

The influence of "sensibilité" on French
comedy in the first half of the eighteenth
century (L'Andrienne to Mélanide)

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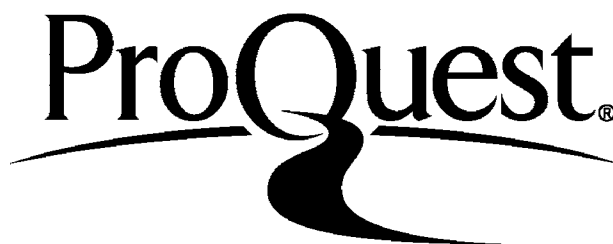
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by

Anita Wendy Perkins.

ABSTRACT

That there was a move towards a more serious form of comic drama in the first half of the eighteenth century is well known. This study seeks an explanation for the change by placing the comedy, especially the main works of the dramatists writing for the Comédie Française, in the context of one of the most significant trends of thought of the time. The opening chapters therefore describe the climate of ideas, the concept of human nature and man's relations with his fellows in two major areas, aesthetics and morals. Chapters four and five treat the two relationships which have traditionally formed the basis of the comedy, namely that of the family and that of the married couple, examining in particular the nature of the characters, their attitudes to each other and thus their relationships on the stage. The following chapters cover what might be regarded as features peculiar to the comedy in the first half of the eighteenth century; chapters six and seven analyse the many forms taken by the moralising tendency of the comedy in these years, while chapter eight is concerned with the patterns which can be discerned in the creation of the tearful character and situation. All these chapters on the theatre deal with what might be called the tone of the plays, that is to say what would previously have been their comic mood or style and the influence on it of a transformation in outlook. Chapter nine, however, attempts to bring together all the features discussed hitherto and to determine their effect on the structure of the comedy.

Where possible, modern scholarly editions have been used. Unless otherwise stated, quotations are taken from the editions listed in the bibliography and all references are to those editions; their spelling and punctuation have been retained.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Many writers have outlined, and the title alone of Hazard's La Crise de la conscience européenne suggests, the change in outlook in many areas at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Although cruelty and injustice undoubtedly persisted, a softening of manners in general and the disappearance of some superstitions and barbarities were accompanied by separation to an extent of religion and morals and a more optimistic view of human nature. Certainly in several works of quite different kinds there are attempts to reassert the dignity of the ordinary man or at least to depress the pretensions of the rich and powerful. In philosophy, Cartesian rationalism, at its height around the turn of the century, remained strong, of course, and its analytical method was still to underpin a number of the major achievements of the eighteenth century, while a faith in Reason was the foundation for the Enlightenment. Despite this, however, systems based on the premise that man is a feeling and not a reasoning being form an important current of thought from the earliest years of the century.

The notion of "sensibilité" itself is an old one, dating back to the Middle Ages and belonging to the traditional philosophy of the schools. It is central once again in the work of the seventeenth-century free-thinker Gassendi, who adapts the medieval concept of the "sensitive soul" to make of it an "internal sense", which puts together all the evidence provided by the other senses. In the eighteenth century,

"sensibilité" contains within it two main elements, namely the ability to receive sense impressions from the outside world and a general capacity for feeling which, ultimately, becomes a moral sense.

The first of these, deriving principally from Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding (1690), and his theory that man's knowledge comes from impressions made on the senses or representational ideas and their combinations, produces, later in the eighteenth century, the psychological studies of writers such as Condillac and the pure materialism of La Mettrie. "Sensibilité" as a generalised capacity for feeling is a complex notion, taken up in many different ways. It depends originally on a very basic awareness of external phenomena and hence of the self, which subsequently becomes sympathy or compassion for others, resulting in a desire to promote their well-being. Such a theory eventually finds its most concise expression perhaps in D'Alembert's Discours préliminaire à l'Encyclopédie (1751), and leads also to the coherent systems of Buffon and Rousseau. From the beginning of the century, however, there exists the idea that "sensibilité" is a source of moral energy and that man is possessed of inherent feelings of love and benevolence for his fellows. As far as plays on the stage were concerned, these beliefs, as we shall show, mean that in the "comic" sphere at least, the old dramatic techniques, relying on opposition of characters, are increasingly unacceptable. The tragedy, traditionally the domain of the "passions", is not that of the more moderate affections and thus remains largely unaffected by the new movement. In the comedy, however, new attitudes transform

the old genre to such an extent that the possibility of an entirely new genre could be envisaged.¹

Indeed, Lanson, one of the few critics to have attempted a serious analysis of the comedies of the first half of the eighteenth century usually grouped together under the heading "comédie larmoyante", specifically links their emergence to the change in attitude towards human nature. He is clear in his definition of the new genre and categorical about its creator:

La comédie larmoyante est un genre intermédiaire entre la comédie et la tragédie, qui introduit des personnages de condition privée, vertueux ou tout près de l'être, dans une action sérieuse, grave, parfois pathétique, et qui nous excite à la vertu en nous attendrissant sur ses infortunes et en nous faisant applaudir à son triomphe. La Chaussée en fut l'inventeur.

Furthermore, he maintains that all La Chaussée's plays are informed by one dominant and striking characteristic:

Son théâtre tout entier est une peinture et un éloge de la sensibilité, et en manifeste le triomphe, au moins dans la littérature, longtemps avant que Rousseau ait paru: c'est la première œuvre considérable qu'elle inspire, où elle s'exprime. (p. 232).

¹For some of the first half of the eighteenth century comedies which might be said to form part of the classical French tradition were still being written and performed at the Comédie Française. This tradition, maintained by dramatists such as Dancourt and Dufresny, was continued by Legrand, whose last play, La Nouveauté, was produced in 1727. Others, like Guyot de Merville and La Grange-Chanceel, ensured that a purely comic drama, even if influenced by the tone of the Foire, persisted until the end of the 1730s. The former's final play for the French actors, for example, Le Médecin de l'esprit, belongs to the year 1739.

²G. Lanson, Les Origines du drame contemporain: Nivelles de La Chaussée et la comédie larmoyante, Deuxième Edition (Paris, 1903), p. 1.

In general, the new genre has not fared well at the hands of critics, many of whom give only a brief explanation for its success and who find sarcastic or dismissive comments difficult to avoid. Lénient says, for example:

Si la comédie y (à l'esprit) renonce parfois, c'est pour tomber dans la déclamation et le pathos du drame bourgeois et philosophique, de ce que Diderot appelle le genre sérieux, trop voisin du genre ennuyeux, le seul que proscrive formellement Voltaire.³

Similarly, Brunetière, suggesting that Nivelles de la Chaussée had not exploited, had perhaps not even realised, the true subject of his Mélanide, concludes:

... cette seule raison nous empêchera toujours de souhaiter de revoir Mélanide ou la Gouvernante à la scène. La lecture en est bien suffisante! ...⁴

The tone of the same critic's opening sentence to his discussion of Destouches: "Je ne dirai rien de la vie, ni du caractère de Destouches; son Glorieux est l'événement le plus important de sa frivole existence" establishes the level of the rest.⁵

When examining Voltaire, and Nanine in particular, an English critic, E. F. Jourdain claims that:

³C. Lénient, La Comédie en France au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1888), I, 163.

⁴F. Brunetière, Les Époques du théâtre français (1892), Sixième Édition (Paris, 1906), p. 292. The fifth edition bears the date 1914 on the title page, but the sixth edition has nevertheless been used here. There is no difference between the two as far as the passages quoted in this chapter are concerned.

⁵Histoire de la littérature française classique, 1515-1830 (-1875) (Paris, 1904-17), III, 231. The third volume of this work is edited by Albert Chérel; the fourth edition, published in 1931, has been used here.

Of the purely larmoyant work of Voltaire's, Nanine (1749) is a good example. If Voltaire had been writing a thesis to show the melancholy result of indulgence in sensibility he could not have done better. Author and characters alike seem unable to produce⁶ any reasonable or likely chain of events.

Aghion begins his outline of the development of the whole of the comedy in the eighteenth century with:

La comédie romanesque, plus sérieuse que gaie, telle que nous la comprenons aujourd'hui a été conçue et exécutée, (oh, bien maladroitement), à cette époque.

Trahard adopts the same kind of approach and discounts some of the most prominent dramatists of the time with:

... les œuvres d'un Piron, d'un Destouches, d'un Boursault, ne sont plus que des curiosités littéraires.

While such a judgment may be true, it does not preclude the possibility of giving both to the writers mentioned, and to others contemporary with them, serious consideration. Admittedly, some critics do abandon an ironic tone; in this case they often concentrate their deliberations on an attempt firstly to isolate the date at which the new genre emerged and then to determine its creator. Lénient tends in this direction when proposing that the beginning of a new stage in the development of the comedy can be seen with Destouches's Le Philosophe marié (1727) and Nivelles de la Chaussée's Le Préjugé à la mode (1735).⁹ Gaiffe, in his Le Drame en France

⁶E. F. Jourdain, Dramatic Theory and Practice in France, 1690-1808 (London, 1921), p. 63.

⁷M. Aghion, Le Théâtre à Paris au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1926), p. 33.

⁸P. Trahard, Les Maîtres de la sensibilité française (Paris, 1931-33), I, 15.

⁹See La Comédie en France au XVIII^e siècle, Chapter VII, I, 158.

au XVIII^e siècle, treats most of the comic drama in the first part of the century as a precursor of the "drame" of the latter half.¹⁰ In a later work, however, Le Rire et la scène française, he gives a general description of the main trends of the period and uses certain dramatists as examples of particular developments:

La manie de moraliser en scène et de faire du dialogue théâtral une sorte d'épître à la Boileau que récitent plusieurs personnages, est déjà sensible dans des pièces de Boursault comme Esope à la Cour (1680) [sic] et Esope à la Ville (1701) [sic], ou dans le Jaloux désabusé de Campistron (1709); elle va s'épanouir avec Destouches ... la comédie pathétique (on disait alors «larmoyante») avec La Chaussée, en attendant que le drame la remplace et crée un genre vraiment neuf ...¹¹

Aghion, having stated that: "Il est incontestable que «Le Préjugé à la mode» (1733) [sic] marque une révolution dans la littérature"¹² then qualifies this with:

A la rigueur on peut contester à Nivelles de la Chaussée l'invention de la comédie larmoyante puisque Baron avec son "«Andrienne» ... avait en 1703 fait un essai analogue, et que Piron en 1728, avait écrit une comédie «Les fils ingrats ou l'Ecole des Pères» ... (pp. 35-36).

He returns, however, to his original premise by emphasising that with La Chaussée "le théâtre larmoyant prend plus

¹⁰ See F. Gaiffe, Le Drame en France au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1910), Première Partie, Chapitre premier, pp. 15-34.

¹¹ Le Rire et la scène française (Paris, 1931), p. 134. Esope à la cour was first performed in 1701 and Esope à la ville in 1690.

¹² Le Théâtre à Paris au XVIII^e siècle, p. 35.

d'étendue" (p. 36). Trahard, too, devotes much of the first two chapters of his Les Maîtres de la sensibilité française to determining precisely when the movement may be said to have come into being.¹³

It is easy to be sardonic about many of the comedies in the first half of the eighteenth century. Further, several critics provide no more than a survey or a description of the genre during these years. Despite Trahard's claim that the reasons for the change in comic drama "important moins que les résultats" (I, 17), it is perhaps natural, even desirable, that an attempt be made to set it in the context of its own time. Two theories recur in works of criticism when the causes of the development in the genre are sought. Firstly, the gradual transformation in outlook in many areas, including the theatre, is to be explained, for some, by a reaction against the climate of the previous age and secondly, for others, by the influence in some way of the middle class. For a critic such as Brunetière, for example, a change in social structure is responsible for the change in the comedy: the bourgeoisie, growing in importance, hungry for equality, use the theatre as "un moyen de propagande et d'action," refusing, moreover, to tolerate the continuing portrayal on the stage of members of the aristocracy.¹⁴ Aghion echoes this idea with his contention, again about the eighteenth century in general, that:

... l'art dramatique durant cette époque
s'attache d'une part à plaire à la masse
du public en peignant sous des couleurs

¹³ See Les Maîtres de la sensibilité française, I, 7-34.

