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Concepts of benevolence in the novels of Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith

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CONCEPTS OF BENEVOLENCE IN THE NOVELS

OF

FIELDING, STERNE, AND GOLDSMITH

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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PREFACE

For the past two centuries literary critics have analyzed and evaluated the works of Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, and Oliver Goldsmith. These critics have unanimously agreed that they represent the forerunners of the modern novel. The ability of these three men to picture life, the art with which they portray the times in which they lived, and the influence they exerted on later writers are all factors which have been thoroughly studied.

However, so far as the writer of this thesis can determine, no research has been made on Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith as a group, determining their treatment of benevolence in their respective novels.

It is, therefore, the purpose of this thesis to attempt to interpret the concepts of benevolence in the novels of the three authors. It is, further, the purpose of this thesis to prove that these concepts in all five novels indicate the thought of the period. In order to do this, it was deemed relevant and valuable to determine the thought and condition of the period which spurred these literary orbits to inculcate in their novels the beneficency of God and the tolerance of man.

These concepts can be worked out best by a study of some of the novels of the three authors, as to their treatment of character and incident within the plot.
In this thesis, Chapter I will be a discourse on The Temper of the Times; Chapter II, Concepts of Benevolence in Fielding's Novels, *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*; Chapter III, Concepts of Benevolence in Sterne's Novels, *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*; Chapter IV, Concepts of Benevolence in the *Vicar of Wakefield* by Oliver Goldsmith. The fifth chapter is a summary of the benevolent concepts found in the five novels.

In addition to the primary books listed above, standard secondary material has been used. No attempt has been made to deal with the other types of literary work produced by these three men; neither has an attempt been made to deal with their technique of the novel except when reference to such is pertinent to the main discourse.

The author wishes to acknowledge appreciation to the members of the English Staff of Atlanta University, and especially to Miss Coragreene Johnstone, for the patient help and guidance given in the writing of this thesis.
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CHAPTER I
THE TEMPER OF THE TIMES

When we consider the great men of various ages and their contributions to their own and succeeding generation, it is only natural that we turn to the era in which they lived to determine what, if any, factors in the age may have influenced the fertility of their minds. It is true that some men are born with a brilliance and keenness of mentality which marks them at birth as counselors and leaders of men, but the channel and trend which their brilliance takes is determined by the social order of the day.

Therefore, before we interpret the concepts of benevolence in the novels of Henry Fielding, Laurence Sterne, and Oliver Goldsmith, let us examine briefly the political, social, and intellectual milieu in which these men lived.

The seed of discontent and dissatisfaction, of which we get an insight in the works of Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith, was first planted in the politics and government of Europe. The political teapot of England under the reign of George the Third and the ministry of Robert Walpole merely simmered and remained passive, but the flame from continental disturbances finally manifested itself in the restlessness of the English people. The old land marks were gradually

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passing away. Social conditions which had been accepted for centuries began to become intolerable, the vast difference in the treatment accorded the persons of noble birth and those of peasant ancestry was frustrating and demoralizing.¹

While the men of high birth had every advantage, the humble classes were subjected to the most inhuman treatment, their clothes mere tatters, their homes hovels, and their food of the coarsest kind; besides most of the abominable sentences passed in the courts of justice were felt by the peasant group, and the weight of taxes for the government was borne on their poorly nourished shoulders.²

Therefore, with such a state of society there is small wonder that the three revolutions, the Industrial,³ the American⁴ and the French,⁵ which were foreshadowed during the middle of the century, deeply affected all classes of society. The many innovations and inventions gave the people more time to delve into intellectual matters.

² Ibid., III, 100.
³ Edward P. Cheney records that the Industrial Revolution was the progressive and modern manner in which commerce, manufacturing and farming were carried on in comparison to the former ages.
⁴ The American Revolution was an outgrowth of resentment by the colonies against the unfair laws imposed upon them by the mother country. The victory was given to the colonies with the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, 1781.
Pre-eminent in this realm were those men interested in science as Sir Isaac Newton with his law of universal gravitation, Benjamin Franklin with his electrical researches, and Priestly and Cavendish in chemistry. Theologians were attempting to solve the age old riddles of the universe. They searched the writings of sages of former generations who were significant for their philosophical rendition of the answer to the complexities of God, nature, and man.

However, no school appealed to the general feeling, and the ground lay open for the enthusiasm of Wesley, which became a lasting one owing to its deep sense of religion, which appealed especially to the middle classes.1

Confident that only a little thought would be necessary to free the world from vice, ignorance and superstition, thinkers now turned boldly to attack the vexing problems of religion and morality, to criticize state, society and church, and to point the way to a new and earthly paradise.2

However, of all the conflicting ideas of the eighteenth century concerning religion and morality, the one that best maintained its popularity, and most frequently made its appearance in all sorts of unexpected association, was that of the nature of man. The issue may be said to have started when John Calvin, under the influence of

2 Ibid., p. 418.
Martin Luther\textsuperscript{1} and Martin Bucer,\textsuperscript{2} advanced the theory that man was born in sin and, with the exception of a chosen few, was destined to eternal fire and damnation. This idea is contained in his work, \textit{Institutes for the Christian Religion}, published in 1536.

Calvin states:

Such is the inborn pride of all men that we invariably esteem ourselves righteous, innocent, wise and holy until we are convinced by clear proofs of our unrighteousness, turpitude, folly, and impurity, for man is utterly corrupt and depraved, and humility alone becomes him in the presence of God, who is all that he is not. To know God is to be struck with horror and amazement, for then and only then does one realize his own character.\textsuperscript{3}

Passing from Calvin, we have a similarity of opinion as to the nature of man in the doctrine of Hobbes\textsuperscript{4} who cast aspersions on human nature in his prose work \textit{Leviathan}, published in 1651. In this work, the cynical philosopher pictures natural man as selfish, lawless, unaltruistic and innately addicted to contention,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} Martin Luther, (1483-1546) was a Protestant reformer of the sixteenth century. His work "The Liberty of the Christian Man" published in 1524 did more than anything else to undermine the authority of the Catholic Church.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Martin Bucer, German reformer of the sixteenth century, was influenced by Luther and in turn influenced Calvin, and through him affected the Reformed Church.
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) noted English Mathematician. He became the leading philosopher of his day. L. A. Selby-Bigge, \textit{British Moralists} (Oxford, 1897), II, 907.
\end{itemize}
enmity and war. He further states that man's only hope of peace and freedom lay in complete surrender to an absolute civic authority, preferably a single dictator.¹

In contrast to these pessimistic views, we have the one of faith and belief in man's goodness expressed by Samuel Parker in his work, *A Demonstration of the Divine Authority of the Laws of Nature and the Christian Religion*, published in 1681. Parker asserts:

> The principles of love and tenderness are implanted in man, and God first designed the happiness of all, and then to ensure its realization, so ordered things as to make every man's individual happiness depend on his honest and sincere endeavors to promote that of the community."²

Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, and a student and admirer of Locke,³ agrees with Parker and years later attacks the doctrine of Hobbes. Shaftesbury maintains an optimistic belief in man's perfectability. This idea is seen in his collection of ethical essays entitled *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, published in 1711. Shaftesbury holds that man is possessed of "natural affections" which he describes as "having the chief means and power of self-enjoyment, and the highest possession and happiness of life." A creature must have all his inclinations and


³ John Locke (1632-1704) noted English Philosopher. He maintained religion was based on reason. L. A. Selby-Biggs, *op. cit.*, I, 970.
affections, his disposition of mind and temper, suitable and agreeing with the good of his kind, or of that system in which he is included and of which he constitutes a part.¹

And what is more, Shaftesbury holds, these natural affections are wholly consonant with the constitution of man, and that it isn't any more natural for the stomach to digest, the lungs to breathe, the glands to separate juices than for man to have an affection toward the good of the species. Generation and the care and nurture of the offspring are no more natural to man than is society, without which he cannot ever subsist. The very helplessness of the human infant forces us to own that he is purposely and not by accident made rational and sociable.²

In addition, Shaftesbury holds that these principles of man's affection toward the good of the species are bound up with a belief in a God who represents the ideal of man's perfectability. He states:

