FIELDING'S CREATIVE PSYCHOLOGY: A BELIEF IN
THE GOOD-NATURED MAN

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The philosophy of Henry Fielding turns more upon a study of human nature than upon any stated adherence to a system of beliefs. The thesis of this paper is that he was a moderate law-and-order Anglican of his time, but strongly influenced by the deist Shaftesbury's studies of the psychological characteristics of men. These inquiries into motivations and Shaftesbury's advocacy of the social virtue of desiring good for others seem to have helped determine Fielding's philosophy. The first chapter of this paper shows Fielding's attitude toward Christianity and deism; the second examines in depth his antipathy to rigorism and cynicism; the third explains his considerable interest in Shaftesbury's psychological ideas; the last chapter illustrates the art that Fielding created to serve his philosophy.

Fielding's multilevel irony not only offers a wide range of interpretations, but its subtlety often allows the reader to choose whichever meaning he finds appropriate. The author is best understood, however, as not favoring Thwackum's rigid literalism, but not condemning the Anglican Church for harboring him; not favoring the blind hypocrisy of the philosopher Square, but not condemning philosophy in general because of such "false philosophers."
The worst of the false philosophers, in Fielding's view, combines religious extremism with a cynical philosophy to picture man as essentially depraved. The novelist equates this view with the apparently rigorous cynicism of Bernard Mandeville, in the guise of a classical Cynic; and in his novel Tom Jones, Fielding devotes the episode of the Man of the Hill to a rebuttal of Mandeville's basic argument about the nature of man. Fielding associates both the Man of the Hill and Mandeville with the epithet "man-devil." Throughout the novel, Fielding shows that the cynic's philosophy about man is wrong: Tom does remain selfless despite his experience of some others' hostility toward the good-natured man.

"Good-nature" is Fielding's expression for man's "better nature," not for good humor nor for an easy sentimentality. His concern is not as much with the outer person as with his inner nature, the psychological "why," the motivation underneath whatever outward form that motivation takes. The deists' studies of the behavior of fanatics give Fielding a starting place for his characterizations of both the religious enthusiasts and the extreme literalists. Fielding contrasts these with the more praiseworthy moderates who stay within an acceptable range of restraint and good order. This psychological understanding helps him show his readers the difference between true religion and the "distemper" of bigots, and between true philosophy and the supposedly fallacious claims of cynics.
This study concerns mainly the novels of Fielding, and the time period covers the years from about 1740 to 1754. His most famous novel, Tom Jones, is the source used most frequently, along with his journalism and his other novels. Also helpful were Shaftesbury's Characteristics, Bernard Mandeville's The Fable of the Bees, and Norman Sykes's From Sheldon to Secker.

This paper affirms that Fielding's philosophy reflects a perceptive and compassionate man, who depends more upon his own experience and study of Shaftesburian psychology than upon any system of philosophy. Despite his ultimate reliance upon the conventional Anglicanism of his day, he optimistically insists that his reason can confirm the quality of goodness he sees in the "mixed nature" of most men.
FIELDING'S CREATIVE PSYCHOLOGY: A BELIEF IN THE GOOD-NATURED MAN

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

FIELDING AS PHILOSOPHER AND CHRISTIAN

The philosophy in the writing of Henry Fielding can be identified basically as a belief in the good-natured man. Fielding maintains his position not only by his religious convictions, but by a study of human nature as well, an inquiry very similar to the intellectual concern of the English deist Shaftesbury\(^1\) and deliberately counter to the theories of the skeptic Bernard Mandeville. These two contemporaries of Fielding were something of protagonist and antagonist in his development of an optimistic view of man's "mixed nature,"\(^2\) both as an intellectual interest and as a personal philosophy. Other studies of Fielding can offer a wide range of hypotheses which attempt to give his philosophy, but no critic seems to realize how Fielding avoided philosophical

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\(^1\) Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, "An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit," Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc., edited by John M. Robertson (London, 1900), I, 291-293.

extremes. He held to a reasonably consistent set of beliefs, but his emphasis is always upon man's motivations in relation to his behavior, part of the beginnings of present-day psychology, in effect.

The thesis of this paper is that Fielding's philosophy is that of a moderate law-and-order Anglican of his time, strongly influenced by Shaftesbury's optimistic studies and affected by Mandeville's paradoxes about men and society. For a man who could have had no knowledge of the subconscious or the id, Fielding's insistence upon the individual as responsible to both God and man, but with a will often in unconscious conflict with other elements in his nature, helped to push his work beyond the stereotypes of his day. Motivation, not a rigid code of values, is important in his literary work. Out of the seeming incompatibility of his fairly conservative religious beliefs and his admiration for Shaftesbury's work, Fielding developed a precariously balanced philosophy which supported the Church of England while he damned its bigots, a philosophy which used Shaftesbury's ideas to express his

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3See, for example, Fielding, Characters of Men, XIV, 285; The Champion (March 13, 1739/40), XV, 241; (March 11, 1739/40), XV, 235.

4Fielding, Tom Jones, III, 5, Henley, III, 120, 121, 125; V, 2, Henley, III, 211; XVIII, 4, Henley, V, 309; The Champion (January 24, 1739/40), XV, 166, 169; Characters of Men, XIV, 294-300.
own belief in man's very "human" nature, while Fielding publicly ridiculed some of Shaftesbury's fellow deists.

His work leads only to a limited extent into individualization, for Fielding usually manages to indicate somewhat didactically that his characters are representative. The concept of an egotistical distinction of one man from all others does not appear in his heroes, villains, or minor characters, although the villainous hero of Jonathan Wild comes close to uniqueness. Yet one individual is carefully developed in each of his novels: the narrator, often an idealized image, or even a caricature, of the author himself. The head chapters devoted to the musings of the

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5Fielding, Tom Jones, V, 5, Henley, III, 226-27; V, 6, Henley, III, 233; VI, 3, Henley, III, 282-83; VII, 2, Henley III, 334-35; Of the Remedy of Affliction for the Loss of our Friends, XVI, 102, 98. See also Shaftesbury, "Concerning Virtue or Merit," Characteristics, I, 286, 334-35.

6Fielding, The Champion (January 17, 1739/40), XV, 160; (January 22, 1739/40), XV, 164; (December 22, 1739), XV, 115; The Covent-Garden Journal (March 14, 1752), XIV, 136.

7Fielding, Tom Jones, III, 1, Henley, III, 104-07; XIII, 1, Henley, V, 34; Characters of Men, 283; The Covent-Garden Journal (February 4, 1752), XIV, 113.

8Fielding, Jonathan Wild, XV, Henley, II, 201-06; XIV, Henley, II, 200.

9Fielding, Tom Jones, I, 3, Henley, III, 26; III, 1, Henley, III, 105-08; IV, 6 Henley, III, 163-64, 167-68; VIII, 15, Henley, IV, 153; IX, 1, Henley, IV, 154, 156-57, 160; XI, 1, Henley, IV, 243-47; XIII, 1, Henley, V, 13, 18-20; XIV, 1, Henley, V, 91-92, 95; XVIII, 3, Henley, V, 258; XVIII, 5, Henley, V, 267; XVIII, 4, Henley, V, 308, 310.
narrator are a distinctive feature of the art form of his *Tom Jones*, and there is no attempt to make him allegorical.

But this constant companion, the often obtrusive narrator, prevents Fielding's novels from being "psychological novels," as defined by Leon Edel.\(^\text{10}\) There is no self-effacement on the author's part; his characters rarely speak for themselves without interpretation. Although the interpretation may be highly farcical, Fielding nevertheless often enters directly into the narrative.\(^\text{11}\) The psychological aspect of his novels consists of his clues to real motivations beneath the overt action and dialogue, with a many-layered, many-faceted set of possible interpretations suggested. The reader's choice of meaning often depends upon the reader's own psychological makeup. In *Tom Jones*, for example, the maid named Honour has unwitting lapses of that very virtue. She even inadvertently contributes to Sophia's near loss of at least "honour" by helping Sophia escape to a situation where Lord Fellamar attempts an attack upon her.\(^\text{12}\) Fielding is telling us that an understanding of honour, like that of the other virtues, can be improved by judicious experience. Fielding's witty play upon words is illustrated here in his varied use of the


\(^{11}\)Fielding, *Tom Jones*, see note 9 for examples.

word "honour," for the word is used frequently by the forceful suitor Lord Fellamar, until he unconsciously reveals his true characteristic to Sophia's father, "Though I have not the honour." With equally unconscious irony, Squire Western dismisses Honour for having served Sophia poorly, after which he agrees to a marriage between his daughter and the violent Lord Fellamar. And even Tom Jones mistakenly "thought his honour engaged" in his relationship with Lady Bellaston.

To a perceptive reader, Fielding's art carries deeper implications about human motivation and behavior than may appear on the surface. His wit serves him well in both concealing and revealing "characteristics."

Critics usually present a thesis that Fielding's philosophy was concerned with morality or with the amelioration of social problems of his time. Martin C. Battestin, for instance, gives Fielding a radical religious allegiance, as well as an artistic aim of proselytization, based upon what Battestin calls "the moral basis of Fielding's art." In his enthusiasm Battestin attributes an extremely liberal religious position to Fielding, that "good works" are the ultimate saving grace in a man's life. Although this doctrine can be traced back to the Pelagians, or more immediately,

13 Fielding, Tom Jones, XV, 5, Henley, V, 160.

14 Fielding, Tom Jones, XIV, 2, Henley, V, 96.

the Cambridge Platonists of the late seventeenth century, both of those factions insisted upon an absolutely ascetic life, which was not part of the latitudinists' belief. During Fielding's lifetime, Benjamin Hoadly is an outstanding example of a Latitudinarian leader with a tendency to corrupt practices and an unspiritual mixing of politics and religious power. While the latitudinist clerics could recognize the capacity to sin (or to be naively misled) in a Tom Jones, they would not insist upon the necessity for repentance. Fielding does, even in as personable a character as Tom. Yet in the early eighteenth century, the latitudinists' rather vague belief served a purpose for ecclesiastical politics, for their broad "toleration" of diverse religious claims made it easier for moderate dissenters to come back into the Church of England. Especially after 1736, the established church was trying hard to increase its influence. But most churchgoers of all denominations recognized the latitudinists' ploy for the political tool it was. In spite of the appeal of a less demanding religion, all in the name of "reason," many conservative Anglicans


17Fielding, Tom Jones, XVIII, 8, Henley, V, 330-31; XVIII, 10, Henley, V, 346-47; XV, 1, Henley, V, 140; Characters of Men, XIV, 302. See also Sykes, From Sheldon, pp. 177-78.
like Dean Swift were concerned about the future of the traditional church.\textsuperscript{18}

Though Battestin's view of Fielding has widespread acceptance today,\textsuperscript{19} Fielding's appreciation of human nature never becomes the blithe acceptance of either human fraility or the sufficiency of the human will. In his novels he portrays his own view of the human dilemma: man's natural inclinations in conflict with man's will toward the ideal. His recognition of this conflict is far from the latitudinists' endorsement of all mankind as acceptable to God without ritual, repentance, or judgment—a radical position in Fielding's lifetime, but a concept which later led to the Unitarians and the Universalists.\textsuperscript{20} Nevertheless, this ethos is Battestin's idea of "Augustan togetherness," disparaged by Ian Watt as


wishful thinking on Battestin's part. In Fielding's more traditional faith, judgment was involved, and Squire Allworthy refers to "One from whom you can conceal nothing and before whose tribunal" guilt has no chance.

Yet this clarification does not push Fielding into an inordinately conservative position, the "reactionary" philosophy ascribed to him by Melvin R. Zirker in a recent study. Fielding was necessarily bound by some limitations imposed by his own times, but his ability to change was not hampered by excessive loyalty to the ways of the past. To refute any assumption of a polemical religious conservatism takes only an awareness of how thoroughly Fielding detested it, not only in the rigid, bigoted stand of the fictional Anglican Thwackum, but, in real life, in the dissenter Bernard Mandeville, whose pessimistic view of man is basic to the futile philosophy of the Man of the Hill.


22Fielding, Tom Jones, XVIII, 7, Henley, V, 323.


Tom Jones and in his journalistic writing, Fielding hotly disputed Mandeville's assertion of the natural depravity of man; and obdurately harsh Anglicans such as Thwackum he tolerated only so long as they served the patriotic purpose, in Fielding's eyes, of keeping Jacobites at bay. Even in what Zirker calls the artistically perfected world of Fielding's novels, the author shows the devastating possibilities of being led astray by an overly conservative religious belief, its effects less reversible, apparently, than the consequences of an immature philosophy like Tom's, where a naive trust in his fellowman has to be tempered by experience, and its excesses forgiven by repentance and a more circumspect way of life. In Tom Jones even the atheist philosopher Square fares better than Thwackum, for Square finally has a deathbed conversion, an act which Fielding rarely considered sincere in real life, however.

Another critic, Ronald Paulson, comes close to an understanding of Fielding's efforts to portray man's problems. Paulson, however, sees the problems as merely social

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25Fielding, The Champion (December 11, 1739), XV, 94, 96; (January 24, 1739/40), XV, 166-69; Tom Jones, VIII, 15, Henley, IV, 151-53.


28Fielding, see above, footnote 17.

29Fielding, The Covent-Garden Journal (June 2, 1752), XIV, 186-88; see also above, footnote 17.
predicaments rather than as the individual's psychological dilemmas, and Paulson sees no solutions in the novels. He overlooks the obvious—the traditional Christian answers to persons trapped in perplexing situations by their own "human nature." Paulson also misses the significance of Fielding's admiration for Shaftesbury's psychological studies. Yet this acceptance of a considerable part of Shaftesbury's conclusions is certainly a factor in the novelist's work, despite his occasional denial of certain tenets of that philosopher's deism when it becomes more utopian than Fielding can accept. In his writing, Fielding directly quotes Shaftesbury or refers to his ideas more than to those of any other person, with the traditional cleric Robert South next most frequently quoted. None of the critics has caught the importance of Shaftesbury's influence upon Fielding; apparently his refutation of specific arguments of Shaftesbury has blinded readers to the continuing consideration the novelist

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32 Fielding, Characters of Men, XIV, 285, 297; The Covent-Garden Journal (March 3, 1752), XIV, 131; The Champion (January 22, 1739/40), XV, 165; (February 2, 1739/40), XV, 180-81; Tom Jones, V, 2, Henley, III, 212; VIII, 1, Henley, IV, 60; XIII, 12, Henley, 87; The Champion (March 11, 1739/40), XV, 235.
gave to that philosopher's works. Shaftesbury was not an 
atheistic deist like Square. Although he did not think re-
ligion necessary to all men, to the "noble savage," for in-
stance, he valued the unique Christian revelation probably 
as much as the average Anglican of his day. His percep-
tiveness about the psychology of religious fanaticism was 
what seems to have held Fielding's interest. And Shaftes-
bury's reasoning about the essential good-heartedness of 
all men gave support for Fielding's belief in the possibility 
that almost all men could attain a "good" nature. Shaftes-
bury's concept of a basic goodness in man (in the sense of 
the virtue of desiring good for others, a social ethic) off-
set the Mandevillean view of mankind, that all men are bas-
ically selfish. Recognizing these outer verges of Field-
ing's philosophy can help the reader understand the middle 
course the writer usually held to, and it explains how he


34 Fielding, Tom Jones, VII, 1, Henley, III, 333-35; VIII, 15, Henley, V, 151-53; XVIII, 11, Henley, V, 356; The Champion (February 2, 1739/40), XV, 177-81; Of the Remedy of Affliction, XVI, 97-98.

could both admire and reject some aspects of deism as well as some aspects of traditional religion. This understanding, in turn, helps the reader comprehend some of the intellectual insight underlying the wit and humor of Fielding's novels.

This study of Fielding is mostly limited to his novels, and *Tom Jones* in particular, for here can be found the most mature development of his philosophical ideas. His concepts may have been deepened by the study of law, a step he took at about the same time, in 1740, when he began his first novels. Throughout this decade, from 1740 until his death in 1754, Fielding shows serious and sensitive interest in "truth." Other works of this last thirteen years of his life are occasionally helpful in understanding Fielding, but only when allowance is made for his intense patriotic prejudice against Roman Catholic Jacobites, who were lukewarm supporters of two unsuccessful Stuart invasions of England during Fielding's lifetime. Also, in such works as his *Miscellanea*, a journalistic preoccupation with the often ephemeral issues and personalities of his day sometimes takes precedence over any consistent philosophy. These writings also serve as public devices for the "decorum" important in the early eighteenth century; Fielding could give conventional views on such

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subjects as atheism, deism, Shaftesbury, and religion in
general, without always revealing his own positions.\textsuperscript{37}

Even in his novels, there is great growth, both philo-
sophically and artistically, from his early Hercules Vinegar
narrative, Shamela, and Jonathan Wild, to Joseph Andrews, Tom
Jones, and the poignant Amelia, his last novel. Tom Jones,
The History of a Foundling (1749) is generally considered
his best work, and it contains much that illuminates his
mature conclusions about human nature.\textsuperscript{38}

The second quarter of the eighteenth century was also
the heyday of the English deists, called "Christian deists"
by the historian of philosophy Frank E. Manuel. Manuel uses
this nomenclature to point out that most of these deists af-
affirmed "one exception" to God's aloofness from intervention
in history—that the divinity of Jesus Christ was the sole
"miracle" since Creation.\textsuperscript{39} This gentle deism was part of
a rational reaction in all philosophies and Christian groups
in England, a reaction which began at the end of the

\textsuperscript{37} Fielding, The Champion (June 12, 1740), XV, 335-38;
An Essay on Conversation, XIV, 271-72; The True Patriot
(November 5, 1745), XIV, 7-8; The Covent-Garden Journal
(March 21, 1752), XIV, 141.