¹⁴ See Les Époques du théâtre français, p. 287.

avantageuses la bourgeoisie et d'autre part à attaquer de plus en plus directement les institutions, les mœurs et l'autorité. (p. 20).

Alasseur, too, sees the comedy of the first half of the century within a political framework:

Dans la vie littéraire, il est facile de constater l'évolution des Lettres vers une mentalité bourgeoise. Au 18^e siècle, Rousseau, la vie naturelle, les salons, le drame bourgeois, la comédie larmoyante, le Hameau de la Reine, tout évoque la bourgeoisie.¹⁵

In a slightly different fashion, Descotes also attributes the new plays to the triumph "de l'élément bourgeois."¹⁶ His argument is this:

La condition de roturier n'impose pas les servitudes de l'étiquette, permet de manifester ouvertement sa sensibilité, alors que l'aristocrate se pique de froideur, de scepticisme, de suprême détachement ...

que, peu à peu, ce goût des larmes et de l'attendrissement ait gagné jusqu'aux plus hautes classes de la société, cela n'est pas douteux. L'ennui, la lassitude, le vide du cœur, le plaisir physique même perdant de sa vivacité par son abus même, expliquent assez cette évolution. (p. 189).

The notion expressed here clearly brings Descotes close to a belief that the new movement is to be explained by a desire for different values. The idea is an attractive one. As far as the "comédie larmoyante" is concerned, it is hard to find evidence in the plays for the political accounts offered for their appeal by those such as Brunetière or Aghion. In the first half of the century at least, the characters in the comedy are not notably members of the middle class,

¹⁵C. Alasseur, La Comédie française au 18^e siècle (Paris, 1967), p. 15.

¹⁶M. Descotes, Le Public de théâtre et son histoire (Paris, 1964), p. 189.

nor do they make claims on behalf of that section of society, although there is no doubt that their moral standards are those of the bourgeoisie. Other, less common, theories are perhaps similarly difficult to prove. Brunetière also advances the notion, for instance, that as what he calls the "sens de l'art" decreases, the element of emotion in all literature increases; if to this is added the growing inability to suffer life's problems, given that life itself is becoming easier, it is plain that a willingness to shed tears will invade all art, including the drama.¹⁷ Descotes puts forward the view that the development in the comedy is due to the influence of women.¹⁸

As we have seen, there are those who believe that the new genre can be attributed to a rejection of established attitudes. Certainly Lénient proposes that the corruption of the Regency had inevitably to be replaced by a more moral and moralising position.¹⁹ It is perhaps Lanson, however, whose ideas remain the most interesting and challenging in this respect, because they have wide implications for several aspects of the comedy in the first half of the eighteenth century. He cannot emphasise too strongly the influence of Sensibility on La Chaussée's works which are, he would argue, "entièrement conçues selon les lois et les conventions spéciales de la sensibilité" (p. 240); it provides the unity of the dramatist's output and even explains indeed its defects.

¹⁷ See Les Epoques du théâtre français, pp. 285-86.

¹⁸ See Le Public de théâtre et son histoire, p. 188.

¹⁹ See La Comédie en France au XVIII^e siècle, Chapitre VII, I, 158-59.

In particular it may help to understand the form of La Chaussée's plays:

La sensibilité nous rendra encore raison
de l'importance de l'élément romanesque
dans les comédies larmoyantes de La
Chaussée et des invraisemblances de
l'action. (p. 247).

This idea, namely that "sensibilité" is responsible not only for the characteristic style or mood of the comedy, but also for the change in its structure, is significant and far-reaching. There seems little doubt that La Chaussée himself was largely indifferent about the genre in which he wrote, provided that his ambition was fulfilled: the fact that he returned to the new comedy after the failure of his tragedy Maximien (1738) would tend to prove this and support Lanson's thesis that La Chaussée was first and foremost an opportunist. In the second edition of his book, as a preliminary to his discussion of the "comédie larmoyante", Lanson outlines the development at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries of both tragedy and comedy, in order to demonstrate that the time was right for a genre between the two when La Chaussée was contemplating a literary career. His proposition that La Chaussée is governed above all by the "sensibilité" of his age, that this quality in fact affected important dramatists contemporary with him, is, however, of far greater moment and worth exploring in depth.²¹ Something

²¹Returning to the works of La Chaussée after a survey of the beginnings of "sensibilité", Lanson remarks: "La sensibilité, dont on retrouve des traits de plus en plus fréquents et expressifs dans les œuvres dramatiques du premier tiers du XVIII^e siècle, qui a attaqué Destouches et même effleuré Piron, s'étale sans voiles et sans réserves dans le théâtre larmoyant de La Chaussée" (p. 240).

of the same approach has been taken by other critics, notably Gaiffe, who maintains that:

... ce ton joyeux va bientôt cesser d'être celui de notre théâtre; le second tiers du siècle amène une transformation profonde sinon dans les mœurs, du moins dans la mode, qui met en vogue certaines façons de penser et de sentir. Le goût de la sensibilité se développe ...²²

Since both Lanson and Gaiffe were writing, much new material has become available to us and their notion that the comedy belongs to a particular climate of ideas and attitudes demands to be reexamined.

It would naturally be wrong to suppose that all writers in the seventeenth or early part of the eighteenth century were guided by the dictates of reason. Descartes and the followers of Descartes would be unlikely to regard a capacity for feeling as a criterion of virtue, it is true; on the contrary, repression of such a quality would be considered worthy of admiration. But Mme de Sévigné, for example, betrays genuine affection for her daughter, particularly in letters written in the first distress of their separation. Mme de Grignan is for her "ma chère enfant, l'unique passion de mon cœur, le plaisir et la douleur de ma vie,"²³ and the extent of the mother's ability both to give and receive love is clear in this passage from the same letter of February 9th., 1671, which also contains an interesting usage of the very term with which we are concerned:

Vous vous amusez donc à penser à moi, vous en parlez, et vous aimez mieux m'écrire

²²Le Rire et la scène française, p. 133.

²³M. de Sévigné, Correspondance, ed. R. Duchêne (Paris, 1972-78), I, 154.

vos sentiments que vous n'aimez à me les dire. De quelque façon qu'ils me viennent, ils sont reçus avec une tendresse et une sensibilité qui n'est comprise que de ceux qui savent aimer comme je fais. Vous me faites sentir pour vous tout ce qu'il est possible de sentir de tendresse.
(I, 152).

La Bruyère, in statements such as: "L'on est plus sociable et d'un meilleur commerce par le cœur que par l'esprit"²⁴ and: "Il y a de certains grands sentiments, de certaines actions nobles et élevées, que nous devons moins à la force de notre esprit qu'à la bonté de notre naturel"²⁵ would seem to be proposing that a quality other than the intellect may underlie human relations and may indeed be more reliable. He would appear, too, to be aware of man's suffering and the injustice of things:

Il y a des misères sur la terre qui saisissent le cœur; il manque à quelques-uns jusqu'aux aliments; ils redoutent l'hiver, ils appréhendent de vivre. L'on mange ailleurs des fruits précoces; l'on force la terre et les saisons pour fournir à sa délicatesse; de simples bourgeois, seulement à cause qu'ils étaient riches, ont eu l'audace d'avalier en un seul morceau la nourriture de cent familles.²⁶

Some works of religious philosophy can be said to imply a non-Cartesian view of human nature, amongst them Pascal's Pensées. Although he believes man's dignity to lie in his capacity to reason, he does not dismiss the "heart" as a

²⁴J. de La Bruyère, "Du Cœur" (78), Les Caractères, Œuvres complètes de La Bruyère, ed. J. Benda (Paris, 1951), p. 146. The text used in this edition is that of the eighth, published in 1694.

²⁵"Du Cœur" (79), Œuvres, p. 146.

²⁶"Des Biens de la fortune" (47), Œuvres, p. 189. This passage first appeared in the fifth edition, published in 1690.

source of knowledge. He states, for example, that:

Nous connaissons la vérité, non seulement par la raison, mais encore par le cœur; c'est de cette dernière sorte que nous connaissons les premiers principes, et c'est en vain que le raisonnement qui n'y a point de part essaye de les combattre.

Plût à Dieu que nous n'en (de la raison) eussions, au contraire, jamais besoin, et que nous connussions toutes²⁷ choses par instinct et par sentiment!

Certainly it is the "heart" which is more important where matters of religious faith and a relationship with God are concerned: "C'est le cœur qui sent Dieu et non la raison. Voilà ce que c'est que la foi: Dieu sensible au cœur, non à la raison" (p. 147).

Mme Guyon's inspired descriptions of religious ecstasy suggest a yearning which comes entirely from the heart; indeed both the Opuscules spirituels (1704), for example, and La Vie de Madame J. M. B. de la Mothe-Guyon, first published in 1720, consistently reject the reason and rational reflection as a source of faith. In the latter, which is as much the story of her soul as of her life, Mme Guyon says, for instance, addressing herself directly to God:

... j'éprouvois que votre parole faisait une impression sur mon cœur directement, & qu'elle faisait tout son effet sans l'entremise de la réflexion & de l'esprit.²⁸

Furthermore, that man may find greatest satisfaction in the affective side of his being is clear in this appeal to the reader:

²⁷B. Pascal, "Des Moyens de croire," Pensées, ed. Ch.-M. des Granges (Paris, 1964), pp. 147-48.

²⁸J.-M. Guyon, La Vie de Madame J. M. B. de la Mothe-Guyon, Nouvelle Edition (Paris, 1791), I, 91.

Aimez, aimez le Souverain Bien, laissez le souverain mal, & vous serez bien savans. Quand vous aimez quelqu'un, savez-vous les raisons de l'amour & ses définitions? non assurément; vous aimez parce que votre cœur est fait pour aimer ce qu'il trouve aimable. Y a-t-il rien de plus aimable que Dieu? ... Nul ne peut s'exempter d'aimer, car nul ne peut vivre sans cœur, ni le cœur sans amour. (I, 42-43).

Fénelon, too, adopts the same simple and personal approach in some of his writings. The first part of the Traité de l'existence et des attributs de Dieu, for instance, ends with a "Prière à Dieu," which contains the following passage:

Vous êtes auprès d'eux, et au-dedans d'eux
... Ils vous trouveroient, ô douce lumière,
ô éternelle beauté toujours ancienne et
toujours nouvelle, ô fontaine des chastes
délices, ô vie pure et bienheureuse de
tous ceux qui vivent véritablement, s'ils
vous cherchoient au-dedans d'eux-mêmes ..
.....
Qui est semblable à vous? Mon cœur
se fond, et ma chair tombe en défaillance,
ô Dieu, de mon cœur, et mon éternelle por-
tion!

The detailed, philosophical arguments of this work are frequently interspersed with meditations of this kind. Later, in the fifth chapter of the second part, Fénelon also adds this comment to a similar interjection:

Ces paroles impropres et imparfaites sont le langage d'un amour foible et grossier: je les dis pour moi, et non pas pour vous; pour contenter mon cœur, et non pour m'instruire ni pour vous louer dignement. (II, 298).

A belief that religion is a matter not of rational

²⁹F. de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, Traité de l'existence et des attributs de Dieu, Première Partie, Chapitre V, Oeuvres de M. François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon (Paris, 1787-92), II, 159-62. The first part of the Traité was published in 1712 and the second part in 1718.

perception but of spontaneous feeling is also to be seen in quite another area, namely the works of Saint-Évremond and the poets of the Epicurean circle. The former, for example, would seem by implication to be separating the intellect and another part of man's nature, to which he gives preference, in this assertion:

Vouloir se persuader l'Immortalité de l'Ame par la Raison, c'est entrer en défiance de la parole que Dieu nous en a donnée, et renoncer, en quelque façon, à la seule chose par qui nous pouvons en être assurés.

