THE SYNTHESIS OF ART AND ETHIC

IN TOM JONES

by

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Abstract

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Critics of Tom Jones have issued a variety of conflicting moral judgments about the novel and its characters. This disparity results, in part, from an imperfect understanding of the ethic underlying the novel, an amalgam of latitudinarian and Aristotelian concepts. The ethic not only informs the novel's meaning but provides a schema for the development and contrast of characters and incidents which dramatize complex ethical ideas.

The best and most thorough studies have focused on the latitudinarian influences on Fielding's ethics. Fielding's high praise of Aristotle's Ethics and Politics forces us to consider their ideas in relation to Tom Jones. Significantly, Aristotle's ethical concepts display a number of parallels to the doctrines of the latitudinarians, so that the two sets of ideas reinforce each other in Fielding's work.

While some critics have argued that Fielding believed most of mankind to be positively evil from birth, there is considerable evidence that Fielding's view of human nature is Aristotelian. With Aristotle, Fielding believed that while nature contributes

something to the original disposition, each man has power over the development of his own nature. The actions that he chooses and the habits he develops establish his nature. Therefore, each man is responsible for his action. These ideas are tentatively dramatized in Tom Jones.

The sermons of the latitudinarian divines develop a veritable rhetoric of deceit which defines and analyzes deceit and explains its social consequences. The divines saw deceit as a major cause of the disintegration of the social body as well as a primary tool of the devil in perverting and seducing that society. In Tom Jones deceit and misinformation are omnipresent, with nearly every character contributing to it. Bits of misinformation continue to generate events in the plot, long after their initial purposes have been accomplished. Taken together, they disrupt the social order of the novel. Man's struggle to avoid deceit and to seek truth is imperative.

In such a world the moral vision of prudence is absolutely necessary to virtue. Tom must learn prudence to protect himself from villainy and to insure his own moral action and inner happiness. The concept of prudence derives from the intellectual virtue which Aristotle called practical wisdom. Considered in that light, Fielding's uses of the term reveal a comprehensive dramatization of true prudence and its imitations.

Judgment, which often drastically affects the lives of others, is dependent on the perception of moral truth and specific circumstances. Blifil's failure to grasp the true ends of action, results in his schemes to control others. Allworthy's errors in the perception of particulars result in his inappropriate judgment and control of others. By the end of the novel Tom achieves true prudence when he understands the ends of moral action and when he combines passion with intellectual control to achieve a balance which permits him to perceive with accuracy and to judge with mercy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since the initial publication of Tom Jones in 1749, critics have voiced a wide variety of moral judgments on the novel and its characters. Even twentieth century critics, who are far less concerned that a work "teach" virtue than were critics of the eighteenth century, deliver pronouncements which sometimes have more to do with personal moral tastes than with literary criticism. Some critics permit their judgments of the book's morality to become at least a partial basis for their judgments of the book's artistic merit. Further, the moral judgments issued by modern critics reveal a disparity reminiscent of the disparity in the judgments of Fielding's contemporaries.

One of the earliest attacks on the morality and therefore the art of Tom Jones was by the anonymous author of An Examen of the History of Tom Jones, a Foundling (London: 1750). He attacks the novel as a book calculated to do precisely the opposite of the intention declared in Fielding's dedication: "to recommend goodness and innocence." Commenting separately on nearly every chapter of each book, this cankered critic sets out to demonstrate Fielding's failure as both artist and moralist. He ridicules the idea that Tom Jones has anything at all to do with virtue. Tom "plunges into

every Debauchery" (p. 5). For him even Sophia falls short morally, proving that "Mr. Fielding is utterly unable (as we see in all his Pieces, but most flagrantly in this) to draw a Woman of true Virtue and Modesty" (p. 7). In general, Fielding's enemies "denounced the novel as one of the many libidinous productions which, in the opinion of the Bishop of London, were a contributory cause of the recent seismic manifestations of Divine displeasure toward a 'sinful people.'"[1]

Samuel Richardson, writing to Astraea and Minerva Hill, whom he had asked to read Tom Jones and to give him their opinion, said that Fielding intended "to whiten a vicious Character, and to make Morality bend to his Practices. . . . Why did he make him a common . . . and a kept Fellow, the Lowest of all Fellows, yet in Love with a Young Creature who was traping (trapesing) after him."[2] Of course, Richardson's splenetic envy is primarily responsible for his comments, but others had not this motivation. Sir John Hawkins, for instance, called Tom Jones "a book seemingly intended to sap the foundation of that morality which it is the duty of parents and all public instructors to inculcate in the minds of young people, by teaching that virtue upon principle is imposture, that generous qualities alone constitute true worth, and that a young man may love

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[1]Frederic T. Blanchard, Fielding the Novelist. A Study in Historical Criticism (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1926), p. 49.

[2]Quoted in Blanchard, pp. 63-64.

and be loved, and at the same time associate with the loosest women."[3] Even Samuel Johnson called Fielding a "blockhead." When Boswell asked for a clarification, Johnson said, "What I mean by his being a blockhead is, that he was a barren rascal."[4] Further, Johnson "used to quote with approbation a saying of Richardson's 'that the virtues of Fielding's heroes were the vices of a truly good man.'"[5]

At the same time there were some who praised Tom Jones. For instance, The Gentleman's Magazine for March 1750, after maintaining silence on Tom Jones for over a year, carried a review of the French translation of Tom Jones which declares that the good characters have considerable merit, even Tom, "as much a libertine as he is, engages all sensible hearts by his candor, generosity, humanity, his gratitude to his benefactors, his tender compassion, and readiness to assist the distressed."[6] Captain Lewis Thomas in a letter to a friend on April 3, 1749, said, "If my design had been to propagate virtue by appearing publickly in its defence, I should

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[3]Quoted in Blanchard, p. 262.

[4]James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson L. L. D. (New York: Random House, n. d.), p. 412.

[5]Ibid., p. 334.

[6]"A Literary Article from France," Gentleman's Magazine, XX (March 1750), 117.

rather have been ye author of Tom Jones than of five Folio Volumes of sermons."[7] In 1751 an anonymous author saw the influence of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones as powerful enough to give rise to a whole "new species" of writing--which turns out to be a largely second-rate imitation. His pamphlet, entitled Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding, points to Fielding's realism as a chief virtue, thereby implying that the notions of virtue and vice are appropriate to the real world.

James Boswell, the faithful recorder of Johnson's derision of Fielding, could never understand his friend's contempt for Fielding's art and morality. Boswell was certainly aware of Johnson's "unreasonable prejudice" toward Fielding. He himself argues that, "He who is an good as Fielding would make him, is an amiable member of society, and may be led on by more regulated instructors, to a higher state of ethical perfection."[8] Later Boswell makes the point that "'Tom Jones' has stood the test of publick opinion with such success, as to have established its great merit, both for the story, the sentiments, and the manners . . . so as to leave no doubt of its having an animated truth of execution throughout."[9]

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[7]Quoted in Martin C. Battestin, "Introduction," Twentieth Century Interpretations of Tom Jones, ed. Martin C. Battestin (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 8.

[8]Boswell, p. 334.

[9]Ibid., p. 413.

While the literary merit of Tom Jones is no longer questioned, there is still controversy over the morality of the book's characters. Homes Dudden, in 1952, stated that "the lapses of Tom Jones, . . . though some excuses might be pleaded for them, are invariably represented as nasty and offensive."[10] On the other hand, Golden states that "Though Fielding has shown Tom as frankly delighted by animal pleasure, he has never permitted him to be manipulative. Even the involvement with Lady Bellaston had come from Tom's compliant, affectionate disposition, a specific contrast to her mercenary wish to buy sex. Tom accepts her money as given in the same spirit as his kindly response to her, not as payment but as a testimonial of good will."[11]

Beginning with the first year after the publication of Tom Jones, there has been a similar divergence of opinion over Allworthy. The author of An Examen feels that Allworthy customarily acts "like a fool."[12] A reviewer of Tom Jones in the Gentleman's Magazine could not agree less. Of Allworthy he writes to supposedly French readers, "The name of Alworthy [sic], which in English signifies supereminently good, could never be more justly bestow'd than on

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[10]F. Homes Dudden, Henry Fielding: His Life, Work, and Times (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952), II, 680.

[11]Morris Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1966), pp. 56-57.

[12]An Examen of the History of Tom Jones, a Foundling (London, 1750), p. 27.

the respectable uncle of Jones."[13] Many modern critics assume that Allworthy is the exemplary character of the novel. F. O. Bissell, for instance, feels that Allworthy "personifies almost perfect goodness. . . . The only satire directed against Allworthy," he goes on to say, "is gentle ridicule of the too trusting nature through which he is deceived by Blifil."[14] John Preston, however, has condemned Allworthy as being "quick to blame, more aware of guilt than innocence." Allworthy's judgments, Preston states, are "always prejudiced."[15]

In addition to the critical questions about Tom and Allworthy, a third critical question has arisen concerning Fielding's attitudes toward the basic nature of man as revealed in Tom Jones. While George Sherburn feels that "Fielding does not accept any doctrine of the natural goodness of all men,"[16] Andrew Wright states unequivocally, "Most men, in Fielding's view, are positively evil from birth: such a person is Blifil; or at best wicked through

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[13]"A Literary Article from France," Gentleman's Magazine, XX (March 1750), 117.

[14]F. O. Bissell, Fielding's Theory of the Novel (Utica: Cornell Univ. Press, 1933), pp. 75-76.

[15]John Preston, "Tom Jones and the 'Pursuit of True Judgment,'" ELH, XXXIII (1966), 322.

[16]George Sherburn, "Fielding's Social Outlook," PQ, XXXV (1956), 7.

indifference, selfishness, or ambition: such a person is Black George."[17] Martin Battestin, who examines the problem far more extensively than Wright, concludes that while Fielding is somewhat ambiguous on the issue of man's innate disposition, Fielding "affirmed that man was essentially capable of great goodness, if only he were assisted by the institutions of society and persuaded by the powerful incentives of religion to a proper use of his reason and will."[18]

These rather wide differences in moral judgment are due in part to the sort of audience subjectivity which Fielding satirizes in The True Patriot for April 8, 1746:

> I have heard of a Man who believed there was no real Existence in the World but himself; and that whatever he saw without him was mere Phantom and Illusion.
>
> This Philosopher, I imagine, hath not had many Followers in Theory; and yet if we were to derive the Principles of Mankind from their Practice, we should be almost persuaded that somewhat like this Madness had possessed not only particular Men, but their several Orders and Professions. For tho' they do not absolutely deny all Existence to other Persons and Things, yet it is certain they hold them of no Consequence, and little worth their Consideration, unless they trench somewhat towards their own Order or Calling.[19]

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[17]Andrew Wright, Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1966), p. 34.

[18]Martin C. Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews (Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1959), p. 84.

[19]The True Patriot, ed. Miriam Austin Locke (University: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1959), p. 84.

Since critics, like other men, have various "callings," their opinions must vary. In large part, however, the diversity in moral judgment seems to derive from a failure to apprehend Fielding's ethic. Indeed, only within the last forty years have critics begun to examine Fielding's ethic at all; and only within the last fifteen years has anyone given it more than speculative attention. In 1958 William Empson wrote that in Tom Jones, Fielding "is expressing a theory about ethics, and the ironies are made to interlock with the progress of the demonstration. The titanic plot which has been praised or found tiresome taken alone, was devised to illustrate the theory."[20] Unfortunately, Empson is content to argue that the theory is implied without ever making it explicit. A major problem, then, is to determine the nature and origins of the ethic which informs Tom Jones, so that when we judge the characters, we may at least judge from the stance that Fielding himself appears to have taken. For Fielding, however, the ethic becomes an inherent part of his art, so that an understanding of it informs not only the reader's moral response, but his aesthetic response as well.

What follows will attempt to demonstrate that Fielding's ethic is an amalgam of latitudinarian and Aristotelian ethical concepts

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[20]William Empson, "Tom Jones," Kenyon Review, XX (Spring 1958), rpt. in Ronald Paulson, ed., Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 125.

and that these concepts provide a schema for the development, arrangement, and contrast of characters in Tom Jones. In his dedication of the novel Fielding states "that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history."[21] Of course, that is not Fielding's only purpose, but to accomplish this particular one, he must define "goodness and innocence." His definition evolves out of characterizations and situations which, in part, represent ethical ideas. This is true even of the many minor characters and situations in the novel. For example, Tom's adventure with the company of soldiers is more than a comic interlude, for it leads to a situation in which honor and religion come into conflict. The problem is which should govern behavior, the moral imperatives of Christian religion or the pride of the man of honor who can "never put up an affront"? After Northerton has insulted Sophia and laid Tom out with a well-aimed bottle, the lieutenant in command encourages Tom to seek satisfaction of Northerton. When Tom objects on the grounds of religion, the lieutenant admonishes him to "be a good Christian as long as you live; but be a man of honor too"(VII, xii). Fortunately, by the time Tom resolves to seek his man and fight him, despite his knowledge

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[21]Henry Fielding, The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling (New York: Random House, 1950). Hereafter all references to Tom Jones will be in the text citing the book and chapter of this edition from which all quotations are taken.

that he will "incur the Divine displeasure" (VII, xiv), Northerton has escaped. Though, in this incident, Fielding leaves the conflict between honor and religion temporarily unresolved, he succeeds in dramatizing the ethical problem even as he develops Tom's character, introduces Partridge, and moves the main plot forward. At the same time the incident is thematically connected with a number of other incidents which permit Fielding to examine not only the ways in which people respond to the concept of honor, but the validity of "honor" as a basis for decisions.

Obviously, Fielding's technique does not amount to formal allegory, but it does permit the representation of ethical ideas and problems. By including several incidents in which various characters are seen in relation to similar ethical concepts, Fielding manages to explore the complexitites of a given problem. Further, he refuses to oversimplify character by presenting only extremes. As he states, in reference to Allworthy, "we do not pretend to introduce any infallible characters into this history; where we hope nothing will be found which hath never yet been seen in human nature" (III, v). Because Fielding examines the responses of many agents to similar situations as well as the responses of single individuals to a variety of circumstances, we are forced, by the comparisons and contrasts that result, to make judgements about the agents. As Aristotle points out, "Character is what makes

us ascribe certain moral qualities to the agents."[22] And the complexity which Fielding ascribes to the moral universe of Tom Jones through the revelation of character is a major focus of interest in the novel.

Some time ago, Aurelien Digeon argued that each of Fielding's major novels was written in part as a reply to the novels of Richardson. Thus, he contrasted Joseph Andrews with Pamela, Tom Jones with Clarissa, and Amelia with Charles Grandison. It is well known that Fielding wrote Shamela as a protest against what he regarded as Richardson's attempt to manipulate virtue, as embodied in Pamela, to attain what Fielding considered a base, strictly pecuniary reward. Digeon does not argue that Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones were motivated exclusively by a desire to attack the Richardsonian ethic, but he does suggest, and with considerable perspicuity, that Fielding had Clarissa and its weaknesses in mind as he set to work on Tom Jones and that "in their moral interpretation . . . the two writers are . . . decidedly opposed."

> In both novelists is to be found more or less disguised, the same protest against unlimited parental tyranny, and the same vindication . . . of the rights of personality. At first there is scarcely any difference between Tom Jones and Lovelace. The real difference lies in the author's point of view and in his appreciation of moral values. Richardson has the

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[22]Aristotle, The Works of Aristotle Translated into English, W. D. Ross, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), v. XI, 1450b. Hereafter, all citations for De Poetica (vol. XI), the Politica (vol. X) or the Ethica Nicomachea (vol. IX) will appear in the text, indicated by volume and the traditional numbered divisions for the works of Aristotle.

> tragic outlook, the fatality of his characters dominates him; in spite of himself he admires them, or at the least he submits to them. Fielding, on the contrary, always keeps his detachment. He never loses that critical faculty, which is essential to the comic spirit, he always sees his characters intellectually and is never in their power.
>
> He desires to see life steadily and see it whole; and he succeeds. In contrast to Lovelace, a creature diabolically depraved, a symbol of vice as seen by a Christian visionary, he draws Tom Jones, a real person, a human mixture of vices and virtues. His protagonists are deliberately opposed to those of Richardson.[23]

Richardson sets out to produce a nearly Mephistophelian antagonist in the cavalier Lovelace and a stringently virtuous, nearly Calvinistic protagonist in Clarissa. Even toward the end of the novel when Lovelace is somewhat redeemed by his constant passion for Clarissa, he goes off to fight a duel, assured that he will win, but never questioning the morality of accepting the challenge. By way of contrast Tom at least considers the commandments of God before he decides to "think no more" and goes off to battle Northerton (VII, xiv). Clarissa is so enamoured of her abstract principles of virtue that she appears to make a conscious decision to die rather than submit her chastity to one whom she admits loving but who she feels has not demonstrated proper respect. Her thin excuse for refusing Lovelace has much more to do with social propriety than virtue. In short, Richardson defines the moral universe of Clarissa in terms of characters who illustrate the extremes

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[23]Aurelien Digeon, The Novels of Fielding (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1925), pp. 139-140.

of virtue and vice and who begin to look foolish in their hot pursuit of opposites. Curiously, no characters fall between the extremes. Clarissa's family are unmitigatedly selfish and her brother plots actively against her. Squire Western, whose situation presents a close parallel to that of Mr. Harlowe, has tremendous energy for the activities he loves, i.e., hunting, cursing, and drinking. And he is too unsophisticated to plot against those he regards as his enemies. He simply becomes angry and, happily, loses what slight sense of decorum he might have possessed.

Ian Watt comes close to the truth when he writes, "Richardson and Fielding portray the cruelty of the two fathers very differently; that of Squire Western has an involuntary and exaggerated quality, whereas Mr. Harlowe's is that of ordinary life; the latter's callous resolve seems all the more convincing because it is only manifested in his refusal to speak to Clarissa."[24] Watt uses the term involuntary in its modern psychological sense. In the Aristotelian sense, however, the concept of involuntary action has both moral and psychological frames of reference. Thus, as we will see, Squire Western's actions are voluntary; that is, he acts neither under compulsion nor out of ignorance of particulars, conditions which free the agent of blame. He does not choose his actions rationally, however. He acts as a result of his passionate nature--

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[24]Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1964), p. 268.

what Aristotle would have called irascibility. Mr. Harlowe, on the other hand, by his refusal to speak with Clarissa, acknowledges his son's plotting against Clarissa and accepts it. Thus, his action is deliberately chosen and of a far more vicious nature than Western's. Whatever Watt means by involuntary, whether involuntary in the Aristotelian sense or involuntary in the modern sense of impulsive (governed by the viscera rather than the cortex), it is difficult to see how Western's actions are not those of "ordinary life," despite their exaggerated quality.

At any rate, the difference between Squire Western, who explodes into action irrationally, and Mr. Harlowe, who rationally approves the family plots against his daughter, exemplifies the difference between the conceptions of morality governing the two novels. Richardson sees the world in terms of absolute good and evil, positive and negative poles with all his characters drawn to one pole or another. Fielding, on the other hand, scatters his characters through a moral world that has more than two dimensions, and most of his characters never reach the extreme. Even Black George, for all his deceit, has partially redeeming qualities, or at least excuses. Some of the evil characters, Blifil for example, come very near the absolute edge, but the most virtuous never quite reach the ultimate in puritanical virtue. Tom's incontinence and Allworthy's lack of perception save them both from sainthood, and the psychology of their behavior prevents easy moral generalizations.

Thus, while Richardson's efforts are expended in the development of a psychologically real world, Fielding is more interested in a morally real world. Richardson descends into the minds of his characters, informing us of their reactions to even the most trifling circumstances. Fielding, on the other hand, remains outside his characters, judging first from one perspective, then from another, until he enables his readers to infer motives, desires, and perceptions and finally to make judgments. As Robert Alter points out, "Fielding's shrewdly reticent presentation of details of characterization invites us to reconstruct character by inference. . . . Instead of a detailed 'rendering' to make us believe in the autonomy of his characters, Fielding achieves the same result by respecting the individual characters' claims to be judged fairly yet rigorously, humanely, with wise consideration."[25]

In the process of reading Tom Jones, the reader becomes a dynamic part of the novel's moral universe, for he is asked to perceive, to compare, and finally to judge. Perhaps no writer before or since Fielding has been so conscious of his readers and the conflicting moral judgments they are likely to make. To lead his readers to what he considered true judgment, Fielding supplies us not only with a variety of views of the same character acting in and reacting to various circumstances but of sets of characters

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[25]Robert Alter, Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p. 67.

whom we are forced to compare. The many implied contrasts among characters not only provide a significant basis for arriving at true ethical judgments, but also generate a framework for the thematic structure of the novel. Fielding, in this way, makes his ethics an integral part of his art as a novelist.

Ronald S. Crane, in his article "The Plot of Tom Jones" was one of the first critics to formulate an analysis of the structure of Tom Jones. Coleridge had noted the perfection of the novel's plot, comparing it to Oedipus Rex and The Alchemist; but Crane was the first to move from praise to analysis. While at times brilliant, his analysis leaves a number of problems unresolved. Crane argues that plot is a synthesis of what he calls plots of action, plots of character, and plots of thought. Plots differ in structure according to which of the three is "taken as the synthesizing principle." In a plot of action there is "a completed change . . . in the fortunes of the protagonist, determined and effected by character and thought." In plots of character there is "a completed process of change in the moral character of the protagonist, precipitated or molded by action and made manifest both in it and in thought and feeling." In the third sort of plot, that of thought, there is a "complete process of change in the thought of the protagonist and consequently in his feelings."[26] Crane argues that Fielding

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[26]Ronald S. Crane, "The Plot of Tom Jones," Journal of General Education, IV (January 1950), 114.

combines all three of these to achieve a "complete and ordered whole,"[27] and demonstrates how the plot of Tom Jones integrates action, character, and thought. Still, as Michael Irwin has pointed out, Crane's analysis "overlooks the moral significance which makes the novel more than a romance with an artificial plot."[28] Certainly, Irwin is right, for while Fielding's plot is carefully wrought, he himself, as he suggests in the dedication, is very much concerned with its moral implications which he develops by contrast resulting in what Empson calls "interlocking ironies." Fielding explains that contrast, "runs through all the works of creation, and may probably have a large share in constituting in us the idea of all beauty" (V, i). His discussion of contrast is ostensibly a facetious justification of the introductory essays which are "prefixed to the historical matter contained in every book." The introductory essays have been included, he says, because he, as the founder of the "prosai-comi-epic" deems them "essentially necessary to this kind of writing. . . . For this our determination we do not hold ourselves strictly bound to assign any reason; it being abundantly sufficient that we have laid it down as a rule necessary to be observed in all prosai-comi-epic writing" (V, i). But by the close of the chapter he has given a reason: the purpose of the

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[27]Crane, p. 115.

[28]Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding, The Tentative Realist (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p. 84.

initial chapters in which the author professes to be "laboriously dull" is to set off the more interesting parts of the history.

If we as readers are so dull as to take our genial host seriously, then certainly we must regard the introductory chapters as irrelevant interruptions of the narrative. But we must attend to all that he says with care. He has warned us before that he will not always explain all. Assistance, when it is offered, is "a favour rarely to be expected in the course of my work" (I, v). Indeed, Fielding has structured the chapter so that we cannot help contrasting his facetiously offered explanation of contrast with the arbitrary rules of neo-classical criticism which he enumerates. "Who ever demanded the reasons of that nice unity of time or place which is now established to be so essential to dramatic poetry? What critic hath been ever asked, why a play may not contain two days as well as one? Or why the audience . . . may not be wafted fifty miles as well as five" (V, i)? All these rules and the others which he lists are clearly arbitrary, yet the one rule, that of contrast, which Fielding teases us about in the same chapter "runs through all the works of the creation."

Certainly contrast is one of the chief means of encouraging the reader to understand. Fielding uses it in an essay for The Champion, March 27, 1740, in which he defines the good-natured man "according to Aristotle's method" (italics mine), first defining

good nature, then defining what might appear to be good but, in fact, cannot be.[29] Aristotle, in the Nicomachean Ethics, makes extensive use of the same technique, funneling in to precise meanings by explaining first, for instance, what courage is, then what it is not. By means of contrast Aristotle eliminates misleading appearances and clarifies the truth.

Some critics have noted Fielding's use of contrast in Tom Jones. Andrew Wright, for instance, points out that there is "a maintenance of doubleness that is agreeable, significant, and subtle."[30] Wright proceeds to indicate contrasts between Tom and Blifil, Thwackum and Square, Sophia and Molly, Partridge and the Man of the Hill. But he fails to show the significance of these contrasts much beyond the fact of their presence. His treatment of Sophia and Molly is typical, extending no farther than the following paragraph:

> Book IV, "Containing the Time of a Year," begins and ends with Sophia, but centres on Molly Seagrim. Again, therefore, Fielding uses contrasting characters to establish a fact which, observed comically, is both beautiful and true. The focus shifts from Tom to Molly, and then to Sophia. Sophia likes, and is prepared to love, Tom, for to her his gallantry in rescuing her when she is thrown by her horse gilds over the involvement with Molly Seagrim. The book therefore ends on a happy note: Sophia's knowledge that Tom finds her attractive and the reader's knowledge that Sophia is attracted to him.[31]

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[29]Henry Fielding, The Works of Henry Fielding, ed. William Ernest Henley (New York: Croscup and Sterling, 1902), XV, 257-258.

[30]Wright, p. 76.

[31]Ibid., p. 78.

Robert Alter, a more recent and more perceptive critic, examines Fielding's use of contrasting characters and incidents, arguing that "one of Fielding's important technical innovations in Tom Jones was to systematize the procedure of comparing and contrasting characters which he had already used in Joseph Andrews and to make its significance felt virtually everywhere in the novel. The characters of Tom Jones are arranged in a more or less symmetrical, coherent system that extends over a complicated set of coordinates of meaning."[32]

This "complicated set of coordinates of meaning," according to Alter, turns out to be a continuum or "scheme of the possibilities of interplay between energy and restraint." Thus, Alter views Squire Western as the embodiment of raw, "exploding" energy in contrast to Allworthy who "keeps natural impulse under the firm control of civilized restraint."[33] Other characters exist on a continuum somewhere between the two.

Beyond this, Alter argues convincingly that the technique of contrast is one of the major structural devices responsible for the "intricate unity" of the novel. He points out that "the various formal aspects of the novel are . . . intimately linked with one another . . . the 'geographical' division into three groups of six

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[32]Alter, p. 87.

[33]Ibid., pp. 88-89.

books each, paralleled by the triad of Tom's mistresses, the symmetrical recurrence of incidents at opposite ends of the novel, the balanced contrasts of town and country, the elaborate pairings of characters and events."[34]

However, Fielding's use of contrast produces an even greater unity than Alter suggests, reflecting subtly an ethical system which is both complex and comprehensive, bringing characters and incidents into clear, thematic relationships with one another, and providing a matrix of ethical dimensions against which we judge each character.

The world of Tom Jones is an aspect of the novel that has been passed over. That Fielding does not develop an inner psychological world as Richardson does has already been noted. Nor is he concerned about the physical world, for Tom Jones contains surprisingly few descriptions of physical objects. The "world" of Tom Jones focuses on the relationships among characters, and the chief characteristic of that world seems to be that truth, whether factual or judgmental, is very difficult to come by. Most characters are hardly ever fully aware of what they do or why they do it. Nor have they much success in predicting the consequences of their actions. A great deal of what happens comes about as the result of

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[34]Alter, pp. 136-137.

misinformation or misapprehension of one sort or another. It is even difficult for the narrator and the reader, who is admitted "behind the scenes" with him, to discover the truth. Yet control of self and perception of others become extremely important for happiness.

Within the context of such a world Fielding explores the relationships among men or their fictional counterparts both concretely and abstractly. At the concrete level he posits characters with particular personalities, reveals them in specific situations, and the reader, through the eyes of the narrator, watches them react. At the abstract level the actions of all characters, seen in contrast to one another, reveal a comprehensive ethic, which provides a schema for the development of characters and a framework for the thematic structure of the novel.

Thus, one function of Fielding's careful, sometimes minute, use of contrast is to force us to discriminate and to accept the transgressions of men, with reservations perhaps, but with new understanding. Few men in Tom Jones are absolutely evil; and none is absolutely good. All are of the post-lapsarian generation, and as such, all are subject to human frailty, including temptation and error. For Fielding, morality cannot be the simple "either-or" that Richardson suggests. Arriving at ethical truth and true judgment is usually a matter of fine discrimination, painstakingly sought. The complexity of the ethic dramatized in Tom Jones permits

not only refined, multidimensional distinctions, but the development of characters who are more true to life, at least in the moral sense.

The second function of Fielding's technique of contrast is directly related to the schema provided by his ethic. Together they lend structure to the thematic material of the novel, permitting it to become a unified, artistic whole beyond the plot level structures described by R. S. Crane. The interpolated stories and the superficially extraneous stories such as those of the two Nightingale children which Crane sees as flaws[35] become integral and important to the thematic structure of the novel. One function of the minor characters and incidents is to help delimit the range of good and evil and to illustrate those combinations of motive and action which suggest, in a systematic way, the various strengths and weaknesses of men. In Clarissa Richardson limits himself morally to diametric opposition of good (Clarissa) and evil (Lovelace). In Tom Jones, however, Fielding moves beyond that simplistic design to the systematic observation of men who are sometimes weak and sometimes strong, sometimes right in their perceptions and judgments, but often subject to error. Fielding's concern moves beyond the private lives of such imperfect men to their social or corporate existence. Fielding examines what happens to these characters

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[35]Crane, pp. 107-130.

individually and to their social relationships when they interact. In the process of dramatizing the problem, he builds upon an ethic which is comprehensive rather than dichotomous and complex rather than simplistic, because the choices go far beyond either absolute good or absolute evil. We must conclude that Fielding's use of contrast produces an even greater artistic unity than Alter suggests. It is not only responsible for the classic symmetry of the novel, but, in conjunction with Fielding's ethic, it generates a matrix of ethical dimensions against which each character is illuminated as he makes his way through the world of Tom Jones.

In the chapters which follow, this examination of Tom Jones will move from the bases of Fielding's ethic to the nature of the world of Tom Jones, and finally to the ways in which the ethic provides a schema for the development and deployment of characters in that world.

CHAPTER II

ARISTOTLE AND FIELDING'S ETHIC IN TOM JONES

Critics in the past forty years have suggested a number of sources for Fielding's ethic: Shaftesbury, the stoic philosophers, and the latitudinarian divines. While Fielding undoubtedly was influenced to some extent by each of these, his ethic, at least in Tom Jones, seems built primarily upon latitudinarian and Aristotelian ideas. Martin Battestin has already argued the extent of Fielding's indebtedness to the latitudinarian divines, but though the evidence is strong, critics have seemed reluctant to examine Fielding's use of Aristotelian ethical ideas. The problems to examine here, then, include first, the validity of assertions concerning Fielding's indebtedness to Shaftesbury, the stoics, and the latitudinarians; second, the evidence demonstrating Fielding's attitudes toward and knowledge of Aristotle; and third, the ways in which Aristotelian ethics are compatible with Fielding's Christian faith. Later chapters will examine Fielding's apparent uses of Aristotelian ideas in Tom Jones.