Nothing can more highly contribute to the fixing of right apprehensions and a sound judgment or sense of right and wrong, than to believe a God who is ever and on all accounts represented such as to be actually a true model and example of the most exact justices and highest goodness and worth. Such a view divine providence and bounty extended to all, and expressed in constant good affection towards the whole, must of necessity engage us, within our compass and sphere, to act by a like principle and affection. And having once the good of our species or public in view, as our end or aim, 'tis impossible we should be misguided by any means to a false apprehension or sense of right or wrong.³

¹ Anthony Cooper, An Inquiry Concerning Virtue (1711), quoted L. A. Selby-Bigge, op. cit., I, 55.
² Ibid. I, 60.
While Shaftesbury further points out that if man commits a wrong against himself, but if there be any such thing as kindness, gratitude, bounty, or compassion in a man's heart toward the rest of the species, there is still virtue within the man, and the creature is not wholly vicious and unnatural, but in part represents a likeness to God.¹

However, Shaftesbury maintains that a truly good creature is such a one as by the natural temper or bent of his affections is carried primarily and immediately, and not secondarily and accidentally to good and against ill.² And since this tendency toward good and against ill is man's natural bent, Shaftesbury inevitably arrives at the conclusion that man is naturally good.

The position taken by Shaftesbury was in turn denounced by Bernard Mandeville in his production the Fable of the Bees or Private Vices Public Benefits, published in 1725. Hence Mandeville assumes, like Hobbes, the innate selfishness of mankind and, paradoxically, argues that whatever virtue does exist in society depends on the conflicting vices of individuals. Mandeville's lack of conformity to the general philosophy of the times concerning man's goodness is contained in the following statements taken from the Fable of the Bees.

¹ Ibid., p. 254.
² Ibid., p. 250
Cleomenes informs Horatio of man's love for himself, "Whether it is given to other animals besides ourselves or not it is certain, that in our own Species every individual Person likes himself better than he does any other." ¹

This love of self, Mandeville declares, is the root of all acts of charity. This view is expressed by Cleomenes after Horatio says praise should be given individuals who share their wealth with those in need: ²

I shan't dispute it with you, as long as you confine your Praises to the Endowment itself and the Benefit the Publick is like to receive from it. But to ascribe it to, or suggest that it was derived from a Publick Spirit in the Man, a generous sense of Humanity and Benevolence to his kind, a liberal Heart or any other virtue or good quality, which it is manifest the Donor was an utter stranger to is the utmost absurdity in an intelligent creature, and can proceed from no other cause than either a wilful wronging of his own Understanding, or else Ignorance and Folly. ⁵

This unorthodox line of reasoning voiced by Mandeville gave the cynical doctrine of Epicurus, ⁴ Hobbes, and La Rochefoucauld ⁵ such literal application in his attack on charities, and so openly justified the grossness of the times that he offended the self-respect of

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² Ibid., II, 23.
³ Ibid., II, 24.
the better classes.¹

Since followers of Shaftesbury were sworn defenders of man's innate goodness, the fable caused much grumbling in the philosophic hive. Francis Hutcheson, the most ardent follower of Shaftesbury, contends in his work, Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections, published in 1726: "Wherever then Benevolence is supposed, there it is imagin'd disinterested and designed for the good of others."²

Similarly Richard Cumberland in A Philosophical Enquiry into the Laws of Nature, published in 1727, advocates man's innate goodness when he says, "Man has a natural tendency toward benevolence by virtue of his physique, his intellect, and his affections."³

Likewise Joseph Butler shows his belief also that man's instincts lead directly and immediately to the good of the community when in 1756, he affirms in The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature:

There is a natural principle of benevolence in man. And if there be in mankind any disposition to friendship; if there be any such thing as compassion, for compassion is momentary love; if there be any such thing as the parental or filial affections; if there by any affections in human nature, the object and the end of which is the good of another; this is itself benevolence or the love of another.⁴

² Frances Hutcheson, Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections (1726), quoted L. A. Selby-Bigge, op. cit., I, 80.
This theory of man's goodness, promulgated by Shaftesbury and taken up by many of the outstanding English men of the day, permeated England, spread to the continent, and made a definite impression on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a radical reformer of France. His natural enthusiasm and zeal for the rights of all men were fired anew, he took up the cry in his native country and became one of the leaders of the era with his constant plea for consideration, recognition and opportunity for the under-privileged people. He maintains that, "It were better that all men should be savages than that a few of the most cunning, cruel and greedy should make slaves of the rest."¹

This proclamation, voiced in similar terms by American statesmen and American sympathizers in England, saw its fruition in the American Revolution in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789, thus indicating the far reaching effect of the philosophical controversy carried on between the Mandeville and Shaftesbury schools.

Shaftesbury's popularity, however, was to depend primarily on his ethical teaching, for which his doctrine, "The conscience of approving one's self a benefactor to mankind is the noblest recompense for doing so,"² served merely as a poetical background. Popular writers, like the philosophers, turned to him in the late twenties as a refuge from the nightmare occasioned by Mandeville's theories, which in view

² Anthony Cooper, Characteristics (1711), quoted William E. Alderman, op. cit., p. 159.
of contemporary selfishness was disconcertingly plausible and, therefore, all the more distressing to national pride.\(^1\)

The end of all Shaftesbury's theology and ethics is the "moral beauty" which entitles man to be justly styled the friend of mankind. He became the main authority for English ideas of philanthropy during a period that witnessed a broadening of human sympathies and a preoccupation of society and literature with the cause of social ameliorations.\(^2\)

One of the outstanding social reforms of the eighteenth century, promulgating a belief in Shaftesbury's philosophy, was the revision in 1783 of the Penal Code of England, which was one of savage severity.\(^3\) The condition of the prisons was decried by John Howard, when he found them to be wretched abodes; the scanty food, the lack of warmth, the overcrowding, the poisonous atmosphere, the consequent diseases, the untended condition of the sick, the ponderous chains and iron collars, were all features greatly improved by Howard's patience and philanthropy.\(^4\) The hospitals were inspected and made safer and more sanitary, and the streets which were hazardous and filthy were improved upon.\(^5\)

\(^1\) C. A. Moore, op. cit., p. 300.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 310.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 11.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 10.
However, the greatest philanthropic effort of the time, was on behalf of the abolition of the slave trade. As early as 1668, William Penn had denounced the cruelty of the trade, and his successors in the "Society of Friends" had never been quite insensible to its evils. In 1780 Burke prepared a code for the mitigation and ultimate abolition of the traffic in human lives, but he lost hope in the possibility of bringing it to a successful issue. Nevertheless, the younger spirits of the Revolutionary movement in our literature remained ardent champions of Negro emancipation, which proclamation was signed in England in 1833, and in America in 1863.¹

In the light of the philosophy of Shaftesbury, and of the activities of his disciples, benevolence may be described as that self-enjoyment which arises from a consistency of life and manners, a harmony of affections, a freedom from the reproach of shame and guilt, and a consciousness of worth and merit with all mankind, our society, country and friends. To possess these attitudes is to live according to nature, and the dictates and rules of supreme wisdom. This is morality, piety, and natural religion.²

Shaftesbury's ethical theory was primarily responsible for a moral tone which is one of the chief distinctions between the literature before and after the adoption of his philosophy by English writers. With various modifications this moral tone has persisted to our present day.

¹ Ibid., pp. 12, 13.
² Anthony Cooper, Characteristics (1711), quoted William E. Alderman, op. cit. p. 159.
In an effort to estimate the force which Shaftesbury exerted upon the ethical speculations of his century and consequently upon literature itself, the author by way of selected passages, attempted to see to what extent this philosophy has found its way into some of the novels of the eighteenth century and in what manner this benevolence may be found in terms of attitudes toward God, humanity, goodness, charity, love, and liberty.
CHAPTER II

CONCEPTS OF BENEVOLENCE IN THE
NOVELS OF HENRY FIELDING

In the foregoing chapter, we have seen that the eighteenth century was one in which change and controversy were the order of the day. Philosophically, the controversy centered around the nature of mankind. Let us, then, see to what extent this issue is reflected in two of the novels of Henry Fielding—Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones.