Qu'a fait Descartes par sa démonstration prétendue d'une substance purement spirituelle, d'une substance qui doit penser éternellement? Qu'a-t-il fait par des spéculations si épurées? Il a fait croire que la Religion ne le persuadoit pas, sans pouvoir persuader ni lui ni les autres par ses raisons.

Lisez, Monsieur, pensez, méditez; vous trouverez au bout de vôtre lecture, de vos pensées, de vos méditations, que c'est à la Religion d'en décider, et à la Raison de se soumettre.³⁰

This idea is echoed by Chaulieu in his "Ode contre l'esprit, en 1708":

Dans la vérité simple & pure
D'une sainte Religion,
De quelle superstition
N'y mêles-tu point l'imposture?
Le moyen de te pardonner
Ce que tu veux tirer de gloire
De nous apprendre à raisonner,
Quand il n'est question que de croire?³¹

³⁰Ch. Marguetel de Saint-Denis, Seigneur de Saint-Évremond, "L'Homme qui veut connoître toutes choses ne se connoît pas lui même: A Monsieur ^{xxx}", Oeuvres en prose, ed. R. Ternois (Paris, 1962-69), II, 137-39. The passage quoted is taken from the second version of this essay, first published by Desmaizeaux in 1705.

³¹G. Anfrie de Chaulieu, Oeuvres de Chaulieu (La Haye, 1777), I, 42.

Moreover, the value placed on the affective side of man's being is present in what is in fact more important for the Epicureans than religion, that is to say the search for happiness in the ideal state of "volupté". Scorning a preoccupation with wealth and prestige, and believing that man should follow his "passions", and what Chaulieu would call his "pente naturelle", these writers have scant respect for that which originates in the mind.³² This call from Mme Deshoulières "Homme, vante moins ta raison;/Voi l'inutilité de ce present céleste/ Pour qui tu dois, dit-on, mépriser tout le reste,"³³ is paralleled in a poem by Chaulieu on the death of La Fare:

J'appelle à mon secours, Raison, Philosophie,
Je n'en reçois, hélas! aucun soulagement.
A leurs belles leçons, insensé qui se fie!
Elles ne peuvent rien contre le sentiment.
J'entends que la raison me dit que vainement
Je m'afflige d'un mal qui n'a point de remède,
Mais je verse des pleurs dans le même moment,³⁴
Et sens qu'à ma douleur toute ma vertu cede.

Similarly, La Fare himself, in his "Les Béatitudes de ce monde" states:

Heureux qui joint aux grands talents
Un esprit doux, un cœur tendre et sincère:
C'est le plus rare des présents
Qu'aux mortels les Dieux puissent faire.³⁵

Where the poets are concerned, the inclination to emphasise the affective side of their make-up often takes the form

³²See the "Ode contre l'esprit" (Oeuvres, I, 43), where the "pente naturelle" is called "le guide le plus fidelle."

³³A. Du Liguiér de la Garde Deshoulières, "Réflexions Diverses," Poésies de Madame et de Mademoiselle Deshoulières, Nouvelle Edition (Bruxelles, 1745), I, 105.

³⁴"Plainte sur la mort de Monsieur le marquis de La Fare, le 28 Mai, 1712," Oeuvres, II, 47.

³⁵Ch. A. de La Fare, Poésies inédites du Marquis de La Fare, ed. G. L. van Roosbroeck (Paris, 1924), p. 34.

of a kind of melancholy, a striving for the impossible or a yearning for lost youth, which, in their turn, can find expression in a desire for solitude in nature.³⁶ In more positive fashion, in all the writers, a capacity for feeling gives a meaning to man's existence. It is plain that for Saint-Évremond, for example, awareness of true contentment comes at least in part through the affections:

Je veux que la connoissance de ne rien
sentir qui m'importune, que la réflexion
de me voir libre et maître de moy, me
donne la volupté spirituelle du bon Epi-
cure; j'entens cette agréable indolence,
qui n'est pas un état sans douleur et sans
plaisir; c'est le sentiment délicat d'une
joye pure, qui vient du repos de la con-
science, et de la tranquillité de l'esprit.³⁷

The notion that man should yield to his feelings, especially those of love, is particularly strong in the poetry of Mme Deshoulières; significantly she believes that a heart that is not stirred by emotion, however painful, is one which has all but ceased to exist. In the poem "Caprice," for instance, she says:

³⁶ These lines from "Les Deux Pigeons" come to mind here: "Hélas! quand reviendront de semblables moments?/Faut-il que tant d'objets si doux et si charmants/Me laissent vivre au gré de mon âme inquiète?/Ah! si mon cœur osait encor se renflammer!/Ne sentirai-je plus de charme qui m'arrête?/Ai-je passé le temps d'aimer?" (J. de la Fontaine, Fables, Livre Neuvième, Fables, Contes et Nouvelles, ed. R. Groos and J. Schiffrin (Paris, 1954), p. 219).

La Fontaine's "Le Songe d'un habitant du Mogol," (Fables, Livre Onzième, Fables, Contes et Nouvelles, p. 268), Chaulieu's "La Retraite, en 1698" (Œuvres, I, 26-28) and his "Les Louanges de la vie champêtre, A Fontenay, ma Maison de Campagne, 1707" (Œuvres, I, 32-35), all express an appreciation of and a longing for the tranquillity of nature.

³⁷ "Sur les plaisirs: A Monsieur le Comte d'Olonne," Œuvres, IV, 21.

Tranquillité vous êtes de retour.
 Mais que dans ce bonheur je trouve peu de charmes!
 En perdant mes transports, mes craintes, mes desirs,
 Hélas! que j'ai perdu de biens & de plaisirs!
 Ah! le repos n'est pas aussi doux qu'on le pense!³⁸

The "tranquillité" which Mme Deshoulières here reproaches is not the contentment of Chaulieu or Saint-Évremond, in which man has no desires beyond those which he is capable of fulfilling; rather is it a complete emptiness, a "vuide dans la vie" which is insupportable.³⁹ Only through experiences of the heart can man have a sense of life, the lines: "Peut-on s'accoutûter à ne sentir plus rien?/ Et pour les cœurs enfin le calme est-il un bien?"⁴⁰ encapsulating Mme Deshoulières's belief that a capacity for feeling, even with a relatively narrow meaning, is precious.

This faculty also underlies a relationship much prized by the Epicureans, that of friendship. This is clear from Chaulieu's account of his suffering on the death of La Fare, a suffering simply and directly expressed:

La Fare n'est donc plus! La Parque impitoyable
 A ravi de mon cœur cette chere moitié.

 La trame de nos jours ne fut point assortie
 Par raison d'intérêt, ou par réflexion;
 D'un aimant mutuel la douce sympathie
 Forma seule notre union ...⁴¹

La Fare's own enjoyment of friendship is plain in "Les Béatitudes de ce monde":

³⁸ Poësies, I, 124.

³⁹ These words are used of the end of a love affair in "Madrival," Poësies, I, 74.

⁴⁰ "Caprice," Poësies, I, 125.

⁴¹ "Plainte sur la mort de Monsieur le marquis de La Fare," Oeuvres, II, 45-46.

Heureux celui dont le goût se renferme
Dans peu d'amis tendres et vertueux;
Qui sain de corps, d'esprit tranquille et ferme,⁴²
Dans les plaisirs peut vieillir avec eux.

If Saint-Évremond has some reservations about a friendship founded purely on affection, believing that: "Le Cœur est un aveugle, à qui sont dûes toutes nos erreurs,"⁴³ he nevertheless maintains that the relationship cannot be mere rational appreciation of another's qualities:

Ce que je veux dans les Amitiés, c'est que les lumières précèdent les mouvemens, et qu'une estime justement formée dans l'Esprit, aille s'animer dans le Cœur, et y prendre la chaleur nécessaire⁴⁴ pour les Amitiés, comme pour l'Amour.

Indeed, in the essay "L'Amitié sans amitié," he would appear to suggest that man possesses a quite distinct part of his being which, in spite of its disadvantages, is the basis of any relationship:

Il est certain que la Nature a mis en nos cœurs quelque chose d'aimant, si on le peut dire; quelque principe secret d'affection; quelque fond caché de tendresse, qui s'explique et se rend communicable avec le tems ... (III, 291).

Striking in this passage is the vagueness of Saint-Évremond's language, a vagueness in evidence too in the essay "Sur l'Amitié"⁴⁵

⁴²Poésies inédites, p. 34.

⁴³"[L'Amitié sans amitié]. A Monsieur le Comte de Saint-Albans," III, 289.

⁴⁴"Sur l'amitié: A Madame la Duchesse Mazarin," III, 321.

⁴⁵Here, for example, he states that: "Elles (les amitiés) ne subsistent point sans fidélité et sans secret. C'est ce qui les rend sûres; mais ce n'est pas tout pour nous les rendre agréables. Il se forme une certaine liaison entre deux Ames, où la sûreté seule ne suffit pas: il y entre un charme secret, que je ne saurois exprimer, et qui est plus facile à sentir qu'à bien connoître" (III, 316).

It might be attributable perhaps to the fact that no adequate vocabulary exists at this time to define man's capacity for feeling; on the other hand, it is possible that Saint-Évremond has consciously chosen a mode of expression lacking in precision in order to insist on the separation between the affections and the intellect.

Whatever may be the truth of the matter in this instance, there can be no doubting that the Epicureans valued the affective and not the reflective aspects of existence. Saint-Évremond indeed analyses man's psychology and the workings of "sentiment" in "Sur les plaisirs," proposing that the "heart" responds to external phenomena and ultimately draws man to his fellows.⁴⁶ Apart from this, however, there is no coherent system in the works of the Epicureans; it is true that their writings advance the possibility of a way of life and of attitudes which are non-Cartesian, but there is no real philosophy of sentiment here; the feelings which they express are not scruples and there is above all no moral intention in their works. Nor does the Epicureans' concern for others extend beyond their own circle. La Fare, as we have seen, refers to "peu d'amis tendres et vertueux" and Saint-Évremond urges: "Vivons pour peu de gens qui vivent pour nous."⁴⁷

The statements of all the seventeenth-century authors whom we have quoted, are, in fact, relatively isolated pronouncements and cannot truly be said to amount to a philosophy of man. This is the major difference between the seventeenth

⁴⁶ See Oeuvres, IV, 12-23.

⁴⁷ As far as La Fare is concerned, see p. 22 above. Saint-Évremond's statement comes from "L'Amitié sans amitié," III, 293.

and eighteenth centuries: in the latter, in the area of aesthetics and morals, in conduct books and works treating mankind in general, there is both a psychology and a morals of sentiment which help to determine the outlook of the age. An investigation of these two areas must surely be fruitful for an understanding of the development in comic drama.

For most of the first half of the eighteenth century there were three official theatres in Paris, the Comédie Française, the Théâtre Italien and the Opéra. It would clearly be impossible to undertake a satisfactory analysis of all the works produced at these theatres during the years with which we are concerned. At the Comédie Française alone, between 1715 and 1750, 83 comedies and 111 "petites pièces comiques" of one, two or three acts were performed.⁴⁸ If to this number are added the comedies put on before 1715, it can be seen that even an exhaustive discussion of comic drama at the Comédie Française is out of the question.⁴⁹ This study will be limited to that theatre, since it was arguably the most important of the period. The choice of dramatists to be considered is not an easy one to make. Nivelle de la Chaussée would seem to select himself, as he is for so many, both at the time and later, the creator of

⁴⁸ See H. Lagrave, Le Théâtre et le public à Paris de 1715 à 1750 (Paris, 1972), p. 337.