\textsuperscript{38} Fielding, Tom Jones, I, 1, Henley, III, 17-20; V,
5, Henley, III, 226-27; V, 6, Henley, III, 233, 234-35.

\textsuperscript{39} Frank E. Manuel, The Eighteenth Century Confronts
seventeenth century." It was a recoil from the religious extremes of the Interregnum Period earlier in that century and from the despairing mysticism of some extremist dissenters. By 1747 the Anglican Conyers Middleton was using devastating logic to imply that a "rational" conclusion of no miracles at all could follow the denial of miracles with an arbitrary "exception." The atheistic deism of Voltaire and other philosophes began to affect England only in the decade of the 1750's, however. English deists were then as appalled as other Englishmen were by such blatant disbelief in "the best-natured being in the universe," even in the name of ultimate "reason."

When Bolingbroke published some atheistic passages in his Essays of 1754, Fielding began an earnest rebuttal. Although the novelist died before he could finish his answer to Bolingbroke's arguments, his efforts were hailed as vitally important to England and to the Anglican Church.

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40 John Toland, "Christianity Not Mysterious; Or, A Treatise Showing that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to reason nor above it; and that no Christian doctrine can be properly called a mystery" (London, 1696), Deism and Natural Religion: A Source Book, edited by E. Graham Waring (New York, 1967), p. 13.

41 Manuel, Gods, pp. 72, 74, 50.


As usual, Fielding held a moderate religious and philosophical position which avoided the extremes of his day. He refrained from the emotional pietism of dissenters and the Anglicans who were excessively literal in interpreting the Thirty-nine Articles; he shunned the political controversialism of the latitudinist faction and the strictly rationalistic, atheistic version of deism. In Tom Jones, Fielding vividly presents the self-serving religiosity of the zealot Thwackum (the Anglican version of the rigorist Mandeville), as well as the self-destructive Mandevillean philosophy of the Man of the Hill. He shows the weakness of the equally hypocritical rationalizations of the false philosopher Square, who was an atheist until his conversion. But on the positive side, there can be found in Fielding's writing, and in his life also, some affirmations of his philosophy: in his quiet personal devotion to the Anglican Church; in his insistent intellectual curiosity about the nature of man; in his acceptance of many of Shaftesbury's "natural" arguments about men, despite his reservation that the elegant philosopher sometimes went too far; and in his role as administrator of justice, "the best magistrate that London had during the eighteenth century."

Aware of some psychological contradictions in human nature, he nevertheless refused to give up his trust in what his faith and his reason found true. How he developed a balance of these elements and used them in his writing is a basis for this study.

CHAPTER II

FIELDING, MANDEVILLE, AND THE MAN OF THE HILL

Henry Fielding's life paralleled the optimistic Augustan Age in some ways, with its decorum and concern for social order. His lifetime even continued for a short time into the darker Age of Johnson, a time of the self-aware individual, occasionally a quite serious individual. The term "Augustan period" usually connotes social restraints and classical formality, with elegance in taste and polished manners, at times perhaps too rigid and even intellectually deadening in its assumption of "answers" beneath the superficial exchanges of wit. But an individual philosophy was possible, more than it may appear, for all the insistence upon form and decorum. Dr. Johnson was known in that age also; he as well as Alexander Pope all too often seem, in retrospect, to be dominating the famous verbal fencing matches the same way, at the expense of their partners in dialogue. A foil such as James Boswell may have been necessary for Dr. Johnson's dramatically acerbic wit, as well as for him to be remembered beyond his era. Yet it seems a time when the articulate tongue was most brilliant when there was a willing or hapless target, so that it was vitally important, in the elevated circles of the literati, to be the aggressor and not the victim, the satirist and not
his object. Fielding shows his acute awareness of this; several times in his journals he refers to slander and libel in a defensive tone.¹ To be one of the select group and not one of their goats was indispensable to an ambitious writer. This remained an elusive goal for Fielding, whether as playwright, journalist, or novelist.

Fielding was more than ambitious, however. He never lost an almost childlike intellectual curiosity, not so much about issues, or even about the emerging scientific discoveries, but rather about people and their real, essential characteristics. There is no question that he liked to be on the winning side of most issues and that he used conventional appeals to gain popular acceptance (and sales) of his journalistic work. But in his novels he increasingly dealt with what most interested him, what to him was a vital concern, the inner nature of man. The appeal of this inquiry was quite limited, however, for the growing audience of readers was likely to be of the servant class and the small shopkeepers,² and their search was more for the confirmation of their feelings rather than the examination of them. Samuel Richardson was their muse, for his writing gave these readers the security and confidence in their own judgments that

¹Fielding, "The Preface to David Simple," Henley, XVI, 8-9; Tom Jones, XI, 1, Henley, IV, 242-47; XVIII, 1, Henley, V, 294.

they may have needed. Thus, the social situation left Fielding with an elite audience of well-educated readers, many of whom must have felt that his avoidance of stern positions on current popular issues was weakness. Among the larger group of less sophisticated readers were many who were offended at an almost objective examination of human motivations and behavior. While Fielding's stories can be appreciated today as much for their witty approach to psychological insights as for their rollicking narrative appeal, Tom Jones in particular made the author suspect in his own age of "reasonable" and cursory analyses. His approach to writing may have been envied by some, but it was an era when the emerging middle classes still depended upon authority for knowledgeable answers; and almost all the critics took the position of self-righteous censorious guardians of public morality against any mind as open as Fielding's. As he put it, he was "roasted."

Even worse, he was superficially imitated by sensation-oriented writers, another factor which hurt the credibility of his own claims in Tom Jones of a thorough dissection of "human nature," making it palatable through his wit and the art of his narrative. His valid interest in the

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5 Fielding, Tom Jones, I, 1, Henley, III, 18-20; XVI, 1, Henley, V, 198-200; XVIII, 1, Henley, V, 293-94; The Champion (June 12, 1740), XV, 335, 338.
characteristics of men, especially their motivations in relation to their behavior, was apparently never recognized during the eighteenth century. Placed on the defensive, he offered an apologia in his preface to Sarah Fielding's David Simple, disavowing the anonymous "spurious" writing which had been falsely attributed to him. He refers to the real "cruelty" of such injuries to his character, and speaks of "the Causidicade," a journal which "accused me not only of being a bad writer and a bad man, but with downright idiotism, in flying in the face of the greatest men of my profession." He goes on to justify his cause, "as I have suffered so cruelly by these aspersions in my own case, in my reputation, and in my interest." This is not on the level of querulous complaining, but it is rather a realistic recognition of the destructive effect of vituperative criticism upon an aspiring writer. The exclusiveness of the powerful in the professions, the considerable help their backing gave an unrecognized writer, novelists' class and rank limitations also bring all shades of flattery into play during this era; and it is to Fielding's credit that he is so rarely the sycophant, preferring instead to show gratitude and public approbation as an example of the generous spirit he needs to aid him and which he would have in return. He never asks for patronage in the fawning terms of Conyers

Middleton, for example, so caustically mocked in Fielding's *Shamela*. Fielding is part of his era, but his values are not conventional.

In his first issue of the *Covent-Garden Journal*, in January of 1752, he declares that he "renounce[s] all pretensions to deal in personal slander and scurrility, a very extensive article." He says that in the journalism of his time particularly, "so powerful is the love of laughter in depraved minds, that they care not what nor whom they sacrifice to its gratification." For his own wit, he declares, it is not his intention "to attack the character of any person," that "vice, folly, and not particular men, will be the objects of satire." In his work of 1752 there is a more skeptical tone than in his lighthearted burlesque ten years earlier, less optimism than in his novel *Tom Jones*, but he never seems to succumb to bitterness even in an age leading into philosophical skepticism. Even in the 1740's there is a hint of skeptical speculation scattered through his works, probably an unconscious intimation that his contemporaries

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7[Henry Fielding], *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews* (1741), edited by Ian Watt, The Augustan Reprint Society, No. 57 (Los Angeles, 1956), introduction, pp. 2-5; dedication, pp. iii-xii.


have to be right about man's reason, that it can lead the way to a balanced nature, a happier life, and finally immortality. Otherwise the considerable dependence upon rationality must lead him into questioning everything, beyond occasional skepticism into cynicism. This alternative was stated outright by only a few Augustans, by men as diverse as the orthodox Middleton, the even more orthodox Anglican Joseph Butler, who refused to let reason have the last word,\textsuperscript{11} the skeptical philosopher Mandeville, whose realistic view of man as materialistic and self-deluding challenged all the optimistic trust in reason that was building up after 1700,\textsuperscript{12} and the strongest voice of all, David Hume, who was variously called deist, atheist, or Christian, but in retrospect, skeptic.\textsuperscript{13} Although Fielding had at least two of Hume's works in his library,\textsuperscript{14} that philosopher's most forceful criticisms of reason came after Fielding's death, and Fielding may not have taken Hume's ideas about natural man any more seriously


\textsuperscript{13}Manuel, Gods, pp. 65, 168-69.

\textsuperscript{14}Ethel M. Thornbury, Henry Fielding's Theory of the Comic Epic (Madison, Wisconsin, 1931), pp. 176, 185.
than he did those of the Royal Philosophical Society. Fielding's faith and reason both guided him, but his mind gave him his arguments against his enemies.

It may be that the trace of skepticism late in Fielding's philosophy developed out of a Lockean insistence that the good and the true can always be supported by "proof," or from a realistic concern about the future of his family when his painful gout became an immediate threat to his life, or from a personal sense of discouragement over the critics' reception of his novels, especially their disappointment in *Amelia*. He may have been fighting off intervals of skepticism all his life, but its more frequent appearance in the 1752 series of *Covent-Garden Journal* articles suggests his frustration with having fallen so far short of universal fame, at the same time his health was deteriorating. "Praise," he says on his final journey to Lisbon, "is the last gift they [the world] care to bestow."¹⁵ He makes a rare attack upon the rich as a class: "none more impudent and unjust.... not contented with all the honorables, worshipfuls, reverends, and a thousand other proud epithets which they exact of the poor, and for which they give in return nothing but dirt, scrub, mob, and such like."¹⁶ And in another paper he says

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that he has "endeavoured to show that a rich man without charity is a rogue; and perhaps he is also a fool."\(^1\)

These two views of the rich, charitable or not, are joined in a later meditation upon a generous lady, "But in reality, how little doth the acquisition of so valuable a character, and full indulgence of so worthy a disposition, cost those who possess it?" And he answers, "the very offals which fall from a table."\(^2\) Yet his overall attitude remains tolerant despite his indignation from time to time, and his judgments continue to carry a good measure of balance and fairness. He never lets such occasional skepticism make him cynical, for a wry wit usually comes to restore his perspective, his trust in his own philosophy.

Fielding's main examination of the cynical position seems to be written into *Tom Jones*, and it is refuted there. In the episode of the Man of the Hill, an embittered man is portrayed, a Christian who finds his religion adequate only for his self-justification, a philosopher who bases his conclusions only upon the dark side of human nature. Fielding seems to be showing how a man initially as good in his nature and as naively "innocent" as Parson Adams in *Joseph Andrews* can have arrived at a totally cynical position. His study is a lesson to Tom--that he not become finally

\(^1\)Fielding, *The Covent-Garden Journal* (June 2, 1752), XIV, 184.

\(^2\)Fielding, *Voyage*, XVI, 243.
discouraged nor rely upon a "prudent" philosophy alone in the education he gets from his experiences. It may be necessary for Tom to learn this truth, since Mrs. Wilkins gives society's view of Tom's prospects at birth: "It doth not smell like a Christian. . . . and it is, perhaps, better for such creatures to die in a state of innocence than to grow up and imitate their mothers, for nothing better can be expected of them." Later the general opinion is that Tom was born to be hanged. By the time he meets the Man of the Hill, Tom has been unjustly turned out of his godfather's home, defrauded of his inheritance, and forbidden to see his beloved Sophia again, probably enough to make a cynic of any young man. At this point he gets to meet just such a sour-natured person he could become, and he learns that neither religion nor philosophy is enough to help someone with "nothing less than a persuasion of universal depravity." This personal philosophy Fielding may have associated with the Calvinists generally, certainly with the Dutch Calvinist Bernard Mandeville's philosophy in particular.

Mandeville questioned whether formal religious belief had anything to do with the way society functions, since to

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21 Fielding, Tom Jones, II, 5, Henley, III, 84.
him man appeared totally selfish and unable to reason himself into any virtue. Even charity was motivated by vanity, he said, and all are hypocrites, the ones with the most claim and appearance of virtue being the worst hypocrites. Although Fielding never abandoned his dependence on reason, except on the question of immortality, he consistently tried to expose hypocrites, fitting them into categories such as the false saint, the prude, and particularly in Tom Jones, the teachers of false religion, the Man of the Hill and Thwackum, and the teacher of false philosophy, Square. What Fielding could never agree with was Mandeville's pragmatic conclusion that it made no difference to society whether virtue or vice predominated, since men's personal vices could (and did) work toward the public good. Because of Mandeville's suspicions of his contemporaries' emphasis upon reason and "charity," Mandeville insists that men are merely trying to rationalize vices, to achieve religious redemption through a sort of balance sheet of

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23Fielding, Remedy of Affliction, XVI, 108-09.

public good works which cancel out private vices. Many of his criticisms seem just; however, Fielding could never accept such skeptical views of mankind as a whole. Fielding exempts sincere Christians from this general condemnation, and good works are usually the criteria by which he judges whether a man is a sincere Christian or a pretender. He seems concerned that society will break down if cynical attitudes such as Mandeville's persist, since such ideas might encourage the very condition of man that the philosopher suggests does prevail, no sincere virtue at all.

In his Covent-Garden Journal Fielding attacks the advantages of turning a hypocritical front to the world, by defending it in the character of an Iago. "The reputation of goodness is all I aim at," his villain says, and intimates that his outward imitation of a praiseworthy man is derived from envy and hate, for he is convinced that there is "no pleasure in goodness . . . no profit in it." In this tone Fielding speaks of the "motives which arise from our vanity, and which, as that very wise writer Mr. Mandevil [sic, as man-devil] observes, are much the strongest supports of what is generally called benevolence, I think . . . the folly of doing good from such motives very plainly appear." He continues, "An instance of this I give you in myself [Iago], who without having ever done a single good action, have

universally a good character; and this I have acquired by only taking upon me the trouble of supporting one constant series of hypocrisy all my days."26 Not surprisingly, Fielding could not understand what seemed to him an advocacy of hypocrisy for "publick benefits."27

In the 1740 Champion Fielding criticizes the "political philosophers," meaning Mandeville apparently. He also seems to charge Mandeville with atheism, which most laymen and the orthodox clergy thought Mandeville to support. "They [Hobbes and Mandeville] . . . endeavoured to ridicule and extirpate all our expectations of any future reward in another life; and secondly, they have represented it as directly incompatible with our happiness and advancement in this."28 Fielding also uses the common epithet "deist" to mean atheist, in disparaging these philosophers who, "while one part of this tribe have been kicking our religion out of doors, another have as strenuously applied themselves to send our morals after." And, he continues, "we have seen religion represented as a grievance, and vices very modestly called the chief benefit of a nation."29 This is not the stand of a

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27 Mandeville, Letter to Dion, pp. 36-37. See Fielding, The Champion (December 11, 1739), XV, 94-96.


29 Ibid., p. 164; (January 24, 1739/40), XV, 166-69.
deist, nor were there many atheists in England at that time; he is describing the realistic but cynical statements of Hobbes the materialist and Mandeville the Calvinist, especially the latter, who seemed to build his philosophy upon the harsh Dutch Calvinist view of man as essentially worthless and hopeless without the grace from God which man could not initiate.

Arminianism, the idea that a sincerely repentant man will not be refused grace and that God forgives every repentant man as mercifully and freely as He condemns, had been absorbed into both Anglican and dissenter dogma since 1700. Although the Calvinistic doctrines had never been removed from the Articles of Faith of the Church of England, only an extreme stickler for literal interpretation of church documents abided by the Calvinistic views of man that were still included. Both reason and Arminianism had changed the attitude in the English churches, and the younger members could hardly believe that scarcely a generation earlier, clergymen like Thwackum (and to some extent, like Mandeville) were in the majority. To men such as Fielding, the whole concept of a benevolent God could be proved on the grounds of reason, in contrast to the harsh Calvinistic view of both God and man held by many churchmen in the seventeenth century.

