Samuel Clarke says in Discourse Upon Natural Religion (1705) that "As the Addition of certain Numbers, necessarily produces a certain Sum, and certain Geometrical or Mechanical Operations, give a constant and unalterable Solution of certain Problems or Propositions, so in moral Matters there are certain necessary and unalterable Respects or Relations of Things, which have not their original from arbitrary and positive Constitution, but are of eternal necessity in their own Nature" (II, 31).

<sup>25</sup>For example, Fielding not only was well-versed in the sermons of the Latitudinarians and the writings of the moral philosophers, he also knew the classical philosophers from which these men had drawn many of their ideas.

<sup>26</sup>A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality (before 1688), II, 259.

<sup>27</sup>A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals (1758), II, 105-185.

<sup>28</sup>Discourse Upon Natural Religion (1705), II, 5.

<sup>29</sup>The Religion of Nature Delineated (1722), II, 364, 366.

<sup>30</sup>Macklem, p. 77.

<sup>31</sup>The specific works referred to here are: Balguy's The Foundation of Moral Goodness, Part II (1729), II, 190; Price's A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals (1758), II, 155; Clarke's Discourse Upon Natural Religion (1705), II, 9.

<sup>32</sup>An Inquiry Concerning the Original of our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good (1725), I, 86.

<sup>33</sup>Richard Price, A Review of the Principal Questions in Morals (1758), II, 183.

<sup>34</sup>Quoted in Price, p. 109.

<sup>35</sup>The Fable of the Bees, ed. F. B. Kaye (Oxford, 1924), I, 51-52, 324, quoted in Price, p. 109.

<sup>36</sup>For a brief and concise contrast of Mandeville and Shaftesbury's views on human nature see A. R. Humphreys' "A Friend of Mankind," pp. 210-211, and Leslie Stephen's History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), pp. 15-40.

<sup>37</sup>Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century (London: Methuen and Company, 1966), pp. 62-63.

<sup>38</sup>A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1898), II, 235; I, 125; II, 245.

<sup>39</sup>Treatise, II, 252.

<sup>40</sup>Treatise, II, 271.

<sup>41</sup>John Traugott, Tristram Shandy's World: Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), p. 74.

<sup>42</sup>Treatise, II, 245.

<sup>43</sup>The Eighteenth Century Background, p. 111.

<sup>44</sup>The Natural History of Sensibility, p. 20.

<sup>45</sup>Sir Leslie Stephen, History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, p. 73.

<sup>46</sup>I am using this term in a specific and rather narrow sense which will be defined more clearly later on in the paper.



## Chapter II

### The Good-Natured Man: An Ideal

The Good-Natured Man became prominent in literature in consequence of changes in ethical theories. But the treatment of him in English literature was conditioned by the literary tradition which in turn was affected by the social and political influences of the time. We will not define this general background as we did the ethical background on the assumption that it is more familiar. The Good-Natured Man and the themes and emotions associated with him are given their artistic fulfillment in the novel; therefore, the principal works discussed in this paper will be novels. However, the new ethical theory was reflected in other genres, particularly in the drama and periodical literature, before it was in the novel. As good nature became a more and more dominant virtue in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it received more treatment in literature and good-natured characters graduated from the traditional role of comic butts to the role of protagonists. The major characters sympathetically portrayed in the following works written before 1740 are

benevolent: Colley Cibber's Love's Last Shift (1696) and The Provoked Husband (1728), Farquhar's Twin Rivals (1702) and Constant Couple (1700), Steele's Christian Hero (1701) and Conscious Lovers (1722), Addison and Steele's The de Coverley Papers (1710-1712), Theophilus Cibber's The Lover (1730), Lillo's The London Merchant (1731), John Kelley's The Married Philosopher (1732), William Popple's The Double Deceit; or A Cure for Jealousy (1735), Joseph Dorman's Sir Roger de Coverley; or The Merry Christmas (1740), many of Fielding's plays, and the list could go on including plays, operas, sermons, periodical essays, and Christian tracts which present the Good-Natured Man as hero. All the "sentimental"<sup>1</sup> comedy, tragedy, and non-dramatic literature, particularly before 1740, compose the literary background of the more complete portrayal and treatment given the Good-Natured Man in the novel. For sentimental literature, like the character of the Good-Natured Man, grew out of an underlying philosophical belief in benevolence as a law of nature and a natural human emotion.

The appellation "Good-Natured Man" has both general and particular referents, and we must distinguish between the referents just as we distinguish between comedy in

general, sentimental comedy, and a specific play, or poetry in general, epic poetry, and a specific poem. Of course, only the essential features and attributes are included in a definition of the type. The particular referents or recurrences of the type are never identical and the duplication of certain essential features and attributes are always in a shifting context of non-essentials.

The general category or character type which I call the Good-Natured Man has been partially defined in the preceding chapter. The term "good nature" unlike "sentimental," never lost its positive moral connotation in the eighteenth century. As a general and abstract concept, it included in its meaning a complex of ideas having to do with the moral man--passions, judgment, virtue, etc. Of course, the attitude toward good nature and the Good-Natured Man fluctuated with the emphasis given to the term. When aspects of good nature, like the ideas of "the natural," of innocence and unsophistication, and of feeling, are exaggerated out of proper proportion, the term was, as John Hughes pointed out in the Spectator for November 1, 1712, "rendered Suspicious, and in danger of being transferred from its original Sense, to so distant an

idea as that of Folly."<sup>2</sup> Fielding also shared the concern that "Several words in all Languages have, with great Injustice been wrested and perverted . . . , and by long Use and Corruption, been brought to Convey ideas foreign to their original Signification."<sup>3</sup> In his essay on good nature in the Champion for March 27, 1740, he attempted to expose the false meanings that threatened to discredit the concept.<sup>4</sup> One evidence that good nature escaped being "wrested and perverted" from its "original Signification" is that when Fielding wrote his satirical essay in the Covent-Garden Journal for January 14, 1752, in which he included a "Modern Glossary" of terms "at present greatly in Use," he did not list good nature along with such words and definitions as Temperance, "want-of Spirit"; Virtue and Vice, "Subjects of Discourse"; Gallantry, "Fornication and Adultery"; Worth, "Power, Rank, Wealth."<sup>5</sup>

In the literature of eighteenth-century England, the Good-Natured Man is always presented sympathetically, but he rarely if ever embodies fully the moral ideal of the author or of the character himself. This is certainly true in the works of Henry Fielding, who without a doubt was the preeminent artist of good nature. It is abundantly clear in his discursive writing that he was well aware of

the difference between "goodness alone, unsupported by social intelligence or prudence or the higher moral imperative of religion" and true greatness, the "true Sublime in Human Nature" which is "the Union of a good Heart with a good Head."<sup>6</sup> This concept of the "true Sublime in Human Nature" is both a moral and, in Fielding's mind, social ideal. And in much of what Fielding says about "good breeding" in the Essay on Conversation and what he says about "good-nature" in "Of True Greatness," "Of Good-Nature," An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men, and the essay for March 27, 1740, in the Champion, he seems to have this ideal in mind, not simply good nature without "parts." Thus, it is possible to draw from these works a definition of the ideal Good-Natured Man. Just as Shaftesbury brought together the latitudinarian ideas about benevolent human nature, the naturalistic view of ethics, and the new world-view of science and incorporated them into his ethical theory, Fielding draws on the classical philosophers, the Latitudinarians, and the eighteenth-century moral philosophers for his concept of good nature. Thus, he provides better than anyone else a representative, clear concept of good nature by which all good-natured characters

can be both identified and judged.

The following passages are offered to provide a working definition of good nature, not a comprehensive one. In the wake of the excellent critical studies that have traced Fielding's conception of good nature to its various sources in the latitudinarian-benevolist tradition, the conventionality and indebtedness of Fielding in these statements seems patently obvious.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, I offer them without comment.

In the poem (verse essay) "Of Good-Nature" Fielding tries to define the essence of good nature, the true mark of this virtue, so that it can be distinguished from feigned good nature:

What by the Name, then, shall be understood?  
 What? but the glorious Lust of doing Good?  
 The Heart that finds it Happiness to please,  
 Can feel another's Pain, and taste his Ease.  
 The Cheek that with another's Joy can glow,  
 Turn pale, and sicken with another's Woe;  
 Free from Contempt and Envy, he who deems  
 Justly of Life's two opposite Extremes.  
 Who to make all and each Man truly blest,  
 Doth all he can, and wishes all the rest?<sup>8</sup>

In An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men

Fielding says: "Good-nature is that benevolent and amiable temper of mind, which disposes us to feel the misfortunes, and enjoy the happiness of others; and consequently, pushes

us on to promote the latter, and prevent the former; and that without any abstract contemplation on the beauty of virtue, and without the allurements or terrors of religion."<sup>9</sup> And in the essay in the Champion for March 27, 1740, Fielding defines good nature, partly by negation in order to counter false meanings, as "a Delight in the Happiness of Mankind, and a Concern at their Misery, with a Desire, as much as possible, to procure the former, and avert the latter; and this, with a constant regard to Desert." It "is not that weakness, which, without Distinction, affects both the Virtuous and the Base," nor is it "that cowardice which prevents us from repelling or resenting an injury." And he continues, "As good-nature requires a distinguishing faculty, which is another word for judgment, and is perhaps the sole boundary between wisdom and folly; it is impossible for a fool, who hath no distinguishing faculty, to be good-natured."<sup>10</sup>

These passages provide a fairly concise definition of good nature as an abstract ideal. That this ideal is representative, in a vital and viable way, in the eighteenth century is attested to in the following discussions of other writers, particularly Goldsmith and Sterne who also set forth their ethical theory and moral idealism in

expository writing. This ideal is implicit in many imaginative literary works but not fully embodied in any single character, unless perhaps in the narrator. As a "real" fictional character in eighteenth-century novels, plays, and essays the Good-Natured Man type is defined by two extremes. At one extreme the Good-Natured Man is an innocent, simple, warm-hearted, generous, unsuspecting character utterly devoid of vanity and affectation. Like Adam before the fall, there is no evil in him and no understanding of evil. Because he does not recognize artifice or understand the true nature of his society, his values and actions are often inappropriate, according to a social code, to his reality. At the other extreme is the "affected" Good-Natured Man who is not truly good in any moral sense and who is not distinguished by his humanity and universal friendship, but who is rather a sentimental fool who goes about indulging his emotions purely for self-gratification. His "sensibility" is no longer moral consciousness or awareness of the feelings of others but merely an overly acute sensitivity to his own emotions.<sup>11</sup>

Most, if not all, of the characters in eighteenth-century English literature who are described as being



good-natured could be arranged on a continuum between these two extremes. At the former extreme the Good-Natured Man lacks perception of his own reality, but he embodies a set of values which evokes our admiration. He represents a moral ideal and usually functions as a standard by which to judge society. At the latter extreme the Good-Natured Man does not embody values we admire, and he is strictly the object of our judgment, never the standard. The Good-Natured Man in eighteenth-century English literature may be seen as a type which develops in character and function from the former extreme to the latter.

When we conceive of all the specific good-natured characters in eighteenth-century English literature arranged on a continuum between the two extremes defined above representing the development of the Good-Natured Man as a type, we discover that four major stages of the Good-Natured Man's development are depicted and treated extensively by several artists. These four stages of development I designate as the Good-Natured Man as Naif, the Good-Natured Man as Humorist, the Good-Natured Man as Paragon and the Good-Natured Man as Man of Sensibility. The first and last stages are the two extremes partially

defined above.

The significant differences between each of the four subtypes of the Good-Natured Man are determined by three basic variables: morality, that is, the ethical theory on which the character is based; perception; and art. If the ethical ideals in the work wherein the Good-Natured Man appears are similar to those of the Latitudinarians and Shaftesbury, the Good-Natured Man's charity, benevolence, and natural affections will be justified and motivated by his moral nature acting in harmony with Christian belief and the nature of things.<sup>12</sup> If the ethical ideals of the work are similar to those of the rationalists, the Good-Natured Man's charity, benevolence, and natural affections are likely to be rendered culpable if they are not always subordinate to reason. If the ethical ideals are similar to those of Hume and Smith, the Good-Natured Man may be portrayed as eccentric or absurd since his feelings of approbation or disapprobation have no absolute basis or sanction in the natural or supernatural. For the expression of feelings which do not call attention to something beyond themselves becomes merely exhibitionism. For example, the naif (who almost invariably is measured against ethics like those of the Latitudinarians and

Shaftesbury) and the Man of Sensibility (who is frequently measured against ethics like those of Hume and Smith) may both be fools, but the naif is a fool for God's sake, or for goodness' sake, or for morality's sake and is worthy of some admiration, but the Man of Sensibility is a fool for no good cause and is merely ridiculous.

It hardly needs to be said again that once goodness and feeling have been separated from the notions of benevolence and charity held by Latitudinarians and Shaftesbury even a morally sensitive character may be content with the feeling, which is proof of his good nature, and lose the desire to act outside himself. From here it is only a short step to the affectation of sympathetic feelings in order to appear good-natured.

It is not necessary to delve into the moral basis of every artist's work in order to determine the ethics behind a character. It is readily apparent from the treatment of a character in a specific work whether his good nature is genuinely his unaffected self and whether his "goodness" is vindicated by an absolute standard of morality in God's will or the nature of things, or whether his "goodness" is affected or at best relative, largely determined by his social conditioning. As Sheldon Sacks

has convincingly argued in Fiction and the Shape of Belief, it is the novelist, rather than the satirist or apologist, from whom the greatest degree of ethical revelation is demanded. "Apart from any moral intention he has, he must, if he wishes to write a good novel, judge characters, acts, and thoughts as part of his representation," and thereby expresses his own beliefs, opinions, and prejudices.<sup>13</sup>

The second variable which accounts for differences among the four subtypes of Good-Natured Man is the perceptiveness of the character, that is, the degree to which he understands society. If he does not understand society, he is easily duped and his actions are frequently foolish and ineffectual; if he has some understanding of society, he can better protect his own interests and more effectively achieve his benevolent goals. The names of the first and third subtypes of Good-Natured Man serve as an index to the social awareness of the characters in those categories.

A third variable is the art of a character, that is, the degree to which a character who understands society can control himself and the situations in which he finds himself. If a character is slow of wit, or if his emotions consistently overrule his considered judgment, or if he

is controlled by his "humour," his understanding of society does not substantially affect his behaviour, though it frequently affects his attitude. On the other hand, if a character can act prudently and artfully without forfeiting his goodness, he is worthy of admiration by both moral and social standards. Of course, these variables may change in the development of a specific character. In a moral romance, for example, the Good-Natured Man may begin as innocent and ignorant and may, through a journey or other ritualistic experience, gain understanding of society. But the change is usually a last page transformation and the reader's acquaintance with the character stops at the same time the change is culminated, as with Tom Jones. Thus, significant differences among the various genuinely good-natured characters, excluding those who affect good-nature, can be traced to their understanding of and adaptation to society. The attribute that they all invariably share is of course their natural goodness. All are, in varying degrees, morally admirable.

Obviously, the Good-Natured Man as a type, like fiction as a genre, is an abstraction, a category imposed upon a group of somewhat similar things in order to facilitate understanding. These terms have meaning only in relation

to specific works. To say that the Good-Natured Man as a type develops in the pattern defined above is, of course, to impose an organizing concept upon a group of characters, for the type itself is nothing more than an organizing concept. Certainly there is some correlation between the precise characterization of a specific Good-Natured Man and the time he appears, but the concept of a developing type, not chronology, is the organizing principle informing this study. When this concept is used in relation to specific characters, it does add clarity, just as the concept of the protagonists of the Leatherstocking Tales as one developing character adds clarity to that series even though it violates the chronology of the various characters' appearances.

In the following chapters the character of the Good-Natured Man at each stage of development will be described, the themes which seem inherent in the Good-Natured Man and his conflicts at each stage of development will be discussed, and the function of the Good-Natured Man at each stage of development both as a type and as a main character in a specific literary work will be defined.

## Notes to Chapter II

<sup>1</sup>Of course, many of the aspects of literature that have become associated with "sentimentalism" have no source in or relation to sentimental ethical theory or good nature. In the 1740's the word "sentimental" first came into usage as a derivative of the English word "sentiment." "Sentiment" was frequently employed by moral philosophers and periodical essayists to denote "a thought, a mental attitude of approval or disapproval, an opinion or view as to what is right or agreeable," and to connote a moral evaluation, an attitude of approval or disapproval from a moral point of view. "Sentimental" originally meant "thought" plus "moral," or a reflective concern for moral conduct or feeling. In the 1750's "sentimental" underwent gradual change. The heart, not the head, came to be looked upon as the principal guide to man's virtuous conduct, and "sentimental" became more closely associated with feeling and the heart than with reflection and the mind. In the 1760's the main connotation became feeling rather than thinking morally; "sentimental" came to mean characterized by or exhibiting refined and elevated feeling. Since exhibiting feeling became the indication of moral goodness, the presentation in literary works of feeling labeled as "sentimental" which was affected or indecorous to and unwarranted by reality created the pejorative meaning for the term. (Erik Erametsa, A Study of the Word "Sentimental" and Other Linguistic Characteristics of Eighteenth Century Sentimentalism in England /Helsinki: Helsingin Liikekirjapaino Oy, 1951/, pp. 23-51 and passim.)

When the designation "sentimental comedy" came into usage in the 1750's, it meant "comedy depicting a moral way of thinking and acting." In the modern critical use of "sentimental" as a label for a work or group of works, e.g., sentimental comedy, it could mean one or all of several things: that the work or works support sentimental ethical theory, that they deal with a moral problem, that they appeal to the emotions more than to the intellect, that they contain the idea of essential goodness or perfectability of human nature, that they exhibit private virtues rather than expose vices, that they solicit tears and admiration for the sufferings and actions of the good and virtuous,

that they partake of the artificial, the exaggerated, or the improbable. (Arthur Sherbo, English Sentimental Drama /East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957/, p. 13.) In other words, the term could apply to the theme, characters, structure, and tone of a work or works or to any one of these.

For purposes of this paper, when the word "sentimental" is used in relation to a work, it refers to the tone of the work (the attitude of the author) or to the romantic narrative structure (the unironic portrayal of the desirable and the ideal as the attainable and real). To the extent that the tone of a work unironically supports sentimental ethics in its characters and themes it is "sentimental"; to the extent that it ridicules sentimental ethics in its treatment of characters and themes it is satirical or ironic. Usually, however, "sentimental" will be defined in context.

<sup>2</sup>The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), IV, 370.

<sup>3</sup>The Champion, January 12, 1739/1740, in William Ernest Henley, ed., The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq. (New York: Croscup and Sterling, 1902; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1967), XV, 150.

<sup>4</sup>Works, XV, 256-260.

<sup>5</sup>Works, XIV, 88-92.

<sup>6</sup>Preface to Miscellanies, by Henry Fielding, Esq.; in Three Volumes (3v., London, 1743), I, xxviii-xxix, quoted in Henry K. Miller, Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 47.

<sup>7</sup>The studies I have in mind are: R. S. Crane's "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling'"; James A. Work's "Henry Fielding, Christian Censor," in The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), pp. 139-148; Martin C. Battestin's The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews; Henry K. Miller's Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies; Stuart M. Tave's The Amiable Humorist: A Study in the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1960).



<sup>8</sup>Miscellanies, I, 16, quoted in H. K. Miller, pp. 56-57.

<sup>9</sup>Works, XIV, 285.

The statement that good nature disposes us to promote the happiness of others without the "allurements and terrors of religion," quoted in the present context might lead one to assume that Fielding, like Shaftesbury and other moral philosophers, believed in the autonomy of ethics. H. K. Miller in Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies and other critics have shown that Fielding "never doubted that the Christian religion as he understood it was the ultimate basis of moral behavior. . . . Good-nature (or, in effect, virtue, benevolence, charity) and religion were complimentary moral forces, together constituting the very 'bands of civil society'; and of the two, religion went beyond good-nature, both in giving promise of a life to come and inspiring a more sublime morality than could any mere human passion." Fielding did share many of the beliefs held by Shaftesbury, most notably that man had a sense of right and wrong antecedent to religious belief, but whereas Shaftesbury argued that this moral sense existed independently of religion, Fielding held that the original notions had been implanted by God and were thus identified with religious imperatives. (Henry K. Miller, Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies, pp. 71-72.)

<sup>10</sup>Works, XV, 258.

<sup>11</sup>Paul E. Parnell's definition of the "sentimentalist" as basically an egoistic character who is constantly rationalizing his morally ambiguous actions and exclaiming over the beauties of virtue in order to be able to think of himself as virtuous fits the Good-Natured Man at this latter extreme, and only at this extreme ("The Sentimental Mask," PMLA, 78 [1963], 529-535).

