

The Concept of the "Well-Educated" Person in
Eighteenth-Century English Literature

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of the "well-educated" person as theorized in the literature of the eighteenth-century. Novels and periodical essays by writers such as Henry Fielding, Samuel Johnson, Philip Dormer Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, Daniel Defoe, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftsbury, Oliver Goldsmith, John Locke, Fanny Burney and Mary Wollstonecraft are referred to as sources for various eighteenth-century views on the characteristics of the ideal "well-educated" person and his duties to society.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the memory of my Father, Travis Ross Lovelace, who always encouraged my love of literature. Without his support, I would not be where I am today.

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The theme of education and the character of the "well-educated" man are striking features of much eighteenth-century English literature from satiric novels to polite essays.

All, All of a piece throughout:
Thy chase had a beast in view,
Thy wars brought nothing about;
Thy lovers were all untrue.
'Tis well an old age is out,
And Time to begin a new.

(1689) John Dryden¹

"Time to begin a new" could be called the battle-cry of eighteenth-century English writers, for they were rejecting the seventeenth-century cynicism concerning the nature of man, which can be found in the writings of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). John Dryden (1631-1700), foreshadowing eighteenth-century writers, picks up on the new philosophical trend which begins in the late seventeenth-century and which held major significance for the theories of how human character is shaped.

Perhaps "trend" is not exactly appropriate in connection with the ideas which predominated eighteenth-century English literature. A trend is an idea which comes quickly and disappears quickly and in retrospect, may seem ridiculous. However, the "trend" in philosophical thought in eighteenth-century England has profound influence on the writers and consequently, the literature of the time reflects the "new philosophy" of man and life as Donald Greene points out in The Age of Exuberance: Backgrounds to Eighteenth-

Century English Literature, the authors, like all great artists, "did not think of themselves as 'neo'-anything: they were attempting to do something new, something never done before."² This "new philosophy" was highly contagious and it soon permeated every aspect of life, including education. Before delving into the concept of the "well-educated" person in eighteenth-century English literature, it is necessary to explain the "new philosophy," when it began and how it differs from the seventeenth-century Hobbesian view of the nature of man.

In the late seventeenth-century there was a tendency to believe that man was inherently evil due to the fall of Adam. In other words, philosophers were greatly influenced by the belief that because of Adam's sin, all mankind was born in a state of sin and therefore he must be restrained by an authority such as the church or government. Hobbes shared this belief in the evil nature of man. Greene states that Hobbes created a scandal with the publication of Leviathon, in which Hobbes says that man is depraved because of his nature to survive at all costs.³ Thus to Hobbes, war was a natural condition:

Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man. For war consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known, and therefore the notion of time is to be considered in the nature of war, as in the nature of weather.⁴

Hobbes goes on to say that this is neither right nor wrong; it is just the way it is. The only solution is to create laws which strive to keep society from falling apart. This entails having a strong central authority to enforce the laws of the land.

Hobbes' view was in contrast to the later views of the eighteenth-century writers, for the eighteenth-century philosophy was that man is not inherently bad. In 1693, John Locke (1632-1704), a philosopher who believed that Hobbes' philosophy was inaccurate, wrote Some Thoughts Concerning Education, in which he says a child is like a "tabula rasa," or a blank slate upon which one writes.⁵ This accounts for Greene's assessment that Locke believed that man was capable of altruistic as well as egotistic behavior.⁶ However, instead of saying that these conditions were innate, Locke believed that they were learned. This idea is not to be attributed to Locke completely, for he was influenced by a philosophical movement called Benevolism.⁷ Basically, this philosophy maintained that man is "naturally" inclined to act benevolent and not wicked. Locke's extension of this idea included his alteration in the belief that man is innately good. Instead, man is simply born and his character is determined by his education. F.W. Garforth states in his evaluation of Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education, that "in a sense, the whole theme in Thoughts is 'education of a character.'"⁸ Thus Locke places a greater emphasis on society and its role in shaping an individual. In turn, this individual will either be

beneficial or destructive to society.

However, Locke's concern rests even more with the individual's development than society's role. In An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689), Locke attempts to explain the workings of the mind. In Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England, John Valdimir Price states,

Locke was far more interested in the contents of the mind, in discovering how it worked, how knowledge was acquired, how experience enabled us to make inferences, and how we were affected by our perceptions and our reflections derived from these perceptions.

This observation is important to realize when one reads Some Thoughts Concerning Education, for Locke was concerned with how individuals learn. This becomes a major issue of debate in the later chapters of this paper which concern the theories of learning.

Yet, even though Locke's ideas were extremely influential to writers such as Joseph Addison (1672-1717), his philosophy is not very comforting to those people who sought to prove that Hobbes was wrong and that man is innately good.¹⁰ Locke moved away from the idea of the innate depravity of man, but it was Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftsbury (1671-1731), who espoused the philosophy which won many followers.

Whether one calls it Benevolism or Latitudinarism, Shaftsbury believed that man is innately good: "Trust human nature and all will be well."¹¹ Latitudinarism, as Martin Battestin explains, is a "reaction against the cynical moral relativism of Hobbes, the strict

rationalism of the neo-Stoics."¹² It was a philosophy which stressed the perfectability of the human soul and this was directed to the amelioration of society. Battestin sums up this philosophy:

Good nature, or rather its specific manifestation in a comprehensive and energetic charity, became the core of latitudinarian Christianity which has as its goal the practical betterment of society no less than the salvation of individual souls.¹³

Thus, Battestin hits upon the major motivation behind the creation of the "new philosophy." The security of the nation was the main concern of eighteenth-century writers and this security rests on society's ability to influence individuals to sacrifice their desire in order to benefit the whole of society.

However, Shaftsbury says that the philosophy becomes a paradox. Society is the natural state for expressing benevolent feelings, yet society also works against their development. How? Shaftsbury says it is "from the force of custom and education in opposition to nature."¹⁴ Perhaps this paradox explains the waves of didactic literature which flooded the eighteenth-century literary world. Shaftsbury had thrown a pebble into the calm pool of latitudinarianism and the resulting ripples surfaced in the works of such writers as Samuel Johnson, Henry Fielding, Joseph Addison, Sir Henry Steele, Oliver Goldsmith, Daniel Defoe and Sir Joshua Reynolds. In other words, the works of these authors used Shaftsbury's suggestion that there was a need for an improvement in society before society could develop individuals which will benefit it. Like Locke and Shaftsbury,

many writers believed that this goal could be achieved with education.

The time was right, as Greene believes:

The increase in the dissemination of knowledge, in the production and distribution of newspapers, magazines and books, was phenomenal, and men like Addison and Steele, Johnson and Goldsmith were leaders of the movement of enlightenment.¹⁵

Men were seeking answers and the writers were only too happy to provide them for the men who desired to be more "enlightened." Yet, this did not apply to all classes of men.

Even though social mobility was more flexible in the eighteenth-century, as John Barrell asserts in English Literature in History, 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey, this does not mean that the traditional position of the aristocracy was threatened by the middle class.¹⁶

He states,

...that there was a change in the conceptions of how the organization of society could be described—how various elements that compose a society could be identified, and how they could be represented as sharing a common concern for the unity and stability of that society.¹⁷

Thus, every element of society is recognized as having a duty in establishing a sound society.

If stability is the goal, then why not adhere to a tradition which has proven its worth by its longevity? Such a tradition is the role of the aristocracy as the leaders of society. Hence, it is within this class that the writers look for examples of good men to point out to the young men who aspire to become "well-educated." The older "gentlemen" of the upperclass of English society, were

the guiding lights for the young gentleman to be. These young men were the future leaders - the backbone of the nation. Why were these elder gentlemen of the aristocracy considered to be the best examples of virtuous men?

These men of wealth had much more leisure time than say, the average working man. Thus, the gentleman had time to attempt to comprehend everything. He was able to exhibit a form of virtue unavailable to those of lower rank. John Barrell says,

The virtues of the gentleman were defined not by the fact that to be 'bred a gentleman' was as Fielding remarked, to be 'bred up to do nothing': the wisdom of the learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure: and he that hath little business shall become wise.¹⁸

What Barrell seems to be saying is that even though there was a philosophy which said that all men are innately good and have the ability to become virtuous and thus, a benefit to society in the eighteenth-century, some men seem more innately good than others. All men have innate goodness but the lower classes lack the opportunity to cultivate and expand it. The circumstances are not as favorable for virtue and education to flourish. The higher up one is, the more virtuous he has the opportunity to be and thus, the more influential in society. This logical belief was held by many eighteenth-century writers. Their concern was with the proper cultivation of the young men of the upperclass.