Fielding, Tom Jones, V, 2, Henley, III, 211; VII, 6; Henley, III, 355; XVIII, 4, Henley, V, 308-10; The Champion (May 3, 1740), XV, 298; (January 24, 1739/40), XV, 166-69; (May 24, 1740), XV, 319.
Mandeville, however, had gone so far in questioning the eighteenth century's view of itself as respectable that he was assailed by churchmen and deist alike, from William Law to Edward Gibbon, and John Wesley to Shaftesbury. That their English morality was no better than that of un-Christian cultures, as Mandeville declared, was contrary to almost all the trends in English philosophy and religion during the early decades of the century. His idea of individual vices adding up to social good depended upon what Mandeville called a "skillful Politician" who can turn "the Private Vices of the Worst of Men ... to a Publick Benefit." Mandeville says that "a Man's Salvation is the greatest Benefit he can receive or wish for," but the implication that God might be the clever manager who could turn even vices to public good was repugnant to Fielding, despite the possibility of this as a definition of Providence. In Tom Jones Fielding dramatizes his conclusion that no good-natured man could believe the worst of his fellowmen unless he merely reflected the hypocrisy in himself and that "it is impossible for a fool ... to be good-natured." This was supposed to confute Mandeville's main arguments, and Tom must learn the difference between a good nature and a bad one, that "though virtue and wisdom be in reality the opposites to folly and

\[\text{Mandeville, Letter to Dion, pp. 45, 38.}\]
vice, they are not so in appearance. As in Erasmus'
Praise of Folly, the fool may appear to be the innocent
person in a world with some who would exploit him, but the
real fool is like the Man of the Hill, one who protects his
interests at the price of the basics of his religion. With
no social involvement, not even using his gun to defend Mr.
Waters, and no compassion for mankind, neither the Man's
religion nor his philosophy can be true, in Fielding's view.

In his journalism, Fielding calls contempt for one's
fellowman the most "odious disposition" in human nature, one
which "certainly denotes a bad mind." He disparages the
ancient philosophers Heraclitus, who thought that all things
are converted into their opposites by fate, and Democritus,
who taught that even the animals are more admirable than
men (by staying true to their animal natures), referring
to a "mixture of pride and ill-nature" in their kinds of
philosophy. For a contemporary example of such error, he uses
"those curious persons who have employed their time in in-
quiring into the nature and actions of several insects, such

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32Fielding, The Champion (March 27, 1740), XV, 258;
(March 4, 1739/40), XV, 227.

33Fielding, Tom Jones, IX, 2, Henley, IV, 163.

34Fielding, The Covent-Garden Journal (August 29, 1752),
XIV, 231-35.

35Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, Primitivism and
Related Ideas in Antiquity, with Supplementary Essays by
W. F. Albright and P. R. Dumont (New York, 1965), pp. 80,
19.
as bees and ants . . . whether they are not apt to express any contemptuous behaviour one towards another," likely another reference to Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*. At the end of this essay Fielding emphasizes that "this contemptuous disposition is, in reality, the sure attendant on a mean and bad mind in every station," a criticism similar to that he gives the "philosophers of gold" in the head chapter on "Love" in *Tom Jones*. His comment corresponds to the association Shaftesbury makes between materialist philosophers and the alchemists who claimed to produce gold from red clay. It appears likely that Fielding decided to examine Mandeville's theory thoroughly in the Man of the Hill episode in *Tom Jones*, to show decisively how false that cynical philosophy was. In the novel, the hero tells the Man that, "in truth, none seem to have any title to assert human nature to be necessarily and universally evil but those whose minds afford them one instance of this natural depravity," an echo of the conclusion Fielding reached in his essays.

The narrative of the Man of the Hill is sometimes cast aside by critics as if it were not important to the novel or

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not a part of the plot and artistic scheme. "An insupportable digression," Digeon calls it, "a mere moral tale." But Charles Dickens is said to have found "the idea of the whole book" in the episode. He may have caught the warning to Tom in the Man's philosophy: that even a good-natured person may still be so overcome by the hostility of the world and the exploitation of his goodness, that he too could become a bitter, hopeless cynic. This is not the "prudence" Tom must learn; in fact, if Tom learns enough prudence and a great deal about the natures of men, he will be somewhat protected from the loss of his own faith and better nature. The episode gives the reader an insight into Fielding's balanced and considered judgment of men, even of those with whom he disagreed violently. He does the Man of the Hill justice, showing the reasonableness of such a bitter reaction to the continual hurts imposed upon an imprudent but well-intentioned person by those he loved. Mrs. Fitzpatrick's story is a similar warning to Sophia, who, like Tom, has the choice of reacting in compassion or in bitterness to her experiences. Fielding clearly implies, however, that while a truly good-natured person may indulge his

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temporary "passion of despair," he does not turn into a cynic. The example of Tom, who has saved his life, should be sufficient evidence to the Man that not all men are hypocrites, but the Man's original good-nature has been overcome to the extent that he does not change. He feels bound by fate, ignoring the free will which Fielding values.

The character's name, Man of the Hill, may well be Fielding's oblique clue to the object of his characterization. Man-de-ville seems to be parodied by the word "Man" itself, the "Hill" to rime with "ville," and "of" in place of the French "de," meaning "of." Otherwise the author would surely use the more common expression "on the Hill" and probably name the man. In this case Fielding may need no other name, if he is sure his readers will recognize the character. The Man is referred to as "the stranger," perhaps as significant as "the Man" in indicating unnatural isolation, that he is a stranger to the feelings of the rest of mankind.

The names of the characters in Tom Jones usually carry some implications; Allworthy, for instance, reasons as thoroughly as the Man, but from a persistently praiseworthy, good-hearted disposition opposite to the Man's misanthropic one. Since both men are on an elevated intellectual height, well above ordinary men, the Man of the Hill constitutes an excellent foil to Allworthy's reasoned goodness, and presents

12 Fielding, Tom Jones, VI, 12, Henley, III, 318-19. See also Shaftesbury, "Virtue or Merit," Characteristics, I, 334.
a "bad example" to Tom of the wrong kind of prudence that experience can teach a man. The balanced man must not let his mind continually justify himself without a forgiving heart to qualify his reactions and reunite him with others. Fielding's (and Shaftesbury's) cardinal virtue of desiring good for one's fellowmen is totally incompatible with the philosophy of Mandeville and the Man of the Hill.

Besides his own experience of occasional skepticism, Fielding may have used his reading in classical philosophies as a source for his portrayal of Mandeville as a cynic. This reading also could explain the narrator's observations, in this episode, on the character of Partridge, apparently one of those hypocrites Mandeville describes, one who keeps an appearance of virtue solely to gain favour and wealth. Tom sees that in the natures of men such as Partridge, where paternalistic benevolence is not the predominant characteristic it is in Allworthy, the passion of self-interest can overcome "love, friendship, and esteem," and can use others' virtue to its own ends. At the beginning of the episode of the Man of the Hill, Tom may hope that a higher view of the world, to be found symbolically through metaphysics and philosophy, will offer him a more agreeable way of reconciling the various sides of his own nature which have contributed to his predicament. The name of the hill, Mazard Hill, may imply a philosophic, logical approach he needs, for the

now obsolete word "mazard" was slang for "the head," a term which could mean "the mind" also, or man's intellect apart from his emotions. The dark, melancholy light of some ancient philosophy might be conducive to a more realistic view of society and of man, so that he can find a peace of mind even in his unhappy situation. The moonlit night can be associated with metaphysics, as in Shaftesbury's description of that branch of philosophy: "'that it is . . . necessary for one who would usefully philosophise, to have a knowledge in this part of philosophy sufficient to satisfy him that there is no knowledge or wisdom to be learned from [metaphysics]' . . . For of this truth nothing besides experience and study will be able fully to convince him" of the vacuousness of "these empty regions and shadows of philosophy," the "moonlit voyages, when we have to deal with a sort of moon-blind wits, who though very acute and able in their kind" allow "nothing beside what we can prove by strict and formal demonstration." Tom soon learns the futility of the "dry task" of trying to build a philosophy with the Man's "perceptions, fancies, appearances, affections and opinions"; when he has "finished this mysterious work," he is as relieved as Shaftesbury to "come now to open day and sunshine," henceforward "to take for real the whole creation and the fair forms which lie before us," "Mrs. Waters, in Tom's case.

In the same symbolic vein, the Jacobite Partridge tells Tom at the start of the episode that "that mountain . . . seems to me to be one of the highest in the world," so that Partridge, "whose head was full of nothing but of ghosts, devils, witches, and such like," is chilled "at the very mention of the top of that mountain." Considering how certainly Fielding thought Roman Catholicism thoroughly irrational, he has Tom agree that his companion might be "mad" to climb that mountain, although later they find it to be just a hill. The narrator confirms that it might be a threat to Partridge, since "there was no article of his creed in which he had a stronger faith than he had in witchcraft." The Man is "strange," a common opinion of a philosopher in any age, "not at all like other people," one who is a stranger to ordinary mankind, one who "keeps no company with anybody," and one who frightens "the country-people," more than the devil himself. Fielding seems to be concerned mainly with refuting a logical philosophy by a better logic. But his amusement at the simpleminded who are afraid of philosophical speculation shows a sophistication and some philosophical study on his own part.

The Man's retirement from the rest of the world "above these thirty years" while "he hath hardly spoke to six living

45Fielding, Tom Jones, VIII, 10, Henley, IV, 104.
46Fielding, Tom Jones, VIII, 10, Henley, IV, 107. See also Mandeville, Fable of the Bees, II, 269.
people" is not only misanthropic; it corresponds to the creed of the classical Cynic, as does his sparse, primitive lifestyle, with animal skins for clothing. This retirement from society shows a contempt for mankind and is unlike the behavior of a Stoic, who is indifferent to material things but stays within society and emphasizes brotherly helpfulness to others. Henry Knight Miller implies that Fielding confuses Cynic and Stoic beliefs, but the Man does not hold Stoic beliefs. The Stoics aimed at the betterment of society. Contempt for the weak is not usually part of the Stoic attitude, not at all of Christian Stoics. But the contempt for one's fellow men which Fielding decries is cynical. In his article about the "curious persons" who are not content to accept that "we are all what the Lord pleased to make us," and elsewhere, Fielding states that "this contempt of others is the truest symptom of a base and bad heart." Ten years before Tom Jones was published, the author apparently had not placed the materialist philosophers in the same category as the Cynics. In praising the Stoics, however, as he frequently does, he contrasts skeptical writers with them: "As it was the aim and earnest endeavour of the Stoics, and other sects of the ancient writers to raise and elevate human nature to the highest pitch of goodness and virtue;

7Fielding, Tom Jones, VIII, 10, Henley, IV, 110.
8Miller, Commentary, p. 258.
these [cynical] philosophers have, with no less pains, la-
boured to degrade and debase it to the lowest sink of iniq-
uity and vice."⁴⁹

The Man of the Hill seems to be Fielding's most serious
study of this "negative" philosophy, the one for which he had
the most trouble finding rebuttals which would not undermine
his personal positive philosophy and its regard for self-
honesty. There is a persistent earnestness in the comedy
of this section of Tom Jones, a determined effort to under-
stand and show his readers how an intelligent, reasonable,
patriotic man from a Christian background, a person such as
Mandeville, can arrive at a conclusion so contrary to Field-
ing's beliefs. "A certain sect," he writes in 1739, "endeav-
oured to persuade mankind" that the qualities of true virtue
"were nothing more than chimeras of their own brains, or at
least forgeries only devised to impose upon and cheat the
multitude." At this time the indignant essayist suggests
that if this dour view of man is true, "an evil which ad-
mits of no remedy, a wise man would surely wish to remain
in ignorance of [it]."⁵⁰ Fielding does not use this arg-
ument in Tom Jones, that a wise man does not desire to
know an unpleasant truth. He tries to stay above the appeal

⁴⁹ Fielding, The Covent-Garden Journal (August 29, 1752),
XIV, 235; Essay on Conversation, XIV, 263; The Champion
(January 22, 1739/40), XV, 162.

⁵⁰ Fielding, The Champion (January 24, 1739/40), XV,
166.
to self-interest and irrationality, as he usually does in his more mature thought. So Tom is shown a credible picture of a primitive man, clothed in the skin of an ass, it is true, but whose original good will has been finally overcome by the world. The problem of innate virtue's survival under worldly conditions is a concept of Shaftesbury's; it seems to be the only logic Fielding finds which gives reasonable arguments for a sincere, Christian philosopher to become totally cynical. That prudence and a better-nourished "good-nature" would have been adequate to prevent the Man's final attitude appears viable to the novelist. He cannot use reason to answer satisfactorily Mandeville and that philosopher's view of man and God, but he can refute a classical Cynic, one who takes "Nature" as his norm in his primitive self-sufficiency and his revulsion from civilization "to a course of life to which it appears you was not born," as Tom notices. Significantly, the Man's sword is still stained with the blood of his enemies, indicating a total lack of forgiveness, although he maintains that he "was not always of a suspicious temper" toward any "human creature." His ultimate philosophy of "a great philanthropy" which "chiefly inclines us to avoid and detest mankind," fits both the ancient Cynic and Fielding's view of Mandeville equally well.

51 Fielding, Tom Jones, VII, 10, Henley, IV, 113.
Another tie to the Cynics is the Man's deep admiration for his father, whom he compares to Socrates, the greatest of all heroes to the Cynics.\(^5^2\) Socrates figures in another association with the Man, for Xanthippe is the name of Socrates' wife as well as the Man's mother, a classical reference which even Partridge recognizes, perhaps because his own wife had been of this temperament.\(^5^3\)

There also seems to be a bit of labored symbolism in the tale Partridge relates, of the drunken Frank, who naively relies upon appearances in the account of a ghost which probably was only a white-faced calf. The Man is shown to have been as poor a judge of character and as gullible as Frank, and as lacking in common sense distinctions between appearances and reality. The Man begins to learn such discrimination when he turns to philosophy, but it also teaches him "the art of despising" worldly things. Although he gets great satisfaction from taking the role of a Good Samaritan in saving his father's life, the Man refuses to go the way of the Prodigal Son in repenting of his errors and returning to his father's estate. From Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers, he learns "wisdom"; from the Holy Scriptures he learns a great deal about glory and God. But the Man does not speak of the Gospels, the heart of even the


deist "revelation" and to which the philosopher Square finally ascribes his understanding of the "truth" of Christianity. Instead, the Man speaks arrogantly of his "true learning and almost universal knowledge." Despite all the help of metaphysics and a rigorous religion, he does not see man's real nature, either in his false friend, Watson, or in the compassionate man who risked his own life to save the Man's, Tom.

By the time the Man is betrayed into Jacobite hands, the Man has lost enough religion to wish to exact vengeance upon his betrayer. "I imagined every human creature whom I saw [to be] desirous of betraying me," says the embittered Man, and he ironically refers to "our savage brothers of the Creation" when his own brother was fair and more than generous to him, as he admits. But even his brother is not considered a true friend by the Man, blinded by his own bad nature. "Human nature is everywhere the same, everywhere the object of detestation and avoidance," he insists, in spite of Tom's declaration that there is "the utmost diversity in human nature," the psychological approach to man used by Shaftesbury. The Man praises God as benevolent, then contradicts himself in effect, as he declares the idea first stated by Democritus, that "there is not an insect, not a vegetable, of so low an order in the Creation. . . . [but] Man alone

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... hath basely dishonoured his own nature." His attitude is revealed as Calvinistic in contrast to the Arminian "benevolent" view of God which he stated earlier.

Tom warns the Man of the bad mind which convinces a person of everyone else's "natural depravity." But the Man assures him that Tom will come to such a belief himself when he has experienced more of the world, and Tom gives up any hope of persuading the Man into an attitude of good-nature. Allworthy had already warned Tom of the danger of "prudence" without the values of religion, and the Man is seen by Tom to be an embittered philosopher. Mandeville shocked all sects of Englishmen when he used paradoxes, "the dubious labyrinths" of metaphysics to Fielding, to effectively challenge their naive trust in the adequacy of reason for all things. Like Tom, most of Fielding's countrymen preferred the optimistic idea that "nothing should be esteemed as characteristic of a species but what is to be found among the best and most perfect individuals of that species."

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55 Fielding, Tom Jones, VIII, 15, Henley, IV, 151, 152; See also Manuel, Gods, pp. 62, 79.

56 Fielding, Tom Jones, VIII, 15, Henley, IV, 152; V, 7, Henley, III, 243.


58 Fielding, Tom Jones, VII, 15, Henley, IV, 151.
After Fielding's death, Voltaire used Candide to expose this discrepancy in the claims of the Age of Reason. The French deists became so much more "realistic" that the simple Christian philosophers of English deism seemed to fade away. Bolingbroke's apparent atheism, Hume's skepticism, the French cynicism were no part of the mild English deist philosophy of the first half of the century. When Partridge and the Jacobite landlord call the Man of the Hill "the Devil himself," and the sergeant asks what sort of "gentleman is the Devil,"59 many of Fielding's readers in his day must have recognized the pun on the name Mandeville, and considered it an apt one for more than superstitious reasons.