⁴⁹ Some 65 comedies, of all types, were put on at the Comédie Française between 1700 and 1715. See H. C. Lancaster, Sunset: A History of Parisian Drama in the last years of Louis XIV, 1701-1715 (Baltimore, 1945), pp. 336-38.

a new genre.⁵⁰ Similarly, it appears essential to include in any examination of the age the plays of Destouches, whom several have regarded as a precursor to Nivelle de la Chaussée. Both Lough and Lagrave have shown, moreover, that these two enjoyed greater success in the period than any other comic dramatist, with the exception of Marivaux.⁵¹ If we adopt this criterion, the plays of Piron, Gresset, Boissy and Fagan should also be included, Piron and Gresset indeed being singled out by not a few modern critics when significant drama of the first half of the eighteenth century is discussed. The decision to devote this study to the Comédie Française only necessarily means omitting most of Marivaux's theatre; the plays written for the French actors are of course considered here, together with others which seem to present interesting points of comparison. L'Andrienne (1703) and

⁵⁰In the eighteenth century Luigi Riccoboni, a staunch supporter of the new comedy, says of him, for example: "Il a inventé un nouveau genre de Comédie" ("Lettre de Monsieur Louis Riccoboni à M. le docteur Muratori," in Oeuvres de Monsieur Nivelle de la Chaussée, ed. Sablier (Paris, 1762), V, 198).

Collé, although disliking the plays of La Chaussée, concedes his importance: "Il est bien étonnant qu'un auteur de la médiocrité incurable dont est La Chaussée ait donné, pour ainsi dire, le ton à son siècle ..." (Ch. Collé, Journal et Mémoires, ed. H. Bonhomme (Paris, 1868), I, 53).

⁵¹See J. Lough, French Theatre Audiences in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century (London, 1957), Chapter 3, pp. 178-79.

Lagrave's statistics are particularly interesting for the light they shed on the success of Marivaux, especially, of course, at the Théâtre Italien. See his Le Théâtre et le public, pp. 597-601 and pp. 604-7.

Mélanide (1741) provide useful limits for the scope of an analysis of comic drama in the first half of the eighteenth century. Baron's play has often been regarded as heralding the emergence of a new kind of comedy⁵² and Desfontaines established its triumph by giving to Mélanide the name "Romanédie", thus marking the creation of a new genre.⁵³ Some plays from the years after 1741 will in fact be examined in this study, so that the whole of the theatre of both Destouches and Nivelles de la Chaussée may be taken into consideration, together with the main works of other dramatists of the time.

The term "comédie larmoyante" is unsatisfactory for any objective study of the more serious comedy produced in the first half of the century, in view of the pejorative sense which it has acquired. Even some of those writing in the eighteenth century dislike the adjective "larmoyant" and use it against their will. Sablier, for example, remarks of Goldoni:

M. Goldoni, marchant sur les traces de M. de la Chaussée, a osé présenter à sa Patrie des Scènes intéressantes, pathétiques & même larmoyantes, puisqu'il faut se servir de ce terme ...⁵⁴

Fréron also has reservations about this epithet, referring to the new genre as "le genre Larmoyant, puisqu'on

⁵²See the passage from Aghion's Le Théâtre à Paris au XVIII^e siècle quoted on p. 9 above and Bougainville's words quoted on p. 28 below.

⁵³See P.-F. G. Desfontaines, Observations sur les écrits modernes (Paris, 1735-41), XXV, Lettre CCCLXII, 27-28.

⁵⁴Ch. Sablier, ed., Œuvres de Monsieur Nivelles de la Chaussée (Paris, 1762), "Avertissement," I, iv.

l'appelle ainsi."⁵⁵ As several writers in the eighteenth century observe, "comédie larmoyante" is already employed only by those opposed to the genre. Titon du Tillet says of La Chaussée, for instance: "Il est l'inventeur d'un nouveau genre de Comédie à qui ses Censeurs ont donné le nom de larmoyant."⁵⁶ That this is common practice is plain, too, in the explanation advanced for the failure of L'Amitié rivale de l'amour (1735) by the editor of Fagan's plays, who states that: "... ce ne fut point parce que la Pièce étoit dans le genre que l'on a crû pouvoir appeller larmoyant pour en ridiculiser l'intérêt ..." ⁵⁷ Voltaire's preface to Nanine supports both these assertions; the new kind of comedy is a genre, he claims, "où l'on veut attendrir les spectateurs, et qu'on appelle, par dérision, comédie larmoyante."⁵⁸

Deciding on an alternative name is, however, by no means straightforward. Some critics seem to adopt the term "comédie sérieuse" for the comic drama in the first half of the century, but this may cause confusion between the theatre of those dramatists we have mentioned and a genre with its own aims and characteristics created later by Diderot. The name

⁵⁵E. C. Fréron, Lettres sur quelques ecrits de ce tems. Par M. F..., Nouvelle Edition (Londres, 1752-54), IV, Lettre I, 12.

⁵⁶These words are quoted by Sablier in his edition of the works of Nivelles de La Chaussée, "Avertissement," I, v, and are taken from Second Supplément du Parnasse François, article 324.

⁵⁷B.-C. Fagan, Théâtre de M. Fagan, et autres œuvres du mesme auteur (Paris, 1760), I, xxiiij. The name of the editor does not appear in this edition. Quérard names him as Pesselier.

⁵⁸Voltaire, Nanine, Préface, Œuvres complètes de Voltaire, Nouvelle Edition ... conforme pour le texte à l'édition de Beuchot (Paris, 1877-85), V, 6.

"new comedy" might allow the greatest possibilities for objective study. Strictly speaking, of course, the genre is not new, despite the claims made for it and for Nivelles de la Chaussée by Sablier and others. There is a mixture of the serious and the comic, for instance, in the works of some seventeenth-century playwrights such as Hardy, Jean de Schélandre and Boisrobert, while the comedies of Corneille might also be regarded as precursors of the eighteenth-century genre. Indeed, there are those in the eighteenth century whose arguments in favour of the new genre are based in part precisely on this assertion, namely that the genre is not new and can thus be considered a legitimate form of drama. On succeeding Nivelles de la Chaussée in the Académie Française, for example, M. de Bougainville replies to one contention of those against the new comedy that: "... ce genre ... est ancien ... l'Auteur de l'Andrienne l'a connu, & ... peut-être le devons-nous au Réformateur de la Comédie Grecque."⁵⁹ The term "new comedy" nevertheless commends itself as one devoid of ironic or pejorative overtones. The plays themselves may have fallen out of favour, but, popular in their own time, they deserve serious analysis.

⁵⁹J.-P. de Bougainville, "Discours de M. de Bougainville, prononcé à l'Académie Française, le 30 Mai 1754, jour auquel il fut reçu à la place de M. De La Chaussée." An extract from this speech is given by Sablier in his edition of La Chaussée's works: "Avertissement," I, vij-xj. The words quoted here are to be found on p. x.

CHAPTER TWO

Dubos and the aesthetics of sentiment

Poetic treatises in France develop out of those on rhetoric, using at first much the same divisions of material and terminology in their attempt to establish the status of poetry and of the poet. Such treatises are, in the sixteenth century, relatively precise and detailed where technical and linguistic problems are concerned, but the seventeenth century, an age which believes that beauty is dependent on a universal and eternal Reason and can be created by applying poetic rules, seeks a doctrine and a method which it considers to be lacking in the previous century. It witnesses, therefore, the rise of theorists of poetry whose aim is to enable the poet to attain perfection and, as a result, poetic treatises become increasingly categorical and authoritarian. The approach adopted by seventeenth-century critics is continued by the rationalists of the early eighteenth century, particularly those whose writings form part of the second *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*. That debate may well have widened the scope of discussion on artistic matters, however, and indeed, while treatises of a polemical nature, produced in defence of a definite point of view, do not disappear, many works on aesthetics, especially towards the middle and in the latter part of the century, belong to a wider investigation into the workings of the human mind and the operations of sentiment.¹

¹The term "esthétique" itself is, of course, not used in the first half of the century; it is with the publication of Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* in 1750 that the word can be employed in studies of this kind.

The broadening of outlook experienced by the eighteenth century can be seen in its initial stages in the Réflexions critiques sur la Poësie et sur la Peinture by Dubos, who is now regarded as a significant figure in the history of aesthetics. His book, begun in 1719 and completed in 1733, deals not only with poetry and the visual arts, as one might expect, but with the nature of genius in many contexts, with external phenomena such as climate, which might affect all the arts, with the relationship, for example, between the climate and the character of different nations. Above all, Dubos devotes an important section of his deliberations to a study of the way in which the public judges art or poetry. His intention, as outlined at the beginning of the Réflexions critiques, is to render an account to each man "de son approbation & de ses degoûts," to show him, where poetry and painting are concerned, " ... ce qui se passe en lui-même, en un mot les mouvemens les plus intimes de son cœur."² In the long run, such an analysis cannot but be useful for the creative artist:

Un livre qui, pour ainsi dire, déploieroit
le cœur humain dans l'instant où il est
attendri par un poëme, ou touché par un
tableau, donneroit des vûes très-étenduës
& des lumieres justes à nos Artisans sur
l'effet général de leurs ouvrages ...
(1,4).

Having given some time to an examination of human nature in the most general sense and to the possible genres within poetic and dramatic art, it is indeed to the artist rather than to the public that Dubos first addresses his attention,

²J.-B. Dubos, Réflexions critiques sur la Poësie et sur la Peinture, Quatrième édition (Paris, 1740), I, 3.

The passages from the opening section quoted above already suggest the originality of Dubos's attitude to aesthetic questions; but what might be called the premise of much of his subsequent discussion immediately distinguishes him from critics of the previous century:

On ne lit pas un poëme pour s'instruire,
mais pour son plaisir, & on le quitte
quand il n'a point un attrait capable de
nous attacher. (I,XII,74).

This statement on the appeal of poetry can also be applied to painting;³ any artist must strive to stir the emotions and in order to do so he must find "la Poësie du stile." This Dubos defines, for poetry, in the following way:

La Poësie du stile consiste à prêter des
sentimens interessans à tout ce qu'on
fait parler, comme à exprimer par des
figures, & à présenter sous des images
capables de nous émouvoir, ce qui ne nous
toucheroit pas, s'il étoit dit simplement
en stile prosaïque. (I,XXXIII,272).

Moreover, one quality alone will enable the poet to endow his work with the "Poësie du stile":

C'est pour inventer des images qui peignent
bien ce que le Poëte veut dire, c'est pour
trouver les expressions propres à leur
donner l'être, qu'il a besoin d'un feu
divin, & non pour rimer. (I,XXXIII,279).

The notion that the true artist should be possessed of divine inspiration or genius is an old one, of course, having its origins in classical literature, and it is adopted in principle by all those in France who describe the creative process. We see it, for example, in the theoretical writings

³That Dubos scarcely separates the two forms is apparent in such a statement as "Les Peintres sont Poëtes" (I,XXIV, 186), and in this preliminary to the contention that genius is essential to the true artist: "Si cet entousiasme divin, qui rend les Peintres Poëtes, & les Poëtes Peintres ..." (II,I,6).

of the Renaissance and in seventeenth-century critics such as Chapelain or La Mesnardière, while Boileau makes of it a starting-point for the arguments in his Art poétique.

Nearer to Dubos's own time, a critic like Houdar de la Motte could reaffirm the idea, examining with particular reference to the ode "... quel est & quel doit être cet enthousiasme dont on fait tant d'honneur aux Poètes, & qui doit faire en effet une des plus grandes beautés de l'Ode."⁴

Whatever name may be given to poetic genius, however, for all those who are influenced by classical concepts it must to some extent be, at the very least, balanced by a calmer and more rational approach. The poets of the Renaissance, for example, maintain that the product of divine inspiration must be revised and polished in tranquillity and imagination could never be given a free rein. Greater emphasis was given to this belief in the seventeenth century, when it was widely held not only that genius should be controlled by the intellect, but that qualities of knowledge and industry were almost more important. This is broadly speaking the position taken up by the rationalists of the early eighteenth century. The name of La Motte has in fact become synonymous with "enemy of the poet"; he regards the verse form as an obstacle both to expression and understanding of meaning and qualifies his approval of "enthousiasme" in this way:

... source de beautés & de défauts, selon qu'elle est aveugle ou éclairée. Mais c'est le plus souvent un beau nom qu'on donne à ce qui est le moins raisonnable. ...