This is where the concept of the "well-educated" person enters. Just what does being "well-educated" mean? Locke attempts to explain

the rearing of a young gentleman in Some Thoughts Concerning Education. Addison and Steele concern themselves with education in many of the Spectator essays. Actually, most eighteenth-century writers saw education as essential to the development of virtuous men worthy of emulation. The debate is over what kind of education is conducive to such an aim. How does one raise a child to be "well-educated"?

Using literature as the source, this paper attempts to present the characteristics of the "well-educated" person as depicted in the novels and periodical essays of the eighteenth-century. Also to be discussed are the different methods of education espoused by the philosophers to be the "correct" education for cultivating the "well-educated" person who, in turn, will contribute to the benefit of society.

Chapter 1 Notes

The MLA Handbook For Writers Of Research Papers, Theses, And Dissertations was used as a guide throughout this paper.

¹ Donald Greene, The Age of Exuberance: Backgrounds to Eighteenth-Century English Literature (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 52.

² Greene, p. 91.

³ Greene, p. 92.

⁴ M.H. Abrams, Ed., The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 4th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979), p. 1657.

⁵ John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education. Edited by F.W. Garforth (Woodbury, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1964), p. 45.

⁶ Greene, p. 23.

⁷ Larry Champion, Ed., Quick Springs of Sense: Studies in the Eighteenth-Century (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1974), pp. 64-66. Benevolism maintained that virtue consists in benevolence, that the feelings of man are so constituted that he is "naturally" inclined to act benevolently, and that acting benevolently is rewarded with pleasure.

⁸ Locke, p. 121.

⁹ John Valdimir Price, "The reading of philosophical literature," in Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England, ed. Isabel Rivers (Leicester Univ. Press; New York: St. Marin's Press, 1982), p. 169.

¹⁰Price, p. 165. Price notes that the Spectator alone, with its numerous allusions to and explanations of Locke, doubtless did much to encourage the popularity of Locke: no philosopher has ever had a better publicity agent.

¹¹Greene, p. 112.

¹²Martin Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1959), p.15. The neo-Stoics' main proponent was Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third Earl of Shaftsbury. The belief was that the contemplation of Nature is bound to lead to virtue, happiness, and right thinking; that men instinctively desire the good - indeed, that the Good and Beautiful are essentially the same, so that the appeal of virtue to men is really an aesthetic appeal.

¹³Battestin, p. 15.

¹⁴Battestin, p. 17.

¹⁵Greene, p. 60.

¹⁶John Barrell, English Literature in History, 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 21.

¹⁷Barrell, p. 21.

¹⁸Barrell, p. 20.

Chapter 2 The Gentleman

In order to characterize accurately the "well-educated" person in eighteenth-century English literature, it is necessary to define one of the key terms associated with such a person - the "gentleman." This term spawns a list of implications such as upper class status, wealth in the form of land, and a sound education. Each of these general terms can be further subdivided and defined. Hence, ambiguity surrounds the meaning of a "gentleman." One thing is evident though: in the views of eighteenth-century authors such as Locke, Fielding, Addison, Steele and Chesterfield, the two terms, "well-educated" and "gentleman" seem to become synonymous. In the eyes of society, one term implies the other; a "gentleman" is "well-educated" and a "well-educated" person is most likely a gentleman.

Even though everyone agrees that there are certain characteristics necessary for a gentleman, there is no single, universal definition of one. The definitions vary from writer to writer. Some are more concerned with the outward graces of a gentleman. Others consider the graces of the mind to be of utmost importance. However, they all agree that the gentleman should be the best representative of English society. This traditional view of a gentleman is important for understanding some of the implications attached to the term. They keep the same type of men in the category of gentlemen while preventing the ascent of the unconventional yet perspective gentleman from the lower classes. Society holds that a gentleman

must be from the upper classes. Thus, a man born into a wealthy family inherits the title of a gentleman. In Henry Fielding's (1707-1754) Joseph Andrews, Mr. Wilson says, "Sir, I am descended of a good family and was born a gentleman."¹ This is an idea which pervades the eighteenth-century.

On the other hand, a man born into the working class can labor diligently to prove himself to be good enough to be a gentleman. At best, he will only be second rate to the gentleman who is born into the upper class, but his children may ascend the next step of the ladder to continue the cultivation. The working class "gentleman" can associate with his peers only and thus he is barred from mingling with the "best" of the gentleman. In the Tatler No. 48, Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729), speaks of a young man who was bred a mercer yet later inherits some money from an uncle. This young man tells Steele that he would rather make the money in his own trade than on trying to become a fine gentleman. Steele commends him for his choice: "...I could not but admire the young gentleman's prudence and good sense; for there is nothing so irksome as living in a way a man knows he does not become."² What seems illogical about this is that the young man has the wealth to make Steele consider him a gentleman, yet Steele thinks the man is right in not trying to become something with which he is not familiar - a fine gentleman or a "well-educated" gentleman. On the other hand, the man born into a wealthy family has no real income until he receives his inheritance. How is

it that the man with no real income is considered a gentleman, while the man from the working class is not considered to be a fine gentleman? The key lies in the traditional system based on inherited money/land.

When one considers that the writers of the eighteenth-century endeavored to live by the rules of reason and stability, it is only logical to believe in the permanent forces of the family. Thus, if a young man's father was considered to be a fine gentleman, then it is easier for the son to achieve the same status. The characteristics of a gentleman are passed from one generation to the next through the blood. This leads to the insinuation of good breeding being necessary for a fine gentleman. In The Compleat English Gentleman, Daniel Defoe (ca. 1660-1731) says, "Our modern Acceptation of a Gentleman is this, A Person Born (for there lies the essence of the Quality) of some known or Ancient family whose Ancestors have at least for some time been rais'd above the class of mechanicks."³ This system applies to the eldest son only. The other sons, although gentlemen because of their family name, must go into occupations befitting a gentleman.

Some of the occupations of a gentleman have already been mentioned but it is necessary for the full definition of a gentleman to relate the main occupations. Historically, the gentleman was a member of the social class called "the gentry." Greene asserts that these men were "landowners occupying in a rank between that of baron

and yeoman."⁴ Thus, a gentleman would usually have an estate to run. Along with land came the right to sit in Parliament. The landowners may also have the advantage to become a member of the justice system, such as being a Justice of the Peace. All these privileges were passed from the father to the eldest son. The younger sons had various options for their careers.

In Joseph Andrews, Fielding makes a case against this system of inheritance: "Would it not be hard that a man who hath no ancestors should therefore be rendered incapable of acquiring honor; when we see so many who have no virtues enjoying the honor of their forefathers?"⁵ Yet, in the end, Joseph, who displays all the characteristics of a gentleman but is a footman, is in reality, the son of Mr. Wilson who was "born a gentleman."

If one is born a "gentleman," therefore, one has certain obligations. Fielding's complaint against the men who have the reputation of a gentleman but have none of the virtues, is voiced by other literary writers of his time. In Joseph Andrews, Fielding fictionalizes this misconception of a gentleman in the form of the wealthy Squire. This man had been "educated" by what was called "travelling" and secures a county seat in the government. By all appearances, the Squire was "in common opinion one of the finest gentlemen of his age..."⁶ However, in reality, he takes pleasure in making his fellow man look absurd by stooping to play ridiculous pranks on him. Philip Dormer Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield

(1694-1773), says in Letters To His Son, "...never yield to that temptation, which, to most young men, is very strong, of exposing other people's weaknesses and infirmities."⁷ Steele also says in the Tatler, "The appellation of a Gentleman is never to be affixed to a man's circumstances but to his Behaviour in them..."⁸ Thus, even though the Squire has the appearance of a gentleman, this in no way reflects his attitude toward others, which is not of a gentleman; his behavior makes him no gentlemen.

