

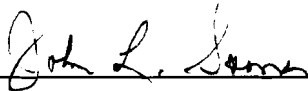
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VISION IN CATCH-22, SOMETHING HAPPENED, AND
GOOD AS GOLD

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Moral criticism's subjectivity makes it problematic to use in evaluating any novel. Using it to evaluate fiction by contemporary authors like Joseph Heller is even more difficult because these authors employ narrative techniques which make it difficult for readers to identify their values. By using "value objects" to identify the world view of a novel's "moral standard" character, and by using that world view to judge the protagonist's values, the moral critic can establish whether or not an author is a moral writer.

In Catch-22, Joseph Heller sets forth his moral hypothesis. Yossarian must learn from Orr, the novel's "moral standard" character, what it means to be responsible.

Once Yossarian understands Orr's secret and how Orr is able to be responsible, Yossarian realizes that the world view he had been embracing, Catch-22, is an excuse for acting immorally.

In Something Happened, Heller explores the possibility of a character failing morally. Bob Slocum understands the morally responsible world view his son, the "moral standard" character, demonstrates, but Slocum chooses to embrace a deterministic world view which denies free will, giving him an excuse to act immorally.

Heller uses Good as Gold to reaffirm his moral vision of responsibility while exploring a second excuse for denying responsibility, belief in a world ruled by chance. The protagonist, Bruce Gold, eventually embraces the values his brother, Sid, the novel's "moral standard" character, demonstrates. Bruce's world view reaches moral convergence with Sid's world view. At the end of the novel, Bruce Gold, much like Yossarian in Catch-22, is running away from a society which endorses irresponsibility and running to a society which encourages responsibility.

The moral vision which is developed in Heller's first three novels confirms that Joseph Heller is a moral writer. It also establishes that moral fiction is possible even in contemporary novels which seem "morally confusing."

MAKING SOMETHING HAPPEN: JOSEPH HELLER'S MORAL VISION
IN CATCH-22, SOMETHING HAPPENED, AND
GOOD AS GOLD

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Chapter 1

Moral Criticism: A Search for a Method

Is moral fiction possible in the Einsteinian age?

Are Joseph Heller's first three novels moral? This question has been a contentious issue for many years. Heller has said that he'd be very upset if he were accused of writing an immoral book (Amis 182). However, writing immoral books is just what Heller has been accused of doing.

When Catch-22 first came out, Thomas Blues faulted Heller (while arguing that Catch-22 has a "moral structure") for having Yossarian base his decision to run away on the fact that Orr had made it to Sweden rather than on the fact that running away was "the only humanely possible action" (557). Another critic faulted Heller for writing an immoral novel because Catch-22 is "anti-institutional" (Anonymous 37). Some critics have even pointed out that despite being set during World War II, nowhere in the novel does Heller deal with the Nazis and the atrocities they were committing (Epstein 98). By using World War II, Heller has created a controversial backdrop. It seems difficult to justify someone running away from his responsibility to help stop the Nazi menace. Running away, in such contexts, seems morally irresponsible.

Heller's next two novels come under similar moral

criticism. Joseph Epstein says of Heller's Something Happened, "given the loss of credence in characters and in plot that is part of Heller's novelistic equipment, pornography is all that is left him . . ." (101), and Sanford Pinsker says that Good as Gold requires a "narrator with richer stuff than Gold's moral/cultural zero can provide" (104).

Heller, on the other hand, continually asserts in interviews that his novels are moral. Heller states, "Catch-22 is concerned with . . . forces or institutions that want to destroy life or the moral self (qtd. in Plimpton 113). He also says that Catch-22 is concerned with "the development, the birth of Yossarian's consciousness as a moral being" (qtd. in Sale 89). Heller says of his second novel, "There is . . . an extremely high moral content in Something Happened. . . . It's [Catch-22's moral content] my idea of conscience and it coincides with Bob's idea of it in Something Happened" (qtd. in Amis 182). In a 1979 interview, Heller asserts that each of his first three books is moral and goes on to state:

Also the ethical sense of my books is very conventional. Apart from a certain taste for salacious activities and licentiousness, the ethics in Good as Gold are quite conventional. What is being ridiculed, deplored, by me if not by my characters, is a moral corruption, a disavowal

of responsibilities, a substitution of vanity, folly where other people's lives are concerned.

(qtd. in Brooks 209)

There are also critics, though, such as W. Scammel who argue that Heller is too moral at the end of Catch-22, exchanging his "Fool's cap for the Preacher's robe" (50). Life, it seems, imitates Art. Heller's first novel has become the victim of a critical Catch-22. As Stephen Potts notes, "Heller was thus castigated for not taking a moral stance and, on the other hand, for taking one" (111).

PREMISES OF MORAL CRITICISM

Determining the morality of Heller's novels would seem to be an easy task. A critic need only apply the method of moral criticism in order to determine a work's moral significance. However, an established method for applying moral criticism does not exist because moral criticism is not as widely accepted as other critical modes. In today's critical marketplace, an analysis of moral principles, moral theme, or moral "anything" of a literary work seems to lack "serious" critical value. Moral criticism is dismissed as being subjective, on the one hand, and autocratic on the other. In fact, moral criticism is difficult to execute correctly. There are two main ways to fail. If one asserts

too strongly the relative nature of morality, the critic destroys all basis for making a moral evaluation. If one applies standards which are too stringent, then the critic becomes an autocratic champion of values which may not apply to the text.

Since the publication of John Gardner's book On Moral Fiction in 1977, the academic community has debated the validity of moral evaluations of literature. Some have said that Gardner's book is "another vote for the conservative consensus" (Baumbach 6). Others have said that sentiments such as Gardner's have "always been the position of totalitarian systems . . ." (Federman 11). Gardner's book may be guilty mostly of not being as persuasive as it could have been. Many of the criticisms of Gardner's concept of moral fiction have become generalized assumptions about moral criticism itself. As R. Barton Palmer suggests, moral critics have, by their kindest detractors, been characterized as serving "a reactionary wish for an out of fashion aesthetic" (162). Moral criticism, they contend, is simply not viable for the Post-modern world. For instance, Jerome Klinkowitz states:

A universe which is now seen as "indeterminate, uncertain, chaotic, or relative" simply will not support the "optimistic or humanistic premises" which underlie traditionalist art and ways of teaching it. Instead, literature has kept pace

with science and philosophy, to the point of agreeing that afflictions are primarily systems of meaning which owe the standard of success to internal consistency and not to the way they mimetically represent the outside world.

(Klinkowitz 387-88)

The implication that we need to find new ways to understand "traditionalist" art and new ways to teach it seems valid. The problem is that moral criticism has become an "out of fashion aesthetic" because literature is keeping "pace with science and philosophy." Ironically, philosophy can probably be characterized as trying to keep up with science, too, since science and technology have become such powerful forces in contemporary culture. Essentially, literature is attempting to keep "pace with science and [science]." The tendency in literature, as in many other disciplines, is to strive for an objectivity, similar to scientific objectivity, which forces our knowledge to be more "factual" and therefore more "true." Stephen Tanner, an advocate of moral criticism, agrees that its decline is due to a modern "relativistic temper," a contemporary "philosophical concern with ascertainment of order and value," a "subjectivist inclination," and attempts to "emulate the dispassionate objectivity of science" (281).

In the mid-1920's, Erwin Schrödinger, along with Werner Heisenberg and Paul Dirac, helped usher in our new

scientific age when he proposed a new theory called quantum mechanics. This same scientific pioneer once wrote:

I think it probable that this age, which delights in calling itself the age of technology will in some later time be described, in terms of its brightest lights and deepest shadows, as the age of the evolutionary idea, and the decay of the arts. (Schrödinger 5-6)

Schrödinger compares our technological development to an "elephantiasis" or "one mightily developing organ" which damages or "cripples" the other organs. In our rush to embrace scientific thinking, we have allowed many other areas of our culture merely to subsist and often to deteriorate.

Emulating the objectivity of science is a good exercise for the discipline of literary criticism, but adhering to this "objectivity" to the exclusion of other concerns, including moral concerns, may be too rigid. Not so long ago, literature was believed to be an instrument "to teach human beings their true nature, their dignity, and their place in the scheme of things" (Kirk 40). Schrödinger's criticism of contemporary culture is an indictment of the field of literary studies which have moved away from the idea of an instructive knowledge transcending objective "facts." This instructive knowledge is potentially one of the great strengths of literature, and, in moving away from

it, literary studies may be perpetuating their own decline.

Literature has become less and less important to the lives of the typical person in contemporary culture. It now seems that people seldom turn to literature in order to understand their hopes and fears. Hazel Barnes notes that Herbert Marcuse is concerned with just such possibility in One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Societies (60). Marcuse writes, "The psychiatrist takes care of the Don Juans, Romeos, Hamlets, Fausts, as he takes care of Oedipus--he cures them" and that in this world "[t]he soul contains few secrets and longings which cannot be sensibly discussed, analyzed and polled," which cannot be reduced to the realm of science (Marcuse 91). As a result, we allow literature to become merely an aesthetic object with no meaning for human life. The understanding of the human condition and its relevance to our physical and emotional world are being analyzed away as literary studies strive for the objectivity of science.

The irony in literary studies drifting toward science is that science has never been totally objective. For instance, Kurt Gödel, a twentieth-century mathematician, says that in any mathematical system there is "at least one crucial axiom that cannot be proved within the system itself" (Lynn 99). Schrödinger states that strict objectivity has never been "applicable" to the field of science (7). If strict objectivity is not applicable to

science then it probably is not applicable to literature. Rigid objectivity serves no justifiable purpose in literary criticism and ignores literature's moral relevance. In ignoring the moral relevance of literature, we have allowed criticism to become "dehumanized" (Donovan 53).

Despite this shift in the way people perceive "truth," there is still a strong recent historical basis in literature for moral criticism. One may go back to Tolstoy who said that one of the purposes of art is "to make that feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbor, now attained only by the best neighbors of society, the customary feeling and the instinct of all men" (qtd. in Tanner 284). Anne Bradstreet suggests that there is morality in even ostensibly "immoral" works: "There is no object that we see, no action that we feel or fear, but we may make some spiritual advantage of all; and he that makes such improvement is wise as well as pious" (67). Henry James asks the moral question of all poets and novelists "How does he [the novelist] feel about life? What, in the last analysis, is his philosophy?" Flannery O'Connor states that a novelist's "vision cannot be detached from his moral sense." Ralph Ellison has said, "Still I believe that fiction does help create value, and I regard this as a very serious--I almost said 'sacred'--function of the writer" (qtd. in Tanner 283-84).

Since the publication of Gardner's book, several

critics have stepped forward to defend the validity of moral criticism. Palmer encourages a return to moral criticism but criticizes Gardner for being negative about didacticism in novels and suggests that we need to get past our bias against didactic works (172). George Panichas makes an even harsher indictment of contemporary criticism than does Gardner, faulting the "'sham liberalism' [which] has for too long prevailed in the American Intelligentsia" (236). Russell Kirk calls for a moral literature by examining the concepts of the moral imagination, the idyllic imagination, and the diabolic imagination (38-39). Hazel Barnes illustrates literature's ability to affect how we look at our society and how contemporary literature affirms the values of "outcasts" in contemporary society, allowing us to understand different moral perspectives (49). R. B. Gill's essay states that all moral concerns within a work are written and understood within "interpretive communities" (54). An interpretive community consists of adherents to one particular critical theory or aesthetic. According to Gill, the interpretive community to which a work belongs determines the work's moral concerns and the way in which the morality should be evaluated.

Christopher Clausen makes one of the best arguments for the validity of moral criticism saying, "No individual or society, however original, starts from zero on ethical questions"; there is always some moral or ethical center for

people and, in many cases, this ethical center is widely acknowledged. Clausen also states:

The . . . most important reason for denying that uncertainty of moral judgments should deter critics from invoking them is that such a proscription would apply equally to moral philosophers, juries, members of legislative bodies, or any other group of people who are concerned with questions of ethics. (Clausen 77)

While the field of literary studies cannot hope to achieve the objectivity of science, its practitioners should have the courage of the rest of society who deal with "questions of ethics."

Despite the apparent, but small, support for moral criticism, there does not seem to be a clear understanding of what moral criticism entails or how it is to be done. Out of the many introductory guides to literary criticism that have been published in the last ten years, only one, A Guide to Literary Criticism and Research by Bonnie Klomp Stevens and Larry L. Stewart, speaks at all about moral criticism. In the chapter on "Moral and Religious Studies," it offers a cursory review of what such a field might take in and offers no suggestions for applying this approach to literary studies.

Only one critic, Stephen Tanner, ever suggests a possible method for moral criticism. Tanner offers his own

defense of moral criticism, as a moral critic must, but then urges his readers to act:

The point I wish to make is that we must not be intimidated or misguided by prevailing attitudes in recent criticism. Realizing we have on our side the weight of tradition tested for centuries, we should espouse unashamedly and unhesitatingly an edification theory of literature and then strive for a moral approach of criticism that is perceptive and wise. Let us stop fretting over the legitimacy of moral criticism and get on with the business of doing it well. (Tanner 284)

As passionate as his injunction is, though, his real contribution is that he outlines a program that escapes the two pitfalls of moral criticism: being too lax or being too strict. Tanner, while acknowledging that literary criticism cannot be completely objective, suggests a method which brings moral criticism a little closer to the objectivity of other critical methods.

Tanner points out that moral criticism is not simply applying extrinsic values to a text to see if the text supports them. As Tanner states, "if we apply superficial standards, or even if we apply the most significant standards in the wrong way, we will be unable to do justice to the fiction of our time." We cannot simply apply Christian values and standards to a work because the author

may not subscribe to such values or standards (286). Instead, we must look for a way to determine the values, standards and principles the author has addressed. Tanner helps establish a starting point for such an approach by suggesting the notion of "value objects," things about which humans must make judgments (287). How the author treats the value objects, according to Tanner, reveals the author's attitudes and values. Writers necessarily assert and/or imply their own attitudes and values by the way they deal with these value objects in their fiction (287). Therefore, these value objects offer the moral critic a concrete basis, a more objective basis, on which to make moral judgments and build a method for moral criticism.

According to Tanner, value objects are invested with meaning because people respond to them with cognition and emotion (288). Essentially, how people think and feel about value objects give value objects meaning. This meaning often indicates the value or values of the person responding to the objects. Therefore, by examining how an author treats a value object, it is possible to identify one or more values with which the author is concerned. Tanner states,

The task of the critic in considering value objects is to determine the author's cognitive knowledge of them--how he perceives and understands them--and then to determine what

emotions he attaches to that cognition. This combination of cognition and emotional commitment reveals the meaning the objects have for him, what he affirms about them. (288)

Since, as Tanner points out, the meaning which the author attaches to the value objects may be ethical or unethical, the critic is in the position of making a moral evaluation. The critic, then, is still applying extrinsic moral standards, but the critic is able to apply the standards in a more objective manner.

Tanner offers a list of five value objects which should, in most cases, help a critic define the values addressed within a text. They are:

1. The Self. What is the nature of the human person? Is he distinguishable from other animals? Does he have a soul? Does he have intrinsic worth and, if so, on what grounds? What is or should be the basis for his choices and the standards for his behavior?

2. Nature. What is or should be man's relation to nature? Is nature benign, hostile, or indifferent toward man? Is harmony with nature possible and, if so, on what basis and for what reasons? Is there any connection between nature and spirit? Should man's ecological sense produce a feeling of obligation or reverence toward other

life?

3. Other Minds. What is or should be a man's relationship with other individuals? What kind of communion is possible or desirable? Does man have obligations towards others and, if so, on what grounds?

4. Time. What meaning does history have? What bearing does the past have on the present? What should man's attitude be toward the future? How is the present moment to be valued in relation to past and future?

5. Society. What is or should be the nature of human community? What is or should be the relationship between the individual and society? Is social reform possible or even desirable? On what grounds? (287-88)

Tanner acknowledges that in determining an author's cognitive and emotional commitment "questions of technique are important." Tanner suggests that many contemporary methods of criticism may help facilitate the study of value objects. The moral critic, being well-acquainted with "amoral" critical methods such as Formalism and Rhetorical studies, may use these methods in order to determine the treatment of the value objects more clearly. Tanner offers three ways in which the value objects may be examined:

1. Individual value claims and direct expressions

of value commitments made by the narrator or characters.

2. The behavior of characters as a reflection of underlying values.

3. The symbolic expression of value commitment in objects, events, and characterization. (288)

Tanner's value objects are important in determining whether an author is a moral writer, not only because they are specific objects with which to identify an author's values in the text, but also because they imply that the author's values can be found in the text. Tanner has, thus, identified a starting point for the moral critic.

When using Tanner's notion of value objects to identify the values addressed in a text, it does not seem necessary to use all five of the value objects he suggests. In fact, the five he suggests are just that, suggestions. There could be, feasibly, other value objects identified in a text and these value objects may not apply to other texts; they may be text specific. For example, four of Tanner's five suggested value objects can be found in Heller's first three novels. Since "nature" is not addressed in a significant way in any of Heller's first three novels, it will not be used in this analysis.