⁴A. Houdar de la Motte, Discours sur la Poésie en général, & sur l'Ode en particulier, Œuvres de Monsieur Houdar de la Motte (Paris, 1754), I, Première Partie, 28.

Enthousiasme tant qu'on voudra, il faut qu'il soit toujours guidé par la raison, & que le Poète le plus échauffé se rappelle souvent à soi, pour juger sainement de ce que son imagination lui offre.

Terrasson, another avowed Modern, believes that under Louis XIII the arts and sciences developed together to their mutual advantage, the sciences giving a certain precision and logic to the arts, but the union between the two, which alone can carry the arts to perfection, must now be strengthened:

... il faut nécessairement rappeler les unes & les autres à un principe commun, & ce principe n'est autre que l'esprit de philosophie que nous avons défini en commençant.

Considering as they do that poetry must have the dual aim of providing instruction and of aspiring to absolute beauty according to the rules laid down for it, La Motte and Terrasson come close to denying genius any role in artistic endeavour. Influenced by Cartesian rationalism and following the doctrine established by the seventeenth century, they would seem to propose that poetry is a creation of the intellect.

It is in this context that Dubos's statements are so

⁵ Discours sur la Poésie en général, Oeuvres, I, Première Partie, 28-29.

⁶ J. Terrasson, Dissertation critique sur l'Illiade d'Homère (Paris, 1715), Préface, I, xli. "Philosophie" had been defined as "une supériorité de raison qui nous fait rapporter chaque chose à ses principes propres & naturels, indépendamment de l'opinion qu'en ont eue les autres hommes" (I, iij). It is significant that Terrasson's work bears the sub-title Où à l'occasion de ce Poème on cherche les Regles d'une Poétique fondée sur la raison, & sur les exemples des Anciens & des Modernes.

striking. It is true that a few writers before him had advanced the claims of the feelings in poetry. One such is the abbé Chaulieu, whose poem "Ode contre l'esprit" may be said to contain a short but complete aesthetic theory based on the belief that:

Ce qui sûrement touchera,
C'est ce que le cœur nous fait dire.
C'est ce langage de nos cœurs
Qui saisit l'ame & qui l'agite ...⁷

In an exchange of letters with La Motte, Fénelon questions the validity of rules in art, saying that: "Il faut avouer que la sévérité de nos règles a rendu notre Versification presque impossible."⁸ And he adds:

"L'émulation peut produire d'heureux efforts, pourvû qu'on n'aille point jusqu'à mépriser le goût des Anciens sur l'imitation de la simple nature, sur l'observation inviolable des divers caractères, sur l'harmonie & sur le sentiment, qui est l'ame de la parole" (III, 53).

Dubos, however, evolves a more coherent position out of his central idea and what the rhetoricians had always said of eloquence is extended by him to all the arts. While he does not suggest that a poem or painting should not be revised or that rules can be abandoned, he nevertheless places few reservations on his demand that the artist trust himself to something other than his reason in order to win over his public. His discussion of genius, for example, begins with this paraphrase of an important idea in Horace: "... il faut encore que ces vers puissent remuer les cœurs, & qu'ils soient

⁷G. Anfrue de Chaulieu, "Ode contre l'esprit, en 1708," Œuvres de Chaulieu (La Haye, 1777), I, 41-42.

⁸F. de Salignac de la Motte Fénelon, Lettre de Fr. Ar. Duc de Cambray, ce 26 janvier 1714, Œuvres de Monsieur Houdar de la Motte, III, 51-52. The spelling in the two passages quoted here is that of the complete works of La Motte.

capables d'y faire naître les sentimens qu'ils pretendent exciter" (II,I,2).⁹ It is clear, therefore, that in the first instance the intellect is of no use to either poet or painter; indeed, Dubos had said as much when offering advice to both earlier:

L'art d'émouvoir les hommes & de les amener où l'on veut, consiste principalement à sçavoir faire un bon usage de ces images. L'Ecrivain le plus austere, celui qui fait la profession la plus sérieuse de ne mettre en œuvre, pour nous persuader, que la raison toute nuë, sent bientôt, que pour nous convaincre, il nous faut émouvoir, & qu'il faut, pour nous émouvoir, mettre sous nos yeux par des peintures, les objets dont il nous parle.

(I,XXXIII,277-78).

These words may perhaps recall those of some Renaissance poets and yet the gift of which Dubos speaks is not exactly that referred to by, say, Ronsard or Du Bellay.¹⁰ His inspiration is a more subdued state, stemming, it would seem, from a particular element in man's make-up; he may even be proposing in fact that there is within man a quite separate quality, independent of what one might call divine fury, but fundamental to the creation of art or poetry. He chooses several of the same terms as his predecessors, but envisages the creative

⁹Dubos himself quotes Horace's De Arte Poetica here: "Non satis est pulchra esse Poemata, dulcia sunt, / Et quocumque volent animum auditoris agunto" and adds: "Et Horace auroit dit la même chose aux Peintres" (II,I,2). (Dubos's own presentation of the Latin has been reproduced here; he is quoting lines 99-100 of Horace's poem).

¹⁰The passage quoted from Dubos might recall these words of Du Bellay, for example: "... celui sera veritablement le poëte que je cherche en nostre Langue, qui me fera indigner, apayser, ejouyr, douloir, aymer, hayr, admirer, etonner, bref, qui tiendra la bride de mes affections, me tournant ça & la à son plaisir" (Deffence et Illustration de la Langue françoise, ed. H. Chamard (Paris, 1961), Livre II, Chap. XI, p. 179.

process in this way:

... l'enthousiasme qui fait les Peintres & les Poètes, ne consiste pas dans l'invention des mystères allégoriques, mais bien dans le talent d'enrichir ses compositions par tous les ornemens que la vraisemblance du sujet peut permettre, ainsi qu'à donner de la vie à tous ses personnages par l'expression des passions. ...

Il n'est pas nécessaire d'inventer son sujet, ni de créer ses personnages, pour être réputé un Poète plein de verve. On mérite le nom de Poète, en rendant l'action qu'on traite capable d'émouvoir, ce qui se fait en imaginant quels sentimens conviennent à des personnages supposez dans une certaine situation, & en tirant de son génie les traits les plus propres à bien exprimer ces sentimens.

(I, XXIV, 206-7).

A similar notion underlies Dubos's observations on painters;¹¹ it leads us to conclude that inspiration is an instinctive understanding of what is appropriate, as the phrase "imaginant quels sentimens conviennent" makes plain, amounting to a kind of sympathy between the poet or the painter as creator and that which he creates. It is a judgment, but one which comes through the feelings.

There is clearly some vagueness in Dubos's exposition of the qualities needed by the true artist. Certainly he does not put before all else the desirability of sound knowledge, nor does he believe a preoccupation with perfect composition and structure to be essential; on the contrary, a poem, at any rate, cannot appeal by mere regularity of form or

¹¹"Les Peintres sont Poètes, mais leur Poésie ne consiste pas tant à inventer des chimères ou des jeux d'esprit, qu'à bien imaginer quelles passions & quels sentimens l'on doit donner aux personnages, suivant leur caractère & la situation où l'on les suppose, comme à trouver les expressions propres à rendre ces passions sensibles, & à faire deviner ces sentimens." (I, XXIV, 186).

adherence to the rules.¹² By definition, however, Dubos cannot legislate for art in the way that Chapelain, for example, was able to, given his faith in reason. Dubos can do no more than say that a poem or painting must have an immediate impression and speak directly to the heart:

Ces premières idées qui naissent dans
l'ame, lorsqu'elle reçoit une affection
vive, & qu'on appelle communément des
sentimens, touchent toujours ... Ils
parlent le langage du cœur.

(I,XXXIII,272).

By implication, therefore, if an artist wishes to reach his public, he must himself first experience or comprehend the emotions he is seeking to convey and use himself the language which makes a simple and direct appeal. Only a capacity for feeling, and not a readiness to obey rules devised by the intellect, can render this possible. In a sense, Dubos has liberated the artist, since no laws can be set up either to bring such a capacity into being or to regulate its operations.

Rollin, rector of the University of Paris in 1694 and principal of the Collège de Beauvais in 1699, includes in his De la Maniere d'enseigner et d'etudier les belles lettres observations on the creation and appreciation of several art forms. As a man devoted to the study of the classics, he believes that the imagination should be held in check and subjugated to good taste. This is " ... un discernement

¹²"Or c'est à proportion des charmes de la Poésie du stile qu'un poëme nous interesse. Voilà pourquoi les hommes préféreront toujours les poëmes qui touchent, aux poëmes réguliers." (I,XXXIV,287-88). He does, however, make this proviso: "Le génie est donc une plante, qui, pour ainsi dire, pousse d'elle-même; mais la qualité, comme la quantité de ses fruits, dépendent beaucoup de la culture qu'elle reçoit. Le génie le plus heureux, ne peut être perfectionné qu'à l'aide d'une longue étude" (II,V,43-44).

délicat, vif, net, & précis de toute la beauté, la vérité, & la justesse des pensées & des expressions qui entrent dans un discours."¹³ Although it functions "par un sentiment fin et exquis," and seems to escape precise definition, it is nevertheless closely allied to the intellect:

Cette heureuse qualité, que l'on sent mieux qu'on ne peut la définir, est moins l'effet du génie que du jugement, & d'une espèce de raison naturelle perfectionnée par l'étude. (I,lxxx).

It is this "heureuse qualité" which is a guide during the process of composition:

Elle fait usage de l'imagination, mais sans s'y livrer, & en demeure toujours maîtresse. Elle consulte en tout la nature, la suit pas à pas, & en est une fidèle expression." (I,lxxx).

Rollin demands of the orator, however, qualities held by Dubos to be essential in painter and poet. Naturally the orator has ideas and these must survive close scrutiny, but if he concentrates on logic alone, appealing merely to the reason, he will fail. In order truly to persuade, he must touch the heart and therefore make use of striking imagery, for without it his speech "... languit, tombe dans une espèce de monotonie, & est presque comme un corps sans âme" (II,244-45). The soul to which Rollin refers here are the passions, which "emportent & entraînent tout" (II,309). Thus the first prerequisite for a good orator who wishes to carry his audience along with him, is an ability to undergo himself the emotions he is to arouse in others:

Le plus important de tous (les préceptes) est que pour toucher les autres, il faut être touché soi-même ... (II,310).

¹³Ch. Rollin, De la Manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les belles lettres, Par rapport à l'esprit & au cœur (Paris, 1726-28), "Discours préliminaire," I,lxxix.

The poet cannot allow himself to be governed by his intellect; a facility for natural and genuine expression is of greater value:

... l'air, l'extérieur, le geste, le ton,
le style, tout doit respirer je ne sais
quoi de doux & de tendre, qui parte du
cœur, & qui aille droit au cœur.

(II, 318-19).

Again we note that the writer is not specific in his advice and in this case resorts to the old notion of the "je ne sais quoi". It is clear, nevertheless, that Rollin believes a capacity for feeling to be a surer basis than the intellect for communication between orator and audience and that that communication should be founded on emotions experienced by both. Like Dubos, he reinstates feelings killed by Cartesianism.

More explicit and outspoken, Rémond de Saint-Mard begins his aesthetic theories with an attack on rationalism, condemning in particular Bouddar de la Motte's attempts at the systematisation of poetry, together with the verse of both Fontenelle and La Motte himself. He maintains that in general terms a desire to apply the Cartesian method too widely has led to an arrogant narrowness of outlook and repression of an important side of man's nature:

Nous ne voyons rien au-dessus de nous, parce que nous savons tirer une belle chaîne de conséquences: on dirait que nous sommes devenus des substances pensantes, des esprits purs, & que nous avons renoncé à sentir pour être désormais mieux en état de penser.