In 1918 W. L. Cross remarked that "in a sober mood [Fielding] would have accepted as completely as did Square the moral doctrines

of 'the Great Lord Shaftesbury.'"[1] Thirty-three years later R. L. Brett endorsed Cross's unexamined statement, commenting that, "Tom himself can be regarded as a hero possessing all the natural virtues of Shaftesbury's system, while Square is an avowed exponent of it,"[2] a very curious comment in light of Square's self-indulgence and general hypocrisy. Erwin Wolff makes use of a similar argument to demonstrate Fielding's Shaftesburianism: "Die »beauty of virtue«, von der Fielding in der Widmung an Lyttleton spricht, entspricht dem Leitbild, das Shaftesbury in den »Characteristics« gezeichnet hatte. In der Figur des Square lässt Fielding den Autor der »Characteristics« selbst auftreten und unterwirft ihn--wie konnte man dem Moralisten einen willkommeneren Tribut zollen--dem »test of ridicule«."[3] If Shaftesbury is represented in the figure of Square and subjected, by way of tribute, to the test of ridicule, he clearly fails miserably. There were certainly aspects of Shaftesbury's benevolism which Fielding accepted, but these, as we shall see, were common to Fielding's Christian beliefs.

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[1]Wilbur L. Cross, The History of Henry Fielding (New Haven, 1918), II, 212.

[2]R. L. Brett, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury (London: Hutchinson's Univ. Library, 1951), p. 182.

[3]Erwin Wolff, Shaftesbury und seine Bedeutung für die englische Literatur des 18. Jhs. (Tubingen: M. Niewmeyer, 1960), p. 219.

As Battestin makes clear, Fielding could not accept the deistic principles of Shaftesbury's Characteristics: "The inadequacy of Square's speculative Shaftesburianism is clearly demonstrated by its inability to account for the reality of unmerited suffering (the occasion of Tom's broken arm) or to provide a reliable moral imperative (the encounter in Molly Seagrim's closet)."[4]

Other critics have felt that Fielding's ethic was based upon the stoic philosophers. Homes Dudden, for instance, has argued that Fielding's essay, "Of the Remedy of Affliction for the Loss of Our Friends," first published in the Miscellanies in 1743, is "a revelation of the author's leaning to the Stoical philosophy, and also of the Christian truths of a future life and of reunion with departed friends."[5] While it is easy to accept the latter, it is not so easy to accept the former, which, in view of Dudden's interpretation of Tom's character is very important; for if we believe that Fielding is a Christian stoic, we might be as harsh with Tom as Dudden is, seeing him as "Dominated by the emotion that chanced to be uppermost at the moment . . . incapable of controlling his passions." Dudden goes even farther, stating that Tom's "conduct

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[4]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 13. See also pp. 62-63.

[5]Dudden, Henry Fielding, I, 427. For the entire argument see I, 424-427 and II, 865-866.

was singularly confused and illogical--a strange compound of good and evil." His "actions are indications of a disordered mind."[6]

The essay upon which Dudden bases his argument for Fielding's stoicism provides evidence almost directly contrary to Dudden's assertion. After citing Cicero as an authority who "prescribes philosophy to us, as a certain and infallible method to assuage and remove all those perturbations which are liable to affect this nobler part of man," Fielding argues "that this supreme philosophy, this habit of virtue, which strengthened the mind of a Socrates, or a Brutus, is really superior to every evil which can attack us, I make no doubt; but in truth, this is to have a sound, not a sickly constitution. With all proper deference to such great authorities, they seem to me to assert no more than that health is a remedy against disease."[7] These great masters, says Fielding, have pointed the way, but have been unable to allure others into it. In commenting on "affliction for the death of our friends," Fielding goes even farther, stating that "those base tempers which are totally incapable of being affected with it . . . are not worth preserving." After citing the case of Stilpo, the philosopher who felt no loss at the death of his children, Fielding comments that "This sudden

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[6]Dudden, Henry Fielding, II, 634.

[7]Works, ed. Henley, XVI, 97-98.

unruffled composure is owing to mere insensibility; to a depravity of the heart, not goodness of the understanding."[8]

While Fielding goes on to recommend certain stoic methods of preparing for grief and for lessening its effects, it is certain that he does not wish to ignore the natural passions, to push them from view, especially not those concerned with love. Nor does he see them as a sign of depravity. On the contrary, when they are under temperate control, they are a sign of health and good nature, a cause for joy. Witness Joseph Andrews as he prepares to wed Fanny or Tom when he is alone with Sophia. Even in his essay dealing with "Affliction for the Loss of Our Friends," he implies the danger of crushing love by putting it off: "It hath been well said of lovers, who for a long time procrastinate and delay their happiness, that they have loved themselves out before they come to the actual enjoyment."[9] There is room in Fielding's ethic not only for the temperate enjoyment of the passions, but for their impulsiveness.

In addition, his works throw frequent barbs at the stoics. Joseph Andrews provides the best known instance. Shortly after Adams has reprimanded Joseph for his grief at the prospect of losing Fanny to kidnappers, Adams receives a report that his youngest son has drowned. Instead of receiving the news stoically, his

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[8]Works, ed. Henley, XVI, 99.

[9]Ibid., XVI, 100.

grief is immoderate. While Allworthy responds stoically to the supposed approach of his death, few others in Tom Jones have such presence of mind. George Sherburn argues that Fielding attacks stoicism in Amelia. For Fielding, he argues, the stoic temper was essentially selfish, operating only when the dominant passions of the individual remain uninvolved. Sherburn believes that "the noble Roman ethic is exhibited in the person of Colonel James. . . . When James's ruling passion interposed, apparent friendship turned to unscrupulous treachery."[10] The same is true of Square, the philosopher, in Tom Jones. He can remain aloof from situations in which others lose their tempers or display their passions, but once he sees the possibility of seducing Molly Seagrim, he plans carefully to fulfill his own lustful desires. In short, while his works reveal a certain admiration for the stoics, Fielding finds the stoic position wanting when put to the test.

In addition, he was far too concerned with the good and evil effects of the passions to ignore them. His comment in The Covent-Garden Journal (No. 29) for April 11, 1752, on "those who have little or no Delight either in the Good or Harm which happeneth to others," clarifies his position:

> Men of this Stamp are so taken up, in contemplating themselves, that the Virtues or Vices, the Happiness or misery

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[10]George Sherburn, "Fielding's Social Outlook," PQ, XXXV (January 1956), 15.

> of the rest of Mankind scarce ever employ their Thoughts. This is a Character, however truly contemptible it may be, which hath not wanted its Admirers among the Antients. These Men have been called Philosophers, and in the heathen systems they might deserve that name; but in the sublime schools of the Christian Dispensation, they are so far from being entitled to any Honours, that they will be called to a severe Account.[11]

As Battestin adequately demonstrates, Fielding embraces as his ideal the compassionate, good natured man, one who can feel the happiness as well as the miseries of others--a temper diametrically opposed to that of the stoic.[12]

Martin Battestin has presented a very carefully argued and documented study which argues that Fielding's ethic has its "source in the popular latitudinarianism of the day."[13] In Joseph Andrews, he says, Fielding attacks vanity as the chief vice; "vanity is to Fielding what self-love is to Barrow . . . the chief vice subsuming all others, the root of uncharitableness."[14] Similarly, Fielding adopted the chief virtues expressed in the sermons of the latitudinarian divines: good nature and charity. Good nature, Fielding believed, derived from natural goodness of heart, the best

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[11]The Covent-Garden Journal, ed. Gerard E. Jensen (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1915), I, 306-307. Note that Fielding's attitude toward stoicism remains relatively stable from at least 1743 to 1752. If it changes at all, it appears to become more negative.

[12]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, pp. 66-70.

[13]Ibid., p. 11.

[14]Ibid., p. 53.

passion, which delights in the well being and happiness of others. For the latitudinarians, active charity was the condition of salvation, charity which derived from an inward love of God, goodness, and humanity. Thus charity and good nature, as Fielding saw them, were closely allied, although one could choose charitable action even though he were not prompted to it by natural goodness of heart.

Battestin argues further that while Fielding took a "predominantly optimistic view of human nature,"[15] he felt that since the Fall and because of corrupt environment and education, true good nature was rare. Therefore, Fielding saw the punishments and rewards of the Christian religion as necessary incentives to the improvement of mankind. In summary, Battestin states that "Fielding's view of human nature generally coincided with that of the latitudinarians in its over all optimism." Fielding, he says, "affirmed that man was essentially capable of great goodness, if only he were assisted by the institutions of society and persuaded by the powerful incentives of religion to a proper use of his reason and will. On the other hand, the completely moral man, like the heroes of the novels, was by nature compassionate, selfless, and benevolent. . . . This man . . .wanted no other inducement to morality than his own benevolent disposition."[16]

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[15]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 55.

[16]Ibid., p. 84.

Michael Irwin seconds this view of Fielding's ethic, adding that certain aspects of it were common to other schools of thought, and goes beyond it only to categorize the major social and moral evils which Fielding satirizes.[17]

No one will deny that Fielding asserts the supremacy of charity both as the primary social virtue and the essential condition for salvation nor that he satirizes what he sees as the opposites of charity: egotism and malevolence. Yet this analysis does not reconcile the conflicting moral judgments about Tom Jones. Battestin's criticism is directed primarily at Joseph Andrews, and while the doctrine of charity may supply the ethical rationale for that book, it does not sufficiently answer for Tom Jones. While Joseph Andrews recommends charity (as represented in the various actions of Parson Adams) and attacks those sins arising from egotism and cruelty (vanity and lust in Lady Booby and Mrs. Slipslop, avarice in Mr. Tow-wouse and Peter Pounce), it does not deal with the more real and more complex situations which one finds in Tom Jones. While Fielding never relinquished his central virtue of charity, by the writing of Tom Jones his ethic had become far more complex. In that more serious work he undertook a more systematic treatment of virtue and vice; inevitably he turned to the realm of philosophy.

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[17]Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding: The Tentative Realist (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967). See especially Chapter 2.

The need for combining the teachings of philosophy and religion is repeatedly stressed in both the comic and serious scenes of Tom Jones. For instance Square sees himself as an avowed Platonist and Aristotelian, the representative of philosophy, while Thwackum believes himself to be a pillar of the Church of England, a devotee of religion. Though the chief vice of both is that they have not charity, the difference between them is explained by the narrator as a difference between virtue and religion. For fear that he will give offence to any "who are warm in the cause of virtue or religion," Fielding explains that he has not endeavored "to cast any ridicule on the greatest perfections of human nature. . . . I would rather have buried the sentiments of these two persons in eternal oblivion, than have done any injury to either of these glorious causes" (italics mine). He asserts, "that both religion and virtue have received more real discredit from hypocrites than the wittiest profligates or infidels could ever cast upon them: nay, further . . . these two in their purity are rightly called the bands of civil society" (III, iv). When a few lines later, he condemns Thwackum and Square, he does so in terms that emphasize the necessity for both religion and virtue: "Upon the whole, it is not religion or virtue, but the want of them, which is here exposed. Had not Thwackum too much neglected virtue, and Square religion in the composition of their several systems, and had both not utterly discarded all natural goodness of heart, they had never been represented as objects of derision in this history" (III, iv). When

Square finally combines religion and virtue in himself and reveals the plot against Tom, his letter to Allworthy discriminates between philosophy and religion, affirming the superiority of religion. Nevertheless, both seem to be necessary.

Allworthy's advice to Tom, suggesting that he add religion and prudence to the goodness, generosity, and honor of his temper, further argues the distinction, since prudence, as it was understood in the eighteenth century and earlier, was a key virtue without which none of the other virtues were possible.

The Man of the Hill, however, while asserting the ascendancy of religion, makes the distinction between philosophy and religion most clearly. And while he is not perfect (Tom points out the error underlying his misanthropy), neither is he totally the object of ridicule. By shutting himself off from the world, he fails to live according to the precepts he commends, but his concepts of religion and virtue apparently are in accord with Fielding's own. In reference to Aristotle and Plato he states that "They not only instruct in the knowledge of Wisdom, but confirm men in her habits, and demonstrate plainly that this must be our guide, if we propose ever to arrive at the greatest worldly happiness, or to defend ourselves with any tolerable security against the misery which everywhere surrounds and invests us" (VIII, xiii). Thus the Man of the Hill very nearly equates philosophy, wisdom, and virtue. In "Of Remedy of Affliction for the Loss of Our Friends" Fielding

argues the synonymy of philosophy and virtue for the ancient philosophers: "It was not the bare knowing the right way, but the constant and steady walking in it, which those glorious writers recommended and dignified by the august names of philosophy and virtue; which two words if they did not always use in a synonymous sense, yet they all agreed in this, that virtue was the consummation of true philosophy."[18]

After praising religion, the Man of the Hill contrasts the benefits of philosophy and religion: "True it is, that philosophy makes us wiser, but Christianity makes us better men. Philosophy elevates and steels the mind, Christianity softens and sweetens it. The former makes us the objects of human admiration, the latter of Divine love. That ensures us a temporal, but this an eternal happiness" (VIII, xiii). For Fielding, then, philosophy and religion appear to be two distinct sources of virtue and happiness. If religion can insure us of "eternal happiness," philosophy by teaching the habits of virtue leads us to a temporal happiness. Obviously, Fielding saw the Christian virtue of charity as extremely important to temporal life and happiness as well as to the condition of salvation. But for the definitions and analyses of virtue, for use particularly in the attainment of temporal happiness, he turned to the ancient philosophers.

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[18] Works, ed. Henley, XVI, 95.

The Man of the Hill's distinction between temporal happiness (philosophy) and eternal happiness (religion) points to a second difference between Tom Jones and Joseph Andrews. If, as Battestin demonstrates, Joseph Andrews stresses those aspects of religion (charity and chastity) most necessary to eternal happiness, Tom Jones, without ignoring the primary condition for salvation, emphasizes the qualities required for temporal bliss. The note is first struck by Allworthy as he reprimands Jenny Jones. After pointing out the dreadful nature of her crime in having defied the laws of religion and incurred divine displeasure, he shifts his observation to the temporal world in what seems a curious but significant passage.

> 'But these [religious] things, though too little, I am afraid, regarded, are so plain, that mankind, however they may want to be reminded, can never need information on this head. A hint, therefore, to awaken your sense of this matter, shall suffice: for I would inspire you with repentance, and not drive you to desperation.
>
> 'There are other consequences, not indeed so dreadful or replete with horror as this; and yet such, as, if attentively considered, must, one would think, deter all your sex at least from the commission of this crime.
>
> 'For by it you are rendered infamous, and driven, like lepers of old out of society; at least from the society of all but wicked and reprobate persons; for no others will associate with you.
>
> 'If you have fortunes you are hereby rendered incapable of enjoying them; if you have none, you are disabled from acquiring any, nay almost from procuring your sustenance; for no persons of character will receive you into their houses. Thus you are often driven by necessity itself into a state of shame and misery, which unavoidably ends in the destruction of both body and soul' (I, vii).

Allworthy's harangue continues in this vein. Everything about the passage, its rhetoric and its literal content, stresses the temporal consequences of Jenny's behavior. It is as though Fielding were setting up a problem for our consideration: given our understanding of divine commands and of what is necessary for salvation, what beyond this knowledge is necessary for happiness on earth? The emphasis on temporal happiness continues throughout the novel.

In preparing the reader for the "mighty events" contained in his history, the narrator points up a "very useful lesson" for his readers who "may here find, that goodness of heart and openness of temper, though these may give them great comfort within . . . will by no means, alas! do their business in the world. Prudence and circumpsection are necessary even to the best of men. . . . It is not enough that your designs, nay that your actions, are intrinsically good; you must take care that they shall appear so" (III, vii). Certainly there is irony in the passage. But the irony is more closely related to the tragic than the comic. It relates what the narrator regards as a bitter truth that his reader, as well as his characters, must contend with to do their business in the real world.

Tom himself supplies still another example of the novel's emphasis on moral action and happiness in the temporal world. In jail, as he awaits word of Mr. Fitzpatrick's condition, Tom knows his own innocence in the affair, but Nightingale brings him word

that he (Tom) has been accused of instigating the quarrel and giving the first blow. Though he knows his own innocence, that he fought only in his own defence, he points out that he would rather die than live with the reputation of having committed "the blackest crime in human nature" (XVII, ix). A few pages later he laments to Mrs. Waters "the follies and vices of which he had been guilty; every one of which, he said, had been attended with such ill consequences, that he should be unpardonable if he did not take warning" (XVII, ix). In both instances Tom's major concern (and surely Fielding's) is with the temporal effects of his actions.

In contrast, Joseph Andrews recounts the adventures of Christian men in a vain, hypocritical and sometimes cruel temporal world and appears to emphasize the effects of sin on the immortal soul. Fielding seems not so concerned with happiness in this world as he is with salvation in the next. For instance, in Parson Adams's debate with Barnabas and the bookseller concerning the merit of good works over faith alone, Adams brings the discussion immediately to rewards and punishments in the hereafter.[19] Later, as Adams discusses telling the truth and lying, he states, "Out of love to yourself, you should confine yourself to truth . . . for by doing otherwise you injure the noblest part of yourself, your

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[19]Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews and Shamela, ed. Martin Battestin (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1961), I, xvii. Hereafter, all references to Joseph Andrews will be in the text, citing book and chapter in this edition.

immortal soul" (II, iii). Again, in his remarks to Mr. Trulliber, Adams refers to the "rewards and punishments" of the scriptures in condemning Trulliber as a non-believer.

The use of the word prudence in the two novels provides another means of discriminating between their ethical concerns. In Joseph Andrews, prudence is used exclusively in reference to the self-seeking actions of various characters motivated by vanity, greed, or some other ignoble quality. Mrs. Slipslop is a "prudent waiting-gentlewoman" (I, ix) who "imagined that by so long a self-denial she had not only made amends for the small slip in her youth . . . but had likewise laid up a quantity of merit to excuse any future failings" (I, vi). Mr. Tow-wouse, having been caught in bed with Betty the chambermaid "prudently" withdraws out of fear of his wife (I, xvii). When Leonora's aunt recommends that she give up Horatio for Bellarmine, Leonora is concerned that the world will condemn her. "The world," her aunt replies, "is always on the side of prudence" (II, iv). While the word is used rather frequently in this negative sense in Joseph Andrews, it is never used in a positive way as it is in Tom Jones.[20] Joseph and Parson Adams do not need to learn prudence as Tom does. Joseph and his mentor exemplify the Christian virtues necessary for salvation, but have

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[20]For a discussion of the ironic uses of prudence in Tom Jones see Eleanor Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones (University: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1965).

no flaws--apart from a somewhat surprising but comic naiveté and Adams's egotism about his ability as a school teacher. Tom, on the other hand, while displaying good nature, generosity, and honor, must, as Martin Battestin has pointed out, learn prudence of two sorts, both positive: (1) prudentia of the Christian humanist tradition which enables its possessor to perceive and judge aright and to act accordingly; (2) the prudence which enables one to act with a discretion which will protect the virtuous man from the self-seeking designs of the malicious.[21] For Fielding prudence is the essence of what he calls in Amelia "the Art of Life." Without it, men, though intrinsically good, are subject to the errors stemming from their own follies and passions and to the deceits and schemes with which others are too apt to ensnare them. According to Fielding, "quitting the Directions of Prudence" gives rise to "all the Miseries in which Men of Sense sometimes involve themselves."[22]

Allworthy recommends that Tom learn prudence, in the sense of moral vision, in order to be happy. The narrator recommends

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[21]For a discussion of the meanings of prudence current among Fielding's contemporaries from which these two definitions are taken, see Martin C. Battestin, "Fielding's Definition of Wisdom: Some Functions of Ambiguity and Emblem in Tom Jones," ELH, XXXV (1968), 188-218.

[22]Henry Fielding, Amelia (London: J. M. Dent, 1893), I, i. Hereafter all references to Amelia will be in the text citing book and chapter in this edition.

prudence, in the sense of discretion to protect oneself from the evil designs and slanders of others. Prudence, then, is primarily a temporal virtue, necessary for real happiness in this world. Of course, prudence has its role in preparing for salvation since the man who has it not is prone to greater folly and sin. Witness the Man of the Hill's story. But its rewards are more immediate, more temporal in nature. In short, while Joseph Andrews exhibits the Christian virtues requisite to salvation, Tom Jones, while by no means ignoring good nature and charity, presents a careful analysis of the virtues which can not only help the Christian lead a life worthy of salvation but can promote his happiness in this world.

As the Man of the Hill says, it is the writings of the ancient philosophers, especially Aristotle and Plato which "not only instruct in the knowledge of Wisdom, but confirm men in her habits, and demonstrate plainly that this must be our guide if we propose ever to arrive at the greatest worldly happiness" (VIII, xiii). Indeed, it was from the ancient philosophers, essentially Aristotle, that Fielding derived the ethical system which informs Tom Jones.

That Fielding could not embrace the stoic position has already been argued. Nor could he accept the Platonic analysis of love. One passage of Joseph Andrews is revealing in this respect: "Pamela chid her brother Joseph for the concern which he exprest at discovering a new sister. She said, if he loved Fanny as he ought, with a pure affection, he had no reason to lament being

related to her.-- Upon which Adams began to discourse on Platonic love; whence he made a quick transition to the joys in the next world, and concluded with strongly asserting that there was no such thing as pleasure in this. At which Pamela and her husband smiled on one another" (IV, xiii). Given Parson Adams's usual simplicity and naivete, his earlier reprimand of Joseph for so loving Fanny that he would grieve at her loss ("'such love is foolishness, and wrong in itself, and ought to be conquered . . . it savours too much of the flesh'" (IV, viii)), the passage clearly indicates that in the author's opinion the concept of Platonic love ignores the reality of pleasures of the flesh. Pamela and her husband at least recognize the fallacy of Adams's arguments as do Joseph, his creator, and the reader. A passage in Tom Jones confirms Fielding's view of Platonic love as little more than a pleasant myth.

> That refined degree of Platonic affection which is absolutely detached from the flesh, and is, indeed, entirely and purely spiritual, is a gift confined to the female part of the creation; many of whom I have heard declare (and doubtless with great truth), that they would, with the utmost readiness, resign a lover to a rival, when such resignation was proved to be necessary for the temporal interest of such lover. Hence, therefore, I conclude that this affection is in nature, though I cannot pretend to say I have ever seen an instance of it (XVI, v).

Certainly, Fielding's more virile heroes are not capable of "that refined degree of Platonic affection." Both Tom and Joseph eagerly await the pleasures of their wedding night. The gentle irony of Fielding's concluding sentence in the passage above indicates that

he, for one, can give no credence to the existence of such purity in even the "female part of the creation."

Undoubtedly, there were some parts of Platonic and stoic philosophies that appealed to Fielding but it is the Aristotelian system of ethics which meshed most closely with his Christian latitudinarian ideals of good nature and charity and with his notion of the interdependence of physical and spiritual love; and it is for Aristotle, of all the classical and modern philosophers, that Fielding reserves his greatest praise. Further, a reading of Tom Jones with reference to the Aristotelian ethic, resolves a number of the moral problems illustrated by the diversity of judgments suggested in the first chapter and provides a schema for Fielding's arrangement of contrasting characters and situations.

In the seventeenth century Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes had attacked the dominance of Aristotelian methods in natural philosophy, or what we would call science today. The new science adopted totally different methods of investigation. For instance, as Douglas Bush points out, it drew a distinction between primary and secondary qualities, thus abolishing even the sort of data that Aristotelian science investigated. "In the customary view, that of the philosopher as well as the layman, the sensible qualities of objects, colour and the like, were what they seemed to be, inherent properties possessed by those objects as the Creator made them. The new science changed all that. The senses and the

Aristotelian categories no longer furnished accurate criteria. Primary qualities were those which could be scientifically measured, such as space, time, number, force, velocity."[23] The context in which the scientific revolution came about, however, was one of tension between the traditional and the new. For instance, in 1621, Nathanael Carpenter published Philosophia Libera, which attacked Aristotelianism in the natural sciences. But in the same year Oxford established the Sedleian lectureship in Aristotelian natural philosophy.[24] Again, Bacon himself "was not untouched by the pseudo-scientific attitudes he condemned,"[25] and the influence of Aristotle was not the least of these. Primarily, because of his atheism Hobbes had little influence on the thought of the period. As Douglas Bush puts it, "the mechanistic revolution was largely confined to the brain of Hobbes."[26]

Some attacks on Aristotle appeared in more literary writings, in poems by Abraham Cowley and John Dryden, for instance. Thomas Sprat asked Cowley to prepare an ode for his History of the Royal Society. Cowley's hymn "To the Royal Society" was first printed

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[23]Douglas Bush, English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century 1600-1660 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1945), p. 290.

[24]Ibid., p. 18.

[25]Ibid., p. 263.

[26]Ibid., pp. 292-293.

in Sprat's History in 1667. He writes in praise of Bacon whom he sees as the liberator who rid science of the traditional dominance of Aristotle:

> He [Bacon] broke that Monstrous God which stood
> In midst of th' Orchard, and the whole did claim,
> Which, with a useless Sith of Wood,
> And something else not worth a name,
> (Both vast for shew, yet neither fit
> Or to Defend, or to Beget;
> Ridiculous and senseless terrors!) made
> Children and superstitious Men afraid.
> The Orchard's open now, and free;
> Bacon has broke that Scar-crow Deitie;
> Come, enter, all that will,
> Behold the rip'ned Fruit, come gather now your Fill.[27]

Bacon has opened the world of knowledge to men through experimental science. Cowley even suggests that the traditional method of enquiry into natural philosophy represented by Aristotelian logic and categories is the real "Forbidden Tree." While the new scientific method had

> . . . taught the curious Sight to press
> Into the privatest recess
> Of her imperceptible Littleness,[28]

it is the old method which represents knowledge no man can attain,

> For 'tis God only who can find
> All Nature in his Mind.[29]

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[27]Abraham Cowley, Poems of Abraham Cowley, ed. A. R. Waller (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1905), p. 449.

[28]Ibid., p. 451.

[29]Ibid., p. 449.

Cowley also praises the work of the atheistical Thomas Hobbes in breaking Aristotle's "universal Intellectual reign." Cowley addresses Hobbes:

> Thou great Columbus of the Golden Lands of new Philosophies.
> Thy task was harder much then his,
> For thy learn'd America is
> Not onely found out first by Thee,
> And rudely left to Future Industrie,
> But thy Eloquence and thy Wit,
> Has planted, peopled, built, and civiliz'd it.[30]

Dryden, in his poem "To my Honor'd Friend Dr. Charleton" celebrates Bacon, Gilbert, Boyle, Harvey, and others (all scientists) for having freed reason from "The longest Tyranny that ever sway'd," that of the Stagirite who "made his Torch their universal Light."[31] In listing so many scientists, Dryden makes obvious the real nature and extent of the attacks against Aristotle. The context of each attack indicates that the real concern is solely with the inescapable Aristotelian influence on scientific method, not with Aristotle's influence in other realms of human inquiry.

The tension between the attacks on Aristotelian science and its continuing influence has already been suggested. Men whose concerns were non-scientific apparently continued to revere Aristotle and to refer to him by his medieval appellation, the philosopher. The latitudinarian divines composing sermons about

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[30]Abraham Cowley, Poems of Abraham Cowley, pp. 188-189.

[31]John Dryden, Poems by John Dryden, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), I, 32.

the time of Cowley's and Dryden's attacks used that epithet and quoted Aristotle, not to attack but to support their own arguments. John Tillotson for instance, quotes Aristotle in order to refute Hobbes's statement that men are naturally at war with each other.[32]

Further, if the Spectator papers are any indication, and they obviously are, Aristotle's reputation emerged into the eighteenth century unsullied. I can find no allusion to Aristotle in The Spectator which is in the least pejorative. On the contrary, he is clearly considered exemplary. In paper No. 476, Addison states that Tully and Aristotle excel at the kind of writing in which the author has the whole scheme in mind before he sets pen to paper.[33] In No. 215 Addison alludes to Aristotle's doctrine of "substantial forms" and proceeds to develop ideas about natural disposition and the function of education which are essentially Aristotelian.[34] Paper No. 239 compares the Socratic and Aristotelian methods of argumentation as a base for an ironic attack on the method of argument commonly used in English universities: "When they were not able to confute their Antagonist, they knock'd him down."[35]

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[32]John Tillotson, Sermon XXXIII, "Of Forgiveness of Injuries and against Revenge," The Works of the most Reverend John Tillotson (London, 1735), I, 305.

[33]Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, and others, The Spectator, ed. C. Gregory Smith (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1958), IV, 9.

[34]Ibid., II, 139.

[35]Ibid., II, 210.

Addison's papers on Milton's Paradise Lost, Nos. 267, 273, 279, and 285 as well as several other papers (for instance, Nos. 253, 291, 297, 315 and 592) clearly regard Aristotle as the master critic against whom nearly all of literature and criticism can and should be judged. Our concern here, however, must be with Fielding's personal response to Aristotle.

Fielding's biographers, Cross and Dudden, assure us that Fielding began his study of the classics, including Aristotle, as a school boy. Cross points out that in 1728 Fielding was "still reading the ancient classics--Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, and Epictetus."[36] Fielding's library at the time of his death yields specific information about his interest in Aristotle. While the contents of a library may not correspond to their owner's actual reading practices, it is reasonably safe to assume that when Fielding, who was often in financial difficulty,purchased volumes, he read them or at least intended to. After his death a good sized collection of books relating to Aristotle was sold at auction with the rest of his library: separate Greek-Latin editions of both the Politics and the Rhetoric, Duval's 1629 Paris edition of Aristotelis Opera in Greek and Latin, and no fewer than thirteen commentaries on the works of Aristotle, nearly all of them early

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[36]Cross, I, 53.

sixteenth century editions.[37] The presence of the commentaries suggests the seriousness with which Fielding took his study of Aristotle.

Fielding's works from The Champion and Joseph Andrews to The Covent-Garden Journal are studded with allusions to and quotations from the Poetics, the Politics, and the Nicomachean Ethics. Of course, he also alluded to a great many other classical writers, but he apparently regarded no other classical philosopher as highly as he did Aristotle. He attacks the De Anima as a pack of nonsense and accuses Aristotle of prying into what man has no right to know, but concludes that in spite of that Aristotle is "the Author of a Treatise on Politics, of another on Rhetoric, and of a third on Ethics, the merit of all which I think hath not yet been equalled."[38] The important point here, of course, is that while Fielding condemns De Anima, he believes that Aristotle's Ethics and Politics have never been equalled. In an earlier number of The Covent-Garden Journal Fielding produces a glossary of ironically defined terms to illustrate the perverseness of contemporary usage;

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[37]See Ethel Thornbury, Fielding's Theory of the Comic Prose Epic, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, No. 30 (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1931), pp. 170-189 for a list of books sold after Fielding's death. See particularly items 71, 95, 256, 591, 592, 593, 596-602 and 615.

[38]The Covent-Garden Journal, ed. Gerard E. Jensen (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1915), II, 136 (No. 70, November 11, 1752).

thus he sets forth, with heavy irony, the following definition: "NONSENSE. Philosophy, especially the Philosophical Writings of the Antients, and more especially of Aristotle."[39] In other words, Aristotle should be the last of all the ancient philosophers to be considered nonsense. More important, as early as The Champion for March 15, 1740, there is evidence that Aristotle had begun to influence Fielding's thinking. In that issue, he recommends the "golden mean," Horace's term but Aristotle's concept, to all his readers.[40] And a few issues later, on March 27, 1740, Fielding presents his analysis of the good natured man, declaring, "I shall take these different ideas to pieces and reduce them according to Aristotle's method into . . . their simple parts."[41] He then proceeds to make an analysis of the good natured man just as Aristotle examined the courageous man or the munificent man, explaining those actions which evidence true good nature and discriminating those which do not. The parallel method of analysis is unmistakeable. Finally, in view of Fielding's remark in Book I, Chapter i of Tom Jones that the main "provision" he will serve up "is no other than Human Nature," his comment that no man ever understood human nature

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[39]The Covent-Garden Journal, I, 156.

[40]Works, ed. Henley, XV, 247.