Before a moral critic can use Tanner's "value objects," however, those objects must be modified. As they stand, they do not distinguish between a moralist and a moral

writer. The term "moral writer" does not refer to whether an author is moral in his or her personal life, but to whether the author's writing is moral. Also, there is a difference between being a moral writer, who places characters in situations where they must deal with moral problems, and a moralist writer, who has a specific message to convey. A moralist is often a moral writer, but there are many moral writers who are not moralists.

The moral writer not only creates situations which require moral decisions to be made, but the moral writer also has a moral vision. The moral vision of an author does not imply a comprehensive moral code. An author cannot be expected to take on the ethicist's task. Typically, an author will only attempt to handle one or two particular components of what may be a comprehensive moral code, and, even then, the moral component with which an author is concerned may not apply in every imaginable situation, only the author's imagined situations. An author with a moral vision might be confused with a moralist, but a moralist is typically only concerned with making the "correct" moral decision. The moral writer, possessing a moral vision, is concerned with dramatizing the difficulty of making moral decisions and with exploring how a person goes about making such decisions.

Tanner's value objects have three specific weaknesses which must be modified to enable a moral critic to identify

a moral writer. First, if Tanner's concept of value objects is applied in analyzing a single work, there is the possibility that the work may be evaluated incorrectly. This problem may be due to something as simple as a misunderstanding of genre. For instance, if Heller's bleak satire, Something Happened, had been the only book he had written, it could easily be interpreted as a mimetic vision of reality and therefore as an immoral novel.

A critic who is interested in determining whether a novelist writes moral fiction might better evaluate the writer's work if the critic examines more than one work. By analyzing several works by an author, the moral critic reduces the possibility of misunderstanding the author's style and/or genre. Furthermore, novelists are apt to develop particular patterns for dealing with particular topics, situations, and even value objects. The use of more than one work by an author may help to provide a control for the novel which breaks the pattern. The break in a pattern, it would seem, may yield sharper insight into an author's moral vision.

The second problem with Tanner's value objects is more fundamental. They may not be applied uniformly to all types of fiction. Tanner implies that an author's values can be found in the text, but, even when using value objects, it is easier to identify the author's moral vision in novels using certain types of narration than it is with novels using

other types of narration.

An author who utilizes the traditional omniscient narrator occasionally includes commentary which would seem to help in identifying the author's moral vision. In this type of fiction the protagonist often dramatizes the moral values with which the author is concerned. Thus, given such a novel and narrator, the analysis of value objects is fairly straightforward.

However, a problem is presented by novels which employ what Booth terms an "impersonal narrator," the type of narrator used by authors who try to remove themselves from the novel, who try to maintain an "authorial silence" (273). It is this type of narration which Booth says has led to "moral difficulties" and to which most of the "charges against the immorality of serious modern fiction" can be ascribed (378-79). Booth sees such a narrator as the cause of moral confusion because:

[the author] is never undeniably there, even in the long-winded commentary. But he is never undeniably dissociated, either, and therein lies the problem. The reader cannot help wondering. . . . Is this [the author's] view? Should it be mine, at least temporarily, so that I can go along sympathetically with the hero? (380)

Booth's concerns are valid, especially if readers continue to expect an author's moral vision to be conveyed in a novel

with impersonal narration as it is in a novel with a more personal narrator. For instance, when Yossarian, Catch-22's protagonist, takes his plane over the bomb target during the tenth mission over Ferrara, he manages to get one of the planes in his squadron shot down, killing "Kraft and the others" (141). Yossarian's response, when Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn are trying to decide what to do about the situation during the debriefing, is to suggest that they give him a medal. The self-centered values Yossarian dramatizes during this scene are probably not values which Heller wishes to have associated with himself and are not what most critics would call moral. How do we separate Yossarian's actions after the Ferrara mission from Heller's moral vision?

Tanner makes one statement which may provide a solution to some of the difficulties with Booth's "impersonal narrator." While describing the difficulty of practicing moral criticism with the contemporary novel, Tanner states, "Behind every character is a world view. What a character does depends ultimately upon the author's fundamental attitudes and values" (285). Tanner never returns to a discussion of what he means with this statement. Certainly he is correct in his assertion that a character's moral vision is related to that of the author's. I would suggest, however, that even though a character's values may help in identifying the author's moral vision, the character's

values should not be mistaken for the author's.

"Behind every character is a world view" implies that each character represents a set of beliefs, standards, and/or values. The world view is adopted or evolves because of that character's experiences and because of that character's particular perspective or vantage point in relation to his or her fictional world.

Tanner does not draw a distinct relationship between the world view represented by each character and the author's moral vision. But, having each character represent a world view is useful to the moral author because he or she may then set these world views against one another. In many stories, authors create a foil for their protagonists. In moral novels, a foil will function as a "moral standard" character. These foils will represent the values to which the protagonist must respond. By comparing the various world views in a text, the critic may discover the character, the moral foil, who serves as a standard for the author's moral values in the story. In other words, the moral writer tests the protagonist's views against a character who represents the novel's moral standard, the world view by which all other world views can be measured.

Now, there could be a hundred world views represented in a novel, but, ultimately, the protagonist's world view will reach a moral crisis which will bring it into direct conflict, a moral convergence, with the author's appointed

standard. This moral conflict is one of the salient characteristics of a moral standard. The moral standard plays a key role in, is a catalyst for, the resolution of the novel. The author's moral vision is determined, then, by examining the way in which these two world views interact. For instance, Orr's character in Catch-22 represents the world view which is Heller's moral standard for the novel, the standard by which the protagonist, Yossarian, is measured. Yossarian goes through a moral crisis as a part of his moral development, which prepares him for a moral convergence with the world view represented by the Orr standard.

It is likely that moral writers using Booth's "impersonal narrator" often create a character, a moral standard, to represent their values in the text, and it is also likely that they often designate the protagonist as the character undergoing the moral crisis. The possibility that a moral writer might put a moral standard in the novel should be explored by a moral critic. If a writer uses such a device, its presence helps solve the moral critic's problem of evaluating the text by extrinsic standards or values. The critic hardly needs to bring his or her own values to the text if the author has already furnished a moral standard. The second technique allows the reader to experience the same moral crisis the protagonist does and thus feel and understand the author's moral vision more

fully. Recognizing these techniques, the moral critic can avoid "the widening gyre" of debate about moral absolutes. Even though we can debate endlessly the validity of moral absolutes in our world, we must recognize that, within the fictional world created by a writer, the writer has the prerogative of setting the moral standards. The moral critic, then, can use Tanner's value objects to identify the two world views in conflict in a text, identify the protagonist's moral crisis and moral convergence with the author's moral standard, and hence identify the author's moral vision for the novel.

The author's moral vision, then, may not be represented by either the protagonist or the moral standard singly but by the moral convergence which takes place. The author's moral vision may be dramatized in the difficulty the protagonist has in making moral decisions necessary to his or her fictional world.

The third and final way that Tanner's value objects must be modified actually involves the questions Tanner poses for identifying the author's treatment of the value objects. The questions imply that there are good and bad ways to respond to the value objects. As a result, they also imply that for fictional characters to be moral, these characters would have to possess three basic characteristics:

1. moral characters must have free will,

2. moral characters must be able to examine the world, and

3. moral characters must be able to create and to recreate their own world view in response to the examined world.

The first characteristic is necessary simply because if the character does not have freewill, the character cannot make a moral choice. Even in naturalistic stories such as Jack London's "The Law of Life" where characters seem to have a small range of choices, they still have the opportunity to choose as does Kokoosh by choosing not to cling to life (961). Conceivably, though, there may be stories in which a character does not have the ability to choose and therefore the issue of morality is irrelevant to the character.

The second characteristic is important because a moral character must have the ability to examine the world. This ability allows the character to see the moral problems with which he or she is confronted. If the character fails to identify correctly the moral problems with which he or she is faced, the actions the character subsequently takes will likely not be moral. Throughout much of Catch-22 Yossarian only sees the danger of being killed. Yossarian is unable to identify his real problem and therefore does not recognize a moral solution to the problem until the end of the novel.

The ability to create, and to recreate, a world view is also important for a moral character. This capacity is closely related to freewill. Essentially, the character must not only have the freewill to make moral decisions but must also have the ability to change, to grow morally, to create a world view consistent with his or her continuing examination of the world. Without the ability to grow morally, the character might make an immoral decision early in the novel which would condemn the character for the remainder of the novel. By creating a world view, the character is continuing to learn and therefore continuing to grow morally. The ability to create implies that the character has imagination and a certain kind of optimism in meeting the moral challenges he or she faces.

The three modifications of Tanner's value objects will not only help distinguish between moralists and moral writers, but they will also help identify those writers who have moral concerns and deal with them covertly in their art. In summary, to study how a writer uses such value objects as the self, nature, other minds, time, and society, a moral critic should study more than one work by an author, should look for "moral standard" characters in novels by authors who use "impersonal narrators," and should look for evidence of the three basic characteristics of moral characters.

Tanner's approach to moral criticism, then, does

provide a way to begin, and when modified, a way to conduct an examination of a literary text to determine its moral implications. By applying Tanner's value objects, a moral critic will be able to 1) determine that the fictional world the author has created allows the characters to make moral decisions, and 2) identify the values, the "moral" world view, by which all other characters may be judged.

Moreover, Tanner's value objects, when modified, will also help solve Booth's problem with "impersonal narrators" with a reputation for creating "immoral fictions." By applying the two steps described above to any existing "moral standard" character in such novels, and to the protagonist of such novels, a critic may evaluate the protagonist's world view by comparing it to the values of the "moral standard" character. Finally, a moral critic may find that the moral values of one novel told by an "impersonal narrator" will help determine the values of another such novel by the same author.

HELLER AND MORAL CRITISM

Joseph Heller is one of those writers who puzzles moral critics because he does seem to remove himself from his novels. Fortunately, however, in each of Heller's first three novels, a foil for the protagonist functions as the

novel's "moral standard" character. These "moral standards" demonstrate that the world Heller has created allows characters to possess the three characteristics which are necessary for a character to represent a moral world view. They also affirm similar world views. The "moral standard" characters are Orr in Catch-22, Bob Slocum's little boy in Something Happened, and Bruce Gold's brother Sid in Good as Gold. Each of these characters is identified as the "moral standard" character because each plays a key role in the resolution of the novel. The "moral standard" character is present in each novel until near the end. When the character "disappears" from the narrative, the protagonist must act without the influence of the "moral standard," and the resolution of the novel subsequently takes place. By examining each "moral standard" character in relation to Tanner's value objects, it is possible to identify the values the moral standard represents and hence by which the protagonist is judged.

In each of Heller's first three novels, the protagonists are offered an opportunity to obtain something they want but for the possible price of sacrificing their moral integrity. In Catch-22, Yossarian wants to not be killed. He is given the opportunity to join the military bureaucracy which would allow him to go home but on the condition that he says "nice things" about Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn. In Something Happened, Bob Slocum is

given the opportunity to be promoted to a job with better pay and more prestige. However, in being promoted, he must fire his friend Andy Kagle. In Good as Gold, Bob Slocum is offered a job in the U.S. government, a job which promises power and social position. However, Gold must sacrifice his family and heritage in order to accept the position.

In Catch-22, the moral debate has often centered on whether or not Yossarian was being morally responsible in running away at the end. By using the novel's moral standard, Orr, it is possible to identify Yossarian as a responsible moral agent, as a representation of a moral world view. Because Heller creates Orr-like figures, similar moral standards, for Something Happened and Good as Gold, it is possible to follow this analysis through these next two books. At the end of Catch-22, Yossarian acts morally by running to his responsibilities, and therefore Heller must examine two excuses that are used to deny such responsibility: 1) belief in a deterministic world in which fate rules life and 2) belief in a chaotic world in which all events are simply random occurrences.

In Something Happened, Heller continues to explore the moral vision he created in Catch-22 by creating a protagonist, Bob Slocum, who fails. Heller's exploration into moral values and human weaknesses necessitates defining a world view for the protagonist which allows him to fail morally. Heller allows Slocum to convince himself that life

Chapter 2

Catch-22: The Moral Hypothesis

"Danby, you dope! There is hope, after all.
Can't you see?"

--Yossarian

The debate over the morality of Catch-22 has generally centered on Yossarian's decision to desert the army at the end of the novel. This debate is the moral problem for the critic analyzing Catch-22. The moral problem for Yossarian is quite different.

Yossarian's problem is, however, represented by the recurring, almost constantly present, image of Snowden's death. While Snowden's death takes place on the Avignon mission, the events surrounding Snowden's death are difficult to piece together because the reader does not see them chronologically. In fact, it is not until late in the novel that the reader is allowed to learn Snowden's secret when Yossarian opens Snowden's flak suit and finds he has treated the wrong wound:

It was easy to read the message in [Snowden's] entrails. Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret. Drop him out a window and he'll fall. Set fire to him and he'll burn. Bury him and he'll rot like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage. That was Snowden's secret.

Ripeness was all. (450)

Snowden's secret may be understood optimistically or pessimistically. If one recognizes that the "spirit" is the only thing which keeps a human from being merely "garbage," one can work to maintain one's spirit. However, for a person who lacks "the spirit," Snowden's secret would obviously mean that the person's life is meaningless. Yossarian's problem is that he lacks "the spirit" and therefore his life is meaningless. Yossarian has lacked "the spirit" since the second Bologna mission when he is reduced to garbage while trying to move Aarfy who is blocking his only path for escape:

Punching Aarfy was like sinking his fists into a limp sack of inflated rubber. There was no resistance, no response at all from the soft, insensitive mass, and after a while Yossarian's spirit died and his arms dropped helplessly with exhaustion. He was overcome with a humiliating feeling of impotence and was ready to weep in self-pity. (emphasis added) (153)

Yossarian's spirit, his ability to rebel, dies. He no longer possesses the spirit to alter his circumstances when faced with a challenge. While Yossarian may occasionally show signs of having a spirit after the battle, he still has problems with it, as is evident in chapter 39, "The Eternal City," when Yossarian's spirit is described as being "sick"

(426).

Yossarian acts on the basis of life being meaningless and has therefore given up hope. He is still concerned about preserving his life, but his attitude of hopelessness paralyzes him, and therefore, he cannot take any meaningful action to save his own life. He merely awaits his "fate."

At the end of the novel, though, Yossarian seems to possess a completely different world view. As Yossarian debates whether to run away or not, Major Danby first appeals to Yossarian by telling him that by running away he may be helping Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn. Yossarian replies,

Let the bastards thrive, for all I care, since I can't do a thing to stop them but embarrass them by running away. I've got responsibilities of my own now, Danby. I've got to get to Sweden. (462)

When Danby reminds Yossarian of the geographical impossibility of reaching Sweden, Yossarian says, "Hell, Danby, I know that. But at least I'll be trying. There's a young kid in Rome whose life I'd like to save if I can find her" (462). Yossarian does not give up in the face of the challenges ahead of him. He does not crumple into garbage or sink into self-pity. Instead, he embraces the challenges ahead of him and decides to proceed in spite of them.

The catalyst for this change in attitude and belief is the news of Orr's having made it to Sweden. Yossarian

suddenly decides that leaving is the right thing to do. One of Thomas Blues's major criticisms is that Yossarian's fleeing is based on the news of Orr's reaching Sweden. Blues's criticism focuses on a particular aptitude Orr has for technically oriented endeavors:

Still, we are obliged to remember that Orr is a technician, a systems man, that his escape is technological achievement only. . . . Hardly a plausible source of informed rebellion. . . . (557)

One of the main questions which must be answered is whether or not Yossarian is acting morally when he follows Orr's lead. In order to better understand the moral standard which Orr represents, it is necessary to apply Tanner's concept of value objects to Orr.

Tanner's "self" object requires that five questions be asked of the object in relation to Orr's character:

1. "what is the nature of the human person?"
2. "Is he [or she] distinguishable from other animals?"
3. "[Do humans] have souls?"
4. "[Do humans] have intrinsic worth and, if so, on what grounds?"
5. "What is or should be the basis for [a human's] choices and standards for [a human's] behavior?" (287)

That Tanner's questions have in common is an attempt to determine if a character respects him or herself and in what terms. In examining Orr's understanding of "self," it is evident that humans may possess "the spirit." It is not clear whether this "spirit" is actually a soul or not but "the spirit" seems absolutely necessary for a moral world view.

What seems implied in the notion of "the spirit" is that human beings create meaning for their lives, an existential understanding of "self." Orr is sophisticated technically, as Blues points out, and Yossarian calls him a "mechanically-aptituded, disaffiliated son of a bitch" (23). Yossarian adds that Orr has "a thousand valuable skills that will keep him in a low income group all his life" (321). Orr is able to use a soldering iron, a hammer, a drill, a file, and a chisel. He can build fires, dig holes, and find water. He is even unafraid of the various animals in nature (321-322). Orr knows how to do all these "inconsequential" things because he has taken responsibility for his own welfare, rather than leaving the responsibility for someone else.

Despite his technical sophistication, Orr exhibits another aptitude. If one examines the descriptions of the stove Orr is building, it is apparent that this is not only a technical achievement but also an achievement of artifice. Orr is a craftsman and therefore his creations are artful as

well as utilitarian. The stove is situated on the "smooth cement floor" which Orr has created (318). While Yossarian is in the hospital, "[Orr] had filed or chiseled a perfect channel in the cement so that the slender gasoline line was flush with the floor as it ran to the stove from the tank he had built outside on an elevated platform" (322). Orr designs the stove to burn all night with a "feed control" and to radiate heat throughout the tent using the metal plates he installs (320). The precision of Orr's work demonstrates an artistic attention to detail and a productive use of the imagination.