Although the purpose of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones was not didactic, some of the ideas ingrained in them were certainly an outgrowth of the deep and benevolent feeling permeating the atmosphere of the eighteenth century. There is little, if any, doubt that the two novels depict society as it was with its merits and its faults, its licentious manners, and domestic virtues, its brawls, its oaths, its prisons and its masquerades.¹

Therefore, from a study of this society, I shall attempt to establish some eighteenth century concepts concerning goodness, virtue, friendship, humanity, life, Christianity or belief in God, love, marriage and other aspects involving the personality and character of the individual found first in the novel Joseph Andrews, published in 1742.

Joseph Andrews is a young man of menial parentage employed in the home of Lady Booty who, after the death of her husband Sir Booby, becomes enamored of Joseph. Joseph in his determination to remain pure for his beloved Fanny, a girl who lives in the parish of his former master, departs for the parish. Before going very far, he encounters the Reverend Abraham Adams, a kindly benevolent figure from Joseph's home, whose wise counsel Joseph has often sought.

Parson Adams and Joseph continue the journey together, many times being forced to show their goodness of heart with fistic emphasis. They meet Fanny who had started in search of her beloved after hearing of his plight. The three of them have many interesting adventures before the story ends with the happy marriage of Joseph and Fanny, an ending which was in keeping with the sentiments paramount in the eighteenth century.

This century was one in which the existence of God was greatly debated, however, throughout this story many instances of reverence for a God are indicated. One instance is shown when Adams meets Joseph after the latter has been attacked by robbers:

Joseph retired to his chamber whither the good Adams accompanied him and took this opportunity to expatiate on the great mercies God had lately shown him, of which he ought not only to have the deepest inward sense, but likewise to express outward thankfulness for them. They therefore fell both on their knees, and spent a considerable time in prayer and thanksgiving.¹

In the above passage we find demonstrated a belief based on faith in a Being not revealed, a belief that our lives are directed by an

Unseen Power to whom we should give praise. This idea is reflected again when Fanny, who has been rescued from the hands of villains, is admonished by Adams, "Be of good cheer, damsel, and repose thy trust in the same Providence which hath hitherto protected thee and never will forsake the innocent."\(^1\)

Again this faith in God's watchful care is illustrated when Joseph appears on the scene while Adams is talking to Fanny, and it is recorded that, "The Diety who presides over chaste love sent her Joseph to her assistance."\(^2\)

This new doctrine also carried with it the theory that the Supreme Being was primarily interested in the purity of the heart. Adams exemplified this idea when he spoke to his fellow clergyman:

> My opinion hath always been that a virtuous and good Turk or heathen, is more acceptable in the sight of their creator than a vicious and wicked Christian, though his faith was as perfectly orthodox as St. Paul himself.\(^3\)

This passage further sustains the belief that it is not necessary for an individual to align himself with any particular dogma, that benevolence came not only from creed, but also from deed.

The benevolent creed may be evidenced by the interest we find manifested in the woes of humanity. In one instance this is shown in the condemnation of the impositions set upon the poor by the rich, for Adams, after being told the manner in which one of the rich landlords beat, overworked and sentenced his tenants, replied,

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1. Ibid., p. 137.
2. Ibid., p. 302.
3. Ibid., p. 76.
"I was sorry such men were suffered to proceed with impunity, and that riches could set any man above the law." In speaking of these existing conditions during the eighteenth century Knight declares that, "A slight line separates the criminal from the exalted, that success atones for a multitude of sins, that the great have qualities which the base share."

However, charitableness toward the weakness of man is a part of the philosophy embedded in the story. This attitude is displayed when Adams remonstrates with a gentleman for berating his nephew:

Men did not make themselves; and if corruptness had too much ascendance in the mind, the man was rather to be pitied than abhorred; that reason and time might teach him to subdue it.

In addition to maintaining a charitable attitude toward the faults of others, the opinion prevailed that those persons whose fortune was of such nature that they had all of their needs supplied and many luxuries should be charitable toward those whose material acquisitions were of such little quantity that they were made to suffer from want. In support of this argument we have the reflection of Joseph on the selfishness of some people:

I have often wondered to observe so few instances of charity among mankind; for though the goodness of a man's heart did not incline him to relieve the distresses of his fellow creatures; methinks the desire of honour should move him to it. What inspires a man to build fine houses, to purchase fine furniture, pictures, clothes, and other things, at a great expense, but an ambition to be respected more than

1 Ibid., p. 92.
other people? Now, would not one great act of charity, one instance of redeeming a poor family from all the miseries of poverty, restoring an unfortunate tradesman by a sum of money to the means of procuring a livelihood by his industry, discharging an undone debtor from his debts or gaol, or any such like example of goodness create a man more honor and respect than he could acquire by the finest house, furniture, pictures, or clothes, that were ever beheld? For not only the object himself who was thus relieved, but all who heard the name of such a person, must, I imagine, reverence him infinitely more than the possessor of all those other things; which when we so admire, we rather praise the builder, the workman, the painter, the lace-maker, the tailor, and the rest by whose ingenuity they are produced than the person who by his money makes them his own.¹

From the above quotation, one can see the fullness and richness of eighteenth century benevolence. The feeling that all men had potentially good qualities and were worthy of a share in this world's goods was an ever present idea of the exponents of the Shaftesbury school.

An earnest love for one's fellowman, a love which causes one to keep faith in mankind and their ultimate redemption is seen. Time and time again the urgent plea is made that the utmost strength be put forth in the attainment of high standards of love and purity. This idea is shown when Adams implores one of his host:

Out of love to yourself you should confine yourself to truth, for by doing otherwise, you injure the noblest part of yourself, your immortal soul. I can hardly believe any man such an idiot to risk the loss of that by any trifling gain, and the greatest gain in this world is but dirt in comparison of what shall be revealed hereafter.²

¹ Ibid., p. 228.
² Ibid., p. 93.
Adams further maintains his hopes of high standards of love and purity when speaking of the honor of his nephew:

I hope he will never act so as to be a disgrace to any order; but will serve his God and his country to the utmost of his power, as I have endeavored to do before him; nay and will lay down his life whenever called to that purpose.\(^1\)

In the above passage the benevolent interpretation of the era is seen in the belief that man's success and happiness comes when he identifies himself with the whole scheme of nature. The many social reforms were an outgrowth of the feeling that men were born to help one another. This idea can be seen in the following passage as Adams becomes instrumental in securing employment for Joseph when he spoke to Lady Bobby's waiting woman about a position for him:

He desired her to recommend him to her lady as a youth very susceptible of learning, and one whose instructions in Latin he would himself undertake; by which means he might be qualified for a higher station than that of a footman; and added, she knew it was in his master's power easily to provide for him in a better manner.\(^2\)

This interest in the welfare of one's fellowman is demonstrated again, when Joseph, having been stripped in the road on a cold night, was given the overcoat of a coachman who rode by. The driver exclaims, "I would rather be attired in only my shirt all the rest of my life than suffer a fellow creature to be in so miserable a condition."\(^3\)

Moreover, the benevolence continues when Joseph, upon recovery finds himself penniless and Adam offered him all of his little stock

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 151.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 16.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 47.
saying, "I have only nine shillings and three pence half penny in my pocket, which you are welcome to use as you please."¹

Throughout the novel, the various characters suffer bodily harm in the interest of right or in defense of a human being who they think has been wrongfully treated. Once when the host of an inn insulted Joseph it is recorded: "Adams, which perceiving dealt the host so sound a compliment over his face with his fist, that the blood immediately gushed out of his nose in a stream."²

Likewise, when Adams found Fanny attacked by ruffians, we are told:

Adams did not therefore, want the entreaties of the poor wretch to assist; but lifting up his crabstick immediately leveled a blow at that part of the ravisher's head where according to the opinion of the ancients, the brains of some persons are deposited.³

The reformers of the period felt that to bring about the happiness of all men, one could not just sit and meditate about righting the wrongs existing everywhere, but one had to take an active part on behalf of the "forgotten man." Wagenknecht accurately evaluates the benevolence in Joseph Andrews when he says: "Hate there is no time for, save as hatred for crime, murder, drunkenness and vice."⁴

Similar to the sentiments found in Joseph Andrews are the expressions of benevolence discernible in another novel of Fielding, Tom Jones, published in 1749.