[41]Ibid., XV, 258.

better than Aristotle[42] forces us to consider the influences that the works of Aristotle had on the great eighteenth-century humorist and ethical writer.

The parallels between certain major ethical problems in Tom Jones and various aspects of both the Nicomachean Ethics and the Politics, two works of Aristotle that deal primarily with "human nature," may be obvious. Some critics have noted in passing the Aristotelian influence on Fielding's ethical thought. Morris Golden, for instance, has commented that "Aristotle's influence is dominant in the direction of demanding such moral actions as those of the wayfaring Abraham Adams, Joseph Andrews, and Tom Jones, who move out of themselves to participate in the lives of others."[43] Unfortunately, Golden offers neither support for nor explanation of his contention. Ian Watt in commenting on the sexual morality of Tom Jones has said that "Aristotle's Golden Mean is often, perhaps, capable of a certain subversion of rigid ethical principles: and it is perhaps as a good Aristotelian that Fielding comes very close to suggesting that too much chastity in Blifil is as bad as Tom's too little."[44] Watt makes no further mention, however, of

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[42]"An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers," in Works, ed. Henley, XIII, 124. Fielding pays a similar tribute to Homer in Tom Jones, saying that, of all others, Homer "saw farthest into human nature" (IV, xii). However, I find no other philosopher who receives such high praise from Fielding.

[43]Morris Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology, p. 2.

[44]Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, p. 283.

Fielding's use of Aristotelian ethical concepts. Finally, Robert Alter believes that "the whole procedure of deploying characters in matched opposites could be taken as a translation into narrative structure of Aristotelian ethics, a kind of spatial illustration of the need for golden means, but wisdom suggest that this interpretation should not be pressed too hard."[45] Alter is correct, of course, in refusing to examine every character in Tom Jones as an illustration of some aspect of a golden mean. Some characters, however, in respect to some virtues tend to illustrate excess, defect, or mean. But there is a great deal more to Aristotelian ethics than that. The ensuing chapters will show how various concepts in Aristotle's ethic are reflected in Tom Jones.

The problems here will be first to summarize the major principles of the Nicomachean Ethics, next to demonstrate how the principles of the Ethics mesh with the Christian doctrines of the latitudinarians, and finally to determine the significance that an Aristotelian point of view has for the meaning of various ethical situations in Tom Jones.

Aristotle's system of ethics is eudaemonistic; for him, happiness was a final end, "desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else" (IX, 1097a). The virtues "we choose indeed for themselves . . . but we choose them also for the sake of happiness,

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[45]Robert Alter, Fielding and the Nature of the Novel, p. 97.

judging that by means of them we shall be happy" (IX, 1097b). He argued that the "function of man is an activity of soul which follows or implies a rational principle." Thus human good, i.e. happiness, is "activity of soul in accordance with virtue" (IX, 1098a). Aristotle insisted that virtue could only be viewed as activity, not state of mind, "For the state of mind may exist without producing any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive, but the activity cannot; for one who has the activity will of necessity be acting, and acting well" (IX, 1099a). The man who has the activity, furthermore, has a life which is pleasant in itself, because virtuous action is not only pleasant in itself but will be pleasant to the man who is a lover of it. Aristotle qualifies, however, pointing out that happiness needs "external goods as well; for it is impossible, or not easy, to do noble acts without the proper equipment . . . and there are some things, the lack of which takes the lustre from happiness, as good birth, goodly children, beauty" (IX, 1099b). At the same time, "no function of man has so much permanence as virtuous activities" (IX, 1100b). Therefore, the virtuous man will always be happy, since he will always "be engaged in virtuous action and contemplation, and he will bear the chances of life most nobly and altogether decorously" (IX, 1100b).

Aristotle proceeds from these definitions to an analysis of virtue of which he stipulates two kinds, intellectual and moral.

Intellectual virtue owes its birth and growth primarily to teaching, while moral virtue comes about as the result of habit. "Neither by nature . . . nor contrary to nature do the [moral] virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit" (IX, 1103a). Further, vice develops in the same way: "states of character arise out of like activities. . . . It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference" (IX, 1103b).

Virtue, for Aristotle, is concerned with passions and actions, actions in which the rational principle of the soul enables man to overrule the passions in choosing the intermediate or mean which lies between the vices of excess on the one hand and defect on the other (IX, 1107a). Thus while man tends to seek pleasure and avoid pain naturally, he must learn from his earliest youth to choose the mean regardless of the pain involved for him. The mean, at the same time, must be chosen relative to particular individuals in specific situations, for the mean will not be the same for everyone in a given situation. An appropriate amount of exercise for a man of athletic constitution, for instance, may be completely inappropriate for a sickly man. Further, the distance between the mean and excess and that between the mean and defect will not always be equal: "To the mean in some cases the deficiency, in some the excess is more opposed; e.g. it is not rashness, which is an excess,

but cowardice, which is a deficiency, that is more opposed to courage, and not insensibility, which is a deficiency, but self-indulgence, which is an excess, that is more opposed to temperance. . . . because one extreme is nearer and liker to the intermediate, we oppose not this but rather its contrary to the intermediate" (IX, 1109a).

In order to distinguish the blameworthy from the praiseworthy it is necessary, Aristotle argues, to discriminate between the voluntary and involuntary. Aristotle called actions involuntary when they "take place under compulsion or owing to ignorance; and that is compulsory of which the moving principle is outside, being a principle in which nothing is contributed by the person who is acting or is feeling the passion" (IX, 1110a). Action resulting from ignorance of purpose or of universals may not be regarded as involuntary. Involuntary action results from "ignorance of particulars, i.e., of the circumstances of the action and the objects with which it is concerned" (IX, 1111a).

Aristotle examines the relationship of choice to virtue and draws an important distinction between acts chosen and those done voluntarily. "Choice, then, seems to be voluntary, but not the same thing as the voluntary; the latter extends more widely. For both children and the lower animals share in voluntary action, but not in choice, and acts done on the spur of the moment we describe as voluntary, but not as chosen" (IX, 1111b). Choice comes after

deliberation about means, for ends cannot be the subject of deliberation since they, along with particular facts, are matters of perception. The object of choice, then, being what we can deliberate about and what we wish for after deliberation, is in our power. No action can be termed vicious or virtuous unless it is the result of deliberate choice. Errors in choice arise from pleasure which seems to be a good when it is not. Practical wisdom, when we understand the universals and perceive the particulars, enables us to deliberate and choose the action which comes closest to the mean representing virtue.

Hence, both virtuous and vicious actions are in our power. Since the individual action is in our power, and since the habit of choosing virtuous or vicious actions gives rise to a like state of character (i.e., virtuous or vicious,) our state of character is likewise in our power.

To summarize, then, for actions to be virtuous, they must not only be in accord with the mean, but "The agent also must be in a certain condition when he does them; in the first place he must have knowledge, secondly he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. . . . As a condition of the possession of the virtues knowledge has little or no weight, while the other conditions count not for a little but for everything, i.e. the very conditions which result from often doing just and temperate acts" (IX, 1105a-1105b).

The basic principles of Aristotle's Ethics are in harmony with the ethical precepts of the latitudinarians which, as Battestin has demonstrated, are reflected throughout Fielding's works. The concept that the virtuous man chooses the mean and avoids excess in bodily pleasures appears in The Champion for January 24, 1740:

> Nor hath the virtuous man less advantage in the ways of pleasure. Virtue forbids not the satisfying our appetites, virtue forbids us only to glut and destroy them. The temperate man tastes and relishes pleasure in a degree infinitely superior to that of the voluptuous. The body of the voluptuous man soon becomes impaired, his palate soon loses its taste, his nerves become soon unbraced, and unfit to perform their office: whereas, the temperate body is still preserved in health, its nerves retain their full tone and vigour, and convey to the mind the most exquisite sensations. The sot soon ceases to enjoy his wine, the glutton his dainties, and the libertine his women. The temperate man enjoys all in the highest degree, and indeed with the greatest variety: for human nature will not suffice for an excess in every passion, and wherever one runs away with a man, we may generally observe him sacrificing all the rest to the enjoyment of that alone.[46]

For Aristotle, temperance and self-indulgence were concerned with touch and taste. Those who go wrong in "the natural appetites" do so only in the direction of excess. The self-indulgent man is "slavish and brutish" in his tastes pursuing some things he should not and delighting in some more than he should. One of Aristotle's condemnations of the self-indulgent man is surprisingly similar to the quotation from The Champion in its sentiment: he who pursues pleasure to excess will be unable to enjoy all his "passions."

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[46] Works, ed. Henley, XV, 167-168.

Aristotle says, "The self-indulgent man, then, craves for all pleasant things or those that are most pleasant, and is led by his appetite to choose these at the cost of everything else; hence he is pained both when he fails to get them and when he is merely craving for them (for appetite involves pain); but it seems absurd to be pained for the sake of pleasure" (IX, 1119a). Elsewhere Aristotle insists that man should satisfy his natural passions: "the bad man is bad by virtue of pursuing the excess, not by virtue of pursuing the necessary pleasures (for all men enjoy in some way or other both dainty foods and wines and sexual intercourse, but not all men do so as they ought)" (IX, 1154a). In the quotation from The Champion, Fielding uses the concept of temperance as Aristotle does in relation to the pleasures of touch and taste. The latitudinarians use the same word in the more general sense to signify the mean in relation to all actions. Tillotson uses the term in at least one instance in the Aristotelian sense when he offers rules of morality. He states "that we govern our passions by reason, and moderate our selves in the use of sensual delights, so as not to transgress the rules of temperance and chastity."[47] The essential harmony of the three positions is clear. The virtuous man is free to enjoy bodily delights but must not pursue them to excess,and in all other things he must act according to the mean.

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[47]Quoted in Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 30.

Second, Aristotle, the latitudinarians, and Fielding all stress the necessity that virtue be manifest in action. This is a key issue for Aristotle who insists early in the Ethics that virtue (i.e., the chief good) must be active: "It makes, perhaps, no small difference whether we place the chief good in possession or in use, in state of mind or in activity. For the state of mind may exist without producing any good result, as in a man who is asleep or in some other way quite inactive, but the activity cannot; for one who has the activity will of necessity be acting, and acting well" (IX, 1099a). Similarly, the latitudinarians insisted on action especially in regard to charity which was to them the essential condition of salvation. Their doctrine that faith without works is dead was raised especially in opposition to the deists who argued that the "natural beauty of virtue" was incentive enough and to the Antinomian sects derivative of Calvinism that held man was capable of salvation by faith alone.[48] In a sermon called "How to Judge Moral Actions," for instance, Samuel Clarke emphasizes (with his characteristic italics) the importance of action: "By the Actions of a man's Life, by the whole Course and Tenour of his Behaviour in the World, and by no other Distinction whatsoever, can be ascertained the True Character of any Person, and the Real Goodness or Badness of his Principles." All else, Clarke argues, can

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[48]Ibid., pp. 15-19.

be "deceitful." "Pretences to Opinions and Doctrines, may be all fallacious. Forms and Observances of all kinds may be hypocritical."[49] Indeed, Clarke goes on to state that "The End and Design of all Religion . . . is the Practice of Virtue."[50] Clarke's emphasis of words such as action, practice, habit, behaviour is certainly very much akin to the Aristotelian insistence on action. Of course, Clarke argues that "the Acts and Habits of every Moral Virtue" are founded upon "the Belief of God and of a Judgment to come,"[51] and that man acts "in the practice of universal Justice and Charity towards Men, and in a regular and sober Government of their Own Passions; under a firm persuasion and continual expectation of the righteous distribution of Rewards and Punishments at their proper Season, in the eternal Judgment of God."[52] Clarke also recognized, however, that men act, in part, out of a "just Sense of what is Right in itself," but no action could be right in itself were it not also "Acceptable to God."[53] Though Aristotle did not share the belief that religious incentives

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[49]Samuel Clarke, Sermon XL, "How to Judge Moral Actions," The Works of Samuel Clarke (London, 1738), I, 249.

[50]Ibid., I, 250.

[51]Ibid., I, 249.

[52]Ibid., I, 250-251.

[53]Ibid., I, 249.

were necessary to promote active virtue, there is no real lack of harmony between the two views.

For Fielding, the emphasis of both Aristotle and the divines on action was a basis for much of his satire. In the matter of charity, for instance, when Captain Blifil argues that charity really consists in forming a benevolent opinion of others, Allworthy replies that "he had always thought it was interpreted to consist in action" (II, v). The reader, of course, knows that the motive for Captain Blifil's argument is his fear that Allworthy's charity will empty his coffers before he, Blifil, has a chance to enjoy the wealth he hopes to inherit. Later, when Partridge rebukes a beggar, Tom reprimands him for having charity in his mouth but none in his heart. "'Your religion,' says he, 'serves you only for an excuse for your faults, but it is no incentive to your virtue'" (XII, iv).

Fielding's idea of the necessity for action extends beyond charity to the other virtues, as does Aristotle's. For instance, after Fielding describes "the active principle" which "sits on its throne in the mind . . . where it presides, governs, directs, judges, acquits, and condemns according to merit and justice" and after he assures us that "Our hero . . . was very strongly under the influence of this principle," he explains that this principle prevented Tom from any thoughts of stealing Sophia away from her father in order to make his fortune. He adds "for this,

as I have said, is an active principle, and doth not content itself with knowledge or belief only" (IV, vi). It is interesting here to compare Aristotle's phrase as he defines the function of man as "an active life of the element [in the soul] that has a rational principle" (IX, 1098a). For Aristotle, as for Fielding, the principle was active. Aristotle's insistence on the activity of virtue (the "active life" of a "rational principle" in accord with virtue) discriminates his position clearly from Plato's. It is for this reason that Square, while he had read the works of both Aristotle and Plato, chose to form his morals on the Platonic model.

Plato believed that virtue was knowledge;[54] but neither Fielding nor Aristotle can accept the idea. Aristotle thought that virtue was a state of character inhering in persons, not abstract knowledge. To be virtuous, he believed one must do virtuous acts voluntarily, by choice, and from an unchanging state of character. In contrast to the somewhat static Platonic notion of virtue as knowledge, Aristotle places great emphasis on action. "If," he says, "there is an end for all that we do, this will be the good achievable by action" (IX, 1097a).[55] For Fielding, in the

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[54]It is not within the limits of this paper to determine whether Socrates or Plato originated the ideas contained in the Platonic dialogues. Thus, they have been arbitrarily ascribed to Plato.

[55]For discriminations between the Platonic and Aristotelian concepts of virtue, see Ethics 1116b, 1144b, and 1145b.

world of practical morality, accepting knowledge as virtue while disregarding action is as absurd as the doctrine that faith alone could suffice for salvation.

This distinction clarifies the allusions to Aristotle and Plato in regard to Square's moral position: "But though he had, as we have said, formed his morals on the Platonic model, yet he perfectly agreed with the opinion of Aristotle, in considering that great man rather in the quality of a philosopher or a specialist, than as a legislator. This sentiment he carried a great way; indeed so far as to regard all virtue as a matter of theory only" (III, iii). In short, Square rejects the Aristotelian ethic because it would demand action and accepts the "Platonic model" because the idea that virtue is knowledge enables him to rationalize to the position that virtue is theory only and does not involve action. After a passage declaring that only by doing just and temperate acts can just and temperate men be produced, Aristotle identifies Square's problem precisely: "But most people do not do these [just acts, etc.], but take refuge in theory and think they are being philosophers and will become good in this way, behaving somewhat like patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the things they are ordered to do. As the latter will not be made well in body by such a course of treatment, the former will not be made well in soul by such a course of philosophy" (IX, 1105b). When Square turns up in Molly's closet, Fielding makes a very

similar, though exquisitely ironic point about those who have a theory of virtue but fail to put it into practice. The difference between philosophers and ordinary people is not so great.

> It is, indeed, in theory only, and not in practice, as we have before hinted, that consists the difference: for though such great beings think much better and more wisely, they always act exactly like other men. They know very well how to subdue all appetites and passions, and to despise both pain and pleasure; and this knowledge affords much delightful contemplation, and is easily acquired; but the practice would be vexatious and troublesome; and, therefore, the same wisdom which teaches them to know this, teaches them to avoid carrying it into execution (V, v).

What more is there to say?

Aristotle's virtue of liberality is not so extensive as the latitudinarian virtue of charity. Aristotle limits his virtue to the giving of material things with pleasure--or "at least without pain." Still, it has much in common with the Christian ideal of charity, especially in the sense that it is not dependent upon having great wealth, but is relative to wealth. Aristotle's liberal man gives what he can though he may have very little, as does the poor pedlar who relieves the plight of Joseph Andrews and Abraham Adams by giving them all he has, six shillings and six pence (II, xv). But Aristotle would not support indiscriminate liberality. "The liberal man, like other virtuous men, will give for the sake of the noble, and rightly; for he will give to the right people, the right amounts, and at the right time, with all the other qualifications that accompany right giving" (IX, 1120a). In this sense Fielding's concept of charity has more in common with Aristotle

than the latitudinarians. For while he believed in the necessity for the good man to alleviate misery, he believed just as firmly that indiscriminate giving could be pernicious to the general welfare of society. In his Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, for instance, Fielding comments that since knaves form a part of every community, "it becomes the good-natured and tender-hearted man to be watchful over his own temper; to restrain the impetuosity of his benevolence, carefully to select the objects of his passion, and not by too unbounded and indiscriminate an indulgence to give the reins to a courser which will infallibly carry him into the ambuscade of the enemy."[56]

Finally, in their attitudes toward the rewards of virtue, the concepts of Aristotle, the latitudinarians, and Fielding coalesce. Fielding himself quotes Aristotle and Isaac Barrow in the same issue of The Covent-Garden Journal to support his own argument: first, he cites Aristotle's Ethics, "In the Energy itself of Virtue . . . there is great Pleasure;" second, he cites Isaac Barrow, "A Man may be Virtuously Voluptuous, and a Laudable Epicure by Doing Much Good."[57] Tom Jones makes the point even more effusively when he compares the pride of wealth to "the warm, solid content, the swelling satisfaction, the thrilling transports, and the exulting

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[56]Works, ed. Henley, XIII, 110.

[57]The Covent-Garden Journal, I, 308 (No. 29, April 11, 1752).

triumphs which a good mind enjoys in the contemplation of a generous, virtuous, noble, benevolent action" (XII, x).

In summary, then, there are a number of major points of contact in the Aristotelian ethic and that of the latitudinarians, which reinforced each other in Fielding's ethic: (1) the idea of temperance in the sense of moderation or self-restraint of any natural affection or appetency is held in common; (2) the Aristotelian idea that virtue is not simply a matter of belief, but primarily a matter of action, encompasses the latitudinarian doctrine of active charity and is shared by Fielding in his insistence that virtue must be active; (3) the Aristotelian virtue of liberality, though not so expansive as the Christian ideal of charity, is compatible with it and, in addition, has a clear parallel to Fielding's rational control of charity; and (4) finally all three hold strongly that considerable pleasure accrues to the individual who acts virtuously.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF CHARACTER

Perhaps the most difficult problem in the analysis of Fielding's ethics lies in his view of human nature. The available evidence has led to vastly divergent views. On the one hand, Andrew Wright has stated that Fielding believed most men to be positively evil from birth.[1] More specifically, Digeon has said that Blifil is "vile by nature and from birth, and . . . delights in bringing suffering to noble souls, whom he basely envies because of their nobility."[2] On the other hand, Martin Battestin, while adducing conflicting evidence feels that in general Fielding agrees with the latitudinarian position that man is basically capable of great goodness.[3]

The problem is important to the interpretation of Tom Jones. If Blifil and those like him are evil from birth and have no choice in the matter, they cannot be condemned; yet Fielding appears to condemn Blifil. If Blifil is innately evil from birth, then it

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[1]Wright, Henry Fielding: Mask and Feast, p. 34.

[2]Aurelien Digeon, The Novels of Fielding, p. 158.

[3]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 84.

follows that Tom must be innately virtuous. If he were, there would be no call for him to learn prudence. If virtuous and vicious natures come about other than by nature, we are forced to ask how and why Blifil, who is reared in the same environment as Tom, becomes vicious while Tom does not. Further, if it is not by nature that the virtues and vices arise, we must ask with whom the responsibility does lie. Does it lie with the individual himself or with those around him? Answers to these questions should have ramifications for the significance of Tom Jones.

Fielding's view of human nature and its development is closely parallel to that of Aristotle and was almost certainly influenced by the Aristotelian position, which is expressed in both the Politics and the Ethics. Basically, Aristotle's position is that, "Neither by nature . . . nor contrary to nature do the [moral] virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit" (IX, 1103a). If the moral virtues existed in us by nature, it would be impossible for us to become vicious and vice versa. The acquiring of intellectual virtues, however, requires education, time, and experience. Further, states of character arise out of like activities.

> By doing the acts that we do in our transactions with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly. The same is true of appetites and feelings of anger; some men become temperate and good-tempered, others self-indulgent and irascible, by behaving one way or the other in appropriate circumstances. . . . It makes no small difference, then,

> whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference (IX, 1103b).

It is clear, then, that from Aristotle's point of view, we have it in our own power as individuals to become virtuous or vicious. He suggests, however, that men may receive a "certain character" or disposition at birth which may influence their perception of ends. Because, by nature, they mistake the apparent good for the real good, they do evil through ignorance of the end. Still, according to Aristotle, because men adopt the means to the end voluntarily, both virtue and vice are voluntary and within our power. And because "we are ourselves somehow responsible for our states of character, and it is by being persons of a certain kind that we assume the end to be so and so" (IX, 1114b), virtuous and vicious actions are both voluntary. However, Aristotle draws a crucial distinction between actions and states of character: they are not voluntary in the same way. "For we are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end, if we know the particular facts, but though we control the beginning of our states of character the gradual progress is not obvious, any more than it is in illnessess; because it was in our power, however, to act in this way or not in this way, therefore the states are voluntary" (IX, 1115a).

At the conclusion of the Ethics, Aristotle summarizes this position and makes clear the relationship among nature, habit and

education: "Now some think that we are made good by nature, others by habituation, others by teaching. Nature's part evidently does not depend on us, but as a result of some divine causes is present in those who are truly fortunate; while argument and teaching, we may suspect, are not powerful with all men, but the soul of the student must first have been cultivated by means of habits for noble joy and noble hatred, like the earth which is to nourish the seed (IX, 1179b). For Aristotle, nature's role is in providing a certain disposition which, as he points out in the Politics,[4] can be altered or reinforced by habit. But education can not make a man good, i.e., noble, in itself. Nature and habit play the important roles.

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[4]In the Politics, Aristotle reiterates his position with a somewhat different emphasis: he includes "rational principle" as one of three things that make men good, or, in the other event, evil. Note, however, that it is through the "rational principle" that instruction is possible:

> There are three things which make men good and virtuous; these are nature, habit, rational principle. In the first place, every one must be born a man and not some other animal; so, too, he must have a certain character, both of body and soul. But some qualities there is no use in having at birth, for they are altered by habit, and there are some gifts which by nature are made to be turned by habit to good or bad. Animals lead for the most part a life of nature, although in lesser particulars some are influenced by habit as well. Man has rational principle, in addition, and man only. Wherefore nature, habit, rational principle must be in harmony with one another; for they do not always agree; men do many things against habit and nature, if rational principle persuades them that they ought. We have already determined what natures are likely to be most easily moulded by the hands of the legislator. All else is the work of education; we learn some things by habit and some by instruction (X, 1332a-b).

Fielding makes his own position clearest perhaps in two issues of The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 16 and No. 66. In the first of these, the issue for February 25, 1752, he states, "In the worthiest human Minds, there are some small innate Seeds of Malignity, which it is greatly in our Power either to suffocate and suppress, or to forward and improve their Growth, 'till they blossom and bear their poisonous Fruit." Toward the end of the same essay he states that it is greatly in the individual's power "to imitate the most benevolent and virtuous, or the most wicked and base of all Beings."[5] In these passages Fielding echoes two important Aristotelian ideas. First, nature may dispose the individual in a particular direction by contributing what Fielding calls "seeds." Second, it is within the power of the individual to suppress or nourish these seeds, i.e. to develop for himself a virtuous or vicious character.

In The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 66, for October 14, 1752, Fielding develops the idea that habit directs "the primary instincts of our Nature" and develops what becomes known as our character. "Habit hath been often called a second Nature, the former may indeed be said to govern and direct the latter. I am much deceived, (and so was Mr. Locke too) if from our earliest Habits we do not in

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[5]The Covent-Garden Journal, I, 232-233.

a great Measure derive those Dispositions, which are commonly called our Nature, and which afterwards constitute our Characters. Nor is this Force of Habit or Custom exemplified only in Individuals; Nations are governed by the same Impulse."[6] The passage is clearly parallel to the Aristotelian idea quoted above that "states of character arise out of like activities." While Fielding quotes a number of authorities in the essay from Homer and Aristotle to Ovid and Cicero to develop the idea that not only individuals but states and nations develop their characters as a result of habit, Aristotle offers the clearest parallel to the idea that *habit produces states of character in individuals and nations*, when he says that "The virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. . . . This is confirmed by what happens in states; for legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them" (IX, 1103a-b). The parallel is even clearer when we realize that Aristotle refers to a "state of character" when he calls a man just, as discriminated from performing a single just action. The same ideas in a different sequence appear again in the Politics, Book VIII, Chapter 1:

> No one will doubt that the legislator should direct his attention above all to the education of youth; for the neglect of education does harm to the constitution. The citizen

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[6]The Covent-Garden Journal, II, 110-111.

> should be moulded to suit the form of government under which he lives. For each government has a peculiar character which originally formed and which continues to preserve it. . . . and always the better the character, the better the government.
>
> Again, for the exercise of any faculty or art a previous training and habituation are required; clearly therefore for the practice of virtue.[7]

This passage is not simply a parallel, for there is clear evidence that Fielding was familiar with it as early as 1746, a time when he was beginning to write Tom Jones.[8] Parson Adams in a fictitious letter to The True Patriot quotes its opening sentence, citing Book and Chapter of the Politics.[9]

Fielding's allusion to Locke in The Covent-Garden Journal for October 14, 1752, suggests that Locke reinforced Fielding's views on these matters, for Locke's views, while not so thoroughly or specifically formulated as Aristotle's, are parallel to those of the Ethics. First, he agrees that nature plays a role in the development of states of character: "few," he says, "of Adam's children are so happy as not to be born with some bias in their natural temper, which it is the business of education either to

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[7]X, 1337a. Compare footnote 5 above and Politics 1310a.

[8]That Fielding began Tom Jones in 1746 is widely accepted. See Dudden, II, 584-592, for an exhaustive treatment.

[9]The True Patriot, ed. Locke, p. 191 (No. 13, January 28, 1746).

take off, or counterbalance."[10] Again, in discussing means of instruction, Locke observes that, "God has stamped certain characters upon men's minds, which, like their shapes, may perhaps be a little mended; but can hardly be totally altered and transformed into the contrary."[11]

It is clear that Locke would agree to the relative ineffectiveness of precept (Cf. Aristotle on the relative inefficacy of argument.) and general efficacy of habit in education. "What you think necessary for [children] to do, settle in them by an indispensable practice as often as the occasion returns. . . . This will beget habits in them, which, being once established, operate of themselves easily and naturally."[12] It is not so clear in Locke however, as it is in Fielding and Aristotle that habit not only establishes virtuous and vicious "states of character" but that it can alter natural disposition. Nor does Locke state explicitly that virtue and vice are voluntary and in our power as do both Fielding and Aristotle.

The concept of human nature that Fielding makes explicit in the two issues of The Covent-Garden Journal cited above is apparent

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[10]John Locke, John Locke on Education, ed. Peter Gay, Classics in Education, No. 20 (New York: Columbia Teach. Coll. Bureau of Pub., 1964), p. 101. Original title, Some Thoughts Concerning Education, 1693.

[11]Ibid., p. 43.

[12]Ibid., p. 42.

in Joseph Andrews, Amelia, and the shorter works published between those two. The concept of the effect habit has on states of character is evidenced in both Joseph Andrews and Amelia. In the former, the narrator discusses habit which he says has "so vast a prevalence over the human mind, that there is scarce any thing too strange or too strong to be asserted of it." One of his examples is "the practisers of deceit, who, from having long deceived their acquaintance, gain at last a power of deceiving themselves" and begin to think they are in fact what they have attempted to make others believe (IV, vii). In Amelia, Dr. Harrison observes, "The nature of man is far from being in itself evil. . . . Bad education, bad habits, and bad customs, debauch our nature and drive it headlong as it were into vice" (IX, v).

While the evidence concerning Fielding's view of the role of habit in producing "states of character" is clear, the various passages relating to nature's contribution to character have led to considerable consternation among critics. Even Battestin, who presents an extensive discussion of Fielding's ethics evades the problem. Quoting a passage from Fielding's "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," Battestin states that "Only through the acknowledgement of 'some unacquired, original distinction, in the nature or soul of one man, from that of another,' Fielding felt, may we account for the markedly different inclinations to good or evil, let us say, in men of the same background and education.

This idea is dramatically illustrated in the novels by the contrasting characters of Tom Jones and Blifil." [Italics mine][13] In a footnote to the passage he quotes, apparently as evidence, Joseph Andrews's statement about human nature: "If a boy be of a mischievous, wicked inclination, no school, though ever so private, will ever make him good, on the contrary, if he be of a righteous temper, you may trust him to London, or wherever else you please--he will be in no danger of being corrupted" (III, v). Peculiarly, the implication of Battestin's statement is denied in his very next paragraph: "Although Fielding did not, in any absolute sense, admit the innate goodness of men, he did maintain that, of the "passions blended" in human nature, love and benevolence and compassion were very real components, operative in some men more strongly than in others, but present in all to some degree."[14] If we are to accept the absoluteness of natural depravity implied by both Battestin's former statement and Joseph's then how can we accept the idea that "love, benevolence, and compassion" are present "in all to some degree"? Since Fielding is clearly not an environmentalist who attributes development of virtue and vice solely to the effects of experience and environment, it seems to me that only a few possibilities remain. The passages to which

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[13]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, pp. 58-59.

[14]Ibid., p. 59.

Battestin alludes help to identify the most likely of these possibilities when they are examined in their full context.

To be sure, in "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" Fielding argues that there is an initial, natural difference in the characters of men. In the same sentence from which Battestin quotes, he states that, "This original difference will, I think, alone account for that very early and strong inclination to good or evil, which distinguishes different dispositions in children, in their first infancy." He continues, in the sam sentence, to argue for differences "in the most uninformed savages, who can have thought to have altered their nature by no rules, nor artfully acquired habits."[15] Clearly, the implication of the sentence is that it is possible to alter or reinforce that nature displayed in "first infancy" by learned "rules" or "artfully acquired habits." The "seeds of malignity" and those of virtue both exist in the human heart, perhaps in varying degrees; the problem is one of proper nourishment.

Joseph Andrews's lines are in rebuttal to Parson Adams's declaration that private education is far more efficacious in establishing a virtuous character than public education is. There are three interesting aspects of the context in which the speech appears. First, it is spoken by a character who is relatively

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[15] Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 281-282.

naive about identifying good and evil, let alone the causes of them. Joseph does not recognize Lady Booby's hypocrisy in pretending grief at her husband's death, even though he knew she never loved him. He was not even aware, at first, that Lady Booby wished to seduce him. After her first rather obvious efforts, he writes to his sister Pamela that "if she had not been so great a lady, I should have thought she had had a mind to me" (I, vi).

Second, while Parson Adams does not attack the assertion, it is clear that he believes a "private education" can insure virtue, at least if he were the schoolmaster, regardless of a youth's natural disposition. He certainly believes that he is as effective as Amelia in discouraging and rebuking "any symptom of malevolence. . . . in which she had such success, that not the least mark[s] of pride, envy, malice, or spite discovered itself in any of their little words or deeds" (IV, iv). For Parson Adams, there was no question that a "good" education could suppress the "seeds of malignity" in people if not in the horses to which Joseph compares men.