It is clear, then, that Orr is responsible for himself in a creative way. He learns the things he must in order to survive and perfects his abilities for his greater benefit. These traits may not support the argument that Orr sees an innate worth in human life, but they do suggest that Orr believes that human beings have the potential to create meaning; he also recognizes each life has a potential worth which is important to develop. To this end, Orr's world view is life-affirming. A person must embrace life imaginatively and thereby create meaning.

By examining Orr's relationships with "other minds," it becomes apparent Orr's acceptance of responsibility carries over into his relationships with "other minds." He is other-centered rather than self-centered. When examining the value object "other minds" it is necessary to ask three

questions:

1. "What is or should be [a human's] relationship with other individuals?"
2. "What kind of communion is possible or desirable?"
3. "Does [a human] have obligations toward others and, if so, on what grounds?" (287)

Orr's respect for self does not produce open personal relationships. There are two immediate and related reasons for this. First, Orr seems to respect others as he respects himself. As a result, he refrains from giving out advice. Second, because he is so imaginative, he tends to think and speak in images and symbols. During Yossarian's conversation with Orr in chapter 28, Orr says, "I knew this valve wouldn't work if I left a part out" (324). Then he asks Yossarian to hand him the "small composition gasket" which had rolled over near Yossarian's foot. When Yossarian says it is not by his foot, Orr says, "Right here" and holds up "something invisible" for Yossarian to see (324). Orr's message is that Yossarian is going to have to use his imagination in order to see what Orr is talking about. Whenever Orr talks to Yossarian he tries to coax Yossarian into using his imagination. When Orr keeps asking Yossarian to fly with him, he is trying to tell Yossarian the secret of why the whore was hitting him on the head with a shoe that day in Rome (325). However, Yossarian, does not

understand Orr's secret because he does not engage his imagination. As a result, Yossarian does not enjoy the kind of relationship with Orr that Orr is capable of.

Some sort of communion must be possible, though, because Orr seems to have achieved a communion with the whore who was hitting him on the head. Orr and the whore are conspiring together. Orr is absolutely positive that the whore to whom he refers as "my girl" would never tell anyone his secret (323). When Yossarian tells Orr that he knows Orr's secret and implies that Orr's girl had told Nately's whore, "Orr grinned like a gargoyle. 'No she didn't'" (321). Orr and the woman continue to display a rapport which is a confusing mixture of contempt and good-natured kidding, but "[t]he girl wouldn't tell Nately's whore or any of the other whores or Nately or Yossarian" (26) what happened between her and Orr. It is perhaps only to be speculated that this communion is based on a mutual respect and a creative understanding.

Orr, though, does not simply write off those who do not understand him. He continues to attempt to help Yossarian, to attempt to make Yossarian understand, even though Yossarian cannot commune on a level with Orr's world view. In fact, Orr's actions affirm responsibility even for those around him who do not understand him. For instance, Orr looks out for Yossarian's welfare. Orr makes sure that the tent that he and Yossarian share is "the most luxurious tent

in the squadron" (18). Orr has provided them with running water, a wood-burning fireplace, and cement floor (18). It becomes obvious that Orr is not merely doing all this work for himself when he has a conversation with Yossarian while he is working on the stove valve. Orr begins giving Yossarian instructions on how to get along without him.

He says,

I'd like to get this all finished for you while there is still time. You'll have the best stove in this squadron when I'm through. It will burn all night with this feed control I'm fixing, and these metal plates will radiate the heat all over the tent. If you leave a helmet full of water on this thing when you go to sleep, you'll have warm water to wash with all ready for you when you wake up. Won't that be nice? If you want to cook eggs or soup, all you have to do is set the pot down here and turn the fire up. (320)

Orr seems genuinely concerned with Yossarian's welfare. He wants to save Yossarian by inviting Yossarian to fly with him. However, because Yossarian cannot take the imaginative leap necessary to understand Orr, he will not fly with Orr. So, Orr does what he can to make Yossarian's life more comfortable.

Orr is able to be responsible for others because of his understanding of "time." By examining the value object

"time" in relation to Orr's character, it becomes apparent that Orr's "moral" world view includes a special understanding of "time." Rather than viewing time as uncontrollable and fearful, Orr's character demonstrates the ability to conceive of time as a tool to shape the future. Each of Tanner's four questions about "time" reveals this same attitude:

1. "What meaning does history have?"
2. "What bearing does the past have on the present?"
3. "What should a person's attitude be toward the future?"
4. "How is the present moment to be valued in relation to past and future?" (288)

While the last two "time" questions involve the future, the first two are concerned essentially with the relation of past to present. The world view represented by Orr's character affirms that one's past does have an impact on one's present moment. Orr does not embrace the idea of immediate gratification of wants and desires but of forestalling immediate gratification. Orr has developed over the years "apple cheeks" and strong hands. He was not born with these physical characteristics, nor are they characteristics he was able to develop overnight. The message in Orr's riddle about apple cheeks is not that one needs apple cheeks in order to survive but that one must be

able to set goals and work steadily toward those goals in order to achieve them. Such an attitude toward "time" shows that Orr's world view includes the value of discipline.

The past (a record of successful behaviour) is validated by anticipated results in the present. This pattern encourages present sacrifice for the future. Orr believes in a world in which the individual has some power to shape his or her future. This attitude is perhaps best displayed in Orr's manner of embracing combat missions.

While stationed at Pianosa, Orr only flies a total of nineteen missions including the one on which he disappears, and he is shot down on almost every flight (320). Orr, however, is not frightened by his "luck": "Oh, I don't mind flying missions. I guess they're lots of fun" (320). Orr does not view flying missions as another "chance" of being shot down and killed, does not simply await his "fate," but rather he embraces each combat mission as an "opportunity" to be shot down and to practice ditching his plane. As Orr says of himself, "I'm just about the best pilot around when it comes to ditching or making crash landings" (321). Orr, then, does not practice evasive actions because he knows that such actions will not help him in the inevitable event that he is shot down, inevitable because Colonel Cathcart will continue raising the number of missions. On the other hand, Orr understands that ditching and crash landing will help. So, instead of merely waiting for something to

happen, letting time rule him, Orr embraces his own free will and rules time by using it effectively to prepare for his future.

Orr's understanding of "society" builds on his understanding of "time." By examining the value object "society," it is evident that Orr's world view includes two traits: 1) an understanding that even the smallest, seemingly unimportant individuals in society are important and 2) an ability to work effectively. In examining "society" it is important to ask three questions:

1. "What is or should be the notion of human community?"
2. "What is or should be the relationship between individual and society?"
3. "Is social reform possible or desirable [and,] if so, on what grounds?" (288)

For Orr, the notion of human community and the relationship between individual and society are closely connected. Orr's world view seems to embrace a strong notion of equality. When Yossarian comes in to his tent and finds Orr tinkering with the stove he says,

I can't watch you. . . . If you want to work on something big, that's okay. But that valve is filled with tiny parts, and I just haven't got the patience right now to watch you working so hard over things that are so goddam small and

unimportant. (319)

Orr's only response is to say, "Just because they're small doesn't mean they're unimportant." This statement exemplifies Orr's attitude toward the individual's relationship to society. Orr, himself, is one of the smallest men in the squadron, but he does not see himself as unimportant. He recognizes the importance of the small individual within the large society, and he recognizes the important effects that every small action has on the society as a whole. One of Orr's contributions to society is that his attitudes and actions have the potential to give others hope.

Orr's attitude toward the seemingly small and unimportant also informs the idea that social reform is possible. Social reform is possible by breaking a problem into its smaller component parts. By doing so, the problem no longer seems formidable and may be addressed incrementally. This ability to work with small issues requires both patience and discipline. Orr illustrates this ability while working with the stove valve. He disassembles the valve into its thirty-seven minute parts and begins reassembling them with a meticulous and methodical attitude (322). He does not attempt to tackle the problem as a whole but piece by piece. Orr's disappearance and subsequent appearance in Sweden seems to have been accomplished, not by worrying about the impossibility of making it to Sweden, but

by embracing the possibilities of catching cod and eating it raw, of using a little blue oar to move nine hundred pounds in a raft, and by navigating with a small compass and waterproof map (317-18). Orr represents a world view which affirms the importance of small "unimportant" things. He also represents an ability to work effectively by breaking problems down into more manageable goals.

Orr's responses to the value objects "self," "other minds," "time," and "society" demonstrate that Orr's world view affirms six basic values:

1. The world view must embrace the imagination.
2. It must be life-affirming.
3. It must be other-centered rather than self-centered.
4. It must include an understanding of time as tool to shape life (to that end one must be disciplined).
5. It must include an understanding of every individual being important to society.
6. It must include an ability to work effectively.

Orr's understanding that a person's past actions gives life meaning allows Orr to discipline himself in order to continue to strive for meaning. In Orr's case, the meaning is wrapped in the riddles of his "apple cheeks" and the whore hitting him on the head with a shoe. More importantly, though, Orr understands that one's present

moment may be used as a tool to shape one's future, to give one's future meaning. He recognizes that one small individual can make a difference and that there is a possibility for social reform. Orr is once again embracing the imagination by imagining a future which is different, is better somehow, than the present.

Orr is, then, a moral character. As a result, his words and actions can serve as a standard to evaluate Yossarian, the novel's protagonist. Yossarian's world view is much different than Orr's. Yossarian is in the middle of a moral crisis when the novel opens. Yossarian has already flown the mission over Avignon, experienced Snowden's death, and internalized the negative interpretation of Snowden's secret. By the end of the novel, Yossarian has changed his moral vision. In determining Yossarian's growth it is necessary to apply Tanner's value objects to his negative world view and then his positive world view, his moral convergence with Orr's world view.

The "self" object, when applied to Orr, identifies Orr's world view as both embracing the imagination and being life-affirming. Yossarian's initial world view, while at times embracing the imagination, is not life-affirming. The view that "[t]he spirit gone, man is garbage" taints even Yossarian's imagination. Yossarian does not take responsibility for his actions when he gets Kraft and his crew killed by taking them over the bridge at Ferrara a

second time (142). Instead, he misuses his imagination to avoid taking responsibility by thinking up and suggesting the idea that they give him a medal. Yossarian also comes up with imaginative ways of avoiding the mission to Bologna. He moves the bomb line (114), has Corporal Snark put soap in the sweet potatoes, invents the story of the Lepage glue gun (128), and yanks out the intercom wires in the plane so that they have to turn back (145). Each of these imaginative acts does nothing to help him address the problem of not wanting to be required to fly more missions. Unlike Orr, Yossarian is preoccupied with marginal issues and therefore tends to avoid responsibility.

Yossarian goes further in his attempts to avoid responsibility by going to several different people to have himself taken off of combat status. In each of these situations, he does not take responsibility for his own welfare but puts his "fate" in the hands of others. He asks Doc Daneeka to help and Doc Daneeka explains catch-22 to Yossarian for the first time (22). He also tackles Major Major Major who offers to let him fly only milk runs (106). Yossarian does not accept Major Major Major's offer because he will not settle for anything other than not fighting the war any longer. He expects to be sent back to the states by the group psychiatrist. However, the psychiatrist sends A. Fortiori back because of Yossarian's own misguided creativity (312). Finally, Yossarian expects that Colonel

Cathcart and Colonel Korn can be relied upon to be responsible for his welfare when they offer to make a deal with him. He expects that they will take care of him. However, he finds that Cathcart and Korn also are not concerned about Yossarian's welfare and will make up reports about him that suit their purposes (452-53).

Yossarian does not accept responsibility for his own welfare and therefore does not even think of being responsible to others. Tanner's second value object is "other minds." Throughout most of the novel, Yossarian's relationship to "other minds" is self-centered. Yossarian does not seem to care what his relationship is with other individuals. When Clevinger says in the officer's club that Yossarian is crazy, Yossarian calmly explains to him that "they" are trying to kill him. Despite the fact that all the men are in the war, Yossarian only recognizes the fact that people are shooting at him. He is not fazed at all by Clevinger's comment, "They're trying to kill everyone." Yossarian simply replies, "And what difference does that make?" (17). Yossarian is unable to understand the world in terms of what is happening to others.

Clevinger and Yossarian repeat the same argument only a few pages later in reference to the first time the entire squadron is poisoned by Corporal Snark. The result is the same. When Clevinger reminds Yossarian that he was not the only person poisoned, Yossarian replies, "And what

difference does that make?" At this point, though, Yossarian continues to explain to Clevinger that "[a]s far back as [he] could recall," people had been trying to kill him (20).

Furthermore, Yossarian defines his world by himself. He only identifies two different types of people: "people who cared for him and people who didn't" (20). He goes on to identify himself as Tarzan, Mandrake, Flash Gordon, Cain, Ulysses, the Flying Dutchman, Lot, Deirdre, "Sweeney in the nightingales among the trees," and "miracle ingredient Z-247," each being agents that act alone and are set apart from typical life. At the end of Yossarian's list he states that he is "a bona fide supraman." Yossarian does not let Clevinger, who thinks he said "superman," misunderstand him. He says it again, emphasizing his point, "Supraman" (20). Yossarian suggests that his life is more important than the lives of any of the other men in the squadron. Yossarian's life should be important to him. What he does not seem to recognize, however, is that with his importance comes responsibility to "other minds."

Yossarian's irresponsibility in his relationships with others can be seen in his relationship with the chaplain. Yossarian fell in love with the chaplain the first time he saw him (7) and the chaplain enjoyed being around Yossarian and Dunbar more than anyone else, especially when they were at the officer's club (276). Despite their mutual feelings

of friendship, Yossarian endangers the chaplain by signing the chaplain's name to one of the letters he censors while in the hospital (8). Yossarian does not show any responsibility toward the man he has just met. The chaplain, on the other hand, recognizes Yossarian's handwriting on the letter while being interrogated but does not tell his interrogators that it is Yossarian's handwriting (391).

In addition, it is evident that although Yossarian is constantly "falling in love" with different women, he does not recognize any obligation to these women. Yossarian's attitude, for example, is obvious in his treatment of Luciana whom he meets in Rome and to whom he proposes marriage (163-64). She tells Yossarian that she will not give him her name and address because he will tear it up as soon as she leaves. Yossarian protests, but:

The minute she was gone, Yossarian tore the slip of paper up and walked away in the other direction, feeling very much like a big shot because a beautiful young girl like Luciana had slept with him and did not ask for money. He was pretty pleased with himself. . . . (167)

Yossarian even has trouble accepting responsibility for the crew of Kraft's plane. The entire crew is killed when Yossarian takes his plane over the bridge at Ferrara a second time, but as when Yossarian lands and walks into the

briefing room he acknowledges that he is:

. . . uncertain how he was supposed to feel about Kraft and the others, for they had all died in the distance of a mute and secluded agony at a moment when he was up to his own ass in the same vile, excruciating dilemma of duty and damnation. (141)

Ironically, Yossarian cites "duty," which implies some type of responsibility, as one of the factors which caused him to make a decision which got his friends killed. This responsibility is misguided, so misguided that he suggests they give him a medal for the mission (142). Clearly, Yossarian's misunderstanding of the relationships between individuals does not allow Yossarian to be other-centered.

At times, Yossarian seems to exhibit concern for other characters, but when it comes to a crisis Yossarian reverts back to his self-centered attitude. When Yossarian decides that he is not going to fly any more missions, people begin "popping up at him out of the darkness" to express concern for him and wish him good luck, but Yossarian realizes that his relationship with these people is different in the light from his relationship with them in the dark, and Yossarian "did not care about them at all as he walked around backwards with his hand on his gun. . ." (412). When under pressure, Yossarian simply does not care about anyone but himself.

Later in the novel, Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn

offer Yossarian a deal. They will send him home if he promises to "[s]ay nice things" about them both in Pianosa and back in the United States (436). Yossarian understands that accepting the offer would be a "scummy trick" on the rest of squadron, but he accepts it anyway with the justification, "There's no reason I have to risk my life for them, is there?" (437-38).

Yossarian is able to continue denying responsibility for himself and others because of his understanding of "time." Yossarian's understanding of "time" prevents him from being able to make moral decisions. Yossarian does not understand time as a tool to shape one's future. Instead, he seems to see time as an unstoppable force which carries his "fate" closer each minute. This understanding allows Yossarian to deny his own free will and to devalue his "self."

This attitude toward time can be seen in the actions which Yossarian takes to forestall his flying the mission to Bologna. Clevinger points out that everyone's fascination with the bomb line is "a complete reversion to primitive superstition. They're confusing cause and effect." Yossarian takes part in the confusion by tiptoeing out at night and moving the bomb line (122-23). With this action, Yossarian illustrates that he has no understanding of how to take actions which will serve some meaningful end. His actions do not prepare him for the future. They only stall

his immediate future momentarily.

Yossarian's attitude toward time seems to be a long held belief and influences his decision to go into the hospital for the first time. His attitude allows him to accept the English intern's advice that a liver ailment is better to fake than anything with the appendix because the liver is a "large ugly mystery" (181). While Yossarian is in the hospital, he misuses his imagination again to avoid responsibility by imitating the patient that "see[s] everything twice" (185) and then by acquiescing to the doctor's wishes that he play the dying soldier, Guiseppe.