¹ Ibid., p. 62.
² Ibid., p. 114.
³ Ibid., p. 134.
Tom Jones is the story of a boy who was adopted in infancy by a generous hearted gentleman, Squire Allworthy. Tom, though thoroughly kind at heart, is given to reckless ways which cause his adopted father many anxious moments.

Upon reaching maturity, Tom falls in love with the beautiful, virtuous Sophia Western, who reciprocates his affection, but she is thwarted in her attempt to marry Tom by her father. Squire Allworthy, after repeatedly urging Tom to mend his ways, finally decides to send him away. Tom sets out to seek his fortune engaging in one experience after another.

Sophia runs away from home to keep from marrying Blifil, the nephew of Squire Allworthy. After many interesting adventures, Tom is found to be the illegitimate child of Squire Allworthy's sister and is made the Squire's heir. Sophia's father relents, and Tom finally marries the much desired Sophia.

In Tom Jones, as in Joseph Andrews, reverence for God is manifested when Captain Blifil, the squire's brother-in-law chides Allworthy for continuing to care for Tom. He represents the act as displeasing to God, as it is aiding and abetting sin, Squire Allworthy answers him:

To represent the Almighty as avenging the sins of the guilty on the innocent, was indecent, if not blasphemous, as it was to represent him acting against the first principles of natural justice, and against the first principles of right and wrong, which he himself had implanted in our minds; by which we were to judge not only in all matters which were not revealed, but even of the truth of revelation itself.¹

The concept of benevolence of the period carried with it the thought that people of reason and great intellect would acknowledge after deep meditation and reflection, the omnipotent power of God. Such reflections are indicated when Tom stopped at the house of the Man of the Hill who leads a hermit’s life. In the course of the conversation, Tom inquires of the host how he endures a life of solitude. The Man-of-the-Hill replies:

There is one single act for which the whole life of man is infinitely too short; what time can suffice for the contemplation and worship of that glorious, immortal, and eternal Being, among the works of whose stupendous creation not only this globe, but even those numberless luminaries which we may here behold spangling all the sky?\(^1\)

While the Man-of-the-Hill rather preferred solitary communion with God, to the company of friends, there are persons, even though they feel a closeness with God, nevertheless, who put great emphasis on friendship. Views concerning friendship are found in a speech made by Allworthy when he ponders:

Men of true wisdom and goodness are contented to take persons and things as they are, without complaining of their imperfections, or attempting to amend them. They can see a fault in a friend, a relation, or an acquaintance without ever mentioning it to the parties themselves, or to any others; and this often without lessening their affection.

Again, we see the eighteenth century concept of benevolence in the interpretation of friendship and the belief in the innate goodness of man when Allworthy states:

\(^1\) Ibid., I, 510.
\(^2\) Ibid., I, 85.
The firmness and constancy of a true friend is a circumstance so extremely delightful to persons in any kind of distress, that the distress itself, if it be only temporary, and admits of relief, is more than compensated by bringing this comfort with it. Nor are instances of this kind so rare as some superficial and inaccurate observers have reported. To say the truth, want of compassion is not to be numbered among our general faults.  

Here again is the belief that man is born with a natural affection for humanity, the notion asserted by many philosophers of the age. The fervent exhortation to abide by all the highest ideals of love and virtue to which man was born is made when Allworthy says:

There is in some human breasts a kind and benevolent disposition, which is gratified by contributing to the happiness of others. That in this gratification alone as in friendship, in parental and filial affection as indeed in general philanthropy, there is a great and exquisite delight.

Allworthy further maintains that goodness is an inseparable part of benevolence in the following passage:

There is one degree of generosity, which seems to have some show of merit, and that is, where, from a principle of benevolence and Christian love, we bestow on another what we really want ourselves; where in order to lessen the distress of another, we condescend to share some part of them by giving what even our own necessities cannot well spare. This is, I think meritorious.

In the passage stated above the idea is presented that if a person is benevolent who gives from a full storehouse, how much more benevolent is the individual who shares his belongings at a sacrifice to his own comfort and welfare.

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1 Ibid., II, 254.  
2 Ibid., I, 269.  
3 Ibid., I, 71.
In addition to the qualities of love and kindness found in *Tom Jones* the relationship of marriage is revealed as signally important because to such a union must be carried the virtues of love and loyalty, declared by the benevolent thinkers to be dominant in the human breast. We find this sentiment couched in no uncertain terms in the reply of Squire Allworthy, when Doctor Blifil asks his opinion concerning marriage between Bridget Allworthy and Captain Blifil. The squire comments:

I have always thought love the only foundation of happiness in a married state, as it can only produce that high and tender friendship which should always be the cement of this union, and in my opinion, all those marriages which are contracted from other motives are greatly criminal, they are a profanation of a most holy ceremony, and generally end in misery and disquiet.1

The prevailing concepts of benevolence are reinforced by actual deeds of kindness. Several such instances are the adoption of Tom by Squire Allworthy, Jenny's aid of Miss Bridget at Tom's birth, Tom's disposal of his favorite pony in order to give Black George money for the support of his family, Tom's offer to accompany Molly to jail, Jones' immediate defense of the Man-of-the-Hill when he was attacked by robbers, Jones' defense of Mrs. Waters when she was in the clutches of Northerton, Sophia's compensation to a landlord for all unpleasantness he had suffered because of her, Jones' gift of money to a highwayman after the man tells of a starving family, Jones' plea to Nightingale to marry Nancy, who is impregnated by Nightingale.

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An instance which seems to embody all of the spirit of benevolence cited above is typically illustrated toward the close of the novel. Young Blifil is jealous of the Squire and Sophia on account of their love for Tom and resents the fact that Tom will share in the wealth of Allworthy. From the first, he plans the disgrace and downfall of Tom; however, at the end of the novel Blifil is exposed as a vicious liar and the wrath of the Squire is aroused. But Tom does not become enraged because of the perfidious-ness of Blifil, who has caused him many days of heartache, humiliation and want; rather in keeping with the spirit of the times, Tom intervenes when his uncle threatens to disinherit Blifil:

He omitted nothing which his invention could supply to raise and comfort the drooping spirits of Blifil. He ordered to furnish him with any money he wanted, assured him of his hearty forgiveness of all he had done against him, that he would endeavor to live with him hereafter as a brother and would leave nothing unattempted to effectuate a reconciliation with his uncle.\(^1\)

In the novels of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* right always triumphs over evil.

However, Lovett and Hughes maintain that in the story, "Ridicule and stark fact are used to expose the ugliness of vice."\(^2\)

Not only are facts in a bare and impressive manner presented but the humorous vein infused into these novels erased what might have been a feeling of sadness at the thought of the degradation

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1. Ibid., II, 400.
people of inferior rank were forced to suffer. The broadest and most delicious laughter is not a weapon of offence; teeth are seldom shown and for every time that there are fierce laughs at human vanity, there are ten laughs of sympathy and gentleness at human weakness and oddities.\footnote{Walter Raleigh, \textit{The English Novel} (London, 1929), p. 172.} Dawson states that "The humor in the novels is subtle and always has behind it the energy of a powerful thought with a real philosophy of life unfolded."\footnote{W. J. Dawson, \textit{Makers of English Fiction} (Chicago, 1905), p. 28.}

Moreover, in these novels we find the fight against "man's inhumanity to man;" also a sympathy for weaknesses which made such things possible under the social system of the eighteenth century. We find pointed the way to a fairer and happier state for all beings with some of the benevolent views in the novel.