Third, and most important, Joseph's speech appears in Book III, Chapter v, immediately following Wilson's tale in Chapter iii and the account of his life in the country in Chapter iv. Wilson is descended of a good family and had received an education good enough that he mastered Latin and was "tolerably versed in the Greek." He gives us no clues, however, concerning his innate moral

inclinations. His narrative is neutral on that point, leading us to believe that had his father not died leaving him the heir of a "moderate fortune," or had he not assumed too soon that he was ready for the world, all might have been different. At seventeen, in London, his values are such that he affects the character of "a fine gentleman" and allows himself to pursue the false values of the town. His vanity leads him to folly, and, finally, his "passion for women" leads him to vice. His vice is not due to what might be called a naturally vicious nature. Fielding seems to attribute it to a combination of Wilson's inexperience and the bad influence of London.

Wilson does not end, as Hogarth's Rake does, in Bedlam. On the contrary, the suffering he experiences from poverty and debtor's prison brings about a catharsis which purges him, so that when he is saved by what must be regarded as a miracle, he proceeds to live virtuously, though removed from the evil influences of the city.

In short, if we accept Joseph's statement as true, Wilson's tale would make no sense. If he had been "of a righteous temper" he would, according to Joseph's view, never have been corrupted. Had his wickedness been innate, he would never have been saved. And Joseph offers no middle of the road alternative. It is Wilson's story that demonstrates Fielding's view of human nature, not Joseph's statement.

To summarize then, there is concrete evidence that Fielding knew Aristotle's theory of human nature and its development, and there are some passages in Fielding's work that reveal striking parallels to passages from Aristotle. Further, when all Fielding's statements about human nature are brought together they reveal, not a fluctuating set of beliefs, but a consistent theory which, except for Christian elements, is precisely parallel to Aristotle's and which appears to have been developed, at least in part, from his study of Aristotle. The basic elements of this theory which Fielding and Aristotle hold in common are these: (1) Man is born with some "bias" in his original nature which may dispose him more to good than to evil or vice versa. (2) Yet, as both Aristotle and Fielding would say, something depends on him. He has virtue or vice in his power from the beginning. (3) Education by precept and example has the power to influence the original disposition, to rebuke "any sign of malevolence" and to encourage the signs of goodness. (4) Habit, however, is the most powerful element in establishing "states of character." Therefore, "It makes no small difference . . . whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather <u>all</u> the difference" (IX, 1103b). (5) Habit eventually produces our state of character, or second nature. Once formed, it is well nigh impossible to do other than what that nature dictates, except with the intervention of religion as in

the case of Square. Still, the actions proceeding from this state of character must be considered voluntary, because they were voluntary in the beginning, and thus the vicious man in blameworthy. (6) Finally, a man may perform a vicious action without being vicious in his soul, i.e., the action may not proceed from an unchangeably vicious nature. The same, of course, is true for virtuous actions.

Before examining the implications that this theory has for Tom Jones, however, it will be useful to examine some of Fielding's ideas about education, for education can alter original dispositions, establish habits, and thus form states of Character. Fielding frequently protested the current educational practices which he felt were responsible for many of the ills of society. Parson Adams speaks for his creator in a letter to The True Patriot, No. 13, January 28, 1746. He has been discussing the profligacy and impudence of town bred youth with Mr. Wilson both of whom declaim against the lack of care taken by parents in the education of their children who receive "very little school learning" and no instruction in virtue and morality before they are brought to the "great city" or sent on the "grand tour" before they are twenty. Thus, set adrift in the world the children fall prey to various vices and follies which "enervate both their bodies and minds" before they

are adult.[16] Both these and other of Fielding's particular educational concerns have rather specific antecedents in John Locke's essay, Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693), which was well known long before Fielding's time.[17] For instance, Adams's letter speaks out against travel abroad or to the great city between the age of leaving school and twenty, while Locke's essay recommends against travel between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, a time at which he says a young man is more ready to "hearken to the temptations of his companions . . . rather than to the persuasions of his tutor." and when "he is both raw and unruly."[18] It is noteworthy that Mr. Wilson and Tom Jones both arrive in London during these susceptible years, while the Man of the Hill falls victim to the temptations of one of his companions at a similar age.

Again both Locke and Fielding see the development of virtuous character as the primary end of education, as do both Aristotle

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[16]The True Patriot, p. 133 (No. 13, January 28, 1746). See also The Covent-Garden Journal, ed. Jensen, II, 1-4 (No. 42, May 26, 1752) and II, 64-65 (No. 56, October 14, 1752).

[17]For instance, The Spectator, No. 337, March 27, 1712 cites Locke as an authority on education, while The Spectator, No. 313 refers to the essay as Locke's "celebrated treatise of Education" and proceeds to paraphrase a rather long passage. Cf. The Spectator (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1907), II, 442 and Locke on Education, ed. Gay, p. 48.

[18]Locke on Education, p. 173.

and Montaigne, whom Fielding also admired.[19] However, while Aristotle recommends public education for the good of the state,[20] and while Montaigne assumes a private tutor, Fielding seems to agree with Locke's preference for a private education, and for the same reasons. Locke believes that both private and public education had their "inconveniencies." Education at home under a tutor might make a young man shy and "ignorant of the world." Education in public, he believes, is not conducive to a virtuous character. "Virtue is harder to be got than a knowledge of the world; and, if lost in a young man, is seldom recovered."[21] At the same time, ignorance of the world was not an incurable evil and a private education could prepare the young man for the world. Thus, he concludes the superiority of private over public education. Parson Adams's arguments for private education under a tutor are very similar: "I prefer a private school, where boys may be kept in innocence and ignorance. . . . Who would not rather preserve the purity of his child than wish him to attain the whole circle of arts and sciences? which, by the by, he may learn in the classics of a private school" (III, v). For similar reasons Allworthy resolves to commit the education of Blifil and Tom to tutors at

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[19]For some of Montaigne's views of education see especially "Concerning the Education of Young Children."

[20]Politics, X, 1337a.

[21]Locke on Education, p. 49.

home, for he had observed "the imperfect institution of our public schools, and the many vices which boys were there liable to learn" and believed that in his own house "their morals would escape all that danger of being corrupted to which they would be unavoidably exposed in any public school or university" (III, v).

Locke foresaw dangers in the plan, however, and recommended that the father take extreme care in the choice of a tutor. Further, the company a young child should see should not present him a bad example, nor should the parents, and especially not the tutor. For Locke, the best tutor was not one who saw the chief business of education as learning Latin and language, but rather "one, who knowing how much virtue, and a well tempered soul, is to be preferred to any sort of learning or language,"[22] makes the development of a virtuous mind his major concern. Locke is equally adamant in stating that "The tutor's example must lead the child into those actions he would have him do. His practice must by no means cross his precepts, unless he intend to set him wrong. It will be to no purpose for the tutor to talk of the restraint of the passions, whilst any of his own are let loose; and he will in vain endeavour to reform any vice or indecency in his pupil which he allows in himself."[23] Locke has other admonitions for tutors

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[22]Locke on Education, p. 141.

[23]Ibid., p. 72.

as well, especially in relationship to punishment by birchen rods which he calls "the usual lazy and short way . . . the only instrument of government that tutors generally know, or ever think of . . . the most unfit of any to be used in education." Locke felt that no correction was useful to the child "where the shame of suffering for having done amiss does not work more upon him than the pain."[24] Thwackum is the incarnation of Locke's bad tutor. He beats Tom unmercifully with little or no effect, except that of illustrating Locke's principle that such punishment results in the pupil's rejection of the tutor and what he teaches. After the poaching incident with Black George, Tom, "with great resolution," bears all Thwackum's lashes--"so severe a whipping, that it possibly fell little short of the torture with which confessions are in some countries extorted from criminals" (III, ii). But he feels no shame until Allworthy apologizes for the severity of the punishment and gives Tom a little horse to make amends. Then Tom weeps. Similarly, Fielding's respect for the gypsy band who "look on shame as the most grievous punishment in the world," is obvious (XII, xii).

The divergent development of Tom and Blifil comes about in part from differences in initial dispositions, perhaps, but also as a result of important differences in their educational

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[24] Locke on Education, p. 33.

experience and the habits they establish, for while their environment is superficially the same, Fielding makes it very clear that the environment treats the two boys in different ways. First, while Tom has a natural goodness which begets kindness, compassion, and generosity in him, he has also an adventurous spirit which leads him into escapades with Black George. Blifil, on the other hand, is cold and aloof, prone to keep to himself, ignoring the suffering of others. We have already seen, however, that Fielding believed that a combination of education and habit can alter or reinforce initial dispositions. In Tom Jones, he makes at least a tentative effort to dramatize those effects.

Fielding, as narrator, explains the intent of Allworthy's educational plan for the two boys: Education at home under the supervision of tutors. Allworthy, of course, recognizes some of the "imperfections" in Thwackum and Square, but not all, and he thought that, "the different exuberancies of these gentlemen would correct their different imperfections; and that from both, especially with his assistance, the two lads would derive sufficient precepts of true religion and virtue" (III, v). Unfortunately, as the narrator suggests two sentences later, Allworthy is not infallible, "For we do not pretend to introduce any infallible characters into this history." The narrator dares the reader to discover the faults in Allworthy's plan: "If the event happened contrary to his expectations, this possibly proceeded from some fault in the

plan itself--which the reader hath my leave to discover, if he can." (III, v). Of course, as the narrator intends, it does not take a very discerning reader to detect some of the flaws. First, what Allworthy thinks of as the "different exuberancies" of the tutors are in themselves mere masks, evident only in the words of Thwackum and Square, but never in their actions. While Thwackum's conversation suggests piety, he has "utterly discarded all natural goodness of heart" and never once reveals any active charity. On the other hand, Square talks much of virtue but never demonstrates any until he lies on his deathbed.

Second, Allworthy intended that the two lads be afforded equal treatment by their tutors. From the beginning this is never the case, for two important reasons. Both Thwackum and Square coddle Blifil because they wish an alliance with Bridget, hoping ultimately to gain control of Allworthy's fortune. Since they assume that Bridget will be partial to her avowed son and hate Tom as an interloper, capable of diverting some of Allworthy's wealth from her offspring, they reject Tom as well, hoping to please Bridget. Eventually, however, as Tom grows older, Bridget no longer hides her regard for him, so that Thwackum and Square come to regard Tom as a rival and hate him in proportion to their greed.

The second cause of their rejection of Tom greatly reinforced the first. Tom failed to show the tokens of respect they thought were their due, "often forgetting to pull off his hat or to bow

at his master's approach" (III, v), clearly a trivial token. Further, Tom neglected to show respect for both the precepts and examples of Square and Thwackum, once jesting to Square that "he believed there was no rule in the world capable of making such a man as his father" (III, v). Blifil, on the other hand, "had greatly gained his master's affections; partly by the profound respect he always showed his person, but much more by the decent reverence with which he received his doctrine; for he had got by heart and frequently repeated his phrases, and maintained all his master's religious principles with a zeal which was surprising in one so young" (III, v). Further, Blifil affords both tutors the same treatment, even though they seem diametrically opposed to one another: "With one he was all religion, with the other he was all virtue" (III, v). Blifil "found by experience" the most effective means of flattering, not only Thwackum and Square, but Allworthy, for when he commended the masters to Allworthy, his praises were repeated to Thwackum and Square, and Allworthy himself took them as praise for "that singular plan of education he had laid down" (III, v). Thus Blifil learns the subtle deceit of flattery through his experience with tutors whose vanity he clearly sees is more important to them than the virtuous development of their students.

Tom, at the same time, sees through their vanity and hypocrisy; and well he should, for the severe beatings he receives reveal no charity in Thwackum who inflicts them and no active

virtue in Square who condones them. The tutors preach religion and virtue, then beat and chide Tom for an action in which Allworthy could see enough virtue, though perhaps mistaken, to grant a pardon. Allworthy was pleased with the "invincible fidelity" that Tom had displayed toward Black George. Tom rejects the tutors totally, refusing even to tell Thwackum what he had done with the proceeds from the sale of his horse. He could not refuse Allworthy the information, but "as for that tyrannical rascal [Thwackum], he would never make him any other answer than with a cudgel, with which he hoped soon to be able to pay him for all his barbarities" (III, viii).

Having rejected the model presented by the tutors, Tom chooses to admire the honest, charitable nature of Allworthy, a model which appeals to and reinforces his own natural temperament. Blifil, whose natural temperament is cold and somewhat selfish, adopts the flattery, deceit, and cold justice of the tutors.

Blifil's first dishonorable act, which stands in clear contrast to Tom's lie to protect Black George, is his revelation of the secret which Tom had confided in him. He tells it, apparently without premeditation, in order to shift attention from his having called Tom a "beggardly bastard," claiming at the same time, "Those who tell one fib will hardly stick at another" (III, iv). His act, though deceitful, is a childish one, but it is successful, not only in shifting attention from him but in its innuendo against

Tom. From this point his acts become clearly premeditated and more serious in their repercussions for others. His next act is to buy Tom's Bible, the money for which Tom gave to the family of Black George. Blifil then reads Tom's Bible ostentatiously before Thwackum. Thwackum again punishes Tom. Again Blifil's act is childish, though obviously premeditated, but not terribly serious in its consequences. His next act has the character of pure malice, for it does Blifil himself no good. After Tom has labored to restore Black George to Allworthy's favor, Blifil reveals to Allworthy the story of the action brought against Black George for killing a hare, suppressing certain aspects of the story and leading Allworthy to believe that the culprit had wired more than one hare. By insisting "on a promise of secrecy from Mr. Allworthy" before revealing the matter, Blifil prevents the truth from being known. Though masquerading as an act of justice, it is clearly the premeditated result of ill will. And the consequences are more serious, for Allworthy refuses to reinstate Black George in his service. In each of these acts, Blifil receives the commendations of his tutors, for in each Tom is thwarted, thus satisfying their own ill will against Tom.

From this point Blifil practices deceits partly out of malice and partly out of self-interest. His deceits grow in their enormity, in the subtlety of the techniques he uses, and in the pain and anguish they bring to those against whom he plots. By the end of

the novel the narrator can convincingly compare him to the devil, for his malice and scheming control the lives, fortunes, and attitudes of many characters until the truth comes out. His evil character is not the result of nature simply, but the result in large measure of the example set by his tutors and the habits developed and reinforced under their tutelage.

Since Tom, on the other hand, totally rejects the tutors and takes Allworthy as a model, and since he has been endowed by nature with an open and generous disposition, the development of his character is realized through a whole series of attempts to relieve the distresses of others as well as by fairly frequent indiscrete action resulting from that same disposition, which others can interpret to his disadvantage. He develops the habit of doing good for others so extensively that one of his chief pleasures results from his contemplation of the happiness he has been able to contribute. His responses to having helped the Andersons and Mrs. Miller are clear examples. At the same time, however, there is one habit which he must develop; that of bringing his native impulsiveness under rational control. John Coolidge believes that this necessity represents a difficulty which Fielding proved unable to handle. He argues that if "'Wantonness and wildness' are of the very nature

of that 'openness of temper,'" prudence cannot protect it without changing it.[25] But Coolidge seems to adapt the terms of his syllogism for his own purposes. Fielding nowhere states that "wantonness and wildness" are necessary parts of the "openness of temper" which he heartily condones; he simply suggests that they derive naturally from the generous, exuberant disposition. Properly understood, prudence is far from inconsistent with Tom's chief virtue, his ability to feel the misfortune and happiness of others. On the contrary, it is the intellectual virtue which enables man to become morally virtuous, requiring rational control of the passions, not change.

At any rate, while there may be "no real evidence that [Tom] has acquired 'discretion' and 'prudence'"[26] by the end of the novel, there are several indications that his habits will change, that he has gained insight into the ways in which his impulsiveness has influenced his life, and that he has indeed begun to control his impulses. He breaks with Lady Bellaston and does not allow himself to become entangled with Arabella Hunt, even though she would be able to relieve his financial embarrassment. More important, in

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[25]John S. Coolidge, "Fielding and 'Conservation of Character,'" MP, LVII (1960), rpt. in Ronald Paulson, ed., Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays, Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 162.

[26]P. D. Edwards, "Education and Nature in Tom Jones and The Ordeal of Richard Feverel," MLR, 63 (1968), 25.

prison, he recognizes his own responsibility in bringing about those misfortunes which plague him. In short, the conditions are ripe for the development of new habits. But Fielding certainly realized that dragging his hero through various scenes designed simply to demonstrate his new prudent behavior would be not only superfluous but dull. The reader must simply have faith with Sophia in Tom's good intentions or take the narrator's word that Tom "acquired a discretion and prudence very uncommon in one of his lively parts" (XVIII, xiii).

The essential point is that both Blifil and Tom, while perhaps predisposed by nature to certain types of behavior, have their characters in their own power. At each stage in his plot to discredit and thereby eliminate Tom, Blifil is faced with alternatives. While the reader never has the opportunity to observe him considering the alternatives, the very fact that he consciously chooses vicious action implies that he could have chosen differently. As he chooses deceit from the beginning, he gradually becomes inured to doing wrong. It becomes so habitual with him that it may not be possible for him to act in any other way. Tom, on the other hand, at least attempts to act prudently. He resolves to stay away from Molly altogether and manages to do so for three months. He warns Mrs. Waters of his susceptibility to so much charm. His failures to abide by his resolutions do not demonstrate that he has no power over his actions and therefore his character. On the

contrary, they illustrate the difficulty of controlling natural passions but, at the same time, imply that control is both desirable and possible. The very fact that Tom never plots a seduction as do Square, Molly Lady Bellaston, and even Nightingale reveals a high degree of control over his strong passions.

While nature may predispose a man to act in certain ways, and while it contributes "some small innate Seeds of Malignity, . . it is greatly in our Power either to suffocate and supress, or to forward and improve their Growth."[27] Once the character has been formed by a combination of education and habitual action, it may be very difficult for a man to act in any other way, as is Blifil's case apparently. But change is possible, even for a hardened hypocrite like Square, through the intervention of religion. Nevertheless, because each man is entirely responsible for his own actions from the beginning, he is also responsible for the development of his character. If this were not the case, there would be no point in Fielding's attempts "to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices" (Dedication), for they would be unable to change.

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[27] The Covent-Garden Journal, I, 232.

CHAPTER IV

THE WORLD OF *TOM JONES* AND THE RHETORIC OF DECEIT

In the dedication to *Tom Jones* Fielding states that he has "endeavoured strongly to inculcate that virtue and innocence can scarce ever be injured but by indiscretion; and that it is this alone which often betrays them into the snares that deceit and villainy spread for them." In part, Fielding apparently intended the novel as a dramatization of conflict between virtue and innocence on the one hand and deceit and villainy on the other. *Jonathan Wild* and a number of essays reveal that his interest in the nature and effects of deception had been established for some time when he came to the writing of *Tom Jones*. For Fielding, the villainy of everyday criminals who can be detected and brought to justice does not present the threat to the social order that deception does. For the villain who operates subtly, through deception, is able to evade the law and operate successfully and maliciously for long periods of time.

Deception is almost an integral part of comic art with mistaken identities, disguises, gulling, white lies common to most comedy. *Tom Jones*, however, is different from most of its predecessors in two very important ways: in the omnipresence of misinformation

and in the continuing influence that a given falsehood has in generating events. Nearly every character, good and bad alike, takes some part in transmitting a falsehood, and many take part in originating misinformation, either purposively or unconsciously. Further, various deceptions, from unconscious half-truths to villainous lies, seem to take on a life of their own providing a continued impetus for the plot action even after the initial purpose of the lie has been accomplished.

In other words, while a falsehood may have been propagated to achieve a particular end, the misinformation remains even after the accomplishment of its original purpose, and it is often the good characters responding to that misinformation who move the plot forward. Thus, what might be called the secondary effects of deceit assume primary importance for the plot. Further, considered in the light of late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century ideas about the nature and consequences of truth and falsehood, deceit takes on major thematic significance in Tom Jones. Before examining the operation of falsehood in the novel, therefore, it will be useful to examine some of the ideas about deceit with which Fielding was conversant.

Despite the irony of his statement, Fielding's Parson Adams, in a letter to The True Patriot, seems to echo the latitudinarian divines of an earlier period when he writes that "The Devil himself is, in Scripture, said to be the Father of Lies; and Liars

are perhaps some of the vilest and wickedest Children he has. Nay, I think the Morals of all civilized Nations have denied even the Character of a Gentlemen to a Liar. So heinous is this Vice, that it has not only stigmatized particular Persons, but whole Communities with Infamy."[1] Isaac Barrow, Samuel Clarke, John Tillotson, and Robert South, latitudinarian divines whose sermons Fielding owned and read, all agreed both on the seriousness of what Tillotson called "corrupt and filthy Communication" and the fact that it was "one of the reigning Vices of this wicked and adulterous Generation."[2] All seemed to agree, whether speaking of "corrupt communication" in general or some specific form of falsehood such as slander or back-biting, that falsehood in any form threatened to break the bonds that preserved the social order.

In a sermon preached before Oxford University in 1688, Robert South argued that in an initial implicit social compact all men had agreed upon signs and words which they would use to convey their thoughts to each other. Thus, a hearer has a right to expect that the words and signs do actually express the truth of the speaker's mind. But "he that has to do with a liar, knows not where he is, nor what he does, nor with whom he deals. He walks

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[1]Henry Fielding, The True Patriot, No. 7 (December 17, 1745), ed. Miriam Locke (University: Univ. of Alabama Press), 1964.

[2]John Tillotson, Sermon CLX, "The Evil of Corrupt Communication," The Works of the most Reverend John Tillotson (London, 1735), III, 376.

upon bogs and whirlpools; wheresoever he treads he sinks, and converses with a bottomless pit, where it is impossible for him to fix, or to be at any certainty."[3] Worse than the plight of the individual, however, is the result for "societies and bodies politic." For falsehood "tends utterly to dissolve society. There is no doubt, but all the safety, happiness, and convenience that men enjoy in this life, is from the combination of particular persons into societies or corporations: the cause of which is compact; and the band that knits together and supports all compacts, is truth and faithfulness. So that the soul and spirit that animates and keeps up society is mutual trust, and the foundation of trust is truth, either known, or at least supposed in the persons so trusted."[4] According to South, what demonstrates the "high malignity" of fraud and falsehood is that in its natural course it "tends to the destruction of common life, by destroying that trust and mutual confidence that men should have in one another." Men come to distrust each other "then divide, separate, and stand upon their guard, with their hand against every one and every one's hand against them."[5] South argues further that falsehood is the instrument of tyranny and the tool of murder and robbery. In fact

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[3]Robert South, Sermon XII, "Of the base sins of falsehood and lying," Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions (Oxford, 1842), p. 255.

[4]Ibid., p. 252.

[5]Ibid., p. 254.

"all that misery and calamity that befalls mankind" is "an effect of lying and falsehood."[6]

In several sermons Samuel Clarke makes very similar claims against "injurious speech." His special argument which recurs with surprising frequency is that abusing "the power of speech to the Damage and subverting of all civil Society, (when on the contrary it was given us on purpose to be the bond of Society;) that This is a great and crying Sin; is readily acknowledged by all."[7] In his sermon "Of the Nature and Extent of False Witness" Clarke cites the evil effects that lying has on society as the primary reason to refrain from any instance of "licentious speech." "Society, bears some Analogy to the Frame of the Natural Body: And, as in the natural Body, all Division, Disagreement, and Disunion of the Members, tends necessarily to the destruction and dissolution of the Whole; so, in proportion, in all communities and Societies of men whatsoever, the Contentions and Animosities, the Disorders and Distractions, arising from Slander, Calumny,

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[6]South, p. 249.

[7]Samuel Clarke, Sermon CXXXIII, "Of the Nature of Lying," The Works of Samuel Clarke (London, 1738), II, 107.

Detraction, Uncharitableness, and other Instances of licentious Speech are inevitably of very pernicious effect."[8]

In addition to denouncing the evil effects of lying, the latitudinarians also present definitions and analyses of falsehood. Samuel Clarke, for instance, defines "the proper notion of a Lie" as an "Endeavouring to deceive another by signifying to him as true, which we ourselves think not to be so." He adds that if a man relates something which he believes to be true but which proves otherwise, such a statement is not a lie, but an error.[9] Robert South's definition is in essential agreement with Clarke's although expressed in somewhat more technical language. "The nature of a lie, therefore, consists in this, that it is a false signification knowingly and voluntarily used; in which the sign expressing is no ways agreeing with the thought or conception of the mind pretended to be thereby expressed."[10] Both definitions involve the intent or volition of the speaker in signifying what

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[8]Samuel Clarke, Sermon CLXV, "Of the Nature and Extent of False Witness," Works, II, 326. See also Sermon CLXVI, "Of the Sin of Deliberate Fraud," Works, II, 331. "deliberate or contrived Fraud, is in itself a Crime of the deepest malignity, and of the most pernicious consequences: A Sin which tends to destroy all human Society, all Trust and Confidence among Men, all Justice and Equity which is the Support of the World, and without which no Society of Mankind can subsist."

[9]Samuel Clarke, Sermon CXXXIII, "Of the Nature of Lying," Works, II, 108.

[10]South, pp. 244-245.

he does not inwardly believe to be so. South and others proceed to the classification of lies as well. Samuel Clarke, for instance, discriminates four degrees of false witness. The first and most flagrant violation of truth is bearing false witness in judicial matters, whether in criminal or property matters. The second degree involves "spreading knowingly and maliciously, False Reports concerning any person." in private conversation. No motive renders this villainy excusable; on the contrary, this sin "is of the deepest Die, and condemned among the most detestable Crimes both by Reason and Scripture." The third degree consists of "the careless and rash Custom of spreading censorious and uncharitable Reports to the disadvantage of our Neighbour" without any justification for the censure. The fourth degree "is when men are censorious towards their Brethren, in spreading abroad things neither false, nor dubious, but certainly true; yet needlessly, and contrary to the Laws of Charity: Declaring their Neighbours real infirmities, or real Faults, to his Disadvantage; without serving the purpose of Any true Benefit, either to Him or others."[11]

Of the four degrees of false witness which Clarke enumerates, only the first two have to do with lying as Clarke and South have defined it. But by detracting from the mutual confidence necessary for social solidarity, all four contribute to the

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[11]Samuel Clarke, Sermon CXLV, "Of the Nature and Extent of False Witness," Works, II, 324-325.

dissolution of society. In commenting on the text of his sermon, "On the Nature and Extent of False Witness," Clarke makes it clear that he uses the word deceive to signify any censorious representation of another. "The word which we here render, deceive; signifies, in the original, any damage, any inconvenience, brought upon a man in the way of slander, calumny, backbiting, or any other injurious manner of representing him."[12]

Other writers make even finer, sometimes confusing distinctions. Isaac Barrow, for instance, discriminates among several "sorts of Obloquy" in "Against Detraction" including detraction or backbiting, slander, censuring, and reviling.[13] In another sermon he lists nine categories of slander, most of which appear in Tom Jones.[14] It would be possible, though not particularly useful, to adduce examples from Tom Jones of each type of lie, obloquy, or slander which the divines enumerate. The point is that they present a veritable rhetoric of deceit, defining its nature, analyzing

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[12]Clarke, Sermon CXLV, 324. The text for this sermon is Proverbs 24: 28-29. "Be not a Witness against thy Neighbour without cause, and deceive not with thy Lips: Say not, I will do to Him as he hath done to Me; I will render to the man according to his works." In a sermon entitled "Against Evil Speaking" (Sermon XLII, Works, I, 395) John Tillotson makes discriminations very similar to Clarke's and suggests the same prohibitions.

[13]Isaac Barrow, Sermon XIX, "Against Detraction," The Works of the Learned Isaac Barrow (London, 1700), I, 239.

[14]Isaac Barrow, Sermon XVII, "The Folly of Slander," Works, I, 221-225.

its parts and types, and explaining its effects and consequences not only for individuals, but for the social body.

For Fielding, the latitudinarian divines, and the eighteenth century in general the difficulty in arriving at the truth was not solely due to deceit. Part of the problem lay in the nature of language. In 1690 Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding declared that "words, in their primary or immediate signification, stand for nothing but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them,"[15] no matter how imperfectly those ideas may be assembled. Locke continues that men make two sorts of errors in regard to this concept. First, they assume that their words are the marks of ideas in other men's minds. Second, "they often suppose the words to stand also for the reality of things."[16] In Book III, Chapter 10, the section of Locke's Essay which Fielding seems to have been most fond of quoting and alluding to, Locke argues that "Besides the imperfection that is naturally in language, and the obscurity and confusion that is so hard to be avoided in the use of words, there are several wilful faults and neglects that men are guilty of."[17]

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[15]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), II, 9.

[16]Ibid., II, 11.

[17]Ibid., II, 122.

Of the six abuses which Locke lists, Fielding seems most concerned with the first and third. The first is the use of words which do not signify "clear and distinct ideas," an abuse to which Fielding makes frequent reference.[18] Locke's third abuse is the "affected obscurity" which is typical of Fielding's doctors and lawyers who are consistently guilty of the fault which Locke cites: "either applying old words to new and unusual significations; or introducing new and ambiguous terms, without defining either; or else putting them so together, as may confound their ordinary meaning."[19] All of Locke's abuses stem from the failure to observe what Locke believes to be the cardinal principle: that words signify only the ideas in the mind of the person using them.

Robert South discussed similar problems in his sermon "Of the Fatal Imposture and Force of Words." He argues, first, that people necessarily mistake words for things: "as in accompts, ciphers and figures pass for real sums; so in the course of human affairs, words and names pass for things themselves." Further the generalities of men are governed by names and words. "And he who will set up for a skilful manager of the rabble, so long as they have but ears to hear, needs never inquire whether they have

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[18]For a rather extended discussion see The Covent-Garden Journal for January 14, 1752, ed. Jensen, I, 153-154.

[19]For a discussion of all the abuses see Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, II, 122-142.

any understanding whereby to judge; but with two or three popular empty words, such as popery and superstition, right of the subject, liberty of conscience, Lord Jesus Christ, well tuned and humoured, may whistle them backwards and forwards, upwards and downwards, till he is weary; and get up upon their backs when he is so." According to South words have inordinate force--"a certain bewitchery, or fascination . . . which makes them operate with a force beyond what we can naturally give an account of." Clearly, he says, men often respond more fully to what is said to them than what is done to them. What else would make man surrender his power of reason to "gross, fulsome, abusive flattery." There is nothing in which men are so "remarkably and powerfully governed" by words "as in matters of good and evil," for virtues are called by the names of vices and as long as men pay more attention to words than what they signify, they will be unable to make the true discriminations.[20]

Fielding's own concern with deception, falsehood, slander, and the like is obvious from his writings apart from Tom Jones. Jonathan Wild makes his progress in the world by hypocrisy and deception and delights more in the various deceptive means he uses to attain his ends than he does in the ends themselves. In his essays, too, Fielding comments frequently on the dangers of

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[20]South, pp. 449-455.

slander and deception. In The Champion for March 6, 1739, for instance, he quotes Dr. Robert South on the evils of slander.