Yossarian's view of time also prevents him from taking any long-range actions, prevents him from planning for his future. One of his few attempts to control his future occurs when he volunteers for cadet training which he thinks will keep him out of the war long enough that it will be over before he has completed training. However, even in this situation, Yossarian's foresight fails because he fails to prepare himself for the possibility that the war might not be over when he gets out of cadet training (74).

Because of Yossarian's morally deficient understanding of time, he is unable to understand adequately the relationship of the individual to society. Throughout the novel, Yossarian has experiences which typify his view that nothing can be done in the face of society's power over the individual. Again Yossarian is confusing cause and effect

and not recognizing that the individual has a responsibility to society and vice versa.

Consequently, Yossarian is unable to take effective action to remedy his situation. He is unable to accomplish anything but meaningless acts of rebellion until he learns the individual's relationship to society. Yossarian's view of society is identified by the old woman in Rome who says, "Catch-22 says they have the right to do anything we can't stop them from doing" (416). Catch-22 works because Yossarian, like so many in the novel, believes the world should meet his expectations, expects others to solve his problems for him, and accepts the idea that he can do nothing to change things for himself.

This attitude is symbolized by the second run to Bologna which turns out to be not a milk run. Yossarian keeps taking evasive action but cannot get out of the barrage of flak. When he turns around, Aarfy is blocking his only escape route. Symbolically, Aarfy represents the world view to which Yossarian has subscribed--a world view in which there is no imagination, no change, just an immovable mass. Aarfy is much like the society with which Yossarian is at odds, the military bureaucracy which is preventing Yossarian from leaving the war. All of Yossarian's punching and resistance does nothing to help change his circumstances. Yossarian cannot proceed through the moral door of decision because his world view prevents

him from proceeding. Interestingly, Orr, who has only the day before been on holiday in Rome, suddenly appears in formation (155-56). Orr is crash landing, demonstrating the attitude which could free Yossarian from his paralysis of inaction.

Yossarian's understanding of "society" also denies the possibility for social reform. He is unable to break a problem down into its component parts and approach them systematically. Yossarian's inability to approach problems in such a manner makes it difficult for him even to watch Orr doing so. Yossarian says,

You're a happy imbecile and you don't know what it means to feel the way I do. Things happen to me when you work over small things that I can't even begin to explain. I find out that I can't stand you. I start to hate you, and I'm soon thinking seriously about busting this bottle down on your head or stabbing you in the neck with that hunting knife there. (319)

Not only is Yossarian unable to break problems down into smaller more manageable components, he is also unable to watch someone who can. Because Yossarian refuses to learn, he is unable to work effectively in his society for any type of social reform.

Orr's effective use of his imagination, his ability to accept challenges and responsibility to himself and others,

his understanding of the use of time, and his understanding of the individual's relationship to society are all indictments of Yossarian's attitudes and values--Yossarian's world view. Yossarian misuses his imagination. He does not accept responsibility for himself or others and therefore his world view is neither life-affirming nor other-centered. He is not disciplined and tends to misunderstand "time." He does not recognize the importance of the seemingly "inconsequential." And, he simply cannot work effectively. Clearly, Yossarian is morally deficient in comparison with Orr. In fact, on a weekly milk run to Parma, Yossarian receives a wound which symbolizes of his moral deficiency.

The scene in which Yossarian is wounded takes place in chapter twenty-six which begins "In a way it was all Yossarian's fault . . ." (294) and with a sentence which bears a reminder of "the day Kraft was shot down and killed" (296). Yossarian has not taken responsibility for his actions and is still willing to continue to drop his bombs on the "undefended inland target." A piece of flak catches him in the leg and Yossarian immediately thinks that he has been castrated (296). The wound is symbolic of Yossarian's moral deficiency because just as he thinks he has been castrated (lost his will), he also does not think he has free will. Yossarian has not been castrated and he does possess free will. The wound, then, becomes the symbol of Yossarian's moral deficiency, his ignorance of his moral

potential. The moral deficiency is not that Yossarian is castrated, has no free will; it is that he is behaving as if he has no free will. He is perpetually stuck in Hamlet's "To be, or not to be."

Orr seems to appear in the novel every time Yossarian acts immorally. This juxtaposition of world views creates a cognitive dissonance on the part of Yossarian and may even explain Yossarian's aversion to watching Orr take apart the stove valve. When Orr takes it apart, Yossarian's morality is being judged. Heller illustrates how extreme a person's reaction to a moral standard might be when Yossarian considers killing Orr: "Just the daintiest stick there [with a hunting knife] would kill him and solve so many serious, agonizing problems for them both" (323). There are serious and agonizing problems for them because each character is faced with making moral decisions. As long as Yossarian must acknowledge Orr's existence, he must acknowledge a moral alternative to his actions. In fact, it is at precisely the point when Yossarian is considering how to murder Orr that Orr turns to him and asks, "Does it still hurt?" The question catches Yossarian off guard and Orr has to explain that he is referring to Yossarian's thigh wound because Yossarian is still limping a little.

Orr calls attention to Yossarian's limp, a sign of Yossarian's moral deficiency. Because Orr represents the moral standard, he is able to render a moral judgement of

Yossarian simply by calling attention to Yossarian's limp. In doing so, he is also able to call Yossarian back to a consciousness of acting morally.

Yossarian could have killed Orr, could have denied a moral alternative. By closing the door on that alternative, Yossarian probably would have possessed a symbolic limp for the rest of his life. Yossarian, though, does not shut that door, and when Orr "disappears," Yossarian has the opportunity to recreate his moral vision.

At the end of the novel, Yossarian accepts responsibility for his own welfare, saying, "I've been fighting all along to save my country. Now I'm going to fight a little to save myself" (455). He has come to a point where he is willing to accept such responsibility. However, he is unable to engage his imagination in order to understand how to go about fulfilling that responsibility.

Yossarian's understanding of his relationship to "other minds" also begins to change after Orr disappears. He begins to understand an idea of communion, and he begins to recognize his responsibility to other people.

Yossarian begins to understand his responsibility to others when he heads to Rome after Captain Black tells Yossarian that the whores have all been "flushed" into the street (413). He realizes "Someone had to do something sometime. Every victim was a culprit, a culprit a victim, and somebody had to stand up sometime to try to break the lousy chain of

inherited habit that was imperiling them all" (414). Even with such a realization, though, Yossarian still accepts the deal that Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn offer him. He still allows himself to play a "scummy trick" on the rest of his squadron.

Immediately after his acceptance of the deal, Yossarian is stabbed by Nately's whore, a character Nedra Grogan sees as symbolic of Yossarian's conscience (98). The stabbing is important because it necessitates the operation which provides Yossarian the freedom and psychic distance to recall Snowden's death in coherent detail for the first time in the novel. Once Yossarian deals with Snowden's death he is able to come to terms with his cynicism and to recognize that Snowden's secret does not necessarily have to be interpreted pessimistically. Yossarian is able to recognize the importance of retaining one's spirit. When Major Danby tries to explain to Yossarian why he should go along with Cathcart and Korn's offer, Yossarian replies, "Goddammit, Danby! I've got friends who were killed in this war. I can't make a deal now . . ." (457). Yossarian even suggests that his whole reason for deserting may not be that selfish because "[t]here's a young kid in Rome" whose life he is planning on saving. Yossarian has not only begun to take responsibility for himself, but he is recognizing his responsibility to those around him, recognizing that he would not be responsible to himself if he did not accept

responsibility for those around him. In this way, Yossarian has begun his moral convergence with the world view represented by Orr.

After Orr disappears, Yossarian begins to realize the problems with his conception of "time." Yossarian explains to Major Danby the "catch-22" of living like a vegetable: if you are good they cut you up and eat you, and if you are bad they let you rot and use you for fertilizer. The only way to defeat it is not to be a vegetable (456). He understands the problem intellectually and yet cannot act because he thinks that action is useless.

The only part of Yossarian's world view which does not change after Orr disappears is his understanding of "society." Yossarian's ability to act hinges on a change in the understanding of this value object, because in the "moral" world view Orr represents, the responses to all the value objects are interdependent. Yossarian has not internalized all of Orr's values. So, in the final chapter of Catch-22, Yossarian and Danby conclude, before Orr's secret is revealed, that there is no hope for them in their society:

and there was no hope at all for either of them until footsteps exploded in the corridor suddenly and the chaplain, shouting at the top of his voice, came bursting into the room with the electrifying news about Orr. . . . (458)

When Yossarian hears that Orr has "washed" ashore in Sweden, he understands that there is hope. His understanding of Orr's world view is complete. He sees actual evidence that even the most "inconsequential" person (Orr) can make a difference.

This understanding affects his understanding of the other value objects. He finally understands Orr's riddles about his apple cheeks and the whore hitting Orr on the head in Rome (459-460). He can engage his imagination to see Orr's message and therefore can engage his imagination and begin to fulfill his responsibility to himself. He recognizes that Orr "planned it that way from the beginning" (459). Once he sees there is hope, Yossarian is ready to act and does so by making the best of his present moment, by making time work for him. Yossarian acts by running away, and he does not waste time in getting started. Yossarian's attitude has changed by the end of the novel because he has recognized that there is a possibility to change one's circumstances. He has realized that there is hope, that small individuals do have power.

When Yossarian understands the world view that Orr represents, it frees him from Catch-22 and allows him to take action. It is not until Yossarian substitutes Orr's secret for Snowden's secret that he is able to act. Orr's secret, that there is hope, helps Yossarian begin to formulate his own vision for taking action. He recognizes

that he creates his own value. Yossarian synthesizes his understanding with Orr's, understands the six values Orr represents, and goes beyond them. This moral convergence creates Heller's moral vision for the novel.

While flying with Orr to Rome to find out what has happened to the whores who were "[f]lushed right out into the street" (413), Yossarian realizes that he is responsible:

Yossarian thought he knew why Nately's whore held him responsible for Nately's death and wanted to kill him. . . . [S]omebody had to stand up sometime to try to break the lousy chain of inherited habit that was imperiling them all. (414)

To go beyond the values Orr represents, Yossarian must not simply stop doing bad but must also start doing good. Yossarian sees McWatt take responsibility for the death of Kid Sampson by killing himself (349). This, however, is not a positive way of taking responsibility because it accomplishes nothing for the future. Yossarian does, though, see his roommates take positive action when they simply take outside the things belonging to the dead man in Yossarian's tent, Mudd, and dump them in the bushes, stunning Yossarian with their "practical, direct efficiency" (359-60).

These first two values that Yossarian has learned are

what he brings to the moral convergence and hence the moral vision of the novel. One has to accept responsibility and stop doing bad, and one has to start doing good. Yossarian embodies this attitude not only by deserting but also by going after Nately's whore's little sister in order to save her.

Related to these values is Yossarian's understanding that he can no longer be self-centered; he must be other-centered. He recognizes that in order to be responsible to himself he must first be responsible to others. This is actually a reversal of the idea that Polonius states in Hamlet, that in order to be responsible to others, one must first be responsible to himself. Yossarian tries to be responsible to himself first by accepting the deal offered by Cathcart and Korn, but he is plagued by the man who says "We've got your pal, buddy. We've got your pal" (442). Yossarian's realization that they have all his pals (445) helps him understand that he cannot be responsible to himself until he is responsible to others, an attitude that was exemplified in Orr who took care of Yossarian's needs before he took care of his own.

Another one of the values Yossarian learns from Orr is the value of small, seemingly unimportant concerns. Yossarian realizes that he may not be able to do anything to stop Cathcart and Korn or any of the other members of the military bureaucracy except run away and embarrass them

(462). He knows that he cannot, by himself, change the entire world but he can focus on one specific part of that world, Natley's whore's little sister. His realization in the Eternal City that perhaps the only people in the world who had a chance at being good were "the children, and perhaps . . . Albert Einstein and an old violinist or sculptor somewhere" (422) causes him to begin creating his world by helping one specific child. Yossarian and his action may seem small and unimportant in relation to the war, but he and his actions are the only things that give his life value.

The fifth value which Yossarian seems to learn from Orr is that one cannot expect the world to change to accommodate one's wishes; a person must be willing to adapt to his/her situation and rise to meet the challenge. The Japanese have two words for optimism: Rakutenteki, which describes an optimism one has when one has no responsibilities, "a faith in a world in which all problems are solved, taken care of" and Rakkanteki, optimistic that one will have "enough challenges to give life meaning" (Schwartz 79). Yossarian realizes he must reject Rakutenteki--he cannot rely on Major Major, Doc Daneeka, or anyone else to solve his problems--and must embrace Rakkanteki. He does. Just as Yossarian is taking off at the end of the novel, Danby asks

him how he feels and Yossarian tells him he is frightened (463). Danby says that it is good because it proves he's still alive and then says to Yossarian, "It won't be fun" and Yossarian replies, "Yes it will" (463). It will be fun because Yossarian is optimistic that there will be enough challenges to give his life meaning. He knows that he will have to "keep on [his] toes every minute of every day" (463) but in doing so he will know he is alive, and he will be giving his life meaning.

The moral vision for the novel, then, is that a person has to take responsibility for his or her actions and must then take some sort of positive action. This moral vision is evident at the end of Catch-22 when Yossarian finally understands what Orr had been trying to tell him. However, because Yossarian cannot understand Orr's message earlier, he finds himself in a moral crisis.

Catch-22 is Joseph Heller's first attempt at defining a moral vision. Once Yossarian understands his moral problem, he makes accepting responsibility look easy. In Yossarian's surreal world, a moral agent merely sets his or her goals high (Sweden) and runs out to help someone else. Such a moral hypothesis is palpable to most readers; however, it risks being adopted merely as a moral platitude. Therefore, Heller must continue exploring the moral values he presents and the human weaknesses which prevent people from adopting such values.

In Catch-22, Heller raises the possibility of a character denying a "moral" alternative when Yossarian considers killing Orr. Heller, then, must explore the possibility of a protagonist rejecting the "moral standard" character. In Something Happened Heller presents such a protagonist with an exaggerated limp, a character who never reaches his moral convergence.

Chapter 3

Something Happened: Slocum's Moral Failure

"History is to blame."

--Mr Deasy in

James Joyce's Ulysses

At one point in chapter three of Something Happened, Bob Slocum, the novel's protagonist says "It was after the war, I think, that the struggle really began" (78).

Ironically, this line accurately describes the struggle a moral critic might have with Something Happened. If Catch-22, a war novel, is morally problematic, Something Happened, a novel about a man caught up in corporate America, is even more so.

Booth expresses a concern for novels such as Catch-22 which, told from the third person perspective, employ an "impersonal narrator" and become morally confusing. Something Happened uses a first person narrator and is even more "morally confusing" because the protagonist-narrator affirms a world view which seems immoral. Something Happened presents a world which is less surreal than that of Catch-22, and in which the moral decisions seem much more complicated. Heller is still exploring the issues of responsibility and free will, but he has brought them home from the war to the family and job in a way which makes the reader uncomfortable.

Most critics seem to agree that the novel is a stark

portrait of contemporary life. Kurt Vonnegut has said that the protagonist, Bob Slocum, is "morally repellent and socially useless" (96). Joseph Epstein's description of the novel is to say, "Nothing happens in Something Happened" (100) and Thomas LeClair adds that the most important accomplishment for the novel is "demonstrating the ultimate futility of quantitative and causal thinking" (115).

The complication for Bob Slocum is a recasting of Yossarian's predicament in Catch-22. This time it's not an offer to fly milk runs or be sent home, but a chance to move up the corporate ladder, a promotion. This time the protagonist isn't faced with playing "a scummy trick" on the rest of the men but on one man in particular. In the company in which he works, Slocum has one friend, Andy Kagle, who is the head of the sales department. When Slocum hears that Arthur Baron, the head of everyone in Slocum's division, wants to see him, Kagle asks Slocum to come immediately and tell him if Baron says anything about Kagle being fired (502). Slocum does not confide in Kagle, however, because when Slocum meets with Baron, he finds out that he, Slocum, is being offered Kagle's job (504). Throughout the remainder of the novel Slocum justifies the decision he eventually makes--to take Kagle's job (505).

In determining whether or not Slocum makes a moral decision in taking Kagle's job, it is necessary to decide whether Slocum is being honest with himself and the reader

when he implies that he had no choice. Susan Strehle argues that the pessimism of Something Happened is due to Slocum's "deterministic belief that man is the helpless and irresponsible pawn of fate" (107).

At the end of Catch-22, Yossarian affirms a moral vision because he recognizes he has free will and that there is hope. If Strehle is correct in her interpretation of Something Happened, Slocum represents an inversion of Yossarian because he does not recognize free will and therefore washes his hands of the responsibility to make moral decisions.

The moral critic, then, must determine if, in fact, the world that Heller has created for his second novel is deterministic or merely appears to be deterministic. The moral critic must consider whether the characters possess the three characteristics which allow a character to act morally: free will, the ability to examine the world, and the ability to create his or her own world view in response to the examined world. If the world Heller has created is deterministic, then the character cannot exercise free will and therefore cannot be held responsible for making moral decisions.