We are able to conclude, therefore, from Fielding's two novels, \textit{Joseph Andrews} and \textit{Tom Jones} that the eighteenth century concepts of benevolence revealed in them are first, Christ should have an exalted place in the hearts of all mankind; second, all men regardless of race, birth or creed should be accorded justice and fairness; third, the faults of all should be weighed in a charitable light; fourth, physical effort should be put forth where need be to aid those in distress; fifth, virtue and marriage should be held as a sacred symbol and as a sacred institution.
All of these concepts may be summed up in the one statement "Men should reverence God and let his principles of love be the guiding factor in their relations with their fellowman." Therefore, we may safely say that manifestations of benevolence in keeping with the eighteenth century philosophic theories of Shaftesbury and his followers are found embodied in the novels of Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones.
CHAPTER III
CONCEPTS OF BENEVOLENCE IN THE
NOVELS OF LAURENCE STERNE

In an attempt to determine, to what extent the benevolent philosophy of the age is revealed in *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* by Laurence Sterne, an analysis of the texts of both novels will be made.

*Tristram Shandy* published from 1759 to 1767 is a story not really of Tristram, but of his father and Uncle Toby, as a great portion of it is given to incidents prior to Tristram's birth.

The theme of the story centers around the insistence of Walter Shandy (Tristram's father) upon the importance of the parental mind, the nose, and the name in forming a worthwhile future for the child, while Uncle Toby in his quiet benevolent way tries to minimize the significance of these mental and physical aspects.

Some of the other characters in the story include Mrs. Shandy, Trim (Toby's servant), Doctor Slop, Reverend Yorrick¹ (a friend to Toby), and Widow Wadman who is in love with Toby. These characters provide the opportunity for a display of benevolent sentiments. As an outgrowth of this benevolent sentiment, a reverence for God, a love for humanity, and a belief in the innate goodness of all mankind are revealed.

¹ Eugenius is Sterne's name for John Hall (afterward Stevenson), a neighbor and Sterne's boozing companion in Cambridge. He was the author of *Crazy Tales*. H. D. Traill, *Sterne* (New York, [n.d.]), p. 49.
A deep-rooted acceptance of God and an uncompromising belief in right over wrong are shown, when Trim, in one of his many sermons to Walter and Toby Shandy, proclaims:

To have the fear of God before our eyes, and in our mutual dealings with each other, to govern our actions by the eternal measures of right and wrong; the first of these will comprehend the duties of religion; the second, those of morality, which are so inseparably connected together, that you cannot divide these two tables, even in imagination without breaking and destroying them both.¹

The belief that God had infinite power and wisdom is seen again when Eugenius comforts Yorrick in his last moments of life by pleading:

My dear lad, be comforted, let all thy spirits and fortitude forsake thee at this crisis when thou most want'st them; who knows what resources are in store and what the power of God may yet do for thee.²

Here we have the belief in the ability of a God who can overcome all obstacles, even death. This humble faith in God's wisdom extends to a surrender to the judgment of an Almighty Being in matters concerning man and the universe when Uncle Toby says to his brother who has just given a long discourse on the reason why some noses are longer than others, "There is no cause but one, why one man's nose is longer than another's but because that God pleases to have it so."³

² Ibid., p. 37.
³ Ibid., p. 199.
Tristram, himself, later reveals his uncle's views concerning the reverence for God when he says, "Twas no inconsistent part of my Uncle Toby's character that he feared God and reverenced religion."¹

This fear and reverence is seen again when Walter Shandy ponders over the tribulations persons are called upon to bear and, after wondering aloud how they are fortified, Uncle Toby tells him: "'Tis by the assistance of Almighty God, we are upheld by the grace and the assistance of the best of beings."²

In the light of the foregoing lines, it is obvious that in Tristram Shandy we find a regard for Christianity in so far as it is understood, and, though dogma is not ingrained in the novel, the religious views are in perfect accord with prominent eighteenth century theories.

Just as some critics have maintained that there is no evidence of a belief in God in Tristram Shandy, so have some declared that no evidence can be found to support a concern for humanity, but if unfavorable philosophy is drawn from this novel, there are instances and incidents vital in this work whereby the doctrine of goodness may be exemplified. These instances are seen in the attitude toward servants, toward people who have had misfortunes, and toward the downtrodden. There is revealed the broad and humanitarian spirit which swayed the mind during this period.

¹ Ibid., p. 290.
² Ibid., p. 227.
Of Toby's goodness to servants we get a glimpse when he makes the following promise to Trim:

   In recompense Trim, of thy long fidelity to me, and that goodness of thy heart, I have had such proof of, whilst thy master is worth a shilling, thou shall never ask elsewhere, Trim, for a penny.\(^1\)

Further Uncle Toby chides his brother who has been harsh to a servant when he admonishes him, "The poor fellow is thy servant, not thy slave."\(^2\) Here we see manifested a belief in the rights of and justice for all men regardless of class or position.

Another account of kindliness and benevolence is the incident concerning LeFevre; the young son of a dead friend of Uncle Toby, who has been entrusted to the care of Uncle Toby since early childhood, wishes to go to war. Uncle Toby gives him his consent with such a heartbroken sigh that it is recorded in the following passage:

   The greatest injury could not have oppressed the heart of LeFevre more than my uncle Toby's paternal kindness; he parted from my Uncle Toby, as the best of sons from the fathers—both dropped tears, and as my Uncle Toby gave him his last kiss, he slipped sixty guineas, tied up in an old purse of his father's in which was his mother's ring, into his hand and bid God bless him.\(^5\)

   This touching revelation of Uncle Toby's love for LeFevre extends to a feeling of kinship with all men. When Trim speaks of Toby's love of glory and pleasure, Uncle Toby in a voice ringing with sincerity exclaims:

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\(^1\) Ibid., p. 225.  
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 280.  
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 346.
I hope, Trim, I love mankind more than either; and as the knowledge of arms tends so apparently to the good and quiet of the world, and particularly that branch of it which we have practiced together in our bowling green, has no object, but to shorten the strides of ambition and intrench the lives and fortunes of the few from the plundering of the many; whenever that drum beats in our ears, I trust, corporal, we shall neither of us want so much humanity and fellow feeling as to face about and march.¹

The speech just cited by Uncle Toby is an emphatic denunciation of the social order of the day wherein the populace was kept under the feet of the aristocracy and made to bear the burdens of the heavy taxes. As an attempt to abolish slavery was one of the major issues of the benevolent platform, we see consideration for the Negro as a human being demonstrated in a brief conversation between Trim and Uncle Toby regarding a young Negro girl in a shop swatting flies rather than killing them. The conversation follows:

Uncle Toby says, "She had suffered persecution, Trim, and had learnt mercy."

"She was good, and please, your Honor, from nature as well as from hardships," replied Trim, "a Negro has a soul! an' please your Honor?"

Quoth Uncle Toby, "I suppose God would not leave him without one, anymore than thee or me."²

In Tristram Shandy then, we get an intimation of the attitude toward the Negro. He has a soul which can be reached with the hand of mercy, touched by the plight of the helpless, and hurt because of the wrongs of mankind.

We can readily imagine what a peaceful contented world we would have if there were millions of men like Uncle Toby, for his

¹ Ibid., p. 496.
² Ibid., p. 495
heart goes out in sympathy for all men in poverty and distress.
Aged and infirm as he is, he would walk through darkness and storm
to help persons less fortunate than he.¹

However, the benevolent aureole of the eighteenth century
surrounded not only man, but all of nature's creatures, for
Uncle Toby's heart melts at the sight of a fly. He caught one
once and exclaims:

I'll not hurt thee, I'll not hurt a hair of thy head,
go, go, poor devil, get thee gone, why should I hurt thee?
This world is surely wide enough to hold both thee and me.²

In speaking of the beginning of this benevolent philosophy
concerning animals and insects, Williams states:

The incident in this novel is one of the first to make us
feel that animals and dumb creatures, just because they share
a conscious life with us have a moral claim to justice and
mercy.³

The idea that creatures share a conscious life with us clearly
forshadowed the romantic spirit which dawned during the latter part
of the current century and took definite shape in the nineteenth
century, thus, we see a similar concept in the works of Cowper.⁴

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¹ Wilbur L. Cross, The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne (New
³ Harold William, Two Centuries of the English Novel (London, 1911),
p. 93.
⁴ Cowper's humanitarianism is inextricably mingled with a love for
nature. This idea is expressed in his poem "The Task," published in
1792:

I would not enter on my list of friends,
Thou grac'd with polish'd manners and fine sense,
Yet wanting sensibility, the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
Burns, and Coleridge, who grieved at the captivity or misfortunes of animals or insects.