> Slander may be properly compared to a poisoned weapon, or a stab in the back, and is indeed never used but by such base persons as would use these also. Dr. South expresses himself warmly, but not improperly on the subject. "It is," says he, "that killing poisonous arrow drawn out of the devil's quiver, which is always flying about, and doing execution in the dark, against which no virtue is a defence, no innocence a security. It is a weapon forged in hell, and invented by that prime artificer and engineer the devil; and none but that great God who knows all things and can do all things can protect the best of men against it.[21]

Nearly thirteen years later Fielding attacked slander in The Covent-Garden Journal where he equates taking away someone's reputation with taking away his life.[22]

In addition to various journal essays dealing with hypocrisy and deceit,[23] Fielding, prior to Tom Jones, published "An Essay On the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," to help the innocent detect various deceptions to which they were likely to be subjected. He singles out the flatterer, the professor (one who goes even further than the flatterer), the promiser, the man who is "inquisitive into the secrets of your affairs," the slanderer, and the

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[21]Works, ed. Henley, XV, 232. Fielding quotes the same passage with slight variations in "Knowledge of the Characters of Men," Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 297.

[22]The Covent-Garden Journal, ed. Jensen, I, 219-220.

[23]See, for instance, The Champion for January 29, 1740 in Works, ed. Henley, XV, 172-177; and The Champion for December 11, 1739 in Works, XV, 95.

false saint.[24] Each of these deceives others, sometimes with a motive sometimes without, but each is dangerous in that he provides false information or impressions which are likely to ensnare the innocent. One of the worst of these types is he who is guilty of "censorious sanctity." For "censorious sanctity" brings about misconceptions of virtue and vice, cheating men "into the pursuit of sorrow and misery, under the appearance of virtue," and frightening them "from mirth and pleasure under the colour of vice."[25] Fielding is concerned not only with individual acts of deception in the day-to-day world which disorient and mislead the individual, but with a higher level of deception which perverts the perception of true merit and vice. The complexity of life lies not simply in arriving at the truth about individual people and events but in perceiving the truth about morality.

Because of deliberate falsehoods, slanders, and half-truths, and because of the difficulties inherent in the ways men used and abused language, Fielding and many others saw themselves confronted by a network of corrupt communication which distorted and perverted truth. Fielding himself, in the Covent-Garden Journal, quotes and apparently accepts the truth of South's statement that "'Most of those Things . . . that have the mightiest and most controuling

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[24]Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 293.

[25]Ibid., XIV, 297-298.

Influence upon the Affairs and Course of the World, are downright Lies.'"[26] Earlier, in The Champion, Fielding comments on the abuses of speech, declaring that while the "use of speech be not peculiar to man, I believe the abuse of it is." He continues, seconding Locke's analysis of the abuse of words:

> Mr. Locke, in his chapter of the remedies of the abuse of words, says, "That whoever shall consider the errors and obscurity, the mistakes and confusion, that are spread in the world by an ill use of words, will find some reason to doubt, whether language, as it has been employed, has contributed more to the improvement or hindrance of knowledge amongst mankind."
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> I am inclined to believe, that if we could, by a kind of chemical operation, separate those parts of our ordinary conversation, which either leave any idea in the mind of the speaker, or convey any to that of the hearer, from those which do not, the former would be found scarce to bear the proportion of a tenth part to the latter.[27]

For a variety of reasons, then, Fielding views "the whole world" as a "vast masquerade, where the greatest part appear disguised under false vizors and habits; a very few only showing their own faces."[28]

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[26]The Covent-Garden Journal (No. 12, February 11, 1752), ed. Jensen, I, 205.

[27]"The Champion" (January 17, 1739), Works, ed. Henley, XV, 157. In this particular essay Fielding presents a number of examples of doctors and lawyers--the type who appear in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones.

[28]"Knowledge of the Characters of Men," Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 283.

For Fielding and the latitudinarians this "vast masquerade" has mythic dimensions. Parson Adams's letter to Fielding's The True Patriot for December 17, 1745, alludes to the Scripture which calls the devil "the Father of Lies," and continues, "Liars are perhaps some of the vilest and wickedest Children he has."[29] Fielding twice quotes Robert South's comment that slander or detraction (depending on which of Fielding's quotations we turn to) "is that killing, poisonous arrow, drawn out of the devil's quiver, . . . A weapon forged in hell, and formed by that prime artificer and engineer, the devil."[30] Such allusions to the devil in connection with falsehood and fraud are very common in the latitudinarians' sermons.

On the other hand, as Samuel Clarke writes, "God in Scripture is sometimes called Truth; and as the perfection of religion is the imitation of God in his communicable Attributes, so a necessary part of that imitation, is an endeavouring to be like him in his veracity."[31] To the divines, being truthful is not only a Christian duty, but one required, by the very nature of society, of every man whether "heathen" or Christian.

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[29]The True Patriot, ed. Locke. Samuel Clarke, in Sermon CLXV, "Of the Nature and Extent of False Witness" (Works, II, 324), uses a similar metaphor.

[30]Fielding's quotation of South in "Knowledge of the Characters of Men," Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 297.

[31]Clarke, Sermon CXXXIII, "Of the Nature of Lying," Works, II, 113.

While the truth may be very difficult to ascertain, Clarke is certain that man can attain it if he does not permit himself to be blinded by the love of any wickedness and if he resolves "never to be deluded into the Persuasion of any thing, contrary to plain and evident Reason, which is the Truth of God's Creation."[32] In fact, it is man's Christian duty to seek and find the truth. The myth of Truth and Falsehood, then, places man between God as the incarnation of truth and the devil as the father of lies. The conflict becomes a cosmic one between God and the devil for men's souls. Men must avoid the "snares" and deceits of the one and seek the bosom and truth of the other.

Samuel Clarke enumerates three problems in the perception of truth in the real world which are also important in Tom Jones: (1) the nature of things, (2) the natural imperfections of human understanding, and (3) deliberate attempts to conceal the truth.[33] Fielding examines the nature of things in relation to Fortune, the intervention of chance events which are unpredictable and therefore not subject to human control. He explores the natural deficiencies of human understanding and examines the web of deceit and misinformation spread by the wicked and augmented, unconsciously, by even the most honorable. Finally, he emphasizes the

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[32]Clarke, Sermon CXII, "Of the Difficulty of Arriving at Truth," Works, I, 715.

[33]Ibid., Works, I, 712.

pervasiveness of the problem with a series of images, the central nature of which is formalized deception: the puppet show, the London theatre, and the masquerade. In the context of unpredictable events and faulty perception, the deceit and misinformation which permeate the novel have far-reaching effects, extending to the disintegration of the microcosmic society which centers in Paradise Hall.

A number of critics have commented on the role of Fortune in the plot of Tom Jones. Most recently, John Preston has suggested the ways in which Fortune or chance event contributes to the unpredictability of the world, making it largely irrational. According to Preston, Fielding "implies that Fortune is the term we must use to describe the human condition, the element in which human qualities are formed and human virtues and vices operate."[34] While good Fortune is not necessary to the happiness of the truly good man blessed with a sanguine temper, adverse Fortune may have significant effects on men's lives. Further, because human nature is basically irrational and "governed chiefly by instinct not reflection," Preston argues that it is "therefore particularly exposed to Fortune."[35]

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[34]John Preston, "Plot as Irony: The Reader's Role in Tom Jones," ELH, 35 (September, 1968), 373.

[35]Ibid., p. 375.

It is not a simple combination of Fortune and the irrational which creates the main problems in the novel, however. What Fielding called "deceit and villainy" in the dedication to Tom Jones, in conjunction with Fortune and imprudence (the irrational), plays a decisive role in the development of problems for the characters in the novel. At the same time Fortune is in part responsible for the unravelling of circumstances which have become knotted with deceit and misinformation. Note, for instance, that Tom's apparently incestuous relationship with Jenny Jones leads ultimately to the revelation of truth about his birth.

A second cause of difficulty in arriving at the truth involves the natural limitation of human understanding. Even the best of characters in Tom Jones do not always have sufficient penetration to protect themselves from deliberate deceit, frequently failing to ascertain the motives and incentives of those who wish them ill. Allworthy, who is the most notable example of the good man lacking penetration, is constantly deceived, not only in informal situations but in formal ones where as a justice of the peace he is called upon to examine all the evidence and render a decision. Captain Blifil, for instance, partly by pretending lack of interest in Bridget, partly by disguising his very real interest in Allworthy's fortune, and partly by playing the role of a sober and righteous Christian, manages to hide his real motives entirely, so that Allworthy welcomes his marriage to Bridget. Allworthy sees Blifil

as "a man of sense and honour" and believes that love is the foundation of their marriage (I, xii). In his capacity as a justice, who has power to reward and punish, Allworthy sometimes fails to examine all the evidence in a case. But his omissions are never intentional. In the instance of his punishment of Black George, for example, Allworthy fails to hear Black George in his own defense. This particular omission is engineered by Blifil, who first "insisted on a promise of secrecy from Mr. Allworthy before he revealed the matter to him" and then led Allworthy to believe that Black George had wired several hares. "By that means the poor gamekeeper was condemned without having an opportunity to defend himself" (III, x).

Allworthy, of course, is not the only good character who fails to perceive the villainy and deceit around him. Tom does not realize Molly's promiscuity until he finds her with Square and hears more from her sister. He does not suspect the injury that Partridge's blabbing does him until Sophia accuses him of spreading her name about the inns. He does not suspect Lady Bellaston's avocation until Nightingale informs him of it. Even Sophia trusts those who do not deserve her confidence: Mrs. Honour who deserts her and Lady Bellaston who plans and encourages her rape by Lord Fellamar.

Morris Golden, argues that Fielding's characters in general, except for the very best of them, tend to perceive others in terms

of their own personalities. That is, they have become so "enclosed" within themselves that they attribute to others the characteristics which they themselves possess. He believes that in Fielding's fiction "preoccupation with the self causes, and manifests itself in, limited ways of knowing: we can know mainly elements outside ourselves which correspond to elements within."[36] The most significant results of self-enclosure, according to Golden, are the resulting failure to communicate adequately with others and the failure to understand motives and even overt action. Mrs. Western is perhaps the most obvious example. "No species of disguise or affectation had escaped her notice; but as to the plain, simple workings of honest nature, as she had never seen any such, she could know but little of them" (VI, ii). Of Allworthy she states, "Do you think Mr. Allworthy hath more contempt for money than other men because he professes more?" Her assumption that Sophia is in love with Blifil and her ensuing endeavors are largely responsible for Sophia's running away, which becomes a major strand of the plot. Most characters, Partridge, Squire Western, Bridget, The Man of the Hill, see others as reflections of themselves. As Golden demonstrates not even Allworthy, Tom, and Sophia are entirely free of such restrictions in their insights into others.

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[36]Morris Golden, Fielding's Moral Psychology, p. 42.

In his search for truth, man's natural lack of perception is greatly aggravated by both the conscious and unconscious spread of misinformation. In Tom Jones nearly every type of lie and every degree of slander or detraction enumerated by the latitudinarian divines is illustrated. Most frequently the deceit is uttered deliberately to achieve particular ends for the characters involved. Young Blifil, Captain Blifil, Partridge's wife, Thwackum, and Square are all guilty of what South calls the pernicious lie, "uttered for the hurt or disadvantage of our neighbour." Bridget, young Blifil, Molly Seagrim, and others are guilty of South's "officious lie, uttered for our own or our neighbour's advantage." Bridget's initial deception is an attempt to hide her own guilt and to protect her child, rather than to injure anyone else. Blifil's distortion of the events on the night of Allworthy's supposed death and his attempt to conceal Bridget's secret after her death tend to be combinations of the two. That is, his lies are not only pernicious, causing considerable harm to Tom in Allworthy's eyes, but officious, working to his own personal benefit as well. With both types of lie, the intent of the perpetrator is to gain some particular end. Sometimes, however, a character uses what South would call the jocose lie[37] because his personality seems to require it of him, without

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[37]South, Sermon XII, "Of the base sins of falsehood and lying," Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions, p. 246.

his having any specific end he wishes to achieve. Squire Western, for example, slanders Allworthy for no discernible reason, calling him, "As arrant a whore-master as any within five miles o'un" (IV, x). While Western and others who spread slander, half-truths, and lies, might do so without evil intent, they clearly contribute to the texture of false information which pervades the world of the novel.

It would be possible, though perhaps not very useful, to adduce examples of the nine types of slander listed by Isaac Barrow in one sermon as well as the various "sorts of Obloquy" which he enumerated in another. Nearly every sort of deceit, slander, detraction, backbiting as enumerated by the divines seems to be present in Tom Jones. One might almost suspect that Fielding had made a conscious attempt to incorporate every type of deceit in Tom Jones, from the most blatant to the most subtle.

In addition, as various critics have pointed out, Fielding's novels also include many instances of what Locke called the "abuse of words," the use of words without any fixed ideas. Hatfield suggests that Fielding is primarily concerned with the learned professions, the quacks, pettyfoggers, and parsons.[38] However, Fielding is concerned about the abuse of words by any man, and

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[38]Glenn W. Hatfield, "Quacks, Pettyfoggers, and Parsons: Fielding's Case Against the Learned Professions," TSLL, IX (Spring, 1967), 69-83.

some of his best comedy derives from that concern. Partridge, for instance, is constantly guilty of corrupt Latin expression as he is of distorting truth through his own fixed views of reality. When Mrs. Waters' room is broken into at Upton, she screams "Rape!" for which Fielding offers the delightful explanation "that these words of exclamation are used by ladies in a fright,as fa, la, la, ra, da, etc., are in music, only as the vehicles of sound, and without any fixed ideas" (X, ii). Square, Thwackum, the various lawyers who appear, and even some of the innkeepers contribute to the humor of the novel by their rather violent abuses of language. But it is clear that Fielding also intends to demonstrate the serious consequences that such abuses can have. One example will suffice. When Allworthy's physician states that Allworthy is in "imminent danger" and allows the family to believe that he is dying (V, vii), the expression, "imminent danger" has no "fixed idea" and is used primarily to make the cure seem the greater miracle. The consequence is that Tom becomes drunk with joy at the news of the recovery, and events ensue which lead to his expulsion from Paradise Hall.

At any given point in the novel, prior to the last few chapters of Book XVIII, every major character, except Blifil, and most of the minor ones base their actions, at least in part, on misinformation and falsehood. While Tom is grieving in jail, for example, Partridge tells Tom that Jenny Jones (Mrs. Waters) is his

mother so that Tom thinks he has committed incest. Further, Partridge still believes that Allworthy is Tom's father. Allworthy still does not know the truth of Tom's birth, nor the truth about Tom's behavior on the climactic evening of his illness. He still accepts Blifil as a charitable and virtuous young man and therefore believes his suggestion that Tom is a murderer. Squire Western knows no more than Allworthy does of Tom's birth, and he too accepts Blifil's accusations. Even Sophia has primarily false information about Tom and believes that he made a serious proposal of marriage to Lady Bellaston and that he killed a man. Indeed, deceit, misinformation, and their effects are so pervasive in the novel that they affect nearly every character to some degree as well as every major event.

Bridget's deception concerning Tom's birth and the further deceptions of Blifil are at the center of this vast network of misinformation. It is Bridget's lie which initiates the plot and Blifil's continued twisting and suppression of the truth which keeps it going. Yet Blifil could not possibly be so successful if he were the only deceiver. Unfortunately for Tom and others, there are some who aid Blifil gladly and with full knowledge and still others who forward his designs unwittingly. Thwackum and Square support Blifil's deceits without question; Dowling helps plot Tom's destruction while excusing his conduct on the grounds that he is simply a lawyer working for a client. Molly's failure

to name the real father of her child, the doctor's exaggeration of Allworthy's illness, and Bridget's initial lie all play beautifully, if unintentionally, into Blifil's hands.

But Blifil is the master deceiver, manipulating others in his carefully plotted scenarios much as the puppet-master manipulates his puppets through his own version of Vanbrugh's Provoked Husband in XII, v. It is a curious paradox that Blifil, who is responsible for so much misinformation in the novel, should also have the most truth at his disposal. Perhaps, for the devil to be that "father of lies" as the scripture suggests, he must know the truth about particulars, if not about morality. Significantly, Blifil is associated with the devil. At a point when his attempt to suborn the witnesses of Tom's quarrel with Fitzpatrick is nearly revealed, Blifil lies about his actions, and even manages to fool Mrs. Miller who is deeply suspicious of him. "In this particular instance he had imposed upon [Mrs. Miller] as well as upon the rest; so entirely had the devil stood his friend. And indeed I look upon the vulgar observation, 'That the devil often deserts his friends, and leaves them in the lurch,' to be a great abuse on that gentleman's character. Perhaps he may sometimes desert those who are only his cup acquaintance; or who, at most, are but half his; but he generally stands by those who are thoroughly his servants" (XVIII, v). Blifil is most thoroughly the devil's servant in the matter of lying. If the devil is "the Father of Lies," and if, as

Parson Adams writes, "Liars are perhaps some of the vilest and wickedest Children he has," Blifil is certainly a major representative of the devil in Tom Jones. At times he takes on the external marks of the devil, as when in attempting to distort Mrs. Miller's passionate enthusiasm for Tom's goodness, he speaks "with one of those grinning sneers with which the devil marks his best beloved" (XVII, ii). His villainous deceits are characterized as much by their cleverness and subtlety as by their ambitious complexity. As Blifil plots Tom's expulsion, he resolves to "hoard up this business till the indiscretion of Jones should afford some additional complaints; for he thought the weight of many facts falling upon him at once would be most likely to crush him" (VI, x). But Blifil never relies solely on facts. He filters all through his own perversity, permitting Allworthy to believe that Tom's "riot and debauchery" were occasioned by Allworthy's supposed approaching death. He intimates that Tom has had continued intimacy with Molly, though Tom had been with her only on one occasion since his earlier confession of fatherhood to her child. He even pretends that Allworthy must demand the information from him (VI, x), thus appearing reluctant to break Clarke's injunctions against any injurious speech, even what is true.

Further, nearly every innuendo, half-truth, equivocation, or lie he utters is intended to give him the appearance of virtue or wisdom and someone else the appearance of wickedness or foolishness.

In the last two books of the novel Blifil's scheming is directed toward making Tom appear to be "one of the greatest villains upon the earth." At the same time he represents his tampering with witnesses to Allworthy as a charitable concern for Tom.

The more virtuous characters in the novel, those who must strive to escape "the snares that deceit and villainy spread for them" (Dedication), make a contribution to the proliferation of false impressions and misinformation. Allworthy himself, at one of the key junctures of the plot, fails to make clear his accusation of Tom. "Many disadvantages attended poor Jones in making his defence; nay, indeed, he hardly knew his accusation; for as Mr. Allworthy, in recounting the drunkenness, etc., while he lay ill, out of modesty sunk everything that related particularly to himself, which indeed principally constituted the crime, Jones could not deny the charge" (VI, xi). Tom could not deny his drunkenness, and he did not know that the chief source of Allworthy's displeasure was not the drunkenness per se, but the supposed cause of it, Blifil's suggestion that Tom's drinking was by way of celebrating Allworthy's approaching death. Allworthy's failure "out of modesty" to make the accusation clear is understandable and perhaps excusable, but the suppression of information is a continuing and important motif in the novel. Tom is first guilty of it in protecting Black George. Years later, Allworthy agrees to conceal Blifil as his source of information about Black George's

wiring hares. Molly does not reveal that someone other than Tom is the father of her child but lets Tom accept the responsibility. But Blifil is the most clearly culpable character in this respect, when he simply does not report the message that lawyer Dowling brings from Bridget's death bed. The difference is that the consequences of Allworthy's modest refusal to explain all are unintentional. Yet they are certainly real enough for Tom. He is expelled from the household.

Even Sophia at Lady Bellaston's dissembles, pretending not to know Jones when he visits her there. Lady Bellaston, of course is not deceived, but Sophia, believing her falsehood successful, suffers considerably agony over it (XIII, xii). Jones himself contributes to the general abundance of misinformation when he proposes marriage to Lady Bellaston. While his deceit is intended to put off the lady, it has secondary effects which go beyond his intention, for Lady Bellaston and Mrs. Western use the letter to influence Sophia against him. While Tom is not so conscience-stricken over his stratagem as Sophia is over her falsehood, he does not send the letter to Lady Bellaston without compunctions. "There was in this scheme too much of fallacy to satisfy one who utterly detested every species of falsehood or dishonesty" (XV,ix).

Though Jones "utterly detested every species of falsehood or dishonesty," the very fact that he is human prevents absolute impartiality and honesty. In telling Partridge the story of his

expulsion from Paradise Hall, Jones orders the events and circumstances so that he appears in a very favorable light.

> Not that Jones desired to conceal or to disguise the truth: nay, he would have been more unwilling to have suffered any censure to fall on Mr. Allworthy for punishing him, than on his own actions for deserving it; but, in reality, so it happened, and so it always will happen; for let a man be never so honest, the account of his own conduct will, in spite of himself be so very favourable, that his vices will come purified through his lips. . . . For though the facts themselves may appear, yet so different will be the motives, circumstances, and consequences, when a man tells hiw own story, and when his enemy tells it, that we scarce can recognise the facts to be one and the same (VIII, v).

Fielding's point is that this phenomenon is a fact of the human condition. Jones does not deliberately deceive anyone but simply tells the story from his own point of view. In this particular instance, of course, Tom's unconscious distortion makes no difference, but in other incidents the straining of information through an individual personality, without any conscious attempt at distortion, makes a considerable difference to the events of the plot, especially in an instance such as Allworthy's suppression of the real reasons for his displeasure with Tom.

As if to emphasize the misinformation consciously or unconsciously conveyed by most characters, Fielding presents several instances of what might be called "institutionalized" deception. In two of these, the puppet show and the theatre, the degree and kind of deception depends on the perception of the audience. Any dramatic performance, of course, demands "the willing suspension

of disbelief." The significance of the plays in Tom Jones, however, lies in the fact that characters accept the performances for what they are not. For example, the audience of the puppet show, except for Tom, all agree with the puppet master's claims that the elimination of Punch and Joan from the plays had gone a long way to improve the puppet shows and the morals of the audiences. "I question not," he says, "but people rise from my little drama as much improved as they do from the great" (XII, v). When Tom objects that leaving out Punch has spoiled the show, everyone disagrees and the master of the show begins a harangue about "the great force of example, and how much the inferior part of mankind would be deterred from vice by observing how odious it was in their superiors" (XII, v).

As might be expected from Fielding, the puppet master's moral declamation is interrupted by a disturbance stemming from the landlady's having found her maid "on the puppet-show stage in company with Merry-Andrew, and in a situation not very proper to be described." In defense the maid cries out, "If I am a w---e . . . my betters are so as well as I. What was the fine lady in the puppet-show just now? I suppose she did not lie all night out from her husband for nothing" (XII, vi). Two chapters later Merry-Andrew exposes the puppet-master's lewd desire for Sophia whom he had hoped to rob and strip.

With three deft thrusts, at three levels, Fielding smashes the illusion which the puppet-master tried to create. First, a puppet-show stage can be used for purposes other than moral instruction. Second, those witnessing the moral instruction may not be improved by it. On the contrary, Grace, the maid, uses what she has seen in her defense. Finally, those who talk much of moral instruction may care very little for it themselves as the puppet-master's desire for Sophia indicates. Clearly, the idea of the stage as a moral instrument, at least in this instance, is largely an illusion on the one hand and a front for corruption on the other. It is certainly no accident that, only a few paragraphs after Merry-Andrew's exposure of the puppet-master, the narrator makes a fairly explicit statement about the difference between illusion and reality. After commenting that Sophia was more "offended at the freedoms which she though . . . he had taken with her name and character than at any freedoms in which . . . he had indulged himself with the person of another woman," he quickly adds that if any reader is "shocked" at these sentiments appearing unnatural, "I must remind such persons that I am not writing a system, but a history, and I am not obliged to reconcile every matter to the received notions concerning truth and nature" (XII, viii). In short, the "received notions" about the truth of a young girl's feelings are apt to be just as fallacious as the "received notions" concerning the function and purpose of puppetry, or perhaps as fallacious as any received notions.

Another instance of institutionalized deception appears in Tom's visit to the theatre with Partridge and the Millers. Again, the play requires "willing suspension of disbelief," but Partridge so far suspends his disbelief, without willing it, that he believes Hamlet saw a real ghost on the stage. Therefore, he reasons that Hamlet was not played by a very great actor, for he explains, "if I had seen a ghost, I should have looked in the very same manner, and done just as he did." The king, on the other hand, according to Partridge, is the best actor, for "he speaks all his words distinctly, half as loud again as the other.--Anybody may see he is an actor" (XVI, v).

Many critics have pointed out "Partridge's simple confusion of the real and stage worlds,"[39] but Partridge's simple confusion of the real and illusory becomes a comic analogue of the way in which all men respond to deception. When the actor is clumsy as is the king, the deception is transparently obvious, but when it is artful, men cannot tell truth from reality. To be sure, Fielding compares hypocrites to actors: "Some have considered the larger part of mankind in the light of actors, as personating characters no more their own, and to which, in fact, they have no better title than the player hath to be in earnest thought the king or emperor whom he represents. Thus the hypocrite may be said

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[39]Maurice Johnson, Fielding's Art of Fiction (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), p. 106.

to be a player; and indeed the Greeks called them both by one and the same name" (VII, i). The problem is that when the hypocrite has any art, he can easily be successful.

Significantly, the chapter following Partridge's comments on the players deals with a real instance of artful deception which is totally successful. When Allworthy discovers Sophia's strong aversion to Blifil, he begins to think he had been deceived into carrying matters too far. But Blifil manages not only to convince Allworthy that he had himself been deceived, but to persuade him to permit a reopening of his suit to Sophia, all this in spite of the fact that Blifil's passion for her was based on a combination of avarice and hatred. Allworthy responds, then, to a real life "player" as Partridge had to one who practiced his art on the stage.

The masquerade in Tom Jones is Fielding's primary metaphor of deception. Partridge's deception by an actor is owing to his own simplicity. The deception surrounding the puppet show derives partly from misconceptions ("received notions") of its purpose and effect, and partly from the hypocrisy of those involved. The masquerade, however, is a formalized deception; its primary purpose is disguise and deception at the level of real relationships. As Tom walks about attempting to find someone who can help him find Sophia, the masquerade clearly becomes a microcosm of the duplicity in the real world. Tom recognizes no one, though disguises present

no problem to some others. He knows not which way to turn in searching for Sophia. He finally mistakes Lady Bellaston for Mrs. Fitzpatrick and ends the evening by beginning an amour which is in many ways a continuation of the masquerade, Lady Bellaston hiding her lust behind pretended affection, and Tom pretending passion in order to continue his search for Sophia. The masquerade reflects the world of Tom Jones, which itself "becomes a vast masquerade, where the greatest part appear disguised under false vizors and habits; a very few only showing their own faces, who become, by so doing, the astonishment and ridicule of all the rest."[40]

Many literary works, of course, are concerned with deception, but most deal with what can be called the immediate effects of falsehoods spread by a single character or group in hopes of achieving some rather specific end. In many such works the tactics of deceitful characters succeed primarily because of the gullibility or even sinfulness of the other characters. In Moliere's Tartuffe, for example, Tartuffe is the source of deception, but Orgon's total gullibility is absolutely necessary to his success. In Congreve's Double Dealer Maskwell's masterful deceptions enable him to use others for his own immoral ends; but he can rely, with nearly complete confidence, on the foolishness of characters such

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[40]"Knowledge of the Characters of Men," Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 283.

as Ladies Froth, Plyant, and Touchwood. Still, it is he who is responsible for the genesis of deceit in the play. Congreve's concern is with the nature of the deceptions, the aspects of human nature which permit them to function, and what their immediate effects are. He does not seem concerned with the results of deception beyond the specific goals that Maskwell sets for himself.

In Defoe's Moll Flanders, Moll is guilty of one deception after another, but there is no attempt to explore those deceptions beyond their most immediate effects. In some instances when Moll deceives others, such as her husband in the colonies, her son, and her final (Northumberland) husband, there is little concern with even the most immediate effects, except that her lies in each case usually prove beneficial to her. Certainly Defoe does not seem concerned with the evil effects that her deliberate and usually careful lies might have had. In Richardson's Clarissa, Lovelace deceives a great many characters in order to obtain a very specific goal, Clarissa's maidenhead and what it represents. The enormity and breadth of his machinations and deceptions extend nearly to the point of disbelief. Still, Richardson's concern is with their immediate effects on Clarissa and others and on how close they bring him to his specific goal. Similarly, most works concerned with deception relate the source of deceit or misinformation and probe only its immediate effects.

Tom Jones, however, is unique in its exploration of deception. First, while a few characters are responsible for the grossest falsehoods, nearly every character including Tom and Allworthy, wittingly or unintentionally contributes to the web of misinformation. Second, in Tom Jones Fielding demonstrates how a lie or a bit of misinformation has a succession of effects, when brought into play with the vagaries of Fortune and the faulty perception of most characters. Because the world is as it is, the influence of deceit does not stop with the immediate goal intended by its perpetrator. Even the unintentional suppression of truth will have a series of effects. In short, Tom Jones displays what might be called a "domino theory" of misinformation.

For example, Bridget's initial deception of her brother continues to have unintended effects until the truth about Tom's birth is finally revealed to Allworthy at the end of the novel. The primary purpose of Bridget's scheme was to introduce the child to Allworthy's household without implicating herself. The plot succeeds smoothly, but it has unintended effects shortly after its initial success. The initial deceit combined with some chance events, other bits of misinformation and outright lies results in Jeremy Partridge's disgrace and departure from the community. For when a neighboring gossip informs Mrs. Patridge that Jenny has been delivered of "two bastards," she immediately assumes her husband to be the father of one (II, iv). She accuses her husband,

beats him, and thereafter publicizes his guilt to her neighbors. Yet what she says to this point she believes to be the truth and is not technically a lie. Still, she is guilty of defamation and slander, a practice which, whether the story be true or false, stands condemned by the latitudinarians.

It is her perception and her nasty temperament rather than her veracity which is at fault, of course. Mrs. Partridge's assumptions stand only on suspicions which arise from her own personality rather than from any real evidence. Her neighbors, perceiving Jeremy's blood covering Mrs. Partridge, accept her claim that he had beaten her cruelly. They too ignore the plain evidence, in this case the lacerations on Jeremy's face, and spread the story that he had cruelly beaten her. "Nay, in some places it was reported that he had murdered her; in others, that he had broken her arms; in others, her legs: in short, there was scarce an injury which can be done to a human creature, but what Mrs. Partridge was somewhere or other affirmed to have received of her husband" (II,v).

When Partridge comes before Allworthy for trial, Ann Partridge states all the circumstances and concludes that her husband had confessed his guilt. Partridge, however, maintains his innocence, protesting that he was forced into a confession by the "continued importunity she used: who vowed, that, as she was sure of his guilt, she would never leave tormenting him till he had owned it" (II, vi). Unfortunately for Partridge, his wife flies into a

temper and claims that she is ready to take her oath that she "found them a-bed together" (II, vi), a lie she refuses to retract. Since Allworthy accepts the evidence of Partridge's wife, evidence which the English courts would not accept, and is unable to locate Jenny Jones to confirm or deny the truth of her claim, he cancels Partridge's annuity. Partridge surrenders himself to despair and after the death of his wife leaves Little Baddington to seek a place where he could earn a livelihood.

Blifil extends the affects of his mother's deceit when he suppresses the truth following Bridget's death, and by doing so, prevents Allworthy from suspecting his ulterior motives in revealing stories about Tom. Further, because Western believes that Tom is a bastard without fortune, he is outraged to discover that Sophia is in love with him. Yet, when the truth is revealed he is far more delighted to have Tom as a son-in-law than he was with the prospect of Blifil. Bridget's deception even affects Tom's adventures on the road from Paradise Hall to London. In the first place, he meets Partridge whom he believes to be his father, but Partridge, knowing that he himself is not Tom's father, firmly believes that Allworthy is. And since it is not possible for Partridge to keep any information to himself, he advertises his notion of Tom's parenthood abroad, influencing Tom's reception in more than one public place. Thus, a major falsehood carried out to accomplish a specific purpose, has far-reaching consequences

for the lives of many characters, extended as it is by chance, by deceit, and by the faulty perception of others.