The fictional world of Something Happened is not deterministic. The proposition can be established in two ways: 1) by examining the novel's moral standard, Slocum's little boy, and 2) by examining Heller's structure which

denies causality and thus determinism.

Slocum's insistence that the world is deterministic is, then, merely an excuse to justify his actions which are believed to be immoral. Since Slocum is the narrator of the novel and is not a reliable source for determining the individual's relationship to the world, it is necessary to remember that Heller used a character, Orr, to be the novel's moral standard in Catch-22. Strehle suggests that in Something Happened Slocum's nine-year-old boy serves as an existential alternative to Slocum's determinism (110). As a result, the boy may represent the novel's moral standard. In Catch-22, Yossarian has already made his decision not to take Cathcart and Korn's offer, but it is not until Yossarian hears the news of Orr's reaching Sweden that the novel is able to reach resolution. Orr becomes the catalyst, providing the moral understanding Yossarian needs to act. Similarly, Slocum has already taken Kagle's job when he "accidentally" kills his son. This incident seems to be the catalyst for the resolution in which Slocum "takes charge." After Orr and Slocum's little boy "disappear" from their respective texts, the protagonists are free to act. Slocum's little boy, like Orr, plays a key role in the resolution of the novel and is therefore the moral standard.

However, there are certainly problems if Slocum's nine-year-old boy represents the moral standard for the novel. First, the boy probably does not have a fully

to allow an optimistic moral view. As Slocum says,

He cannot understand why wars, muggings, bees, math, spiders, basketball, rope climbing, nausea, ferocious, menacing men (real and deduced), and public speaking all have to be there for him to contend with. . . . (218)

At times he even gets to the point where he wants to shirk responsibility. For instance, he decides for a time that he will not go to gym class, and Slocum helps him avoid the "responsibility" by going to talk with his gym instructor. This avoidance only lasts for awhile and then the boy joins the others in gym and learns how to play well (233-234).

In fact, the boy is more optimistic than he initially seems. Despite the boy's constant "thinking," Slocum acknowledges that "[i]t is like pulling teeth from him sometimes to get him to complain" (212). His sister even states, "Nobody is that good all the time" (212). He may not like the situations with which he is faced and occasionally wants to shirk his responsibilities, but he usually does not complain and always attempts to "manage," even though he doesn't know what the word means (237).

Another part of the boy's relationship to "self" is his ability to use his imagination. Slocum says that the boy "has wit and a talent for imaginative tricks" (209). He demonstrates this talent for his father when he explains why he gives money away to other children:

"And whenever I feel happy," he continues, "I like to give something away. Is that all right?"

"Sure . . . Why were you happy?"

"Now it gets a little crazy. . . . Because I knew I was going to give it away." He pauses a moment to giggle nervously. "To tease you," he admits. "Then when I knew I was happy about that, I wanted to give the nickel away because I was happy about wanting to give the nickel away."

(281-282)

As Strehle notes, the reasoning is circular (111), but it is sound because the boy is doing something "good." The argument even sounds as if it has been created by Orr from Catch-22. The boy's world view is optimistic both in its perspective and in the fact that the boy is accepting responsibility for his own emotional welfare.

However, the importance of the boy's argument lies only in showing that the boy is optimistic, but in showing that he can use his imagination effectively. It is not merely an "imaginative trick," but it is an affirmation of the ability to create a world view. It takes an imaginative leap in order to put one's self into such a perspective. Because the argument is circular, there is no way to get into the perspective logically; it must be done through the imagination. The boy affirms the idea that a person creates meaning for his or her life.

Immediately following his explanation for why he gives away pennies and nickels, the boy gives another example of this circular reasoning by saying, "Sometimes I feel like laughing for no reason at all. Then I feel like laughing just because I know I feel like laughing" (282). He is demonstrating a way of choosing his perspective, of taking responsibility for creating his perspective. This imaginative leap allows the boy to take himself, and those around him, out of the Slocum's perspective of a world in "decline" (61).

The boy's imagination also helps him connect himself with Tanner's second value object, "other minds." His imagination allows him to be so connected with people that when he tickles them, he laughs. He is able to identify closely with people who are in trouble and is perhaps the reason he gives cookies and pennies away. The boy, as Slocum says, "knows what it is to long. (He longs along with them)" (320). The boy recognizes a very close connection to other minds and therefore recognizes a responsibility to others.

The boy's understanding of his responsibility to others and confusion about the way other people perceive such a relationship is evident in his experience in giving his cookie away. When another little boy comes by to play with Slocum's son, the son offers the little boy a cookie. When the little boy finishes that cookie he looks longingly at

the cookie Slocum's son is holding. When Slocum's son realizes the little boy's interest in the second cookie, he offers the second cookie to the little boy too, as Slocum describes:

The boy stiffens as though offended and pulls back with a look of hostility. Suddenly, to my own amazement, he is enraged and befuddled and shakes his head in vigorous resentment. (289)

The other little boy immediately mistrusts the Slocum's boy's generosity and accuses him of having had the cookie in his mouth, having dropped it on the floor, or having gotten it dirty. When the boy finally asks Slocum's boy why he does not want the cookie, the only response he gives is "Because you want it. Don't you? I had some" (289). The little boy becomes enraged to the point of violence at this response and shoves the cookie back across and off the table at which they are seated and then runs out of the house.

Slocum's boy senses a responsibility for satisfying not only the needs of those around him, but also for satisfying their wants. He wants others to be happy. This quality, much like Orr's, demonstrates that the boy is very other-centered in his concern for those around him.

Slocum's boy also attempts to relate to people on an equal basis. He never wants to be in a dominant-subordinate relationship with others. Forgione, the boy's gym teacher, says that he isn't competitive, that "[h]e doesn't try to

win" (220). In fact, when the boy is leading in a race, he starts laughing, slows down, and waits for the other kids to catch up "so they can all laugh together and run alongside each other as they continue their game (after all, it is only a game)" (221-22). Even when he is with his father, he attempts to adopt attitudes and manners that put he and his father on a level as equals (274). Not only is there a responsibility to others, but there is possibility of community. Therefore the boy is much like Orr in his affirmation of responsibility to "other minds" and in his use of the imagination to fulfill his responsibility.

The boy's relationship to the value object "time," although difficult to discern, also emphasizes the importance of responsibility. The boy often spends time worrying and thinking about his future. Yet, he comes to a point where he does not expect anyone to intervene on his behalf when he faces the challenges in his life. He simply believes that he will "manage," and does manage (273). Slocum acknowledges that his boy would probably manage better if he "were allowed to develop and do things his own way" (238). However, the boy is not allowed because adults, including Slocum, "order" him about. In deciding he will manage, the boy is accepting responsibility to face the challenges ahead of him. Like Orr, Slocum's boy understands that the individual is not a slave to time, that a person does not merely have to await his or her "fate," but can

prepare for the challenges ahead and "manage."

The boy's relationship to "society" is perhaps defined somewhat differently than that of Orr's. The boy exists in a world where he has to interact with only other children and with his own family. The boy's society is generally represented by his family because this is where he is most often described. Within this small society, the boy demonstrates the individual's relationship to the society as a whole in several ways. It is already obvious that the boy, like Orr, has an understanding of how small acts are important. He gives away cookies, pennies, and nickels when he thinks it will make others happy. These acts, individually, do not significantly alter his world, but the combined weight of all the individual acts does cause his family to acknowledge his example.

Just as Orr does in Catch-22, the boy's understanding of the individual's relationship to society affirms the importance of seemingly "inconsequential" individuals. Slocum says that even though he may not like them, "He [the son] is always saddened and disconcerted when one of our Black maids or white nurses leaves . . ." (215). Even though he admits that he's not sure he likes Derek, his retarded brother, and feels uncomfortable around Derek (256-57), he is still concerned that his parents may decide to get rid of Derek (215). In his view, any of these other individuals is important because they are at least as

important as he is. Should something happen to any of them, something would very likely happen to him as well.

Within his society, the boy also demonstrates that some sort of social reform is possible. The boy's successes are only fleeting, but he is able to bring his family back together again when they are fighting:

My boy is pleased with himself . . . at having transported us all to a spirit of warmth and generous good feeling from the savage rancor with which we had been smashing each other. . . . And that is the needful service performed for us so regularly and artlessly by this angelic little boy of mine . . . to draw us together again by . . . recalling to us the great need and capacity for affection each of us has hidden away very deep inside. . . . (151-52)

The boy, like Orr, perhaps even more than Orr, has a humanizing capacity, an ability to bring people to a realization that they can change their circumstances if only they would stop trying to hurt one another.

Slocum's boy represents a world view which embraces the imagination, is life-affirming in that he is willing to accept the challenges that face him, and is other-centered rather than self-centered. The boy's attitude toward time acknowledges that he must have the responsibility to face the challenges ahead of him. He also demonstrates that it

is possible to create one's own world view in response to the examined world, to choose to be happy and therefore do good. The boy affirms the individual's role within society and the individual's ability to make choices which bring people together rather than tearing them apart. These are all values which are also affirmed by Orr, the moral standard of Catch-22. They are values which are the moral standard for Something Happened. So, since Slocum's boy represents the moral standard of the novel, it is evident that characters in this world do have free will.

Heller's use of structure in the novel also argues against a deterministic point of view. Heller sets the reader up to believe that "something" must have happened to create the situation in which Slocum finds himself. Then, he allows Slocum to go on searching his own past for the inciting moment, the complication. There are hundreds of little possibilities which Slocum suggests. However, as the reader explores these possibilities, one after the other turn out to be a dead end. Heller repeatedly confounds the readers' expectations of there being a complication, rising action, climax, and resolution. In doing so, Heller is denying a common convention in the novel, a causal structure. Even the death of the boy seems spliced into the novel. The reader doesn't know why the boy was at the shopping center, why Slocum happened to be nearby but not with the boy, or how the accident happened. There seems to

be no causality to the events which take place in the novel, only justification from Slocum for why he does not take action. The structure of Something Happened, then, argues that one event does not cause another. The fact that the structure of the novel confirms the main principle of the "moral standard" character strongly supports the argument that Heller does not share his first-person narrator's deterministic world view.

Strehle has suggested that Slocum believes in a world that is ruled by determinism. I would also suggest that this deterministic world view is Slocum's way of avoiding responsibility for his actions and avoiding responsibility for taking action. By using Tanner's value objects and the values represented by Slocum's son to evaluate Slocum's world view, it is evident that his world view is very different from his boy's, Orr's and Yossarian's.

The divergence of world views is obvious when examining the value object "self." Slocum is a person who denies responsibility for anything. During an explanation of one of his anxiety dreams he parenthetically remarks, "(I haven't done anything)" (375). He perhaps means to deny that he deserves the anxiety he is enduring. However, the comment also betrays an anxiety he has because he never has taken any action, never on his own accord. Slocum denies responsibility even for his own habits. He claims it is not his fault that he now bites his fingernails. He began

biting his fingernails because he was told to do so by his classmates as part of a grade school insurrection (68-69). He claims he is not responsible for his handwriting. His handwriting came from Tom, his co-worker at the automobile casualty insurance company (69-70). Slocum not only denies responsibility for his "self" but he seems to deny a "self" altogether. Even when he tells his dream about the maid calling and telling him his boy is not breathing, Slocum admits that he knows just what he would do; he would "telephone the police in Connecticut and let them handle it" (322). The children are his responsibilities as a father, but he is more than willing to deny those responsibilities.

There are fleeting moments in the text when Slocum realizes he may create a responsible world view, and he recognizes his own culpability for not doing so. Slocum is capable of examining his world, especially when he must face his son and his son's willingness to accept responsibility. At these times, Slocum passes judgment on his "self." After a bitter fight with his wife and his son's attempt to accept responsibility for his father's anger, the boy tells his father, "You're the best daddy in the whole world" (316). Slocum realizes, though, that he is "the worst daddy in the whole world." Slocum says, "I broke my promise to him many times. He continued to love me anyway" (317). In a sentence between the recognition of being the "worst daddy" and the recognition of having broken his promise to his son

many times, Slocum relates that he has helped an old man across the road that day and that he has now decided that he may do it more often now that he knows he can. He knows he has volition and, therefore, the ability to begin creating a world view. These recognitions prompted by his son recall to him a capacity for being responsible and exercising free will. When Slocum recognizes the responsibility his son accepts even for Slocum's own anger, he recognizes his own moral deficiency. Slocum is a person who can examine his own world and therefore has the possibility to decide how to respond to his world. However, Slocum refuses to respond to his world by accepting responsibility. He insists that he has not done anything and refuses to accept responsibility for his habits.

Slocum's relationship with "other minds" also demonstrates an avoidance of responsibility. He is unwilling to take any responsibility for helping those around him. Slocum's family consists of his wife, his daughter, his boy, and Derek, his retarded son. A chapter is devoted to each of the four members of Slocum's family. However, Slocum's relationship with each of these members of his household seems much less than adequate. He is a philandering husband who shows no responsibility to his wife. He will not say "I love you" to her, and he will not tell her that he is sorry because she might think he is apologizing (180).

Slocum's relationship with his daughter is certainly not a relationship which exemplifies the ideal father-daughter relationship:

(All I have left is the power to cripple her.)
Where was the morality, duty, and good sense in trying to turn her into a kind of person I do not like and one that she was probably never able to become anyway? I know where it will end (and I do not like it. I do not like knowing it. But what can I do? Nothing. I know that much too). (166)

Slocum is able to recognize that his daughter is having problems but he is unwilling to do anything about those problems. He is neither willing to accept responsibility for her now, nor is he willing to accept responsibility for perhaps having contributed to her present state of mind.

Slocum has basically written off his children. He does not accept responsibility for the way that he acts toward his children: "Something happened to both my children that I cannot explain and cannot undo. I can't be good to them, it seems, even when I wanted to" (164). With his boy, it is so extreme that he has decided that the "sentence has been passed" (214) and states several times over the course of the novel that he is going to lose his boy (173, 179, 364, 381).

Because Slocum does not accept any responsibility toward those around him, the nature of his relationships is

typically dominant-subordinate. He says that he "owns" his family (376). In many cases he even expresses violent urges. He often wants to kick his daughter in the leg (102). His urge to kick comes out even more often in his relationship with Kagle:

(For a moment, I have an impulse to seize his shirt front furiously in both fists and begin shaking some sense into him; and at exactly the same time, I have another impulse to kick him as hard as I can in the ankle or shin of his crippled leg.) (57)

Even for his own son with whom he has his best relationship, he feels a rage and a violent impulse to do him harm. When he sees his boy frozen in fear at the day camp to which they send him, he acknowledges that he wanted to "murder" him (295). When his boy gets lost on the beach and is frozen in fear, Slocum says that his first impulse "was to kill him" (315).

Slocum is certainly not other-centered. In fact, he is violently self-centered. He admits that he has friends, but he has no close friends (410); he is unable to recognize that he is obliged to show some responsibility to those around him. He has responsibilities as a husband, father, and friend and he avoids all of them because his family "became what they were; if I had to imagine them better they would be no different" (377). Slocum cannot imagine them

better because he uses his imagination irresponsibly. He says that his imagination "is infinitely more sophisticated and convoluted" than his boy's imagination (231). Rather than using his imagination to help better his circumstances, Slocum imagines murders, dismemberments, perverts, "strange, fierce scowling men," and torture. Whereas the boy takes imaginative leaps into laughter and happiness which in turn allow him to do good and become happier, Slocum misuses his imagination and does no good.

In short, Slocum is self-centered. He expresses himself in dominant-subordinate relationships and refuses to imagine himself into a perspective which would allow him to be other-centered. Instead, he simply denies responsibility to those around him.

Slocum's understanding of "time" also allows him to deny responsibility. His is, as Strehle suggests, a deterministic view of time. Such a perspective does not allow one to imagine things better because it views everything as having been set in motion at some indeterminate point in the past. Slocum's whole attitude is based in his comment at the beginning of the novel: "Something did happen to me somewhere that robbed me of my confidence and courage . . ." (6). The line is repeated throughout the book whenever Slocum needs a way to deny his responsibility.

When Slocum speaks of the problems his daughter will

face in the future he states his view of time directly: "It is not a matter of morals anymore, or even of decision; it is only a matter of time" (167). There can be no morality, there can be no free will, because there is only time and Slocum does not know how to use time: "All we really have is time. What we don't have is what to do with it" (337).

Slocum certainly does not use time as a tool. He is further back in this part of his moral development than even Yossarian is. It is an interesting notion of time to which Slocum adheres because it acknowledges that the present moment is dependent on the past. However, the future is dependent on the past as well, leaving no room for actions taken in the present to have any impact. The past has somehow sealed off any significant changes in variables and the future is only an impending doom. Slocum constantly refers to this notion by saying "the die is cast" (169), there was a "critical break" (190), and the "sentence has been passed" (214). He explains,

I cannot fight and nullify a whole culture, an environment, an epoch, a past (especially when it's my own past and environment as well as hers, and I myself am such a large part of hers), and I have made my own adjustment to them all so contemptibly. (166)

This attitude lends the exceptionally bleak cast to this novel's black humor. There is no hope after all.

Therefore, Slocum may take Kagle's job without guilt or regret because "[i]t is God's will" (505). Slocum affirms a deterministic view of "time" and uses it to justify his actions, perhaps because he does fear they are immoral decisions.