An explanation of what does constitute a gentleman's character is presented in Letter To His Son, by Chesterfield who goes through great pains to advise his son on how to be a gentleman. His letters carry on the tradition of the courtesy book, the function of which was "to define the ideal gentleman and to suggest the education necessary for his highest development."⁹ Chesterfield does his best to relate the gentleman's physical graces as well as his mental graces. He defines these graces in a person:

A pretty person, genteel motions, a proper degree of dress, an harmonious voice, something open and chearful in the countenance, but without laughing; a distinct and properly varied manner of speaking: all these things, and many others are necessary in the composition...

All these things seem logical enough but the difficult part, as we have seen, is how to achieve them. A man may be born with the title to be a gentleman, but he still has to be cultivated.

This is where judgment is important. Chesterfield says to imitate established fine gentlemen. He says of choosing which people to

emulate: "Your own good sense and observation will teach you more of it than I can."¹¹ However he does offer this advice, "Observe carefully what pleases you in others."¹² He is advising his son to imitate conduct which pleases him, for more than likely, this conduct will please others.

All this advice which Chesterfield gives seems to suggest a bland conformity. However, conformity was not seen as bad, but natural. This is not to say that rules are not followed today. However, in the eighteenth-century there was more emphasis on the upper class to provide the model which embodied the rules. Chesterfield says, "It is certain, that we seek our own happiness in everything we do; and it is certain, that we can only find it doing well, and in conforming all our actions to the rule of right reason, which is the great law of Nature."¹³ The concern of Chesterfield and other writers of the eighteenth-century writers is that the gentlemen are going to be running the country. Therefore, they must be sensible, knowledgeable and virtuous.

Locke says in Some Thoughts Concerning Education, that the education of a gentleman should begin in the home and at a young age. He believes that "self-denial must be learned when young so it will be familiar as a man."¹⁴ Thus, if a man learns at an early age that he must sacrifice his desires in order to benefit society, then he will be more receptive to sacrifice as a leader of a nation. This prepared leader will be a gentleman who is "well-fashioned...and has that decency and gracefulness of looks, voice, words, motions,

gestures and all the whole outward demeanours which delights company and makes those with whom we may converse, easy and well pleased."¹⁵ Locke's idea of the education of a gentleman is for the sons of a gentleman only since he wrote Some Thoughts Concerning Education, in order to advise a gentleman how to educate his son properly. After an early education at home, the father might send the eldest son to school to be cultivated and since it takes money to attend the universities and colleges, the young man would be among his peers. They can imitate one another or observe the conduct of the dons in social situations. They will learn by detecting the failures and successes of each other.

Besides imitating a real gentleman, the young man can look in fiction to find a gentleman worth imitating. The opening paragraph of Fielding's Joseph Andrews says, "...examples work more forcibly on the mind than precepts....A good man therefore is a standing lesson to all his acquaintances..."¹⁶ The key is to discover the fine gentleman, to have the ability to recognize his character. In Joseph Andrews, Mr. Wilson emphasizes the need for some kind of example to follow: "And to this early introduction into life, without a guide, I impute all my future misfortunes..."¹⁷ Wilson's mistake was that he did not have foreknowledge before he jumped into the real world. He went full-steam ahead and without a rudder. Consequently, he fell in with the wrong company. "Good company," says Chesterfield, is "company which all the people of the place call,

and acknowledge to be, good company... It consists chiefly of people of considerable birth, rank, and character..."¹⁸ The way to learn discernment then is to have knowledge, from books and real life, of good company. If one has an idea of what to look for, then the characteristics of a gentleman will be more apparent. With the acquirements of a gentleman's graces, a man is ready to fulfill his vocation in life.

Being a gentleman could and was made into a full-time occupation by some. There were social events to attend, coffee-houses to frequent and sports outings to watch. Sons not fortunate enough to be allotted an allowance, had to seek real jobs. Some chose the clergy as a profession. This would require a degree from a renowned university, such as Oxford or Cambridge. A gentleman could decide to remain at the University and teach, thus becoming a role model. Another avenue would be life in the military. Only gentlemen could be officers. Whatever the occupation, there was the sense of duty to one's country. They made the laws, set the conventions and carried them out to unify England and keep her safe and secure.

Thus, this duty falls to the "well-educated" person who has the characteristic of a gentleman. The class which ruled in the past continues to rule. There are some additions from the middle classes but they were not completely accepted by the fine gentlemen of the upper class. These characteristics are further strengthened by one's family name and financial status. However, the writers cry out against the imposter who only appears to be a gentleman.

Many writers believe that men of the middle class are capable of being gentlemen, especially over the high-bred imposter. Fielding says in Joseph Andrews, "The best men are but little known, and consequently cannot extend the usefulness of their examples a great way."¹⁹ At best, "gentleman" is an ambiguous term to define. However, it does relate directly to the idea of the "well-educated" person in eighteenth-century English literature, the notion that it is in his actions, his treatment of others that the gentleman is most clearly seen.

Chapter 2 Notes

¹Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, Edited by Martin C. Battestin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), p. 169.

²Donald F. Bond, Ed., The Tatler Nos. 1-125 (Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 87.

³Daniel Defoe, The Compleat English Gentleman (London: David Nutt, 1972), p. 75.

⁴Greene, p. 36.

⁵Fielding, p. 206.

⁶Fielding, p. 206.

⁷Philip Dormer Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, Letters To His Son in Eighteenth-Century English Literature, Edited by Geoffrey Tillotson (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1969), p. 860.

⁸Shirley Ross Letwin "The Idea of a English Gentleman: Englishman in Search of a Character," Encounter, 57 NO. 5(1981) p. 13.

⁹Tillotson, p. 853.

¹⁰Tillotson, p. 859.

¹¹Tillotson, p. 855.

¹²Tillotson, p. 859.

¹³Tillotson, p. 859.

¹⁴Locke, p. 45.

¹⁵Locke, p. 127.

¹⁶Fielding, p. 13.

¹⁷Fielding, p. 170.

¹⁸Tillotson, p. 859.

¹⁹Fielding, p. 15.

Chapter 3 Learning From Books

Even though the definition of a gentleman is not completely clear, one thing is certain - a gentleman must be educated. The question is which type of education, book-learning or real experience, is more likely to produce an individual who is virtuous. The answers are as numerous as those to the question of what constitutes a gentleman. Each writer has evidence, whether in the form of an essay or novel, to support his opinion. Since both components of a "well-educated" person are so complex, it is better to analyze them separately, beginning with book-learning.

Oliver Goldsmith (c.1730-1774) says in The Bee, No. VI, "As few subjects are more interesting to society, so few have been more frequently written upon than the education of youth."¹ The interest stems from a concern over producing young men who will benefit society. Everyone had a view on this issue. The roots of this debate can be traced back to Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education.²

Locke emphasizes that there is more to book-learning than grammar and rhetoric. He lists subjects which are necessary for a young man to learn if that man ever hopes to become a "well-educated" gentleman. Some of the subjects are Latin, Geography, Arithmetic, French, Astronomy, Geometry, History, Ethics, Civil and Common Law.³ Such subjects can be learned only from books. While the subjects of Geography, French, Astronomy, History, Ethics, Civil and Common

Law can possibly be learned without book reference, the concepts of the subjects must be learned before being applied. Furthermore, an in-depth study of any of the subjects must include the use of written material such as text books. Geography and Astronomy are necessary to a "well-educated" person because one needs to know the world and his place in it. French is necessary because of England's proximity to France.

Of Latin, Locke says, "Latin I look upon as absolutely necessary to be a gentleman; and indeed custom, which prevails over everything... Custom serves for reason, and has, to those who take it for reason, so consecrated this method..."⁴ Hence, the teaching of Latin is dictated by custom rather than relevancy. It seems as if the writers were trying to return to an age which they thought was superior to their own. Yet, due to custom, Latin is highly relevant to the scholar as Fielding illustrates in the embodiment of Parson Adams in Joseph Andrews: "Mr. Abraham Adams - excellent scholar; perfect master of Greek and Latin language..."⁵ Adams excels in the ancient languages but he is stuck in the past and consequently, weak in the contemporary world. Yet, Adams, a good man, looks back to the ancients for examples of great men. Therefore, the writers feel that the classics are a good place for young men to learn virtues by imitating good men from the past. Joseph Addison agrees with this in the Spectator, No. 337:

To this end, whenever they (students) read the lives and actions of such men as have been famous

in their generation, it should not be thought enough to make them barely understand so many Greek or Latin sentences, but they should be asked their opinion of such an action or saying, an obliged to give their reasons why they take it to be good or bad.