The many, seemingly minor bits of misinformation which various characters originate or pass along can and do have decisive effects on events in the lives of the novel's characters. As Fielding points out in relation to Sophia's recovery of her muff from the fire, "In reality, there are many little circumstances too often omitted by injudicious historians, from which events of the utmost importance arise. The world may indeed be considered as a vast machine, in which the great wheels are originally set in motion by those which are very minute, and almost imperceptible to any but the strongest eyes" (V, iv). The notion that even seemingly insignificant circumstances and events can have far-reaching effects becomes a structural principle of the novel, operative in more than the instance of Sophia's muff. Fielding arranges even apparently minute incidents so they directly contribute to the larger plot action. Thus, what at first glance might seem a trivial lie may begin a chain of events which has important consequences.

Perhaps the most obvious example is the physician's lie about Allworthy's "imminent danger" which prepares the way for Tom's "immoderate excess of rapture" when the physician announces Allworthy's complete recovery (V, viii-ix). Tom's joy leads to his becoming drunk which in turn leads to the near fight with Blifil and Tom's ensuing walk during which he meets Molly, and

so on. Obviously, the physician's exaggerations of Allworthy's condition are not alone responsible for what happens that evening, but they initiate the series of events which Blifil can distort and use against Tom.

Northerton's slander of Sophia, another apparently trivial lie in a relatively minor event of the novel, also has important consequences. Northerton had seen Sophia and her Aunt Western at Bath, but knew nothing more of them. Yet he claims that he knew "'one Sophy Western . . . that was lain with by half the young fellows at Bath'" (VII, xii). This slander provokes Tom to insult Ensign Northerton, who in turn hits Tom on the head with a bottle. Tom's condition is exaggerated by the physician who comes to attend him just as Allworthy's had been. The result is that Tom's plans to march with the soldiers are frustrated; the soldiers leave without him, and he moves toward Gloucester. Two other events occur as a result of the episode initiated by Northerton's slander. First, because Tom requests a barber upon his recovery and because he requires a new surgeon, he meets Jeremy Partridge, who by chance lives in the vicinity and who fills both capacities. Jeremy takes to the road with Tom believing that Allworthy is Tom's father and hoping to procure a reward if he can persuade Tom to return to Allworthy. Second, some time later, after his talk with the Man of the Hill, Tom hears the screams of a woman being attacked by this same Northerton, who had escaped his imprisonment.

Providentially, it turns out to be none other than Jenny Jones (Mrs. Waters) who is essential to the revelation of the truth at the end of the novel.

Still another apparently unimportant falsehood changes the direction of events and brings Tom into contact with the Man of the Hill. A pettyfogger in conversation with Dowling and Mrs. Whitefield, the landlady, slanders Jones so roundly that Mrs. Whitefield changes her conduct toward Tom entirely. Tom noticed the change from "natural affability" to "constrained severity," a change which "was so disagreeable to Mr. Jones, that he resolved, however late, to quit the house that evening," (VIII, viii). His wanderings in the dark that night take him by chance to the Man of the Hill's home where, in the morning he encounters Mrs. Waters. Northerton's lie, aided by Fortune and abetted by additional slander, instigates a complex sequence of events which brings Tom into contact with both his presumed parents and prepares the way for the peripeteia at the end of the novel--all this even though Northerton's own immediate purpose was simply to disgrace Tom.

The omnipresence of deceit and misinformation not only controls particular incidents, but disrupts the social order. With Bridget's first major lie about Tom's birth, the society surrounding Paradise Hall begins a gradual disintegration, as represented by the ostracism of one character after another. Allworthy, acting on misinformation of one kind or another in each case, sends Jenny

Jones and Tom away, withholds Partridge's annuity, driving Jeremy to another community to seek a livelihood, and removes Black George from his service, making him persona non grata even in his own family. In a sense, even Sophia is driven away by misinformation. Her aunt's erroneous assumption that she loves Blifil certainly instigates the pressure to marry Blifil from which Sophia flees.

What is worse, falsehood enables Blifil to gain more and more power, and as Robert South argues, falsehood is the instrument of tyranny. Clearly, Blifil is a tyrant whose every action and speech is directed at manipulating the actions and perceptions of others. Having displaced Tom, he can look forward to uniting the estates of Allworthy and Western under his own rule.

Near the end of Book XII immediately following Tom's adventure with the gypsies, the narrator lists three qualities requisite to absolute monarchy, qualities which make "finding any man adequate to the office . . . very difficult, as it appears from history." The three qualities include "first, a sufficient quantity of moderation in the prince, to be contented with all the power which is possible for him to have; secondly, enough of wisdom to know his own happiness; and, thirdly, goodness sufficient to support the happiness of others, when not only compatible with, but instrumental to his own." If a man who has these "great and rare qualifications," the narrator argues, is capable of "conferring the greatest good on society, it must surely be granted, on the

contrary, that absolute power, vested in the hands of one who is deficient in them all, is likely to be attended with no less a degree of evil." Aligned as he is with the devil, the father of lies, Blifil is egregiously deficient in all three. Significantly, the narrator argues that earthly tyrants must derive their title to absolute power from "the prince of darkness," who possesses "absolute power in his infernal dominions. . . . the only absolute power which can by Scripture be derived from heaven" (XII, xii). Blifil, the true servant of "the father of lies," has the potential of becoming an earthly representative of the devil in the practice of tyranny.

Coming almost immediately prior to the third six books of the novel in which events reach a climax that unravels the truth, the incident with the gypsies and the commentary on absolute monarchy extends the conflict between truth and falsehood to the idea of controlling others. The purpose of every deliberate lie in the novel has been to control the beliefs and actions of other people. Rulership of a sort hangs in the balance of the novel's action. If Blifil's deceptions remain undiscovered, he will succeed Allworthy and become a tyrant who has not the moderation "to be contented with all the power which is possible for him to have," who does not have "wisdom to know his own happiness," and who cares nothing for the happiness of others. Good Fortune and Tom's continued perseverance in a charitable concern for others do not

permit such a result, of course. Once the truth is revealed, injustices are corrected, ostracized characters return and governance of the whole passes to one who will be both compassionate and just in his administration of affairs.

Perhaps the most essential characteristic of the world of Tom Jones, then, is the continual struggle between truth and falsehood, between the imitation of God's veracity and service to the devil. When falsehood prevails, it has consequences far beyond its original intent, and what Robert South said of the man who deals with a liar is true certainly for the good characters in Tom Jones: "He walks upon bogs and whirlpools; wheresoever he treads he sinks . . . it is impossible for him to fix, or be at any certainty."[41] When falsehood prevails, mutual trust is impossible, the bonds of society which require that each man act in truth and with justice toward his brother dissolve, and evil and injustice prevail. The truth must be recognized and honest intercourse be reestablished before men can return to the ideal existence where honesty and charity, and therefore happiness, are normative. By the end of the novel Tom and Sophia reign near Paradise Hall over just such a utopian society in which "there is not a neighbor, a tenant, or a servant, who doth not most gratefully bless the day when Mr. Jones was married to his Sophia" (XVIII, xiii).

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[41]South, p. 255.

CHAPTER V

PRUDENCE AND THE CONTROL OF SELF

Many critics have been content to issue moral judgments about Tom's behavior without investigating the ethical dimensions of that behavior and without examining it in light of the ethical perspective produced by the actions of other characters. Obviously, Tom's errors are not alone responsible for his problems. "The world," as Mrs. Wilkins says, "is censorious" (I, iii), and in such a world where deceit, slander, and misinformation permeate nearly all relationships and frequently dominate judgments, there is little wonder that Tom's imprudence results in considerable difficulty for him. Tom needs to learn prudence not only to protect himself from a censorious and unpredictable world but to insure his own inner happiness. While a great deal has been written about the concept of prudence in Tom Jones, critics have not examined the idea as it derives ultimately from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. Yet examined in that light, Fielding's various ironic and serious uses of the term reveal a comprehensive dramatization of true prudence and its imitations. Tom, it turns out, is far from being the only character in the novel who needs to learn prudence.

In commenting on Tom's affairs, most critics have simply referred to his "indiscretions" without determining their exact

nature. Yet such an examination is necessary to understanding the ethical framework of the novel. The Ethics of Aristotle, with which Fielding was undoubtedly familiar, is useful in making certain key discriminations about the behavior of several characters, including Tom.

According to Aristotle, for an act to be virtuous or vicious, it must be voluntary, i.e., not performed under compulsion or as a result of ignorance of particulars, and chosen, i.e., desired in accordance with our deliberation. In considering acts which have to do with our natural passions, primarily those concerned with bodily enjoyments, Aristotle uses the distinction between the voluntary and the chosen to discriminate between incontinence and self-indulgence. The self-indulgent man makes a deliberate choice to pursue what he ought not, while the incontinent man either deliberates and fails to abide by a decision to abstain or fails to deliberate at all and simply acts. But, says Aristotle, "of the people who are incontinent with respect to bodily enjoyments, with which we say the temperate and the self-indulgent man are concerned, he who pursues the excesses of things pleasant--and shuns those of things painful, of hunger and thirst and heat and cold and all the objects of touch and taste--not by choice but contrary to his choice and his judgement, is called incontinent, not with the qualification 'in respect of this or that,' e.g. of anger, but just simply" (IX, 1148a). The self-indulgent man pursues bodily

enjoyments by choice, after conscious deliberation. Thus, incontinence, which is contrary to choice, is not really a vice, though Aristotle says that it might be in a limited sense; but self-induglence must be considered vicious, because "vice is in accordance with choice; not but what they [incontinence and self-indulgence] are similar in respect of the actions they lead to" (IX, 1151a).

Some additional discriminations are informative, as well. First, those who follow "natural desires" are more easily pardoned because they follow "such appetites as are common to all men" (IX, 1149b). However, those who have strong appetites are more susceptible to incontinence than those with weak appetites and therefore less deserving of blame. "This is why we should describe as self-indulgent rather the man who without appetite or with but a slight appetite pursues the excesses of pleasure and avoids moderate pains, than the man who does so because of his strong appetites; for what would the former do, if he had in addition a vigorous appetite, and a violent pain at the lack of the 'necessary' objects" (IX, 1149b)? Thus we are ready to pardon the man who is "defeated by violent and excessive pleasures or pains" if he has resisted, for his defeat is not astonishing. "But it is surprising if a man is defeated by and cannot resist pleasure or pains which most men can hold out against, when this is not due to heredity or disease" (IX, 1140b). Further, Aristotle posits two causes of

incontinence, impetuosity and weakness. Weak men fail after deliberation, but impetuous men fail to deliberate because of their emotion. "It is keen and excitable people that suffer especially from the impetuous form of incontinence; for the former by reason of their quickness and the latter by reason of the violence of their passions do not await the argument, because they are apt to follow their imagination" (IX, 1150b).

The incontinence of excitable people is more curable than the incontinence of those who deliberate but fail to abide by their decisions (IX, 1152a). In the same way, the self-indulgent man, who makes a choice and stands by it, is not so likely to repent as is the incontinent man (IX, 1150b).

Fielding makes use of all these discriminations in Tom Jones. Reading the novel in terms of them, at any rate, clarifies not only the nature of Tom's indiscretions, but the moral position of the book as a whole, which some critics have seen as ambiguous. In regard to Tom's indiscretions, for instance, John Preston suggests that the moral sense in the book is ambiguous "because we do not find it in the action" and cites Tom's adventure with Molly. At first, Tom is concerned over what will happen to Molly, but when he finds that she was first seduced by Will Barnes who is probably responsible for her pregnancy, he becomes "perfectly easy" (V, vi).

"But," says Preston, "this is luck, not morality."[1] However, Tom has been relieved of responsibility for the child. What remains is his own personal problem of incontinence, one which primarily concerns him and which only he can solve. The morality of the book does indeed lie in the action of the book, in the nature of specific actions which various characters perform.

While the term incontinence was not used consistently in the eighteenth century to classify those actions which Aristotle sees as distinct from self-indulgent ones, it is interesting that Fielding uses the term in connection with Tom, but not other characters who could also be regarded as incontinent if the term were used loosely. As a matter of fact, terms such as indulgence and gratification are used to describe those who consciously seek to indulge their pleasures. At any rate, all of Tom's actions as well as the descriptions of his personality indicate that his crimes are those of incontinence as opposed to self-indulgence. On the other hand, Molly, Square, Blifil, Mrs. Waters, Lady Bellaston, and even young Nightingale, are clearly guilty of self-indulgence.

To begin with Tom has the excitable, impetuous nature and strong appetites that make people susceptible to incontinence. When the physician, for instance, explains that Allworthy was out

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[1]John Preston, "Tom Jones and the 'Pursuit of True Judgment,'" ELH, 33 (September, 1966), p. 315.

of all danger, the account threw Tom "into such immoderate excess of rapture, that he might be truly said to be drunk with joy." His "naturally violent animal spirits" in combination with the great amount of wine he drank on that occasion "produced most extravagant effects" (V, ix). By the same token, excessive grief also produces extravagant effects. As he is leaving Allworthy's estate after his banishment, Tom throws himself down beside a little brook to rest. "Here 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). While Tom is able to "reason with his passion" (VI, xii), at least after his passion has cooled, he is unable to control his passions by the early use of reason and deliberation. Frequently, reason or prudence does not come into play until after the fact.

On the other hand, by virtue of his good nature, a quality "whose use is not so properly to distinguish right from wrong, as to prompt and incite [him] to the former and to restrain and withhold [him] from the latter" (IV, vi), Tom is never guilty of plotting against others to gratify his passions. Further, once he has committed himself to Sophia, Tom, along with Booth in Amelia, while "not absolutely a Joseph . . . yet could he not be guilty of premeditated inconstancy" (Amelia, X, ii). For Fielding, as for Aristotle, it is premeditation that provides the key discrimination

between what Allworthy calls "those faults which candour may construe into imprudence, and those which can be deduced from villainy only" (XVIII, x).

Aside from Sophia, Tom becomes involved with three women: Molly, Mrs. Waters (Jenny Jones), and Lady Bellaston. In each case it is the female who takes the initiative in seducing Tom. While Tom was fond of Molly, he could not "bring himself to attempt the possession of her person; for though his constitution urged him greatly to this, his principles no less forcibly restrained him. To debauch a young woman, however low her condition was, appeared to him a very heinous crime . . . so that he once resolved to get the better of his inclinations, and he actually abstained three whole months without ever going to Seagrim's house, or seeing his daughter" (IV, vi). In general, Tom maintains this attitude toward both Molly and Mrs. Waters. That is, he recognizes where his passion will lead him and attempts to avoid the situations which he knows will lead to incontinence. While Tom makes good resolutions as the result of deliberation when his passions are cool, he fails to deliberate in situations which have excited him. And Molly, of course, does what she can to seduce him. She "behaved in such a way that the youth must have had very much or very little of the hero if her endeavours had proved unsuccessful" (IV, vi).

Tom's adventure with Molly on the evening of Allworthy's recovery has prompted considerable critical discussion because some critics see the scene as a clear demonstration of Tom's iniquity, while others see it as unconvincing. However, not only is it an instance of Fielding's comic genius, but it is perfectly consistent with the ethical and psychological assumptions upon which the plot as a whole is developed. Tom has just sworn "the chastest constancy" to the image of Sophia, when Molly appears, "in a shift that was somewhat of the coarsest, and none of the cleanest, bedewed likewise with some odoriferous effluvia, the produce of the day's labor, with a pitchfork in her hand." Certainly no "Circassian maid richly and elegantly attired" (V, x). After a "parley" of fifteen minutes Tom retires with Molly into the thickest part of the grove. The problem is obvious. How can Tom so soon forget his vow of constancy to Sophia for a girl whose appearance and odor must afford something less than exquisite pleasure to the senses. To explain the event the narrator suggests that Tom probably thought "one woman better than none," but does not seem to take that reason very seriously. The real cause of Tom's quick departure to the woods lies in the combination of his natural "animal spirits" and the great quantity of wine he had consumed earlier, which had "totally subdued" his power of reason. Significantly, the narrator adds, "Now, if there are any transgressions pardonable from drunkenness, they are certainly such as Mr. Jones was at present guilty of" (V, x).

It is interesting that, in this passage, Fielding refers to Aristotle's comment in the Politics that there is "more of policy than justice" in "the laws of Pittacus, by which drunken men receive double punishment for their crimes." For Aristotle, the drunken man has suspended his power of reason. Since drunkenness is unnecessary, Aristotle can commend the "policy" of laws which double a drunken man's punishment, but at the same time, he recognizes that a drunken man's actions are more pardonable because they are not by choice and deliberate. In the same way incontinent people act not by choice and deliberately, but, having lost the power of reason, contrary to choice. "It is plain, then," says Aristotle, "that incontinent people must be said to be in a similar condition to men asleep, mad, or drunk" (IX, 1147a).

In this adventure with Molly, Tom's state is that of incontinence, for while he acts knowingly and voluntarily, he does not act by choice and after deliberation. On the contrary, he acts when his power of reason has entirely deserted him. The situation is very similar to that at Upton. Tom finds Mrs. Waters very attractive and warns her in advance, "I could not answer for my power of resisting the attractive charms of so much beauty" (IX,ii). After his dinner with Jenny, during which, according to the landlady, they drank two bottles of wine (X, iii), Tom submits to those seductive charms which Jenny uses as weapons of war. Indeed, Fielding's extended metaphor of battle is as appropriate as it is

comic. Under the assault of Jenny's charms, climaxed when "the lady had unmasked the royal battery," Tom "delivered up the garrison, without duly weighing his allegiance to the fair Sophia" (IX, v). The power of reason deserts him again; his impetuous, animal spirits win once more.

The affair with Lady Bellaston is of a somewhat different order. It is for this affair that critics have reserved most of their disparaging comments. Preston feels that the moral implications of the affair "remain sadly unresolved,"[2] and H. K. Banerji states that Fielding "might have spared his reader the last depth of degradation in Jones, his liaison with Lady Bellaston."[3]

However, even in the affair with Lady Bellaston Tom is guilty of no worse than incontinence, though in this instance his lapse cannot be attributed to impetuosity in the same sense as in the affairs with Molly and Mrs. Waters. After Lady Bellaston makes her advances, the narrator explains that "Jones never had less inclination to an amour than at present; but gallantry to the ladies was among his principles of honour, and he held it as much incumbent on him to accept a challenge to love as if it had been a challenge to fight. Nay, his very love to Sophia made it necessary for him to keep well with this lady, as he made no doubt

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[2]Preston, "Tom Jones and the 'Pursuit of True Judgment,'" p. 324.

[3]H. K. Banerji, Henry Fielding: His Life and Works (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), p. 212.

but she was capable of bringing him into the presence of the other" (XIII, vii). He is caught up, not by his passionate nature as in the previous affairs, but by a sense of honor (which has misguided him before and which must be corrected before the novel ends) and by his desire "to keep well with this lady" that she might bring him to Sophia.

Tom soon becomes so enmeshed with Lady Bellaston that, though he feels disgust with the arrangement, he cannot extricate himself without what he regards as injustice to her. Not only is her passion for him ardent, but her gifts are generous, raising him "to a state of affluence beyond what he had ever known" (XIII, ix). He fears that if he does not display a passion equal to hers, she will think him "ungrateful;" and Allworthy, at least, seems to equate ingratitude with murder.[4] Tom "knew the tacit consideration upon which all her favours were conferred; and as his necessity obliged him to accept them, so his honour, he concluded, forced him to pay the price. This therefore he resolved to do, whatever misery it cost him, and to devote himself to her, from that great principle of justice by which the laws of some countries oblige a debtor who is no otherwise capable of discharging his debt, to become the slave of his creditor" (XIII, ix). The point is that

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[4]Allworthy argues that dishonesty may be forgiven but that "when dishonesty is attended with any blacker crime, such as cruelty, murder, ingratitude, or the like, compassion and forgiveness then become faults" (XVIII, xi).

Tom's behavior with Lady Bellaston is incontinent as opposed to self-indulgent. His first submission to her desires is contrary to choice and is not the result of deliberation. As his indebtedness increases, mistaken honor and his fear of being thought ungrateful combine to keep him in the lady's service until he can extricate himself "honorably" by forcing her to break off the affair.

While Tom is unable to control his passions on some occasions and operates from a mistaken notion of honor on others, his follies never take on the dimensions of vice. By contrast, other characters in the novel are clearly self-indulgent. When Square, for instance, learns of Tom's affair with Molly, he begins to plan his own seduction of the girl. Indeed, "he liked the girl better for the want of that chastity, which, if she had possessed it, must have been a bar to his pleasures" (V, v). Square's plotting extends to picking his target with care, preparing the way with "some well-chosen presents," and paying for the services rendered by Molly. Square, indeed, is one of those who "know very well how to subdue all appetites and passions, and to despise both pain and pleasure; and this knowledge affords much delightful contemplation, and is easily acquired; but the practice would be vexatious and troublesome; and, therefore, the same wisdom which teaches them to know this, teaches them to avoid carrying it into execution" (V, v). The passage ridicules more than Square's vicious acts; it

satirizes the stoic belief that passions could and should be ignored and the Platonic concept of virtue which focuses on knowledge rather than action. Square had "formed his morals" on the Platonic model, yet he "perfectly agreed with the opinion of Aristotle, in considering that great man rather in the quality of a philosopher or a specialist, than as a legislator. This sentiment he carried a great way; indeed so far as to regard all virtue as a matter of theory only" (III, iii). Fielding and Aristotle object to the same danger in the Platonic ethic. Anyone like Square can easily argue that if virtue is knowledge, it is a matter of theory, not of action. Square's position permits him to act basely, by choice, and, worse, to plot to the disadvantage of others, in order to indulge "a natural appetite" (V, v) and then to rationalize his way out of guilt and responsibility. As Aristotle has pointed out, "the self-indulgent man . . . is not apt to repent; for he stands by his choice" (IX, 1150b).

All three women with whom Tom has affairs make deliberate attempts to seduce him. Molly, as we have seen, makes her desires and advances very obvious. Mrs. Waters decides she wants Tom, and her advances are described in terms of her assault on Tom's fortress. Lady Bellaston makes the first overtures at the masquerade and then plans both the means and opportunities for a continued liaison. When she recognizes that Sophia "stood between her and the full indulgence of her desires," she formulates the plan to remove her which includes a projected rape by Lord Fellamar.

It is no accident that these three women take the aggressive role in Tom's affairs. If it had been otherwise, Tom would actually have warranted the character of "libertine" that the hostile critics of Fielding's day assigned him.

At the same time, Fielding does not regard either Molly or Mrs. Waters as irretrievably corrupt. Lady Bellaston's character is so thoroughly established by habit that she is virtually a lost soul--one "whom everybody knows to be what nobody calls her" (XV, ix). By Nightingale's account she is thoroughly promiscuous. Molly and Jenny, on the other hand, show some degree of constancy, Molly to Will Barnes and Jenny to Captain Waters.

Nightingale, too, though having committed some vicious actions, is not a vicious character. He "had been guilty of some indefensible treachery to women, and had, in a certain mystery called making love, practised many deceits" (XIV, iv). Not the least of these he practiced upon Nancy, promising marriage to entice her, then calling her "whore" in the sequel. But he is capable of redemption. He loves Nancy and Tom is successful in pleading her heartbreak if Nightingale should carry out his plan to abandon her. Thus, while he commits self-indulgent acts, he is not self-indulgent in character.

In terms of the deliberate indulgence of his passions, both those of anger and sexual desire, Blifil is undoubtedly the blackest character in the novel. While Lady Bellaston can plead

ardent passion on her behalf, there is reason to wonder if Blifil has any such desire at all. As Aristotle points out, "if a man is defeated by violent and excessive pleasures or pains, there is nothing wonderful in that. . . . But it is surprising if a man is defeated by and cannot resist pleasures or pains which most men can hold out against" (IX, 1150b). The man with no appetite or with very little deserves far greater censure, then, than the man who is subject to strong passions (IX, 1148a). The former is Blifil's case. If he is unimpressed by Sophia's charms, the cause is that "his appetites were by nature so moderate, that he was able, by philosophy, or by study, or by some other method, easily to subdue them." However, he has other passions concerning Sophia's fortune, namely "avarice and ambition, which divided the dominion of his mind between them" (VI, iv). As for the natural passions which Fielding and Aristotle expect in man, Blifil has a very small share. But he is not totally devoid of them, as we learn later. As soon as he learns that Sophia prefers Tom to him, his passion begins to emerge from beneath its cold rock. He begins to "consider Sophia as a most delicious morsel. . . . nor was his desire at all lessened by the aversion which he discovered in her to himself. On the contrary, this served rather to heighten the pleasure he proposed in rifling her charms, as it added triumph to lust" (VII, vi). Blifil allows free rein to his perverted passion as he continues his plot to ensnare Sophia.

Fielding very carefully arranges the incidents of the novel so that the self-indulgence of these characters contrasts with Tom's incontinence. The contrast between Tom's behavior and that of Molly, Mrs. Waters, and Lady Bellaston is obvious. Square's carefully planned and executed seduction of Molly is brought into sharp contrast with Tom's behavior in respect to both Molly and Sophia. In a sequence of four chapters the narrator presents Tom's resolution to abide by Molly, his discovery of Sophia's affection for him, his discovery of Square in Molly's bedroom, and finally his resolutions concerning Sophia. In the first of these chapters, Tom hopes that Sophia might have some regard for him but "He was far from a sanguine assurance that Sophia had any such affection towards him, as might promise his inclinations that harvest, which, if they were encouraged and nursed, they would finally grow up to require" (V, iii). He knows that Western would never accept him as a suitable match for Sophia whom he wished to see "married to one of the richest men in the country" (V, iii). Tom could not bring himself to pursue Sophia without her father's consent. But beyond this he feels that he cannot desert Molly. "His own heart would not suffer him to destroy a human creature who, he thought, loved him, and had to that love sacrificed her innocence" (V, iii). In short, Tom resolves to "abide by Molly, and to think no more of Sophia" (V, iii). In the very next chapter, however, Mrs. Honour tells Tom of Sophia's concern for the muff which he had kissed,

and then he sees her snatch it from the fire. His impetuous nature wins the day. "The citadel of Jones was now taken by surprise. All those considerations of honour and prudence which our hero had lately with so much military wisdom placed as guards over the avenue of his heart ran away from their posts, and the God of Love marched in, in Triumph" (V, iv).

Tom proceeds to Molly's home to make her amends with a sum of money, where he discovers Square. The reader learns of Square's carefully planned seduction and hears from Square's own mouth his justification for his conduct. The title of the following chapter requires the reader to compare it with at least the one immediately preceding: "By comparing which with the Former, the Reader may Possibly Correct Some Abuse which He Hath Formerly Been Guilty of in the Application of the Word Love" (V, vi). The chapter not only reveals Sophia's love for Tom and his for her, but it demonstrates how and why "His life was a constant struggle between honour and inclination" (V, vi). He frequently resolves to leave the Western's house and see Sophia no more, but just as often he determines to "pursue her at the hazard of his life" (V, vi).

Square's behavior stands in direct contrast to Tom's in relation to both Molly and Sophia. While Square has not the least compunction about planning to seduce Molly, Tom tries to fight off that temptation and loses only because Molly's efforts to seduce him are successful. While Tom sees Molly compassionately as a

fellow human being whom he thought he loved and whose life he may have ruined, Square sees her only as an object for the gratification of his lust. Even when Tom knows that he loves Sophia and strongly suspects her affection for him, he cannot bring himself to pursue her out of his consideration for her father's wishes. It is obvious that Square would not have hesitated at such considerations, just as Blifil does not. Thus while Tom's discovery of Square in Molly's chamber has important consequences in the plot, revealing the truth about Molly and opening the way for Tom's devotion to Sophia, it also has the very important function of contrasting Tom's incontinence with Square's self-indulgence.

Tom's incontinence is not alone responsible for all his difficulties, but in combination with the unpredictable events of Fortune, the omnipresence of deceit, and the faulty perception of others it brings him considerable difficulty and, at one point, brings him to the brink of despair. His affairs with Molly, Jenny, and Lady Bellaston not only illustrate Tom's incontinence but serve as focal points for the interplay of Fortune, deceit, and faulty perception. Events at each juncture serve as obstacles which Tom must overcome before he can attain wisdom or her earthly representative, and namesake, Sophia.

At a time when Allworthy's esteem for Tom has been raised because of Tom's efforts to help Black George, the narrator comments: "But Fortune, who seldom greatly relishes such sparks as my friend

Tom . . . gave now a very different turn to all his actions, and showed them to Mr. Allworthy in a light far less agreeable than that gentleman's goodness had hitherto seen them in" (IV, v). What follows is not simply the result of Fortune; it is due to a combination of Fortune with Tom's imprudence and the ever-present deceit. Sophia gives Molly a dress which Molly's vanity prompts her to wear to church despite the bulge in her belly. A fight ensues and Molly's pregnancy is revealed to Allworthy who has consigned Molly to the House of Correction when Tom arrives to plead on her behalf and to confess to being the father of her child. It is here that deceit becomes important, for Molly conceals the fact that Will Barnes is the father of the child. But Square's slander, what Isaac Barrow would have called his aspersing Tom's actions without warrant, does the real damage when he suggests that Tom had "supported the father in order to corrupt the daughter"; the accusation gives Allworthy his "first bad impression concerning Jones" (IV, xi). Later, Fortune provides a chance meeting between Tom and Molly on the day of Allworthy's extreme illness, and complicates matters by bringing Thwackum and Blifil to observe the pair. Tom's incontinence on that occasion along with the other events of the day, misrepresented as they are by Blifil, leads to his expulsion and his apparently permanent separation from Sophia.

At Upton, Fortune brings Sophia to the inn at a time when Tom's incontinence (he is in bed with Mrs. Waters) prevents their meeting and threatens a permanent break with Sophia. The effect of misinformation here is delayed, not taking place until Partridge tells Tom that Mrs. Waters is his mother--misinformation which causes Tom considerable grief. In this instance the deceit was initiated long before the event, but, with the assistance of Fortune (Partridge and Jenny do not encounter each other at the inn) continues to affect the lives of the novel's characters.

In the affair with Lady Bellaston, Tom himself is responsible for the deceit which Nightingale suggested as an attempt to help Tom escape the situation into which his incontinence had led him. When the letter is brought to Sophia's attention, it threatens a permanent rift between Tom and Sophia, who at least pretends to be thoroughly disgusted with Tom by this time. Significantly, the immediate results of this third affair do not derive from Fortune but from Tom's incontinence and from his own deceit. He must realize, as he does in prison, that he cannot attribute his difficulties to Fortune.

Still because the world is as it is, because deceit is rampant and the effects of Fortune unpredictable, Tom must learn prudence. There is a great deal of talk about prudence in the novel, and many critics have commented on the nature of prudence. Eleanor Hutchens discusses the ironic effects which Fielding achieves when

he uses the word prudence in contexts which retain what she calls its "flat literal meaning" but strip away its favorable connotations. This ironic treatment of the term reverberates against Fielding's positive uses which make up "one of the major themes of Tom Jones."[5] Despite her perceptive analysis of the ironic use of prudence in Tom Jones, Eleanor Hutchens' definition of prudence in its best sense does not seem very far removed from the worldly, practical ways in which Fielding's worst characters employ the term: "one thinks of prudence as a useful quality, needfully exercised against real risk and involving self-control and judiciousness in the management of difficult affairs."[6]

Hatfield argues that Fielding thinks "prudence is the guardian of innocence" and that his effort in Tom Jones, at least in part, is to restore its original sense in which it was "one of the cardinal virtues, with an honorable genealogy that can be traced back as far as Plato and that comes through Aristotle and the Stoics into Cicero's De Officiis and . . . the mainstream of Christian ethics."[7] Ultimately, however, Hatfield's conception of prudence seems superficial. It is the "human condition of judgment," he

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[5]Eleanor Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones, pp. 101-104.