The whole of the universe is looked upon with compassion, especially man with his inability to escape the miseries of life and his further inability to adjust himself. This picture is given of man by Uncle Toby:

Inconsistent soul that man is: languishing under the wound which he has the power to heal! his whole life a contradiction to his knowledge; his reason that precious gift of God to him are not the necessary causes of misery in this life enough, but he must add voluntary ones to his stock of sorrow! struggle against evils which cannot be avoided and submit to others, which a tenth part of the trouble they create him would remove from his heart forever!

As a complement to the unhappiness which nature deems necessary for man to suffer, nature also spreads happiness to all her beings to give balance and equanimity to human lives. This hypothesis may be substantiated by the following observation of Uncle Toby:

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1 The same love and compassion are in the lines taken from Burns' "To A Mouse" published in 1785:

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which maketh thee startle
At me, thy poor, earth born companion
An' fellow mortal!

2 In 1794 a definite acceptance of the idea of the love of nature as an integral part of the sentiment of the age is seen in the following lines taken from "To A Young Ass" written by Samuel Coleridge:

Poor ass, thy master should have heart to show
Pity best taught by fellowship of woeful
For much I fear me that he like thee,
Half famished in a land of luxury!

3 Laurence Sterne, op. cit., p. 189.
Nature is neither very lavish, nor is she very stingy in her gifts of genius and capacity to its inhabitants; but like a discreet parent, was moderately kind to them all, observing such equal tenor in the distribution of her favors, as to bring them, in those points pretty nearly to a level with each other.¹

The quality of benevolent acceptance and justification of the ways of God and man is built upon the doctrine that God is right and that man, made in his image, is basically and innately good. These qualities are admitted by Lovett and Hughes when they state, "The Sentimentalism at its highest and most wholesome is expressed in My 'Uncle Toby.'"²

This wholesome sentiment which is so marked in Tristram Shandy is also apparent in the next novel of Sterne, A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy published in 1768. In this novel, however, we fail to see the height of meditation attained in Tristram Shandy. It is merely a collection of mellow memoirs of Sterne's travels through France and Italy. The brittle veneer has been removed, and occasion after occasion is found for the revelation of the benevolence of the age.

The side of the novel which the public had admired in the story of LeFevre was now to find expression on a larger scale. Therefore, we find the Sentimental Journey lacking in the barbs of the preceding novel.

¹ Ibid., p. 32.
The story centers around the Reverend Yorrick who stops at all the little villages across the country of France and Italy. He is accompanied by a man-servant La Fleur whom he hired at Montruil. As they travel along, Yorrick's heart upon one occasion is touched by the sight of a monk who has been soliciting aid for the needy; the monk and Yorrick exchange snuff boxes and Yorrick says of the box he receives:

> I guard this box, as I would the instrumental part of my religion, to help my mind on to something better; in truth I seldom go abroad without it: and oft and many times have I called up by it the courteous spirit of its owner to regulate my own in the justlings of the world.1

From many of the ensuing acts of Yorrick, he must have in truth called upon the power emanating from the little snuff-box to guide him, because it seems as if his mind dwelt on the closeness of man to man. He ponders to himself at one time:

> When man is at peace with man, how much lighter than a feather is the heaviest of metals in his hand; he pulls out his purse, and holding it airily and uncompressed, looks around him as if he sought for an object to share it with.2

However, finding someone with whom to share the contents of a purse did not prove so hard for Yorrick, because he noted that always as travelers left the inn, they were immediately surrounded by "sons and daughters of poverty" and Yorrick says, "Let no man say, 'let them go to the devil; 'tis a cruel journey to send a few miserables, and they have had sufferings enow without it."3

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2 Ibid., p. 11.
3 Ibid., p. 62.
Again we detect a care for one's fellowmen, a care in which true happiness is found. However, many opportunities for happiness are neglected by failure to perceive the wonders about us during a lifetime. While in this mood, Yorrick soliloquizes:

What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life, by him who interests his heart in everything, and who having eyes to see what time and chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyeth on his way, misses nothing he can fairly lay his hand on.¹

In the foregoing statement the recognition of beauty as an essential part of a satisfactory life is in keeping with the benevolent philosophy which prevailed. Beauty consists also in doing good for a fellow being despite the menial position the individual might occupy. When Yorrick's servant La Fleur asked to be excused from his duties for a while, Yorrick assented, reminding himself that:

The sons and daughters of service part with liberty, but not with nature, in their contracts; they are flesh and blood and have their little vanities and wishes in the midst of the house of bondage as well as their task master.²

In the passage just quoted recurs the aversion to bondage or slavery seen in *Tristram Shandy.*

Likewise, the consideration for animals which appeared in *Tristram Shandy* is apparent in this novel also. When Yorrick un unsuccessfully attempts to free a little bird from the cage where he has been shrieking, "I can't get out! I can't get out!"³ Yorrick

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¹ Ibid., p. 48.
² Ibid., p. 72.
³ Ibid., p. 122.
retires to his room and imagines human beings held in such captivity and languishing through the years. For Yorrick proclaims all men equal and says, "It is each man's duty to feel himself equal to all other men."¹ He admonishes himself upon one occasion:

Whenever man does not feel himself equal to all other men, man is false to himself and betrays his own succours ten times where nature does it once.²

The insistence that man remain true to himself in his measure with other men is not the only cry of the new movement, but the advice is given that for a man to be true to himself he must of a necessity then keep his heart right. We are given a recommendation for doing so, when Yorrick states:

I can safely say for myself, I was never able to conquer any one single bad sensation in my heart so decisively, as by beating up as fast as I could for some kindly and gentle sensation to fight it upon its own ground.⁵

In keeping with this theory of a pure heart, Yorrick, upon finding himself greatly attracted to a charming young lady he meets while on tour, forces all his instincts of love, loyalty and fidelity to the front. He thinks of his wife and of his marriage vows and reproaches himself saying:

I had sworn to her eternal fidelity—she had a right to my whole heart, to divide my affections was to lessen them, to expose them was to risk them; where there is risk, there may be loss; —and what wilt thou have, Yorrick! to answer a heart so full of trust and confidence.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 151.
² Ibid., p. 132.
³ Ibid., p. 149.
⁴ Ibid., p. 77.
In the last quoted passage, a deep sense of the sanctity of marriage is revealed. This would naturally be important to an individual with a benevolent heart, as it embodies love, thoughtfulness, care, faith and trust in a being other than oneself, for as Wagenknecht says, "In the Sentimental Journey we are taught to love the world and our fellow creatures better than we do."¹ This compassionate view may be added to the others that have been found interwoven in Tristram Shandy and a Sentimental Journey.

In order to cement more firmly within our minds the philosophy found in the novels, it is well to enumerate the concepts which the author, from a study, has concluded are a vital part of eighteenth century thought. The novels reflect the following sentiments: first, all men should respect the wisdom and authority of God; second, all persons should be regarded as beings worthy of recognition in their own rights; third, the weaknesses of human beings should be looked upon with kindliness and sympathy; fourth, respect should be shown for the beauty and purity of nature; and fifth, marriage should be held as a sacred institution. Therefore, one may say with confidence that the novels, Tristram Shandy and Sentimental Journey through France and Italy, express a rare consciousness of the fact that man is his brother's keeper.

CHAPTER IV
CONCEPTS OF BENEVOLENCE IN THE
NOVEL OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH

The Vicar of Wakefield, the literary child of Oliver Goldsmith, was also born and nurtured in the soil of eighteenth century optimism. To what extent this optimism was able to penetrate the cloister of its pages can be ascertained only by a study of the novel itself. We shall, therefore, attempt to set up the dogma concerning God, the nature of man, and the universe, found in the story in relation to the pattern of the period.

But, before attempting to prove some of the eighteenth century concepts of benevolence, it might be well to give a very brief summary of the plot.

In the novel, Vicar of Wakefield published in 1764, the average family of middle class status is headed by the father, Doctor Primrose, a kindly, tolerant clergyman devoted to his wife and six children.