Thus, the classics do have a proper and useful position in the education of a young man, especially if virtue is the aim of education.

History is extremely important for education because so many lessons are found in the past. Thus there are lessons to be learned and avoided in history. History also gives a man a sense of who he is and where he has been. There is also the idea that history repeats itself. Therefore, knowledge of it would be useful if a similiar situation ever occurs again. In Joseph Andrews, Adams says, "I am not much travelled in the history of modern times, that is to say, these last thousand years; but those who are can, I make the question, furnish you with parallel instances."⁷ In this sense, one can say that the best way to study the present is to study the past because nothing happens which has not previously happened.

Hand-in-hand with History go Civil and Common Law. Knowledge of these subjects is of utmost importance to the "well-educated" person. In order to be a benefit to society, a man has to know the laws of that society, social as well as legal. In the Spectator, No. 337, Addison says, "He (the student) might at the same time mark what was moral in any speech, and how far it agreed with the character of the person speaking. This exercise would soon strengthen his

judgement in what is blameable or praise-worthy, and give him an early seasoning of morality."⁸ Thus, a student can learn from books what to expect in the real world.

Even more important than speeches is knowledge of the English constitution and government. In evaluating the Common Law, the subject of ethics comes into use. The application of ethics to law requires an organization or method of thinking, one which Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) calls "discernment." How does one know what is good or bad if one has nothing against which to measure a law? To be serviceable to his country, a man must be capable of distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

Thus far, only academic books have been discussed in relation to education. What about fiction? Do novels offer any lessons? Fielding would say "yes." In the opening chapter of Joseph Andrews, Fielding says, "In all these, delight is mixed with instruction, and the reader is almost as much improved as entertained."⁹ However, Goldsmith does not agree with this. In The Bee, No. VI, he says,

Instead, therefore, of romances, which praise young men of spirit, who go through a variety of adventures and at last conclude a life of dissipation, folly, and extravagance in riches and matrimony, there should be some men of wit employed to compose books that might be praised for having resisted allurements when young, and how he at last became lord mayor; how he was married to a lady of great sense, fortune and beauty; to be as explicit as possible; the old story of Whittington, were his cat left out, might be more serviceable to the tender mind than either Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews, or an hundred others, where frugality is the only good quality the hero is not possessed of.

Hence, Goldsmith sees this mixing of vice and virtue in a hero as counterproductive rather than constructive to the impressionable young reader.

Perhaps such a student would be able to read a novel such as Joseph Andrews, and yet be aware of what is good and bad in it, if he (the student) has a guide/tutor to aid him. In Joseph Andrews, Mr. Wilson says, "I stayed a very little while at school after his death; for, being a forward youth, I was extremely impatient to be in the world; for which I thought my parts, knowledge, and manhood thoroughly qualified me. And to this early introduction into life, without a guide, I impute all my future misfortunes."¹¹ If Mr. Wilson had remained in school and finished his book education, he may have been better prepared for the real world. Thus he might have avoided the troubles he had.

However, knowledge of books is not enough on its own. One needs an experienced tutor to point a young man in the right direction. Locke says a tutor should have "the character of a sober man and a scholar."¹² He goes even further to say, "To form a gentleman as he should be, it is fit his governor should himself be well-bred, understanding the ways of carriage and marriages of civility, in all the variety of persons, times and places; and keep his pupil, as much as his age requires constantly to the observation of them."¹³ Contrast this with the type of "guidance" given to the country squire in Joseph Andrews:

He had been educated (if we may here use that expression) in the country, and at his own home, under the care of his mother, and a tutor who had orders never to correct him, nor to compel him to learn more than he liked, which it seems was very little...¹⁴

Without strong guidance, the squire never learned to abide by the proper rules of conduct. The bulk of his learning has been through travelling which is helpful only after a young man has been exposed to life in books. But, he still needs a tutor or schoolmaster's aid. Goldsmith says in The Bee, No. VI, "Of all the professions in society I do not know a more useful, or a more honorable one than a schoolmaster..."¹⁵ Goldsmith believes that an education is only as good as the teacher who administers it.

This is where the importance of school emerges. One of the debates in education was over the question of public vs. private schools. Which kind produces an atmosphere which is more conducive for educating young gentlemen? When Adams and Joseph are discussing the misfortunes of Mr. Wilson in Joseph Andrews, Adams says, "I have discovered the cause of all the misfortunes which befell him. A public school, Joseph, was the cause of all calamities which he afterwards suffered. Public schools are the nurseries of all vice and immortality." Joseph disagrees and offers an example to the contrary: "You know my late master, Sir Thomas Booby, was bred at a public school, and he was the finest gentleman in all the neighbourhood... Besides, I have often heard my master say that the discipline practised in public schools was much better than that in

private."¹⁶ Thus, it depends on the individual. However, Locke sees this as being bad for a youth's development:

Schoolmates often bring boldness of spirit which has a mixture of rudeness and ill-turned confidence which must be unlearned... Virtue is harder¹⁷ to be got than a knowledge of the world.

Thus Locke argues in favor of private education in the home before a young man is sent to school.

The overwhelming indication is that determining the subject matter in which to educate a young man is easy; it is controlling the outcome which is the difficult part. One never knows which way a youth will go. There are a number of ways to influence the outcome as much as is possible but nothing is certain. Joseph says in Joseph Andrews,

I remember when I was in the stable, if a young horse was vicious in his nature, no correction would make him otherwise; I take it to be equally the same among men...if a boy be of a mischievous, wicked inclination, no school, though ever so private will ever make him good; on the contrary, if he be of a righteous temper, you may trust him to London, or wherever else you please,¹⁸ he will be in no danger of being corrupted.

Guidance, then, is always necessary, whether through books or real experience, because one can learn vice as well as virtue.

Chapter 3 Notes

¹ Arthur Friedman, Ed. Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith
5 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 455.

² Margaret J.M. Ezell, "John Locke's Images of Childhood:
Early Eighteenth Century Response to Some Thoughts Concerning
Education" Eighteenth Century Studies 17 (Winter, 1983/84) pp. 139-55.

³ Richard Wynne, Ed., Essays on Education by Milton, Locke and
the Authors of the Spectator (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1961), pp.
86-119.

⁴ Wynne, p. 46.

⁵ Fielding, p. 17.

⁶ Wynne, p. 145.

⁷ Fielding p. 114.

⁸ Wynne, p. 147.

⁹ Fielding, p. 15.

¹⁰ Friedman, p. 461.

¹¹ Fielding, p. 170.

¹² Wynne, p. 26.

¹³ Fielding, p. 27.

¹⁴ Fielding, p. 206.

¹⁵ Friedman, p. 457.

¹⁶ Fielding, pp. 194-95.

¹⁷ Wynne, p. 24.

¹⁸ Fielding, p. 195.

Chapter 4
Learning From Experience

The mind is but a barren soil; a soil which is soon exhausted, and will produce no crop, or only one, unless it be continually fertilized and enriched with foreign soil.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourse VI¹

There is no doubt that all eighteenth-century writers agreed with Reynolds on the point that the mind must be "continually fertilized." This has already been established in the preceding section on learning from books. The issue in this section is not whether experience is a better method of education than book-learning, but rather, this section analyzes what is meant by real-life experience or, as Locke prefers to label it, "real education." This alternative method of education or fertilization, is the issue which is debated in periodical essays and novels. Writers such as Reynolds, Johnson, Chesterfield, Fielding, Goldsmith and Defoe, all had opinions on the method of real education.

In the most general sense, real experience means socializing and socialization, whether at school, parties, operas, coffee-houses or on the popular and fashionable "Grand Tour."² James Howell, an eighteenth-century writer, speaks of travel: "...the Genius of all active and generous spirits /is/... a desire to Travell, and not to be bounded, and confined within the shoares and narrow circumference of an Island..."³ What Howell describes is a desire to see and experience more than one's immediate environment. Travelling

is a way to incorporate all types of socializing while learning concurrently about foreign cultures. One of the most vocal proponents of real education was Chesterfield. In his Letters To His Son, Chesterfield advises his son to become a great gentleman, admired by all. As in the section dealing with book-learning, imitation is also the key to education by real experience. The difference is, as Chesterfield points out, that one should imitate the men of the real world, not the men of the academic world:

A company wholly composed of men of learning, though greatly to be valued and respected, is not meant by the words, good company: they cannot have the easy manners and founuse (cultivated address) of the world, as they do not live in it.⁴

Thus, to find gentlemen worthy of emulation, one must venture into the real world. By Chesterfield's definition, the "real world" is the world outside academics and the academy. His advice on books is to "recommend them as the best general maps to assist you in your journey."⁵ Barrell sums up what Chesterfield means by books being "general maps": "The theoretical knowledge of the world he requires will come to him from books; the practical knowledge will come to him in the assemblies of those 'qui ont du monde!', from studying to imitate their manners, and to understand their characters."⁶ The idea is that books are only as a preparation for the real world.