Today's reader of Mandeville's work may not come to Fielding's conclusion that the philosopher was advocating an antisocial, almost impossible rigorism. Rarely do we now hear the words of a Jeremy Taylor, that "he that would die holily and happily must in this world love tears, humility, solitude, and repentance."60 The attitude was too close and too serious in Fielding's day, however, to be ignored. In Tom Jones the author seems to be answering all

59Fielding, Tom Jones, IX, 6, Henley, IV, 185.

such rigorists with his sketch of the dour isolate, the Man, who contributes nothing to society, but who misses the whole thrust of the Christian's value in the world. Yet Fielding was perceptive enough to show the readers that the Man was finally nothing more than a cynic. This is exactly the impression likely to be drawn by today's student of Mandeville's philosophy, although on different grounds from Fielding's. Like Jacob Viner, we can see Mandeville as a skeptic, a free-thinker in eighteenth century terms, who has managed to grossly ridicule the religious extremes both of rigorism and of the pragmatic but sometimes corrupt liberalism in the Christianity of his day.\textsuperscript{61} Instead of holding to a steady center of both faith and considerable honesty as Fielding did, Mandeville seems to laughingly duck out of the fray altogether. The supposed Dutch Calvinist appears to have retreated to the sidelines, while he violently unsettled all who did not accept the many paradoxes that resulted when the eighteenth century insisted upon using reason to prove faith itself. Although Kaye says that Mandeville never comes completely to a "reductio ad absurdum of the rigoristic point of view,"\textsuperscript{62} it is more likely that he does, and at the same time destroys the sometimes incredible rationalizations employed by ambitious and worldly clerics as well.

\textsuperscript{61}Mandeville, \textit{Letter to Dion}, pp. 7-8, 11.

\textsuperscript{62}Kaye, F. B., "The Influence of Bernard Mandeville," p. 95.
Yet Mandeville never approaches the Sisyphean view of life as totally, or even ultimately, absurd, as the more recent existentialists have. He is tearing down the pseudo-religious rationales for personal behavior, even rationality itself as a support of religion, an irrational aspect of man's nature. He leaves himself only one position for an early eighteenth century philosopher: to be a freethinker, perhaps to enjoy worldly pleasures, but to neither justify nor condemn his attitude by religion. There is apparently an underlying appreciation for Christian ethics, as most freethinkers held in their extremely individual way. But to Fielding freethinkers were as unconscionable as atheists, and he constantly relegates them to the position of cynics.\textsuperscript{63}

Mandeville's witty writing is so ambivalent in its subtle condemnation of what he openly calls good, and in its hints of appreciation for what he calls bad, that the reader of today is left much in Fielding's predicament—how can a philosopher, one who shows brilliant insight into Christian values, remain in such a skeptical position, with the salvation of his own soul supposedly the only objective of his life?\textsuperscript{64} And has he, like the Man of the Hill, perhaps lost his soul by such apparently un-Christian ways of preserving it? Both Mandeville and Fielding were prototypical

\textsuperscript{63}Fielding, The Covent-Garden Journal (March 8, 1751), XIV, 102-04; (March 14, 1752), XIV, 136; The Champion (December 22, 1739), XV, 115; (January 17, 1739/40), XV, 159-60; (January 22, 1739/40), 164-65.

\textsuperscript{64}Mandeville, Letter to Dion, pp. 22, 32, 38, 49, 66.
psychologists in cutting beneath layers of hypocrisy to the real and supposedly basic motivations of man, but Fielding seems to have gone beyond Mandeville in one sense, by exposing the ultimate motivation of Mandeville's own arguments as basically selfish. Yet how could Fielding show, or even admit, that a concern with saving one's soul, even if the rest of the world does perish, is selfish? In the Man of the Hill episode he tries to do this, successfully or not.

The enigma of Mandeville challenged most of the well-read men of his time, and as Mandeville points out, reasoned arguments alone could not refute his, for he dealt in paradoxes. It is to Fielding's credit that he gave up his early indignant arguments and tried in his novels, in his own style of wit, to reveal the fallacies in Mandeville's reasoning. It is unfortunate that his purposeful efforts keep his portrayal too serious, even with the deliberate comic relief of Partridge's stories. Not many of his readers can have enjoyed such a didactic trip through old arguments, with the same wry irrational conclusion of old, that Mandeville must have been the Devil himself. Fielding's personal conclusion about the enigmatic philosopher is shown in the cynical attributes he gives the Man, and his insight illustrates how deeply and sincerely involved in the study of human nature Fielding was. But he was searching for universal traits; he reflects his times in his suspicion that the true individual, the unconventional thinker, represents a threat to his own more traditional philosophy of life.
While F. B. Kaye and Malvin Zirker find parallels in the thinking of Fielding and Mandeville on social problems, and it is true that at times Fielding seems to feel as despairing of mankind's "virtue" as Mandeville, he never really believes in the basic selfishness of all men. To place Fielding and Mandeville in the same philosophical position would be as naive as to accept Battestin's arguments that the novelist was latitudinarian. As for that liberal position, Fielding lacked the latitudinarian pragmatic "tolerance" for all other Protestant sects; he deplored any such religious factionalism and "party" spirit as theirs; and his mention of the latitudinist leader Hoadley usually can be understood as public praise of the "great" who could be patrons of the arts. Although the powerful bishop was a friend of Fielding's sister, that divine's notorious ambition can be connected with Fielding's comments on "well-fed divines" who assign self-denial to others. Hoadley's reputation is opposite to the virtues described plainly in Fielding's descriptions of the ideal

65 Fielding, Voyage, XVI, 200-01.
66 Fielding, Tom Jones, XI, 2, Henley, IV, 253; IX, 10, Henley, IV, 22-25; VIII, 8, Henley, IV, 92-93.
68 Fielding, Tom Jones, VI, 3, Henley, III, 284; The Champion (March 29, 1740), XV, 264.
clergy, those who are temperate, live without ostentation, and imitate Christ in charity and the first virtue of all, humility. Jesus "rebuked them when they contended who should be reckoned the greatest; and ... exhorted them 'to beware of the scribes which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues,'" Fielding quotes. And he comments that those "wise, or mighty, or noble, in a worldly sense" who were in the ministry were "reputed to be the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things." In Tom Jones he implicates Hoadley directly, when the Captain does not condescend to get support for his religious arguments. This would necessitate "this complacency to one ... thoroughly despised." But "any hopes of preferment made it necessary to show the submission to a Hoadley, or to some other of great reputation in the science." "Despised" is the obvious association with "Hoadley" here.

Neither the most liberal nor the most austere extreme fitted Fielding; he consistently held to the middle way so praised by Shaftesbury and ridiculed by Mandeville, and

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69 Fielding, The Champion (March 29, 1740), XV, 264; (April 5, 1740), XV, 269; (April 19, 1740), XV, 283-87.
70 Fielding, Tom Jones, II, 7, Henley, III, 93.
used his own psychology of human nature to conquer the passions of too much religious enthusiasm or too much worldliness.\textsuperscript{71}

CHAPTER III

HUMAN NATURE, SHAFTESBURY, AND THE BEGINNINGS OF PSYCHOLOGY

Henry Fielding's writing gives some outstanding examples of a conscious study of what is now called psychology, a science which began in the first half of the eighteenth century. An inquiry into human nature, the examination was carried on mostly by the English deists during Fielding's lifetime, and he was continually reading and writing about these early notions which saw "the utmost diversity in human nature"¹ and attempted to define a healthy mind. This approach to the study of man could hardly have developed without the empirical methods of the "new science" of the seventeenth century, nor without the lessening of authority in the Church of England and of scholasticism in the universities. The nature of the external world had been opened to studies and "proofs," so why should not man's inner nature, his passions and humours, his reason and social nature, be analysed? The area of investigation seemed limitless, for geographical exploration was finding new, strange cultures in places like China and India, and interest in the Mohammedan religion became widespread. Contact with alien

¹Fielding, Tom Jones, VIII, 15, Henley, IV, 148.
mores could provide a primitive norm by which England could judge the values of its civilization. It did not seem to matter that one culture was European and another that of a tropical island. They were all bound by the same "natural" principles, even in considerable diversity. Bishop Berkeley's missionary school for the West Indies could have been designed for a Yorkshire moor as well.²

The universe had been pictured by science as made up of harmonious parts with natural, universal laws which were simple and objective. "Mystery" was no longer a barrier to knowledge. As Alexander Pope phrased the new feeling about the reasonableness of nature: "Nature and Nature's law lay hid in night./ God said: 'Let Newton be,' and all was light."³ The orderliness and simplicity of the new science seemed to explain how all phenomena could be understood. The uncivilized life of the natives in strange countries suggested pure, paradisiacal ways which had to be reconciled with the Grecian Golden Age of creation, the first century of Christianity, and the creation story in Genesis. Somehow, the eighteenth century found such reconciliation remarkably easy, through euhemerist interpretations of history, allegorical interpretations of the classics, and eventually,


de-mythologization of the Scriptures. There was a growing belief in a "natural religion," the worship found in primitive societies and the basics for any religion. "Christianity was therefore a re-publication of the law of nature, with a new law-giver, and with impressive inducements to well-doing." In Tom Jones Allworthy states that men's minds "were to judge not only in all matters which were not revealed but even of the truth of Revelation itself." As conservative a Tory as Thomas Sherlock, Bishop of London in the 1740's, preached that "natural religion is the foundation on which revealed religion stands; and therefore revelation can never supersede natural religion without destroying itself." The Anglican dogma appeared to need simplification for it to be carried to the unsophisticated people of the new discoveries. John Locke put this reliance upon "natural" basics into reasoned philosophy, and his The Reasonableness of Christianity, according to M. Pattison, "may be said to have been the solitary thesis of Christian theology in England for the greater part of a century."

"Sykes, From Sheldon, p. 162.

"Fielding, Tom Jones, II, 2, Henley, III, 68.


Locke used a rational proof of the existence of God, since the Creator of anything can not have come from nothing. Man himself knows that he exists and must have begun out of something other than nothing. But a method using the workings of the mind was Locke's unique contribution to the study of man in the eighteenth century. The same principle of harmony which Newton found in the heavens was found in the human mind by Locke, a unifying power in reason itself, so that the deist Shaftesbury could insist upon an order and harmony in all Nature and in the nature of a "balanced" man. This high regard for reason was part of a revolt against traditional habits of justifying by authority, a greater independence of thought resulting partly from Locke's idea of the mind as without innate ideas and therefore in need of independent thinking. But by the time the whole tenor of life seemed ruled by reason, toward the middle of the century, deists had raised some questions about miracles and prophecies which left revelation in a shaky position. Conyers Middleton, a highly independent thinker of a strong orthodox faith, finally denied all miracles outside the apostolic age, a stand which had not bothered the deists before, since the English deists almost all believed in the Christian revelation in

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8 Waring, *Deism*, pp. vii-viii.
Jesus. But Middleton proved his point too well; by his very arguments he left susceptible to denial all the miracles of the patristic age. Middleton seemed, in effect, "to hand over the primitive Church, lock, stock and barrel, to the Roman Catholic Church," since the choice appeared to be to accept all the miracles or none. The deists had not accomplished so much with reason the fifty-two years since John Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious* as Middleton did; this one orthodox Anglican divine was honest enough to follow reason where it led, meanwhile insisting, as the deists had long done, that the Christian revelation was an exception to all the arguments reason could bring against it. Fielding does not seem to have entirely trusted Middleton after the latter's naively flattering dedication of a classical translation to Middleton's patron, John, Lord Hervey. Fielding's allusions to "Conny Keyber" in *Shamela* almost certainly refer to Colley Cibber, an actor Fielding detested, and to Conyers Middleton, since the dedicatory letter in *Shamela* parodies Middleton's fatuous dedication to Hervey.¹⁰

Fielding had no use for freethinkers apparently, whether deist or extremely open-minded Anglican, despite his knowledgeable appeal to the freethinkers for the

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¹⁰Fielding], *Shamela*, pp. iii-xii, 3-4.

government's cause, in The True Patriot.\textsuperscript{11} He shows his familiarity with deism as well, in using the word "liberty" far more often in that article than he does one such connotative word usually, and an examination of the English deist Thomas Woolston's second "Defense" against imprisonment (1730) shows its significance: Woolston uses the word "liberty" six times in the five brief sentences of his statement.\textsuperscript{12} Fielding indicates in other work, however, that "liberty" is too often associated with "libertinism"\textsuperscript{13} for him to use it freely, although he may not mean the statement as pejoratively as it sounds. Both intellectual liberty and public decorum were among his concerns. If Fielding did not so consistently appear sincere in his religious beliefs, at the same time that he belittles deists along with atheists, freethinkers, and skeptics,\textsuperscript{14} he could be called a deist himself at times. Almost all the English deists were Anglicans, but, along with most of the orthodox and liberal church leaders, they claimed to be reforming the church into what

\textsuperscript{11}Fielding, The True Patriot (November 26, 1745), XIV, 18-23.


\textsuperscript{13}Fielding, The Champion (December 18, 1739), XV, 109; (January 15, 1739/40), XV, 156; The Covent-Garden Journal (July 18, 1752), XIV, 213-14; Voyage, XVI, 239-41.

\textsuperscript{14}Fielding, The Champion (January 22, 1739/40), XV, 164-65; (April 19, 1740), 288.
each believed was the religion of the first century. Fielding appears almost conservative in his general contentment with the church as it is. Sometimes, however, he had severe criticism for individual divines, unnamed, who did not live up to the Christian "imitation of Christ" and should, he thought, be punished for their corruption by the church order as a whole. The latitudinist Hoadley is the only churchman he criticizes by name.  

In his library, "surpassing even Dr. Johnson's," Fielding had many volumes of sermons, as well as the works of Francis Bacon, who introduced the "new philosophy" of wisdom proceeding from observation rather than from authoritarianism. He also had all the works of Locke and of Shaftesbury as well as some works of the freethinkers John Toland and Anthony Collins, indicating that he knew a great deal about the claims for reason and the strongest proponents of those claims. Fielding seemed capable of differentiating among the variety of deists and freethinkers: Toland, first a Roman Catholic, then dissenter, then disciple of Locke; Samuel Clarke, who openly embraced both deism and orthodoxy,  

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15Ibid., (March 29, 1740), XV, 261-62; (April 19, 1740), XV, 285-87; Tom Jones, II, 7, Henley, III, 93.

16Cross, Henry Fielding, III, 77.

causing him to be attacked by both sides ("Nobody doubted the existence of God," said Anthony Collins, "until Dr. Clarke strove to prove it."\(^{16}\)); Collins, a confidant of Locke, and probably the only skeptic among the English deists of the first quarter of the century; Thomas Woolston, the scholar who was imprisoned for allegorizing the miracle stories; and Fielding's favorite, Shaftesbury, the intellectual who was somewhat above the religious argumentation, for he concentrated upon human nature and its relationship to social responsibilities.\(^{19}\) The relative freedom with which Englishmen could speak their views without fear encouraged considerable theological debate. Woolston was the only one imprisoned for blasphemy, although the law stayed on the books throughout the period; when Woolston died in prison, he became a martyr to free speech and "all England seemed secretly ashamed of what had happened."\(^{20}\)

But to English intellectuals such deists as Shaftesbury, not the freethinkers, seemed to be the most influential. While most English deists felt that there was some innate religious spark in man, contrary to Locke's view, Shaftesbury refined this quality to an inborn virtue, a social inclination which made a normal man want to engage in what

\(^{16}\) Waring, Deism, p. 44.

\(^{19}\) Shaftesbury, "Virtue or Merit," Characteristics, I, 304-09.

\(^{20}\) Stromberg, Religious Liberalism, p. 8.
was public good, the broader view of virtue that Fielding favored. The "first and chief in Nature," says Shaftesbury, is "the private interest and good of every one to work toward the general good, which if a creature ceases to promote, he is ... directly his own enemy, nor can he any otherwise be good or useful to himself than as he continues good to society." And Shaftesbury closes his essay on "An Inquiry concerning Virtue or Merit" with the following encomium: "So that virtue, which of all excellences and beauties is the chief and most amiable; and which is the prop and ornament of human affairs; which upholds communities, maintains union, friendship, and correspondence amongst men; that by which countries, as well as private families, flourish and are happy, and for want of which everything comely, conspicuous, great, and worthy, must perish and go to ruin; that single quality, thus beneficial to all society, and to mankind in general, is found equally a happiness and good to each creature in particular, is that by which alone man can be happy, and without which he must be miserable."21 While Fielding specifically repudiates the idea that "virtue is the certain road to happiness," he does make a point about real virtue, exactly like Shaftesbury's more elaborate definition, that "by virtue is meant (as I almost think it ought) a certain relative quality which is always busying itself without doors, and seems as much interested in pursuing the good

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of others as its own." The novelist does not agree with Shaftesbury that such virtue is possible without religion, which would leave the possibility of an atheist's virtue being equivalent to a Christian's. But otherwise Shaftesbury describes the virtue Fielding promises to portray in Tom Jones, where his "honest purpose" of recommending "goodness and innocence" is presented as "a kind of picture in which virtue becomes, as it were, an object of sight." Besides illustrating "that beauty of virtue," he says he has tried to motivate "human action in her favour by convincing men that their true interest directs them to a pursuit of her," and his method is to employ "wit and humour" to try to "laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices." This view fits "the delight in doing good," a vital characteristic of the best balance of nature in Tom Jones.