<sup>12</sup>The italicized words are carefully chosen so as not to imply direct influence or a one to one relationship. By 1740 the benevolent view of man and the ideas of good nature summarized in Chapter One of this paper had become widely disseminated and could be picked up without ever reading any of the divines or philosophers. Moreover, I am not interested at present in tracing the sources of the ethical conceptions of the writers discussed in this paper.

<sup>13</sup>Fiction and the Shape of Belief: A Study of Henry Fielding (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), p. 271.

### Chapter III

#### The Good-Natured Man as Naif: The Moral Aspect

The very title good-natured naif indicates the strengths and weaknesses of the characters to which it refers. The naifs are innocent, simple, warm-hearted, generous, unsuspecting, utterly devoid of vanity and affectation, and, in short, have "that open Disposition, which is the surest Indication of an honest and upright Heart."<sup>1</sup> Their actions are unashamedly generous, spontaneous, and unaffected, and since they can understand in others only that which they contain in themselves, they have no understanding of evil and do not recognize artifice. Therefore, they unconsciously present both the moral and naive qualities of their good nature with glaring boldness. Among the four types of the Good-Natured Man treated in this study the naif is the most frequent in occurrence, most versatile in function, and most ambiguous in treatment.

Fielding created more fully developed, memorable, and lovable good-natured naifs than any other writer. He asserted in the preface to the Miscellanies that "Benevolence, Honour, Honesty, and Charity, make a good

Man; . . . Parts, courage, are the efficient Qualities of a Great Man."<sup>2</sup> Whatever the reason, and many have been convincingly proposed, Fielding limits himself in his writing to creating variations on these two classes of men and never tries to embody in a single character his ideal of "true greatness"--the man both good and great which he defines in his verse essay "Of True Greatness" and elsewhere. This ideal, defined in the preceding chapter, is implicit in all of Fielding's works. Mr. Boncour, Heartfree, Joseph Andrews, Parson Adams, Tom Jones, Squire Allworthy, Booth, and Dr. Harrison are all good-natured men who fall short of the "true Sublime in Human Nature" partly because the ideal is incapable of being translated into the real, but mainly because they lack sufficient quality of "greatness," that is, "Parts." Obviously, Squire Allworthy and Dr. Harrison have more social intelligence, knowledge, and art than do any of the other characters, and they will receive fuller treatment in another chapter. The other characters are naifs.

Obviously there are numerous other good-natured characters in eighteenth-century literature who fit the naif subtype. And since Fielding's characters and works

have received so much critical attention, I choose to concentrate in this chapter primarily upon ones that more readily yield up fresh insights as well as a definition of the character and function of the good-natured naif.

The Good-Natured Man appears, with few exceptions in comic narratives.<sup>3</sup> Reasons for this are no doubt multitudinous. Some probable causes are that the divines and philosophers presented the Good-Natured Man as a comic hero in their polemics, that drama had a long tradition of employing characters similar to the Good-Natured Man in minor comic roles (buffoons, rustics, country bumpkins), and that the neo-classical emphasis on the universal rather than the particular, on society rather than the individual, caused the comic mode which reflects the permanence and the typicality of human experience to flourish better than the tragic mode which reflects the finality and uniqueness of human experience. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains. Interestingly enough, the character type in nineteenth-century American literature which R. W. B. Lewis labels the American Adam<sup>4</sup> is very similar to the good-natured naif but almost invariably appears in a tragic narrative. The eighteenth-century English character has

never, so far as I know, been recognized as an influence on the shaping of the nineteenth-century American character, but the striking resemblance between them leads one to suspect that there are debts yet to be acknowledged.

Fielding's Joseph Andrews (1742), Tom Jones (1749), and Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield (1766) are comic narratives and that alone is sufficient indication that these works are not primarily about the "life and opinions" of the characters mentioned in the titles, but about the meaning of life which arises from the static, central characters' encounters with static, typical societies. Maynard Mack has expressed well the effect of the comic point of view upon characters: "We are usually aware with comic characters that we are looking around them as well as at them," because "comedy presents us with life apprehended in the form of spectacle rather than in the form of experience." Our point of view is "not inside the character but outside him, in a position that compels us to observe discrepancies between the persuasive surfaces of personalities as they see themselves and these personalities as they are. Thus the point of view that ours must be continuous with in comedy is not the characters' but the author's. . . . The comic artist subordinates the presentation of life as

experience, where the relationship between ourselves and the characters experiencing it is the primary one, to the presentation of life as spectacle, where the primary relationship is between himself and us as onlookers."<sup>5</sup>

In comic narratives the naif may be treated either sentimentally, or ironically, or both. The good-natured naif is almost always to some degree an object of satire because he is something of a misfit in his society and is unaware that he is different from anyone else. Of course, the very fact that he does appear somewhat ridiculous, is in part a condemnation of society and makes it the chief object of ridicule. Fielding has pointed out in his preface to Joseph Andrews, as has Congreve in his dedication to The Way of the World, and Shadwell in dedication to The Virtuoso, that "The only source of the true Ridiculous . . . is affectation," which proceeds from vanity and hypocrisy.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the good-natured naif evokes laughter and sympathy and unlike society never simply scornful ridicule. However, one must confine himself to a very narrow definition of ridicule if he argues that the good-natured naif is never the object of ridicule in Fielding. A workable definition of ridicule is provided by Adam Ferguson in Institutes of

Moral Philosophy (1769), "Ridicule is a sentiment of disapprobation, mixed with mirth and pleasantry. As the sentiment of disapprobation predominates, ridicule approaches to scorn. As the sentiment of pleasantry predominates, it approaches to mirth and may even be mixed with tenderness."<sup>7</sup>

Since the proper evaluation of and attitude toward the good-natured naif is the one held by the author, it is impossible to arrive at a correct understanding, or a just appraisal, of a work in which the naif is a major figure without first ascertaining the writer's attitude toward his character. However, there has been much disagreement over Fielding's and Goldsmith's attitudes toward their good-natured comic heroes. Because of various interpretations of the tone in The Vicar of Wakefield, particularly the author's attitude toward Dr. Primrose, there have been diverse and contradictory statements about the function of the Good-Natured Man and consequently about the artistic quality of the work. The same is true in regard to Goldsmith's play, The Good-Natur'd Man (1768).

Almost all criticism of The Good-Natur'd Man and The Vicar of Wakefield has analyzed and evaluated them, not as separate and complete verbal structures whose internal meanings are more important than their external



meanings, but as illustrations of or units in Goldsmith's campaign against sentiment. Yet, the traditional interpretation of both works is that they are sentimental.<sup>8</sup> The traditional critical judgment, then, is that since his practice contradicts his dramatic theory and his customary anti-sentimental stance, Goldsmith has failed to accomplish his purpose and his works lack consistency.

More recently the satirical elements of the works have been stressed. Robert B. Heilman and W. F. Gallaway, Jr. have argued that the sentimental elements of The Good Natur'd Man are included to be ridiculed and that, as the title implies, Goldsmith's fundamental purpose is to ridicule extravagance disguised as generosity and gullibility masked as universal benevolence.<sup>9</sup> Robert H. Hopkins has argued that readers have been misinterpreting The Vicar of Wakefield for over 175 years and that the work is a satire of Dr. Primrose and his family from beginning to end.<sup>10</sup> These gentlemen provide much needed correctives to the interpretations of these works. Of course, they discover much more artistic unity than the earlier critics had. But they are controlled in their analyses by the belief that an anti-sentimental habit of mind exists throughout Goldsmith's works and that the presence of any

sentiment in his work would mean that he "had not sufficient control of his materials to avoid the very thing he attacked."<sup>11</sup> They find no sentiment. This either/or choice between a sentimental (i.e., unironic) and a satirical interpretation has continually hampered critical study of The Good Natur'd Man and The Vicar of Wakefield.

I readily agree that Dr. Primrose and Young Honeywood are satirized throughout The Vicar of Wakefield and The Good Natur'd Man. I also assert that Joseph Andrews, Parson Adams, Tom Jones and many other good-natured naifs are satirized. The follies for which the good-natured naif is ridiculed result from his faulty perception. Because he does not understand the true nature of his society, his values and actions are inappropriate, according to the social code. He never questions whether his ideals are workable or whether his techniques, his means of realizing his ideals in reality, are efficient. But since the good-natured naif naively believes that everyone else shares his ideals and his open and honest means of achieving them, he is completely out of step with society. He reacts to appearance as his good nature and sensibility dictate in a society where one succeeds by controlling reality by art and intellect.

Not only does the good-natured naif not understand society, he does not understand himself. He cannot perceive, as those around him may, that his unconscious motives are frequently inconsistent with his actions. Honeywood recognizes his own inconsistencies at the end of The Good Natur'd Man: "I now too plainly perceive my errors. My vanity, in attempting to please all, by fearing to offend any. My meanness in approving folly, lest fools should disapprove. Henceforth, therefore, it shall be my study to reserve my pity for real distress; my friendship for true merit, and my love for her, who first taught me what it is to be happy."<sup>12</sup> And Robert Hopkins finds substantial evidence to support his argument that Dr. Primrose is very materialistic. Dr.-Primrose consistently equates earthly prosperity with God's grace.<sup>13</sup> And he gets a great deal of satisfaction and security from the verse in Psalms which he gives in place of money to his son George when he sends him away from home, "I have been young, and now am old; yet never saw I the righteous man forsaken, or his seed begging their bread" (IV, 26). Thus, the good-natured naif is open to ridicule for his inconsistency not only with the social code but also with his own moral code. But there is no indication that any

of the naifs ever consciously act from unworthy motives. Therefore, they are gently satirized for being morally inconsistent but are not judged to be evil persons who consciously cover base motives with the appearance of righteousness.

Thus, both the social and moral standards for judging the good-natured naif show him to lack perception. But the social code measures his efficiency and judges him to be a fool, and the moral code evaluated his conscious motives and judges him to be a man of good character.

Robert Heilman and Robert Hopkins assumed that the purpose of The Good Natur'd Man and The Vicar of Wakefield was merely to make the Good-Natured Man ridiculous when measured by the social code or by his own moral code. For that reason neither has seen the happy endings of these works or the attitudes of the prudent and admirable paragon figures toward the good-natured naif to be significant. I contend that these aspects of the works are crucial to an understanding of the artistic unity and consequently of the themes of both works.

The happy endings have been accounted for in various ways, but never, to my knowledge, have they been seen as a part of the natural, organic development of the works.

For example, for some the conventional structure of comedy is adequate explanation for the ending of The Good Natur'd Man, and the author's desire to please the sentimental tastes of his readers is adequate reason for the ending of The Vicar of Wakefield. I agree that, as is typical of comic narrative, there is no direct causal connection between the actions of the good-natured naif and the happy endings. But the endings are justified by and grow naturally out of the narrative, for it is the social hero, the Good-Natured Man as paragon, who has the ability to recognize the folly of the good-natured naif and to understand and control reality who comes to the rescue. The appropriate question is not whether or not the endings are probable, but rather how the endings affect the meaning of the works.

The fact that the most admirable characters in the works (Sir William Thornhill in The Vicar of Wakefield and Sir William Honeywood in The Good Natur'd Man) respect and help rescue the good-natured naif is significant to the theme of both works in two ways. First, it reaffirms the ideals and values of the good-natured naif. Sir William Honeywood is more reserved than Sir William Thornhill in his praise of the naif's virtues. He acknowledges that Young Honeywood's faults are "so nearly allied to excellence,

that we can scarce weed out the vice without eradicating the virtue" (V, 20), but he does not believe, as Miss Richland does, that "his tenderness, his humanity, his universal friendship, may atone for many faults" (V, 51).

He tells Young Honeywood in the rescue scene that parallels the one in The Vicar of Wakefield:

. . . Sir, you are surprised to see me; and I own that a desire of correcting your follies led me hither. I saw, with indignation, the errors of a mind that only sought applause from others; that easiness of disposition, which, tho' inclin'd to the right, had not courage to condemn the wrong. I saw with regret those splendid errors, that still took name from some neighboring duty. Your charity, that was but injustice; your benevolence, that was but weakness; and your friendship but credulity. I saw, with regret, great talents and extensive learning, only employed to add sprightliness to error, and encrease your perplexities. I saw you mind with a thousand natural charms: but the greatness of its beauty served only to heighten my pity for its prostitution. (V. 80)

Thus, Sir William Honeywood not only reaffirms the values of tenderness, humanity, and universal friendship, but also corrects mistaken notions about them and gives operational definitions of them. He not only rescues the naif from exploitation but from being unwittingly the instrument of injustice.

When Sir William Thornhill comes to aid Dr. Primrose, he tells George, "I am now come to see justice done a worthy man, for whom I have the most sincere esteem. I

have long been a disguised spectator of thy father's benevolence. I have at his little dwelling enjoyed respect uncontaminated by flattery and have received that happiness that courts could not give, for the amusing simplicity around his fireside" (IV, 168, italics mine). Thus, the most admirable character in the story by either social or moral standards has a "sincere esteem" for the good-natured naif and appreciates his benevolence, openness, and simplicity. Moreover, the actions of Sir William Thornhill up to the time of this speech support his assertion that he has come, not to do a benevolent act, but to see justice done. And every evidence outside the work indicates that the word "justice" is carefully chosen. In 1759 Goldsmith published his essay "On Justice and Generosity" which defined justice in a way that amplifies the meaning of Sir William Thornhill's statement: "Justice may be defined, that virtue which impels us to give to every person what is his due. In this extended sense of the word, it comprehends the practice of every virtue which reason prescribes or society should expect. Our duty to our maker, to each other, and to ourselves, are fully answered, if we give them what we owe them. Thus, justice, properly speaking, is the only virtue, and all the rest have

their origin in it" (I, 406).

Secondly, the rescue of the good-natured naif by the social hero who wishes to see justice done turns the ridicule back upon society. Thus, to interpret these works merely as satires on sentiment is to impose a theme upon them. The theme which is organically a part of the structure and tone of both The Good Natur'd Man and The Vicar of Wakefield is concerned with values. Goldsmith upsets our sense of values by first showing that present reality makes the good-natured naif absurd and then that the good-natured naif makes society villainous. Two ways of life controlled by two standards of conduct are shown to be in conflict.

The central theme, then, is concerned with the fate of goodness in modern reality, and because of the many variables and influences that affect the fate of goodness, both works, especially The Vicar of Wakefield, are ambiguous and ambivalent. Obviously, the conclusions reaffirm that goodness is possible for those, like Sir William Thornhill and Sir William Honeywood, who have both prudence and benevolence, art and worthy ideals, intellect and good nature. But if the Sir Williams had not been present to render their services, the good-natured naif would not



have been judged by a moral code which judges one on the basis of his character and conscious motives, but he would have been judged and condemned by a social code which judges one on the basis of his efficiency (perception and art) and is too complex for the man with simple goodness and ignorant innocence to understand. The Primrose family would have been destroyed and Young Honeywood would have left the country in defeat. And the improbability of the endings of both the play and the novel point out the improbability of simple goodness surviving in the respective societies, of morality without intellect being rewarded.

These generalities may be applied with equal validity to Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews. However, instead of being rescued by a paragon within the story, they are rescued by the storyteller's comic manipulation of plot. But the improbability and the meanings of the resolutions are much the same. Fielding says concerning Tom Jones near the end of the novel, "so destitute is he now of friends, and so persecuted by enemies, that we almost despair of bringing him to any good" (XVII, i; V, 248). But Fielding, the omniscient narrator, the god and creator of the novel, manipulates the plot so that the prison doors open for Tom and the charges against him of murder, incest, and

unfaithfulness are found to be groundless. Fielding takes pride in the fact that he uses "natural means" both to create illusions in the minds of his characters and audience and to strip them away, but he acknowledges repeatedly that the story is completely his own fabrication. Thus, when Tom Jones (like Joseph Andrews) discovers that he is a gentleman by birth, it is implied that he has proved himself to be worthy of that rank. Since comic manipulation of plot makes the discovery possible, the improbability of the discovery is evident, and Fielding's role in seeing justice done is analogous to Squire Thornhill's. Fielding is firmly and seriously in control of the moral significance of his plots and characters.<sup>14</sup>

Except in comedy, the way of life characterized by simplicity, innocence, and benevolence is doomed to destruction by a society that judges man by a social code rather than a moral code, that values art more than good character, that is dedicated to material rather than abstract ideals. But the fate of the naif in comic works is commensurate with his moral desert. The naif is associated with normal society in conflict with absurd society, moral conduct in conflict with immoral conduct, a simple, natural, country style of life in conflict with a chaotic, artificial,

city style of life. The comic resolution reaffirms both the values associated with the naif, and preserves the possibility of escape from absurd, corrupt society.

Thus, the good-natured naif in these works is both a standard and an object of satire. To the degree that his moral goodness is emphasized, the good-natured naif is respected; to the degree that his naivete is emphasized, he is satirized for his many imperfections and deficiencies, for having fallen short of fulfilling his human capabilities. The difference is like that between saying, "He has his imperfections, but he is a good man," and saying "He is a good man, but he is woefully unfit for this world."

The dual heroic and ironic role of the naif is evident in almost every confrontation between the naif and a blocking figure. When Adams goes to Parson Trulliber to borrow the meager funds necessary for him, Joseph, and Fanny to return home, his simple faith in mankind sets him up for disappointment, but his unwavering faith in his beliefs is his armor against Trulliber and the weapon by which he eventually reduces the parson to a blind fury and to the point of proving he is a Christian by fighting Adams. Time and time again the naif encounters the social, political, and religious giants and deflates their puffed up,

pretentious egos with his innocence. Thus, to the delight of the audience, the naif unwittingly breaks through the facades and artificiality of pretentious society. Each encounter provides the author with an opportunity to attack strongly those persons, ideas, and institutions that are in his view evil. Attack upon society for moral failure predominates in Joseph Andrews, Tom Jones, and The Vicar of Wakefield at the same time that sentimental ethics are tested for their practicality. In most encounters both the naif and the blocking figure are losers. The naif fails to achieve his goal because he is inept socially; the blocking figure reveals his immorality. But since it is the morality of the characters about which we are made to care, the naif is admirable, the blocking character despicable.<sup>15</sup>

When the good-natured naif is a country parson, like Dr. Primrose or Parson Adams, whose role it is to exemplify and preach morality, the emphasis is clearly on his moral goodness. If he practices what he preaches, he is likely to be predominately an object of admiration in spite of his naivete. Fielding says much the same when he states in his preface to Joseph Andrews that he made Abraham Adams a clergyman "since no other office could have given him so

many opportunities of displaying his worthy inclinations"

(p. 11). Fielding introduces Adams in Chapter Three:

Mr. Abraham Adams was an excellent scholar. He was a perfect master of the Greek and Latin languages; to which he added a great share of knowledge in the oriental tongues, and could read and translate French, Italian, and Spanish. He had applied many years to the most severe study, and had treasured up a fund of learning rarely to be met with in a university. He was besides a man of good sense, good parts, and good nature; but was at the same time as entirely ignorant of the ways of this world as an infant just entered into it could possibly be. As he had never any intention to deceive, so he never suspected such a design in others. He was generous, friendly, and brave to an excess; but simplicity was his characteristic. (pp. 22-23)

His learning comes from books, not experience; his idealism is founded on scripture and the classics. He is a very capable, but very innocent man. However, his role as parson justifies all of this. His very name (as well as his good nature and naivete) provides a vision of innocence and illustrates the truth of what he preaches--that man can be emancipated from time, from the sins, griefs, and evil consequences of past human experience. His role makes it right for him to be an idealist, to embrace the abstract and reject the concrete, to embrace the "other world" and reject this one, to embrace the spiritual and reject the physical, to embrace faith and reject skepticism.

Stuart Tave says of Adams, "not to apprehend the

existence of such passions as malice and envy is a considerable imperfection, weakening, as it does, the effectiveness of virtue; the innocence that is unaware of the conflict between its own ideal motives and the resistant reality of the world in which it must act is in a continual state of blind confusion."<sup>16</sup> Tave is placing the emphasis not upon Adam's moral goodness but upon the limitations and rigidity of his constitutional goodness, and judging him by a social, pragmatic standard. This is not the emphasis in the novel. Innocence does not seem to be such a "considerable imperfection" when we see Adam's appropriate role as an example and preacher rather than as philanthropist. Certainly for Adams himself his innocence is no unmixed blessing, but for Adams as parson his distorted perception of reality preserves his essential qualifications, virtue and idealism, by preventing a too brutal collision of his ideal world with the real one, at least in his own consciousness. Society may judge Adams to be "in a continual state of blind confusion," but Adams is never aware of confusion. If his ideals contradict reality, then reality is wrong and ought to be altered or condemned. Adams is unshaken as an invincible and indomitable idealist who thinks better of himself and his actions and better or

worse of his world than is justified by reality. And we love him for it, for his ignorance is harmless to anyone but himself since his only involvement in the lives of others is an active charity prompted by benevolent motives, and his authority exists only in the spiritual, abstract realm of belief, values, and ideas.