Exposure to the world is thus one way to observe men worthy of emulation but where does one look for such men? Chesterfield calls them "good company" and defines them as "company which all the people

of the place call, and acknowledge to be good company...It consists chiefly of men of considerable birth, rank, and character..."⁷ Thus, a young man must seek and choose a man who is generally agreed to be a "good man" by society. To make such a selection requires what Reynolds calls "discernment." Chesterfield also uses this term in his Letters To His Son: "Imitate, then, with discernment and judgment, the real perfections of the good company which you may get into."⁸ It follows that this ability to discern must be based on some kind of knowledge of what to look for in a man worthy of emulation. The choice hinges on the perception of the young man. Fielding says in An Essay On the Knowledge of the Characters of Men: "As good-nature requires a distinguishing faculty, which is another word for judgment, and is perhaps the sole boundary between wisdom and folly; it is impossible for a fool, who hath no distinguishing faculty, to be good-natured."⁹ Men must be taught to judge or "reason" in order to be properly cultivated. Being cultivated is a process which has a logical order; the ability to judge comes before making the right decision.

Once a young man has learned the art of discernment, he must select a gentleman to imitate but where does one look? It has already been mentioned that Chesterfield advised his son to keep "good company." Yet this is a contradiction to experiencing the "real world." If a young man does not frequent places where there is both good and low company, then how else will he develop a full knowledge of the world? He must experience every aspect of life

and if he is able to discern, he will make the best choice. Once a decision has been made, Reynolds says in Discourse VI: "We should imitate the conduct of the great artists in the course of their studies, as well as the works which they produced, when they were perfectly formed."¹⁰ Thus, imitation goes beyond copying gestures and manners. It must include an analysis of the total man. Granted, Reynolds was speaking of art, but imitation of a great artist is analogous to imitation of a good man, for the end result is a product of originality. Reynolds says in Discourse VI:

Whoever has so far formed his taste as to be able to relish and feel beauties of the great way in his study; for, with an inward pride, and is almost as powerfully affected, as if it had itself produced what it admires. Our hearts frequently warmed in this manner by the contact of those whom we wish to resemble, will undoubtedly catch something of their way of thinking; and we shall receive in our bosoms some radiation at least of their fire and splendour.

This advice to observe the mental workings of the chosen model is the same advice Chesterfield gives to his son: "Seek for their particular merit, their predominant passion, or their prevailing weakness..."¹²

Yet would this discovery always be used for good? Samuel Johnson is inclined to answer this question in the negative. He says in Rambler No. 4, "...for that observation which is called knowledge of the world, will be found much more frequently to make men more cunning than good."¹³ This is an acute observation in

itself. Men can use information obtained by observation for questionable means. It takes a man of insight to acknowledge this possibility. In a letter to his brother, Oliver Goldsmith brings up the same idea: "I had learn'd from books to love virtue before I was taught from experience the necessity of being selfish."¹⁴ Thus, bad as well as good conduct can be learned from experience. It all depends on the nature of the man. Daniel Defoe says in The Compleat English Gentleman, "That the great defect lies not in their families or in their blood, not in their intellect or capacities, but in the error of their education."¹⁵ If these undesirable men had been taught by the proper method, they would have been more likely to have grown into properly cultivated young men.

Forseeing this problem, the writers concerned themselves with the preparation of a man before he enters society. Goldsmith says in The Bee No. 6, "As few subjects are more interesting to society, so few have been more frequently written upon than the education of youth."¹⁶ This is only logical in a world so concerned with the good of society. The young men will one day become leaders of that society. The hope of the future rests in the hands of these potential leaders. Therefore they must receive the method of education which will produce the best possible leaders. Goldsmith gives his plan in The Bee No. 6:

We should teach them as many of the facts as possible and defer the causes until they seemed of themselves desirous of knowing them. A mind thus leaving school, stored with all the simple

experiences of science, would be the fittest
in the world for the college course...¹⁷

Goldsmith argues for teaching young men the basics and then sending them out in the world. Fielding remarks on education in The Jacobite's Journal, No. 22, that "Education may serve for all good Purposes and...that every Seed of Good in Human Nature may be reared up to full Perfection and Maturity; while all which is of evil Tendency is weeded, before it spreads and is strengthened by Time."¹⁸ Sheriff believes that what eighteenth-century writers, particularly Goldsmith, were trying to do is "show that the naturally good man must be taught to understand society and adapt his values to social reality if he is to be truly good."¹⁹ To teach one to understand society is a rather difficult task due to the complexity of society. Sheriff points out a paradox in Goldsmith's theory. Basically, Sheriff says that adapting one's values to social reality may conversely result in producing bad results. He says, "How could spontaneous natural 'social affections' or benevolence, be an adequate guide to moral conduct amidst the calculated fraud and deceit of society?"²⁰ Thus if one adapts the "values" of a debauched society, then the individual is contributing to the deterioration of society. Reynolds has one possible solution in Discourse VI: "There can be no doubt that he who has the most materials has the greatest means of invention..."²¹ In order to prevent the young man from being lured to the dark or corrupt element of society, writers agree that the individual must be prepared to

confront such an element, recognizes it and ultimately, denounce it. Hence, the importance of experience in the cultivation of a young man is paramount in producing the "good man." Greene feels that "'Experience' then is the key word of the controlling philosophy of the intellectual life of eighteenth-century Britain."²² Chesterfield elaborates on the man who has not experienced the real world: "...Knows nothing of man, for he has not lived with him, and is ignorant of all the various modes, habits, prejudices, and tastes, that always influence and often determine him."²³ Yet, cannot one "see" the world through the eyes of another by reading of his experiences?

The amount of didactic literature written during the eighteenth-century would seem to indicate so. Fielding, especially, labored to fictionalize the "good man" in Joseph Andrews. In his novel there is Parson Adams - the book-learned man; Joseph Andrews - the young but uncultivated man; the Country Squire - the experienced man gone bad and Mr. Wilson - the experienced man who reforms. Fielding describes Adams as "a man of good sense, good parts and good nature; but entirely ignorant of the ways of this world as an enfant just entered into it could possibly be."²⁴ Thus, even though Adams is a virtuous man who is to be regarded highly, his conduct in the real world is not to be imitated since he is not aware of how the real world operates. He is not a "man of the world" in the sense that Mr. Wilson is in the novel. When speaking of his life, Mr. Wilson

says,

I stayed a very little while at school after my father's death; for, being a forward youth, I was extremely impatient to be in the world: for which I thought my parts,²⁵ knowledge, and manhood thoroughly qualified me.

Thus Mr. Wilson, in contrast to Parson Adams, represents the experienced man who is lacking in book education. Another example of this type of man is the Country Squire. In this case, the Squire is also lacking in book-learning, yet he remains bad while Mr. Wilson realizes his errors and tries to amend them. The Squire, even with his lack of education, acquires a government seat. His knowledge of the world (which he gained by traveling) and his birth into a landed class, mislead the people into thinking the Squire is a gentleman in conduct as well as birth. His exposure to the real world gives him a significant advantage over a book-learned person such as Parson Adams. It is easier to live in a world about which one know something about the rules of the game. Adams has trouble functioning in the real world because his world is found in his books.

This is not to say that the Squire is a man to be imitated, but neither is the Parson. Adams is, Sheldon Sacks calls him, "A walking concept" or a standard of virtue.²⁶ His perception is faulty and as Sheriff says, his "values and actions are inappropriate according to the social code."²⁷ Adams has not taken the opportunity to observe the real world. Instead, he "travels" in his books. This is best

shown in a dialogue between Adams and a Country Inn Host in Joseph

Andrews:

Adams: I will inform thee; the travelling I mean is in books, the only way of travelling by which any knowledge is to be acquired.