Financial reverses bring on one humiliation after another, causing the family to move from their palatial home. The oldest son, George, goes to distant lands in an effort to regain the family's fortune; the older daughter, Olivia, elopes with the young landlord, Sir William Thornhill, who proves to be a villain; the younger daughter, Sophia, falls in love with Mister Burchell, an itinerant wanderer.
Doctor Primrose leaves to find Olivia, and, in the meantime, meets his son, George, acting in a road show. He finds Olivia and returns with her in time to see his humble abode enveloped in flames. He is seriously burned in an attempt to rescue his two youngest boys. The family is given shelter by kindly neighbors.

The Vicar refuses to consent to the marriage of Sophia to Sir Thornhill and for that reason is thrown into jail. After Sir Thornhill has caused the Primrose family much suffering, his wickedness is uncovered and just as sorrow had followed sorrow, happiness after happiness piles up, which climaxes with the disclosure of Mister Burchell as Sir Thornhill Senior. The end, of course, justifies the inexorable faith in God and men which was maintained throughout the story by the Vicar.

A definite trust in the beneficency of God is indicated, and a deep feeling of humility and obeisance is displayed before a Supreme Being for each blessing received when the Vicar in referring to the daily routine in his home says, "We all bent in gratitude to that Being who gave us another day."¹

This statement affirms a belief and faith in an unseen and unrevealed power or force. This idea is consistent with another instance of the acknowledgment of the sustaining hand of God when the Vicar, distraught and over-come with grief upon the occasion of

Olivia leaving home, looks for his pistol. His wife chides him saying, "My dearest, dearest husband, the Bible is the only weapon that is fit for your old hands now." This statement cements the idea that the strongest weapon is found not in the use of fire arms, but in the word of God.

The Vicar often found solace in the thought that a Heavenly Being gives just desserts for acts of righteousness here on earth. This virtue in part was born of Christianity and natural kindness; nevertheless, it was long nourished by his inner reflection. This belief is revealed when the Vicar counsels his son with the following plea:

Go, my boy, and if you fall though distant, exposed and wept by those that love you, the most precious tears are those with which Heaven bedews the unburied head of a soldier.2

The Vicar believes that God is a Being who forgives our trespasses, and rejoices when we, having sinned, return to the path of righteousness. This attitude is clearly seen in the Vicar's words to Olivia. He says:

Heaven we are assured is much more pleased to view a repentant sinner, than ninety-nine persons who have supported a course, of undeviating rectitude. And this is right, for that single effort by which we stop short in the downhill path to perdition, is itself a greater exertion of virtue than a hundred acts of justice.3

The above theology which portrays a chance for so called sinful men to eradicate or correct their errors in living is presented again when the Vicar speaks to the prisoners, while he, himself, is confined

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1 Ibid., p. 129.
2 Ibid., p. 175.
3 Ibid., p. 191.
in jail. He tells them constantly of the inestimable value of God and religion:

To religion then we must hold in every circumstance of life, for our truest comfort; for if already we are happy, it is a pleasure to think we can make that happiness unending; and if we are miserable it is very consoling to think there is a place of rest. Thus to the fortunate religion holds out a continuance of bliss; to the wretched a change from pain.¹

The Vicar continues his doctrine of a merciful and understanding divinity by saying:

The author of our religion everywhere professes himself the wretch's friend, and, unlike the false ones of this world bestows all his caresses upon the forlorn.²

We have seen from the quoted passages from the Vicar of Wake-field that a belief is professed in the ultimate reward by God for all acts of righteousness, because in his deepest distress the Vicar has but to remember how much kinder Heaven is to us than we are to ourselves, and how few are the misfortunes of nature's making, to recover his cheerful patience.³

Paralleling this faith in God, found in the novel, is the sincere compassion expressed for the woes of humanity, for the Vicar was readily moved by pain and sorrow; the contemplation of purity and unselfishness always thrilled him.⁴ Once the Vicar while musing on happiness murmured:

¹ Ibid., p. 245.
² Ibid., p. 246.
⁴ Edward Wagenknecht, op. cit., p. 90.
As some men gaze with admiration at the colors of a tulip, or the wings of a butterfly, so I was by nature an admirer of happy human faces.\(^1\)

Not only did the Vicar rejoice when he saw happy human faces, but he enjoyed being instrumental in causing such happiness for "never was the family of Wakefield known to turn the traveler or the poor dependent out of doors."\(^2\)

This love for humanity and this concern for the oppressed was instilled in the hearts of all the Vicar's children as evidenced by Sophia's remark to Mister Burchell. She says, "We should never strike an unnecessary blow at a victim over whom Providence holds the scourge of resentment."\(^3\)

The willingness to aid those persons who are in distress is found again in "The Ballad" in the *Vicar of Wakefield* read by Mister Burchell:

Here to the houseless child of want  
My door is open still;  
And though my portion is but scant,  
I give it with good will.

Then turn tonight, and freely share  
Whate'er my cell bestows;  
My rustic couch and frugal fare,  
My blessing and repose.\(^4\)

The desire to share, to divide, to lend a helping hand to a brother, and to give the assurance that one is a part of a whole,

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1 Oliver Goldsmith, *op. cit.*, p. 15.  
is certainly consistent with eighteenth century benevolence.

The intense efforts of the abolitionists which swept the
country at this time are emphatically upheld by the Vicar, who,
upon being questioned by a visitor concerning his opinion about
maintaining slaves, replies:

I am for liberty, that attribute of God! Glorious
liberty! that theme of modern declamation. I would have
all men kings. I would be a king myself. We have all
naturally an equal right to the throne: we are all
originally equal.1

The doctrine is advocated that all men are created equal and
that all mankind should have equal opportunities to progress, and
that public wrong exists when a situation is otherwise. That
humanity is the helpless victims of the crimes and brutalities of
the world2 is confirmed when the Vicar attempts to reform the
hardened inmates of a penal institution by teaching them various
trades.3 The Vicar says of the result of this effort:

Thus in less than a fortnight I had formed them into
something social and humane; and had the pleasure of
regarding myself as a legislator, who had brought men
from their native ferocity into friendship and obedience.4

It is obvious, in the last quotation, that Doctor Primrose, in
all adversity, hoped and worked unalteringly for a better turn of
fortune, enduring in the meantime without fret.5 It is that reasonable

1 Ibid., p. 140.
2 William Black, Goldsmith (New York, /n.d./), p. 86.
3 Oliver Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 223.
4 Ibid., p. 224.
5 Wilbur L. Cross, The Development of the English Novel (New York,
1922), p. 79.
philosophy which in the end leads us back from all the mistaken paths of life.¹ This philosophy is endorsed by Taine when he states:

The Vicar does not give way; he remains a priest and head of a family; prescribes to each of them his duty; encourages, consoles, orders, preaches to the prisoners, endures their coarse jests, reforms them; establishes in the prison useful work, and institutes fines for punishment and rewards for industry.²

The Vicar has the most benevolent and paternal soul; the most sociable tendencies, open to gentle emotions and familiar tenderness.³ He earnestly believes that the wicked can be brought to the ways of Christ by patience and forbearance. He voices this idea when he says:

It has ever been my opinion that no man was past the hour of amendment, every heart lying open to the shafts of reproof, if the archer could but take proper aim.⁴

Just as the Vicar is charitable in his thoughts toward people and charitable in the sharing of his home, he is equally willing to give of his purse. This unselfishness is illustrated when the Vicar, in discussing the compensation for his pastoral service, says:

The proof of my living which amounted to but thirty-five pounds a year, I made over to the orphans and widows of the clergy of our diocese.⁵

¹ Leslie Stephens, op. cit., p. 289.
³ Ibid., p. 185.
⁴ Oliver Goldsmith, op. cit., p. 218.
⁵ Ibid., p. 18.
When the Vicar meets Mr. Burchell for the first time, he thinks he is a beggar, and says:

I could not avoid expressing my concern to the stranger at seeing such a gentleman in such circumstances and offered him my purse to satisfy the present demand.\(^1\)

The Vicar chides his daughters about their expensive attire when he says: "The nakedness of the indigent world might be clothed from the trimmings of the vain."\(^2\) It is quite evident then that the Vicar is the embodiment of the qualities of simplicity and generosity, by teaching that those in possession of an abundance of material wealth should share with the less fortunate.