When attention is focused on the naif as the object of satire, the major theme which is inherent is that of innocence versus knowledge or experience and passion versus prudence.<sup>17</sup> This theme is most obviously treated in the contrasts between the naif and the Good-Natured Man as paragon, between Tom Jones and Squire Allworthy, Dr. Primrose and Sir William Thornhill. There are similar contrasting characters in Fielding's, The Fathers; or The Good-Natured Man, Goldsmith's, The Good Natur'd Man, and Lillo's, The London Merchant to mention only a few. And where there is no character that more nearly approximates the ideal Good-Natured Man with both a good heart and a good head, the ideal is always implicit as a contrast to the shortcomings of the naif. The broadest statement of this theme is the ideal versus the real.

When attention is focused on the naif as the standard of satire, the major theme is naturally charity versus

vanity, or it might be stated variously as goodness versus greatness, impulsive goodness versus cold prudence, benevolence versus self-love, good nature without art versus art without good nature. The theme is developed in innumerable paired characters. The contrast between Tom Jones and Blifil is representative. The theme is also reflected in the geographical contrast of country and city. The broadest statement of this theme is a form of the real versus the real, real morality versus real society. None of the contrasting ideas, persons, or places is ideal, but given the choice between the two conflicting realities, Fielding, Goldsmith, Smollett, Sarah Fielding, and all others who portray the naif choose simple, impulsive, benevolent good nature and the country every time. For, as they see it, ultimately the conflict is between order and confusion in the related spheres of morality, society, and language.



### Notes to Chapter III

<sup>1</sup>Henry Fielding, "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," Works, XIV, 283.

<sup>2</sup>Miscellanies, I, xxvi; quoted in Miller, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup>Some exceptions are George Barnwell in Lillo's The London Merchant (1731) and David Simple in the sequel Sarah Fielding added in 1753 to her novel David Simple (1744). Obviously all the good-natured naifs are potentially tragic, at least in the modern Mandelian sense, but as it happens the ones which are allowed to shape their own destinies are one-dimensional characters who do not add significantly to our understanding of the character and function of the Good-Natured Man.

<sup>4</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

<sup>5</sup>"Introduction," Joseph Andrews, by Henry Fielding (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1948), p. xv.

<sup>6</sup>Ed. Martin C. Battestin (Wesleyan University Press, 1967), p. 7. Future references to this work will be given in the text.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in Tave, pp. 75-76.

<sup>8</sup>Robert H. Hopkins, The True Genius of Oliver Goldsmith (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), pp. 166-176.

<sup>9</sup>Heilman, "The Sentimentalism of Goldsmith's Good-Natured Man," in Nathaniel M. Caffee and Thomas A. Kirby, ed., Studies for William A. Read (University, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1940), pp. 237-253. Gallaway, "The Sentimentalism of Goldsmith," PMLA, 48 (1933), 1167-1181.

<sup>10</sup>The True Genius of Oliver Goldsmith.

<sup>11</sup>Heilman, p. 242.

<sup>12</sup>In Arthur Friedman, ed., Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), V, 81. Future references in this chapter to works in this collection will be given in the text.

<sup>13</sup>Hopkins, p. 218.

<sup>14</sup>Morris Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966), p. 133.

<sup>15</sup>Maynard Mack in "The Muse of Satire," Yale Review, 41 (1951), 80-92, defines "the voice of the naif, the ingenu, the simple heart," as a satiric persona. "The owner of the voice is usually the vehicle of ironies about matters he professes not to understand, and is amazed by his own involvement in the literary arts." There are some obvious affinities between this satiric persona and the naif discussed in this chapter. But it is helpful to distinguish between the naif character or role and the naif voice. The naif as a character in a novel (in which satire is subordinate to represented action) is far more versatile and complex than the naif as a voice for the satirist in a work in which ridicule of character traits, ideas, or manners is of primary interest (Mack uses Pope's satires to illustrate his points). Tom Jones and Parson Adams, for example, sometimes function as satiric personae, but this function is only a part, a subordinate part, of their respective roles in the novels in which they appear. Not only do they reveal ironies by their actions as well as by their speeches, but in addition neither their actions or their speeches are always "vehicles for ironies." In other words, Mack is not talking about a character in fiction when he defines the naif. The function of the naif character as a vehicle for satire is treated directly and extensively in the following works: Robert Alter, "The Design of Character," Chapter Three in Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); Homer Goldberg, "Fielding's Prototypes," Chapter Two in The Art of Joseph Andrews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Glenn W. Hatfield, "Irony and Action," Chapter Four in Henry Fielding and the Language of Irony (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1968); Eleanor N. Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones (University: University of Alabama Press,

1965); and George R. Levine, Henry Fielding and the Dry Mock (The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton and Company, 1967).

<sup>16</sup>The Amiable Humorist, p. 141.

<sup>17</sup>Some good discussions of this theme are: Glenn W. Hatfield's "'The Serpent and the Dove': 'Prudence' in Tom Jones," Chapter Five of Henry Fielding and the Language of Irony; Eleanor N. Hutchens' "'Prudence' in Tom Jones: A Study of Connotative Irony," PQ, 39 (1960), 496-507.

## Chapter IV

### The Good-Natured Man As Humorist: The Constitutional Aspect

The theory of "humours" and the cervantic depiction of Quixotian obsessions with ideas were part of the literary tradition that influenced the portrayal of the Good-Natured Man. These influences are noticeable but insignificant in the good-natured naif. They are insignificant because in the character and function of the good-natured naif the emphasis is always upon morality, whether the naif is the object or the standard of either satire or evaluation, and the theme which develops in a work in which he is a central character is that of good versus bad, or moral versus immoral, or morality versus society, etc. The constant and unchanging element in the character of the naif is his "natural goodness." This, of course, reflects the artist's unwavering faith in a natural basis for morality. Even though Fielding emphasized good judgment when defining "good-nature" or in discussing the proper allocation of charity, he had an overriding faith in the "natural" feelings as guides to virtue.<sup>1</sup> In short, his ethics are similar to those of the Latitudinarians and Shaftesbury,

and his themes are moralistic.

But in the character and function of the Good-Natured Man as humorist the emphasis shifts from the moral to the constitutional aspect of character. Again, anyone who has attended carefully to what Fielding and his characters have to say about moral education or has tried to account for the differences between Tom Jones and young Blifil is aware that the good-natured naif is controlled by his constitution. The naif, and all other good-natured characters for that matter, can reason but from what they are by nature and education, and they attribute to others the qualities they value and recognize in themselves unless experience makes that impossible.<sup>2</sup> As a device for satire, the naif is the ethical antithesis to the vanity and hypocrisy of society; as a comic hero, the naif overcomes the limitation of his constitutional good nature. The avowed purpose of many of Fielding's essays and novels is to teach prudence and wisdom to the good man, to alter his constitution so that it is less limiting. Fielding found the naif an adequate character-device for treating seriously moral themes because he never doubted that the good man's natural sense of right and wrong, though antecedent to religious belief, "had been implanted by

God and [was] thus to be identified with religious imperatives."<sup>3</sup>

The traditional theory of humors, because it is a familiar and functional vocabulary for giving expression to physiological-psychological reality, is significant in works which focus upon the internal conflicts of the Good-Natured Man. "Humor" has a long etymology and many definitions. Stuart Tave provides a comprehensive study of the term in his work The Amiable Humorist. I wish to merely call attention to the major ideas which an eighteenth-century writer would have associated with humor.

Ben Jonson's concept of humor is a development of the medieval theory whereby the body was composed of four fluids whose particular mixture in an individual determined his basic temperament or character type. At the beginning of Every Man Out of His Humour, Ben Jonson distinguishes two kinds of humor in the metaphorical sense, the sense in which it applies to disposition: true humor in which a peculiar quality actually possesses a man, drawing all his physical affects, spirits, and powers to run one way; and affected humor in which a man goes out of his way to appear different in fashions, manners or nature.<sup>4</sup> Congreve felt about true humor as he did about

natural folly or physical defects; they are from nature and cannot be changed and, therefore, should never be the subject of ridicule. Jonson and Congreve are, of course, interested in the humorist as a comic character in literature. But the concept of humor is pervasive in writings of political, social, and moral nature as well and is influenced by attitudes and values in these areas.

After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, Whig thinkers like Sir William Temple, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele who were upholders of individualistic political and social attitudes gloried in England's reputation for possessing an abundance of humorous and eccentric characters.<sup>5</sup> Humor became synonymous with peculiarity and individualism and took on positive connotations of innocence and nobility. These writers associate the oddity and irregularity of English characters with the irregularity of climate.

The doctrine of the ruling passion reflects a less positive view of the humorist. The ruling passion theory is evident in works throughout the Age of Reason and was popularized by Pope in the Essay on Man. The theory saw man's reason as always tending to be enslaved by the passions, usually by one passion which also dominated the other passions.

Locke in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding rejects all notions of innate ideas or principles but gives a new explanation for the ruling passion psychological theory. In Book Two Locke says that "there is scarce any one that does not observe something that seems odd to him, and is itself really extravagant, in the opinions, reasonings, and actions of other men." The reason for this, according to Locke, is that through chance, custom, and education, ideas which "of themselves are not at all of kin, come to be . . . united in some man's minds," and once any false or arbitrary connection has been made, one idea "no sooner at any time comes into the understanding, but its associate appears with it." These associations often become the rooted basis of individual behavior since "once set agoing" they "continue in the same steps they have been used to; which by often treading, are worn into a smooth path, and the motion in it becomes easy, and as it were natural."<sup>6</sup>

Those who account for humors by the medieval physiological theory, or by the effect of the English climate, or by the ruling passion theory, or by the association of ideas are all trying to explain why or how the thoughts and actions of an individual are uniquely



at variance with the standard concept of man as a rational, moral being. That is, they are all attempting to account for character and personality. And they would probably all accept a general definition of humor as "any whimsical Oddity or Foible, appearing in the Temper or Conduct of a person in real Life," and of a humorist as a person "Obstinately attached to sensible peculiar Oddities of his own genuine Growth."<sup>7</sup>

Stuart Tave defines almost all good-natured characters as "amiable humorists"--their good nature being their controlling humor. Although good nature sometimes functions like a "humour," the ideologies behind the two terms are independent of each other and for purposes of clarity in this discussion I choose not to use the terms interchangeably.<sup>8</sup> Because "humour" is associated with body chemistry, climate, heredity, and social environment, it has deterministic and amoral connotations. But when this term is applied to the Good-Natured Man who characteristically strives to be virtuous, the term becomes pejorative.

It is very difficult to define the good-natured humorist as a type because each humorist is sui generis. But a few generalities about him are possible. The Good-Natured Man as humorist either affects a humor while his good nature

rules him or has a favorite passion, obsession, or interest which frequently interposes with and usurps control over his good nature, or both. In any case the emphasis is primarily upon a part of the good man's constitution (passion, perception, or will) as an obstacle to consistent moral conduct. All good-natured humorists are "lovable eccentrics" but all are, in varying degrees, inadmirable for allowing themselves to be controlled by their respective humors, whether the heart overrules the judgment of the head or whether the head rules at times without consulting the heart.

The Good-Natured Man as humorist is not an ideal by any standard. Shaftesbury had said that "To have the Natural Affections (such as are founded on Love, Complacency, Goodwill, and in a Sympathy with the Kind or Species) is to have the chief means and power of Self-Enjoyment" [*italics mine*], but he had complemented that by saying that moral goodness depends on a proper balance between the "Natural Affections" and the "Self-Affections." He said that moral value lies in the immediate affection or relish for the good, but he qualifies that by saying goodness or virtue consists "in a certain just Disposition, or proportionable affection of a rational Creature towards

the moral Objects of Right and Wrong [*italics mine*].

Francis Hutcheson, who gathers most of Shaftesbury's qualities of goodness and virtue under the term "universal benevolence," says, "If there be any Benevolence at all, it must be disinterested; for the most useful Action imaginable, loses all appearance of Benevolence, as soon as we discern that it only flowed from Self-Love, or Interest." Obviously, the very concept of "humour" implies an absence of Shaftesbury's "proper balance" and Hutcheson's "disinterested" benevolence. The rationalists, on the other hand, rejected instinctive benevolence, and Richard Price gives what would be a representative of their attitude toward the good-natured naif and the good-natured humorist. "Wherever the influence of mere natural temper or inclination appears, and a particular conduct is known to proceed from hence, we may, it is true, love the person, as we commonly do the inferior creatures when we discover mildness and tractableness of disposition; but no regard for him as a virtuous agent will arise within us." But "Rational benevolence entirely coincides with rectitude, and the actions proceeding from it, with the actions proceeding from a regard for rectitude."<sup>9</sup> But the Good-Natured Man as a humorist, a character with a ruling passion is never

capable of consistent "rational benevolence" regardless of how much he believes in it and preaches the necessity of it as a principle of virtue.

Thus, the Good-Natured Man as humorist lacks a proper balance between natural affections and self affections, i.e., benevolence and self-love, or the proper "union of the good head and good heart," i.e., reason and feeling--good or vicious. The deviance and inconsistency of the good-natured humorist is caused by his controlling humor, ruling passion, or dominant obsession which provides an opposing force either to natural goodness or to prudential goodness. Each of the good-natured humorists selected for discussion in this chapter (the Man in Black, Matthew Bramble, and Uncle Toby) is controlled by a different part of the human constitution, that is, each has a different humor. Moreover, the conflict between humor and good nature is unique in kind and in effect in each character. On the other hand, the three characters are alike in that they incorporate, to some degree, in their characters the values seriously held by eighteenth-century society; as humorists they share fully in the human condition. The good-natured humorist is by far the most believable of the four types of Good-Natured Man discussed in this study.

Thomas Preston defines Goldsmith's Man in Black and Smollett's Matthew Bramble as Benevolent Misanthropes because they affect misanthropy.<sup>10</sup> The Benevolent Misanthrope was once a naif but has gained a better understanding of himself and of his society and recognizes that universal benevolence finally renders one incapable of doing good to anyone and that goodness is not rewarded, yet he is still unable to control his good nature. Because the Benevolent Misanthrope sees and is angered by the wickedness of the unfeeling world, and because he also has a benevolent nature and a delicate sense of morals, he affects misanthropy in order to protect himself from the deceit and imposition of the world. Like the eiron figure Aristotle defines in his Ethics, he deprecates himself, pretends to be less than he is, in order to make himself invulnerable. He preaches prudence while his heart rules him and causes his actions to be inconsistent with his feelings; he affects misanthropy and acts benevolently. Since his good nature continues to control his actions, his invective against society does not consistently hide his compassion any more than the affected concern of a hypocrite hides his malice or indifference. His repeated attempts and failures to hide his true nature provide humor and make

him a lovable eccentric.

But the comparison between Matthew Bramble and the Man in Black stops here. For the slight knowledge they have of the "dark" side of life, knowledge which separates them from the good-natured naif, affects each differently. Also, our regard for them as virtuous agents and their functions in the respective works in which they appear differs.

Goldsmith repeatedly demonstrates that untutored and unchecked benevolence alone cannot insure moral conduct in society and is unwittingly prone to injustice. Natural feeling in an unnatural (in the sense of man-made) society is not an adequate guide to moral action--justice or charity. Goldsmith learned this from experience. He wrote to his brother Henry in January, 1759, "I had learn'd from books to love virtue, before I was taught from experience the necessity of being selfish. I had contracted the habits of a Philosopher, while I was exposing myself to the insidious approaches of cunning; and often, by being even from my narrow finances charitable to excess, I forgot the rules of justice, and placed myself in the very situation of the wretch who thanked my bounty." The Man in Black reveals to Altangi that his benevolence, which Altangi had

already witnessed to be indiscriminating, is "rather the effect of appetite than reason:" "We [children] were told that universal benevolence was what first cemented society; we were taught to consider all the wants of mankind as our own; to regard the human face divine with affection and esteem; he [Drybone's father] wound us up to be mere machines of pity, and rendered us incapable of withstanding the slightest impulse made either by real or fictitious distress; in a word, we were perfectly instructed in the art of giving away thousands, before we were taught the more necessary qualification of getting a farthing." Burchell, another perceptive Good-Natured Man, in The Vicar of Wakefield gives a similar account.<sup>11</sup>

Of particular significance here is that Goldsmith does not justify universal benevolence as natural, but rather blames early education and conditioning for over stressing this value to the extent that it (as Shaftesbury had warned) "destroys its own end." Goldsmith never asserts that benevolence is not justified by God or the nature of things, and he never attempts to undercut benevolence as a virtue; rather he attempts to show that the naturally good man must be taught to understand society and adapt his values to social reality if he is to be

truly good. Asem's visit to another world showed him what a horrible world it would be if universal benevolence were practiced by everyone. However, Asem's discovery was that the practice of that ideal by everyone would be the same as benevolence practiced by no one. Therefore what is desirable is benevolence controlled by prudence, by intellect.<sup>12</sup>

Goldsmith does frequently undercut what appear to be good actions by revealing unworthy motives. The Man in Black is taken in by appearance, as is the naif, partly because he cannot tell whether the need is real or affected, and therefore he is lightly ridiculed because he is unable to act prudently in a dissembling society. But he is primarily ridiculed because Altangi, the narrator, reveals that the Man in Black gives to the various applicants for a selfish purpose--to relieve "his own uneasy sensations." Thus, the Man in Black is no more virtuous than Lysippus in Goldsmith's essay "On Justice and Generosity," who is praised by all the world for his generosity: "there is only one sort of people, who complain of his conduct. Lysippus does not pay his debts. . . . In paying his debts a man barely does his duty, and it is an action attended by no sort of glory. Should Lysippus satisfy his creditors,



who would be at the pains of telling the world /?"<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the Man in Black's affected humor, misanthropy, causes him to see affectation everywhere, even where it is not. Because his misanthropy is caused by a small amount of social intelligence and implies that he is becoming adept in the ways of the world, he is not harshly ridiculed for his affectation. But, because of the disproportionate strength of feeling in Drybone's real character, what appears to be good nature is nothing more than a true humor. Goldsmith may allow us to love him for his "mildness and tractableness of disposition," but his fundamental purpose in his portrayal of Drybone is to ridicule "extravagance disguised as generosity and gullibility masked as universal benevolence."<sup>14</sup> "Mere machines of pity" are not automatically men of virtue.

Goldsmith's sympathetic portrayal of characters who possess the spontaneous generosity and the sensitive humanity of naturally good man in The Vicar of Wakefield, The Good Natur'd Man, "The Deserted Village," and the Letters from a Citizen of the World indicates that he, like Fielding, found the genuineness and honesty of these characters far more admirable than the characters in his works who adhere to empty social and liturgical forms in

order to appear good-natured. But, in these same works, he "was too keenly awake to the realities of life to credit their success anywhere short of the New Jerusalem."

Moreover, he never equated natural goodness with human kindness or true integrity with ignorant innocence.<sup>15</sup>

Goldsmith's moral ideal is represented by Sir William Thornhill and Sir William Honeywood, who are treated in the next chapter.

On the other hand, Matthew Bramble's natural goodness is never questioned. The major function of his private good deeds is to provide proof of his goodness. However, he differs from the naif in that instead of being merely a device for satire, he is, by virtue of having a modicum of social awareness, a satirist. Thomas Preston has said that "In Matthew Bramble, Smollett finally created an acceptable, nonmalicious satirist who could express benevolently and yet virulently the satire he had been striving to write in his earlier novels."<sup>16</sup> However, in Smollett's earlier novels it is clear that he is satirizing what he seriously feels to be wrong with the world. But in Humphrey Clinker the explicit satire is aimed at superficial faults. And Bramble's diatribes cannot be taken seriously because he is predisposed to see corruption

everywhere he looks. Bramble's invective against society is undercut by the disparity between his descriptions and those of the other characters, particularly Jerry and Lydia, and by Jerry's statement upon discovery that George Dennison is not a "wretched stroller" but "one of the most accomplished young fellows in England." This statement at the climax of the story is the only overt expression of the appearance versus reality theme and it reflects on the actions of all four of the letter writers in the novel. "I am . . . mortified to reflect what flagrant injustice we everyday commit, and what absurd judgments we form, in viewing objects through the falsifying medium of prejudice and passion."<sup>17</sup>

I do agree with Preston that Bramble's misanthropy represents a satiric vision of man and the world, for it springs from personal experience of the world's fraud and deceit.<sup>18</sup> What Bramble is reflects equally on himself and society. Society is fatal to the Good-Natured Man. Bramble hides his innate goodness and benevolence under a facade of misanthropy to protect himself from exploitation. Thus society is implicitly ridiculed. On the other hand, there is something unadmirable and ridiculous about Bramble's good nature, not because of shortcomings in morality as with the Man in Black, but because it makes a weakling of

him. Again, the emphasis is on good nature as constitutional rather than moral. His valetudinarianism and misanthropy are caused by his tender heart and delicate sense of morals. Bramble wrote Dr. Lewis, "Everything that discomposes my mind, produces a correspondent disorder in my body" (p. 154), and the wickedness of the world provides ample cause for his mind to be discomposed. His valetudinarianism and misanthropy, his discomfort at Bath and London, and his retreat from the busy haunts of men for thirty years, all imply that good nature renders one unfit for life in society, which is to say in the final analysis, unfit for life. Moreover, we cannot admire Bramble because he is not potentially tragic. He is a victim of good nature, not a champion or devotee of it. When his good nature comes into conflict with society, he damns society, but walks away from the conflict. He is not about to lay down his life for his personal dignity; rather he retreats to escape pain or humiliation.