Host: He who goes abroad, as I have done, will always have opportunities enough of knowing the world without troubling his head with Socrates, or any such fellows.

Adams: Friend, if a man should sail round the world, and anchor in every harbour of it, without learning; he would return home as ignorant as he went out.²⁸

Once again, Fielding presents the idea of book-learning vs. real experience. He artfully puts Joseph in a position which falls in between the two types of education. Through Parson Adams, Joseph has been exposed to books. Yet Joseph does not have the chance to apply his book-learning to real life before he is thrust into it with only Parson Adams as a guide. Sheriff describes the situation in this observation: "In a moral romance for example, the Good-Natured Man may begin as innocent and ignorant and may, through a journey or other tutualistic experience, gain understanding of society."²⁹ This describes Joseph's progression from ignorance of the real world to a better understanding of how society functions. Sheriff continues to say that, "Significant differences among various genuinely good-natured characters, excluding those who affect good nature, can be traced to their understanding of and adaptation to society."³⁰ Thus, both Parson Adams and Joseph can be considered

"Good-Natured characters," yet Joseph is a more important figure as a lesson because he gains knowledge through his experiences. Mr. Wilson also gained knowledge through his experiences but, unlike Joseph, Wilson was swayed by the corruption, whereas Joseph remains virtuous.

Here again the predisposition toward good or evil begins when a young man or woman is very young. One such example, Joseph Andrews, has already been examined. Another example is Evelina Anville in Fanny Burney's Evelina. In this novel a young "orphan," Evelina, is raised by a gentle and good man, the Reverend Villars. Once Evelina becomes a woman, she is sent out into the real world, to which she is a complete stranger. She is extremely gullible, believing too many cunning people, yet she remains virtuous due to her excellent upbringing.

Evelina also learns quickly: "Never, never again will I trust to appearances, - never confide in my own weak judgment, - never believe that person to be good who seems to be amiable! What cruel maxims are we taught by a knowledge of the world!"³¹ Thus, Evelina learns from her experiences instead of falling victim to the vices of real life. The point here is that real experience is the method by which one learns the "unwritten" rules of society. Villars understood this and that is why he sent Evelina out into it. He describes Evelina before her "entrance into the world": "She is quite a little rustic, and knows nothing of the world; and tho' her

education has been the best I could bestow in this retired place... I shall not be surprised if you should discover in her a thousand deficiencies of which I have never dreamt."³² When Evelina becomes a member of the social scene, she makes blunders in conduct and says, "I am too inexperienced and ignorant to conduct myself with propriety in this town, where everything is new to me, and many things are unaccountable and perplexing."³³ Yet, Evelina's conduct is considered improper only because she does not follow proper rules of social etiquette. This does not mean that she is wrong. On the contrary, Evelina behaves more rationally than the so-called "refined ladies" of society who follow traditional but ridiculous rules.

The idea of real experience seen through the eyes of a woman sheds light on the conventionality of real education. Everyone must follow the same rules in order to achieve the same goals. Evelina does not conform completely to the rules and through her, the reader sees how society can discourage individuality with its notion of education, especially in women. However, near the turn of the century, the philosophy begins to shift again. Education and the nature of man are used as evidence in favor of educating women in the same manner as men. Along with this shift comes the idea of a woman's education being as important as a man's.

Chapter 4 Notes

¹Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourse on Art, "Discourse VI",
Edited by Robert R. Wark (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), p. 99.

²Thomas H. Curley, Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel (Athens:
Univ. of Georgia Press, 1976) p. 15. According to his morality,
travel was a fundamental ethical duty that required all men to join
the Lockean search for factual truths illuminating the unity within
diversity of human behavior.

³Curley, p. 13.

⁴Tillotson, p. 861.

⁵Tillotson, p. 862.

⁶Barrell, p. 204.

⁷Tillotson, p. 861.

⁸Tillotson, p. 862.

⁹John K. Sheriff, The good-natured man: the evolution of a moral
ideal, 1660-1800 (Univ. of Alabama: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1982),
pp. 21-22.

¹⁰Reynolds, p. 103.

¹¹Reynolds, p. 98.

¹²Tillotson, p. 859.

¹³Samuel Johnson, Essays from the Rambler, Adventurer, and Idler,
Edited by W.J. Bate (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), p. 16.

¹⁴sheriff, p. 46.

¹⁵Defoe, p. 184.

¹⁶Friedman, p. 453.

- ¹⁷Friedman, p. 462.
- ¹⁸Sheriff, p. 46.
- ¹⁹Sheriff, p. 47.
- ²⁰Sheriff, p. 47.
- ²¹Reynolds, p. 112.
- ²²Greene, p. 101.
- ²³Tillotson, p. 861.
- ²⁴Fielding, p. 17.
- ²⁵Fielding, p. 170.
- ²⁶Sheriff, p. 71.
- ²⁷Sheriff, p. 71.
- ²⁸Fielding, p. 155.
- ²⁹Sheriff, p. 72.
- ³⁰Sheriff, p. 72.
- ³¹Fanny Burney, Evelina (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p. 48.
- ³²Burney, p. 18.
- ³³Burney, p. 48.

Chapter 5
The "Well-Educated" Woman

Woman has everything against her, as well our faults as her own timidity and weakness; she has nothing in her favour, but her subtlety and her beauty. Is it not very reasonable, therefore she should cultivate both?

Rousseau ¹

Before women and men could be considered equal, argues Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792, the attitude which Rousseau espouses must alter. In her book A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Wollstonecraft states that it is precisely this belief that women are intellectually inferior to men, which has caused the "inaccurate education" of women. Whereas a man is cultivated in mind as well as body, a woman is cultivated in appearance only. Just as there was an idea "well-educated" man, there was the "refined lady." Wollstonecraft says in her book,

With respect to women, when they receive a careful education, they are either made fine ladies, brimful of sensibility, and teeming with capricious fancies; or mere notable women. The latter are often friendly, honest creatures, and have a shrewd kind of good sense joined with worldly prudence, that often render them more useful members of society than the fine sentimental lady, though₂ they possess neither greatness of mind nor taste.

Here Wollstonecraft picks up on the idea of one's role in society. Just as men have a part, so do women. Wollstonecraft argues that women have not been allowed to fulfill their rightful role in society.

Instead, they have been placed in a subjugated position and have become ornamental rather than productive. In Mary Wollstonecraft: Her Life and Times, Edna Nixon says that Wollstonecraft's book was "not written to extenuate the faults of women but to prove them to be the natural consequence of their education and station in life."³ Hence the eighteenth-century woman is a result of the man's prejudice. Wollstonecraft speaks of the purpose of her book:

To Account for, and execute the tyranny of man, many ingenious arguments have been brought forward to prove, that the two sexes, in the acquirement of virtues, ought to aim at attaining a very different character: or, to speak explicitly, women are not allowed to have sufficient strength of mind to acquire what really deserves the name of virtue.⁴

Thus Wollstonecraft uses the very same arguments for the education of women as the male writers use for the education of men. Virtue and reason are the keys to developing men, and women, who will benefit society. Yet society will never develop properly if women are not cultivated in the same manner as men. Nixon speaks of Wollstonecraft's view: "As she saw it, one half of humanity was being dragged in chains, a dead weight retarding the advance of the other half."⁵ Wollstonecraft sets up the urgency of the situation by appealing to the eighteenth-century desire to create a stable and healthy society. In her dedication to M. Talleyrand Perigord in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, she says,

Contending for the rights of woman, my main argument is built on this simple principle, that if she be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue;

for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice.

Wollstonecraft points out that if, as Locke says, virtue is the principle goal of humanity, then women must be allowed the same opportunity of cultivating the mind. Otherwise, society will be unbalanced, one side overshadowed by the other.

It would be beneficial to examine a woman's "sphere" as opposed to a man's. In the eighteenth-century, these were definitely separate, not meshed as Wollstonecraft believed they should be. She says, "Women have been drawn out of their sphere by false refinement."⁷ While young gentlemen were educated to produce minds capable of creating a stable and good society, women were "educated" in the art of refinement and how to use this art to get a husband. Thus, they were taught that they were to be virtual servants and their duty was to please their husbands. Wollstonecraft illustrates this thought by presenting Rousseau's opinion of women:

He then proceeds to prove that women ought to be weak and passive, because she has less bodily strength than man; and, from hence infers, that she was formed to please and to be subject to him; and that it is her duty to render herself agreeable to her master⁸- this being the grand end of her existence.