In art, more specifically, this development has meant the

¹⁴T. Rémond de Saint-Mard, Lettre première à Monsieur D ... Sur la naissance, les progrès & la décadence du Goût, Œuvres de Monsieur Rémond de St.-Mard (Amsterdam, 1749), III, 172-73. This and the other Lettres were first published in 1733.

abandonment of the "beau feu" and the "beau naturel" once so highly prized, with the result that "... nous immolons tout à une raison sévère, & fiers de nos sacrifices, nous disons que nous avons de la précision" (III,173-74). In despising movements of his own time, Saint-Mard takes us back to the idea that a true poet must be possessed of, and trust himself to, inspiration. He has various terms for this, sometimes calling it, as well as "ce beau feu", "cette belle chaleur" and, simply, "le Génie", but it is always to be preferred to reason or "esprit".¹⁵ In addition, he also looks for another quality in the poet, which he often places in opposition to "esprit" and to which he gives the name "sentiment". His judgments of Fontenelle and La Motte, for example, are remarkably similar; of the first he says: "... si entraîné par l'esprit M. de Fontenelle m'a paru quelquefois peu fidele au sentiment ...",¹⁶ and of La Motte: "... avec de l'esprit, il avoit fort peu de goût ... où il falloit du sentiment, il mettoit presque toujours de l'esprit" (III,211-12, Note). There is something of the same juxtaposition of two different forces in this praise of classical authors:

¹⁵Of Fontenelle Saint-Mard remarks: "... mais par malheur cet empire qu'il a sur son imagination, est senti; on se plaint de ce qu'il coûte, & l'on a regret de le voir acheté par la perte de ce beau feu, de ce beau naturel qui touche & qui enchante" (Lettre II. Sur les causes de la décadence du Goût, Œuvres, III, 189-90). As a note to this he adds: "Comment cela se fait-il? On dit qu'il faut être maître de sa matière; cependant on n'est vif, agréable, naturel, (disons mieux) on n'est beau qu'autant qu'on est entraîné par elle; Est-ce que pour être admirable il faut presque l'avoir été à son insu? Sans doute, & c'est par-là que le Génie est si supérieur à l'Esprit" (III,190).

¹⁶Lettre II, Œuvres, III,200,Note.

Pénétrés que nous aimons mieux sentir que
connoître, ces Grands Hommes en nous
éclairant vouloient aussi nous toucher, &
ils le vouloient au risque de nous éclair-
er moins.¹⁷

Neither the word "sentiment" nor the faculty needed to stir the reader's emotions is analysed in these letters, but it would seem that Saint-Mard is suggesting that the creative artist, indeed most men, can call on something other than inspiration and reason. Ideas contained by implication in this part of Saint-Mard's work are developed in the Réponse de l'Auteur à Madame la Comtesse de V^{xxx}. Qui lui avoit demandé des regles pour bien écrire, written in 1737. Throughout this letter, which has as its premise the belief that "... le beau ... ne fut jamais le fruit de nos recherches" (III,18), Saint-Mard stresses that rules and a knowledge of the rules are quite useless for the poet, mainly because he is directed, when composing, by his own make-up and response to the external world:

... notre façon de rendre est une copie
fidele, de la maniere dont nous sommes
affectés ... (III,20).

The only advantage of rules is that they can refine what already exists, namely "le goût".¹⁸ As a conclusion to this part of his discussion, Saint-Mard states categorically:

Disons-le donc, & disons-le sans détour,
il n'y a que le goût, encore le veux-je
exquis et raisonnablement cultivé, qui,
de concert avec le génie, puisse opérer
les belles choses. (III,30).

¹⁷ Lettre première, Œuvres, III, 172.

¹⁸ "... il est sûr qu'un homme de génie peut tirer du profit des regles; mais pour cela il faut, s'il vous plaît, qu'il ne manque point absolument de goût" (III,28).

There are thus two central concepts in this theory, that is to say, taste and inspiration. Again, the latter is not defined, Saint-Mard assuming presumably that with such an old idea explanation is unnecessary; he merely says: "... il nous faut de la chaleur; & celle qui produit & qui enfante, la belle en un mot, vous devez savoir que ce n'est pas nous ordinairement qui nous la donnons" (III,35). To the notion of "goût", on the other hand, he devotes rather more attention. The passage quoted above might lead us to suppose that it is a quality governed by the intellect, susceptible certainly of improvement and perfection. As Saint-Mard continues his argument, however, it becomes plain that "goût" is an innate quality which cannot be created by any other part of man's nature if it is not already possessed:

... si le goût, lorsqu'on en a, peut s'étendre & se perfectionner, il est fort vraisemblable que lorsqu'on n'en a point du tout, c'est qu'on n'est pas fait pour en avoir; & qu'alors on travaille inutilement pour en acquérir. (III,44).

Indeed, far from being dependent on an ability to reason, "goût" belongs to quite another side of man:

Je le dis donc hardiment ... il n'y a que ce sentiment qui nous a été plus ou moins donné à tous, pour distinguer ce qui est convenable d'avec ce qui ne l'est point; cet instinct plus sûr que la raison, le goût, pour tout dire, qui puisse; selon le précepte d'Horace, varier un sujet ... polir un Ouvrage sans le refroidir; attraper juste cette précision, qui poussée un peu plus loin, iroit à l'obscurité; démêler le sublime du guindé, le simple du bas & du rampant. (III,59-60).

"Goût" is thus affective. We notice here, too, the importance for Saint-Mard of that which is "convenable", or of those elements in a particular work which are fittingly together.

It is not so much the perception of objects themselves, therefore, which is a "sentiment", as the perception of the relations between them. "Goût" remains a judgment, an assessment of how a work should be accomplished, similar to Horace's notion of "ars", but it is a feeling and not a "clear idea".

Beyond this, there is a certain vagueness in Saint-Mard's system as to the way in which "goût" operates. It is plain, as we have seen, that beauty can only be created by "le goût et le génie," but beauty itself cannot be defined; the excellence of a poem, for example:

... vient d'un beau, que content de sentir
on doit renoncer à connoître, d'un beau
qui sort à tous momens, & sort de mille &
mille endroits; elle (l'excellence) vient
d'une infinité de petits riens, plus char-
mans les uns que les autres; mais si fins,
si délicats, qu'il est impossible de les
manier ... (III, 68-69).

Nevertheless, it would seem possible to conclude that "goût" arises out of a distinct and separate faculty in man's make-up. In a somewhat sad reflection on the disappearance of taste in his own time, for instance, Saint-Mard says this:

Seroit-ce que semblables [sic] aux fruits
délicats, le goût ne veut pas être trop manié?
Ou ne seroit-ce pas plutôt que la débauche
honteuse où nous sommes plongés, que la
corruption de nos mœurs, que l'esprit
d'intérêt, & de bassesse qui nous domine,
a tout-à-fait usé notre sensibilité, &
que le goût qui en dépend, & qui est lui-
même un sentiment, en a souffert.
(III, 58-59, Note).

Thus "goût" in both poet and public stems from a generalised capacity for feeling and both, moreover, are incompatible with selfishness and corruption. The first idea takes us back to Saint-Mard's original premise, namely that a poet's creative power is closely allied to the way in which he is affected by objects and events around him, "... de la maniere dont

nous sommes affectés." If Saint-Mard does not give a detailed analysis of the poet's psychology, he does at least offer us the notion that there is in man a faculty which perceives and reacts instinctively to the outside world, putting together the evidence which it finds there and that this faculty is, furthermore, more reliable than the intellect. In addition, the implication at the beginning of the Réponse à Madame la Comtesse de V^{xxx} is that the feeling fundamental to good taste might be more far-reaching. The Comtesse prefaces her request that Saint-Mard write on the principles of good judgment with the following remark:

C'est un métier dont tout le monde se mêle;
mais que peu de gens savent; parceque pour
le bien faire il faut avoir ce que vous
avez; je veux dire, un sentiment fin &
délicat, & ce qui en est le fruit, un dis-
cernement éclairé. (III,2).

To this she later adds, assuaging her fear that he might not have sufficient energy to do it:

... mais je me rassûre par l'idée que j'ai
de votre complaisance, je la crois sans
bornes; puisque c'est une vertu qui est
d'autant plus parfaite, que le sentiment
est vif & délicat. (III,8-9).

"Délicatesse de sentiment" is thus a sign of a standard of behaviour. From the area of aesthetics, we have moved into that of morals.

In the field of poetic theory, the abbé Yart in his "Observations générales" again expresses the belief that a poet should himself experience all the emotions of those whom he creates:

Je veux dire que son imagination doit se
les peindre si vivement, que son cœur
sente les mêmes transports, que si elles

étoient réelles.¹⁹

This ability to enter into characters is a gift and is more valuable than the power of reason:

Voila l'heureux don du Sentiment; il est plus nécessaire au Poëte Tragique que l'esprit, parce que l'esprit, quelques efforts qu'il fasse, ne peut imiter la Nature que très-foiblement, & que le Sentiment, au contraire, est la Nature même.
(2643-44).

Thus an "âme sensible" is essential to the poet and particularly the tragic poet. We note that Yart is not discussing the concept of taste in this essay; the creative power for him is not a matter of judgment but one of sympathy, as it had been to a certain extent for Dubos.

We have seen, therefore, that a number of writers in the first half of the eighteenth century believe in the superiority of genius over "wit" and imply that the artist has within him a faculty separate from, and capable of suppressing, his powers of reasoning, that is to say his power of proceeding from clear idea to clear idea or of combining clear ideas. This faculty, more closely associated with his capacity for "feeling" - which includes judgment and sympathy as well as emotion - inspires his work and forms the basis of his communication with the public. There is also an attempt at this time to locate that part of man which responds to and evaluates a work of art. The rationalists' position on this question is determined by their ideas on the nature of poetry. I

¹⁹M. Yart, "Observations générales sur le Sentiment & l'Interêt, qui doivent entrer dans nos Tragédies," in Mercure de France (Paris, nov., déc. 1742), Décembre, Premier Volume, 2643.

If, as for Houdar de la Motte, for example, beauty is achieved only when a poem conforms to the genre in which it is written and obeys the rules governing harmony and versification, a knowledge of poetic theory is essential for true appreciation of a work. Ideally the critical process is slow and deliberate, taking the form of meditation and comparison of a work with the ideal set up for it. As La Motte plainly says when defending this kind of artistic endeavour:

... elle (la Critique) est utile, puisqu'
elle ne tend qu'à faire voir par un raisonnement sérieux & détaillé, les défauts
& les beautés des Ouvrages.²⁰

Terrasson, too, in stating that " ... la poétique doit être en elle-même un art tiré des lumières générales & universelles de la raison, indépendamment de l'exemple d'aucun Poète particulier, & dont le but soit de diriger les Ouvrages de Poésie" makes evaluation of a work of art an intellectual exercise.²¹ Underlying both his and La Motte's aesthetic doctrines is the notion that man is, or should be, first and foremost a thinking being. It is clear from the Réflexions critiques and the Dissertation critique sur l'Illiade, however, that other ideas on this subject had been circulating widely for some time. Terrasson, for example, takes the trouble to dismiss the claims of a capacity for feeling in any area of life²² and it is certainly true that where the question of the judgment of art or literature is concerned, there are

²⁰ "De la manière de critiquer les Auteurs," Réflexions sur la Critique, Oeuvres, III, 18.

²¹ Dissertation critique sur l'Illiade d'Homère, Préface, I, xj.