Because of Bramble's prominent role in the novel as the most prolific letter writer and as the head of the family, and because the novel progressively discloses his character, one expects Bramble to figure prominently in developing the themes in the comic plot. However, his character is not a good device for the serious treatment of either the

wrongs of society, the value of good nature, or the moral limitations of good nature. All these ideas are treated because they all grow naturally out of Bramble's character, but the treatment of them never gets beyond being entertaining, amusing. The most common unfavorable criticism of Humphry Clinker is that it contains no serious treatment of theme, and there is no serious treatment of theme partly because of the character of Bramble. The "nonmalicious satirist who could express /satire/ benevolently and yet virulently" is nonmalicious because he is in reality a gentle, fearful creature who goes about roaring loudly in hopes that no one will discover how tender and weak he is. His benevolence is undercut because it makes him to be a ridiculous valetudinarian; his virulence is undercut because it is part of his narrow-minded, affected misanthropy. Bramble is controlled by feeling, but his actions reveal that the feelings are prejudice and passion more often than they are benevolence. Moreover he distrusts his feelings and places his faith in his social intelligence (his reason) as a guide to virtue and happiness, but at the same time his natural temper determines to a large extent his perception of reality, and he is, therefore, incompetent for his role as guardian of virtue in the novel

and unsuited for the role of satirist. We may love him and applaud the comic resolution of his expedition, but we have no regard for him as a virtuous agent.

Sterne's Uncle Toby in Tristram Shandy is also a good-natured humorist. Our regard for him as virtuous agent is affected by his "true humour." His hobbyhorse sometimes runs roughshod over his good nature, but he, unlike Drybone and Bramble, is unaware of the conflict between his head and his heart which is obvious to everyone else. He is not judged harshly for his inconsistencies because he lacks perception; he is devoid of affectation, and when he is not riding his hobbyhorse, he is admirable for his good nature. Uncle Toby is an eccentric, and he has his own unique "humour" that individualizes him. But Sterne, more successfully than Goldsmith or Smollett, is able to raise individual humor and action into the realm of idea and type and universal.

Altangi says that Drybone is a "humorist in a nation of humorists," but Uncle Toby in the world of Tristram Shandy is a humorist in a society in which literally every character is a humorist. All the humorists in Tristram Shandy are not good-natured, but Yorick, Walter, Trim, and Tristram could certainly be defined as such.

I have chosen to concentrate on Uncle Toby because his instinctive good nature has an important function in the novel as the antithesis of the attempts of reason to impose order upon the flux of reality. This nature versus art comedy permeates Tristram Shandy. The characters, the themes, the description of the action, the very form of the novel, all witness to the impossibility of imposing art on nature. Tristram is frustrated because he lives 364 times faster than he writes, and at one point finds himself on three different journeys at once. Walter's theories and plans all go awry in reality, and so on.<sup>19</sup> This antithesis is apparent in Toby's internal and external conflicts. But in order to understand the character and function of Toby it is helpful to know something of the ethics of Sterne.<sup>20</sup>

Arthur Cash, among those who have studied Sterne's sermons, asserts that "Sterne was a sincere man of religion and an honest teacher of morality, . . . until his death he thought of his sermons as representing his beliefs."<sup>21</sup> Sterne's ethics, as revealed in his sermons, are sentimental rather than rationalistic, but he is closer to Hume than to the Latitudinarians and Shaftesbury. He believes that man has natural instincts--both benevolent and selfish--

which motivate him. Those actions prompted by benevolence and guided by reason are morally admirable. In sermons arguing for the naturalness of benevolent instincts Sterne sounds very much like a Latitudinarian divine.<sup>22</sup> He counters the Hobbesian and Mandevillian egoistic view of man by giving examples of man's disinterested conduct. In "The Vindication of Human Nature" Sterne describes the conduct of a typical person as evidence of man's natural benevolence. He depicts him first as a youth: "how warmly, how heartily he enters into friendships,--how disinterested, and unsuspecting in the choice of them,--how generous and open in his professions;--how sincere and honest in making them good." The only criticism the youth deserves is for being foolishly generous. Sterne points out that he learns caution as he grows older but that the "same benevolence of heart [is]" altered only in its course."<sup>23</sup> Sterne implicitly acknowledges here that his attitude toward the naivete of a young Good-Natured Man would be similar to that of Fielding toward Tom Jones. But Sterne does not write about young people.

Benevolence and compassion are virtues emphasized in Sterne's sermons. "Philanthropy Recommended," dealing with the story of the good Samaritan, emphasizes disinterested



good works as a Christian virtue. "There is something in our nature which engages us to take part in every accident to which man is subject." When we choose to help others in calamitous situations we do so "from a generosity and tenderness of nature which disposes us for compassion, abstracted from all considerations of self."<sup>24</sup> Sterne is not blind to the fact that self-love is as natural as benevolence and that the priest and the Levite walked by the man who had fallen among thieves before the Samaritan stopped to help him. But he presents in his sermons a "basically optimistic view of man's nature and the human lot, stressing the benevolent and philanthropic aspects of man's character, and tending to explain all apparent incongruities in terms of the providential design of beneficent Creator."<sup>25</sup>

However, Sterne never judges moral action or character on the basis of affections alone. "When he speaks, in the sermons, of good or vicious passions, he means only to indicate their general tendency toward virtuous or evil acts; but the moral worth of the act is determined by some standard outside the emotional constitution--by the law of God or the pronouncements of reason. . . . Judgments of moral character take account of the whole personality,

not of individual instincts, which are always innocent just because they are mechanical." Sterne, like Hume, believes that although reason alone is not adequate as a guide to moral action, one should gain knowledge through experience so that his sentimental intuition is conditioned and informed by an awareness of the customary motives and attitudes of men in his society. Goodness not only does not depend upon the spontaneous instinctive response or the pleasure it brings, it may also be harmful unless supported by consideration of the needs of society at large. "A good man makes a practice of reasoning out the needs of his whole society and looks upon the need of a particular person in terms of its large effects."<sup>26</sup>

In the role of country parson Sterne holds up his moral ideal for emulation and imitation. He does not take the old humor psychology seriously. He believes that whichever natural instincts are indulged grow strong and dominant in the personality. To develop a benevolent temper, "a settled principle of humanity and virtue," requires rigorous self-discipline, particularly if the vicious inclinations with which we are born have been cultivated and made stronger by habit and custom. When a vicious passion grows dominant in a personality, Sterne

does refer to it as a "ruling passion," thus associating it with a humor. But one can alter or break the habit of indulging a ruling passion. Idealistically, he would disagree with Congreve and others who stressed the impossibility of changing one's humor. Although the benevolent temper or the ruling passion has a basis in natural instinct, it is the result of the order and organization a person has allowed his impulses.

The great end and design of our holy religion, next to the main view of reconciling us to God, was to reconcile us to each other;--by teaching us to subdue all those unfriendly dispositions in our nature, which unfit us for happiness, and the social enjoyment of the many blessings which God has enabled us to partake of in this world, miserable as it is, in many respects. --Could Christianity persuade the professors of it into this temper, and engage us, as its doctrine requires, to go on and exalt our natures, and, after the subduction of the most unfriendly of our passions, to plant, in the room of them, all those (more natural to the soil) humane and benevolent inclinations, which, in imitation of the perfections of God, should dispose us to extend our love and goodness to our fellow-creatures, according to the extent of our abilities;--in likemanner, as the goodness of God extends itself over all the works of the creation:--Could this be accomplished,--the world would be worth living in.<sup>27</sup>

Sterne's ethics are, obviously, conventional and his sermons reveal the influence of and include passages borrowed from the Latitudinarian divines. The fact that he included one sermon in volume two of Tristram Shandy and published two volumes of sermons while the Tristram was still in

progress indicates, and there is no evidence to the contrary, that Sterne's ethics had not changed between the time he wrote the sermons and the time he wrote his novels. The moral idealism of the sermons is the ethos within which the good-natured characters and moral themes of Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey must be seen.

Fielding explains that his fictional characters are all morally imperfect because, firstly, perfectly good or bad people are never met with in real life, and secondly, perfect examples have no positive moral impact. But "if there be enough of goodness in a character to engage the admiration of a well-disposed mind . . . nothing can be of more moral use than the imperfections which are seen in examples of this kind; since such form a kind of surprise, more apt to affect and dwell upon our minds, than the faults of very vicious and wicked persons."<sup>28</sup> Fielding also says he will teach by giving examples rather than by preaching. Sterne might have said exactly the same about his own fiction. However, Sterne's purpose was far different from Fielding's. Fielding's purpose in Tom Jones was to make good men wise (prudent) and to attack the evils of society as he saw them. Because of the trustworthy, perceptive, artful, good-natured narrator, Fielding's didacticism is

clearly evident and his moral ideal is ever-present to reveal the inadequacies of the imperfectly good characters as they, simultaneously, reveal the faults of society. But Sterne shifts the emphasis from the external to the internal. In his fiction Sterne's "great aim . . . was to give as true a picture as possible of real human beings as they are in themselves."<sup>29</sup> We are always aware that Sterne's characters could be better or less absurd than they are, but Sterne's purpose is not primarily to reveal the evils of society or to measure his characters against his ideal and ridicule them for falling short. Rather Sterne's characters reveal that the disparity between the ideals man forms in his mind and the reality he experiences grows out of his insurmountable inadequacies.

An anonymous critic in the Times Literary Supplement (April 9, 1949, p. 232) commented, "Sterne poised between the Age of Reason and the Age of Feeling, is one of the least sentimental writers, for he never confused the heart and the head. . . . Reality for Sterne was neither reason nor feeling, but the opposition of the two."<sup>30</sup> This statement is applicable to Sterne's practice in his fiction, not to his moral stance in his sermons. In none of Sterne's characters do reason and feeling function harmoniously

together as they ideally should. Yorick in Tristram Shandy comes the closest to embodying the ideal expressed in the sermons, some of which are attributed to him, but the man who can express the ideal for others cannot live up to it either. In reality, man is impelled one way then another by his head and heart. Each character provides a variation on the conflict but all reaffirm that man is grossly inadequate for his own ideals.

Sterne believes that everyone has a ruling passion, which makes the possession of one seem inevitable, but he also believes that the most innocent, trivial obsession can keep a character off his moral balance.<sup>31</sup> Uncle Toby's sympathetic good nature, his moral character, is marred by his humor, just as Walter's is marred by his weakness for theories. It is not difficult to demonstrate that Toby's hobbyhorse is the cause of absurd and harmful actions.

But the indecorousness of the actions of Uncle Toby neither reaffirms his innocent good nature, as it does with the naif, nor passes a forceful moral judgment upon him as with Goldsmith's Man in Black. Rather the inconsistency reflects Toby's internal conflicts. As a Good-Natured Man, Toby incorporates to some degree in his

character and in his mind the true values of eighteenth-century society, and these values are treated seriously by Sterne. As a humorist, Toby has his interrelated physical and psychological limitations. It is of course an oversimplification to say that Toby's conflict is between his good nature and his humor. But to state the conflict thus points up the fact that the disparity Sterne reveals is not primarily between what Uncle Toby is and what he should be, but between what he is (good-natured, sympathetic, tender, etc.) and what he is (obsessed with armies, fortifications, and battles). The ill effects he brings about are symptomatic of his dominant hobby-horsical character just as his ready sympathy is symptomatic of his genuine good nature. Tristram's unnatural circumcision is indirectly caused by Uncle Toby's obsession with his miniature fortifications, which is indirectly caused by the wound to his groin and his need to communicate the circumstances surrounding it to others. If we try to follow the cause and effects relationships implied in Tristram Shandy, we ultimately discover that things fall out as they do because people are what they are and at the same time cannot be held responsible for being what they are.

Uncle Toby's humor, like the monomania's of the other

Shandean characters, has its psychological basis in Locke's theory of the association of ideas discussed earlier. Sterne found the proposition that men know not reality, but only their own experience, a basis for his comic characters, narrative techniques, and themes. He takes this proposition seriously and demonstrates its validity in the actions of his characters and the structure of the novel. John Traugott sees all of this as clearly as anyone but concludes by saying, "The point is that Sterne is concerned much less with Christianity, if we are to judge from the space allotted it, than with describing pretenders to wisdom, and less with describing pretenders to wisdom than in making a rhetorical and satiric demonstration of human passion."<sup>32</sup> But what makes the "demonstration of human passion" important is its implications for morality. All the discussion about the passions, reason, language, communication, education, or any other of the themes in Tristram Shandy have importance as they have implications for morality. Sterne as a sincere moralist and parson consciously strove to reconcile us to God and to each other. In fiction Sterne is concerned with morality in human relationships. Relationships in Tristram Shandy are as real as humors and the qualities which make them



good are as real and obvious as those which are detrimental. Uncle Toby possesses the qualities (all of which we may refer to as "sympathy") which promote human understanding, communication, and love as assuredly as he possesses a monomania which acts in opposition to sympathy.

Much has been made of Sterne's treatment of time in Tristram Shandy.<sup>33</sup> However, Tristram, the narrator, is the only character in the story who is acutely aware of and struggling with time. Because he has lived to see the passing of all the characters he writes about and is threatened by death himself, he causes us to see all the characters against a background of transience and finitude. This is part of the reason why he can show us the absurdity of life and make us eager to live it at the same time. He, like Thornton Wilder in Our Town, makes us feel, "My, /isn't/ life awful--and wonderful." But Uncle Toby and the other characters are not perceived under the aspect of time and change, but are static and complete. They reveal themselves as more and more the same in actions that elaborate this sameness spatially rather than alter it.<sup>34</sup> This too is important for its moral implication.

There is no indication that Toby or anyone else will ever resolve the internal conflict and achieve the ideal

which he himself admires. Arthur Cash states, "Knowing how impossible it would be to fabricate, in a novel, some perfect character who might serve as a measure of virtue, Sterne had Corporal Trim read aloud his best moral sermon, 'The Abuses of Conscience Considered.' We can hardly doubt that Sterne regarded this discourse as his major moral and religious statement."<sup>35</sup> But the sermon is lost upon the audience; the ideal is lost upon the real--universally and eternally.

Thus, by seeing the proper relationship of Sterne's satire or demonstration of human passion, Sterne's moral ideal, the internal conflict of Uncle Toby, and the static nature of this prominent Good-Natured Man, this major (though imperfect) representative of sentimental ethics, we should be able to see more clearly the art of the work. Without any overt didacticism Sterne builds an air-tight case for the value of sympathy. He borrows the ideas of Locke in his discussion of language and his inquiry "into the original, certainty, and extent of human knowledge." Of particular interest to Sterne is Locke's notion that the working of one's mind, the association of ideas, "separates the individual from reality, including other individuals, and even himself should he forget his past

ideas," and that certain knowledge of inner nature, qualities, and relations is impossible, But he rejects Locke's conclusion that reason, though a little candle, must be our last judge and guide in everything. Sterne shows the "weakness and imbecility of human reason" and that only sympathy can reconcile the isolated, eccentric egos of the Shandean characters.<sup>36</sup> Just as Toby's humor is explained by Lockean notions, his good nature is explained by Humean notions about sympathy. Hume bridges the communication gap between people "through a sentimental intuition of customary motives and attitudes."

But an imaginative insight through the association of ideas . . . is necessary to achieve this knowledge. As we perceive actions in others similar to our own, we form an idea of the emotions of others, and the idea is transformed into an impression, and becomes through association with ourselves a real passion of our own. But still the emotion or passion is not directed toward ourselves, but rather, we feel for and with the object of our intuition. . . . Man is always a social being, neither egoistic nor selfless but always in some sympathetic relation (in normal behavior). Reason, being not an active faculty, becomes the slave of the passions, in the respect that reason can do nothing without passional intuition.<sup>37</sup>

Hobby-horses, human reason, isolation of the individual and the total failure of rational correspondence are all of a piece and all support a view that sees man as a determined, absurd creature. But the good-natured humorists

in Tristram Shandy, and by implication mankind in general, are saved from being the despicable vermin that Swift's King of Brobdingnag sees them to be because of their capacity for sympathetic correspondence. Through sentimental intuition they can and do share one another's feelings and know one another's motives. Toby doesn't understand and doesn't care to understand Walter's metaphysics, but he does understand Walter's passional needs to discover his life in rationally explicable systems. He also understands Walter's good will toward and affection for him. When Walter was trying to arrive at some philosophical solution, "My Uncle Toby would give my father all possible fair play in this attempt; and with infinite patience would sit smoaking his pipe for whole hours together, whilst my father was practicing upon his head." Toby gains no understanding of Walter's solutions. "Whether they were above my Uncle Toby's reason,--or contrary to it,--or that his brain was like wet tinder, and no spark could possibly take hold,--or that it was so full of saps, mines, blinds, curtins, and such military disqualifications to his seeing clearly" into the solutions, Tristram does not say (III, xxxix, 176). However, all are implied to be the cause. Toby is depicted consistently as a man with "very little

choice" in words (I, xxi, 50). While he is recovering from his wound he tries to tell his guests the circumstances of his misfortune but finds the task impossible and extremely upsetting. Tristram asserts that the "true confusion in my Uncle Toby's discourse" arose from "the unsteady uses of words which have perplexed the clearest and most exalted understandings." "Twas not by ideas,--by heaven: his life was put in jeopardy by words" (II, ii, 67). Toby's understanding of human relationships is, however, emphasized as much as his lack of understanding of words. He cannot bear to hear the family disgrace--Dinah's elopement with the coachman--and any account of beneficent actions of one person for another moves him to tears. His sensitivity to feelings is expressed by his inability to hurt a fly and by his whistling of Lillabullero as a restrained way of giving vent to his passions "when anything shocked or surprised him;--but especially when anything, which he deem'd very absurd was offer'd" (I, xxi, 52).

Thus, Sterne shows that "between the word and the thing" (the object with which reason must work) "falls the shadow of human failing; and in the darkness grope beings in comic isolation."<sup>38</sup> But through the flow of feeling which is given expression by gestures and exclamations

men are united into a brotherhood. Like Fielding's, Sterne's work is shaped primarily by contrasts. And the fundamental contrast is incorporated within the character of Uncle Toby. Because we are superior to Toby in our understanding of his world, we see that he is both a fool (because of his limited perception and humor) and the hope of the world (because of his feeling and good nature). But Toby's internal conflict finds its reflection within every other good-natured character in Tristram Shandy and between Toby and other characters.

In works in which the Good-Natured Man as humorist is a central character the probability of a Good-Natured Man acting morally in society is tested. The focus is primarily on the conflicts and inconsistencies within the central character and secondarily on the conflicts between the humorist and society. The conflicts and the themes which arise from them reflect an ambivalence on the part of the author because of his faith in, yet distrust of, natural feelings as a guide to virtue. Consequently, the main themes treated are, in very general terms: nature versus art, feeling versus reason, heart versus head. When the conflict is internal, art, reason, and head are synonymous with social intelligence and rational

judgment, rather than hypocrisy, deception, and vanity-- meanings the terms take on when the conflict is external as is almost always the case in Fielding. Also when the conflict is external and there is a contradiction between the behavior of the good man and the manners of the world, the world is morally wrong. But when the conflict is internal, inconsistencies in the behavior of the good man reveal that he has not fulfilled his human potential and as a moral being is culpable.