"The way of wit and humour may be serviceable [to instruct] as well as that of gravity and seriousness," Shaftesbury advises. Most of Shaftesbury's ideas Fielding seems to have agreed with, sometimes even accepting the spirit of his argument that worldly rewards are not necessary for a society of virtuous members. Fielding hedged by assuring his readers

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22 Fielding, Tom Jones, XV, 1, Henley, V, 141-42.
23 Ibid., dedication, Henley, III, 12-13; The Champion (May 3, 1740), XV, 298-99.
that both rewards and punishments would come in an afterlife, a good argument for the religion Shaftesbury found helpful but not absolutely necessary. Fielding, always the good magistrate, never assumes that antisocially motivated criminal acts should not be punished in this life, however.  

The novelist particularly liked Shaftesbury's studies in human nature, for they were both more realistic and more optimistic than most philosophies. Bacon began this science of social psychology: philosophers should gently inquire into the powers and energy of "custom, exercise, habit, education, fame [reputation], laws, book, studies," for these are the things that reign in men's morals; by these agents the mind is formed and subdued. This psychological approach helps place Fielding's many remarks about "manners" and "good-breeding" in an eighteenth century perspective, for his day took Bacon's idea seriously; man was studied in all his customs, ways of speaking and behaving, and adjustment to his place in society. "'Twas a good fortune in my Lord Bacon's case," says Shaftesbury, "that he escaped being called an atheist or a skeptic, when . . . he derives it [the religious passion] from an imperfection in the creation, make, or


26 See note 17.
natural constitution of man."  

Fielding suggests that "to reduce the knowledge of him [man] to a certain science," a philosopher must search into "that variety" of "climates, customs, religions, education, laws, &c." which have affected human nature. Both Fielding's work and his library affirm his position in the forefront of the trend of psychological inquiry during his time. Such a "method of soliloquy," says Shaftesbury, "must, beyond any other science, teach us the turns of humour and passion, the variety of manners, the justness of characters, and truth of things, which when we rightly understand we may naturally describe. And on this chiefly depends the skill and art of a good writer." 

Fielding shows his participation in this concern with man's nature in Tom Jones, where, for example, he compares the world to a theater, where people expect an imitation of life. The audience becomes like society, judging a man on some one outstanding quality as if that were all there is to the man. But Fielding points out that in nature, as on the stage, the same player may be a villain one day and a hero the next, as he may alternate between the roles of the eminent personage and the fool, the "double reflection"

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29 Shaftesbury, "Advice to an Author," Characteristics, I, 211.

30 Fielding, Tom Jones, VII, 1, Henley, III, 331-35.
referred to by Shaftesbury. Fielding whimsically calls reason a "patentee," who is "very idle . . . seldom to exert himself," while the "Passions" are both "managers and directors" of a person frequently. "The passions . . . often force parts upon men without consulting their judgment," so that man may condemn "what he himself acts." This attitude is based both upon Shaftesbury's view of man's nature as mixed and upon an eighteenth century idea of man as having passions sometimes too valuable to restrain fully so that "the man of candour and of true understanding is never hasty to condemn. He can censure an imperfection and even a vice without rage against the guilty party." This restraint in criticizing or reproving, a usually balanced judgment even upon individuals one dislikes, is an outstanding trait of Allworthy, Tom, and Fielding himself. The sailors who cruelly mock Fielding's infirmities are presented as having "many good qualities" on their own element, the sea, despite their "idle and dissolute" characters on land.

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31 Shaftesbury, "Advice to an Author," Characteristics, I, 128.

32 Fielding, Tom Jones, VII, 1, Henley, III, 335. Also see Shaftesbury, "Advice to an Author," Characteristics, I, 232; "Virtue or Merit," I, 318.


34 Fielding, Tom Jones, VII, 1, Henley, III, 335; Voyage, XVI, 200-01, 213, 272-73.
Fielding's view of passion is also double-sided. "A Lust for doing Good"\textsuperscript{35} can be valuable to a man, to give him direction and endurance and keep him on his course. But like the deists, Fielding is suspicious of every sort of religious passion; he is "fighting popery, priests, their English imitators in the Anglican Church, enthusiastic Protestant sectarians of every variety,"\textsuperscript{36} much as the Whig deist journalists Thomas Gordon and John Trenchard. For him, as for the deists, religious experience is either true or false;\textsuperscript{37} a rational Creator and a gospel of "Christ preaching love" are their essential doctrines. The deists' beliefs are little different from Fielding's religion except that he kept such rituals as baptism and showed considerably more respect for the clergy.\textsuperscript{38} Their ideas, not their religion, was the appeal of the deists for him, it seems.

While the deists were not generally merely theistic, their approach to religion was that of questioners, scientists.

\textsuperscript{35}Fielding, "Of Good-Nature," Henley, V, 258.


\textsuperscript{38}Manuel, Gods, p. 74. See also Cross, Henry Fielding, I, 177; II, 61, 225, 248, 302; III, 23. Also Fielding, The Champion (March 29, 1740), XV, 260-65; (April 19, 1740), XV, 269-73; (April 12, 1740), XV, 273-79; (April 19, 1740), XV, 283-85. Also Shaftesbury, "Miscellaneous Reflections," \textit{Characteristics}, II, 365; introduction by J. M. Robertson, I, xxiii-xxiv.
Original sin, for instance, was considered a physiological susceptibility to delusion in man, according to Trenchard. Locke had "proved" that man tries to escape pain, and the deists decided that man would accept any authority or mystical experience to avoid facing the painful idea of death.\(^\text{39}\)

These first steps into the psychology of human nature were not giant strides, but the principles were listened to by well-educated Englishmen and by some philosophers on the Continent. As the deists moved into unconventional notions about religious experience, they kept their personal belief in the Christian revelation. The Church of England was not officially receptive to them, but individual divines might take sides for or against the deists' latest ideas. Warburton, a highly respected orthodox bishop, would have been termed a *philosophe* in France. Fielding seems to have been very interested in all the physiological and psychological arguments, as were most of his peers, for this group had the classical education to recognize the similarities of the struggle for truth in their own day with that of the ancient philosophers and their theories. Fielding not only employed classical references to introduce each of his journalistic essays; he appealed to ancient thinkers such as Plato on such diverse subjects as the punishment of libel,\(^\text{40}\) the attributes

\(^{39}\text{Manuel, Gods, 74-75.}\)

\(^{40}\text{Fielding, The Champion (March 6, 1739/40), XV, 231.}\)
of good nature, \(^1\) and the benefits of virtue compared to those of vice. \(^2\) It is no wonder that the pursuit of truth became an exhilarating experience for many more Englishmen than merely the deists. Everything in their intellectual life was affected, the Church of England perhaps most of all.

Middleton was just one of the clerics who moved along with the deists in questioning the literal inspiration and interpretation of the Christian Bible, a forerunner of the Biblical criticism later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The result was that by 1740 the unimpeachably orthodox William Law and Joseph Butler openly shifted their arguments for faith to other grounds than literal interpretation of externals in the Bible. \(^3\) Thwackum's outdated literalism in teaching the dogma of the Anglican Church is called a presumption in Fielding's *Tom Jones*; "this authoritative style," the narrator calls it, and Allworthy is indignant. Even Thwackum's "most devout attachment to [the

\(^1\) Fielding, The Champion (March 27, 1740), XV, 256.


language of] religion" did not excuse his "ill-nature," pride, and pretensions to power as he condemns Tom: "a boy of whom from his infancy I discovered the Devil had taken such entire possession."

Even the high church Tory Sherlock did not use such fiery expressions in his preaching. Perhaps the greatest test of all for a Christian in the author's eyes is that Allworthy could not bring himself to "esteem nor love the man." Thwackum's "narrow principles," somewhat like those of the Man of the Hill, carried "contempt for everything great and noble." As Shaftesbury says, "Nothing besides ill-humour, either natural or forced, can bring a man to think seriously that the world is governed by any devilish or malicious power"; and he blames any such interpretation of Christianity upon "the melancholy way in which we have been taught religion . . . when we are in no condition to look into ourselves, and calmly examine the temper of our own mind and passions. For then it is we see wrath, and fury, and revenge, and terrors in the Deity; when we are full of disturbances and fears within."

In examining the motivations for religious bigotry and fanaticism, the deists came into the whole field of psychology, and even sociology, for Shaftesbury preceded Hume in showing

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4"Fielding, Tom Jones, XVIII, 4, Henley, V, 309.

45Ibid., XVIII, 4, Henley, V, 310; V, 8, Henley, III, 246.

the "continuity and ubiquity of the associative principle in man, from the primordial herd onwards to societies within society."7

This brilliant aristocrat, Shaftesbury, is the man to whom Fielding seems to refer most in his work. In Locke's debate with the seventeenth century latitudinist Stillingfleet over whether reason's authority in religion would destroy all "mystery," as Toland claimed it would, public opinion favored Locke's insistence that reason would not necessarily hurt the exploration of such mysteries, but that there would always be areas in which man's mind would be inadequate for understanding. Agreement with Locke and disagreement with Shaftesbury on this point can be found in Fielding's insistence upon the doctrine of immortality, whether or not it can be proved "true" by reason. Fielding is honest in indicating that, to him, there is a point where reason may leave off, so that religion must rely ultimately upon faith.8 But he seems to agree with Shaftesbury that

7Shaftesbury, "Wit and Humour," Characteristics, I, 74-75; introduction by John M. Robertson, I, xli.

traditional Christian concepts of morality, "virtue" in eighteenth century terms, need to be reexamined and redefined. *Tom Jones* is in some respects a refutation of the definition of virtue as mainly "chastity" in Christian utterances and as "honor" in philosophical expressions. The author manages to bring the two together in a somewhat vague Shaftesburian concept of virtue, in the sense of innocent motivations which can produce behavior beneficial to society and not ultimately destructive to the individual, through an experience of how to function effectively in an unspiritual world. Religion is vital to this attitude, however, and Tom's repentance for having caused others pain is emphatically sincere, in contrast to Blifil's. Probably Sophia's hardest task in the novel is to judge and confirm Tom's repentance, a judgment she makes more from her good-hearted disposition and her love for Tom than from her mind apparently, for Fielding is highly suspicious of claims to repentance. Time usually must prove their validity, a problem in the plot if he had resorted to this "proof" so near the end of the novel.

Shaftesbury's answer to religious allegations that man is born tainted with sin is to posit an innate quality which is the opposite of sin: an innate virtue. However this universal desire for good for others may be generalized into a

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social concern, it is something Fielding's experience with people does not always confirm. To him it is more reasonable to consider men born with varying mixtures of good and evil traits. Normal people, in his view, have some "good-nature" in the sense of a better nature, not that of a "fool," nor of pliant "good-humour." This "universal benevolence" is "a passion which really exists in some natures"; for those in which a desirable characteristic is lacking, it "must be introduced by art [education], and that while the mind of man is soft and ductile, and the unformed character susceptible of any arbitrary impression you please to make upon it."\(^5^0\) Except for this Montaigne-like suggestion, and Tom's "excessive kindness" in giving both Blifil and Black George opportunity to repent (and change their natures), Fielding gives few other indications that a lack of good-nature can be overcome. Usually "a villain remains a villain still."\(^5^1\) His theory is not totally consistent in either *Tom Jones* nor his other writing.\(^5^2\) But his writing confirms that he believes and tries to prove that almost all men have possibilities of this "better nature" and

\(^5^0\) Fielding, *Characters of Men*, XIV, 304.

\(^5^1\) Ibid., XIV, 302.

\(^5^2\) Fielding, *The Champion* (December 15, 1739), XV, 102-03; (March 27, 1740), XV, 255-60; *Characters of Men*, XIV, 281, 285-87, 289; *The Covent-Garden Journal* (July 18, 1752), XIV, 114; (June 16, 1752), XIV, 194; *Tom Jones*, I, 1, Henley, III, 17-19.
that both the Christian religion and philosophy are helpful
to its nurture, if neither approach is dogmatic.

The deists gave Fielding and other intellectuals not
only ideas; their methods held the potentiality of proof
for his own conclusions. He seems to use their reasoning
to prove the Lockean harmony of reason and faith, or "pru-
dence and religion," he calls it in Tom Jones, and he employs
the deists' favorite instrument, ridicule, to separate truth
from superstition. 53 Although Shaftesbury declared that the
unity and harmony he saw in nature encompassed the religion-
ists' Providence, he and Clarke both postulated a free will
in man, much as Fielding maintains against Mandeville's
skepticism. 54

Thus in the poem on Deity in his novel, Fielding first
seems to say that Providence is above all and controlling
all men: "Perform the parts Thy providence assigned,/ Their
pride, their passions to Thy ends inclined," 55 a view similar
to Pope's, "Th' Eternal Art deducing good from ill,/ Grafts
on this passion our best principle,/ 'Tis thus the mercury

53 Fielding, The Champion (March 27, 1740), XV, 260;
(January 3, 1739/40), XV, 135-36; Tom Jones, V, 7, Henley,
III, 243; The Covent-Garden Journal (February 4, 1752),
XIV, 111-13.

54 Shaftesbury, "The Moralists," Characteristics, II,
92-93; "Miscellaneous Reflections," II, 294-95.

55 Fielding, Tom Jones, VII, 1, Henley, III, 333.
of man is fixed." Yet Partridge is Fielding's most vocal exponent of the doctrine of Providence, perhaps one of his "superstitions," and Tom makes fun of this view until his path crosses that of Sophia, as if Providence had designed to bring them together at last. "And this was the first time that Jones lent any attention to the superstitious doctrines of his companion." Some ambivalence might be expected, for this subject was not settled in the ideas Fielding himself was examining. The critic Dorothy van Ghent equates Fortune with Providence in the novel, but Fielding makes the distinction. He is able to prove natural causes for "modern miracles"; but he leaves the question of Scriptural miracles open, for there is no real proof, and his reason does not let him destroy his acceptance of the divinity of Jesus. He simply says, "Reader, I am not superstitious nor any great believer in modern miracles," for "the fact may be true and less miraculous than it hath been represented, since the natural cause seems adequate to the effect." Shaftesbury is not much more direct: "Whilst you are unhinging Nature, whilst

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57 Fielding, Tom Jones, XII, 8, Henley, IV, 335.


59 Fielding, Tom Jones, XVII, 1, Henley, V, 247-48; X, 9, Henley, IV, 235.
you are searching heaven and earth for prodigies, and studying how to miraculise everything, you bring confusion on the world, you break its uniformity and destroy that admirable simplicity of order" which must "reveal and witness a God."

A person who believes in this orderliness of God's ways "can then hearken to historical revelation, and is then fitted (and not until then) for the reception of any message or miraculous notice from above"; nevertheless, "how incredulous I am of modern miracles."  

So many of Shaftesbury's conclusions were derived from the Stoics and Epicureans that his statements on ethics were popularly supposed almost subversive. Fielding has kind words for ancient Stoics and Epicureans both, but like Shaftesbury, he carefully exempts the "modern Epicureans" from his approbation. Because Shaftesbury largely ignored the theological debates of his time, preferring like Fielding to stay quietly within his Anglican religion, he is sometimes called a "humanist deist," a bystander to the revelation-reason debates of the theologians (with churchmen on both sides of that continuing argument). But he dwells upon man's nature in the same psychological approach that Mandeville, his bitter enemy, used.  

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61 Fielding, Tom Jones, XV, 1, Henley, V, 141. See also Shaftesbury, "The Moralists," Characteristics, II, 41-42.
public by questioning traditional ethics, more than the theological deists did with their sometimes obscure explications of religious theory. Both Mandeville and Bolingbroke ridiculed Shaftesbury's idea of a benevolent innate virtue; "the calm Virtues recommended in the Characteristics are good for nothing but to breed Drones, and might qualify a Man for the Stupid Enjoyments of a Monastick Life, or at best a Country Justice of Peace, but they would never . . . stir him up to great Atchievements and perilous undertakings," scoffs Mandeville. Fielding despises Mandeville's view of man, and in his attempts to disprove it, he seems to accept almost all of Shaftesbury's philosophy. He does not include that philosopher's assertion that men find such a pleasure in virtue, that "mental enjoyments, or pleasures of the mind" are superior to "sensual enjoyments or pleasures of the body." Square's involvement with Molly Seagrim effectually shows Fielding's opinion of what to him is an unrealistic statement about human nature. While "fitness is governed by the nature of things," Square declares defensively that "very minute circumstances cause great alteration" so that "things may be fitting to be done which are not fitting to be boasted of." The narrator comments that "philosophers are composed

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63 Mandeville, Fable of the Bees, I, 333.