²² "Il n'y a donc d'infaillible pour les choses humaines que la raison seule, & c'est à elle qu'il faut soumettre le sentiment même" (I,li).

those who believe that a faculty other than the reason must be used. La Bruyère, for instance, proposes that:

Quand une lecture vous élève l'esprit, et
quelle [sic] vous inspire des sentiments
nobles et courageux, ne cherchez pas une
autre règle pour juger l'ouvrage; il est
bon, et fait de main d'ouvrier.²³

It is also possible to go back to the père Bouhours and his Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène (1671), to find mention of a something which cannot be coped with by the discursive faculty. Ariste suggests in the "Cinquième Entretien," for example, that the beauty in art - he mentions specifically paintings and statues - or indeed in anything which man may find pleasing, cannot be explained:

... quand on fera un peu de reflexion sur
les choses de ce monde que nous admirons
le plus, on verra que ce qui nous les
fait admirer, c'est je ne sçay quoy qui
nous surprend,²⁴ qui nous ébloüit, & qui
nous enchante.

Bouhours therefore uses the term "je ne sais quoi" to refer to the fundamental and apparently inherent quality in art which attracts man. From the discussion at the start of the "Entretien," however, which centres on the meaning of the phrase and the concept in a general sense, it is plain that the "je ne sais quoi" is a quality in us as well as a quality in works of art or other outside things and that it belongs in fact to the affective side of man's being. Ariste attributes his liking for Eugène, for instance, to "... des effets d'une grande sympathie, & de ces inclinations secrettes qui

²³J. de La Bruyère, "Des Ouvrages de l'esprit"(31), Les Caractères, Œuvres complètes de La Bruyère, ed. J. Benda (Paris, 1951), p. 74.

²⁴D. Bouhours, Les Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène, Nouvelle Edition (Amsterdam, 1682), p. 261.

nous font sentir pour une personne, je ne sçay quoy que nous ne sentons point pour une autre" (p. 246). The nature of this rapport between two men cannot be subjected to analysis and indeed the "je ne sais quoy" would cease to exist were a precise definition to be found for it:

Il est bien plus ais  de le sentir que de le connoistre ... Ce ne seroit plus un je ne sçay quoy, si l'on sçavoit ce que c'est; sa nature est d'estre incomprehensible, & inexplicable. (pp. 246-47).

The "je ne sais quoy" thus escapes the scrutiny of the intellect and can only be apprehended through the feelings; that it is itself a feeling is placed beyond doubt in the following description offered by Bouhours, despite the previous claim that the notion cannot be captured in words:

... c'est le penchant & l'instinct du c eur
... c'est un tres exquis sentiment de l'ame
pour un objet qui la touche; une sympathie
merveilleuse, & comme une parent  des
c eurs ... (p. 247).²⁵

We can see, therefore, that Bouhours believes man to possess a first impulse which acts independently of the reason, in that it certainly does not rely on knowledge or on any process conducted by the intellect. Phenomena in the outside world appeal to and awaken the feeling latent in us, as the words " ... ces je ne sçay quoy en beau et en laid ... excitent dans nous des je ne sçay quoy d'inclination, &

²⁵The whole of this discussion might recall Montaigne's essay "De l'Amiti " and in particular his reference to his own friendship with La Bo tie: "Si on me presse de dire pourquoy je l'aymois, je sens que cela ne se peut exprimer, qu'en respondant: 'Par ce que c'estoit luy; par ce que c'estoit moy'" (M. de Montaigne, *Essais*, I, XXVIII, *Oeuvres compl tes*, ed. Albert Thibaudet et Maurice Rat (Paris, 1962), pp. 186-87).

d'aversion" (p. 257) imply. Furthermore, in stating that: "Ce sont de premiers mouvemens qui previennent la reflexion" (p. 248), Bouhours is clearly separating the spontaneous reactions of the "je ne sais quoi" from the capacity for thought, proposing that, in art as in human relationships, the former play the primary role. The most significant characteristic in the "Entretien" is perhaps the fact that Bouhours's views on aesthetics are contained within a theory of human nature. At the same time, however, he is incapable of analysing the operations of "sentiment" and does not even attempt to say what this term means for him when he employs it.

The vogue of the "je ne sais quoi" was short-lived and the more definite word "goût" came to be applied to man's faculty of appreciation, which was soon to be more carefully examined and described. Bouhours himself gives this definition:

Le goust ... est un sentiment naturel qui tient à l'ame, & qui est indépendant de toutes les sciences qu'on peut acquerir; le goust n'est autre chose qu'un certain rapport qui se trouve entre l'esprit & les objets qu'on luy présente; enfin le bon goust est le premier mouvement, ou pour ainsi dire une espece d'instinct de la droite raison qui l'entraîne avec rapidité, & qui la conduit plus sûrement que tous les raisonnemens qu'elle pourroit faire.²⁶

This is clearly in line with what he has already written on the subject of judgment or evaluation, but is not developed in any way. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, Morvan de Bellegarde published some more detailed reflections on good taste, which contain the following preliminary

²⁶ "Quatrième Dialogue," La Maniere de bien penser dans les ouvrages d'esprit. Dialogues (Paris, 1687), pp. 381-82.

question:

Le croiriez-vous, Madame, que le goût dépend plus du cœur, que de l'esprit, quoique la plupart des hommes se persuadent, que c'est plutôt une réflexion de l'esprit, qu'un mouvement du cœur?²⁷

In all areas of life - in the choice of a profession, in the appreciation of art or architecture or in the question of dress - taste is founded on what the abbé de Bellegarde calls an "inclination" or "penchant". No more than qualified approval is given by him to this fact, however, for he distinguishes between good and bad taste, introducing another notion into his argument:

... je croi que le goût est exquis, quand il est réglé par la raison; & que ceux qui ne suivent que leur inclination pour guide, ont d'ordinaire le goût mauvais, parce qu'ils ressemblent en quelque maniere aux bêtes, qui n'agissent que par instinct, & par temperament. (pp. 13-14).

These two ideas run together through the "Reflexions." Despite Morvan de Bellegarde's belief that taste has a very real existence, it is clearly difficult to define and we see that he has recourse to the "je ne sais quoi":

Quoiqu'on ait bien de la peine à déterminer en quoi il consiste, il ne faut pas croire, qu'il ne dépende que de l'imagination, ou de la fantaisie; c'est quelque chose de réel; c'est un certain je ne sais quoi, que l'on sent, qui fait plaisir, & que l'on ne sauroit définir bien nettement. (p. 21)

On the one hand, therefore, if it is not precisely stated that taste is a function of the feelings, neither is it one

²⁷J.-B. Morvan de Bellegarde, "Lettres de M^r l'abbé de Bellegarde, A une Dame de la Cour, qui lui avoit demandé quelques Reflexions sur le bon Goût," Lettres curieuses de littérature, et de morale (Paris, 1702), pp. 12-13. Despite the title, there is only one letter on good taste.

connected with the intellect, in that it cannot be the object of rational analysis. Morvan de Bellegarde's description of the way in which taste operates seems to support this interpretation of his argument. In words more reminiscent of Locke than of Descartes, for instance, he says:

La nature est une espece d'harmonie, qui par un assemblage divers, fait impression dans nos sens, dans notre esprit, dans notre raison, dans notre cœ̄ur: voilà l'origine de toutes nos passions, qui s'excitent par le rapport qui se trouve entre nos sens, & leurs objets; c'est ce rapport, & cette sympathie, qui fait le plaisir des sensations: la sympathie consiste dans une certaine disposition d'un objet à l'égard d'un autre objet. (p.22).

Again we are confronted with the idea that suitable or fitting relationships are present objectively in nature and also between the things in nature and us; taste is the appreciation of them. Here the abbé de Bellegarde is proposing that it takes the form of a pleasurable sensation, which arises from a spontaneous recognition of harmony, independently of the workings of the reason.

On the other hand, however, there is no doubt that for Morvan de Bellegarde taste is the result of an enlightened mind:

Le bon goût est l'effet d'une raison droite & éclairée, qui prend toūjours le bon parti dans les choses douteuses ou équivoques. (p. 14).

Whereas all men possess some taste, especially in fields where they may be considered expert, and while it may be desirable to follow the promptings of taste which is "inclination", superior taste is found only in those who apply their intellect to a question:

Ceux qui ont le discernement juste & délicat,

conçoivent les choses sous des idées nettes, & telles qu'elles sont en elles-mêmes ... (p. 26).

It is significant that the abbé de Bellegarde holds that too great an attention is paid to the cultivation of social graces, to the detriment of that of the reason, for this implies that he prizes a capacity for clear thinking above all. Certainly he condemns the fact that most men act

... plutôt par caprice, & par l'impetuosité d'une humeur bizarre, que par les lumieres de leur raison, qui n'est pas assez cultivée. (p. 34).

He discusses the decline in good taste in this context and it thus becomes plain that, ideally, judgment belongs in part at least to the rational side of man's being. He says indeed:

Le peu de soin que l'on prend de former la raison des hommes, est cause qu'ils n'ont pas le goût délicat. (pp. 33-34).

These notions, that taste is a movement of the "heart" towards an object causing pleasure and an operation of the intellect, seem to co-exist uneasily in this essay. Morvan de Bellegarde appears to indicate that his ideas are in fact drawn from two different sources in this piece of flattery to the Marquise:

Voilà, Madame, une philosophie, dont vous vous seriez bien passée; il y a longtemps que vous êtes instruite de tous ces mysteres, puisqu'il n'y a rien de curieux dans Descartes ou dans Gassendi, ni dans les autres Philosophes modernes, qui se dérobe à vos lumieres. (p. 25).

He makes no attempt, however, to devise a coherent system from two such conflicting theories. Rather are we left to conclude that, to attain perfection, the impulse on which taste is based should be controlled and directed by the intellect, with its true powers of perception and analysis.

Nevertheless, Morvan de Bellegarde has advanced the possibility that appreciation, in art as elsewhere in life, may be a process belonging to the affections.

A similar approach is adopted by Frain du Tremblay in his Discours sur l'Origine de la Poësie (1713). Initially his statement that good taste is more often the product of temperament and the prejudices gained through education "... que d'un discernement éclairé & d'une connoissance certaine qui procede de la raison ..." ²⁸ points to a belief that it should be a faculty governed by the reason. An assertion such as "... il n'est point du tout impossible d'apprendre & d'enseigner ce qui fait le bon goût ..." (p. 118) supports the original impression that assessment of a work of art is a rational act. When he goes on to examine the particular "habitude de l'ame" on which appraisal is founded, however, Frain du Tremblay reveals that the question is more complex:

On l'appelle goût, quand elle agit par sentiment & à la premiere impression des objets; on l'appelle jugement, quand elle agit par raisonnement, & après avoir examiné les ouvrages sur les regles de l'art & par les lumieres de la verité.
(p. 120).

It is interesting to note, in the first place, the limitation placed here on the word "judgement"; others accept that taste provides judgments, but for Frain du Tremblay, as we see, "judgement" is a separate and independent function. Moreover, it is clear from the distinction he makes that response to a work of art may be a feeling; indeed, when further refining his definitions of the terms "judgement" and "goût" he says:

²⁸ J. Frain du Tremblay, Discours sur l'Origine de la Poësie, sur son Usage, et sur le Bon Goût (Paris, 1713), p. 116.

Celui (terme) de goût, outre l'idée de jugement, signifie encore qu'on a certaine affection pour les objets, ou que les objets ont un certain attrait pour nous. Ainsi lorsqu'on dit qu'un homme a le goût de la poésie, ou de la peinture, cela signifie non seulement qu'il juge bien de l'une & de l'autre, mais encore qu'il les aime. (p. 122).

It is plain that there are two different uses of the word "goût" here. The term is applied both to "l'habitude ou la disposition de l'ame" (p. 123) which produces pleasure in, say, certain books and to "le sentiment même que nous avons à l'occasion de ces études & de cette lecture" (pp. 123-24). In short, it can be employed of "l'habitude qui produit l'acte" and "l'acte qui est produit" (p. 124). In addition, Frain du Tremblay has reverted to the idea that good taste is a basis for judgment. It remains true nonetheless that pure "judgement" is an intellectual activity, while "goût", in both senses, belongs to the 'heart'. The word "judgement" contains no notion of affection for a work of art:

C'est pourquoi on peut dire que l'esprit a plus de part que le cœur à ce qui fait le jugement, & qu'au contraire le cœur a plus de part que l'esprit à ce qui fait le bon goût. (pp. 122-23).