[6]Ibid., p. 106.

[7]Glenn W. Hatfield, "The Serpent and the Dove: Fielding's Irony and the Prudence Theme of Tom Jones," MP, 65 (August, 1967), 29.

writes, "that makes prudence necessary for the good man. It is not enough to have basically good motives; prudence must see to it that one's actions appear good as well (or at least that they do not appear positively evil) or else suffer the situation of Jones in relation to Sophia: 'guilty as I am, my guilt unfortunately appears to her in ten times blacker than the real colors' (Works, V, 349). The 'real colors' here represent the extent of Jones's vice; the appearance to Sophia represents the extent of his imprudence."[8] In Hatfield's view, prudence is clearly concerned with external appearances. He almost seems to recommend that sins be committed in such a way that they appear as good as possible. Hatfield also traces the "disrepute" into which the word prudence was falling and finds several sources which use the term to indicate a vice rather than a virtue.[9]

In the most thorough treatment of prudence in Tom Jones, Martin Battestin delineates three concepts of prudence which are simultaneously operative in the novel:

> (1) it may signify prudentia, the supreme rational virtue for the Christian humanist tradition, that practical wisdom which Tom Jones, like the vir honestus, must acquire; (2) it may signify the shadow and antithesis of this virtue--reason in the service of villainy--that malevolent cunning which characterizes the hypocrite Blifil; or (3) it may signify that prostitute and self-protective expediency, that worldly

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[8]Hatfield, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

[9]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

> wisdom, which, owing to the influence of . . . pious-sounding perpetrators of a middle clas [sic] morality, replaced the humanist concept of prudentia in the popular mind.[10]

Battestin believes that "What Tom Jones fundamentally lacks . . . is prudentia: moral vision and self-discipline. . . . He moves through life committing one good-natured indiscretion after another, unable to learn from past experiences or to foresee the future consequences of his rash behavior."[11]

Hutchens and Hatfield both seem to regard prudence as a "useful quality," one which is primarily concerned with avoiding situations which may prove compromising and with retaining the good opinion of others. Battestin defines prudentia after Cicero, as being concerned with "proper functioning of memory, intelligence, and foresight: memory enabling us to recall what has happened, so that we may learn from experience; intelligence enabling us to discern the truth of circumstances as they really are; and foresight enabling us, on the basis of past knowledge and with the aid of a penetrating judgment, to estimate the future consequences of present actions and events."[12] Perhaps his Ciceronian definition limits attention to specifics. Whatever the case, Battestin seems

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[10]Martin Battestin, "Fielding's Definition of Wisdom: Some Functions of Ambiguity and Emblem in Tom Jones," ELH, 35 (June, 1968), 200.

[11]Ibid., p. 201.

[12]Ibid., p. 191.

primarily concerned with the individual's responses to particular circumstances and events rather than with the understanding and application of moral principles which his term "moral vision" seems to imply.

No one can dispute Fielding's concern with specific action in specific situations, with learning from experience, with predicting possible consequences of actions, and even with the sort of prudence which is "the guard of innocence," what might cynically be called keeping up appearances. But there is also no question that Fielding's concern goes beyond the immediate consequences of indiscretion to the need for acting in accordance with certain moral principles, such as his much discussed concepts of charity and good nature, regardless of the consequences. Any consideration of prudence apart from ethical principles necessarily reduces it to the status of a moral pragmatism, concerned only with the immediate results of action.

Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom was the progenitor of prudentia, coming directly into the Christian tradition through the works of St. Thomas Aquinas who refers to Aristotle in his discussion of prudence.[13] Undoubtedly, Fielding derived his concept of prudence from a variety of sources including the commentaries of Cicero, analyses of virtue by his contemporaries,

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[13]See especially, Summa Theologica, Question 57, Articles 4 and 5.

various sermons of the latitudinarian divines, all of which Battestin cites in his examination of concepts of prudence current during the eighteenth century. Yet Aristotle's analysis must have had particular appeal for Fielding, especially in its insistence on action and in its examination of the relationship of practical wisdom to continence.

According to Aristotle, the intellectual faculty which enables men to make choices in accordance with virtue is practical wisdom which he defines as "a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man" (IX, 1141a). Practical wisdom is concerned with both universals and particulars, for action necessarily has to do with particular circumstances and events. The man who has practical wisdom will act after applying universals to the particular circumstances of a given situation so that he may attain what is "best for man of things attainable by action" (IX, 1141a). Practical wisdom involves perception of particulars and ends, enables a man to choose those means which are appropriate to good and noble ends, and issues such commands that he takes the necessary means. Thus, for Aristotle, practical wisdom and moral virtue were inextricably bound: "it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise without moral virtue" (IX, 1144b). Cleverness is discriminated from practical wisdom on this basis, for cleverness may enable us to hit the mark we set before us.

"Now if the mark be noble, the cleverness is laudable, but if the mark be bad, the cleverness is mere smartness; hence we call even men of practical wisdom clever or smart." While practical wisdom does not exist without cleverness, cleverness does not require virtue for its development. On the other hand, practical wisdom, "this eye of the soul acquires its formed state not without the aid of virtue." To be sure,

> the syllogisms which deal with acts to be done are things which involve a starting-point, viz. 'since the end, i.e. what is best, is of such and such a nature,' whatever it may be (let it for the sake of argument be what we please); and this is not evident except to the good man; for wickedness perverts us and causes us to be deceived about the starting-points of action. Therefore it is evident that it is impossible to be practically wise without being good (IX, 1144a).

Practical wisdom is related to understanding, judgment, and intuitive reason, because all of them deal with ultimates, that is, particulars. Understanding is not concerned with things which are invariable and unchanging but with "things which may become subjects of questioning and deliberation." "'understanding' is applicable to the exercise of the faculty of opinion for the purpose of judging of what someone else says about matters with which practical wisdom is concerned--and of judging soundly; for 'well' and 'soundly' are the same thing" (IX, 1143a). But practical wisdom issues commands about things that are to be done, while understanding only judges. Judgment is "the right discrimination of the equitable" (IX, 1143a), and, like understanding, only judges, but judges

concerning those things with which practical wisdom is concerned. "Intuitive reason is concerned with the ultimates in both directions." It grasps or perceives both the first premisses or universals and the last premisses or variable facts. "The intuitive reason involved in practical reasonings grasps the last and variable fact, i.e. the minor premiss. For these variable facts are the starting-points for the apprehension of the end, since the universals are reached from the particulars; of these therefore we must have perception, and this perception is intuitive reason" (IX, 1143b).

All three of these faculties are related to practical wisdom, for the man of practical wisdom must perceive the particular facts, understand and make judgments about them, apprehend the appropriate end, and take the means which will reach that end. Practical wisdom enables the faculties of understanding, judgment, and intuitive reason to operate efficiently in a given situation. Thus, practical wisdom has great importance in the Ethics; without it, moral virtue is not possible, for while moral virtue enables man to aim at the right mark, practical wisdom enables man, through examination of particular facts, to take the right means.

Given this definition, no major character in the novel, except Sophia, has prudence at his command. It makes eminently clear the sort of prudence that Blifil and a host of minor characters have. They have only the aspect of practical wisdom which attends to

particular circumstances. They are clever in attending to their own selfish desires, but they have ignored the proper and noble ends of all action, the universals. Thus, Bridget is prudent only in the corrupt sense of the word explored by Hatfield and Battestin. Dowling would seem prudent, but his agreement to help Blifil carry out his plot to destroy Tom reveals that he has not practical wisdom which must involve moral virtue. Blifil is the foremost example of false prudence. Aristotle's comment describes Blifil perfectly: "wickedness perverts us and causes us to be deceived about the starting-points of actions" (IX, 1144a). Blifil's prudence is only cleverness accompanied by a thoroughly perverted view of the starting-points of action.

On the other hand, Allworthy, who fully understands the ends of action, the universals of ethical conduct, has great difficulty in applying them because of his failure, in most cases, to apprehend the variable facts, the minor premisses. The errors on his part, in Aristotelian terms, involve lapses in understanding, judgment, and intuitive reason. To take two obvious examples, Allworthy errs in accepting Anne Partridge's testimony against her husband, but errs in a different way when he consigns Molly to the House of Correction. In the first instance, the narrator takes time to hint at Allworthy's error when he begs the reader's patience a moment to "make a just compliment to the great wisdom and sagacity of our law, which refuses to admit the evidence of a wife for or

against her husband" (II, vi). In the second, the narrator comments on both Molly's punishment and Allworthy's procedure. Of the House of Correction he explains that it is a place "where inferior sort of people may learn one good lesson, viz., respect and deference to their superiors; since it must show them the wide distinction Fortune intends between those persons who are to be corrected for their faults, and those who are not; which lesson if they do not learn, I am afraid they very rarely learn any other good lesson, or improve their morals, at the House of Correction" (IV, xi). He also questions whether Allworthy's "conduct was strictly regular" since there "was no regular information before him." Nevertheless, "as his intention was truly upright, he ought to be excused in foro conscientiæ; since so many arbitrary acts are daily committed by magistrates who have not this excuse to plead for themselves" (IV, xi). Despite the narrator's satiric thrust at magistrates whose intentions are not upright, it is clear that he regards Allworthy's action as arbitrary. As though to emphasize that point, this is the second punishment which Allworthy has doled out to the mother of a bastard, the first being to Jenny Jones in Book II. However, in that case the punishment itself is totally different. Thus, while Allworthy intends to do what is right, to render an equitable judgment, he errs in his procedures as well as in his punishment. Ironically, the House of Correction does not correct, nor does Allworthy's sending Jenny away have the

effect he hopes for, quite the contrary as she runs away with a man. In short, while Allworthy has the practical wisdom that enables him to control his passions, he does not have the sort that would enable him to arrive at equitable and correct judgments about others.

Critics have made much of the symmetrical embedding of the two tales which seem to act as object lessons: Mrs. Fitzpatrick's tale for Sophia and The Man of the Hill's for Tom. The tales serve a number of functions, for not only do they contrast with each other, but they serve as foils for Sophia and Tom respectively. Mrs. Fitzpatrick's tale reveals her lack of prudence in marrying Fitzpatrick and at the same time her "cleverness" in becoming the mistress of a fashionable Irish peer. Her self-indulgence reveals her perverted morality, her failure to apprehend the true ends of action. Sophia's true prudence, which has been amply demonstrated by Hatfield,[14] stands in contrast to Mrs. Fitzpatrick, for Sophia not only conducts her own affairs in accordance with virtue, but avoids what could be a disastrous marriage and has keen enough penetration to discern the hypocrisy of Mrs. Fitzpatrick whom Sophia believes is "not better than she should be"(XI, x).

The Man of the Hill's account of his youthful self-indulgence stands in clear contrast to Tom's incontinence, for the Man of the Hill deliberates and makes clear choices to indulge his various

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[14]Hatfield, op. cit., pp. 23-25.

passions. Later when he learns moral truth, the true ends of action, he turns to another form of self-indulgence: he removes himself into so restricted a sphere that virtuous action becomes unnecessary for him. When he and Tom hear Mrs. Waters' cries for help, he can remain at the top of the hill, unconcerned with the fate of his fellow man. As Aristotle points out, "a man has practical wisdom not by knowing only but by being able to act" (IX, 1152a). Even though he has attained understanding of the ends of action, his inability or refusal to act suggests that he does not possess prudence. On the other hand, Mrs. Fitzpatrick acts, but from perverted principles.

Tom, who must learn prudence, ordinarily acts from good intentions. On some occasions,however, he either fails to deliberate or fails to abide by the results of his deliberations. On other occasions he acts from mistaken notions about the ends of action. His resulting incontinence prevents his being prudent or practically wise. Aristotle explains that the same man cannot

> have practical wisdom and be incontinent; for it has been shown that a man is at the same time practically wise, and good in respect of character. Further, a man has practical wisdom not by knowing only but by being able to act; but the incontinent man is unable to act [in accordance with virtue]. . . . He acts willingly (for he acts in a sense with knowledge both of what he does and of the end to which he does it), but is not wicked, since his purpose is good. . . . And he is not a criminal; for he does not act of malice aforethought (IX, 1152a).

Significantly, this is a nearly perfect description of Fielding's hero.

While many critics have commented on Tom's lack of prudence in managing his affairs with Molly, Mrs. Waters, and Lady Bellaston, none has dealt with his failure to understand the universals of moral truth. Throughout the novel, in the country, on the road, and in the city, Tom persistently acts on the basis of what Allworthy calls "a mistaken point of honour" (III, ii). Fielding introduces the problem of honor with characteristic irony in Book III, Chapter ii, entitled "The Hero of this Great History Appears with Very Bad Omens. A Little Tale of So Low a Kind that Some May Think It Not Worth Their Notice." Perhaps the key word which Fielding himself calls attention to is low. In one sense the incident which follows, Tom's lying to protect Black George, is trivial. But in a more important sense it holds the key to the interpretation of both Tom's and Allworthy's characters, as well as to the problem of honor which will recur throughout the novel with important ramifications for the plot.

In this chapter Tom's impetuous nature leads him first to coax Black George onto Squire Western's land and then to promise to protect Black George by taking the entire blame on himself. In anticipation of Thwackum's punishment, Tom's main anxiety is that his constancy will fail him and that he will thereby "betray the gamekeeper, whose ruin he knew must now be the consequence" (III, ii). Tom's constancy holds, of course, even under very severe punishment. Fielding has set up an extremely complex

ethical situation and requires his characters and his readers to make judgments about it. Tom should not have coaxed Black George onto Western's land. The gamekeeper should not have gone with him. Once there and the damage done, Tom promises to protect George for fear that the gamekeeper's family will be ruined. Tom's promise necessitates a lie as soon as Western inquires who was with him. Once Tom has committed himself, a solution to the dilemma is not easy.

When Allworthy comments that even if Tom is guilty, "he could have no motive but a mistaken point of honour" (III, ii), a debate over the nature of honor between Thwackum and Square ensues. Thwackum maintains that honor is dependent on the religion of the Church of England while Square argues that "true honour and true virtue are almost synonymous terms." Allworthy interposes commenting that he had said "nothing of true honour" (III, iii). The debate indicates that concepts of honor are, as Square suggests, manifold and mutable. Throughout the novel the characters who most use the term ordinarily refer to various unexamined conventions such as the gentleman's code of honor and class distinctions. As with Thwackum and Square, their concepts of honor are so mutable that they can be used to justify nearly any action and ordinarily have little to do with either religion or virtue. As Aristotle points out, honor should not be the end of action, because "it seems to be superficial . . . , since it is thought to depend on

those who bestow honour rather than on him who receives it" (IX, 1095b).

The incident with Black George reveals a good deal about Allworthy. When Blifil reveals the truth, breaking his promise to Tom, Allworthy prevents further punishment of Tom, because he believes Tom deserves "reward rather than punishment." He can admire Tom's "invincible fidelity" (III, v) even while he perceives that Tom acted on a "mistaken point of honor." At the same time he shows greater severity to Black George observing "that there was a great difference between being guilty of a falsehood to excuse yourself and to excuse another." Further, he is angered that Black George "basely suffered Tom Jones to undergo so heavy a punishment for his sake, whereas he ought to have prevented it by making the discovery himself" (III, v). The entire incident demonstrates that Allworthy is far more perceptive than many critics are willing to admit.

The next serious situation in which Tom acts on "a mistaken point of honour" takes place on the road, following his quarrel with Northerton. He is urged by the lieutenant in charge to take revenge on Northerton for the sake of his honor. The speciousness of his argument, however, is revealed in his lines about religion: "Be a good Christian as long as you live; but be a man of honour too, and never put up an affront; not all the books, nor all the parsons in the world, shall ever persuade me to that. I love my

religion very well, but I love my honour more" (VI, xiii). Clearly, the precepts of Christianity cannot be reconciled with the lieutenant's code of honor. Even though Tom is not entirely satisfied with the lieutenant's reasoning, he purchases a sword and then debates the issue: "'Very well,' said he, 'and in what cause do I venture my life? Why, in that of my honour. . . . But is not revenge forbidden by Heaven? Yes, but it is enjoined by the world. Well, but shall I obey the world in opposition to the express commands of Heaven? Shall I incur the Divine displeasure rather than be called--ha--coward--scoundrel?--I'll think no more; I am resolved, and must fight him'" (VII, xiv). The decision to "think no more" is typical of Fielding's impetuous hero. He does not take the time to deliberate carefully but acts to protect his honor before he is even sure that it is worth protecting. Fortunately, Tom's intentions are frustrated by the escape of Ensign Northerton, but he still retains the sword with which he will battle Mr. Fitzpatrick.

Underscoring the shallowness of honor throughout the sequence of events, the landlady of the inn attributes honor to one party and retracts it as though she were changing bed clothes. When she thinks the soldiers have money she calls them "gentlemen" and "your honours," but when they leave without paying she calls them wicked. Tom himself receives similar treatment, for "the lowest sort of people are very tenacious of respect; and though they are

contented to give this gratis to persons of quality, yet they never confer it on those of their own order without taking care to be well paid for their pains" (VIII, iii).

Tom's involvement with Lady Bellaston also results from his notion of honor. When confronted with Lady Bellaston's invitation to an affair, the narrator explains his reaction: "Jones had never less inclination to an amour than at present; but gallantry to the ladies was among his principles of honour, and he held it as much incumbent on him to accept a challenge to love as if it had been a challenge to fight" (XIII, vii). Fielding emphasizes the point that Jones' honor forces him to continue the affair. For instance, Nightingale invites Tom to attend a play, and while Tom would have preferred "this sort of fun . . . his honour got the better of his inclination" and he keeps his appointment with Lady Bellaston. As his indebtedness to her increases, mistaken honor and justice and his fear of being thought ungrateful combine to keep him in the lady's service until he can extricate himself by forcing Lady Bellaston to break off the affair. Until Nightingale convinces Tom that Lady Bellaston has bestowed her favors on many other young men, Tom continues to view them as benefits. Once convinced, however, "he began to look on all favours he had received rather as wages than benefits, which depreciate not only her, but himself too in his own conceit" (XV, ix).

Toward the end of the novel Tom begins to define honor for himself and others and to act in accordance with his ideas, so that a number of incidents assures the reader of the change in Tom. He gives his most explicit definition of honor during his attempts to persuade young Nightingale to marry Nancy. Nightingale admits his promise of marriage to Nancy prior to her pregnancy and then asks Tom, "Can I, after this publication of her disgrace, think of such an alliance with honour?" Tom responds without hesitation, "'Undoubtedly . . . and the very best and truest honour, which is goodness, requires it of you'" (XIV, vii). He then launches into an analysis of honor which reveals the distance between Nightingale's superficial, but popular notion of honorable behavior and the unhappiness such behavior would cause. Tom's identification of honor with goodness echoes Square's earlier identification of it with virtue. The difference between the two conceptions lies primarily in the difference between the two men. Square is interested only in the verbal definition, while Tom is concerned with the action which, for him, must proceed from the conception.

Other characters by their words and actions provide perspective on Tom's understanding of honor. Nightingale's uncle, as a way of helping his nephew, provides a cynical definition of honor which echoes Aristotle's reason for denying that it is the end of action: "'Honour is a creature of the world's making, and the

world hath the power of a creator over it, and may govern and direct it as they please'" (XIV, ix). For this reason he urges Nightingale to forget honor and give up Nancy. Lord Fellamar who acts vilely toward Sophia and then toward Tom, later decides to free Tom from imprisonment because "his lordship, who was strictly a man of honour . . . would by no means have been guilty of an action which the world in general would have condemned" (XVIII, xi). Clearly, his lordship equates honor with the good opinion of the world. Tom's definition, however, places honor in direct opposition to the idea that honor consists in popular approval, an idea which guides the decisions of a good many characters in Tom Jones. Further, his new definition also precludes his own past behavior. It will admit neither revenge for the sake of honor nor gallantry to the ladies for the sake of pride.

In addition, Tom begins to exercise greater control over his impulsiveness. His behavior with the elder Nightingale is an example. Though Tom does not succeed in his interview, he displays admirable control over himself. He encounters nearly insurmountable odds in the avarice of Nightingale who insists that his son marry a woman of fortune. As the narrator comments, "Neither history nor fable have ever yet ventured to record an instance of any one who, by force of argument and reason, hath triumphed over habitual avarice" (XV, viii). Despite his failure, Tom makes the attempt and withdraws without unduly exacerbating the old man's

temper. In contrast, in an earlier parallel interview with a Quaker who refuses to give his daughter a groat because she had run away with a penniless man, Tom loses his temper, crying, "'I see there are madmen, and fools, and villains in the world'" (VII, x). The comment which Tom offers the Quaker has absolutely no effect except to confirm the Quaker in his point of view.

Tom provides other evidence of his new understanding of honor. When he receives Arabella Hunt's proposal of marriage, he "almost determined to be false to [Sophia] from a high point of honour" (XV, xi), but he sees the idea as a false point of honor and one which is against nature. His declaration to the widow, that he cannot give his hand unless he can also give his heart, reveals a clear perception of honorable action.

Following his fight with Fitzpatrick, Tom laments "'having shed the blood of one of his fellow creatures'" (XVII, v) even more than he laments being suspected of provoking the quarrel. The contrast to his earlier decision to "think no more" and to fight Ensign Northerton is obvious. The protection of his honor is not warrant enough to kill. He does not wish "'to live with the reputation of a murderer'" (XVII, ix). When Jones finally admits to himself that all his misfortunes are his own responsibility, "'the consequences only of my own folly and vice'" (XVIII, ii), he finally attains the condition necessary to the perfection of prudence. Not until he accepts responsibility for

his own conduct can he learn to exercise the practical wisdom which daily living demands. His responses to Molly, to Mrs. Waters, to Lady Bellaston, to Nightingale, to Ensign Northerton, and to a host of others depend upon his understanding of moral truth and on his ability to guide his own actions in terms of that understanding. Tom gains just such prudence in the course of the novel.

CHAPTER VI

PRUDENCE AND THE CONTROL OF OTHERS

Although John Preston probably overstates the case when he writes that Tom Jones is a book "about judgment,"[1] there is no question that judgment is very important in the novel primarily because it results in actions which frequently and sometimes drastically affect the lives of others. A number of characters in the novel, but chiefly Allworthy, Western, and Blifil, exercise control over others, often to their disadvantage; thus, it is no surprise that the novel focuses considerable attention on judgments. Because judgment is ultimately dependent on the perception of both general moral truth and specific events and circumstances, what is perceived is immensely important. Blifil's failure to grasp the abstract principles of moral action, for instance, results in his deceitful schemes to control others for his own benefit. On the other hand, Allworthy's errors in the perception of particular circumstances and motives result in the inappropriate judgment and control of several characters.

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[1]John Preston, "Tom Jones and the 'Pursuit of True Judgment,'" p. 316.

The omnipresence of false information, however, makes perception and therefore true judgment extremely difficult. To demonstrate the difficulty of perception and judgment Fielding pulls his reader into the milieu of the novel, forcing him to test his perceptions, requiring that he judge, but demanding finally that he realize his own limitations as a judge and that he understand and forgive the erroneous judgments of others. Preston seems to feel that the main ethical point of the novel is that "One must be harsh with oneself but charitable and compassionate to others."[2] True enough, but the novel does much more in demonstrating ethical criteria for judging others. The novel contrasts the ways in which characters arrive at those judgments that influence their control over others and illustrates what might be called an ethic of control, one based on an Aristotelian model. That model in turn contributes to the structure of the novel as a work of art.

Every character in Tom Jones, with the conspicuous exception of Blifil, has difficulty in perceiving the truth. Even the reader of Tom Jones is forced to take an active part in the perceptual world of the novel in order that he may experience for himself the difficulties attendant on perception and judgment. His involvement as an active perceiver and judge is immediate. The narrator's

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[2]Ibid., p. 321.

reason for presenting the bill of fare to the feast is to prevent giving any disappointment to customers, for "Men who pay for what they eat will insist on gratifying their palates however nice and whimsical these may prove" (I, i). He expects the readers of the work to have different points of view and different tastes and he expects them to judge accordingly, but he places the responsibility for judgment on his readers when he states that they "may either stay and regale with what is provided for them, or may depart to some other ordinary better accommodated to their taste" (I, i).

Once the reader accepts the challenge and remains to regale himself with the entertainment provided, the narrator demands that he read with intelligence, that he suspend his judgments until he has examined all the evidence concerning both the characters of the novel and the structure of the novel as a work of art. In Chapter ii with the introduction of Allworthy and Bridget, the reader is immediately presented with varying points of view. Because Allworthy believed that he would meet his dead wife "in a place where he should never part with her more . . . , his sense was arraigned by one part of his neighbours, his religion by a second, his sincerity by a third" (I, ii). One recent critic has seen Allworthy as "not only impeccably celibate in his long years as a widower but also childless . . . his virtue is admirable but there is something sterile about the man."[3] Allworthy's literary

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[3]Alter, Fielding and the Nature of the Novel, p. 89.

neighbors continue to arraign his motives in one way or another. Bridget is introduced as one "of that species of women whom you commend rather for good qualities than beauty." At the same time "her prudence was as much on the guard as if she had all the snares to apprehend which were ever laid for her whole sex." This prudence, the narrator adds, is of the sort which "is always readiest to go on duty where there is the least danger" (I, ii). Clearly, we are encouraged to be wary of too hasty a judgment of Bridget's prudence and Allworthy's chastity.

After his brief digression on unnecessary prudence in women, the narrator concludes his second chapter by speaking directly to the reader: "Reader, I think proper, before we proceed any farther together, to acquaint thee that I intend to digress, through this whole history, as often as I see occasion, of which I am myself a better judge than any pitiful critic whatever; and here I must desire all those critics to mind their own business, and not to intermeddle with affairs or works which no ways concern them; for till they produce the authority by which they are constituted judges, I shall not plead to their jurisdiction" (I, ii). The statement is a continuation of the bill of fare to the feast, another opportunity for the impatient reader to "depart to some other ordinary better accommodated to [his] taste." At the same time it challenges the reader to see how the digressions are indeed pertinent to the main matter of the narrative. Fielding correctly

predicted that critics would quibble over "digressions" which they viewed as irrelevant. Indeed some fairly recent critics see the introductory chapters for each book and the interpolated tales as more or less irrelevant.[4] But in almost every case, a digression provides an additional frame of reference against which the reader is expected to perceive and judge particular events and circumstances. What Fielding demands of his reader is continual alertness and a willingness to examine each aspect of the novel in terms of the whole. Fielding's treatment of Allworthy demands such alertness. The choice of name in itself leads the reader to a conclusion about the man, but very early the narrator brings us up sharply, warning us not to predispose our judgments. He allows the reader to be carried away by rhetoric, but at the height of the conceit, he brings him suddenly down to reality.

> It was now the middle of May, and the morning was remarkably serene, when Mr. Allworthy walked forth on the terrace, where the dawn opened every minute that lovely prospect we have before described to his eye; and now having sent forth *streams of light, which ascended the blue firmament before* him, as harbingers preceding his pomp, in the full blaze of his majesty rose the sun, than which one object alone in this lower creation could be more glorious, and that Mr. Allworthy himself presented--a human being replete with benevolence, meditating in what manner he might render himself most acceptable to his Creator, by doing most good to his creatures.
>
> Reader, take care. I have unadvisedly led thee to the top of as high a hill as Mr. Allworthy's, and how to get thee down without breaking they neck I do not well know (I, iv).

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[4]See for instance W. L. Cross, II, 103 and II, 221 and R. S. Crane, p. 127.

The passage begins in an ordinary enough way, a matter-of-fact description, undergirded by matter-of-fact syntax in the normal subject-predicate arrangement. But suddenly after the semi-colon, the sentence is no longer ordinary. On the contrary, two fairly long modifiers, the first of which develops into an epic simile, precede the subject. The subject-predicate order is inverted to place the sun in the position of maximum emphasis. The final modifying clause is a hyperbolic epic simile comparing the glory of the sun to that of Allworthy. The sentence, long, carefully wrought, and filled with echoes of epic, pushes the reader to the brink of laughter. It is nearly too much to accept, but coming upon us so quickly, and following a rather prosaic statement about the dawn, it takes us unaware. Yet the bubble is at the breaking point, and the next terse sentence pops it: "Reader, take care." The illusion is suddenly demolished, but if there are any doubts remaining, they are removed by the final sentence. Fielding has taken the reader up a high rhetorical hill in this carefully controlled mock-heroic passage and getting down may be a painful task. It is not easy to relinquish initial perceptions once they have been accepted. The passage is almost a paradigm for the central plot problem of the novel. Once Allworthy is convinced of Tom's villainy and Blifil's virtue, it is no easy matter to persuade him of the reverse. But anyone's perception of reality can be false or misleading, the reader's as well as the characters'.

In the very next chapter, the narrator baits the reader again, this time, however, mocking his own powers as well. He first presents an observation which is perfectly obvious, at least after he makes it. "When a wife, a child, a relation, or a friend, performs what we desire with grumbling and reluctance, with expressions of dislike and dissatisfaction, the manifest difficulty which they undergo must greatly enhance the obligation." He then explains that he has given the reader this deep observation because very few readers can be supposed capable of making such observations themselves. This, however, he says, "is a favour rarely to be expected in the course of my work. Indeed, I shall seldom or never so indulge him,unless in such instances as this, where nothing but the inspiration with which we writers are gifted can possibly enable any one to make the discovery" (I, v). But the discovery he has made is an obvious one, one of which every reader can say, "That is perfectly true. I've had the experience myself." The difference is that Fielding renders it comically. The effect of his exaggeration of the "inspiration" necessary to make such an observation is ironic, deprecating his own observational power and, at the same time, questioning the reader's.

A few pages later, the narrator denies having these same inspirational powers. In commenting on Dr. Blifil (who "had one positive recommendation;--this was a great appearance of religion"), the narrator claims not to know whether Dr. Blifil's religion was

real or consisted only in appearance, for he is "not possessed of any touchstone which can distinguish the true from the false" (I, x). However, the very fact that the question arises strongly implies that Dr. Blifil's religion consists solely in appearance. As the story progresses and as we observe him in various situations, this becomes fully apparent. The passage emphasizes the difficulty of discriminating the reality underlying appearances and challenges the reader not to draw unwarranted conclusions.

Later, in commenting on Allworthy's failure to perceive the hypocrisy of Thwackum and Square, the narrator warns his reader to avoid misjudging Allworthy. The reader has special knowledge of both Thwackum and Square, insights which were not available to Allworthy, insights made possible by the special "inspiration" reserved for authors. In fact, the reader is "deceived, if he imagines that the most intimate acquaintance which he himself could have had with that divine would have informed him of those things which we, from our inspiration, are enabled to open and discover" (III, v). In other words, in a work of fiction the writer has special information by virtue of inventing the characters, information which he may, as he chooses, convey to the reader; but in a real situation the appearances conveyed by men such as Dr. Blifil, Thwackum, and Square are not easy to penetrate. Without the inside information which the author provides, the reader is likely to be in the same plight as the characters.

Thus, "Of readers . . . who condemn the wisdom or penetration of Mr. Allworthy, I shall not scruple to say, that they make a very bad and ungrateful use of that knowledge, which we have communicated to them" (III, v).