The Man in Black and Matthew Bramble have enough perceptiveness to realize that their knowledge of the world is limited and consequently their moral goodness is threatened. Uncle Toby may not be conscious that his knowledge of the world is limited or that his good nature is constantly besieged by armies, but Tristram and Walter are and therefore the reader cannot help but be. The Man in Black is the most harshly judged because he is unable to benefit from the limited perception he does have. He continues to indulge his benevolent feelings even when he suspects he is being the instrument of injustice. But although Goldsmith saw the good-natured humorist as a moral failure, he saw the humorist as a stage in the development of the Good-Natured Man on the way to becoming

an artist and paragon, that is, a man like Squire Thornhill who is morally good, socially perceptive, and able to conduct himself so that he is praiseworthy by both moral and social standards. Matthew Bramble is not a moral failure, but his limited insight into reality turns him into a sick, peevish, unsociable, defensive human being. As I have pointed out, the moral evaluation of Bramble is of secondary importance to Smollett, and therefore there is no serious treatment of theme in the work. Uncle Toby is not judged harshly for his shortcomings partly because he lacks perception of his own inconsistencies and because Sterne didn't believe that the difference between the least perceptive man and the most perceptive one was very great or very important. Sterne presents Uncle Toby's moral predicament as the universal human predicament--human life is governed more by fortune and particular humors than by general principles.

In conclusion, in *The Man in Black*, Matthew Bramble, Uncle Toby, and by extension all good-natured humorists, we have a testing of both rational and sentimental ethics, i.e., of the possibility of consistent moral behavior by the Good-Natured Man. Because reason and feeling and head and heart are constantly in conflict, because of a



humor or because of inadvertent faulty perception, consistent moral conduct is difficult and ultimately impossible. As with the naif, the fate of the humorist is commensurate with his moral deserts. Since the good-natured humorist has within himself both the moral and the immoral, the normal and the absurd, the order and confusion, there is no final stabilization of conflict or comic resolution that turns all his conflicts and problems into illusions. He simply goes on being himself. The humorist does not function as the naif does, as a means which allows the author to attack society and vindicate good nature, but rather he functions as a means to display an attitude which accepts social conventions but stresses tolerance and flexibility within their limits, which accepts the heroic and ironic in human nature but stresses acceptance and sympathy in human relationships.

## Notes to Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup>Miller, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup>The constitutional limitations of the naif are discussed extensively in Morris Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology (Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966).

<sup>3</sup>Miller, p. 71.

<sup>4</sup>Tave, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup>Ian Watt, "Introduction," Tristram Shandy by Laurence Sterne (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. xv.

<sup>6</sup>Ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), I, 527, 529.

<sup>7</sup>Corbyn Morris, An Essay Towards Fixing the True Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, Satire, and Ridicule. To Which is Added, an Analysis of the Characters of a Humorist, Sir John Falstaff, Sir Roger de Coverley, and Don Quixote (1744; Augustan Reprint Society, 1947), pp. 12, 15; quoted in Tave, p. 118.

<sup>8</sup>Fielding says that to confuse "good-humour" and "good-nature" is a "gross, but common mistake." Actually, "they are almost opposites" ("An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," Works, XIV, p. 285). Tave defines Parson Adams, for example, as a humorist, but I do not find this helpful in understanding the character and function of Adams. Tave also calls Uncle Toby "the brightest name" in the galaxy of humorists and "the most remarkable of amiable humorists," but because he makes no distinction between "humor" and "good nature," he does not, in my opinion, correctly identify the function of Toby's "humor" in developing the major themes of Tristram Shandy (The Amiable Humorist, pp. 148, 149).

<sup>9</sup>See pages 17-18 above and notes 32 and 33 to Chapter One.

<sup>10</sup>"Smollett and the Benevolent Misanthrope Type," PMLA, 79 (1964), 51-57.

<sup>11</sup>The letter is quoted in Clara M. Kirk, Oliver Goldsmith (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 23. The other quotations are from Collected Works, II, 112, 114; IV, 29-30.

<sup>12</sup>"The Proceedings of Providence Vindicated. An Eastern Tale," in Collected Works, III, 58-66.

<sup>13</sup>"The Bee: 'On Justice and Generosity,'" London Chronicle, October 20, 1759, in Collected Works, I, 405.

<sup>14</sup>Gallaway, p. 1179.

<sup>15</sup>Gallaway, pp. 1167, 1177.

<sup>16</sup>Preston, p. 51.

<sup>17</sup>The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker, ed. Lewis M. Knapp, Oxford English Novels (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 332. Future references to this work will be given in the text.

<sup>18</sup>Preston, p. 56.

<sup>19</sup>William J. Farrell, "Nature Versus Art as a Comic Pattern in Tristram Shandy," ELH, 30 (1963), 16, 34-35.

<sup>20</sup>One of the best treatments of the background of Tristram Shandy, its peculiar characteristics, and its affinities with other works of the period is Alan D. McKillop's "Lawrence Sterne" in The Early Masters of English Fiction (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1956), pp. 182-219.

<sup>21</sup>Sterne's Comedy of Moral Sentiments: The Ethical Dimension of the Journey (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1966), p. 29. I am indebted to Cash for the general argument in this and the following three paragraphs.

<sup>22</sup>John M. Stedmond, The Comic Art of Laurence Sterne: Convention and Innovation in Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 135.

<sup>23</sup>Sermon VII, "The Vindication of Human Nature," in Complete Works and Life of Laurence Sterne (New York: J. F. Taylor, 1904), VI, 118, 119-120.

<sup>24</sup>Sermon III, "Philanthropy Recommended," in Complete Works, VI, 38-39.

<sup>25</sup>Stedmond, p. 135.

<sup>26</sup>Cash, pp. 64, 78-80.

<sup>27</sup>Sermons III, "Philanthropy Recommended," and XLI, "Follow Peace," in Complete Works, VI, 45; VII, 313-314.

<sup>28</sup>Tom Jones, X, i, in Works II, 195.

<sup>29</sup>A. A. Mendilow, "The Revolt of Sterne," from Time and the Novel (London: Peter Nevill, 1952; New York: Humanities Press, 1965), pp. 158-199, rpt. in John Traugott, ed., Laurence Sterne: A Collection of Critical Essays, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 90.

<sup>30</sup>Quoted in Cash, p. 105.

<sup>31</sup>Cash, p. 126.

<sup>32</sup>Tristram Shandy's World, p. 26.

<sup>33</sup>I find the most clear and convincing critical treatment of time in Tristram Shandy to be A. A. Mendilow's in Time and the Novel cited above.

<sup>34</sup>William V. Holtz, Image and Immortality: A Study of Tristram Shandy (Providence: Brown University Press, 1970), p. 140.

<sup>35</sup>Cash, p. 115.

<sup>36</sup>The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman, ed. Ian Watt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), VIII, v, 418. Future reference to this work will be given in the text.

<sup>37</sup>Traugott, Tristram Shandy's World, pp. 10, 25, 74.

<sup>38</sup>Holtz, p. 80.

## Chapter V

### The Good-Natured Man as Paragon: The Social Aspect

After reading Tristram Shandy one is not prepared to find believable any fictional characters who approximate the Good-Natured Man as the ideal defined in Fielding's, Goldsmith's, and Sterne's discursive writings. But such belief is neither necessary nor helpful anyway, for the Good-Natured Man as paragon is an unabashedly idealized character, an apotheosis. He is a character with fine intelligence who controls himself and the situations in which he finds himself in order to achieve his own ends. Morally he is as admirable as the naif; socially he is as artful as the true wit of Restoration comedy. He is thoroughly schooled in the conventions, fashions, rituals, and appearances which are appropriate according to the dictates of society for revealing or concealing morality, culture, intelligence, and emotions. And he knows social respectability and reputation are determined by the decorum of one's manners, ways, appearances, in relation to the social code and reality. On the other hand, the Good-Natured Man as paragon is no slave to social standards and

he dissembles only to achieve worthy ends. Thus, he is the antithesis of both the "politician" as characterized by Hobbes and Mandeville and the "witwoud" of Restoration comedy. As well as being a creature of good nature, understanding, and art, the Good-Natured Man as a paragon almost always has wealth and a position of influence in society.

The above description is based on the depiction of such characters as Sir Charles Grandison, in Richardson's novel, Sir William Thornhill in The Vicar of Wakefield, Sir William Honeywood in The Good Natur'd Man, Sir Charles Allgood in James Nelson's The Affectionate Father (1786), Bevil Jr. in Steele's Conscious Lovers (1722), and Hermsprong in Robert Bage's Hermsprong, or Man as He Is Not (1796). But the description is very like what Fielding describes as his ideal in the concluding stanza of "Of True Greatness":

Lives there a Man, by Nature form'd to please,  
To think with Dignity, express with Ease;  
Upright in Principle, in Council strong,  
Prone not to change, nor obstinate too long;

. . . . .  
To whose blest Lot superior Portions fall,  
To most of Fortune, and of Taste to all,  
Aw'd not by Fear, by Prejudice not sway'd,  
By Fashion led not, nor by Whim betray'd,  
By Candour only bias'd, who shall dare  
To view and judge and speak Men as they are.  
In him, (if such there be) is Greatness shewn. . . .<sup>1</sup>

The Good-Natured Man as paragon reflects the attempt to transpose the ideal directly into the concrete, living and human.

Due to the very nature of this attempt the Good-Natured Man as paragon is very like a "character" such as was popular in sermons, periodical essays, religious and political tracts, and almost all types of writing; he is a personification of a concept, not a human being. He seems to exist only to illustrate principles, and, therefore, functions as a simple (easily recognized and understood) and nearly perfect pattern of moral conduct. Because of this he is not in himself very believable, interesting, lovable, or humorous, and he is not versatile in function. He does not evoke ridicule or ambivalence; we are not superior to him in our understanding of his situation or his society; we can only watch and admire him as he acts skillfully, decorously, justly, benevolently, and superhumanly. In short, he does not provide the comic possibilities of a naif or humorist.

Delight and instruction arise largely from the mistakes and inconsistencies of the naif and humorist. Because the evil world causes the naif's good intentions to go awry, his moral character is not called into

question by his actions; because of the complexity and limitation of the humorist's character, he remains lovable, if not a pattern of virtue. With both we are always aware of the heroic or laudatory and the ironic. We always sense the contrast between the individual and society, subjective and objective, mental state and outward condition. The paragon, on the other hand, has no faults, inconsistencies, or internal conflicts, and he triumphs in all his external conflicts. We accept the concept he represents as worthy, but we do not believe in him as a character any more than we believe in the lifelikeness of allegorical figures or heroes in romance. Thus, the paragon is not always delightful and entertaining, but he fulfills a significant role in providing instruction and developing themes.

This chapter is subtitled "The Social Aspect" because of the emphasis that is implicit in the character of the paragon. The moral character of the naif is not questioned because the emphasis implicit in his character is upon internal goodness, motive, innocence, in all of which he is impeccable. The moral character of the humorist is called into question because the emphasis implicit in his character is upon both internal goodness (because he has good nature) and goodness in the world of experience



(because he has some social understanding). He is inconsistent in one or both. The moral character of the paragon is, of course, not called into question because the emphasis implicit in his character is upon prudential philanthropy in the world of experience and he provides the perfect example. Moreover, it is clearly his high social status, wealth, and social intelligence that protects his good nature. When he disguises himself or assumes a false name as do, for example, Burchell in The Vicar of Wakefield and Hermsprong in Man as He Is Not, he loses the esteem of many and finds himself in trouble with the lords and ladies of society.

Since the Good-Natured Man as paragon has resolved the conflict between the ideal and real, moral and social, innocence and experience, nature and art, impulsive goodness and prudence, generosity and selfishness, he is particularly well-suited for minor roles in works starring the naif. He naturally functions as a moral standard or norm, a trustworthy commentator upon the weaknesses, errors, and worthy qualities of the naif, and a means of giving straightforward expression to the ideas and values of the author. He also may come to the rescue of the naif and overrule the blocking characters and nullify their

actions. We have already noted that Sir William Thornhill and Sir William Honeywood in Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield and The Good Natur'd Man function in this way.

As a minor character the paragon becomes involved with the naif who has his stable, harmonious, simple order (usually a country society) disrupted and is introduced into unstable relationships. The naif may not understand the disruptive forces or events, and his relationships may become more and more complicated until the paragon steps in to resolve the complications and remove the instability. Thus, he brings about the conventional comic resolution and turns all the naif's troubles into illusions. But as pointed out in relation to the conclusion of The Vicar of Wakefield, it is erroneous to contend that since this plot reversal is conventional it should not be taken seriously. For when the Good-Natured Man as paragon functions as a conventional comic device, we may be sure that his action is in keeping with his ideal character and his function as a moral norm. Accordingly we do not believe in the probability of the rescue any more than we do in the probability of any other comic resolution or plot reversal. We feel that "this should be" because it satisfies the expectations aroused in the work; we ask

"what does this mean?" because of the juxtaposition of the naif, the paragon, and the representatives of corrupt society at this critical point in the action.

The juxtaposition of the good-natured naif as an apparent failure in society and the good-natured paragon as a social success has many implications. The very presence of the paragon undercuts the worth of the naif and renders him somewhat ridiculous. When no paragon is present (as in Joseph Andrews), we associate the naif with genuine goodness; when a paragon is present the naif is equated with simple, untaught goodness. We have already discussed in Chapter Three other implications this juxtaposition has for the naif. The intervention of the paragon, who represents both a moral and social ideal, in behalf of the naif turns the ridicule back upon the society which causes discomfort to the naif. But the very fact that the savior is an idealized, romantic hero reinforces the improbability of the survival of the simple, good man in contemporary society.

The juxtaposition of the paragon and society has even broader implications, but they will be clearer after we have discussed the paragon as protagonist.

When the Good-Natured Man as paragon is the main

character, the work is, of course, much closer to what Fielding defined as serious romance than to what he defined as comic romance, closer to the mode of fiction Northrop Frye calls romance than to the mode he calls low mimetic.<sup>2</sup> The themes associated with the character of the Good-Natured Man receive direct treatment and almost any idea of interest to an author gains authority by being spoken by the paragon. Thus, the didacticism is overt, but simplistic. The danger in such a work is expressed by the heroine of Robert Bage's Barham Down (1783): "Uniformity in goodness, is uniformity in dulness; and the most uninteresting of all characters that ever were drawn is, I find, the stiff starched, demure, formal, all-virtuous Sir Charles Grandison."<sup>3</sup> However, when the paragon protagonist is surrounded by strongly individualized characters, especially when some of those are characters of simple goodness or characters who do not value or are unwilling to believe in the paragon's thorough goodness, as in Steele's Conscious Lovers and Bage's Hernsprong, the work is saved from dullness.

In Conscious Lovers Isabella, the aunt to Indiana, has learned from harsh experience in the world not to put too much trust in men. She once had "much love for

a man who poorly left her to marry an estate."<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, to save Indiana from the same fate she intends to prevent her from "being any other than a virgin, except upon proper terms" (II, ii, 41). In counseling Indiana she admits that "Mr. Bevil carries his hypocrisy the best of any man living, but still he is a man, and therefore a hypocrite. . . . They embrace without love; they make vows without conscience of obligation; they are . . . seducers to the crime wherein they pretend to be less guilty." She says Bevil Jr. and all mankind are "serpents who lie in wait for doves," and they "think the worse of you for your confidence in them." "Such is the world" that "fair and natural dealings is to invite injuries; 'tis bleating to escape wolves who would devour you!" (II, ii, 39).

Because of the complications which arise from Bevil Jr.'s love for Indiana and his father's wish for him to marry Lucinda Sealand, Bevil's good character is questioned by almost everyone. When Mr. Sealand and Sir John Bevil are trying to agree upon a "treaty for uniting our families," Mr. Sealand says "'Tis Bevil's morals that I doubt" (IV, ii, 74). The doubt arises because of Bevil's relationship with Indiana. Myrtle, who has a "violent and untractable

passion of jealousy," loves Lucinda and suspects that Bevil is trying to cheat him of her. He does not trust Bevil's apparent good nature any more than Isabella does. "This cool manner is very agreeable to the abuse you have already made of my simplicity and frankness, and I see your moderation tends to your own advantage and not mine-- to your own safety, not consideration of your friend." And he challenges Bevil to a duel (IV, i, 70).

There are many more complications, but Bevil resolves them all and proves that, "His actions are the result of thinking, and he has sense enough to make even virtue fashionable" (II, ii, 40). In averting the senseless duel he teaches Myrtle that "there is nothing manly but what is conducted by reason and agreeable to the practice of virtue and justice" (IV, i, 73). Bevil says of himself-- and he is never wrong--that he is "no more than what every gentleman ought to be and I believe very many are. He is only one who takes more delight in reflections than in sensations." He is one "who has a true taste of life" and a "humane disposition" and finds great pleasure in easing "an aching heart," and seeing the human "countenance lighted up into smiles of joy, on the receipt of a bit of ore which is superfluous and otherwise useless in a man's

own pocket" (II, ii, 46, 47).

Although Bevil Jr. is a rather flat character, through him Steele presents in a delightful but unambiguous manner his ideas on marriage for convenience, dueling, the merchant class, the danger of excessive passion, the duty of children to parents, to name the major themes.

Hernsprong appeared in 1786, but Bage's ethical theory, characters, themes, and plot situations show him to be closer to Fielding's generation in temperament and concerns than to the writers of his own time like Godwin and Holcroft.<sup>5</sup> The influences of Voltaire, Rousseau, and late eighteenth-century English thought are evident, but for the most part the conflicts in Bage's works are between characters who are confirmed in ideals similar to those of the Latitudinarians and Shaftesbury and characters who are confirmed in the ideas similar to those of Hobbes and Mandeville. George Paradyne in Bage's Man as He Is (1792) is much like Tom Jones. He knows and accepts the ideal of good nature but finds that the ideal is impossible to achieve in this world. Hernsprong has conflicts similar to those encountered by Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews, and Parson Adams, but he can confront corrupted society, expose its corruption and triumph over it. Dr. Blick

and Lord Grondale are like most of the "great" men in Fielding's works. They search diligently for some sinister information about Hermsprong in order to be able to commit him to prison. "The inquiry was unfortunate. Mouths in plenty were open in his praise; not one to his discredit." The Hobbesian logic they apply to this data reflects on them and society, for they are "very seldom, very seldom indeed," mistaken in their judgments of men. They conclude "that no man would give himself the trouble to please everybody, without great and uncommon motives. In proportion as he was plausible, he must be the more dangerous. His talents were finely calculated for the office of a spy; and a spy he certainly was."<sup>6</sup>

Hermsprong is a more interesting character than many of the other paragon figures because, though his goodness and his social intelligence are impeccable, his character and living habits are unique. His eccentricities never render him ridiculous because they all derive from his conscious choice. He walks wherever he goes and "he will walk you forty miles in a morning," rises very early, drinks only water, takes baths, and refuses to give deference to Lord Grondale, Dr. Blick, or any other socially prestigious persons.



Hermesprong gives to Caroline Campinet and Marie Fluart an account of his background wherein we learn that he is the son of a nobleman, was raised among the "aborigines in America" and educated in France, and has made "excursions half over Europe." He inherited the fortunes of his parents and grandfather and has "dispersed the money into different banks, principally in England, Italy, and America." He tells them that he has "come over into England, to look at it; resolved, if I did not find it more suited to my taste than the rest of Europe, to return to America, buy thirty thousand acres of land, and amuse myself peopling a desert" (p. 171). Later we find out, however, that he is Sir Charles Campinet and has proof that Lord Grondale, Hermesprong's father's younger brother, acquired his estates by fraud. Hermesprong did not immediately bring a suit against Lord Grondale because soon after arriving at Grondale in a disinterested and courageous act he saves the life of Caroline Campinet, Lord Grondale's daughter, and loses his heart to her. Like Burchell in The Vicar of Wakefield, he is an eiron character who appears to be less than he is, and like Burchell he wants to be appreciated and loved by a certain person for what he is rather than for what he has. His role as eiron of course invites

misjudgment of him by other characters, particularly by the alazon characters who are in control of society.

The society of the novel is the village of Grondale and the villains who offer resistance to Hermsprong are chiefly Lord Grondale and Dr. Blick, the rector of Grondale and Sithin. Blick gains his power by "the agreeable art of assentation" which he uses to hold the favor of Lord Grondale. Lord Grondale is as unbelievably evil as Hermsprong is good. The focus of the novel is upon the conflict of Hermsprong and Lord Grondale, and even though neither character is believable, the values, issues, and sometimes even persons at stake in the conflict are distinctly human. And the absurdities Hermsprong finds in the social system of Grondale are the absurdities of all European society.

The principal value inherent in any Good-Natured Man is, of course, active charity. Hermsprong's benevolent actions are profuse. On one occasion he enters the scene just after Dr. Blick has told Miss Campinet concerning him that "yes, I do know something of him--I wish I could say, something good. But, madam, he is a proud, haughty young man, who thinks too well of himself to pay a proper respect to his betters. Over and above this, madam, he is

an infidel; and you know, without faith our best works are splendid sins." After Miss Campinet informs Hermsprong that Dr. Blick had said "that benevolent propensities, without faith, are only splendid sins," Hermsprong replies, "Surely under any system, kindness to our suffering fellow-creatures cannot be sin. But faith is the doctor's vocation. It is his to speak comfort to the soul, and at yonder cottage (pointing to a distant one) is a proper object of his care; a poor woman in agony for her little one, who perished, I know not how, in the confusion of the night. To me belongs the inferior care of administering to the wants of the body" (p. 70).