Moreover, the Vicar advances the doctrine of goodness itself. This idea is evinced upon the loss of his fortune when he exclaims:

If what you tell me is true and if I am to be a beggar, it shall never make me a rascal, or induce me to disown my principles.\(^3\)

Alluding to this principle of goodness, we find the opinion echoed when the Vicar asserts:

Both wit and understanding are trifles without integrity; it is that which gives value to every character. The ignorant peasant without fault is greater than the philosopher with, for what is genius or courage without a heart.\(^4\)

The Vicar, while talking to his son, who has become discouraged, gives the Bible as his authority on acts of goodness when he declares:

\(^1\) Ibid., p. 28.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 57.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 23.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 108.
I quote to you from the Bible, I have been young, and now am old; yet never saw I the righteous man forsaken, or his seed begging their bread.¹

A firm and unshakeable opinion, which cannot be brooked concerning goodness is sensed in the last statement. The same tenet is upheld in speaking of the senior Sir William Thornhill. The Vicar, with all the admiration for a good man which he feels shining in his eyes, praises him saying:

I have Sir William Thornhill represented as one of the most generous yet whimsical men in the kingdom; a man of consummate benevolence.²

For a man to be imbued with all the characteristics which go to make a true Christian gentleman, it is only natural that the Vicar's interpretation of the fundamental principles of righteousness should also include the marriage vows. The Vicar's home is full of the soft sunshine and tender beauty of domestic life. This portrait is definitely crystalized in the following words when the Vicar says:

I wrote an epitaph for my wife, though still living, in which I extolled her prudence, economy, and obedience till death; and having it copied fair, with an elegant frame, it was placed over the chimney piece, where it answered several very useful purposes, in admonishing my wife of her duty to me and my fidelity to her.³

Thus, from the Vicar's epitaph, we get an idea of the reverence for marriage which the adherents of the philosophy of benevolence are trying to foster in the minds of eighteenth century humanity.

² Ibid., p. 30.
³ Ibid., p. 20.
For we see the Vicar set before us with blended grandeur and pathos—the Christian heroism of the loving father, faithful husband and forgiving ambassador of God to man.¹

In substantiation of the above statement, Forster may be quoted, who comments on the entire sentiment of the story:

It lies near the heart. A something which has found its way "there" which, while it amused, had made us happier; which gently inweaving itself with our habits of thought, has increased our good humour and charity; which insensibly it may be has corrected wilful impatience of temper, and made the world's daily accidents easier and kinder to us all.²

The book, itself, needs no description, an exquisite naturalness is its prevailing charm. We find inculcated in the story, a belief in the reliance on the providence of God, quiet labor, cheerful endeavor, and an indulgent forgiveness of the faults and infirmities of others, which are the easy and certain means of pleasure in this world, and of turning pain to noble uses.³

Despite the enjoyment sustained throughout the story, a distinct plea for a better day for all mankind is evinced. This observation is affirmed by Lovett and Hughes who state that:

In its portrayal of the Vicar's misfortunes, in its treatment of the benevolence of Mister Burchell, and especially in its attack on prison conditions, and the abuses of the law, the Vicar of Wakefield allies itself to the novels of Godwin and Holcroft and Bayes.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 421.
² John Forster, op. cit., p. 412.
³ Ibid., p. 450.
⁴ Robert Lovett and Helen Hughes, op. cit., p. 154.
Regardless of the fact that the *Vicar of Wakefield* is Goldsmith's only novel, no clearer picture of the eighteenth century principles could be diagrammed had he written a score of such novels. The need of love of man for all men manifested in the story synthesizes all of the concepts of benevolence prevalent during the era. However, for the sake of clarity, these concepts may be stated as follows: a belief, first, the power of God is revealed in all acts of goodness; second, criminals were not naturally wicked and could be brought to the ways of Christ by help and patience; third, those in possession of an abundance of material wealth should share with the less fortunate, for the maximum of life was attained by those who were equal strangers to opulence and poverty; and fourth, a belief in the sacredness of marriage.

Moreover, the *Vicar of Wakefield* endorses the philosophy that the heroism and self denial of man, which are needed for the duties of life, are not the super-human sort, but they may co-exist with many follies, with some simple weaknesses, with many harmless vanities; and that in the improvement of mankind, near and remote in its progress, through worldly content to final happiness, the humblest of men have their place assigned them, and their part allotted them to play.¹

¹ John Forster, *op. cit.*, p. 412.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

It has been the purpose of this thesis to reveal the concepts of benevolence in the novels, Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones by Henry Fielding, Tristram Shandy and A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy by Laurence Sterne, and the Vicar of Wakefield by Oliver Goldsmith.

However, we first attempted to show that the society of the eighteenth century was one which influenced the formation of the concepts of benevolence ingrained in these novels. The first half of the eighteenth century was at its best a period of reasonableness, moderation, and polish in politics, literature, science and religion; at its worst, it was a period of corruption, formality and unbelief in any thing except material objects. In contrast, the latter half saw a profound transformation in England—the improvement in manufacture, agriculture and transportation. Likewise, the American and French Revolutions caused a series of changes which deeply affected all classes of society and all phases of each class.

One of these series of changes was in the thought of the period. Philosophically, attention was turned to the nature of man, which discussion had its inception in the sixteenth century when John Calvin declares in Institutes for the Christian Religion that man was wicked, sinful and selfish, and therefore, condemned
to eternal damnation. The same sentiments are voiced by Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, and a student of John Locke, early in the eighteenth century declares himself diametrically opposed to the doctrine of Calvin and Hobbes and contends that man is innately good and instinctively acts for the good of the whole species.

Notwithstanding the fact that many able philosophers of the era agree with Shaftesbury's theory of the goodness of man, Bernard Mandeville, an intellectual giant during the eighteenth century, violently denounces Shaftesbury's theories in The Fable of the Bees and proclaims his views to be in accord with those of Epicurus, Hobbes, and La Rochefoucauld, predicated upon the idea that man is innately selfish. Mandeville's theory is that man thinks of the good of others in so far as it benefits him.

With the philosophers in such a state of controversy, it is no wonder that much of the literature of the period is a reflection of the doctrine of both schools of thought. Representative novels which mirror the concepts of benevolence of the period are *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding, *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey* by Laurence Sterne, and *Vicar of Wakefield* by Oliver Goldsmith.

An analysis of the concepts of benevolence in these five novels revealed common attitudes of the eighteenth century toward God, humanity, and goodness. Exemplary of these concepts are the attitudes found in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* which are: first,
Christ should have an exalted place in the hearts of all mankind; second, all men regardless of race, birth or creed should be accorded justice and fairness; third, the faults of all men should be weighed in a charitable light; fourth, physical effort should be exerted where it is needed to aid those in distress; fifth, virtue and marriage should be held as a sacred symbol and as a sacred institution.

Similar to the concepts of benevolence found in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* are the concepts of benevolence found in *Tristram Shandy* and *A Sentimental Journey*. These concepts were found to be a belief that: first, all men should respect the wisdom and authority of God; second, all persons should be regarded as beings worthy of recognition in their own rights; third, the weaknesses of human beings should be looked upon with kindliness and sympathy; fourth, respect should be shown for the beauty and purity of nature; and fifth, marriage should be held as a sacred institution.

Likewise, similar concepts of benevolence were found in the *Vicar of Wakefield*. This analysis disclosed a belief that: first, the power of God is revealed in all acts of goodness; second, criminals are not naturally wicked and can be brought to the ways of Christ by help and patience; third, those in possession of an abundance of material wealth should share with the less fortunate for the maximum of life is attained by those who are equal strangers to opulence and poverty; and fourth, a belief in the sacredness of marriage.
All of the concepts of benevolence found in the five novels are important, not only because they mirror the thought of the period and are in accord with those tenets held by Shaftesbury concerning the nature of man; but, they are significant also, because they foreshadowed the spirit of romanticism in English Literature, a movement which reached its climax at the turn of the century and culminated in our present era of the common man.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Texts


Background and Criticism


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**Articles**