64 Shaftesbury, "Virtue or Merit," Characteristics, I, 294.
of flesh and blood as well as any other human creatures," and Tom laughingly leaves Square to his fleshly "pleasures."\(^{65}\)

At times Fielding supports Shaftesbury's ideas more than seems necessary in context,\(^{66}\) however, and mentions him at least once in a kindly humorous context. In *Tom Jones* the one time Sophia shows a falling away from perfection, outside of the eighteenth century debate over whether she had the right to "refuse any absolute command" of her father,\(^{67}\) occurs when she resorts to what is euphemistically called an "honest impulse of nature," actually a lie. The rationale given by the narrator is that "the elegant Lord Shaftesbury somewhere objects to telling too much truth," so that "our heroine now followed the dictates of the above-mentioned honourable philosopher." This allusion to restraint in telling the truth probably refers to "a kind of defensive rail- lery" Shaftesbury mentions, "when the spirit of curiosity would force a discovery of more truth than can conveniently be told. For we can never do more injury to truth than by discovering too much of it on some occasions." And Fielding may have found a particular merriment in applying the philosopher's next statement to Squire Western: "'Tis real humanity and kindness to hide strong truths from tender eyes."


\(^{66}\)Fielding, "The Vernoniad," XV, 52; *The Champion* (March 27, 1740), XV, 260.

\(^{67}\)Fielding, *Tom Jones*, X, 8, Henley, IV, 228; XVIII, 9, Henley, V, 341, 343.
Shaftesbury proceeds, in his essay on "The Freedom of Wit and Humour," to distinguish carefully "between fair-dealing and hypocrisy, or between the genteelest wit and the most scurrilous buffoonery," so that philosophical truths would not be obscured. 68

Shaftesbury wanted to be known as a man of taste, of discrimination between the true and the false, but in his writing he emphasized "good-humour," meaning a self-disciplined serenity and moderation. Usually his target was any ill-natured extremism in religion, "manners," or any area of life; "true men of moderation . . . are secure of their temper, and possess themselves too well to be in danger of entering warmly into any cause, or engaging deeply with any side or faction," 69 almost a warning by Allworthy. Much as Fielding seems to admire Shaftesbury's high ethical ideals, he rejects the aristocratic implication of good-nature as an attribute of only the highborn's good-breeding, as well as the popular interpretation of Shaftesbury's urbane "good-humour" for "that constant, settled, glavering, sneering smile" of the malicious. Fielding carefully makes

68 Ibid., XIII, 12, Henley, V, 87; The Covent-Garden Journal (February 11, 1752), XIV, 120, 121, 122. See also Shaftesbury, "Wit and Humour," Characteristics, I, 45.

the distinction between that concept of good-humour and his own idea of good-nature, for "good-nature" is that "amiable temper of mind which disposes us" to promote the happiness of others. And unless he be again misunderstood, "a sour, morose, ill-natured, censorious sanctity never is, nor can be sincere."70

Bishop Berkeley misunderstood Shaftesbury in enough ways to call Shaftesbury an outright atheist. But the mystical Christian bishop was widely criticized and ridiculed for his position; that an honest doubter at variance from the church was necessarily not a Christian went thoroughly against the grain of the intellectuals of the era. Fielding saw no value in Berkeley, and his "Essay on Nothing"71 may well be a burlesque of Berkeley's statements on the existence and movement of nothing without the conscious and continual intercession of God. The only "natural principle" which survived Berkeley's arguments was the existence of God; even man could not know that he himself existed without a mystical personal revelation of each such fact he "thought" he knew.72

70Fielding, Characters of Men, XIV, 287, 285-86, 294. See also Shaftesbury, "Virtue or Merit," Characteristics, I, 270-75.


This stand was back full circle to the seventeenth century dissenters' mystical messages from God, to the Quakers and Inner Light sects. Although Mandeville attacked Berkeley bitterly in his *A Letter to Dion* (1732),\(^7^3\) Berkeley's attempt to refute Locke's basic theories of reason was probably thoroughly misunderstood even by the Englishmen who usually accepted the idea of Providence as unquestionable. Locke remained the most important authority in the Age of Reason, one who "spoke to a generation ready to receive precisely what he was prepared to say."\(^7^4\) The questions he raised about man's reason are some of the very ones Shaftesbury attempted to answer in his essays, and Fielding in his novels, and both tried to find rational causes for man's sometimes obvious irrationality.

Trenchard's *The Natural History of Superstition*\(^7^5\) began the investigation of the psychology of irrational religious emotion which was to lead into the study of wider manifestations of irrational behavior. "Why were men possessed by 'panick fears,' prone to superstition? Why did they show

\(^7^3\)Mandeville, *Letter to Dion*, pp. 1-66; introduction by Jacob Viner, pp. 1-3.

\(^7^4\)Cragg, *From Puritanism*, p. 134.

\(^7^5\)Manuel, *Gods*, pp. 75-77.
bizarre religious feelings and perform unnatural acts in the name of God [for both the ancient classics and the new geographical discoveries gave examples of this]? How could rational men be so readily deceived by priestly frauds? How was it possible for them to believe in myths of abominable gods as if they were realities? How could a religious mystic credit his hallucinations?" The English deists proceeded "to examine into the frame and constitution of our own Bodies, and search into the causes of our Passions and Infirmities."76

Pierre Bayle, a philosopher respected by Mandeville as well as by Fielding, explained mind and body interaction during periods of visitations and psychic delusions. Trenchard began with Bayle's idea, that under sometimes deliberately arranged circumstances, the body could be stimulated to produce delusions that the senses somehow did not contradict in the normal fashion. Blocking communication with the outside "real" world was necessary so that the senses would not correct the delusive phenomena, and the resulting hallucinations could be dreams, delirium, madness, physical sickness, melancholy, intense concentration upon one object or idea, or shock from fright. Hence, by Locke's theories, the "inner light" of visionaries is cut off from the senses somehow, and the mystics believed their hallucinations. The philosophers found examples of their "patients" in Dr. Burton's book

76Ibid.
on Melancholy, and in Bedlam, and those suffering from delusions were soon identified with any "non-rationalist" religious manifestation, including the self-scourging of some religious orders, and were considered of a sick mind. The deists thus brought a respect for the flesh back into philosophy, for they saw it as indivisible from man's mind and emotions.\footnote{Ibid.}

Trenchard used a mixture of "Epicurean and Newtonian physics" to account for mass hysteria, saying that some sort of atoms or vapors released by one sick mind infected others (this before any sort of germ theory for contagion of sick bodies had been postulated) and that members of a sect who were accustomed to extraordinary manifestations became quite sensitive in recognizing them in others and responding in the same way.\footnote{Ibid., p. 78.}

Shaftesbury was exploring the same subject and coming to the same conclusions. In his 1710 Soliloquy: or Advice to an Author, he declared that this psychology was above all other sciences and knowledge, because it provided a key to distinguish true religion from false. "The study of human affection" assigns "the just value of everything in life. By this science religion itself is judged, spirits are search'd, prophecys prov'd, miracles distinguish'd; the sole measure and
discernment of what is sound and just in the affection." This "human affection" is what Fielding means by "human nature" in Tom Jones, for few authors know "true nature," and he intends to portray it with all the skill and art of which he is capable, the narrator says, quoting Pope: "True wit is nature to advantage dressed,/ What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed."

Shaftesbury's descriptions of the bigoted fanatic may have given Fielding far more of a model for Thwackum than any living parson. Thwackum's sanctimonious cruelty was part of d'Holbach's picture of a fanatic, drawn in turn from Shaftesbury's; the embittered man creates a terrible and unjust God to match his own disposition, said the deists, for the true God is benevolent and just, quick to forgive. Nature itself was neutral, and man should not attribute to God or to Nature the destructive passions he finds in himself.

For these embryonic psychologists, the next step in studying a sick-natured enthusiast was to cure him, and not


by sermons. It was "by applying the ridicule," and Shaftesbury speaks for the deists generally, in advocating either wit or mockery as the weapon to test truth. Persecution could never convince a dour fanatic that God is a good-natured Deity, "the best-natured being in the universe."\(^{82}\) The reader of Fielding's essays and novels can see the wit in an effective statement or figure of speech; beneath the surface there is likely to be a more serious idea about human nature, usually in accord with the deists' studies of man.

This method was exactly what Fielding had the talent, skill, and insight to use, and Shaftesbury's ideas often provided his justification in an age when even romantic tales had to be moralized into some conventional maxim. Devotional books were not all replaced by novels, and the most relevant criticism in an age idolizing reason was that a work might be lacking a moral lesson. For a man trying to earn a living through his novels, the figures for book sales spoke loudly: one of the few secular works which sold over 10,000 copies in that period was Swift's *Conduct of the Allies* (in 1711), while Bishop Sherlock's *Letter from the Lord Bishop of London to the Clergy and People of London on the Occasion of the Late Earthquakes* (1750) sold over 100,000

copies.\textsuperscript{83} The market was obviously for books with self-
justifying themes related to the religious interests of the
audience. Fielding seems to have aimed his novels at all the
literate levels, but he had the wit to keep contemporary con-
cerns interesting for those with his own kind of intellectual
curiosity.

Fielding read extensively in the deists' works, judging
from his library and his mention of some of the rationalists.
He had the works of the Abbé Bannier, for instance, and Mat-
thew Hale's \textit{Primitive Origination of Mankind}, one of the
first examinations of early seventeenth century blasphemous
writings (and against all of them), as well as a study of
the most popular "other" religion, Mohammedanism.\textsuperscript{84} These
all gave him a background in primitivism from several angles,
and he does not appear to be as impressed by the purity of
primitive societies and religions as many of his countrymen
were. In \textit{Tom Jones}, for example, he declares that "the true
era of the golden age, and the only golden age which ever
had any existence" was during the reign of five Roman
kings;\textsuperscript{85} the rest of the passage indicates that civiliz-
ization under a good monarch and with reasonably adequate
laws is preferable to even paradisiacal anarchy or tyranny.

\textsuperscript{83}Watt, \textit{Rise of the Novel}, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{84}Thornbury, \textit{Fielding's Theory of the Comic Epic},
pp. 176, 182, 175.
\textsuperscript{85}Fielding, \textit{Tom Jones}, XII, 12, Henley, V, 19.
The author does praise the allegorist Bannier with unusual directness: "the ingenious Abbé Bannier," whose "Mythology, a work of great erudition and of equal judgment," are lines quoted by Fielding in *Tom Jones*. There is elsewhere a vague indication that Tom's youth excuses his lack of wisdom, but Allworthy's answer to an objection that the "wisest men have been in their youth immoderately fond of pleasure" is that "they were not wise then." Primitivism seems to hold no glamour for a writer concerned with the realities of human nature. Even "philosophers are composed of flesh and blood as well as other creatures," and he always comes back to the psychological side of morality, of why one whose natural good nature has been offered both religion and philosophy, and has "improved good natural parts by a proper education," is still vulnerable to exploitation by the wicked, exactly as Hobbes and Mandeville allege (although Tom does not knowingly exploit others in turn). To the author, the answer must lie in a study of human nature, to begin by trying to understand why there can occur outbursts of "distemper" such as he frequently attributes to the Methodists, "the extraordinary emotions of the spirit," which significantly require "a long hood" to deaden the senses, in accord with the deists' theories about the

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86 Ibid., XII, 1, Henley, IV, 301; VI, 3, Henley, III, 284.
"pernicious principles" of fanaticism. He illustrates another deist conclusion, that temporary "humours" result from melancholy or grief. This idea is seen in Tom's passion of despair when he has been sent away from Allworthy; such violent "humours" effectually immobilize the brain until the mood is past. This passion is not "the most moving passage in the book," although one critic calls it that; nor is Tom so overcome with benevolent good feelings that he leaves his pocketbook on the grass for Black George deliberately, as the same critic suggests. These temporary paroxysms of "humour" were devastating to a person, and Tom is not really in his right mind until this expression of his emotion has passed and he can think rationally again about the missing pocketbook as well as about Sophia.

The bigger question was Fielding's concern about basic human nature, about how a well-intentioned person can defend himself against the bad-natured who might take unfair advantage of him, and about how to help one of the wrong kind to change his very nature. Probably his preoccupation with that problem was one reason for his exceptionally conscientious work as a magistrate, but the dilemma has never really

87 Ibid., V, 5, Henley, III, 226-27; XI, 7, Henley, IV, 277; VIII, 8, Henley, IV, 92-93; The Covent-Garden Journal (March 24, 1752), XIV, 146.


89 Elizabeth Jenkins, Henry Fielding (Denver, 1948), p. 61.
been resolved. The deists made some real progress, and out of Fielding's studies of fanatics like "the Holy Enthusiastick," whose "violent aggressiveness and maniacal destructiveness" turned the "melancholy, self-tortured, diseased" mind into a "mighty Storm of Zeal," which this "Fiery Religion" could not help, Fielding tried to create characters whose nature were true to life. Even a cleric can be destructively "ill-natured"; and even a philosopher can be so dogmatically "enthusiastic" about his "system" that he may never discover an ultimate truth in Christianity; thus both can fill the role of hypocrite. This realism about human nature becomes part of "the bitter smile of Voltaire" by midcentury, and it is to Fielding's credit that he never gives in to skepticism, but keeps his faith in man's nature.

Hobbes' reaction to the extremists of his time was to suggest putting all society under the authority of a strong state; Locke's approach was to assume that reason was "natural" and leave the rest in the hands of an almighty God; Shaftesbury made individual virtue into a social ethic, and insisted that all normal persons would respond to the "middle way." But Fielding understood that man is sometimes not only irrational but antisocial, and that the key to a real understanding

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91 Ibid., p. 40.
of man's behavior lay in "human nature." Through his art
the novelist tried to present psychological truth "with a
smiling countenance," in the spirit of a masterly test of
such truth by his wit and the restrained ridicule advocated
by the deists.

\footnote{Fielding, Tom Jones, XI, 1, Henley, IV, 245; The
Covent-Garden Journal (February 4, 1752), XIV, 111-12. See
also Shaftesbury, "Wit and Humour," Characteristics, I, 52,
65, 85, 89.}
CHAPTER IV

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF HUMAN NATURE IN FIELDING'S ART

During Fielding's lifetime there were some gradual shifts taking place in life styles, and some of these contributed to the novelist's "new style of writing."¹ Secularization was one of these changes,² far easier to discern in retrospect than at the time the alteration was taking place. Although the Restoration period had introduced new ideas and had begun the use of the new scientific methods to some extent, a more tangible era of transition began in the early eighteenth century and continued until a period of consolidation about midcentury. Personal morals were relaxed at court during the Hanovarian era, while Parliament was largely controlled by bribery.³ There seemed to be an increasingly aggressive urban mercantile class,⁴ and at the same time, there was easy availability of gin and a soaring crime rate.


²Watt, Rise of the Novel, pp. 82-83.

³Cragg, Church and the Age of Reason, IV, 120-21.

⁴Watt, Rise of the Novel, p. 48. See Cragg, Church and the Age of Reason, IV, 134.
in London. The village commons were being closed to the livestock of small farmers, a move which forced some people into new ways of livelihood. During these years of sometimes gradual but definite change, many people kept their values high and their quality of life stable. Some men, like Fielding, recognized potentially severe problems in the new ways. Drastic though some of the changes were, however, the consensus seemed to be that the situations would get back to "normal."