Such a view of "time" also affects the view of "society." Very early in the novel Slocum explains that there is no possible chance for social reform. Slocum toys with the idea of rebelling against his society, but his act of rebellion, to "spindle, fold, tear, deface, and mutilate" his paycheck, is imaginatively weak and "would be absorbed like rain on an ocean and leave no trace. I would not cause a ripple" (15). The rain on the ocean analogy reflects Slocum's view of the individual's relationship to society--the individual is small and unimportant. Slocum states, "I can no longer change my environment or even disturb it seriously" (15). He recognizes that there are "few alternatives," something he says the rest of his family does not recognize yet (181).

In a world view Slocum calls "my tragic chronicle of the continuity of human experience, of this great chain of being, and the sad legacy of pain and repudiation that one generation . . . gets and gives to another . . ." (194), there are no choices. The only choice, which is not a choice, is to

go right off in whatever direction your madness

lies and do that unwise, unpleasant, immoral thing you don't want to that you know beforehand will leave you dejected and demoralized afterward. Go along glumly like an exhausted prisoner of war and get the melancholy deed over with. (463)

All Slocum can do is go along with what he believes the world wants of him. There are no choices.

Slocum's confidence is short lived, however. Every time he sees his son, he is reminded he does have choices. Slocum is in a moral crisis, then, because his moral alternative, the moral standard, is always there. Slocum's world view as defined by his response to the value objects "self," "other minds," "time," and "society" represents a complete denial of responsibility which is contrary to the world view his son represents. Slocum is morally deficient. Slocum's recognition of his own moral deficiency is apparent when he explains the limp he has picked up from Kagle:

I do not do this voluntarily. It's a weakness, I know, a failure of character or morals, this subtle, sneaky, almost enslaving instinct to be like just about anyone I happen to find myself with. (64)

Even though Slocum attempts to suggest that he is not responsible for this limp, he does acknowledge it is a failure of character or morals that he begins to act like others. Just as Yossarian's moral deficiency is symbolized

by a physical limp, so too is Slocum's. It is symbolic of his consistent denial of responsibility, and it is tied to Andy Kagle, his friend who really does have a crippled leg and who he figuratively "kicks in the leg" by taking his job.

Through his lengthy "decision" to take Kagle's job, Slocum must always go home and face his boy. He even seems to have some unconscious recognition that his boy is a moral standard because when he is talking about wanting to tell his mother to quit lingering on and die, he seems to invoke his boy: "Oh, boy. Oh, boy, oh, boy, oh, boy. I never could say that, even to myself, while she was alive. But that was the way I think I felt. I can say it now" (305). The boy becomes a literal moral standard over the summer because Slocum cannot flirt, be obscene, tell dirty jokes, or get drunk because the boy might observe him (312). At times Slocum even says that he "want[s] to be a little boy" when he grows up (319). Slocum recognizes the "moral" world view his son represents and wants to live up to that standard. However, he also wants Kagle's job.

Something finally happens after Slocum gets the job. Slocum's wife notices immediately that Slocum was with Kagle that day because she notices Slocum limping. She then asks if Kagle's leg is getting worse because Slocum is limping worse than ever. Slocum has figuratively kicked Kagle in his bad leg by taking his job. The exaggerated limp,

though, also symbolizes Slocum's moral deficiency--it's worse than ever. Slocum soon lets the reader know what he thought his mother said just before she died: "You're just no good" (510). His sin allows him to guess at her words and, thus, render a judgment upon himself.

The next chapter's title, "My boy has stopped talking to me" (512), implies that Slocum's boy has rendered a moral judgment of Slocum. However, in deciding to take Kagle's job, Slocum has actually shut his boy out by rejecting the values his boy represents. There can be no moral convergence. In fact, there is an extreme moral divergence. Slocum has made his choice and has done so by asserting that "It was God's will," asserting that there is no alternative. In order to escape moral indictment, though, Slocum must eliminate evidence of a moral alternative. To this end, the boy must be murdered. The boy is hit by a car and seems to Slocum to be twisted and broken, with blood pouring out of him. Slocum grabs him: "I hug him tightly in both arms. I squeeze" (524). The boy, however, was not injured badly by the car that hit him. He died due to asphyxiation. Earlier in the novel Slocum had told his son that if they ever got rid of him it would be with "hugs and kisses" (217). Slocum fulfills his own prophecy; he seems to have decided long ago that he would deny a moral alternative.

Slocum is then free of any moral regrets which might interfere with his decisions. Slocum is able to retire Ed

Phelps, fire Red Parker, take Kagle off the payroll, and get rid of Martha the typist (527-528). Slocum has taken charge and is getting his things in order. He prefers static order to an active, responsible life. He sees and understands his world, refuses to recreate his world view, and sacrifices his free will. As a result, he embraces a false sense of optimism.

Slocum fails morally. Heller, then, has created a protagonist who is free to reject completely the values of the "moral standard" character. If accepting responsibility seems easy in Yossarian's surreal world, it seems nearly impossible in Slocum's realistic world. Heller presents his moral hypothesis that individuals should accept responsibility in Catch-22. In Something Happened, he explores one rigid world view, a belief in a deterministic world, which a protagonist may use to justify acting immorally. Heller must reaffirm his moral vision by returning to responsibility and exploring what it means to be responsible in a world which is more realistic than Yossarian's. In doing so, Heller explores a second excuse for acting immorally--belief that the world is ruled by chance. Good as Gold is the return to responsibility.

Chapter 4

Good as Gold: Return to Responsibility

"God does not play dice."
--Albert Einstein

John W. Aldridge contends that Heller's Good as Gold is the "bleakest" and "blackest" of his first three novels (163). Aldridge says that Good as Gold is about "a society that is fast going insane, that is learning to accept chaos as order and unreality as order" (163). This perspective on American culture, Aldridge contends, may be funny if it did not seem that these conditions may soon exist. Heller, himself says, "Morally, Gold [the protagonist of Good as Gold] is an ignominious person. He wound up the way Bob Slocum of Something Happened started out to be" (qtd. in Reilly 181). After the bleakness of Something Happened it may seem that Heller has a "darkening vision" of the future (Aldridge 162). If Heller has decided that his characters are presenting worlds which are less hopeful, it may be wiser to do as D.H. Lawrence suggests and trust the tale, not the teller (2).

Heller again recasts the predicament of Catch-22. Just as Yossarian has to decide whether or not he will join a military bureaucracy which would be morally irresponsible, and Slocum has to decided whether or not to take a promotion in his company, another possible denial of moral responsibility, Gold is given the opportunity to leave his

wife, to reject his family, and to accept a prestigious and lucrative job in Washington, D.C., working for the government. At the end of chapter four, Gold contemplates what it would be like to work with Ralph for the President, marry Andrea, share her apartment in Washington, fuck her richer and even more attractive friends, serve on a Presidential Commission on education, and be an overpaid professor of Urban Studies. It was to die. (122)

Good as Gold is told by a third person narrator who has the tendency to break into the novel. So, the sentence "It was to die," seems to be the narrator's expression of Gold's feelings about the attractiveness of the offer to go to Washington. However, it may also be a comment by the narrator on moral consequences of such an action. To accept the offer would be to die morally as Slocum does in Something Happened and as Yossarian might have in Catch-22 if not for Orr's example of moral action.

The moral problem with which Gold must wrestle is further complicated by the world view he embraces, a world view which sees time as being only a set of random circumstances. Such a view is completely opposite of Slocum's deterministic view, but Gold's view has the same effect. There can be no meaningful choices in a world of random chance, and therefore, moral decisions are also rendered meaningless. Essentially, Heller is moving from

the historical view of a "great chain of being" to a de-centered contemporary view of random circumstance controlling history and posing the question of how humans make moral decisions.

Implicit in Tanner's value objects are three characteristics required of a moral character. They are free will, the ability to examine the world, and the ability to create a world view in response to that world. The problem for the moral critic, then, is to determine whether, when Gold "decides" not to join the government, he is choosing to live, to accept moral responsibility, or whether Gold's decision is merely a random occurrence.

In Good as Gold, Heller refines his moral vision of what it means to be responsible. He is again affirming free will by suggesting that the belief in a world ruled by chance is only another excuse to deny responsibility for making moral decisions. Heller makes this argument first, by putting a moral standard in his novel who affirms free will, and second, by using narrative techniques which also suggest that the world he has created is not ruled by random chance.

Wayne C. Miller suggests that Sid, Bruce Gold's older brother, is an alternative role model for Gold--"an alternative to the role that he has been pursuing in his quest for public success as the aspiring Jew who would be Kissinger" (186). Like Orr and Slocum's little boy, Sid

serves as the catalyst for the resolution of the novel and is therefore the "moral standard" character. Like Slocum's little boy, Sid dies. However, Sid's death is a natural death. It removes him from the novel and forces Gold to make a choice. So, Sid as moral standard seems to fit Heller's pattern of having the moral standard disappear near the climax of the novel. Sid is much older than either Orr or Slocum's little boy and therefore represents a more mature and developed moral alternative than what Heller has depicted in either of the two previous novels. Tanner's value objects when applied to Sid make it obvious that Sid is the moral standard in the novel, the alternative to Gold's morally deficient world view.

By examining Sid's relationship to the value object "self," it becomes apparent that Sid represents values very similar to those represented by Orr in Catch-22. For instance, Sid, too, accepts full responsibility for his actions and for taking care of himself. When Sid and Bruce are having lunch together in chapter seven and Sid is talking about his childhood after coming over on the boat from Europe with his family, he tells about occasions where he was physically abused by other kids, was mocked when he spoke, spent recesses eating alone, and did not have any friends (266-267). However, Sid does not seem to tell Gold about these occasions in an effort to get sympathy. In fact, he turns down sympathy every time Gold attempts to

offer it, at one point becoming almost indignant when Gold insists that Sid must have been "miserable" and "embarrassed":

I wasn't miserable and embarrassed. . . . No, I don't think I was lonely, kid. Everything was kind of new and interesting. I didn't know what was good or bad. I kind of liked it both ways. I liked playing in school and watching the other kids and I liked going into the fields with my sandwich and watching the subway trains. (267)

Sid does not attempt to use his past as an excuse for any sort of character flaw. Sid does not even attempt to blame Gold for any of the sacrifices he had to make for Gold as they were growing up. He says, "No, kid, it really wasn't that way. We would had to do pretty much the same thing even if you weren't there" (265). It would be easy for Sid, the older brother, to blame Gold as the cause for many of his youthful sacrifices, but Sid never considers it.

Sid also takes responsibility for his own survival. Sid, understanding the nature of American society, knew that he would have to find a way to support his family, to make money. Sid "had worked harder" than the others in his family (54), even working at Brighton Laundry as a kid every hour he could around horses which frightened him.

One of Sid's most striking similarities to Orr is that Sid, too, is technically inclined. While in the Army Air

Force during World War II, Sid became "fascinated with this first contact with cams, springs, sears, solenoid switches, and hydraulics" and was "inspired by the technology" that enabled the complex mechanisms of the machine gun to function reliably (55-56). After the war, Sid applied the knowledge he had acquired working on machine guns to laundry machines and was able to improve some patents, come up with ideas for other machines, and eventually build a company for processing fabrics (54, 56). Sid is able to use his imagination to apply skills he had learned in a seemingly unrelated career to the laundry business and create a lucrative career for himself. He was not simply handed a career or a fortune. He depended on nobody except a few friends to help him get started.

The use of his imagination and his capacity to accept responsibility for his own welfare together indicate that Sid believes in a world in which people create their own meaning. Sid gives his own life meaning and decides what things are important to him. This understanding of "self" allows Sid to accept responsibility for himself by concentrating on those things which are important to him.

One of the things that is very important to Sid is his relationship to "other minds." Sid's other-centered values amplify those values that Orr represents in Catch-22. Sid is human; he acknowledges that being responsible is often not fun. As a child, he left Bruce alone in the street

because he did not want to take care of him (94). However, when Sid is telling the story to Bruce during their lunch together, it becomes evident that Sid was being responsible for Bruce even when he was being his most irresponsible. Sid left Bruce near a police officer and told Bruce to go up to him. Then, he went and told the police officer that Bruce looked lost. Even though he did not enjoy being responsible for his brother and decides to stop being responsible for Bruce, he still recognizes his responsibility for being sure that Bruce is safe (270).

Sid carries this responsibility for his family over to his adult life. He continues to take care of his siblings. As Joannie, Bruce's youngest sister, acknowledges: Sid "still takes care of us, doesn't he, even though it kills Harriet now to see him spend anything? He feels very close to us" (259). Sid does feel close to his family. He believes in a close communion with every member of his family. He feels that he should be able to "kid around" with his younger brother, Bruce, but he does not seem to be doing it with malicious intent as Gold assumes. When Gold accuses Sid of picking on him, Sid says, "I didn't know that really bothered you. Sometimes I can't think of anything else to say so I kid around. . . . I'm sorry if I embarrassed you" (272). Sid takes care of his father, Julius, by, as Julius himself states, being a father to him (398). He took Julius's leather business and helped him

"organize" things (268-69). Sid makes sure that his father's needs are met.

Sid's relationship with his wife, Harriet, might seem to detract from his other-centeredness. He was, for many years, a philanderer and had cheated on his wife many times. However, Sid tells Gold that he would like to go with him to Acapulco, but Sid does not think his heart or Harriet would stand it. He does seem to have some compassion for his wife. He no longer takes trips with other women. He also says his heart "wouldn't" stand it. He doesn't say his heart could not stand it. In one respect, Sid is acknowledging his own propensity for a heart attack, but in another respect, he may be acknowledging that his own values no longer allow him to treat his wife in such a manner.

This other-centered attitude seems to be one which has developed over time. As he has matured, he has become more and more other-centered. It is a value that he held as a child which is obvious in his working so hard during all his "free" hours so that he can buy his mother a radio (292-93). So, at a very early age he represents a young and immature sense of responsibility, much as Slocum's little boy does in Something Happened, but Sid is allowed to mature, thereby becoming a much more mature representation of responsibility than either Orr or Slocum's boy.

In examining Sid's relationship to the value object "time," it becomes obvious that Sid's understanding of time

is closely related to his understanding of self. Sid's capacity to be understanding and responsible helps him create his world. Like Orr's, Sid's past (the responsibilities he has accepted and the sacrifices he has made for his family and friends) is validated by his present. He has become successful and has been able to take care of his family. So, Sid's actions, alone, present an alternative to the way in which Gold's world view understands time.

However, Sid also kids Gold about their differing views of time by veiling his wisdom in a display of circular logic about luck which is as creative as Orr's riddle about his apple cheeks and Slocum's boy's explanation of why he gives money away. Sid feigns Gold's point of view about luck, asserting that humans are lucky to have been born on a planet with water:

Isn't it lucky . . . that we found ourselves on a planet where there's water? . . . Otherwise, . . . we would all be very thirsty. . . . After a big meal of turkey, or steak, or roast beef, or lobster, not only wouldn't we have water to drink, we wouldn't even have soda. Or tea or coffee. Because they are all made from water. . . . We would have to drink wine or beer instead . . . You see, wine and beer are made from grapes and hops. And we'd have plenty of grapes and hops, I

bet. (80-81)

Gold immediately sees the logical fallacies in Sid's statements. Since water allows life to develop, it is necessary for all living things: turkeys, cattle, lobsters, grapes, and hops. Gold understands that "we did not 'happen' to find ourselves on a planet with water but would not have evolved as a species had there been none" (81). In enumerating Sid's fallacies, Gold contradicts his own argument for pure chance and demonstrates that cause-effect does have some degree of legitimacy in Gold's world. Sid refutes the argument of "time" being pure chance and affirms responsibility for managing time effectively.

In fact, Sid demonstrates that a person can even choose to interpret past events in ways which are beneficial rather than detrimental. Gold admits that there is more to Sid, more that "lay secret in him . . . beneath a shield of denials" (271). Sid does seem to deny certain obvious contradictions he makes when talking to Gold. He tells Gold, "We were the ones who couldn't stand you," and when Gold pursues the point, Sid tells him, "I never disliked you. I was always very proud of you" (271). Gold insists that it must be one or the other. However, it is more likely that both of Sid's feelings toward Gold existed simultaneously, that at once he could not stand Gold and, yet, he did not dislike his brother. The fact that Sid chooses to believe in his memories of being proud of his

brother more than his memories of disliking his brother may be a sign of repression. However, the choice may also simply demonstrate Sid's ability to make peace with his past, to use his past in the manner that would be most helpful to him and those around him. He chooses to live in the present with those around him, even his brother.

Sid demonstrates through his actions, through his circular reasoning, and through his ability to choose how he is going to view his past that time does not have to rule him. Instead, like Orr, he uses time as a tool, a way of shaping his present and his future, thereby accepting responsibility for his own life.

The responsibility which Sid accepts is reflected in his relationship to Tanner's next value object--society. Sid recognizes the importance of society and recognizes the importance of every individual in that society. Because Sid is seldom seen in any situation outside of those involving the family, Sid's relationship to society is demonstrated in his relationship with his family. Despite the fact that it becomes difficult to distinguish between "other minds" and "society," it is important that Sid's relationship to "society" is demonstrated within the family. The family is Sid's society. He is affirming the choice of a particular society. He is not affirming the society of a government bureaucracy, but of real people. In this way, there is a type of rebellion that is possible for "society"--

nonparticipation. Nonparticipation rebels against one society in favor of another. This type of rebellion is similar to Yossarian's decision to desert the army and run "to his responsibilities."