Dr. Blick is further ridiculed by the contrast between himself and the good country parson Woodcock. Dr. Blick "has church preferment to near £1000 per annum; and has not, I am told, laid aside his expectations of a bishopric. . . . Besides, taking care not to lose anything of his dues, by a foolish lenity, or by a love of peace, the doctor knows it is his duty rather to govern than to teach his flock; and he governs a'la royal, with imperious airs and imperious commands." Woodcock, on the other hand, "is one of the mildest sons of men. It is true, he preaches humility, but he practices it also; and takes pains, by example as

well as precept, to make his parishioners good, in all their offices, their duties, and relations. To the poor he is indeed a blessing; for he gives comfort when he has nothing else to give. To him they apply when sick-- he gives them simple medicines; when they are in doubt, he gives them wholesome counsels. He is learned too, and liberal in his opinions; but of manners so simple, and so ignorant of fashion and folly, that to appear in the world would subject him to infinite ridicule" (p. 44). Woodcock is obviously a Parson Adams and Blick is a Trulliber. The values of faith and good works and a religion that stresses active benevolence receive basically the same treatment as in Fielding's novels. The simple good nature of Parson Woodcock is, like Parson Adams, vindicated because of his role as country parson. Other good-natured characters in the novel are esteemed not for simple good nature but for acquiring "minds to reason, understandings to judge; for when they will take the trouble to reason a little, and judge for themselves, they do it so well, that propriety of action must follow of necessity" (p. 170).

One theme of particular interest in Hernsprong is that of duty and gratitude to parents and benefactors. This theme is not necessarily inherent in the character of the

Good-Natured Man, but when happy married life with the heroine is the goal of the good-natured hero, naïf or paragon, the idea of duty to parents is always present at least as an obstacle to the hero. The recurrent line spoken by both daughters and sons of alazon figures is "I promise, Sir, not to marry without your approbation." The more stout hearted ones may add ". . . if you will have the goodness not to insist on my marrying against my own will." But before we can treat this theme adequately we must first consider the character and function of good-natured females.

All of the females in eighteenth-century literature that can be taken seriously as ethical agents are paragons in the sense that they can and will do no wrong. Like Clarissa Harlowe, they would rather die than have their virtue tainted. Another reason that good-natured females are paragons is the eighteenth-century attitude that "a young woman was damned for good and all, and must pass her life dripping with penitence if she had once slipped from the path of virtue."<sup>7</sup> Olivia Primrose suffers greatly because she, her family, and her society accept this notion. Most of the female paragons that have prominent roles must be fitting rewards for the Good-Natured Man, e.g., Sophia

Western, in Tom Jones, Fanny in Joseph Andrews, Amelia in Amelia, Sophia Primrose in The Vicar of Wakefield, Miss Richland in The Good Natur'd Man, Evelina in Fanny Burney's Evelina, Caroline Campinet in Hernsprong, and the list could go on and on including almost every comic work starring the good-natured naif or paragon. Allworthy's remarks in praise of Sophia Western defines their archetypal role rather well:

" . . . I never heard anything of pertness, or what is called repartee, out of her mouth; no pretence to wit, much less that kind of wisdom which is the result of great learning and experience, the affectation of which, in a young woman, is as absurd as any of the affectations of an ape. No dictatorial sentiments, no judicial opinions, no profound criticisms. Whenever I have seen her in the company of men, she hath been all attention, with the modesty of a learner, not the forwardness of a teacher. . . . Indeed, she has always showed the highest deference to the understandings of men; a quality absolutely essential to the making of a good wife." (XVII, iii; V, 256)

However, they are, in some inexplicable way, paragons by nature. They have instinctively and intuitively the prudence that the Good-Natured Man must learn by experience. Thus, like the Good-Natured Man as paragon they function as a moral norm, but they rarely function as commentator or as spokesman for the author.

All of this reflects the subordinate role of women and the double standard of morality in the eighteenth

century. Because Bage championed the cause of sex equality, his treatment of women differs from that of Fielding, Goldsmith, Smollett and other earlier eighteenth-century writers. To be sure, Caroline Campinet is a female paragon almost identical to those described above. She loves Hermsprong and recognizes in him "a spirit of undeviating rectitude, which spurns at everything mean and selfish-- an unruffled sweetness of temper, and a soul of benevolence" (p. 216). And though, like Sophia Western, she will not marry the "beau" Lord Grondale has chosen for her, she will not marry Hermsprong without her father's consent. This is of course a device to keep up the conflict between Hermsprong and Lord Grondale, for without Caroline's obedience the alazon would have no power. But Caroline's conception of filial duty and gratitude proves to be, like Tom Jones' conception of honor when lying to protect Black George, a mistaken concept. She almost ruins hers and Hermsprong's lives because she will not recognize that love and obedience are due to parents only if they give the care and tenderness of parents. Hermsprong is the true paragon who teaches Caroline and Marie Fluart that their preconceived notions of duty and of the subordinate role of women are not praiseworthy.

Hermesprong says "I consider a woman as equal to a man" and she should learn to reason and judge for herself rather than let the propriety of her actions be dictated by others. It is to his credit that Bage tried to demolish the stereotyped idea that women were either paragons of virtue or sluts. The role of Marie Fluart is just the opposite of that for which Sophia Western is praised by Allworthy. In Barham Down Kitty Ross is seduced by a villain, but the man who later falls in love with her finds her none the less charming or desirable for it. Caralia in Mount Henneth is raped by two Indian soldiers, and her lover and her father have to convince her that she is fit for marriage. Caralia says to her father, "In all these English books your goodness has procured for me, I find it the leading idea: women who have suffered [the loss of virginity], must die, or be immured forever; ever after they are totally useless to all purposes of society; it is the foundation of a hundred fabulous things called novels, . . . no author has yet been so bold as to permit a lady to live and marry, and be a woman after this stain."<sup>8</sup> Thus, Bage allows some of his females to be, like the naif, imperfect, yet admirable--imperfect in contrast to the paragon figure, admirable in contrast to



corrupt society.

The role of women in English society is, perhaps, the major concern of Hermesprong, but I have elaborated upon it mainly to illustrate something about the function of the Good-Natured Man as paragon. In works where the major character is a paragon, whether the themes are moral or social, the paragon is important as a device, as a judge and commenter to identify and verbalize values, but not as a character whose experience tests values. The philosophies and doctrines of the author are put into the mouth of his perfect man to be spoken directly; they are not depicted in the errors and values of an imperfect naif. Hermesprong, Bevil Jr., Sir Charles Grandison, and other paragons, are preachers, not sinners. What they say is edifying; what they are is incredible and uninteresting.

And this brings us back to consider the implications of the juxtaposition of the paragon and society which we postponed earlier. First, in regard to the moral values inherent in his character, the very presence of an ideal Good-Natured Man in society both affirms and glosses over the fact that the ideal is not viable. It affirms it because only the ideal, unbelievable Good-Natured Man succeeds; it glosses over it by presenting the Good-Natured

Man succeeding. In other words, the Good-Natured Man as paragon resolves to the advantage of the naif and himself conflicts which, except in romance, are insoluble-- e.g., ideal versus real, innocence versus experience. Thus, the presence of the paragon affirms the value of good nature by defending it against the assault of experience, and at the same time affirms the impracticality of good nature, because except in romance it can never succeed in a society of serpents and wolves. The Good-Natured Man as paragon has that impossible but ideal combination-- the wisdom of serpents and the innocence of doves. And even if this were not an impossible combination for everyone, the sentimental ethics behind the Good-Natured Man make it impossible for him.

Secondly, the social themes the paragon exhorts are not necessarily inherent in his character or experience. Since the human truths which the artist takes seriously may have nothing to do with good nature or the ethics associated with good nature, the paragon becomes, even in works which bear his name in the title, of secondary interest as a character. Because of the title and the statement of purpose by the narrator Gregory Glen at the beginning of Hermesprong, the reader expects the novel to

be about Hermsprong. But as it turns out, the novel is about the ideas and values of Hermsprong. With the naif and the humorist the character of the Good-Natured Man and the themes of the work are inseparable, and their experience is more than the equivalent of a statement about their experience. But since the paragon has no "life," his experience is merely the dramatization of a precept which is also usually included. Or to put it another way, the naif and humorist are symbolic--they stand for something else but they also participate in the reality to which they point. For example, Parson Adams and Uncle Toby dramatize and personify in their actions and characters the values of charity and sympathy, but they are not merely walking concepts. Or to be more specific, Abraham Adams has mythical prototypes in Adam the father of mankind and Abraham the father of the faithful, but he is an innocent and good man in eighteenth-century England and the spiritual advisor to Joseph Andrews. The paragon, on the other hand, merely stands for something else; he means, not is.

Thus, there is a paradox implicit in the Good-Natured Man as paragon. He receives the most honorific treatment of any of the good-natured characters, but he is treated the least seriously. The very presence of the paragon as

protagonist is the best evidence that moral goodness is not of central importance to the work, but that social intelligence is. Since social intelligence is not inherent in "nature," the concept of good nature functions mainly not as a theme but as a device for enlisting our good will toward the character, opinions, and actions of the social hero. Good nature becomes an accessory like a white hat.

In the development of the Good-Natured Man as a type, what appears to be the highest point in his development as a man turns out to be an apotheosis, outside the realm of human experience. It was not then, after all, the writers who created paragons who were the most optimistic about good nature. For the best of good-natured men we must return to Henry Fielding's Squire Allworthy and Dr. Harrison. They are only a little lower than the angels, but they are distinctly human. Because of this, they do not fit comfortably into any one of the four types I have defined. They function as paragons in the sense that each is the standard of virtue in the novel in which he appears, each makes responsible ethical comments, and each is a device for determining the reader's attitudes toward characters, actions, and thoughts presented in the novel. But they are unlike the paragons in that they are fallible;

they make mistakes on occasion because they are not conversant with all related facts.

Here again is a paradox. The fallible paragons<sup>9</sup> are morally the most admirable of the believable good-natured characters, but they are the least likeable. Unlike Adams, whose dedication to ideals is justified by his role as country parson and whose involvement in the lives of others is an active charity, the fallible paragons have civil authority and other power to control the lives of others in concrete, physical reality. Allworthy's good nature and his dedication to "right" do not qualify him for this role. Admittedly, he is loved by those under his jurisdiction and his motives are never malevolent and his moral precepts are good, but his judgment in individual cases brought before him is almost invariably wrong. He is an instrument of injustice in the lives of Jenny Jones, Partridge, and Tom Jones. Because of his responsibility in society we are forced to judge Allworthy by social standards (perception and art) rather than by his motives and integrity alone. His propensity to be fooled by knaves, his failure to perceive the motives of others, is a considerable imperfection and weakens the effectiveness of his virtue. Thus, because of his situation, largely, he is not much

loved and esteemed by the reader.

However, the areas in which Squire Allworthy and Dr. Harrison err are carefully indicated and their fallibility adds depth to their characters and complexity to the moral themes of the work. Allworthy acknowledges his errors when he discovers them and is repentant and forgiving. Dr. Harrison is a city parson and just as Booth is something of a humorist in that he is controlled by his constitution, Dr. Harrison is something of an affected humorist who cloaks his good nature with sarcasm. Also Dr. Harrison functions, like Hermsprong, as an ever-present judge and commentator on the action. Unlike Hermsprong, however, he errs and unjustly sends Booth to prison and causes Amelia and her children to suffer. When he discovers his mistake he corrects it, but in correcting it and in other potentially sentimental (emotional) situations he remains restrained and caustic. Again the eiron figure as moral standard adds complexity to the themes.

These characters are not, of course, the protagonists of the works in which they appear, and like other paragons in minor roles they are important mainly in their relationship to good-natured characters who cannot or have not successfully adapted to society.

Thus, we find in eighteenth-century English literature good-natured characters as thoroughly good and thoroughly articulate paragons, female paragons, and fallible paragons. All of them except the fallible paragons are inadequately represented and therefore unbelievable as characters, but all of them serve as major devices for establishing value judgments, creating and controlling the reader's attitudes and opinions, protecting innocent goodness from experience, and thereby shaping the structures and themes of the works in which they appear.

## Notes to Chapter V

<sup>1</sup>Miscellanies, I, 13-14, quoted in Miller, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Preface to Joseph Andrews, p. 4; Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 33-67.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Dorothy Foster, "Introduction," "A Critical Edition of Robert Bage's Man As He Is," Diss. University of Oklahoma, 1971, p. vii.

<sup>4</sup>Ed. Shirley Strum Kenny, Regents Restoration Drama Series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), II, ii, 41. Future references to this work will be given in the text.

<sup>5</sup>Foster, p. xlvi.

<sup>6</sup>Hermesprong, or Man As He Is Not, ed., Vaughan Wilkins (New York: Library Publishers, 1951), pp. 219-220. Future references to this work will be given in the text.

<sup>7</sup>Vaughan Wilkins, "Introduction," Hermesprong, p. viii.

<sup>8</sup>Quoted in Wilkins, p. viii.

<sup>9</sup>Sheldon Sacks uses this term in Fiction and the Shape of Belief. He gives one of the fullest treatments of Allworthy and Harrison that is available.



## Chapter VI

### The Man of Sensibility

The Man of Sensibility may be considered to be a degeneration of the Good-Natured Man type by both moral and social standards. The degeneration of the type parallels the change in the base of morality in mid-eighteenth-century sentimental ethics and the change in the connotations of the term "sentimental" from morality to feeling. Actually he is not really a Good-Natured Man at all, but a humor character whose obsession, whose hobbyhorse, is his conception of benevolent good nature. Thus, his own egocentricity, self-concerns, and self-love motivate him to cultivate that responsiveness to sensibility that was considered an indication "of a right disposition and the natural working of a well-turned spirit."<sup>1</sup>

The Man of Sensibility has little in common with genuinely good-natured characters. He consciously aspires to discover in himself and others good nature, but his conception of good nature is false. He craves feelings of benevolence and sympathy both for the pleasure which arises from them and the assurance of his own good nature

that he gets by testing his emotional responsiveness. I did not treat the Man of Sensibility with the good-natured humorists because, though he is a man of feeling, he does not possess good nature as it is defined in this study. Because he is a searcher after benevolence, his perception of reality is distorted, sometimes willfully and often because, like other humorists, his ruling passion causes all experience to serve his hobby-horsical notions and his subjective vision of order. He is triply a fool because he is "a child in the drama of the world,"<sup>2</sup> he is entirely occupied by a fallacious concept which he thinks is an ideal of virtue, and his own self-centeredness is diametrically opposed to the ideal he aspires to. He is as ridiculous as Malvolio in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night who wears yellow stockings cross gartered and smiles perpetually in the presence of Olivia because he thinks that is what she desires. In reality Olivia abhors the color, detests the fashion, and is in no mood for smiles. The Man of Sensibility thinks that the outward expression of emotion is proof of his good nature. In reality the outward show of affections has no more to do with morality than wearing yellow stockings cross gartered has to do with winning the love of Olivia.

It should be pointed out that the outward expression of feelings had always been associated with the Good-Natured Man as a conventional technique for displaying his inner reality. There is nothing in the ethical theory behind the Good-Natured Man that demands expression of emotions in physical gestures and signs, but "The eighteenth-century novelist had as his heritage the spectacle of drama and a strong tradition of pictorial expression; so it is little wonder that he conceived of emotion as something to be shown visibly."<sup>3</sup> It was particularly important to exhibit the emotional life of the Good-Natured Man, and the stock expressive formulas borrowed from drama and art are usually a part of the Good-Natured Man's character, particularly if the character is a naif or humorist. Fielding has been criticized because the emotions of his characters are always described with hackneyed hyperboles and depicted by way of exaggerated physical reactions.<sup>4</sup> For example, when Tom Jones is turned out by Allworthy, "He presently fell into the most violent agonies, tearing his hair from his head, and using most other actions which generally accompany fits of madness, rage and despair" (VI, xii; III, 318). The following passage from Joseph Andrews contains many of the expressive formulas common

in Fielding:

. . . Mr. Wilson, with wildness in his looks, and the utmost eagerness in his words, begged to be showed into the room, where he entered without the least regard to any of the company but Joseph, and, embracing him with a complexion all pale and trembling, desired to see the mark on his breast; the parson followed him capering, rubbing his hands, and crying out "Hic est quem quaeris; inventus est, &c." Joseph complied with the request of Mr. Wilson, who no sooner saw the mark than, abandoning himself to the most extravagant rapture of passion, he embraced Joseph with inexpressible ecstasy, and cried out in tears of Joy, "I have discovered my son, I have Him again in my arms!" Joseph was not sufficiently apprised yet to taste the same delight with his father (for so in reality he was); however, he returned some warmth to his embraces; but he no sooner perceived, from his father's account, the agreement of every circumstance, of person, time, and place, than he threw himself at his feet, and, embracing his knees, with tears begged his blessing. . . . (IV, xvi, 339).

But all the eighteenth-century novelists presented the inner life by describing its outer signs. And, with the notable exception of Sterne, they relied generally upon the traditional, stock expressive formulas which "were not adequate to the task: they were too gross to differentiate emotions with similar manifestations or to convey feeling as modified by character."<sup>5</sup> To Fielding's credit it should be said that he sensed the limitation of his technique. He sometimes gives up in frustration and appeals to the models he imitates: "O, Shakespear! had I thy pen! O, Hogarth, had I thy pencil! then would I draw the picture of the

poor serving-man, who, with pale countenance, staring eyes, chattering teeth, faltering tongue, and trembling limbs . . . entered the room" (X, viii). And his use of hyperbole and exaggeration implies that the conventional expressive formulas, like the other epic and comic conventions, are important not in themselves but for what they point towards.

Sterne, an artist himself, recognized that highly individualized gesture and action could reveal inner reality, and in Tristram Shandy he "unironically records the outer signs of feeling with a minute fidelity and a . . . close concern for the differences not only between characters but also between shades of the same emotion."<sup>6</sup> The expression of emotions becomes for Sterne, not a convention, but an integral part of his themes--sympathy, communication, and nature versus art. For Sterne believed like Hume that details, when observed carefully, give clues to the characters of men and human psychology. And because of his concentration upon and skill in presenting "verbal pictures," it is fitting that he should satirize in A Sentimental Journey the late eighteenth-century confusion of goodness with adherence to prescribed conventions of expressing emotions. Sentimentalism in the eighteenth century got its pejorative connotation

partly because readers (and writers) concentrated on the outward expression rather than the inner reality of the fictional good-natured heroes and heroines. Through Yorick, Sterne satirizes that error.

Unlike the naïf and good-natured humorist, the feelings of the Man of Sensibility are no longer ones that witness to a moral nature or judge society, but ones that witness to his confusion of feeling and virtue, sensibility and principle, and judge him to be a sentimental (in the pejorative sense) fool. The Man of Sensibility is--and this will have to be supported by argument--always a fool, the object of derisive ridicule, when the author's concept of benevolent good nature is different from that of his created character, as it always is in the works I consider below.

Since the Man of Sensibility embodies few if any respected values, works in which he is a main character are basically psychological studies of individuals with little social interest. Works of this type in eighteenth-century English literature are Sterne's A Sentimental Journey (1768), Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling (1771), and Henry Brooke's The Fool of Quality (1766). There are also works of this type in eighteenth-century French and German

literature, of which I have read only Goethe's The Sufferings of Young Werther. If, as some believe, the Man of Sensibility in these works is a transitional figure between eighteenth-century sentimentalism and nineteenth-century romanticism, it is his introspection, not his sympathy, that provides the link. Unlike the genuinely good-natured characters, his sympathetic feelings are not reflected in disinterested, active charity but in his own or the narrator's description and analysis of them; unlike the major romantics, his introspection is not a means, perhaps the only credible means left, of getting the not-me into clear perspective, but rather his internal concentration is a means of getting as much pleasure as possible from indulging and analyzing his emotion.

Those who have read A Sentimental Journey and The Man of Feeling thinking that Yorick and Harley embody the authors' moral ideal have missed the satirical treatment of these two characters as surely as those who believe that Swift thinks horses are superior to humans have missed the satirical treatment of Gulliver.