As the cottage industries dwindled and the small factories began to take more of the village prisoners, the orphans, and beggars for labor, the general attitude was that of Fielding's—to try to make sure the overseers were kind and fair, but not to encourage the poor to hope for betterment beyond their basic needs. The attitude of Fielding's peers was that the luxury of the upper classes was an incentive to impudence and laziness among the lower orders and that the need was for a better example from those of higher birth. There was as yet no real assessment of cause and effect, of why so many situations were changing. Only by

5Zirker, Pamphlets, pp. 32-33, 83, 87.
8Fielding, The Covent-Garden Journal (May 26, 1752), XIV, 179; (June 13, 1752), XIV, 189-92.
the time Fielding writes *Amelia* does even the alert Fielding appear to accept some of the serious realities of the times; in *Amelia* his conviction that a sincere man has the power to improve society is not as assured as in his earlier novels. While he never doubts God, there is unconscious irony in the fact that he is occasionally skeptical about the nature of his fellow man. He had been concerned with the problems of human nature in both his novels and essays. In *Amelia*, however, he seems to create in a mood that is far more somber, far from the romantic optimism of *Tom Jones*. But in spite of the understatement in the preface to *Tom Jones*, that "it is much easier to make good men wise, than to make bad men good," implying some skepticism, Fielding does not ever give up his faith in "the nature of man." He persists in his belief that man's nature is far from being in itself evil."\(^9\)

His concept of mixed natures is highlighted in his fair assessment of the sailors on his Lisbon voyage, for he offers two views of them: on shipboard they are hard-working, "always extremely alert . . . without any regard to fatigue or hazard," and they possess the good qualities of discipline, obedience, cheerfulness, patience, and fortitude. His view could certainly have been harsher, considering that some sailors on the wharf had ridiculed his feeble

and awkward efforts to board a boat for the ship. Sick as he was with the gout, they had mocked him "by all manner of insults and jests on my misery." It is possible that among the men on the wharf were some who had appeared before his magistrate's bench and that they may have felt that they were avenging themselves with insults. In his reaction to the experience, Fielding becomes philosophical in the melancholy mood of the Man of the Hill, remarking on "that cruelty and inhumanity, in the nature of men . . . who, while they boast of being made after God's own image, seem to bear in their minds a resemblance of the vilest species of brutes; or rather, indeed, of our idea of devils: for I don't know that any brutes can be taxed with such malevolence."\(^\text{10}\)

He tries to reason the experience away with "very uncomfortable and melancholy thoughts . . . that this barbaric custom is peculiar" only to Englishmen of "the lowest degree; that it is an excrescence of an uncontrollable licentiousness mistaken for liberty, and never shews itself in men who are polish'd and refin'd, in such manner as human nature requires, to produce that perfection of which it is susceptible, and to purge away that malevolence of disposition, of which, at our birth, we partake in common with the savage creation."\(^\text{11}\) His argument is reasonable in view of the class distinctions of his time. The Duchess of Buckingham shows much stronger

\(^{10}\)Fielding, *Voyage*, XVI, 273, 200-01.

\(^{11}\)Ibid., XVI, 201.
sentiments, in reference to the Methodists: that their doctrine was "strangely tinctured with impertinence and disrespect toward their superiors. It is monstrous to be told that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. Such sentiments were at variance with high rank and good breeding."\(^{12}\) But it is not sufficient for Fielding to reconcile such behavior with his philosophy; later he concludes that the same person in different situations, on the land or the sea in this case, will react differently—situational ethics with an eighteenth century overtone. This is close to the "noble rhetoric" Empson sees as part of Fielding's art in conveying his philosophy, which Empson calls "humanist, liberal, materialist," and "Gospel" Christianity.\(^{13}\) Since Fielding has earlier stated that good-breeding is not dependent upon birth or position,\(^{14}\) the reader may suspect that in his last journal, Fielding simply rises above even his own reasoning when it is necessary to maintain his concept of the possibility of good in every man's nature.

Still, this sober approach to life is far from that in Tom Jones, where the novelist presents an example of what Marshall McLuhan calls "the myth of a green pasture world


\(^{13}\)Empson, "Tom Jones," pp. 221, 228.

\(^{14}\)Fielding, Conversation, XIV, 277.
of innocence." This myth provides a motivation for "man's natural desire to withdraw from society, symbolized by the city, to a rural setting where he could recover his animal and natural self."\(^{15}\) Eighteenth century England was a world of visual space, especially outside the cities, and its claim to "rationality had the connotation of uniformity and connectiveness. . . . the organizing principle of life."\(^{16}\) London was beginning to be what Louis Wirth describes as a modern city, in that "the contacts of the city may indeed be face to face, but they are nevertheless impersonal, superficial, transitory, and segmental. The reserve, the indifference, and the blase outlook which urbanites manifest in their relationships may thus be regarded as devices for immunizing themselves against the personal claims and expectations of others."\(^{17}\) Considering these changes in city life from that of the country estate or village, Zirker concludes that "Fielding was able to maintain the serenity and idealism of the classical Christian virtues only by recourse to the manipulation available in fiction."\(^{18}\) Zirker contrasts the novels and the legal writings; in *Amelia*, for instance, Dr. Harrison each


\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 45.


\(^{18}\) Zirker, *Pamphlets*, p. 139.
week "visits every house in the parish, examines, commends, and rebukes as he finds occasion," with such good effect that "no quarrels ever proceed either to blows or law-suits; no beggar is to be found in the whole parish,"\(^{19}\) another world from the problems met head-on by the justice's court in London. On the other hand, the poor of the city were considered far too simplistically, but with real concern, in Fielding's social pamphlets, "An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers," in 1751, and "A Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor" in 1753.\(^{20}\)

The ending in *Tom Jones* shows the rather facile solutions of social problems in his fiction, for Tom and Sophia's "condescension, their indulgence, and their beneficence to those below them" keeps the peace, and happiness is assured to everyone within the charmed circle of such patrons.\(^{21}\) An uncritical acceptance of this lovely world as eighteenth-century reality can distort a critic's view of Fielding himself, leaving out of consideration the impact of the real life in which he was immersed. Misconceptions such as the indulgent glow Battestin envisions around

\(^{19}\)Amelia, III, 12, Henley, VI, 164.


Fielding can seriously affect judgments about the actual people Fielding had to deal with. Within his arbitrary bounds of artistic casting, the author projects a basic optimism about the nature of man in Tom Jones, and his own attitudes are disclosed in the way he conceives his characters and places them in situations he finds full of implication and meaning. Even in an eighteenth-century context, however, it is sometimes necessary to look to his other writings to understand Fielding in more dimensions. And in criticizing any of his work, how he writes becomes as important as what he writes.

In analysing Fielding's structure, critics are aided by his overt organization of chapters and books. Tom Jones, for example, has its two hundred and eight chapters divided into eighteen books, each introduced by a prefatory "head-chapter" ostensibly written from the author's own point of view, usually omnipotent, and containing a clue to the action, theme, or tone of the narration to follow in that book. His setting for the novel is similarly divided into sections, Allworthy's country estate for the first six books, the general route from there to London in the next six books, and the city of London and its environs for the last six. His novel begins with a dedication to "George Lyttleton, Esq.," a typical

encomium with gracious expressions of gratitude and appeal to a highly placed patron, a dedication pertinent to an eighteenth-century writer neither financially independent nor socially secure. The novel ends with a neat hem of appropriate rewards and benign punishments, a characteristic of a "comedy" in its time.

So far the skill of a good craftsman is displayed; but the art of Fielding is found in the much more subtle designs, constructions, and furnishings of Tom Jones, in a pattern Van Ghent calls as complex as "a Palladian palace perhaps." Fielding's philosophy is frequently revealed, and as often carefully concealed, in these intricacies, in such situations as placing Mrs. Fitzpatrick and Sophia on the same road for a while. This is significant in that, despite the effusive terms in which Sophia has been described, she, like Tom, could be tempted to become as bitter and as cynical as Mrs. Fitzpatrick, the female philosophical counterpart of the Man of the Hill. Mrs. Fitzpatrick's indiscriminate reading of books is shown to be as inadequate on a more shallow level as the Man's reading of philosophy. She has been betrayed into as heart-breaking wounds as the Man suffered, but she returns to her old careless ways, since "it is possible for one who hath been a villain once to act the same part again."

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In contrast, Mrs. Waters has been hurt by her own generous and naive nature, and she is eventually rewarded by a marriage to Parson Supple. To keep Lady Bellaston relevant to this philosophical thread of the story, one of her roles is to portray an aristocratic woman who has to learn the "good manners," in the context of the times, suitable to a lady of her position—a lesson indicated in her well-bred (and discreet) reserve toward Tom after his marriage. This attitude toward good breeding is part of the philosophy of Fielding's peers during his time, and explains the importance he, like Shaftesbury, gives to "politeness" and "good manners,"26 the qualities which best reflect one's birth and station. The female characters Sophia and Mrs. Miller have the demeanor most appropriate to their respective levels in society.

Tom Jones was published in 1749, a date allowing for much experience in Fielding's dealing with another class, the "low" side of life he saw as magistrate. Fielding seems to have undergone a reevaluation of the place of the novel sometime in 1741, probably during his writing of Joseph Andrews. He moves in that novel into a scrutiny of the life of lowly people like Parson Adams and Joseph far more than in the derisive Shamela. Almost none of his essays deal with other than those he considered his peers, the aristocracy, or

at least the intellectualss. In Joseph Andrews his style of irony indicates the several levels of appeal he will use in Tom Jones later, a sophisticated humor with multifarious intimations. Although Ian Watt points out some strong classical influences in Tom Jones,\(^2\) Fielding's writing also includes some elements of what Watt calls "formal realism."\(^2\)

It is likely that Tom Jones is a deliberate compromise between the newer realism and some classical values that Fielding favors. Fielding refines Richardson's type of blatant interpretative melodrama into a more intellectual entertainment, with a subtle philosophy above the level of what Watt suggests is Richardson's introspective emotional release.\(^2\)

Fielding uses irony deftly to keep from revealing his own private beliefs, fears, and "passions," a discreet contrast to Richardson's often transparent justifications of his heroines' attitudes by outright moralizing. While, as Watt points out, Richardson uses "the ponderous voice of the lay bishop,"\(^3\) Fielding is exceedingly careful to use this voice and method only for a facetious level of meaning.\(^3\)

\(^{2}\)Watt, Rise of the Novel, pp. 271, 272-73, 274-75.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., pp. 32, 286.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., pp. 190-91, 199.

\(^{2}\)Ibid., pp. 235-36.

\(^{3}\)Fielding, Tom Jones, IV, 1, Henley, III, 142-45; titles: I, 3, 7, Henley, III, 22, 36; II, 2, 8, 9, Henley, III, 66, 97, 99.
accept Fielding's words at face value, no matter how candid a character he is portraying, is to ask to be ridiculed by the knowledgeable author, which may explain the hesitation of the reading public to accept his work. His irony is a many-layered mask in context, with the disclosures of real natures under the characters' pretensions of virtue. The author himself, not drawn to the confessional introspection of Richardson, conceals his personal feelings or even ridicules his own irrational sentiments. An example of this self-recognition is his portrait of Sophia. Here he deliberately uses "sublime" language to immortalize the memory of his first wife and possibly to remind his contemporaries that he was married to a woman of her high social standing. In the head chapter immediately preceding this characterization, the author hints at the ways the following "ornamental" part of his work may be construed, perhaps as an exaggeration of nature similar to "those idle romances" produced by "distempered" [unbalanced] minds, or as a diversion from the "serious tale" of his story. Ultimately, as always, Fielding "shall leave to the reader to determine" why his novel says what it does.\footnote{Ibid., IV, 2, Henley, III, 145-49; IV, 1, Henley, III, 143; The Covent-Garden Journal (January 18, 1752), XIV, 93.} William Empson, in a critique which may best be described in Irvin Ehrenpreis' comment, "a remarkably perceptive and inaccurate essay."\footnote{Irvin Ehrenpreis, Fielding: Tom Jones, Studies in English Literature, No. 23 (London, 1964, reprinted 1967), p. 78.}
points out the several directions the various levels of irony take in Fielding's Tom Jones, so that each reader has a choice of identifying with whichever of the levels he understands and accepts. Above the whole work, however, reigns the master, delighted to have charmed and guided his reader into a broader view of the possibilities of human nature.

There are ways to discern much of the real Fielding even in such worldly-wise complexities of design. There are several characters in Tom Jones who profess Jacobite sympathies, for example, and none of these is given much intellectual acumen. In Book XI, there are an unpleasant innkeeper and "a famous Jacobite squire," and in Book XII, there appear the innkeeper's wife, the pupper-show man, an attorney's clerk, and the chameleonlike Partridge in one scene alone. Partridge is a many-sided character, sometimes a Sancho at first, wiser in the ways of the world than his Quixote, then more and more out-thought by Tom's deepening wisdom. Timid as his namesake, Partridge's superstition brings to mind the astrologer who is the target of Swift's Bickerstaff papers, an association familiar to the well-educated readers of the day; Fielding does not misspell the name, though, as Mandeville did in his reference to the almanac-maker, and as Swift

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35 Fielding, Tom Jones, XI, 2, Henley, IV, 250, 252-53; XI, 8, Henley, IV, 273, 284; XII, 7, Henley, IV, 331-33.
had done.\textsuperscript{36} The smatterings of pseudo-pedantic Latin may reflect the author's prejudice against the Roman Catholic mass and the deists' assumptions of a mysterious-sounding jargon deliberately used by priests to keep their common followers credulous and superstitious. In addition, the characterization of Partridge may indicate that no low born pretender to learning, whose "shallow draughts" from the springs of learning have obviously intoxicated his brain, could reach the rational heights of the hero, Tom.

Lord Fellamar, the highborn counterpart of Richardson's Lovelace, illustrates a responsibility to his own class code on another plane, in his disinclination to approach Sophia with violence until instigated to it by the persistent Lady Bellaston. Fielding repeats the eighteenth-century commonplace (at least from those who claimed high birth) that honor in a "liberality of spirit" is "scarce ever seen in men of low birth and education."\textsuperscript{37} But while Fielding frequently wrote articles ridiculing the courtiers and the upper class exceptions to the type of honor which he considered basic to their rank and responsibilities, he indicated also that the ones true to their good nature, of whatever rank, will revert

\textsuperscript{36}Mandeville, \textit{Fable of the Bees}, II, 27.

\textsuperscript{37}Fielding, \textit{Tom Jones}, IX, 1, Henley, IV, 159.
to their fine qualities even if misled by others or by their own human nature.\textsuperscript{38}

Even so, Fielding's portrayals of these potentialities for both high and low actions by men do not show the indiscriminate acceptance of a Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner attitude. Tom must repent his misdeeds, as Fellamar must offer apologies to Sophia and Western and make amends to fulfill his code of honor, by endeavoring "to procure Tom's liberty at once." In the same sense the far too fallible Square needs to learn truth from "the Gospel," to end his ridicule by Fielding. Man lives up to the best in his nature only by accepting his social obligations and the truth Fielding ultimately places in "the Gospel," an orthodox view of both society and religion.\textsuperscript{39}

Squire Western is another character who is prevented from becoming a stock character by the medium of Fielding's art. The scene Watt describes as belonging in melodrama he correctly judges to be a step out of character for both Western and his daughter Sophia. They do speak in "hackneyed trope," in the speech of stock stage villain and innocent maiden.\textsuperscript{40} Western threatens in "stage tones" to turn Sophia

\textsuperscript{38}Fielding, Conversation, XIV, 265, 267, 263, 250-51, 259.

\textsuperscript{39}Fielding, Tom Jones, XVIII, 11, 4, Henley, V, 352-53, 306.

\textsuperscript{40}Watt, Rise of the Novel, p. 264.
out into the street "without a single farthing; not though I saw you expiring," in answer to Sophia's plea to be released from his plan to marry her to Blifil.\(^1\) The irony, which is at least dual, would indicate that the interpretation need not be literal. Western has been called a "politician" twice immediately preceding the chapter,\(^2\) and the reader who does not take his language of "romances" seriously may find this show of force on Western's part to be the cunning politician at work to convince his daughter that his will must be respected in this case. The exaggerated speech tries to convince the reader, rather than the daughter, that the violent squire would follow through on his threats, that is, unless the reader already is alert to Fielding's use of mock-Homeric situations. Sophia's bloodied face is no more an elegant equivalent of Aphrodite's wounded hand, "her lovely skin blood-darkened," than Molly's churchyard battle scene is to be taken as truly heroic in the classic sense, yet Tom's reaction could not have been more dramatic if Sophia had indeed been the goddess of love herself.\(^3\) As Empson infers, Fielding's writing allows for more than one or even two levels of interpretation, and for more than one class of readers. This choice of interpretations lets one reader

\(^{1}\)Ibid. See Fielding, *Tom Jones*, VI, 7, Henley, III, 301.


\(^{3}\)Homer, *The Iliad*, V, l. 345.
see the comedy in these exaggerated scenes, while another reader who loves "a tender sensation" may "pay the price of a tear." And for the one who would philosophize on any topic, there may be a grimace at the thought of a Zeuslike tirade in the mouth of the weak Western, who never learned the simplest lesson of philosophy. "True wisdom," the narrator suggests, "is not to buy at too dear a price"; thus Fielding emphasizes the "moderation" sadly lacking in Western. Ordinarily the author saw such bucolic squires in the light of "the honest, hearty, loud chuckle, which shakes the sides of aldermen and squires . . . proceeding chiefly from a full belly and is a symptom (however strange it may seem) of a very gentle and inoffensive quality, called dullness."