In the society Sid is affirming, every individual is important. Sid understands the feelings of his siblings who want to get Julius and his wife, Gussie, to move to Florida. He even attempts to help convince his father and Gussie to move (74-76). He understands that they are simply a responsibility for the other children. When Gold and Sid are having lunch, Gold wants to decide what they are going to do about their father, but Sid says, "I find I get a kick out of him now. . . . I kind of like him, Bruce, and we're not going to have him much longer" (264). Sid recognizes the importance of responsibility to their father, recognizes that responsibility means putting up with some things that are unpleasant and enjoying the company of a father who no longer seems to have much to offer the family.

Sid keeps the peace in his family, in his society, by going along with his siblings' attempts to get rid of their father. However, he does not exert his complete influence. He could, perhaps, convince his father to go to Florida because of his father's immense respect for him. Their father even tells Sid, "Then I'll do what you say, Sid" (77). Sid, however, never loses his patience with his father and puts up with all of his excuses. He affirms his

society by doing what he can to keep it together.

Sid's world view, his relationship to Tanner's four value objects--self, other minds, time, and society--demonstrates his acceptance of responsibility. In accepting responsibility and affirming values which are similar to those affirmed by Orr and Slocum's little boy, Sid demonstrates that it is possible to exercise free will, to examine the world, and to create and recreate a world view in response to that world. Therefore, Sid represents an alternative to Gold's assertions that the world is ruled by chance, that there are no cause-effect relationships at all. In Sid's world, a person must accept the responsibility to make moral decisions.

Heller not only disavows the possibility of chance ruling the world he has created by providing a moral standard which affirms moral responsibility and free will, but also by using a narrative technique which reminds the reader from time to time that the novel has been constructed and that certain choices have been made. For instance, Heller substitutes the names Emmy Ovary, Echo, Natasha Karilova, and Esther to Gold's sisters Muriel, Ida, Rose, and Ester (93). After doing so, he immediately makes it seem as if Gold had been doing the substituting, but the use of the other names has already affected the reader by giving the reader a reminder that what he or she is reading is artifice, the result of rhetorical decisions.

Later in the novel, when Gold's family is arguing over burial plots, Heller uses the name substitution again, using the names Karamazov, Lady Chatterley, Twemlow, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Esther, Cinderella, Clytemnestra, Quilp, Sophronia, and Jarndyce and Jarndyce to describe the different members of the family (247-48). This time, though, the renaming section is followed by a realization by Gold that there is a distinction between "incredible" and "unbelievable" (248). "Unbelievable" is something "that absolutely, even by the most elastic stretch of faith or imagination, could not be believed." This sentence is then followed by a sentence which reads "This was unbelievable!" (248). The origin of this judgment is ambiguous. If it is Gold who says it, it seems to refer to the next paragraph which is about the ludicrous nature of their argument over burial plots. However, the phrase may also be coming from the narrator, and, if so, is referring to the novel being unbelievable and again drawing attention to the fact that the novel is not ruled by chance but is structured willfully and that the names have been changed by design.

If the name substitution does not break the reader's willful suspension of disbelief, then the beginning of section four in chapter seven does. At this point in the novel, Heller's persona says,

and the thought arose that he was spending an

awful lot of time in this book eating and talking. There was not much else to be done with him. I was putting him into bed a lot with Andrea and keeping his wife and children conveniently in the background. (278)

Heller then goes on to sketch out briefly what he was thinking about doing with the rest of the novel. He even goes so far as to say, "and I would shortly hold out to him [Gold] the tantalizing promise of becoming the first Jewish Secretary of State, a promise I did not intend to keep" (278) and goes on to tell exactly how many more times Gold would meet with Andrea's father, Pugh Biddle Conover, and how many times he would meet Harris Rosenblatt. Later in the novel, Heller puts his own name in the text (299) and then uses a line, which by this time has become much too suspect to be disregarded: "In a novel no one would believe it" (330). Heller's use of such a narrator allows the narrator to comment on the action at times and also demonstrates that the world Heller has created has, in fact, been willfully created. No one meets by chance because Heller has fashioned this world. It may appear that Heller errors by creating a world which is predetermined, that he is merely falling back into the problems of Something Happened. However, Heller has already dealt with that problem, and it is not so much an argument in Good as Gold that people do not have free will, but it is a gentle

reminder for the reader, much like Sid's circular logic is a gentle reminder for Gold, that to some degree everyone has to acknowledge the role that cause and effect plays in life and that people do have a hand in creating their own world view.

Because Sid, as the moral standard for the novel, and Heller's narrative technique both argue against pure chance, it is apparent that Gold's belief in such a world is merely an excuse to avoid responsibility. In relation to every one of the four value objects that have been used, Gold demonstrates an attempt to deny responsibility.

By examining Gold's relationship to "self" it is apparent that he believes that people have no basis to make choices and that there are no standards for behavior. The only standard that Gold does seem to recognize is power. When Andrea's father upsets Gold, Gold lectures Andrea on the importance of his own position:

Less work. Power. Raw Power. Brute, illegal power. I'll misuse it to ruin him and make his life miserable. I'll tap his telephones. I'll have the FBI ask insinuating questions about him . . . and I'm going to have my revenge, if he helps me get my job. He didn't treat me with respect, Andrea. He has no respect for me. (222)

Gold's tirade captures much of Gold's understanding about self. Gold believes that one's life has meaning if one has

power. Furthermore, this meaning is not life-affirming. It is, like the power itself, raw, brutal, and illegal. Gold also points out that he cannot give his own life meaning. Someone must help him get his job: he must rely on Conover. According to Gold's tirade, with great power comes great irresponsibility; he is going to use that power to destroy the very man who helped him achieve it.

Gold's understanding of self neither is life-affirming nor is the self something which Gold seems to have power in shaping. While he believes he is created by others, he recognizes no responsibility to others which is obvious when examining "other minds."

In examining Gold's relationship with "other minds," it becomes apparent that Gold does not see a genuine communion between people as possible. His relationship with Sid he understands as antagonistic. He cannot seem to meet his brother as an equal. Instead, he is upset that he is not treated with the respect he deserves:

It was no fair way, he sulked, to treat a middle-aged, Phi Beta Kappa, cum laude graduate of Columbia who was a doctor of philosophy and had recently been honored with praise from the White House and the promise of consideration for a high-level position. (27)

In general, Gold cannot achieve communion with people because he cannot relate to anyone except by title. Gold

even imagines that should he become President

everyone will be appointed to some good government position one day and asked to resign the next, so that all in the land--regardless of race, occupation, family, creed, or financial station--can go through life called Ambassador, Judge, Major, or Secretary, instead of Esther, Rose, Irv, Victor, Julius or Sid. (178-79)

Gold demonstrates that he does not care for anything so intimate as family relationships but would rather relate to others in a more superficial manner. He would rather have the decision of how to act with someone be based merely on title. In fact, Gold cannot even relate to his daughter. When he finds out that his daughter may know about his sleeping with Linda Book, he says, "Do you think it's helpful for a thirteen-year-old child to know that the Secretary of State is fucking her schoolteacher?" (384). The point that his daughter may be upset because her father is sleeping with her schoolteacher completely escapes him. He does not understand how to relate to anyone as himself and therefore uses the title to hide behind.

Gold is certainly not other-centered. He admits that even though he seems to claim to be humanitarian, he no longer likes people (60). He is willing to choke his fiancée's father, Pugh Biddle Conover (335), divorce his wife (116), and tell his daughter, "Go shit in your hat,"

(195) all for the sake of a job in Washington. He does not care how any of his actions will affect his family (116) and denies responsibility for any of them with the simple phrase, "Let Sid handle it" (260).

Gold's denial of responsibility is based on his understanding of his relationship to the value object "time." It is stated in chapter three that Gold's "myopic astigmatism was discovered early" (50). Literally, Gold had poor eyesight and had to wear glasses. It is a source of shame for Gold. Figuratively, however, Gold's myopic astigmatism represents Gold's lack of foresight and understanding, his inability to see distant objects, the future, clearly. He does not recognize his ability to affect his own future. Gold never does understand his deficiency. Near the end of the novel he says "Pop, why do you pick on me? . . . Just because I had to wear eyeglasses and got good marks in school" (398). In this question, Gold unknowingly admits his faulty understanding of the future's relationship to the present and his own self-centered attitude about his getting "good marks." His father attempts no lengthy explanation, but simply says "Sure . . . That's why" (398).

In addition, Gold feels that the nature of all success is based on "dumb luck" (53). To Gold "[t]here seemed no plausible connection between cause and effect, or ends and means. History was a trash bag of random coincidences torn

open in a wind. . . . Results attained were unrelated to objectives envisioned" (61). Gold, therefore, is unable to understand the nature of success for anyone around him. He thinks that Sid's success in business can only be attributed to mere chance (54). He does not even take into account Sid's ability to work hard at something. Gold talks about how Sid spend much of his time growing up working in one job or another while Gold could remember "whole mornings and afternoons idled away on the bathroom-tiled floor" (55). Gold even acknowledges that

[w]hen Gold was a child, Sid was already working summers, weekends, and weekday afternoon. When Gold was in high school, Sid was overseas in the army. And the year Gold entered college, Sid was discharged from the service, eligible for higher education under the G.I. Bill of Rights, but already thirty-one. (59)

Sid has worked his whole life while Gold has had all the opportunities Sid did not have and has worked very little. There is one thing Gold feels sure about: "for every successful person he knew, he could name at least two others of greater ability, better character, and higher intelligence who, by comparison, had failed" (60). Gold simply does not understand how much hard work and determination help a person become successful. It is simply not a part of Gold's formula and so he excuses his lack of

success by deciding that it had nothing to do with personal determination but rather with pure chance.

Even when Gold considers Murshie Weinrock, "who plodded away in night classes in college for four, five, six years, until World War II," he believes that it is only dumb luck that Weinrock became a doctor because he was moved by the army into an "opulent training program" and then to Harvard Medical School. Gold does not acknowledge that it was Weinrock's persistence that had him studying five or six years and that persistence may have paid off even if Adolf Hitler had not come to power. Rather than acknowledge his own lack of responsibility for the course of his life, Gold decides that he lives in a world where time is ruled by chance and therefore responsibility does not make any difference. Gold denies responsibility for his own life.

This denial of responsibility is also evident in examining Gold's relationship to the value object "society." In chapter seven, Gold goes through the number of ways in which American culture is failing:

It was the Shoot and Chutes into darkness and dissolution, the plunging roller coaster into disintegration and squalor. Someone should do something. Nobody could. No society worth its salt would watch itself perishing without some serious attempt to avert its own destruction. Therefore, Gold concluded, we are not a society.

Or we are not worth our salt. Or both. (294-95)

Gold's salt metaphor refers, as he explains to everyone that wants him to get rid of it, to a "basic, shared commodit[y] that give[s] . . . cohesion" (307). It is an interesting metaphor for Gold to use because it is mentioned in chapter two that "[t]he women in Gold's family believed he liked his food excessively salted" (18). Gold is able to recognize the problem of society not being cohesive, but he is not able to see how he is simply contributing to that same problem. Gold is not worth his salt. In fact, with Gold salt is not even a shared commodity because in his family he is often given his own saltshaker. It simply is not shared and, therefore, does not give cohesion. The lack of cohesion of which Gold is lamenting is society's general loss of a sense of responsibility.

The same loss of cohesion and sense of responsibility is due to an attitude which is often represented by the government, the very "social" institution which Gold wishes to join. For instance, Ralph Newsome tells Gold that in government there is "no such thing as a mistake" (314). When Gold expresses disbelief at such a statement, Newsome adds, "We're still here, aren't we?" (315). At this point Gold has started to identify a certain "cynicism and selfishness" in government, a disregard by those in power for the people who elected them. Yet, only a few lines later, Gold decides to join the government (315).

Washington, the President, and Ralph Newsome all keep adopting the slogans that Gold creates. Very early in the novel Gold decides that "every change is for the worse" which he thinks he will use as the title of an article (44). However, he does not write such an article but this line of thinking helps him write the article "Nothing Succeeds as Planned" which is immediately adopted by the President as "just the excuse he needs for not doing anything" (63). So, just as it was "all Yossarian's fault" in Catch-22 (294), it is all Gold's fault here. In attempting to justify his own disregard for responsibility, he inadvertently gives the government just the excuse it needs to avoid responsibility.

Gold plays the government's game of doublespeak in attempting to get into the government. Gold is a "radical moderate" who advocates "fiery caution and crusading inertia" (44). Gold is so good at providing the government with excuses for avoiding responsibility that the people in government begin to refer to him as the "Gold standard," their standard for irresponsibility. This standard is particularly evident when Gold's phrase "I don't know" becomes the "mainstay of official policy" (44). It is cabled to all the American embassies in code and quickly becomes the most often used phrase in Washington. Interestingly, Gold has created a circular argument for society which spirals into his "crusading inertia." In attempting to be accepted into the government bureaucracy,

Gold gives the government more excuses to be irresponsible. In such a downward spiral, there is no room for social reform. Gold recognizes that "[s]omeone should do something. Nobody could" (295). Gold cannot help reform the society represented by the government as long as he is attempting to join that society. Nobody can do both honestly. Gold simply does not understand that attempting to be accepted into a society may in fact preclude reforming it.

Another significant problem with Gold's understanding of society is that he does not recognize the importance of the small and seemingly unimportant. This problem manifests itself particularly in his understanding of the role of the aged members of society:

A symbiotic system of new criminal classes; and medical science had created something infinitely worse, a long life span, with a larger and larger number of old people who were unneeded by society, had nothing to do, and were not revered. (61)

This attitude strongly affects Gold's feelings toward his father and is part of the reason that Gold wants his father to move to Florida. Gold does not recognize any reason he should feel responsibility toward his father or anyone in his father's generation. His father cannot "contribute" to society and does not possess any power that might be beneficial to anyone. Gold fails to recognize what his

father might have to contribute because Gold is focused on a society of titles and power.

Gold, who with his world view denies free will, denies responsibility for himself and those around him, uses his conception of time as an excuse to be irresponsible and rejects the society to which he is most obliged. When comparing the values that Gold affirms with those that Sid affirms, it is obvious that Gold is moral deficient. Gold's moral deficiency is symbolized, as are Yossarian's and Slocum's, by a limp. In chapter five, Gold has several things happen that draw attention to his foot. Gussie, his stepmother, gives him a sock, a gift which turns out to be a practical joke (156-57). When Gold asks, "What'll I do with one sock?" his father replies, "Maybe you'll lose a foot" (156). Immediately afterward, the family goes out to a Chinese restaurant and Gold receives a fortune cookie that reads, "You will hurt your foot" (162), a prophesy that is "premature[ly]" fulfilled at the end of the chapter when he begins to walk with a limp. The prophecy then becomes the title of chapter six in which Gold is assigned to his first Presidential commission, first proposes marriage to Andrea, and first grovels before the anti-Semitic Conover. Gold's father is right: Gold does lose a foot as he shrinks in moral stature, becoming as morally corrupt as those in government and beginning to deny all responsibility to those around him.

Gold and Sid are at opposition in world views. Some sort of moral convergence as in Catch-22 or complete divergence as in Something Happened must take place. This time there is a moral convergence. Gold joins the government but soon finds himself in a catch-22: he will not be accepted into the government unless he marries Andrea Conover and Andrea will not marry him unless he has a government position first (315-316). In order to attain his political appointment, Gold goes to Andrea's father one more time. There, Conover tells Gold that he should always present himself as Jewish because he will "never make it as anything else" (333). Gold is granted his wish and drives back to Washington in a "dazed state of moral collapse" (343).

This moral collapse, though, is not Gold's literal moral collapse. Instead, Gold continues to work his way into Washington society, seeming more and more like Henry Kissinger, a man Gold despises because he "has a lack of imagination [and] fail[s] to see the moral issue involved" (301). As he is attempting to forget any responsibilities he has to his family, his daughter, Dina, drops out of school (360). As Gold says, "The vixen had bitten him deep in the fleshy part of his leg, and at a most inopportune time" (360), a more painful wound which again draws attention to his moral irresponsibility.

However, this experience allows him to meet Linda Book,

Dina's schoolteacher, and he ends up planning a trip to Acapulco which his wife does not know about, with both Andrea and Linda who know nothing about each other. In section seven of chapter eight, Gold's running on the track at YMCA is spliced together with his trip to Acapulco with Andrea and Linda. As the "muddle of debauchery and irresponsible disgrace" (379) in Acapulco increases, Spotty Weinrock, Murshie Weinrock's irresponsible younger brother, keeps passing Gold on the track and yelling "fag." When the intrigue in Acapulco becomes so great that Gold must run back to Washington to escape facing any responsibilities, Gold discovers that Spotty has not been running full laps but has only been pretending to (374). The next time Spotty passes, Gold lunges for Spotty, misses, falls, and

as he felt his legs wobble and give way . . . he ran fifteen more yards on his knees before toppling to the track and lying still as a stone with his eyes staring, as though he had been brought to his doom by a mortal fright. (375)

Gold is morally wounded. He now is not even able to limp, but must run forward on his knees. Such an image resonates with his groveling before Conover in his attempts to gain a government position. He no longer has a moral leg upon which to stand. He has finally experienced complete moral collapse.