We have already discussed the moral basis of Sterne's art. In the discussion of Tristram Shandy we stressed his ideal of a benevolent temper, of sympathy which is informed

by a knowledge of customary motives and attitudes. Since the hobbyhorses of Tristram, Walter, Toby, and Trim were primarily rational concerns and obsessions, sympathetic intuition of each others' feelings, needs, and concerns was the only means of successful communication among them. But as we have also pointed out before, all the supporters of sentimental ethics mentioned in this study believed that the role of reason was extremely important to the Good-Natured Man. The affections immediately and spontaneously distinguish between right and wrong, but reason, reflection, must always consider the good of the whole, must guide the person to actions of benevolence that are universally good. Fielding said in the Champion, 27 March 1740, that good-nature is an active concern for the happiness of mankind "with a constant regard for desert" and, as if he foresaw the indiscriminate sentimentalism of the Man of Sensibility and wanted to separate himself from it, "as good-nature requires a distinguishing faculty, which is another word for judgment, and is perhaps the sole boundary between wisdom and folly; it is impossible for a fool, who hath no distinguishing faculty, to be good-natured."<sup>7</sup> Yorick, in A Sentimental Journey, is confused and, although he is a clergymen, has



no adequate understanding of true moral virtue. He has given himself completely over to the control of his emotions, believing affections in themselves are virtuous, and is a fool because he, unlike Uncle Toby, is capable of far more autonomy and virtue than he practices. Therefore, in A Sentimental Journey it is Yorick's misconception that benevolent affections are equivalent to moral virtue that is satirized. Because of Sterne's satirical treatment of feeling, Arthur Hill Cash, and perhaps others, draws the conclusion that Sterne was after all a rationalist and that his central theme is that the heart tricks the head, but the head ought always to rule the heart. Sterne was not a rationalist, and the validity of most of what Cash says about Sterne is not affected by whether he was or not. After Hume, the distance between the rationalists and the sentimentalists, which was never great, was diminished. Therefore, the labels are not really important any way. The point I wish to make here is that even though Sterne satirizes "sentimentalism" he does not confuse what he is attacking with the ethical theory which, after Sterne's time, was labeled "sentimental ethics." Sterne is definitely in the tradition of the Latitudinarians, Shaftesbury, and Hume, and he is not advocating in A

Sentimental Journey that morality is discoverable through reason alone. Reason is still, as Hume says, a slave of the passions simply because it is not an active faculty. If he is saying the head should rule the heart, he means only that it should rule as a rudder rules a ship. For he is aware that benevolence as a facet of human nature is essential for goodness of character. He is satirizing the notion that as long as the passions, the gales, are benevolent one would allow them to both move and guide the ship.

Yorick is obsessed with the idea of courtesy and kindness, generosity, and feeling. He tells Count de B\*\*\*\* that he has come to France, where he had previously decided he would find "a people so civilized and courteous, and so renowned for sentiment and fine feeling," "to spy the nakedness of . . . hearts, and . . . find out what is good in them to fashion my own by." He says that the thirst for this insight has lead him into France and will lead him into Italy. ". . . 'Tis a quiet journey of the heart in pursuit of nature, and those affections which arise out of her, which make us love each other-- and the world, better than we do."<sup>8</sup> But for the reader the journey is largely a discovery of the self-flattery,

self-deception, and self-love of Yorick.

After Yorick has had his first meal in France, he is congratulating himself on his benevolent attitude toward the King of France and enjoying the "suffusion of a finer kind" he feels upon his cheek which he attributes to his own humanity instead of to the burgundy he has been drinking. "When a man is at peace with man, how much lighter than a feather is the heaviest of metals in his hand: he pulling out his purse, and holding it airily and uncompress'd, looks round him, as if he sought for an object to share it with." He enjoys the feeling that this produces: "In doing this, I felt every vessel in my frame dilate--the arteries beat all chearily together, and every power which sustained life, performed it with so little friction." But when a poor Franciscan Monk enters to beg for his convent, Yorick immediately predetermines "not to give him a single sous," and even treats the old monk rudely (pp. 4, 5). This pattern with minor variations repeats itself throughout A Sentimental Journey. Sterne displays in Yorick's various encounters not true benevolence, but the lack of it.

When Yorick meets the lady at Monsieur Dessein's coach yard, he calls the emotions she stirs up in him

"benevolence" so that he can cultivate them. "I felt benevolence for her; and resolved some way or other to throw in my mite of courtesy--if not of service" (p. 17). And one is forced to wonder if Yorick's generous motivations are ever truly benevolent and disinterested. He admits that he has "been in love with one princess or another" almost all of his life, and that at intervals "betwixt one passion and another . . . I always perceive my heart locked up--I can scarce find it to give misery a sixpence, . . . and the moment I am rekindled, I am all generosity and good will again, and would do anything in the world either for, or with anyone, if they will but satisfy me there is no sin in it" (p. 34). When Yorick leaves the inn at Montriul, after admitting "there is no man gives so little as I do," he sets out to play the role of the generous good man, but since he will give only eight sous among sixteen people, he gives to those who give him the most emotional pleasure either by benevolent actions or flattery. Also it should be noted, his charity is a public act that attracts much attention to himself (pp. 35-37).

When Yorick parts from the fille de chambre to Madame R\*\*\*\* after meeting her for the first time, "so cordial was the parting between us, that had it happen'd

any where else, I'm not sure but I should have signed it with a kiss of charity, as warm and holy as an apostle" (p. 78). Sterne maintained in his sermons that if human passions were left unchecked, man would be impelled first one way by benevolent feelings and then another by equally natural selfish passions. We see Yorick sometimes come close to acting from benevolent motives alone, but Sterne always shows selfish passions taking control. Since Yorick is eager to entertain feelings of love and pity, he deceives himself into believing that all his sexual passions are benevolent and virtuous.

Yorick also finds love, sympathy, and virtue everywhere because he is determined to. Yorick is sure that all of the overtures which the beautiful Grisset makes to him at the shop in Paris prove her to be exactly opposite what the reader suspects of her. He says, "Any one may do a casual act of good nature, but a continuation of them shows it is a part of the temperature" (p. 52). The principle is valid; the actions to which it is applied are inappropriate. And though Yorick had not a single sous to spare the monk, he tries to find a way to give the beautiful Grisset a livre above the price of the two pairs of gloves he buys inspite of the fact that they do not fit. When

he meets the fille de chambre to Madame R\*\*\*\* at the book seller, he immediately presses her to receive from him a crown and says, "It was a small tribute . . . which I could not avoid paying to virtue, and would not be mistaken in the person I had been rendering it to for the world--but I see innocence, my dear, in your face" (p. 66). Sterne provides ample evidence that Yorick sees in her face what is not there.

Yorick's defense of the feelings he has when the fille de chambre is lying across his bed in the hotel does not vindicate him. He argues that "Nature has so wove her web of kindness, that some threads of love and desire are entangled with the piece" (p. 94). For the implicit judgment throughout the work is that sensitivity to feelings is neither good nor bad in itself. In Sterne's ethical theory expressed in his sermons feelings are virtuous only in so far as they motivate one to virtuous actions, and actions are virtuous not because they are motivated by benevolent emotions but because they are in keeping with some standard outside the emotional constitution--the law of God, the nature of things, the good of mankind. Yorick's moral shortcoming is not only that he is wholly engrossed in his own search for pleasure,

but also he is at fault because he has confused moral worth with benevolent affections, he thinks the wantonness, pride, and vanity he feels is benevolence, and he never considers the effect of benevolence beyond particular objects of sense in the social or universal order.<sup>9</sup>

Yorick cannot, at least does not, think abstractly about moral problems. When he hears the caged starling crying "I can't get out--I can't get out," he says, "I never had my affections more tenderly awakened" (p. 71). One of the reasons he is so moved by the incident is that he has been considering the danger of being arrested for traveling in an enemy country without a passport. He tries to free the starling at first, but after the emotion is passed he never carries through his intentions even though he has every opportunity to do so. In fact he becomes responsible for the bird's captivity by becoming its owner. When he sets out in search of Maria, the demented peasant girl, he acknowledges that he is going "in quest of melancholy adventures" (p. 113). Yorick repeatedly shows himself greedy for pathos and interested in every sensational pleasure of benevolence, but he is careless of the pitiable and his benevolence is transitory and meritless. Yorick is not even capable of any

consideration of man's obligation to animals or the effects of forced marriages in society.<sup>10</sup>

A Sentimental Journey ends with Yorick still self-centered (more concerned about his own comfort than that of the ladies), still indulging and rationalizing his amorous desires, still obeying out of fear the letter of God's laws but not the spirit. The quest is incomplete and unsuccessful. But the reader is aware that in Yorick's encounters with the monk and the peasant family especially, he had the opportunity to discover true benevolence and generosity, but he does not learn the lesson that they offer. And the lesson in benevolence they offer Yorick is the same as the lesson offered the reader by the entire work. Sensitivity to benevolent affections is not an index to moral worth.

Henry Mackenzie was as much aware that sensitivity to benevolent affections is not a reliable index to moral worth as Sterne was. The relationship of sentiment and sensibility to virtue is a recurrent theme of his essays in The Mirror and The Lounger. Mackenzie demonstrates both his familiarity with the sentimental tradition in seventeenth and eighteenth-century literature and his own ethical theory in these essays. I insert the following



quotations as evidence that "sick sensibility," was attacked, not defended, in Mackenzie's works. In an essay on the "Danger of regulating our conduct by the rules of romantic sentiment" Mackenzie writes:

In books, whether moral or amusing, there are no passages more captivating both to the writer and the reader than those delicate strokes of sentimental morality, which refer our actions to the determination of feeling. In these the poet, the novel writer, and the essayist, have always delighted; you are not, therefore, singular, for having dedicated so much of the MIRROR to sentiment and sensibility. I imagine, however, Sir, there is much danger in pushing these qualities too far: the rules of our conduct should be founded on a basis more solid, if they are to guide us through the various situations of life; but the young enthusiast of sentiment and feeling is apt to despise those lessons of vulgar virtue and prudence, which would confine the movements of a soul formed to regulate itself by finer impulses.<sup>11</sup>

In his essay "On novel-writing" Mackenzie says:

The principal danger of novels, as forming a mistaken and pernicious system of morality, seems to me to arise from that contrast between one virtue of excellence and another, that war of duties which is to be found in many of them, particularly in that species called sentimental. . . . In this rivalry of virtues and of duties, those are always likely to be preferred which in truth and reason are subordinate, and those to be degraded which ought to be paramount. . . . The duty to parents is contrasted with the ties of friendship and love; the virtues of justice, of prudence, of economy, are put in competition with the exertions of generosity, of benevolence, and of compassion. . . .

In the enthusiasm of sentiment, there is much the same danger as in the enthusiasm of religion, of substituting certain impulses and feelings of what may be called a visionary kind, in place of real

practical duties, which, in morals as in theology, we might not improperly denominate good works. In morals, as in religion, there are not wanting instances of refined sentimentalists, who are contented with talking of virtues which they never practice, who pay in words what they owe in actions; or perhaps what is fully as dangerous, who open their minds to impressions which never have any effect upon their conduct, but are considered as something foreign to and distinct from it. This separation of conscience from feeling is a depravity of the most pernicious sort; it eludes the strongest obligations to rectitude, it blunts the strongest incitement to virtue. . . .<sup>12</sup>

Mackenzie presents character after character who is generous with undeserving applicants but negligent in duties to his family, his neighbors, and his country, or who can weep over a tender novel or cry when witnessing a generous deed but in real life scarcely ever has "been known to relieve the distresses he is so willing to pity, or to exercise the generosity he is so ready to applaud."<sup>13</sup>

The Mirror and The Lounger characteristically reveal that the sentimentalism of the 1770's and 1780's was pernicious to morality.

. . . the indulgence in that sensibility which arises from the contemplation of objects in distress, is apt to produce and flatter a conscious vanity in the mind of the person who gives way to such indulgence. The vanity turns and rests upon itself, and without leading to action, it fosters a selfish and contracted approbation of our own feelings, which is caught hold of, and serves as a kind of substitute in place of the consciousness of real goodness. . . . Hence the mind may be open to the feelings of compassion and tenderness, may take delight in indulging them,

and by that means acquire great acuteness of sensibility, when it may harden and shut itself against every object, where the giving way to the feelings which such object produces requires real activity and exertion.

To this it may be proper to add, that the very indulgence in the passive feelings of sensibility has a tendency to produce indolence, languor, and feebleness, and to unfit the mind for anything which requires active and firm exertion. While the mind contemplates distress, it is acted upon, and never acts; and by indulging in this contemplation, it becomes more and more unfit for action. . . . He whose nervous sensibility could not bear the sight of a wound, would, in such a case, be incapable, were he otherwise qualified, to assist in its cure; while the person of less delicate feelings, and who is less affected with the sore, will be both more able and more willing to lend his aid in giving relief. . . . While therefore a certain degree of sensibility ought to be cultivated, we ought at the same time to be upon our guard not to push it too far.<sup>14</sup>

Mackenzie's own ethical position which emerges is that virtue and vice do not consist of passive sentiments, but of actions.

Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling has, understandably, often been misinterpreted. Harley seems to be similar to the naifs in Fielding's novels. As a boy he was bereft of parents, and he grew up in the country. He attended a country school for a time and gained the rest of his education from independent reading in literature, "with some assistance from the parson of the parish in languages and philosophy, and from the exciseman in arithmetic and

bookkeeping" (p. 12). As a young man he falls in love with Miss Walton, and later sets out for London, that "sad place" which is "replete with temptations" in hopes of "increasing his fortune" (pp. 15, 12). In his relations with Miss Walton and with those he meets in London, he proves himself to be "a child in the drama of the world." One could give many more characteristics and actions that Harley shares with characters like Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones. I have no doubt that Mackenzie consciously used the good-natured naif archetype in order to criticize the placing of too much faith in the heart by retelling and revising the life of the "man of feeling."

The element missing in Mackenzie's version is belief in good-nature or natural goodness. It is very clear in both The Man of Feeling and in his essays that Mackenzie believed the primary basis of morality to be not in nature or in God's law but in society. Duty to parents, friends, and country, justice, prudence, and economy are virtues which take precedence over the exertions of generosity, benevolence, and compassion. And the mere feelings of generosity, benevolence, and compassion are not virtues at all. "The code of morality must necessarily be enlarged in proportion to that state of manners to which cultivated

eras give birth--As the idea of property made a crime of theft, as the invention of oaths made falsehood perjury; so the necessary refinements in manners of highly-polished nations creates a variety of duties and of offences, which men in ruder, and, it may be (for I enter not into that question), happier periods of society, could never have imagined."<sup>15</sup> In The Man of Feeling the term "good-nature" rarely (I think never) appears. Neither does it appear in Mackenzie's essays in The Mirror and The Lounger which I have read. One finds often terms like "the good man" and "the good-hearted man," and Mackenzie speaks of benevolence, sentiment, and sensibility as being a part of one's "character," not his "nature."

Harley is not treated harshly, for he is amiable and, as Mackenzie says about another good-hearted man in The Mirror, "he is no one's enemy but his own." In doing good to every man who asked him, he did some truly charitable actions to very deserving persons, like Edwards and his grandchildren. But for the most part Harley's experience reveals that extreme sensibility is a weakness in this world. It causes him to be a failure and a fool in handling his own domestic concerns and economy, which "shine not in the eyes of the world" but "are yet the

surest guardians of virtue, of honour, and of independence."<sup>16</sup> Harley bungles both chances he has to increase his fortune; he gives money to the beggar even after the beggar tells him that work goes against his stomach and he lives by stealing and by preying upon people's sentiment and vanity; he visits the mad house and chooses to leave the conductor and allows an idiot to become his guide; he is deceived time and time again in London. Because of his sensibility Harley can never tell Miss Walton of his love or propose marriage to her, and when she finally tells him of her feelings for him he dies of an excess of sensibility.

The contrast, which is implicit in the foregoing paragraph between the plots of The Man of Feeling and, say, Tom Jones, is indicative of what Mackenzie is doing with certain conventional notions. The movement from country to London and back to the country is common to both, but the town-country contrast has a different function in each. In Fielding the city society is judged by the Good-Natured Man from the country; in The Man of Feeling the city-society judges the stereotyped ideas associated with the country and with benevolence. The two works also have a misanthropist. In Tom Jones the misanthropist is judged by the simple wisdom of Tom; in The Man of Feeling

the misanthropist indirectly judges Harley. Harley has already demonstrated in his own character the truth of much that the misanthropist says: "With vanity your best virtues are grossly tainted: your benevolence, which ye deduce immediately from the natural impulse of the heart, squints to it for its reward. There are some, indeed, who tell us of the satisfaction which flows from a secret consciousness of good actions: this secret satisfaction is truly excellent--when we have some friend to whom we may discover its excellence" (p. 42). Finally, in Tom Jones we are left with knowledge that the world is not friendly to naive good-nature; in The Man of Feeling we are left with the knowledge that excessive sensibility is not beneficial to society or to one's self.

It may well be that The Man of Feeling is a more complex and artistic work that has been commonly thought. The common mistake is to assume that the narrator or Harley speaks for Mackenzie as the narrator or the good-natured characters speak for Fielding. But Mackenzie poses as the editor and the story is told by an inside narrator, Charles, who has unalloyed admiration for Harley's sensibility. When one carefully deduces the values of the author from the characters, actions, and structural elements of the entire

work, he finds that the work does not hold up for admiration a sensitivity to feeling which the author and his generation admired but which the twentieth-century reader finds stultifying. Rather he holds up a sensitivity to feeling that his generation equated with virtue and subtly strips away every claim to goodness. If his contemporaries thought Harley to be a paragon, it speaks well for the quality of Mackenzie's satire. Swift's "Modest Proposal" and Gulliver's Travels were misread in the same way.

However, Mackenzie meant to disparage not all pretensions to virtue, but excessive sensibility. He gave Harley insight near the end of his life into the fact that during his lifetime his friends "often laughed very heartily at the awkward blunders of the real Harley, when the different faculties, which should have prevented them, were entirely occupied by the ideal" and that in the midst of their "unnoticed levity" he had viewed life "through the medium of romantic imagination" (pp. 17, 18). Harley tells the narrator shortly before he dies that in his experience in the world "a thousand things occurred, where I blushed for the impropriety of my conduct when I thought on the world, though my reason told me I should have blushed to have done otherwise--It was a scene of dissimulation,



of restraint, of disappointment." He hopes that in heaven he will find the happiness that is believed to be attendant upon virtue. "There are some feelings which perhaps are too tender to be suffered by the world. The world is in general selfish, interested, and unthinking, and throws the imputation of romance and melancholy on every temper more susceptible than its own." These feelings "are called,--perhaps they are--weaknesses here;--but there may be some better modifications of them in heaven, which may deserve the name of virtues" (pp. 128-129). This speech is qualified by Harley's character, the speech of the misanthropist, and by the thematic trajectory of the entire work, but it is at least clear that excessive sensibility is not a virtue in this world.

Thus both Yorick and Harley are descendants of the Good-Natured Man type but they inherited only his subjective disposition of mind and some of his outward features. Sterne does not deny the ontological reality of good nature, but he lifts Yorick's mask to show us that Yorick does not possess it. But Harley is much more like the naif and when Mackenzie reveals to us that Harley does not possess good nature we are supposed to conclude that there is no such thing as natural goodness. As the name implies, the

Good-Natured Man can be a vital character only as long as goodness and nature are indivisible. But the trend in the ethical philosophy of the period was to divorce goodness from nature and to wed it to social justice, custom, and opinion. And the popularization of the "sentimental" brought about a confusion of emotional responsiveness as a guide to moral conduct with emotional responsiveness as moral conduct in itself. Yorick is an illustration of the fact that goodness and nature may not be the same thing and that feelings may be confused with virtue; Harley is an illustration of the fact that goodness and nature are not the same thing and that feelings are not virtuous in themselves. Appropriately, and ironically, the pelagian, socially-oriented morality which the Latitudinarians and Shaftesbury gave authority to by associating it with the universal and eternal nature of things and which was illustrated by embodying it in the Good-Natured Man type survived to set in judgment upon the Man of Sensibility and to find him lacking. Changes in the basis of morality, not changes in moral values, ultimately brought about the disappearance of the Good-Natured Man.

## Notes to Chapter VI

<sup>1</sup>Steele, Preface to Conscious Lovers; 11. 39-40.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Mackenzie, The Man of Feeling, ed. Brian Vickers, Oxford English Novels (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Holtz, p. 42.

For general background on the "language of passions" see Brewster Rogerson, "The Art of Painting the Passions," Journal of the History of Ideas, 14 (1953), 68-94. According to Rogerson, a clear and comprehensive "grammar" for the painting of passions grew out of the systematic study of the passions and the "businesslike formulation of rules for the expression of emotions" by seventeenth-century artists (pp. 72-73). He discusses the formulas of expression in painting, acting, music, and literary art, and finds ample evidence that in the eighteenth century "the norms of expression for each of the arts were fairly well entrenched in popular consciousness" (p. 93).

<sup>4</sup>Ian Watt discusses Fielding's "external approach to character" in The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), pp. 272-280.

<sup>5</sup>Holtz, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup>Holtz, p. 46.

<sup>7</sup>Works, XV, 258.

<sup>8</sup>Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy, ed. Ian Jack, Oxford English Novels (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 3, 84-85.