Rousseau's opinion is common for the day as Wollstonecraft points out: "All the books professedly written for their illustration, which make the first impression on their minds, all inculcate the same opinion."⁹ Thus a woman's education is different from a man's

and women exist solely for the pleasure of men. Wollstonecraft speaks of this:

On this sensual error, for I must call it so, has the false system of female manners been reared, which robs the whole sex of its dignity, and classes the brown and fair with the smiling flowers that only adorn the land.

"Smiling flowers" is a perfect description of women as viewed by men. It is necessary to note here that just as the "well-educated" man is from a class which does not have to work at a trade for a living, the refined lady is from the same class. She had the time to spend on preparing her clothes, hair and make-up in order to present herself in the most appealing way. Thus, the refined lady is an ornament of society.

Granted, they must also fulfill the domestic duty of motherhood, for that is part of a woman's sphere. Yet, are these women the best possible mothers? Are these mothers the role models to which children should look for guidance? Wollstonecraft says since education begins at home, the mother is the first influence in a child's life. Thus, a virtuous and educated mother is a sounder influence than one who lacks reason. It follows that a woman who has been educated will be more apt to instill virtue in her children. Wollstonecraft says,

The perfection of our nature and capability of happiness, must be estimated by the degree of reason, virtue, and knowledge, that distinguish the individual, and direct the laws which bind society: and that from the exercise of reason, knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable.

The whole argument comes down to the nature of man and its connection with the condition of society. Wollstonecraft says that it is for the good of society that women receive the same education as men. She says, "Women, who receive only a disorderly kind of education, seldom attend to with that degree of exactness, that men, who from their infancy are broken into method, observe."¹² This "education," says Wollstonecraft, is the result of man's mistaken belief that women are inferior in intellect and therefore, it is a waste of time to try to educate them. Wollstonecraft says, "Into this error men have probably been led by viewing education in a false light; not considering it as the first step to form a being advancing gradually towards perfection; but only as a preparation for life."¹³

Again Wollstonecraft hits upon the same idea that the eighteenth-century male writers have been trying to depict in novels and periodical essays. Education is the key in developing young men and women who will benefit society. As Nixon says, "Education meant access to knowledge which was the key to thought, to creativeness, to the good life."¹⁴ Furthermore, Wollstonecraft takes this idea of society's condition one more step:

If marriage be the cement of society, mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship, nor will women ever fulfill the peculiar duties of their sex, till they become enlightened citizens, till they become free by being enabled to earn their own substance. I mean to prevent misconstruction, as one man is independent of another.¹⁵

The idea of fellowship between the sexes is something new. Women should be allowed to mix in company in order to learn by observation, just as men do. Wollstonecraft's insistence on "intellectual, emotional and physical development for women" is as Moira Ferguson and Janet Todd point out, "...a revolutionary demand that attacks both male dominance and female acquiescence." These authors emphasize that fact that Wollstonecraft does not stress "equality of the sexes but the right of women to prove this through increased opportunities and independence."¹⁶ Whether or not one believes that women are inferior, there is a belief that they can be made into more productive individuals than the present situation allows in 1792. Ferguson and Todd make the observation that, "Virtue is asexual and should be cultivated by men and women alike."¹⁷ Both sexes can be made virtuous with a proper education of right and wrong.

According to Wollstonecraft, women were not so anxious to make mischief and trouble for men as men believed they were. The women who did cause trouble are the cunning ones who have resorted to such actions only because they have learned that exploiting human weaknesses was the only way one could gain a little power over men. Oppression will have side effects, one may be revolution. In a sense, Wollstonecraft is calling for a social revolution:

Men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in...till society be differently constituted, much cannot be expected from education.¹⁸

Wollstonecraft's ideas are fitting in with the eighteenth-century philosophy of the good of society, yet the problem is, as Ferguson and Todd point out, that Wollstonecraft, "...responds to a literary tradition and to a changing social climate."¹⁹ If society shapes this individual by dictating his or her education, then society is writing its own future. One learns from books and real experience. Real experience is found in society ruled by men and their social customs. Wollstonecraft predicts, "that virtue will never prevail in society till the virtues of both sexes are founded on reason; and, till the affections common to both are allowed to gain their strength by the discharge of mutual duties."²⁰ Thus society is unbalanced by the "inaccurate education" of women. Until the system is altered, society will fail to expand. Ferguson and Todd sum up Wollstonecraft's belief: "The need for female education was a need also of society as a whole; unless the intellectual condition of women improved, there could be no further social advance for humanity."²¹ As long as a woman is treated "like a fanciful kind of half being," instead of a partner who shares the burden of keeping the order of society, then the full potential of a nation is not being used and the best results cannot be achieved.

Wollstonecraft believes that by giving a woman a chance to fulfill her duties by being a man's partner, society will be on its way to stability. She says, "Society can only be happy and free in proportion as it is virtuous; but the present distinctions, established in

society, corrode all private, and blast all public virtue."²² In order to correct this element of society, the 'view' towards a woman's education must change. Once that is accomplished, women can make more productive contributions. Thus, with virtuous men leading the country in politics and ethics and women preparing the children for the future, harmony will result as the two spheres merge.

Just as the man's education is fictionalized in the literature of the eighteenth-century, a woman's "entrance into the world" is also fictionalized. A good example is Evelina in Fanny Burney's novel, Evelina. Burney presents arguments of writers such as Rousseau and Wollstonecraft in a variety of characters. The main concern is the education of Evelina. Edward Bloom states in the introduction of Evelina, that "Throughout the dramatic story of Evelina's evolving education, there runs a moralistic leitmotif which never alters: judicious conduct offers safety and sound reputation; intemperance only uncertainty and sorry consequences."²³ Both kinds of conduct are presented to the reader through Evelina's "eyes." Yet, the reader "sees" Evelina's conduct through the "eyes" of Reverend Villars and other characters. Evelina's ability to distinguish between "judicious conduct" and "intemperance," signals the reader that she has been well-prepared for her entrance into the world. However, Reverend Villars still has doubts which he writes to Lady Howard: "The mind is but too naturally prone to pleasure, but too easily yielded to dissipation; it has been my study to guard

her against their delusions, by preparing her to expect, - and to despise them."²⁴ Thus, Reverend Villars is aware of the temptations of the real world and how easy it is to be led astray. He therefore prepares Evelina for such things. He continues to advise her:

...but you must learn not only to judge but to act for yourself if any schemes are started, any engagements made, which your understanding represents to you as improper, exert yourself resolutely in avoiding them, and do not, by a too passive facility risk the censure of the world, or your own future regret.²⁵

Reverend Villars places great trust in Evelina's ability to judge for herself. Wollstonecraft would agree with this. Evelina has been educated in a manner that has produced a mind which is capable of reason regardless of its sex. She is proof that a woman can think for herself. Another such character in Evelina, is Mrs. Selwyn. Evelina describes her:

Mrs. Selwyn is very kind and attentive to me. She is extremely clever; her understanding, indeed, may be called masculine; but unfortunately, her manners deserve the same epithet, for in studying to acquire the knowledge of the other sex, she has lost all the softness of her own.²⁶

Just as Wollstonecraft says, women of intelligence are considered to be more masculine than feminine. To gain knowledge, she had to become more like a man and thus, Mrs. Selwyn gave up her feminine qualities. Reverend Villars tells Evelina that this does not have to happen:

Though gentleness and modesty are the peculiar

attributes of your sex, yet fortitude and firmness, when occasion demands them, are virtues as noble and as becoming in women as in men: the right line of conduct is the same for both sexes, though the manner in which it is pursued, may somewhat vary, and be accommodated to the²⁷ strength or weakness of the different travellers.

Reverend Villars believes, as does Wollstonecraft, that a woman can be firm and still maintain her gentleness. Mrs. Selwyn is an example of how a society of men plus her own lack of discretion has forced her to take on masculine manners to correspond with her intellect.