At another point, Fielding analyzes the responses of a hypothetical audience to Black George's theft of Tom's five-hundred pound note. Each section of the audience has a somewhat different response, but most agree that Black George is a villain. Again the narrator warns the reader against unwarranted conclusions: "Now we, who are admitted behind the scenes of this great theatre of Nature . . . can censure the action without conceiving any absolute detestation of the person, whom perhaps Nature may not have designed to act an ill part in all her dramas." Later in the same chapter, he states that "A single bad act no more constitutes a villain in life than a single bad part on the stage." For this reason, "the man of candour and of true understanding is never hasty to condemn. He can censure an imperfection, or even a vice without rage against the guilty party" (VII, i). In short, when we do observe a sign of villainy we must be careful not to assume that the bad act arises from a villainous nature. We can only be sure of a villainous nature when we know that the character habitually makes a conscious choice to do evil.

In this series of passages, the narrator prompts his reader to exercise care in observing and good judgment in interpreting his perceptions. The reader is continually reminded that the

truth is as difficult for him to perceive as it is for the characters in the book and that he should not be misled into thinking himself especially perceptive because the narrator makes him privy to information not available to the characters. In real life such "inspiration" is not available. Each man must observe and judge for himself.

Most of Fielding's characters, no less than his readers, perceive the truth with difficulty and judge accordingly. There are continual demonstrations of inadequate perception and judgment among minor characters. Nearly every innkeeper and lawyer is an example. At one inn, for example, the landlady immediately assumes Jones to be at fault in the quarrel with Northerton and refers to him as an "inferior" person and to the officers as "gentlemen" (VII, xiii). However, when the officers have departed her inn, she says to Jones,"'I think it is great pity that such a pretty young gentleman should undervalue himself so as to go about with these soldier fellows'"(VIII, ii).

Among the major characters faulty perception is also common. Allworthy, of course, seems to be open to the charge of inadequate perception and judgment more than any other major character, perhaps because his judgments affect so many people decisively. While John Preston finds "something heroic in Allworthy," the book's

"tragic hero in fact,"[5] he too harshly condemns him as "unexpectedly egocentric," "almost always prejudiced" in his judgments, and "quick to blame, more aware of guilt than innocence."[6] In fact Preston goes on to explain that "Fielding needs someone who can do wrong in order to bring out the hollowness of Allworthy's rectitude. A man," Preston continues, "who cannot act badly has no business to be judging others."[7]

Despite the fact that most critics pass over the problem of Allworthy's errors by acknowledging how easily he is deceived, there is a real problem in reconciling his apparent central moral position in the novel with the large number of errors in judgment he makes. The reader, in short, must perceive and judge not only the actions of characters, but the perceptions and judgments which lead to their actions. Once the nature of a character's perception and judgment is ascertained, it must be judged in light of the ethical concepts dramatized by the novel as a whole. Preston's failure to examine Allworthy's judgments against this ethical framework results in his precipitous condemnation of Allworthy. It is a question of the reader's perception of the perceiver and his world.

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[5]Preston, "Tom Jones and the 'Pursuit of True Judgment,'" p. 323.

[6]Ibid., p. 322.

[7]Ibid., p. 325.

In Tom Jones the narrator assures the reader that he does "not pretend to introduce any infallible characters into this history" (III, v).[8] Even though no "perfect" example will be represented in Tom Jones, the reader himself can learn, for he will be able to perceive the whole truth and learn from the errors of good men. The reader, who will be admitted "behind the scenes of this great theatre of Nature" (VII, i), will have access to an understanding not only of actions themselves, but of the intentions and personalities underlying those actions. The reader must only exercise his intelligence to discriminate between the outward appearances of vice and virtue. In fact, Fielding takes care to remind his reader of that responsibility at almost the precise center of the novel. "To mark the nice distinction between two persons actuated by the same vice or folly" (X, i) is one talent of the good writer, but it is also a necessity for the perceptive reader.

The reader must also make the sometimes difficult discrimination between a vicious act and vicious nature. For both the narrator and Tom urge the same point: that "many a man who commits evil is not totally bad and corrupt in his heart" (VIII, xv). Fielding certainly believed that, despite the difficulties, such fine discriminations in the perception of truth were possible,

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[8]See also, Tom Jones, X, i.

that men could perceive even the most obscure and carefully-disguised villainy, if only they observe the appropriate signs.[9] The perception of such differences requires observation of the agent over an extended period, or at least in a number of situations, and insight, if only oblique, into the agent's intentions in those situations. The reader has both advantages, but in addition, both he and the characters need criteria for judging what they perceive.

To Fielding, the barrister and prospective magistrate, discriminations between the voluntary and involuntary, the premeditated and the unpremeditated were of paramount importance in discriminating between imprudence and villainy. The distinctions drawn in the Nicomachean Ethics present a striking parallel to those dramatized in Tom Jones. One of the key ideas in Aristotelian ethics is that for an act to be done justly or temperately the agent must be in a certain condition when he performs the act. "In the first place, he must have knowledge, secondly, he must choose the acts, and choose them for their own sakes, and thirdly his action must proceed from a firm and unchangeable character. . . . As a condition of the possession of the virtues knowledge has little or no weight, while the other conditions count not for a little but for

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[9]This idea is an implicit assumption underlying Fielding's "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," but see especially Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 283 and 289.

everything, i.e. the very conditions which result from often doing just and temperate acts" (IX, 1105a-1105b). For Aristotle and for Fielding, this passage contains the key criteria for judging whether or not a man possesses the virtues. The primary conditions are choice and character, what we might call intent. The agent's knowledge of particular facts has little or no bearing on his possession of the virtue. Thus, if he acts in ignorance of particulars and therefore chooses an unjust act, he cannot be condemned as unjust, although the act itself might be termed incidentally unjust. Further, he must choose the act for its own sake. If he does not choose the act but does it anyway, he cannot be called unjust, though the act may be. The reverse is also true. If a man performs a just act out of fear, rather than performing it for its own sake, neither the agent nor the act can be termed just, except incidentally. Black George's decision to carry Sophia's money to Tom out of his fear of being caught (VI, xiii) is a perfect example. Curiously, Aristotle instances just such an example: "A man might return a deposit unwillingly and from fear, and then he must not be said either to do what is just or to act justly, except in an incidental way" (IX, 1135b).

The importance of the conditions requires Aristotle to explain voluntary and involuntary action and to define choice, for while no involuntary action involves choice, some voluntary actions do, but others do not. For Aristotle involuntary actions are those

done under compulsion or owing to ignorance. In Tom Jones we need be concerned only with the latter. Aristotle uses the term involuntary in relation to ignorance of particulars, "the circumstances of the action and the objects with which it is concerned" (IX, 1110b). Ignorance of purpose and of universals, however, leads to wickedness and is blameworthy, but one who is ignorant of particular circumstances may be both pitied and pardoned. A man who acts out of ignorance of particulars and especially of the most important points, acts involuntarily.[10] "Further, the doing of an act that is called involuntary in virtue of ignorance of this sort must be painful and involve repentance" (IX, 1111a). Since involuntary acts are those done under compulsion or by virtue of ignorance, voluntary acts are those alone "of which the moving principle is in the agent himself, he being aware of the particular circumstances of the action" (IX, 1111a). Not only acts proceeding from reason, but those proceeding from the irrational passions, such as appetite and anger, must be termed voluntary. If not, we would have to describe things we ought to desire as involuntary, "and we ought both to be angry at certain and to have an appetite for certain things" (IX, 1111a).

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[10]Aristotle discriminates between involuntary and not voluntary action. Those who act in ignorance of particulars and are repentant of those acts are said to act involuntarily, while those who act out of ignorance but are not repentant act "not voluntarily." See IX, 1110b.

Choice, then, involves thought and a rational principle. An action undertaken through excitement of the irrational passions, without deliberate premeditation is not chosen. A man might know the circumstances of an action and be aware of its end; yet if he has not deliberated and made a conscious choice, if he acts merely from the excitement of irrational passon, as Tom does, the act is not an object of choice. The object of choice is in our power and is desired only after deliberation; choice turns out to be "deliberate desire of things in our power; for when we have decided as a result of deliberation, we desire in accordance with our deliberation" (IX, 1113a). As a result, both virtuous and vicious actions are within our power if we choose to do them. As we exercise choice over certain kinds of actions, we develop the habit of acting justly or unjustly, temperately or intemperately. But it does not follow that if after developing a habit pattern of unjust acts, a man can cease to be unjust if he wishes to. He may not be able to change. Because it was in his power at the beginning, however, the acts he does are both voluntary and chosen.

> Therefore virtue also is in our own power, and so too vice. For where it is in our power to act it is also in our power not to act, and vice versa; so that, if to act, where this is noble, is in our power, not to act, which will be base, will also be in our power, and if not to act, where this is noble, is in our power, to act, which will be base, will also be in our power. Now if it is in our power to do noble or base acts, and likewise in our power not to do them, and this was what being good or bad meant, then it is in our power to be virtuous or vicious (IX, 1113b).

In making judgments about the characters in Tom Jones, the reader must perceive these distinctions which are dramatized and brought into sharp contrast through the juxtaposition of various characters. For instance, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, while Tom's incontinent actions are voluntary, they are not chosen. On the other hand, when Tom does not act to steal Sophia from her father, his act is both voluntary and chosen, the result of an active principle, which "prevented him from any thought of making his fortune by such means (for this, as I have said, is an active principle, and doth not content itself with knowledge or belief only)" (IV, vi). The "active principle" which results in inaction is clearly in accordance with the Aristotelian idea that virtue which must be active will consist in lack of action when to act will be base. In contrast, Blifil's plot to capture Sophia is carefully premeditated, having far more to do with his desire for her father's estate than with his love or desire for her. When Tom does choose, he elects virtuous action. Blifil, who hardly ever acts without deliberation, nearly always elects the opposite.

The Aristotelian ideas of the involuntary, the voluntary, and the chosen are also important in judging Allworthy. Certainly, Allworthy blunders. But in each instance, as the narrator suggests following Allworthy's condemnation of Molly, he ought to be excused "in foro conscientiæ" (IV, xi). His intentions are never bad.

In each instance of judgment he is never consciously biased as Preston suggests. It is his "custom never to punish any one . . . in a passion" (VI, xi). Both the narrator and Tom view his actions as both understandable and well-intentioned. By the end of the novel Tom can say to him, "the wisest man might be deceived as you were; and, under such a deception, the best must have acted just as you did" (XVIII, x). If Allworthy's sentences are inappropriate, they are so involuntarily. He acts in ignorance, under the influence of deceit and misinformation.

As Aristotle explains, however, knowledge of particulars is not a condition for the possession of the virtues. Allworthy's problem is not one of judgment so much as it is one of perception of those particulars. His prudence or practical wisdom is as much in need of repair as Tom's is, but only that aspect of it that grasps the specific conditions and circumstances of action. In contrast, Blifil, who apparently has little difficulty in perceiving particulars, fails completely in his understanding of the ends of action, that aspect of practical wisdom which enables one to perceive moral truth, what Aristotle would call the major premisses. Significantly, accurate perception of the major premisses is a very important condition for the possession of the virtues and one which Allworthy fulfills.

Perception of reality in relation to what underlies conduct is not easy. As Aristotle explains, "up to what point and to what

extent a man must deviate before he becomes blameworthy it is not easy to determine by reasoning, anymore than anything else that is perceived by the senses; such things depend on particular facts, and the decision rests with perception" (IX, 1109b). The particular facts themselves are not always observable. Tom's behavior with Molly has the appearance of self-indulgence to Allworthy, especially after Square's suggestion that Tom had tried to support "the father in order to corrupt the daughter" (IV, xi). Only because of the "particular facts" supplied by the narrator can the reader recognize Tom's behavior as incontinent. The perception of motives underlying action is extremely important to judgment in Tom Jones, but true motives are often impossible to detect. Allworthy mistakes both Tom's and Blifil's. As Thwackum and Blifil see Tom go to the woods with Molly, the narrator comments on Blifil's failure to mention Tom's name and then states in a tone of pretended superiority, "We never choose to assign motives to the actions of men, when there is any possibility of our being mistaken" (V, x). The irony is that the comment comes in the midst of a set of incidents for which a good many motives will be asserted or implied, those of Tom perverted and those of Blifil mistaken.

John Preston argues, that Allworthy should have had keener perceptions. As evidence he quotes from Fielding's "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men": "The truth is, nature doth really imprint sufficient marks in the countenance, to inform

an accurate and discerning eye."[11] The remainder of the sentence, which Preston fails to quote, explains that since "an accurate and discerning eye . . . is the property of few, the generality of mankind mistake the affectation for the reality."[12] Thus, physiognomy is really not very reliable. In reality, "the actions of men seem to be the justest interpreters of their thoughts, and the truest standards by which we may judge them."[13] Even this standard is liable to two types of error. The first is a result of taking "their own words against their actions." The second is taking the word of others.[14] Allworthy's error seems to lie in accepting the words of others without questioning the motives which underlie those words and without detecting any tell-tale marks in the countenance. Indeed Allworthy at times appears to be guilty of what Locke called the confusion of words and things and is certainly susceptible to what South called the "inordinate force of words." When Jenny explains that she cannot reveal the father of the child without the sacrifice of either her honor or religion, the narrator claims that "the least mention of those sacred words was sufficient to stagger" Allworthy (I, vi). Throughout the novel

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[11]Preston, "Tom Jones and the 'Pursuit of True Judgment,'" p. 323.

[12]Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 289.

[13]Ibid., p. 289.

[14]Ibid., p. 290.

he seems to be "staggered" by words, accepting testimony on face value, probing more deeply only when information contradicts what he already believes to be true. But in each of his key judgments, it is not possible for him to observe the actions of those involved. He is forced to rely on the testimony of others.

The difficulty in perceiving the truth in a world filled with deceit must be argued on Allworthy's behalf. As the narrator comments, "malice and envy" can so blacken a character "that the sagacity and goodness of an Allworthy will not be able to see through it" (III, vii). Though he commits unjust acts, he is not morally culpable, for each error is involuntary. While his intellectual virtue may be questionable, his moral virtue is sound. However, Allworthy's actions are not unimportant. They affect the lives of several characters to such an extent that Allworthy seems to set all strands of the plot in motion himself. His position of control over others demands all aspects of prudence or practical wisdom.

A fairly large number of characters in the novel are in a position to control others. To a large extent their perception of particular situations and ethical principles contributes to the form that such control takes. The two characters who display clearer perception than any others are Tom and Sophia. In relation to Sophia the narrator twice discusses suspicion. He comments first on Squire Western's failure to detect any of the signs of love between Tom and Sophia, while Sophia discerns Tom's love for her.

"That prodigious superiority of penetration which we must observe in some men over the rest of the human species," in lovers as well as knaves, is due simply to the fact that "they have the same thing in their heads, and their thoughts are turned the same way" (V, vi). This quicksightedness, however, is considerably different from what Fielding calls the first degree of suspicion which derives from the heart and which

> often forms its own objects--sees what is not, and always more than really exists. This is that quick-sighted penetration . . . which observes not only upon the actions, but upon the words and looks of men; and as it proceeds from the heart of the observer, so it dives into the heart of the observed, and there espies evil, as it were, in the first embryo. . . . An admirable faculty, if it were infallible; but . . . from the fallibility of such acute discernment have arisen many sad mischiefs and most grievous heartaches to innocence and virtue. I cannot help, therefore, regarding this vast quick-sightedness into evil as a vicious excess, and as a very pernicious evil in itself (XI, x).

Naturally, Fielding acquits Sophia of this degree of suspicion.

His second degree, however, arises from the head and is "indeed, no other than the faculty of seeing what is before your eyes, and of drawing conclusions from what you see." The narrator makes perception and judgment sound deceptively simple. "The former of these," he adds, "is unavoidable by those who have any eyes, and the latter is perhaps no less certain and necessary a consequence of our having any brains" (XI, x). Even when it is possible to observe actions directly, it is not always possible, as the novel amply illustrates, to draw appropriate conclusions. A few paragraphs later the narrator suggests that careful

observation is necessary when he reveals that Sophia had drawn her conclusions "not from the lips or behaviour of Mrs. Fitzpatrick, but from the peer, who was infinitely less expert at retaining a secret than was the good lady" (XI, v). In short, even Sophia might have been deceived by Mrs. Fitzpatrick. The method is neither so effective nor so foolproof as the narrator pretends it is. Nevertheless, Sophia's perceptive powers are usually quite adequate. She immediately discerns Blifil's base motive in releasing the partridge Tom had given her. Indeed "Sophia, when very young, discerned that Tom . . . was nobody's enemy but his own, and that Master Blifil . . . was . . . strongly attached to the interest only of one single person." Accordingly, "she honoured Tom Jones, and scorned Master Blifil, almost as soon as she knew the meaning of those two words" (IV, v). She also has insights into the personalities of both her father and aunt which help to preserve her from their tyranny. Significantly, while she has clearer perception than any character except Tom, she seems most aware of the fallibility of human perception in a complex world. When Tom pleads for her pardon at the end of the novel, she answers, "'Sincere repentance . . . Mr. Jones will obtain the pardon of a sinner, but it is from one who is a perfect judge of that sincerity. A human mind may be imposed on; nor is there any infallible method to prevent it'" (XVIII, xii). She goes on to insist on the strongest proofs of Tom's repentance: time, time

which will enable her to observe his actions over an extended period and draw appropriate conclusions. Fielding has put most of his advice in "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" into Sophia's mouth. The human mind can be deceived, but the best way to avoid deception is to ignore words and observe action.

Fielding's discussion of the two degrees of suspicion, especially with his use of the phrase "vicious excess," suggests a third term, the total or near total lack of suspicion, the tendency to accept nearly everything at face value. Certainly there are clusters of characters who illustrate aspects of each of these extremes; and each is properly called an extreme, for while Fielding's second degree of suspicion, that which arises from the head, stands as an intermediate between the "vicious excess" of suspicion and simple guilelessness, it is also an extreme in relation to each considered individually.[15] Fielding does not resort to the techniques of medieval allegory as Spenser did in dramatizing Aristotelian means and extremes in Book II of The Faerie Queene.[16] While Spenser's figures display a one-to-one

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[15]Cf. Aristotle's analysis of means and extremes, IX, 1107a.

[16]See especially Book II of The Faerie Queene and the dedicatory letter to Sir Walter Raleigh in which Spenser states, "I labour to pourtraict in Arthure . . . the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private morall vertues, as Aristotle hath devised." The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, ed. J. C. Smith and E. de Selincourt (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1912, rpt. 1952), p. 407.

relationship with the concepts they represent, Fielding's are only broadly allegorical and do not exhibit one characteristic with absolute consistency and to the exclusion of all others. However, Fielding's clusters of characters permit him to show kinds and degrees of simplicity and of the vicious excess of suspicion.

Tom and Sophia, around whom the whole plot develops, also stand at the center of the novel in terms of true perception, that degree of suspicion which, according to Fielding, arises from the head. A host of minor characters fill in the extremes. On the one hand, Thwackum, Mrs. Western, Partridge's wife, and the Man of the Hill illustrate the "vicious excess." Thwackum is ever ready, for instance, to believe Tom's guilt and to blame it on the tutelage of Square. Mrs. Western has the sort of suspicion which "often forms its own objects"; yet she has no insight into "the plain simple workings of honest nature, as she had never seen any such" (VI, ii). Accordingly, what she perceives as Sophia's love for Blifil is really due to her love for Tom, an error which causes "grievous heartaches" for more than one person. As we have seen, Anne Partridge's suspicion also "forms its own objects" in regard to her husband's guilt with Jenny. Poor Partridge's guilt exists only in his wife's imagination. The Man of the Hill goes beyond any other and believes firmly that all members of the human race are depraved and vicious. Significantly, with the

exception of the Man of the Hill, these characters also share a tendency to behave with tyranny toward others: Mrs. Western in attempting to force her niece first to marry Blifil and then Lord Fellamar; Anne Partridge in forcing Jeremy to admit guilt which he did not have; and Thwackum in his various attempts to force admissions from Tom, first in the matter of shooting the partridge on Western's land and later in his discovery of Tom with Molly on the day of Allworthy's sickness.

No character truly illustrates the opposite extreme of guileless simplicity, but Partridge, Mrs. Miller, and Allworthy all share the quality to some degree. Just as Partridge believes that the player taking the role of Hamlet had seen a real ghost (XVI, v), so Allworthy is taken in by the sophisticated deceits of Master Blifil in convincing Allworthy that he had not been aware of Sophia's displeasure at his advances and in persuading Allworthy to permit the reopening of his suit (XVI, v). Mrs. Miller, however, is even more vulnerable to deceit. "She was one of that order of mortals who are apt to believe everything which is said to them; to whom nature hath neither indulged the offensive nor defensive weapons of deceit, and who are consequently liable to be imposed upon by any one who will only be at the expense of a little falsehood for that purpose" (XVII, viii). Consequently, Mrs. Western is able to impose upon her with ease and to draw out all the little stock of information which she has concerning Tom

and Sophia. By virtue of their lack of suspicion, such characters tend to fall easy prey to those who would control and use them. As Fielding wrote in "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," "that open disposition, which is the surest indication of an honest and upright heart, chiefly renders us liable to be imposed on by craft and deceit, and principally disqualifies us for this discovery [of deceit]."[17]

Tom's perception is not a simple matter of having the same degree of suspicion that Sophia has: seeing what is before one's eyes and drawing conclusions from it. His perception is clearly linked to his good nature and his unusual capacity for empathy with others. In describing the active principle which guides Tom, the narrator states that its "use is not so properly to distinguish right from wrong, as to prompt and incite them to the former, and to restrain and withhold them from the latter." The principle is not an intellectual one which facilitates reason so much as it is intuitive, arising from Tom's feelings. Similarly, Aristotle points out that the mean may not be reached by reasoning but by perception which is a function of what he calls intuitive reason (IX, 1109b). Though Tom "did not always act rightly, yet he never did otherwise without feeling and suffering for it" (IV, vi). For example, Tom sees Molly "in the light of compassion" (V, vi).

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[17] Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 283.

When he reflects on her situation and his, "His own heart would not suffer him to destroy a human creature who, he thought, loved him" (V, iii). He finds joy in a generous act and suffers with people in their misfortunes, thus his unhappiness at finding that he had helped the Andersons (XIII, x) and his immediate condemnation of Patridge's "'stupid jesting'" over Nancy's and Mrs. Miller's grief (XIV, vi). Even Square in his letter to Allworthy in London recognizes Tom's generous compassion for others (XVIII, iv). Finally, Allworthy, too, links the goodness of Tom's heart and the quickness of his understanding when Tom intercedes for Blifil (XVIII, xi). In short, essential to Tom's perception "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."[18]

However, if these good qualities derive from Tom's capacity for feeling and expressing emotion, so do his greatest faults. Indeed, his perception fails him most often when his emotions or sensations get out of hand. His passionate nature permits him to become involved with Molly and Mrs. Waters. His feelings about honor and his fear of hurting Lady Bellaston keep him bound to her. He perceives her "ardent passion" for him, "the extreme violence

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[18]Works, ed. Henley, XIV, 285.

of which if he failed to equal, he well knew the lady would think him ungrateful, and, what is worse, he would have thought himself so" (XIII, ix). Such perceptions are intuitive, depending largely on Tom's ability to empathize with others. Since the active principle which inhabits Tom's heart and mind can lead him astray, it must be brought under rational control.

Squire Western is another passionate man, but his passions are never under control. Robert Alter has described him as "a center of continually detonating energy" and as "a wonderfully absurd object lesson in the necessity to direct and channel human energy rationally."[19] Western does virtually nothing that is not an unrestrained emotional response to the world around him. His perceptions of others are totally obscured by his own tremendously egocentric desires and assumptions. He does not believe that others are entitled to a will independent of his own. The result is that while he can love Sophia thoroughly, he can impose the severest tyrannies upon her.

In contrast, Allworthy seems almost incapable of emotional response, even though "he had possessed much fire in his youth, and had married a beautiful woman for love" (VI, iv). He has controlled that passion to such an extent that he does not respond to the passionate outbreaks of those whom he sentences. When

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[19]Alter, pp. 90-91.

Partridge, for example, protests his innocence vociferously and steadfastly, Allworthy simply dismisses him as a wicked man. Again, he seems unruffled even after sentencing Tom. "A flood of tears now gushed from the eyes of Jones, and every faculty of speech and motion seemed to have deserted him. It was some time before he was able to obey Allworthy's peremptory commands of departing; which he at length did, having first kissed his hands with a passion difficult to be affected, and as difficult to be described" (VI, xi). Throughout this demonstration, Allworthy presumably sits stonily unperturbed, either unwilling or unable to be affected by another's grief. Even in times of intense happiness Allworthy is similarly unresponsive. When Sophia agrees to her father's command to marry Tom, the scene that follows exemplifies the difference between Allworthy and Western. Jones fell "upon his knees and kissed her hand in an agony of joy, while Western began to caper and dance about the room." When Allworthy enters the room, however, his first response to the news is formal and constrained: "'I hope, madam,' cries Allworthy,' my nephew will merit so much goodness, and will be always as sensible as myself of the great honour you have done my family. An alliance with so charming and so excellent a young lady would indeed be an honour to the greatest in England'" (XVIII, xii). Whatever the reason may be, Allworthy simply does not respond spontaneously. His lack of emotional response involves a real lack of empathy. As a result, he fails to comprehend the

motives of others, both those who impose on him and those who do not. Nor is he fully conscious, through most of the novel, of how easily he may be imposed upon by hypocrites and villains. Thus, he believes that his justice can be absolute. That is, he is always sure that he knows the truth and doles out punishments accordingly. But lacking the insights supplied by Tom's compassionate nature, Allworthy's judgments take on, though unintentionally, the external characteristics of arbitrary tyranny.

Tom, Allworthy, and Western represent the elements which are necessary to true perception. While Western's uncontrolled passionate nature prevents his having any significant insight into the misery or happiness of others, except when it corresponds to his, Allworthy's almost total control appears to extinguish his ability to empathize deeply with others. Western's nature leads him to the degree of suspicion which "forms its own objects" and is a "vicious excess." Note his comment which attributes a string of bastards to Allworthy. In contrast, Allworthy's starkly controlled temperament supports his natural guilelessness and innocence, allowing him to be readily deceived. These two men illustrate the extremes of excess and defect: Western's passion is nearly always excessive, while Allworthy's is ordinarily suppressed. From a different perspective, Allworthy's intellectual control is excessive while Western's is almost non-existent. Opposed to both, by the end of the novel, is Tom's harmonious combination of passion

and intellectual control, a balance which will permit him to perceive with accuracy and to judge with mercy.

Before the end of the novel, the only character who exercises control over others and who does so justly is the gypsy king. After Patridge is caught in a compromising situation with the wife of one gypsy, Jones agrees to pay a sum of money to the injured husband, stipulating full pardon for both Partridge and the wife. The gypsy king, upon questioning the witness, discovers very quickly that the whole situation had been a trap concocted by the husband and wife to gain a few guineas. His justice is swift and appropriate: "'me do order, derefore, dat you be de infamous gypsy, and do wear pair of horns upon your forehead for one month, and dat your wife be called de whore, and pointed at all dat time'" (XII, xii).

Immediately following this incident the narrator discusses the difficulty of finding "any man adequate to the office of an absolute monarch." The difficulties are first that a prince is usually not "contented with all the power which is possible for him to have"; second, he does not "know his own happiness"; and third, he does not have "goodness sufficient to support the happiness of others" (XII, xii). In short, it is virtually impossible to find a man with a degree of practical wisdom which enables him to perceive not only universal moral truths but the particular facts and to act accordingly with justice toward those under his control.

The ordinary man cannot act absolutely. His perceptions of others are liable to error and his understanding of what is necessary to his own happiness may be faulty.

It is no accident that Tom in the following two chapters is placed in situations which require that he make judgments of others. In the first, Partridge argues that Tom should cash Sophia's bank-note. Tom, however, sees such an action as basically dishonest and loses his temper with Partridge but as quickly forgives him when he sees Partridge somewhat submissive (XII, xiii). In the next chapter the two travelers are accosted by a highwayman who demands their money. Tom soon wrests the gun from the highwayman who pleads for mercy, crying that this had been his first offence and that he needed money to feed his starving family. The man offers to take Tom to his home where he can observe the family's condition for himself. "Jones at first pretended that he would take the fellow at his word, and go with him, declaring that his fate should depend entirely on the truth of his story. Upon this the poor fellow immediately expressed so much alacrity that Jones was perfectly satisfied with his veracity, and began now to entertain sentiments of compassion for him" (XII, xiv). Tom not only returns the man's pistol but gives him two guineas as well for the immediate support of his wife and family.

While Tom's perception, in this instance, is as clear as the gypsy king's, it leads him to a merciful and generous response, which, as the narrator points out, may be regarded "as a want of

regard to that justice which every man owes his country" (XII, xiv). As it turns out, Tom's judgment is exactly right. His action preserves the Anderson family, and he later reflects, not "without horror, on the dreadful consequences which must have attended [the Andersons] had he listened rather to the voice of strict justice than to that of mercy, when he was attacked on the high-road" (XIII, x). Merciful action is typical of Tom who perceives the conflict between justice and mercy, which is established early in the novel with the "base-born infant, to which all charity is condemned by law as irreligious" (I, iii) and extended to the end when Tom pleads to Sophia, "'it is mercy, and not justice, which I implore at your hands. Justice I know must condemn me'" (XVIII, xii). While Allworthy listens to the "voice of strict justice" for Black George and Blifil even after he perceives his former errors, Tom wishes to mitigate the punishments of both. Of course, Tom has greater reason than anyone to recognize that the fallibility of human perception and judgment requires merciful action. This recognition, which he shares with Sophia, is only partly responsible for his preference for mercy. His compassion, once he learns to discriminate its objects, enables him to perceive with clarity and to judge with understanding. Just as he will combine the estates of Western and Allworthy, he ultimately brings together the passion of the one with the intellectual control of the other in such a way that his prudence will give no

one in the vicinity of Paradise Hall reason to fear tyranny from him, unintentional or otherwise.

Perhaps Fielding's most significant achievement in Tom Jones is his success in synthesizing art and ethic so that while art demonstrates the ethic and the ethic gives order to the art, it is impossible to say which generated which. The complex, strongly Aristotelian ethic involving both moral and intellectual virtue is presented through the carefully planned contrasts of character and incident which are carefully woven into the structure of the novel as a whole. The plot dramatizes the idea that prudence or practical wisdom, an intellectual virtue, is essential to the attainment of continence and justice, moral virtues which affect the self and others. Indeed, as the plot demonstrates, prudence is particularly important in a world where truth is ordinarily difficult to ascertain and frequently distorted by villainy but of utmost consequence to the social order.

The novel juxtaposes the actions of various characters including Tom, Blifil, Allworthy, and even Western to demonstrate various human deficiencies and frailties in achieving practical wisdom. Taken together, however, the actions of the characters clearly imply the ideal of practical wisdom and demonstrate the necessity for it. If a man is not practically wise in his personal behavior, he will not attain moral virtue and may suffer for it. If he is

not practically wise in his dealings with others, they are likely to suffer, whether he intends it or not. Yet the difficulties in perception and judgment are so great that charity and mercy must be the Christian additives to the classical concept of prudence.

The novel is so carefully structured that an action or combination of actions which illustrates some deficiency or proficiency in practical wisdom invariably moves the plot forward. For example, Tom's incontinence on the day of Allworthy's sickness (his failure to choose the appropriate means), Blifil's lies in recounting Tom's behavior (his perversion of the true ends of action), and Allworthy's acceptance of Blifil's story (his failure to perceive the particular facts) result in Tom's expulsion from Paradise Hall and, therefore, the ensuing events. As in this instance, the aesthetic form of the novel gives visible shape to its intellectual and ethical content.

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