<sup>9</sup>Cash, pp. 64, 79.

<sup>10</sup>Cash, pp. 44, 81, 83.

<sup>11</sup>The Mirror, April 25, 1780, in British Essayists, IV (London: Jones and Company, 1825), 180-181.

<sup>12</sup>The Lounger, June 18, 1785, in British Essayists, IV, 40.

<sup>13</sup>The Lounger, July 22, 1786, in British Essayists, IV, 160.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

<sup>15</sup>The Lounger, June 18, 1785, in British Essayists, IV, 40.

<sup>16</sup>The Mirror, April 13, 1779, in British Essayists, IV, 38.

## Chapter VII

### Conclusion

A paradox was present in the concept of the Good-Natured Man from the beginning. How could goodness be natural in an unnatural environment? How could natural "social affections," or benevolence, be an adequate guide to moral conduct amidst the fraud and deceit of society? How could natural, spontaneous goodness become artistic, calculated goodness without losing its moral worth? The paradox can be stated numerous ways, but the irreconcilable notions are that to act virtuously is to act in accordance with nature (benevolent feelings and the "nature of things") and that amidst the social conventions and institutions created by human artifice the ideas of vice and virtue are assigned to actions which have no natural motivation. In short, if the Good-Natured Man is to be truly a good man, he must be able to act according to the dictates of his nature and of his society. Even a Good-Natured Man thoroughly acquainted with the artificial world can not resolve the paradox, for nature and art do not match fact for fact. But the

paradox was not only insoluble, but also inescapable. The moral values of the period were at stake because morality could not be easily or suddenly separated from nature. The response was not at first to question the base of morality but to ask whether moral conduct in society is possible, whether seriously held values are tenable.

In the earlier part of the eighteenth century those who had faith in good nature and human reason were optimistic about resolving the paradox by teaching the Good-Natured Man prudence, that is, by teaching him to use his reason to direct and protect his benevolent passions within society. Fielding's moral ideal of the union of a good heart and a good head implies his faith in both, and his avowed purpose in many of his writings, e.g., "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" and Tom Jones, is to teach prudence to the Good-Natured Man. But an increasingly pessimistic attitude toward the viability of the ideal is reflected in Fielding's works.

The trend in Fielding's last three novels is from the judgment of the Good-Natured Man by a predominately abstract moral standard to judgment of the Good-Natured Man by a predominately concrete social standard. Fielding's

treatment of the Good-Natured Man in these works prefigures the change in attitude toward the Good-Natured Man that evolves in the literature of the eighteenth century.

The fact that the naive Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews are not adept in the ways of the world only emphasizes their natural goodness. The comic structure of Joseph Andrews and its highly symbolic and allegorical qualities cause the focus of attention to be upon the conflict of such values as charity versus vanity, revealed in the confrontations between good and bad characters, rather than upon the fates of characters who embody these values. The country, the road, London, the villains (ladies, beaux, roasting squires) are archetypal. Parson Adams is highly individualized, but, because of his unqualified idealism and attractiveness as a person, he functions primarily to enlist support for his values.

In Tom Jones the themes are presented in less allegorical, general terms. The country society is that unidyllic one which surrounds Paradise Hall; the road is not primarily an archetypal pattern of human experience but one which Tom travels from Allworthy's estate to London; London becomes a specific place with particular persons and evils; and the villains are not primarily types but individuals

like Blifil and characters like Squire Western and Black George who are not unadulteratedly evil. Tom is faced with a complex reality in which choices of action are not easily labeled right or wrong. Also the presence of Squire Allworthy gives the work a new emphasis. The charity versus vanity theme is still prominent in the contrasts between Tom and the "bad" characters, but the impulsive goodness versus prudential goodness theme is equally emphasized in the contrast between Tom and Allworthy. Allworthy is not the apotheosis of the Good-Natured Man, but he does possess good nature and prudence. And because he is an approximation of the ideal Good-Natured Man and has responsibility and authority to give counsel and judgment in human society, the paradox becomes clear. The success of Allworthy in administering justice reflects very limited optimism about the possibility for transforming good motives into good actions within the context of society. But Allworthy is a minor character and Fielding once again eludes the paradox by comic manipulation and by judging the morality of the naive, youthful hero by his motives, and by separating morality from action, until Tom has learned the lesson of prudence from experience. But through the fates of the Man on the Hill, Betty, Jenny



Jones (Mrs. Waters), and other basically good-natured characters, Fielding presents plenty of evidence that the impulsive Good-Natured Man who can survive his experience in society and retain sufficient character and reputation to benefit from his experience is exceptional indeed. And even Tom, who miraculously does survive, is not likely to supersede the standard of goodness which Squire Allworthy demonstrates to be pragmatically possible.

Fielding finally confronts the paradox head-on in Amelia, his least comic, most realistic, most overtly didactic novel. Amelia does not reflect a loss of faith in good nature but in the efficacy of good nature. Dr. Harrison, who speaks for Fielding, says, "The nature of man is far from being in itself evil; it abounds with benevolence, charity, and pity, coveting praise and honor, and shunning shame and disgrace. Bad education, bad habits, and bad customs, debauch our nature, and drive it head long as it were into vice. The governors of the world, and I am afraid the priesthood, are answerable for the badness of it" (VII, 144-145; IX, v). And Dr. Harrison tells Amelia in regard to Colonel James, who has tried to seduce her, "I am convinced there are good stamina in the nature of this very man; for he hath done acts of friendship

and generosity to your husband before he could have any evil design on your chastity; and in a Christian society, /which, for Fielding, is a natural society/ which I no more esteem this nation to be than I do any part of Turkey, I doubt not but this very colonel would have made a worthy and valuable member". (VII, 145; IX, v).

Booth, the hero of the novel, dramatizes Dr. Harrison's statements. He is like an older Tom Jones who stays in London and does not learn from his past experiences. He has married a female paragon, Amelia, but continues to be imprudent, unfaithful, irresponsible, and, in Dr. Harrison's view, unworthy of his wife. He is a humor character who believes until late in the novel in the deterministic dominant passion and egoistic theories. But even after he is converted to Christianity, Dr. Harrison advises Amelia to get Booth away from the temptations of London into the country. Even Dr. Harrison, who is wittier, wiser, and tougher than Squire Allworthy or any other Good-Natured Man in Fielding's works, cannot be consistently good in London and he too leaves it. Dr. Harrison is less contrite than Squire Allworthy when he discovers his judgments were mistaken because he knows that the complexity and knavery of society makes consistent

goodness impossible.

Fielding finally acknowledges that the paradox is insurmountable, but he is consistent in retaining his belief in the natural goodness of human nature and in damning society for "debauching" it by education or making it a liability to those who retain it because of corrupt institutions. The Good-Natured Man is untenable as a moral ideal, and consistently virtuous conduct is impossible because society is unnatural and corrupt.

Goldsmith's Dr. Primrose is not much different from Tom Jones in that his conscious motives are good, but his actions frequently are not. And the effect of Goldsmith's works is to vivify, not resolve, the paradox. He values good nature and social justice. Thus the only adequate solution remained an ideal one, as represented by Sir William Thornhill.

The good-natured humorist reflects growing pessimism about the possibility of goodness in society. The Benevolent Misanthrope is, of course, a character who tries to resolve the paradox for himself by adopting the art and wisdom of the serpents of society to protect his good nature. The first Benevolent Misanthrope in the English literature of the eighteenth century is Mr. Spatter

in David Simple (1744). He is a minor character and is apparently successful in solving the problems of the Good-Natured Man who attempts to live amidst fraud and deceit. He functions in the novel as a contrast to the gullible, naive Simple. But in the more fully developed Man in Black and Matthew Bramble good nature and reason are not brought into harmony so easily. Benevolent feelings do not easily submit to reason in the Man in Black, and the conflict of the two wreck Bramble's health and personality. These latter two characters are humorists because they are controlled by their dominant passions, and the implicit judgment is that they should be capable of rational prudence like Mr. Spatter, like the ideal the Man in Black preaches, or like Mr. Dennison in Humphrey Clinker.

If reason or good nature alone can not insure moral conduct in society, and if they will not act in harmony, not only the institutions of society but the constitution of man himself makes consistent moral conduct impossible. Sterne is a pessimistic yet optimistic creator of the Good-Natured Man. There are no paragons in Sterne's novels, only humorists, and if his ideal is rational benevolence, he gives no evidence that it has been or hope that it ever will be attained. Like Hume, he does not

even seriously consider reason alone as a guide to moral conduct. He does take benevolent feelings seriously and tries to salvage their true worth by satirizing mistaken ideas about them and by illustrating their practical value. Certainly the natural self-affections get in the way; assuredly over much sensitivity to feeling may incapacitate one for the appropriate actions; no, feelings do not reflect the absolute moral law of the universe. But there is such a thing as natural sympathy which is good and has practical worth to morality and society.

Thus, as the century progressed a compromise evolved. Ethical philosophers like Hume and Smith and literary artists like Sterne and Mackenzie took from sentimental ethics and the concept of good nature only natural sympathy; from the ethics of the rationalists and the exaltation of reason they took only an awareness of social custom and opinion. They believed that with these two ingredients fairly consistent moral conduct in society was possible.

The compromise retained the values of charity, sympathy, etc., but held that the code of morality to which each society and era gives birth superseded nature as the base of morality. The compromise rejected the egoistic psychological theory but accepted the relativity of morality.

When philosophers in the seventeenth century proposed the autonomy of ethics in order to give the authority of both God and universal nature to their systems, they could not have foreseen that they had ultimately stripped morality of its absolute base. When they wrote and when they created the Good-Natured Man type, they had great faith in nature and in human reason, but by the end of the eighteenth century it was difficult to have much faith in either. Only the utilitarian aspects of their philosophies were still tenable, and the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number was about all that remained as a basis for morality. The disappearance of the Good-Natured Man at the end of the eighteenth century is concurrent with the separation of morality and nature.

The Man of Sensibility, in the works of Sterne and Mackenzie, is a character who relies on his feelings as if they alone were an adequate guide to virtue and as if they corresponded to an absolute morality inherent in nature. He is satirized not only for this mistaken notion, but also because his actions do not measure up to what is pragmatically possible for every person with a modicum of sympathy and social awareness who is serious about moral conduct.

\* \* \* \* \*

A good man can be found in any body of literature, but the Good-Natured Man is unique to one period and the presence and influence of this character type in the literature of the eighteenth century is pervasive. If the works containing the Good-Natured Man are coherent, their structure and meaning will be consistent with and perhaps determined by the character and function of the Good-Natured Man. Like metal filings around a magnetic pole, the various aspects of a work are shaped by their relationship to the Good-Natured Man. For example, one element common to all the works discussed in the previous chapters is the town-country contrast. It is impossible to understand the function of this contrast in the works discussed except in relationship to the Good-Natured Man.

Of course, there is no necessary relationship between good nature and a rural environment. The country versus city theme is traditional to many periods and modes of literature. Nature, innocence, virtue, peace and simplicity are commonly associated with the country, and honest labor, independence, health, chaste love, friendship, and contentment with the sufficient are the sources of the genuine happiness to be found there. The city embodies everything

antithetical to the country life. But it is easy to see why writers of the eighteenth century who were concerned with the relation between goodness and nature and happiness and virtue would have found the rural ideal a useful literary convention. The expression "God made the country, man made the town" implies the general social and moral values the eighteenth century emphasized by the contrast.

For the authors of the works discussed above the rural ideal is important as a setting where the social structure is ideally suited to the character of the Good-Natured Man. The writer's interests, attitudes and values determine his characterization of the Good-Natured Man, and, in turn, determine the depiction and symbolic meaning of the rural society in his work.<sup>1</sup>

The rural ideal represented by the description of "Wilson's way of living" (III, iv, 225-229) is important in Joseph Andrews as "a setting wherein, because of its simplicity, a character can best develop and lead the good, i.e., the moral life. Simplicity renders it subject to the control of reason and good nature; therefore the intellect can fashion the institutions appropriate to the practice of virtue." Of course, many of Fielding's social and moral ideas are apparent in this social microcosm.



Each member performs the honest labors that are appropriate to his hierarchical position, the children are not trained to be "above the rank they are likely to fill hereafter," and duty arises out of love and love arises out of duty not only in relation to other members of the family but also in relation to guests and neighbors. Wilson's society is orderly because love is translated into action, and it is fully intelligible even to the naif because there is a perfect identity of appearance and reality. Thus Fielding uses the country simply as a physical setting for his ideal of a social and moral order.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas Fielding describes primarily the social and moral order of the rural society of the Wilson family, Smollett describes primarily the physical order of Dennison's estate in Humphrey Clinker. If we approach the description of Dennison's estate by way of the character of Matthew Bramble, we can understand why Smollett emphasizes physical order. It is not merely another instance of the tendency of Smollett's novels to dwindle into a geographical report. Rather Smollett's description of the physical order of Dennison's estate, and Dennison's ordering of his estate, embodies in concrete terms the moral ideal implicit, yet lacking, in the character of Matthew Bramble. Bramble

himself tells us as much when he says Dennison is a person "who has really attained to that pitch of rural felicity, at which I have been aspiring these twenty years in vain" (p. 320). The reason that Fielding's depiction is appropriately "quite general, in terms both of the concrete detail and time, with the result that it suggests greater universality" and "Smollett's is more specific, mundane, realistic in a technical sense" is that Fielding is concerned with the abstract, moral aspect of human nature and Smollett is concerned with the concrete, constitution aspect of good-nature.<sup>3</sup> Dennison's values are like Bramble's: "The objects he had in view, were health of body, peace of mind, and the private satisfaction of domestic quiet, unalloyed by actual want, and uninterrupted by the fears of indigence--He was very moderate in his estimate of the necessaries, and even of the comforts of life--He required nothing but wholesome air, pure water, agreeable exercise, plain diet, convenient lodging, and decent apparel" (p. 322). Dennison has all of these and Bramble has few of them because Dennison has disciplined control of his passions and Bramble does not. The moral qualities Bramble admires are actualized in society as a result of control of the passions and, of course, the

presence of benevolent passions.

The rural ideal in The Vicar of Wakefield is seen both through the eyes of the naif and the paragon. Dr. Primrose in Chapter IV describes a microcosmic social structure like the ones described by Fielding and Smollett. The moral significance of the duty, affection, hospitality, moderation, and simplicity is present, but just as Dr. Primrose had an eye out for the rewards of virtue in this life, in describing the physical and social characteristics of his "little republic" he is concerned primarily with the aesthetic rather than the moral qualities. "Our little habitation was situated at the foot of a sloping hill, sheltered with a beautiful underwood behind and a prattleing river before; on one side a meadow, on the other side a green. . . . Nothing could exceed the neatness of my little enclosures, the elms and the hedge rows appearing with inexpressible beauty." Even in describing the labours he emphasizes the beautiful rather than the practical and simple: "As we rose with the sun, so we never pursued our labours after it was gone down, but returned home to the expecting family, where smiling looks, a neat hearth, and pleasant fire were prepared for our reception" (IV, 32,33). The idyllic quality of the vicar's life, which he consciously

cultivates and revels in, is further emphasized by the fact that the vicar-narrator focuses on the "intervals of idleness and pleasure" in telling the story (IV, 32).

Mr. Burchell (Sir William Thornhill), the paragon figure, reveals that the rural society is not valuable because of its beauty and felicity but because it is conducive to morality. Dr. Primrose's basic fault, of which he is unaware, is his excessive concern with worldly fortune and happiness. His attitude toward his country life is consistent with this. But all of his calamities testify to the falseness of his notions about rural felicity. Burchell, the paragon, reveals that, among other of the vicar's mistakes which result from his naivete, Dr. Primrose values the rural ideal for the wrong reason. All of this is consistent with the tenor of the work implied by the contrast of the naif and the paragon: simple good-nature is worthy by an abstract moral standard which judges moral intention, but unworthy by a concrete social standard that judges efficiency. The shift in emphasis in Goldsmith as compared to Fielding, which we have tried to show in the previous chapters, is clear in an exchange between Dr. Primrose and Burchell: "Both wit and understanding are trifles without integrity; it is that which gives value to

every character. The ignorant peasant without fault, is greater than the philosopher with many; . . . An honest man is the noblest work of God." Mr. Burchell returns, "I always held that favourite maxim of Pope as unworthy a man of genius, and a base desertion of his own superiority." Men should be "prized not for their exemption from fault, but the size of those virtues they are possessed of" (IV, 78-79). The rural ideal is not important as a retreat for virtuous living but as an illustration of the moral values which should shape all societies. The ideal Good-Natured Man has retained the values of the rural ideal but has become a part of city-society.

Thus, Fielding is concerned with the contrast between morality and social reality, and the naïf and Wilson's rural society provides a moral contrast to the immoral norm. Smollett is concerned with the internal conflict of the good-natured humorist, and Dennison and his orderly, productive, happy life on his estate provides the moral ideal toward which Bramble has struggled for twenty years. Goldsmith is concerned with the socialization of the Good-Natured Man, and with the help of the paragon the naïf learns that the morality associated with the rural ideal is good but the ignorance and naivete associated with it

is not meritorious. To further substantiate the validity of the above argument we need only notice that the city in each work is treated with a similar emphasis. Fielding shows evil primarily in "city" relationships; Smollett presents evil primarily in the nauseating and graphic descriptions of London and Bath; and Goldsmith allows only his naïf characters to make the city equal evil equation.

But Yorick, the Man of Sensibility in A Sentimental Journey, is not a Good-Natured Man and the idyllic depiction he gives us of the peasant family in "The Supper," "The Grace," and the beginning of "The Case of Delicacy," is, as he suspects, a product of his own "imagination which is eternally misleading" him (p. 120). The peasant family "consisted of an old gray-headed man and his wife, with five or six sons and sons-in-law, and their several wives, and a joyous genealogy out of 'em." This family of twenty-odd persons lives in a "little farmhouse," and when they set down to eat "lentil soup" and bread Yorick describes the scene as a "feast of love." Evidences of poverty are everywhere, but Yorick chooses only to see the "plenty," the joy, the "simple jollity," the "simple virtues," the "safety," and the "protection" (pp. 118-120). There are

evidences of the virtues which Yorick has been seeking, but Yorick is not interested in the peasants as persons, but as food for his romantic imagination. Yorick, unlike Parson Adams and Matthew Bramble, does not inquire into the actual mode of living of these peasants, but rather he is interested, as usual, with the subjective significance of the scene upon himself.

In all these works we are made to care about the Good-Natured Man's morality. And the rural ideal presented is ideal only in the moral and symbolic sense. There is ample evidence in all these works that the literal idyllic existence never has and never will be realized in reality. But the tradition of the rural ideal gave to these writers a convention for presenting an idealized symbol of their moral values and for providing a fitting environment and reward for good-natured characters in the comic resolutions. But again, the retreat into the country is more important for its symbolic meaning, i.e., a representation of the moral values of the new order, than for its literal meaning, i.e., a representation of the country as better suited for virtuous living than the city.

The town-country contrast is far more complex and pervasive in these works than this discussion implies

and a treatment of its function and meaning in the context of eighteenth-century English literature would make up a complete study within itself. This discussion of it is intended only to illustrate that, as has been pointed out time and time again in the preceding chapters, an understanding of the character and function of the Good-Natured Man provides a fruitful approach to a study of both theme and technique in specific eighteenth-century works. As a character in a specific work the Good-Natured Man reveals the interests, attitudes, and values of the author that shape the work; as a character type in eighteenth-century English literature, the development of the Good-Natured Man parallels the development of the predominant ethical theory in a period when morality was a dominant concern.

Therefore, with the definition of the Good-Natured Man provided in this study, we are better equipped to understand the relative importance of themes, of conventions, of techniques in eighteenth-century literature. For the artist's conception of the Good-Natured Man is frequently the germ or seed which gives life to his work and gives form and meaning to every major and minor aspect of it.



## Notes to Chapter VII

<sup>1</sup>Jeffrey Duncan's "The Rural Ideal in Eighteenth Century Fiction," Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, 8 (1968), 517-535, deals with the rural ideal in selected scenes from Joseph Andrews, Humphrey Clinker, The Vicar of Wakefield, A Sentimental Journey, and Tristram Shandy. He recognizes that the rural ideal is used in each work as an idealized symbol of moral values, but he is not always sure, and in regard to A Sentimental Journey is mistaken, about how this symbol is important to and organically a part of the work in which it appears. I am indebted to Duncan in the following discussion, but my purpose is to illustrate the value of the definition of the character and function of the Good-Natured Man provided in this study by going beyond Duncan's conclusions to fresh insights that are made possible by an understanding of the Good-Natured Man type.

<sup>2</sup>Duncan, pp. 518-520; Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, pp. 84, 92-93.

<sup>3</sup>Duncan, p. 522.

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