In contrast, Burney creates characters who are what Wollstonecraft terms "inaccurately educated." The most obvious example is Madame Duval - the most affected woman in the novel. Evelina describes Madame Duval's main concern: "...the labour of the toilette seems the chief business of her life."²⁸ Here is a character who is ridiculed for her desire to court the latest fashion. She does not concern herself with her duty to society and she even berates Evelina for her virtue. "She laughed at my scruples, called me a foolish, ignorant country girl, and said she should make it her business to teach me something of the world." Furthermore, Evelina says of Madame Duval that, "she said I should spend a few months in Paris, where my education and manners might receive their last polish."²⁹ This was one option available to women who wished to gain real experience and correct manners. In a way, it is the equivalent of the young man's "Grand Tour." The difference is that

women did not have the freedom of wide exposure to which the men were entitled. One way in which a man and a woman's education was similiar, was in the emphasis on observation. Reverend Villars says to Evelina, "...indeed, the more forcibly you are struck with improprieties and misconduct in another, the greater should be your observance and diligence to avoid even the shadow of similiar error."³⁰ Thus, women can learn from observation just as men do.

Evelina does indeed learn a lot from her experiences in the real world. She is perceptive and does not fall into the games of society: "Yet I cannot but lament to find myself in a world so deceitful, where we must suspect what we see, distrust what we hear, and doubt even what we feel!" Virtue is not the prevalent conduct Evelina encounters when she ventures into the real world. She speaks of the conventions: "I knew not, till now, how requisite are birth and fortune to the attainment of respect and civility."³¹ She finds that men such as Mr. Lovel and Lord Merton are considered gentlemen due to their births. Yet, Evelina does not admire these men as others do because the men espouse their narrow views of women. Lord Merton says,

...for a woman wants nothing to recommend her but beauty and good nature; in everything else she is either impertinent or unnatural. For my part, deuce tke me if ever I wish to hear a word of sense from a woman as long as I live.³²

Once again, Lord Merton expresses the opinion against which Wollstonecraft argues. The problem is that men such as Lord Merton, are the future leaders and if they continue to see women

as inferior, then a change in the education of women is unlikely to occur under the rule of these men.

Chapter 5 Notes

¹Quoted in Edna Nixon, Mary Wollstonecraft: Her Life and Times (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1971), p. 87.

²Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Edited by Gina Luria (New York; London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1974), p. 87.

³Nixon, p. 118.

⁴Wollstonecraft, p. 39.

⁵Nixon, p. 84.

⁶Nixon, p. 84.

⁷Wollstonecraft, p. 43.

⁸Wollstonecraft, p. 138.

⁹Wollstonecraft, p. 206.

¹⁰Wollstonecraft, p. 96.

¹¹Moira Ferguson and Janet Todd, Mary Wollstonecraft (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1984), p. 67.

¹²Wollstonecraft, p. 45.

¹³Wollstonecraft, p. 96.

¹⁴Nixon, p. 84.

¹⁵Wollstonecraft, p. 289.

¹⁶Ferguson, p. 59.

¹⁷Ferguson, p. 61.

¹⁸Wollstonecraft, p. 42.

¹⁹Ferguson, p. 59.

²⁰Wollstonecraft, p. 289.

²¹Ferguson, p. 69.

²²Wollstonecraft, p. 296.

²³Burney, p. xx.

²⁴Burney, p. 18.

²⁵Burney, p. 164.

²⁶Burney, p. 268.

²⁷Burney, p. 217.

²⁸Burney, p. 155.

²⁹Burney, p. 121.

³⁰Burney, p. 55.

³¹Burney, p. 294.

³²Burney, p. 361.

Conclusion

From the beginning of this paper, there has been some ambiguity concerning the term "well-educated." It is a term which is used frequently in eighteenth-century English literature, yet no one has attempted to define the ideal "well-educated" person as he/she is depicted in the novels and periodical essays of the eighteenth-century. Perhaps the "well-educated" person is not realistic; he/she does not accurately represent the upper classes. It is possible that such a person did not exist in real life. However, the ideal did exist in the literature, in which the concept of the "well-educated" person can be found in the embodiment of characters in the minds of the writers. Who were considered "well-educated" and what were their common traits?

For one thing, a "well-educated" person is what writers refer to as a "gentleman" or "fine lady." By connecting these two terms, certain requirements arise for the "well-educated" person. The first is that until the latter part of the century, men only could be considered "well-educated." Also, a candidate has to be from a family which is secure enough financially so that the young man does not have to work at a trade for a living. With so much leisure time, he could pursue his academic education at a university level. A young man who has money to spend on such an endeavor, is already considered to be a gentleman by birth. But these gentlemen must be cultivated into the best possible leaders. Thus, the writers wrote their advice and opinions to a specific audience. Locke, in Some

Thoughts Concerning Education, says that "the principle aim of my discourse is how a young gentleman should be brought up from infancy."¹ Thus, Locke was writing to the segment of society which would produce the future statesmen, judges, politicians and prime ministers of England.

Yet, society cannot be left out completely, for an individual must learn by experiencing the real world as well as text books. If society is not virtuous, then how can it influence a child to grow into a virtuous man? This question makes people begin to ask what method of education would be better, book-learning or real experience. The answers were numerous and in the form of literature which was didactic in content.

First, book-learning is presented as one method of education. Every young man in college has to endure the basics such as Math, Geography, Latin, and Astronomy. Of particular importance is knowledge of civil and common law, for it is necessary to develop a good citizen. In addition to textbooks, fiction can benefit the young reader by presenting real life situations. In Rambler No. 4, Johnson says, "These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introduction into life."² Thus a novel can contain men to emulate and men to avoid. In Evelina by Burney, Evelina describes Lord Orville, a man worthy of emulation: "That elegant politeness, that flattering attention, that high-bred delicacy, which so much distinguished him above all other men, and which struck us with such

admiration..."³ In the same novel there are characters which should not be emulated. One is Sir Clement Willoughby. Evelina describes him:

This other Lord, though lavish of compliments and an entire stranger to real good-breeding; whoever strikes his fancy, engrosses his attention. He is forward and bold, has an air of haughtiness towards men and a look of libertinism towards women.⁴

Here, in Evelina, there are two clear-cut examples of a virtuous man and an affected man. To the reader, the choice is obvious as to which man is worthy of imitation. In the Rambler No. 4, Johnson says, "The purpose of these writings is surely not only to show mankind, but to provide that they may be seen hereafter with less hazard: to teach them the means of avoiding the snares which are laid by treachery for innocence."⁵ Present in much eighteenth-century literature is the belief that books are one of the best sources for learning not only the basics of life but also the workings of the real world and yet, book-learning alone does not produce the desired "well-educated" person.

The second method of education, real experience, is vital to the complete cultivation of a young man. In general, real experience was participating in the daily activities of the real world. In this case, the real world is the one of the upper classes. This could involve going to parties, Balls, operas, coffee-houses or on the "Grand Tour." Yet this does not mean using learning as an excuse to socialize. Mr. Wilson falls into this snare in Joseph Andrews. He speaks of his life:

Covent Garden was now the farthest stretch of my ambition; where I shone forth in the balconies of playhouses, visited whores, made love to orange wenches, and damned plays....

Mr. Wilson's problem is that he was not ready to enter the real world. A young man must be able to judge so that he will not be swayed by the corrupt element of society.

As the century progressed, female writers, such as Wollstonecraft, began to voice concern over the "inaccurate education" of women. A woman's education is contrasted with a man's. The result is that a woman's outward appearance is what matters to a man. These ideas are fictionalized in Evelina where the character of Evelina is subjected to this system of education, yet she has a mind of her own due to her excellent upbringing. When she is sent into the real world, she makes social blunders yet she remains virtuous. In the long run, this is what matters, for Locke says, "'Tis Virtue, then, direct virtue, which is the hard and valuable part to be aimed at in education."⁷ Evelina achieves this goal despite the fact that she is a woman.

Hence, the ideal "well-educated" person in the eighteenth-century is an individual who has been cultivated both in virtue and graces. He may have been to a university for academic education and travelled under the guidance of a tutor, for society is not a haven of virtue. His early preparations enable him to observe the real world and avoid the snares of the corrupt elements of society. Thus, the writers of the eighteenth-century use the concept of the "well-educated" person as the goal of young gentlemen so that these

future leaders will ensure the stability of a society in an everchanging age.

Notes

¹Locke, p. 9.

²Johnson, p. 18.

³Burney, p. 290.

⁴Burney, p. 291.

⁵Johnson, p. 16.

⁶Fielding, p. 114.

⁷Locke, p. 103.

⁸Johnson, p. 16.

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