For his story he seems to need a personification of the passionate nature which, while not necessarily practicing the deceit or hypocrisy which was Fielding's most frequent target, could still be shown to be woefully lacking in prudence, almost to the point of losing what Western most valued in the world, his daughter's love. The characteristic of "inclination" is what Tom often sees in struggle with "honor" in himself, and it almost causes him to lose the love of those he esteems most, Sophia and Allworthy. These apparent inconsistencies of characterization in Tom Jones can be seen as a subtle

\[\text{\tiny Fielding, Tom Jones, VI, 5, 3, Henley, III, 288, 284-85; Characters of Men, XIV, 287.}\]
blend of art and "mixed" human nature, that "great variety which is found in the nature of man."\textsuperscript{45}

In his art Fielding did not hold to the day-by-day particularizing of Richardson's epistolary style: "Though we have properly enough entitled this our work a history," Fielding says, yet rather "than to imitate the painful and voluminous historian, who, to preserve the regularity of his series, thinks himself obliged to fill up as much paper with the detail of months and years in which nothing remarkable happened," his purpose is to pursue a contrary method. "If whole years should pass without producing anything worthy of his notice, we shall not be afraid of a chasm in our history, but shall hasten on to matters of consequence and leave such periods of time totally unobserved." He goes on to tell his reader that some of his chapters will contain only the time of a single day, "while others may cover years." He declares that "For all which I shall not look on myself as accountable to any court of critical jurisdiction whatever; for as I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein."\textsuperscript{46} This freedom to maintain an artistic illusion is part of what Joseph

\textsuperscript{45}Fielding, Tom Jones, V, 6, Henley, III, 233; VII, 1, Henley, III, 334-35; The Champion (December 15, 1739), XV, 102.

\textsuperscript{46}Fielding, Tom Jones, II, 1, Henley, III, 64-66.
Beach calls the "dramatic ideal" in the development of the novel.  

Some of the changes which took place in the daily life and in the literature of the period can be explained by the spreading literacy, especially in the huge class of servants and the constantly growing class of merchants. Books were not beyond the means of some in these groups; the lending libraries were multiplying, and subscribers could join at a low rate. Women provided a leisure class which had not existed outside the highest classes before the eighteenth century, until the mercantile families were able to free their women from weaving, spinning, and baking. The shift in the reading public, a significant part of which had consisted of a predominantly well-educated, classically-oriented group, was to a barely literate, mostly feminine audience. Many of the latter were servant girls who dreamed of a life like Pamela's or Clarissa's, and the shift illustrates a radical change in tastes in literature as well as in society.

Newspapers were cheap; they cost about the same as gin. The latter is severely blamed by Fielding for crime and other dissoluteness in the lower classes. As a London judge in the

48 Watt, Rise of the Novel, pp. 43, 44, 47.
new age, he almost despairs of enforcing the old laws concerning distribution of liquor, especially control of the alehouses and gin-shops. His alternative solutions carry the accent of desperate remedies, to lock up all spirits except for their use by physicians, or to raise the price of gin so high that the lower classes could not possibly afford it. One can surmise that the restraints would not necessarily be helpful in reducing crime, however. His duties as magistrate brought Fielding far deeper into the sordid realities of the time, on a plane at some distance from Richardson's largely feminine audience.

Fielding's sincerity in trying to improve the law enforcement of his day can hardly be questioned, but it is very likely that he also wanted to be recognized as "a great man" in his own right, by highly placed men such as Chesterfield and Newcastle, to be at least acknowledged by such literary figures as Swift and Pope. He seriously wanted "the great happiness of being known to posterity," and he wanted "to avoid the scandalous imputation, while we yet live, of being one whom nobody knows," in spite of the mocking tone he uses. But by the time Tom Jones was

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49 Fielding, "An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, &c.," Legal Writings, XIII, 29-37.
50 Watt, Rise of the Novel, pp. 151-54.
51 Fielding, Tom Jones, XIII, 2, Henley, V, 35.
was published, Swift and Pope were dead, while Richardson, completely out of the great tradition of satire and finesse, was lionized. Fielding must have felt that he was entering upon a new kind of writing, the legacy of neoclassic wit and insight adapted and applied to his own age.

His philosophy is seen through all his efforts, in what Kettle calls Fielding's "panoramic commentary on England in 1745." Fielding's writings repudiate seventeenth century dogmatism, for "man, therefore, is the highest subject" in the psychological approach opened up by the deists. In place of the earlier authority of church and crown, "Nature to all things fixed the limits fit"; Pope advises, "First follow Nature, and your judgment frame/ . . . / At once the source, and end, and test of art." As the anonymous author for the Essay on the New Species of Writing Founded by Mr. Fielding wrote in 1751, "before Tom Jones, the World had been pester'd with Volumes, commonly known by the Name of Romances, or Novels, Tales, &c. fill'd with anything which the wildest Imagination could suggest. . . . Probability was not required: The more extravagant the Thought, the more exquisite the Entertainmment, as those airy non-entical Forms they had long ador'd." This anonymous writer takes note of the "Ladies,"

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53 Fielding, Tom Jones, VIII, 1, Henley, IV, 60.

the "pretty Creatures" in the reading audience of his time. And he refers vaguely to Fielding's use of the comic mode, that "thro' the whole Humour must diffuse itself." The skillful blending of neoclassical forms with contemporary, more "human" subjects seems to be Fielding's way to use his art and thereby avoid the sort of opinion about novels held by intellectuals of his time which Dr. Johnson expressed: merely "a small tale, generally of love."

He seems to have achieved a particularly appropriate style for appeal to more than one kind of reader, although his multilevel approach was so subtle that it was not recognized during his lifetime. The critic Empson suggests that under his "show of lightness and carelessness," Fielding uses an effective ambiguity, a "habitual double irony." This is distinct from single irony, in which the writer only acts as an advocate to get a meaning past a censor of some sort, to appeal to the judgment of the reader for one final meaning. In Empson's view, Fielding is offering sustenance to both the conventional (or censor's) position, and to the broader acceptance of the sophisticated reader, thereby leaving both readers happy in thinking that the author is "on his side." The distinction Empson makes between Tom Jones and Fielding's earlier novels is that the author is deliberately proving an

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artistic theory, and uses the method of double irony to do so only in *Tom Jones*. *Amelia*, Empson says, is left with "merely less discovery about providing the sad truths." 57

This method may be the solution Fielding discovers to the problem he saw as early as 1740: "the difficulty of pleasing all palates will be easily acknowledged," for "there is "great difference of opinion concerning all works of wit and humour." The audience, he says, "are something divided about what is low, and the critics ... on what is high." This is "the greatest difficulty with which a miscellaneous author must struggle," he repeats, "the variety of his readers' palates. If he is serious, one half of his readers cry that he is dull; if ludicrous, the other half call him ridiculous, foolish, farcial. All persons moreover are desirous to be entertained with what they are most conversant with and best understand," so "I take the opportunity to assure my readers, all possible care shall be taken to please them all." 58 Fielding has given an early clue to his theme in *Tom Jones*, also: "I have often thought ... that, whilst so many men have employed their utmost abilities to invent systems, by which the artful and cunning part of mankind may be enabled to impose on the rest of the world, few

58 Fielding, *The Champion* (June 12, 1740), XV, 335-36, 338.
or none should have stood up the champions of the innocent and undesigning, and have endeavoured to arm them against imposition." As early as 1743 he seems to have been considering the method he will use to project his theme about human nature in an interesting style which still will not offend various segments of the reading public. "However cunning the disguise be which a masquerader [hypocrite] wears; . . . if closely attended to, he very rarely escapes the discovery of an accurate observer; for Nature, which unwillingly submits to the imposture, is ever endeavouring to peep forth and show herself." The double meaning would be his instrument, and no one could better use it than Fielding, nor was any author of the 1740's a more perceptive and knowledgeable student of human nature than he.

Fielding often advises his reader that he could be misunderstood: "I must remind such [shocked] readers 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. But if this was never so easy to do, perhaps it might be more prudent in me to avoid it. For instance, as the fact at present before us now stands, without any comment of mine upon it, though it may at first sight offend some readers, yet, upon more mature consideration, it must please

59 Fielding, Characters of Men, XIV, 281.
60 Ibid., XIV, 283.
all; for wise and good men may consider what happened to Jones at Upton as a just punishment for his wickedness with regard to women, of which it was indeed the immediate consequence; and silly and bad persons may comfort themselves in their vices by flattering their own hearts that the characters of men are rather owing to accident [Shaftesbury's definition of an atheist\textsuperscript{61}] than to virtue. Now, perhaps the reflections which we should be inclined to draw would alike contradict both these conclusions, and would show that these incidents contribute only to confirm the great, useful, and uncommon doctrine, which it is the purpose of this whole work to inculcate, and which we must not fill up our pages by frequently repeating, as an ordinary parson fills his sermon by repeating his text at the end of every paragraph.\textsuperscript{62}

In considering the "great, useful, and uncommon" philosophy of such an author, it is no wonder that Empson slips into the same sort of cul-de-sac as the doctrinaire critics.\textsuperscript{63} Most criticisms of Fielding imply a justification for Tom's sexual adventures, and the singleminded critic is too likely to grasp at a rationale of "the times," of some factional permissive religious affiliation which allowed sexual licence. Otherwise the critic may condemn Fielding's lack of religious

\textsuperscript{61}Shaftesbury, "The Moralists," Characteristics, II, 93; "Virtue or Merit," I, 241-42.

\textsuperscript{62}Fielding, Tom Jones, XII, 8, Henley, IV, 337.

\textsuperscript{63}Empson, "Tom Jones," pp. 221, 234.
standards of morality, even if they have no real bearing on the kind of Shaftesburian virtue Fielding is concerned with. An unconscious association of Tom with Fielding (and with the reader) may be a problem for some critics. Whatever the cause, there is often an assumption that Tom should be perfect or given drastic punishment as a lesson at the end of the story. As audiences of most of the popular "religious" films can confirm, however, perfection is not nearly so interesting as "follies" which are suitably repented and suffered for, at least from the audience's point of view. In *Tom Jones* the author carefully fulfills this orthodox formula. Tom suffers deeply when his misdeeds hurt his relationship with those he loves, Allworthy and Sophia. These two instances of severe melancholy are as strong a portrayal of psychological suffering as Fielding thought possible. A jolt of lightning from the heavens would have been merciful, compared to these intervals of "distemper." Unfortunately, his reading public was less subtle, as Richardson knew, and few of Fielding's contemporaries would understand the unromantic view of melancholy that his study of the deists' work gave him. Another time that Tom suffers excruciatingly occurs when he is in prison and thinks, mistakenly, that he has committed incest, a situation so unthinkable that, if

64 Fielding, *Tom Jones*, VI, 12, Henley, III, 318-20; XII, 3, Henley, IV, 309-10.

true, it might have required some more sadistic form of punishment that some readers seem to favor. But the truth exonerated Tom, while the scare seems to have climaxed his learning experience, to have a regard for prudence. The possibility of incest could not have been developed creditably without Tom's bastardy, another of the indications of Fielding's storytelling skill which seem to have escaped, and bothered, some of his readers.

As a result of giving his readers a "feast" of choices for understanding and identification, Fielding's writing may be culled to "prove" or "disprove" almost any specific tenet of almost any philosophy, no matter how extreme. Empson has gained by burrowing under the surface in Tom Jones, and his findings are decidedly helpful in understanding the novelist's artistic method. To grasp the intended defense of the good-natured man, and the lessons in human nature such a man must learn in order to be a truly "virtuous" member of society and not a Tom-fool, a reader needs to construct an overview which does not rest merely upon minute interpretations. This is further complicated not only by Fielding's rich style, but by the fact that a man as original and perceptive as he was probably held individual reservations about every religious and philosophical system. Fielding would think his reader had missed the point if he condemned Square more for his deistic philosophy than for his blind hypocrisy, or blamed the Church of England for a Thwackum, rather than that
cleric's own "sanctified" hypocrisy, or claimed that Blifil had no chance to be more than a villain, when he continually chose the role of the self-justifying hypocrite, who in malignity is more particularly bent against the best and worthiest men, the sincere and open-hearted."

In 1743 Fielding wrote that he would "take some pains in the ripping up" of the character of the hypocrite, and "exposing the horrors of its inside, that we may all shun it; and at the same time will endeavour so plainly to describe its outside, that we shall hardly be liable, by any mistake, to fall into its snares." He still held this attitude in 1748, sarcastically telling the Jacobites to "feign a love to your country and religion; the less you have of both, the better you can feign both." His suspicion of the outwardly good person can be seen throughout Tom Jones, for the apparently "sober, discreet, and pious" Blifil is contrasted with the kindhearted Tom, who is "universally disliked" in his youth and considered no more than "a poor parish bastard bred up at a great squire's" and not up to "any good to be sure." Illustrations of the deceptive nature of appearances

67 Fielding, Characters of Men, XIV, 295.
continue throughout the novel. Only in the last book does
the author say that Jones is "now completely dressed," when even the most skeptical person could see that his good
nature is revealed and that prudence will not be a hypocritical mask, but will prevent his being victimized seriously
by hypocrites, even in the name of a point of honor. For
Tom, all hypocrites have been unmasked, unless the reader
finds some remaining naïveté in his attitude of "excessive
kindness" toward Blifil. Perhaps Fielding is saying that
Tom, in going the extra mile as a Christian, is not such a
fool as some readers might think.

"The proper study of mankind is man," Pope declares,
and for Fielding the appropriate study of man is human na-
ture, which contains "such prodigious variety" that, "in
reality, true nature is as difficult to be met with in
authors as the Bayonne ham or Bologna sausage is to be
found in the shops." Empson grasps the essentials of
the novelist's art of compassionate ridicule: "the society
which Fielding describes is one in which many different codes
of honor, indeed almost different tribes, exist concurrently," so that the novelist "needs the technique of double irony,
without which one cannot express imaginative sympathy for

70 Fielding, Tom Jones, XVIII, 12, Henley, V, 359.

71 Pope, "Essay on Man," Epistle II, l. 2, Major British
Writers, I, 793.

72 Fielding, Tom Jones, I, 1, Henley, III, 18-19; VIII,
1, Henley, IV, 64-66.
two codes at once."  

Nevertheless, the reader can follow Fielding's own belief in the essential goodness of "normal" human nature underlying his frequent mention of "virtue," "prudence," and "religion," a generally consistent philosophy throughout his work. Else, says the novelist, "if we judge according to the sentiments of some critics and of some Christians, no author will be saved in this world, and no man in the next."  

There is one possible "self-portrait" of Fielding, and this may have been written by his friend Ralph Allen under Fielding's pseudonym, at the time he was beginning his law practice. Since it was written by 1740, and almost certainly from Fielding's point of view, it offers an insight into a philosophy which was to mature during the next decade:

"His Character . . . with such a happy mixture of Humour and Truth"

Should any one take advantage of this Confession, and stile me an odd, old Fellow, he is as welcome to his Censure, as I am to my Particularities; I take no Liberty myself, that I do not as freely allow to others. . . . Other Men's Characters are said to be reducible to certain general Heads, such as the Covetous, the Prodigal, the Mean, the Magnanimous, the Servile, the Brave, the Rash, the Cowardly, the Human, the Cruel, the Treacherous, the Honest, &c. But mine is of such a Motley-kind, that, tho' it borders by Turns upon all of these, and all that can be nam'd beside, it properly belongs to neither; I am seldom the same Man for a whole Day together; sometimes I vary every Hour, some times

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74 Fielding, Tom Jones, XV, 1, Henley, V, 141-42; VIII, 7, Henley, IV, 89; III, 4, 5; Henley, III, 117-18, 125; XI, 1, Henley, IV, 247.
oftener, as if I was a living Weather-Glass, and under the Dominion of every Gale that blew: In short, I never read of any great or little, good or bad Man, in ancient or modern Story, but I found myself alternatly inclin'd to the Vices of the one, and the Virtues of the other.

Cast in so whimsical a mould, compounded of such opposite Materials, it is not to be expected that I should preserve a greater Consistency in writing, than in thinking, or acting; whoever, therefore, should attempt to reduce my Performances as an Author, to that Rule in Criticism of appearing always in Character, would be told by the Wags, he was following a Wild-Goose-Chase; As I participate of all Characters, I have a right to appear in all; and, to write naturally, I must indulge the Humour I am in, be frolick, or dull, reason, or laugh, assume the Fool, or the Philosopher, just as the Whim takes me. 

The writer seems to be following some of Shaftesbury's advice, even then: "Recognize yourself," for there is no better way to control and use "our opinions and fancies," a self-knowledge which is "necessary to hold us to one will, and preserve us in the same mind from one day to another."

Then the perceptive author, Shaftesbury tells us, "who writes in his own person has the advantage of being who or what he pleases"; and "whatever may be the proper effect or operation of religion, 'tis the known province of Philosophy to teach us ourselves, keep us the self-same persons, and so regulate our governing fancies, passions, and humours, as to make us comprehensible to ourselves." 

While Fielding in his


76Shaftesbury, "Advice to an Author," Characteristics, I, 113, 122, 131, 184, 199.
maturity, like Allworthy, may forgive follies with a smile such as "we may suppose the angels bestow on the absurdities of mankind," the aims he gives in the dedication of *Tom Jones* are recognizable as serious and sincere: "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."  

Realizing that his readers would possess more than one outlook on life and that a person can express complete agreement with a creed or philosophy without living by it in the least, the genius and humanity of Fielding is seen in his artistic creations which portray his view of the nature of man. In presenting "truth with a smiling countenance," he was concerned more with the fact than the theory of living a satisfying life, and he drew from the Christian faith, the neoclassical literary standards, the intellectual impact of Shaftesbury's deism, but most of all, from his own personal experience of human nature.

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