As Gold recovers in the hospital, he reflects on what

he refers to as "the moral mystery originating in his final words to Spotty Weinrock at the gym: 'Tell not a soul'" (376). The words are not a mystery for readers familiar with Bob Slocum's words after killing his son, "Don't tell my wife," and his words which begin the next chapter, "Nobody knows what I have done" (Something Happened 525-26). Gold wants his complete moral collapse to be a secret. He wants to believe that he does not have a choice.

Heller, though, does not give the impression that once someone has had a complete moral collapse, he or she has no possibility of becoming moral. Gold's story does not end a few pages after his collapse. Instead, Gold tries to get into the Embassy Ball, a feat that is as difficult and as morally bankrupt as getting a government position. Inevitably, Gold receives an invitation from the former Governor of Texas known for his saying "don't fart around with the inevitable" (177). Gold is now allowing "fate" to determine his future and by accepting the Governor's invitation is allowing himself to be owned. The Governor, as he is known to say, has Gold's "pecker in [his] pocket" (393). Gold has forsaken his own volition. But, before Gold is able to meet the President, Sid dies.

Heller has effectively split the difference between determinism and chance. It is inevitable that Sid must die at some time, but Sid's death seems to happen by chance just before Gold is to meet the President. Gold does not

immediately realize that he should go home; it is suggested, ironically enough, by Ralph Newsome. However, Gold recognizes that if he does not go home he may risk "the opinion that he was not worth his salt or as good as gold" (394).

At Sid's funeral Gold realizes that now that his brother was gone, none of his family has the "volition" to answer the criticisms Sid's widow Harriet heaps on them (395). Without Sid, "[t]he burdens of responsibility for the numerous roles to be filled fell increasingly upon Gold" (395). Gold begins to understand that "Ralph would not hide him, Conover would taunt him, the ex-Governor of Texas owned him" and then wonders "[w]ho would teach him to defend himself?" (401). The answer is implicit in the very next sentence which says that he "decided that he did not want the government appointment" (emphasis added (401). Gold finally understands his brother Sid, who has been trying to teach him all along with his demonstrations of circular illogic. When Gold finally understands Sid, which unfortunately happens after Sid's death, he understands how he can protect himself--by accepting responsibility.

Gold begins to adopt new values for directing his life. He recognizes that he does have volition, that he can make moral decisions. He finds out that Sid's supposed consolidation of their father's leather business was only a "fiction" that Sid had created in order to allow their

father to be what he wanted to be (397); Sid had used his imagination to give his father emotional security. Gold's understanding of other minds begins to change as he realizes that his "father was a burden to be shared only by those willing to assume it" and demonstrates that he is able to assume that responsibility by telling his father that he will take care of him, that his father may come live with him and his family (399). Gold's wife objects and Gold demonstrates that he now has a different understanding of time by explaining to his wife that she may be right but that Sid's funeral is not the right time to tell him (399-400). Gold recognizes some of the contradictions inherent in his feelings toward his father, but he chooses to use time to his family's mutual benefit rather than as a detriment. Gold's attitude toward society changes as he decides to live in the society of his family, a society which encourages responsibility rather than attempt to live in a society which denies responsibility. He realizes that in the society of family there is an obligation toward even the most seemingly unimportant member. He explains his new feelings toward his father to his wife: "Unregenerate. And without any redeeming social value. Once long ago he bought me a toy. Now I'll have to help carry him" (400). Gold reaffirms his new sense of society by letting Newsome and the President have his article "We are not a Society, We are not Worth our Salt" (404). Gold has come to recognize moral

responsibility as the "shared commodity" which gives society cohesion. He no longer needs the article as an excuse to deny responsibility. Gold is finally worth his salt. He is good as Gold.

Gold's moral convergence with Sid's world view affirms and develops the values which Yossarian affirms at the end of Catch-22 and which Slocum denies in Something Happened. Interestingly, Heller has refined his moral vision in Good as Gold. The complete moral collapse of Gold and his subsequent return demonstrate that free will is always possible, that people never lock themselves into a "fate" because of a moral defeat. Also, in the last section of chapter eight, after Gold has experienced his moral convergence, he continues to receive phone calls from Ralph asking him to reconsider and join the government. As a result, he is able to demonstrate the firmness of his decision. These refinements suggest that an integral part of Heller's moral vision is that human beings must continue struggling with moral choices and must continue affirming their moral responsibility, affirming life. Because people have free will, they never can make an absolute, final decision, but must accept the greatest challenge of being a moral agent--continual vigilance in an everchanging universe.

At the end of Good as Gold, Bruce Gold sees a group of Jewish boys playing baseball. The boys' game represents a

microcosm of Gold's society and Heller's moral universe where the characters have stopped trying to make their world better. The game has stopped because of a dispute. One boy is trying to get it started again by yelling at the others to "Varf" the ball (408). His words are Heller's moral injunction to begin accepting responsibility and to make something happen: "Varf the fucking ball!"

Chapter 5

Joseph Heller's Moral Vision

Moral fiction is possible.

Determining the morality of Heller's novels is not easy for the reader. The actions of the protagonists do not solely represent Heller's moral vision. Likewise, the moral vision is not necessarily represented by the resolution of each of the novels. Fortunately, Stephen Tanner has established a procedure to begin such an investigation. His value objects suggest that for characters to be moral agents, they would need the following traits: freewill, an ability to examine the world, and the ability to create and recreate a world view in response to the examined world. In addition, Heller, himself, provides substantial evidence of a moral vision. He creates characters who act as moral standards, uses the same symbol, limping, for moral decadence, and he uses formal structure in his novels to convey his values.

In each of Heller's first three novels there is a moral standard. The moral standard is a character who represents the moral alternative to the protagonist's initial world view. The moral standards for Catch-22, Something Happened, and Good as Gold are Orr, Slocum's little boy, and Gold's brother, Sid, respectively. Each of these characters represents values that the protagonists need to learn and

values by which the protagonists can be judged.

Orr, the moral standard for Catch-22, takes responsibility for his own welfare. He takes it upon himself to learn how to perform many seemingly meaningless tasks. In taking responsibility for his own welfare, Orr is able to imagine the possibilities outside of the catch-22 of flying missions, and, in doing so, chooses a life-affirming response, escaping to Sweden. While planning his escape, Orr is still genuinely concerned about Yossarian and attempts to encourage Yossarian to flee with him. Orr is other-centered. He has taken responsibility for himself, but he also takes responsibility for those around him, namely Yossarian, by making sure, when he cannot convince Yossarian to go with him, that he has provided for Yossarian's needs and wants. Orr also demonstrates the ability to use time as a tool to plan his future. As a boy he decides he wants "apple cheeks," and as an adult he decides he wants to learn how to ditch and crash-land planes. Each of these decisions shows an ability to plan for the future and to take action based on those plans. Orr demonstrates that every individual is important and that problems can be handled effectively. Orr views society as a complex mechanism, a stove valve, in which problems must be approached one piece at a time.

Slocum's little boy is a younger Orr figure.

Therefore, the values Slocum's little boy represents are

less morally mature than those Orr represents. However, it is evident that the boy represents many of the same values that Orr represents. The boy, despite his age, understands the dangers of the world in which he lives. Yet, he does not complain; he accepts the challenges that loom before him. He demonstrates his other-centeredness by giving money to other children and by being able to feel and empathize with others. The boy engages his imagination in order to identify with others, to laugh when he is tickling them, and to give money away because he is happy, knowing he is going to give money away. Slocum's little boy demonstrates, in a more limited way than Orr, the ability to use time effectively. He will "manage." The boy manages by not letting his father manage his life for him and by accepting responsibility to rise to the challenges he encounters. Slocum's boy demonstrates that he, too, values the seemingly unimportant members of his society. He is always concerned about people, even people he dislikes such as Derek, the black maids, and white nurses. The boy, also, shows that it is possible to work effectively for "social reform" by being able to help bring his family back together again when they are fighting.

Sid, like Orr and Slocum's little boy, is the moral standard for the world in which he exists. Sid, though, being much older than either of the other two Orr figures, represents a more mature moral standard. Sid takes full

responsibility for himself. He, like Orr, takes care of himself, going to work very early in his life. He uses his imagination to improve designs for laundry equipment, thereby providing himself with a stable income for the rest of his life. In taking responsibility for himself, Sid also assumes responsibility for the other members of his family. He realizes at a very young age that he must provide money for his family since his family could not depend on his father's income. Sid understands time as a tool with which to shape his future, and, therefore accepts the sacrifices he has had to make for himself and his family. Sid is also able to use an imaginative circular logic to force Gold into admitting that cause-effect has some bearing on time. Sid makes peace with his past and chooses to interpret history in a way which is beneficial to him and to those around him. Sid, too, recognizes the importance of seemingly unimportant individuals. This time the seemingly unimportant are the people his father's age. Sid recognizes the necessity of being responsible for his father even though his father may seem to provide little benefit to society as a whole. And, Sid affirms the society of his family in which he wishes to live by accepting responsibility for the members of that society. In fact, Sid takes almost full responsibility for the society which he does affirm--he is responsible to his family.

In each of the novels, these characters follow similar

patterns. The Orr figures are present throughout each of the novels as examples for the protagonists to follow. In each, the Orr figure poses some sort of riddle or circular reasoning which the protagonist must decipher in order to understand the values the Orr figure represents. When it becomes necessary for the protagonist to act on his own, Heller removes the moral standard. So, each moral standard character first demonstrates the ability to exercise freewill, to make a moral decision, and then leaves the story to allow the protagonist to exercise his own freewill.

All of the protagonists are able to make moral decisions. To this end, they possess freewill, are able to examine the world, and are able to create their own world view. Heller's moral vision is based on the capacity of his protagonists to make moral decisions and their response to such a capacity. As the protagonists are confronted with making a moral decision, confronted with attractive offers to join morally irresponsible institutions, they must come to terms with their freewill, must examine their world, and must create a world view in which to base their actions.

Yossarian is presented with the immediate problem of not wanting to be killed while flying bombing missions. He responds to this problem with small rebellious acts which do little to alter his situation. Eventually he is offered the opportunity to join the military bureaucracy--to be sent home to say nice things about Colonel Cathcart and Colonel

Korn. At first, having observed Snowden's secret, Yossarian believes that there is no hope and that he is being compelled to accept their offer. He does not see that he can take any action against their will. He is morally deficient and receives a symbolic wound which causes him to limp. However, Yossarian is able to demonstrate the capacity to examine his world and to realize that catch-22's strength lies in the fact that people believe it is true. Then, having observed the hope which the news of Orr's being in Sweden represents, Yossarian is able to respond to the world by creating a world view which acknowledges such hope, thereby recognizing that he is not bound by catch-22 and has the capacity to exercise free will and can make moral decisions. Yossarian is then able to take responsibility for his own welfare and to begin taking responsibility for the welfare of those around him.

Bob Slocum is presented with the immediate problem of wanting to survive in corporate America. He, like Yossarian, is able to exercise free will. However, Slocum's life is complicated when he is offered a promotion which he would like to take. Taking the job would mean taking it from his friend Andy Kagle. Slocum is able to analyze his world and is able to recognize that his boy represents a moral alternative. Slocum, though, recognizing that he does have free will and that he is capable of making moral decisions but also wanting Kagle's job creates a world view

which denies free will in response to his examined world. Naturally, this decision contrasts with his boy's world view. Slocum's decision is immoral because Slocum willfully affirms a deterministic world view and chooses to deny that he has free will. Furthermore, he attempts to justify his actions by suggesting that he has no alternative, he has no choice, and therefore cannot be expected to make moral decisions. In denying free will, Slocum must seal off the door to a moral alternative and pretend that he never had a choice. This decision requires Slocum to murder his boy because his boy represents a possible moral alternative. By doing so, Slocum is free to affirm a deterministic world view and justify the action of taking Kagle's job as being neither moral nor immoral. When he does take Kagle's job, he, like Yossarian, picks up a limp, a symbol of his moral deficiency. Slocum's limp is much more pronounced and severe than Yossarian's because he has permanently forsaken his responsibility.

Bruce Gold is presented with the immediate problem of having been offered a job in Washington, D.C. Gold has the opportunity to take a government position. However, in doing so, Gold would have to deny responsibility to his family and to his heritage. Because he, like Slocum, wants to be able to take the job he has been offered but does not want to be judged as immoral, Gold creates a world view in which he believes that there are not choices because

everything that takes place is due completely to chance. Gold is able to begin dabbling in government and completely forsakes responsibility for his family by sleeping with a number of women. He, like Yossarian and Slocum, has a limp which is symbolic of a moral deficiency which eventually becomes a complete moral collapse. However, when Sid dies, Gold is finally able to recognize the example that Sid has set and begins to embrace a moral world view. Gold recognizes the responsibility he has to help his family. He is even able to help his father and thus able to begin fulfilling his responsibility.

Through each of the three novels, Heller refines his moral vision by dealing with specific questions about what it means to be responsible. In Catch-22 he demonstrates the necessity for hope and for exercising free will responsibly. In Something Happened, Heller studies the problem of a character using a deterministic world view as an excuse to act immorally. In Good as Gold, Heller returns to what it means to be moral by examining a presumed chaotic world and the difficulties a person faces when accepting moral responsibility.

Catch-22, although often misunderstood, is Heller's moral hypothesis. It may seem that Yossarian is morally irresponsible at the end of the novel because he is running away. However, Yossarian is actually affirming a responsibility to other human beings rather than to

institutions created by humans. Yossarian is running to his responsibility. He is running to save Nately's whore's little sister. Heller carefully delineates the difference between responsibility to an institution and responsibility to other people. Catch-22 remains Heller's most popular book. Perhaps one of the reasons for its continued popularity is that as Heller's moral hypothesis, it is more surreal than either Something Happened or Good as Gold. Therefore, since it is not as close to the typical human experience, his moral vision does not make the reader as uncomfortable.

With Something Happened, though, Heller begins to apply his moral hypothesis to more realistic circumstances. He also breaks the pattern he establishes in Catch-22: the protagonist, Slocum, fails to act morally. This break in pattern lends sharper insight in Heller's moral vision by presenting a moral antithesis to Yossarian's character. Slocum affirms a world view in which he denies responsibility so that he can have what he wants out of life and still think of himself as not being immoral. Something Happened is told by a first person narrator who fails morally. Even if the reader does not specifically see the way in which Slocum fails, the reader still feels the discomfort in reading the narrative, and Heller is thus able to present his moral view by presenting a character who is the inversion of that view. Because the reader experiences

the moral convergence, or, in this case, moral divergence, the reader experiences the same hollowness, the same lack of meaning in life which the protagonist experiences. By contrasting this feeling with the feeling of affirmation at the end of Catch-22, the reader can easily see which character's actions are being endorsed.

In Good as Gold, Heller returns to the theme of responsibility from a positive perspective and begins to define responsibility more thoroughly. Heller uses a surreal portrayal similar to the portrayal of the world of Catch-22 to describe Washington, D.C., and the people Gold encounters there. However, he also uses the realistic narrative technique of Something Happened to describe Gold's family life. By combining these two worlds, Heller is able to portray the realistic difficulty of being responsible with an abstract fantasy of escaping responsibility, escaping to Washington, D.C.

Like Catch-22, where Yossarian is just beginning his journey toward responsibility at the end of the novel, Gold begins his journey toward responsibility at the end of Good as Gold. Whereas Yossarian's journey begins with unknown obstacles ahead of him, Gold's journey toward his responsibilities begins with a mature, sober understanding of the very real obstacles that lie in his way. He has contradictory feelings of dislike and responsibility for his father. He must begin patching up his marriage with his

wife, Belle.

Good as Gold justifies the argument that Yossarian is a moral character and that he is running toward responsibilities, not from them, at the end of Catch-22 because Gold's responsibilities at the end of Good as Gold define the types of responsibilities to which Yossarian runs. Gold's journey is not easier than Yossarian's journey. Both must resist the temptations to pledge responsibility to surreal institutions and must create meaning for their lives by facing the challenges which responsibility to others entails, a task which Slocum demonstrates is difficult.

Heller's first three novels support the notion that literature is not simply a representation of a particular perspective on reality. Literature can be instructive as well, and importantly, it can be morally edifying. By creating fictional universes in which his characters are measured by moral standards and are allowed to either fail as Slocum does or succeed as Yossarian and Gold do, Heller has succeeded creating a moral vision. Heller dramatizes the difficulty of accepting moral responsibility and explores how moral decisions are made. Thus, Joseph Heller writes moral novels.

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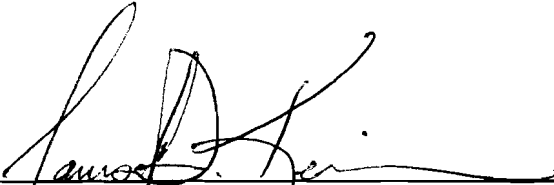
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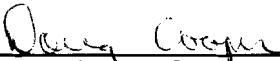
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**MAKING SOMETHING HAPPEN: JOSEPH HELLER'S
MORAL VISION IN CATCH-22, SOMETHING HAPPENED,
AND GOOD AS GOLD**

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