Statements such as these are admittedly qualified by constant reservations. The "sentiment" more appropriate for appreciation of works of the imagination must become, for example, "un véritable jugement de la raison par l'examen & par les réflexions" (p. 120). There can be no doubt that for Frain du Tremblay critical assessment which is a "judgement" is the ideal:

... le terme de jugement présente à l'esprit une plus noble idée; car il signifie proprement un discernement éclairé & fondé sur des connaissances certaines; au lieu

que celui de goût marque un discernement
confus, qui vient plus de sentiment, que
de lumiere. (p. 123).

Nevertheless, like Morvan de Bellegarde, he has introduced into aesthetics the proposition that man's reaction to artistic creation can, in the first instance, be a feeling. It operates most effectively when man's mind has within it a kind of harmony with outside forces:

Car nôtre ame possede en effet cette qualite, qui fait discerner par sentiment les bonnes choses d'avec les mauvaises, & qui les fait estimer leur juste prix, quand nôtre esprit se trouve dans un parfait accord avec la raison. (p. 128).

In his Réflexions critiques Dubos claims, however, that sentiment alone can be the basis of judgment and that the feeling of individuals is a better guide than any approach of the intellect, particularly the theories and calculations of specialists:

Or le sentiment enseigne bien mieux si l'ouvrage touche, & s'il fait sur nous l'impression qu'il doit faire, que toutes les dissertations composées par les Critiques ... (II, XXII, 324).

Although analysis of a rational kind may be employed in questions of aesthetics, its function is to determine not the initial response to a work of art, but the cause of the pleasure gained from it. Thus Dubos concludes that:

Le raisonnement ne doit donc intervenir ... que pour rendre raison de la décision du sentiment ... (II, XXII, 324).

We see, therefore, that the role accorded to the reason is more limited here than it had been for Morvan de Bellegarde or Frain du Tremblay. The importance of Dubos's work lies, too, in the lengthy consideration devoted to the nature of "sentiment" and the way in which it operates. It would seem

at times that it is a sense, possessing the characteristics of the other five senses. Certainly, in stating that reliable decisions are made on the part of the public " ... par la voie du sentiment, & suivant l'impression que le poème ou le tableau font sur lui" (II, XXII,323), Dubos implies that in the first instance the faculty is a passive one, receiving evidence from other parts of the body. Throughout the discussion, "sentiment" is associated closely with the senses. Dubos believes, for example, that with age comes the realisation that: " ... on est trompé rarement par le rapport distinct de ses sens" (II,XXIII,341), and that in many areas reason must yield to experience, that is to say, to the knowledge obtained through the senses. This is as true for appreciation of poetry as for any other activity:

Or s'il est quelque matiere où il faille
que le raisonnement se taise devant
l'expérience, c'est assurément dans les
questions qu'on peut faire sur le mérite
d'un poème. (II,XXIII,349).

Furthermore, when asserting that "sentiment" exists in all men, Dubos links it with the senses of sight and hearing, saying that " ... comme ils n'ont pas tous les oreilles & les yeux également bons, de même ils n'ont pas tous le sentiment également parfait" (II,XXIII,352).²⁹ As we might assume, its judgments are made in a completely spontaneous fashion, without any prior knowledge of the rules. Dubos says of the power to stir of a play, for example: "Le sentiment nous

²⁹Proposing that: "Les Romains naissent presque tous avec beaucoup de sensibilité pour la peinture" (II,XXIX,395), Dubos attributes this in part to "la sensibilité des organes plus grande dans ces contrées-là que dans des pays froids & humides ..." (II,XXIX,396).

apprend ce qui en est, avant que nous aïons pensé à en faire l'examen" (II,XXII,327).

All these statements would seem to suggest that "sentiment" depends on the receptivity of the five main senses and as such it does not greatly differ from the 'sens commun' of traditional philosophy. It is at any rate similar to the other senses, the crucial distinction being that it is an active as well as a passive faculty, with the power to respond to objects perceived. Both these central ideas are encapsulated in the following account of the way in which judgments are formed:

Lorsqu'il s'agit de connoître si l'imitation qu'on nous présente ... est capable d'exciter la compassion & d'attendrir, le sens destiné pour en juger, est le sens même qui auroit été attendri, c'est le sens qui auroit jugé de l'objet imité. C'est ce sixième sens qui est en nous, sans que nous voïions ses organes. C'est la portion de nous-mêmes qui juge sur l'impression qu'elle ressent.... C'est enfin ce qu'on appelle communément le sentiment.
(II,XXII,326).

"Sentiment", therefore, is a quite separate part of ourselves which, while it may rely on sense impressions, acts independently of them. To this "portion de nous-mêmes" Dubos gives other names which enable us to understand it more clearly. In particular, he immediately develops the notion expressed in the passage quoted above in this way:

Le cœur s'agite de lui-même, & par un mouvement qui précède toute délibération, quand l'objet qu'on lui présente est réellement un objet touchant, soit que l'objet ait reçu son être de la nature, soit qu'il tienne son existence d'une imitation que l'art en a faite. Notre cœur est fait, il est organisé pour cela.
(II,XXII,326).

In asserting that the heart, which is traditionally the seat

of all emotions, is that in man which is stirred by and responds to a work of art, Dubos is associating "sentiment" or the sixth sense with the affective side of man's nature and reveals that the terms have a metaphorical sense for him. Elsewhere he uses as synonyms "le sentiment intérieur" or "l'expérience intérieure",³⁰ and it is plain from his discussion that he believes man to possess a quality, namely a capacity for feeling, more reliable than the intellect.

It is apparent, moreover, that in Dubos's system all men have the ability to form a judgment about a work of art. Perfection is not attained by all, as we have seen,³¹ but those without "sentiment" are rare. It is a faculty, too, which exists in varying degrees. Dubos declares, for example, employing the word in an unusual way, that "esprit" provides an awareness of a poem or a painting " ... car on entend alors par le mot d'esprit, la justesse & la délicatesse du sentiment" (II,XXII,328), and he continues:

Plus notre sentiment est délicat, ou
si l'on veut, plus nous avons d'esprit,
plus la montre est juste. (II,XXII,329).³²

³⁰Dubos repeats his principal theory thus, for instance: "Tous les hommes, à l'aide du sentiment intérieur qui est en eux, connoissent, sans sçavoir les regles, si les productions des arts sont de bons ou de mauvais ouvrages" (II,XXII, 331-32). Later when insisting on the timelessness of opinions based on "sentiment", he says: "Les opinions dont l'étendue & la durée sont fondées sur le sentiment propre, & pour ainsi dire, sur l'expérience intérieure de ceux qui les ont adoptées dans tous les tems ne sont pas sujettes à être détruites ..." (II,XXXIV,488).

³¹See p. 28 above.

³²Dubos is taking up and attacking here Pascal's idea that a man attempting to judge a work of art without a knowledge of the rules is like one without a watch: "Ceux qui jugent d'un ouvrage sans règle sont, à l'égard des autres, comme ceux qui n'ont pas de montre à l'égard des autres" (Pensées, ed. Ch.-M. des Granges (Paris, 1964), p.75).

Thus, although men of all ages and all countries are "semblables par le cœur," they may not be equal in the quality of their judgment. Of particular interest here, however, is the association of "délicat" with "sentiment" to suggest the highest point which the capacity for feeling can reach.

Two parallel ideas, perhaps not entirely incompatible, emerge from this part of the Réflexions critiques. The "sentiment" or sixth sense is a sense like the others, but has at one and the same time, the ability to receive impressions and to make its own judgments. "Sentiment" is therefore reflective from the start, being at once a movement of the "heart" and a faculty which recognises that movement, using it as a basis for appreciating a work of art.

It can be seen that Dubos's aesthetic system suggests quite a different conception of man from that of critics such as La Motte or Ferrasson. More than this, it is developed from a coherent psychology, the claim in this part of the book that "... tous les hommes peuvent juger des vers & des tableaux, parce que tous les hommes sont sensibles, & que l'effet des vers & des tableaux tombe sur le sentiment" (II, XXIV,360), recalling the theories with which the Réflexions critiques open. Dubos's premise is that man has to be occupied, the needs of the soul being equal to those of the body in this respect. The activities of the soul fall into two categories:

Ou l'ame se livre aux impressions que les objets extérieurs font sur elle; & c'est ce qu'on appelle sentir; ou bien elle s'entretient elle-même par des spéculations sur des matières ... & c'est ce qu'on appelle réfléchir et méditer. (I,I,6).

The second of these is by far the more difficult and it

³³II,XXXIV,493.

is therefore to the first that the majority of men turn, pursuing any object which is capable of arousing passions, even if it means enduring pain or unhappiness. The reason has no role to play here. This is exemplified firstly in the type of sights to which man is drawn, sights which may include a hanging or the torture of animals, and secondly by the fact that he is powerless to repress this attraction should he attempt to do so:

Un mouvement que la raison réprime mal,
fait courir bien des personnes après les
objets les plus propres à déchirer le
cœur. (I,II,12).

Many spectacles cause too much distress, however, and man eventually seeks a less disagreeable way of filling his time. Art, which creates artificial emotions only, is ideally suited to occupy man, since it enables him to escape boredom without giving him any lasting suffering:

Ne pourroit-il (l'art) pas produire des
objets qui excitassent en nous des passions
artificielles capables de nous occuper dans
le moment que nous les sentons, & incapables
de nous causer dans la suite des peines
réelles & des afflictions véritables?
(I,III,25).

Poets and painters have therefore learnt to imitate that which would have made a powerful impression in real life, thereby awakening a similar passion. It is the experience of this passion which is at the bottom of the pleasure to be gained from a work of art:

Mais comme l'impression que l'imitation
fait n'est pas aussi profonde que l'impression
que l'objet même auroit faite ...
comme l'impression faite par l'imitation
n'affecte vivement que l'ame sensitive,
elle s'efface bientôt. ...

Voilà d'où procède le plaisir que la Poësie
et la Peinture font à tous les hommes.
(I,III,26-28).

We see at the outset, therefore, the belief that is everywhere present in Dubos's work, namely that art appeals essentially to the feelings and that it is with his feelings that man must and does appreciate art. This theory is based, however, on an even more fundamental conception of man, a psychology which underlies the entire discussion about the sixth sense later. It is expressed in this statement:

Quand on fait attention à la sensibilité naturelle du cœur humain, à sa disposition pour être ému facilement par tous les objets dont les Peintres & les Poètes font des imitations; on n'est pas surpris que les vers & les tableaux mêmes puissent l'agiter. (I,IV,38).

Man's response to art is to be explained, therefore, not only by his fear of boredom, but by a capacity, central to his nature, to be moved by objects or spectacles in life; such a conception of man alone can explain the satisfaction he obtains from the most moving sights. This "sensibilité" has been given to man that he may form relationships with his fellows, Dubos claiming that: "La nature a voulu mettre en lui cette sensibilité si prompte & si soudaine, comme le premier fondement de la société" (I,IV,38). It is, in other words, an inherent faculty, seen by the author as counter-acting the effects of an "amour propre immodéré" which could lead man to pursue his own selfish interests. Its major function is to ensure compassion for those who are suffering:

Ainsi leur émotion seule nous touche subitement; & ils obtiennent de nous, en nous attendrissant, ce qu'ils n'obtiendroient jamais par la voie du raisonnement & de la conviction. (I,IV,39).

The examination of the sixth sense had presented a notion of man as primarily a feeling and not a thinking being; these

opening sections of the Réflexions critiques contain the philosophy on which such a theory is founded. They propose not only that man has passions which need to be satisfied, but also that his most important actions and responses are caused by a part of his nature located in the affections. Thus we may say that Dubos's aesthetics is based on a psychology of sentiment.

Rollin includes in his De la Maniere d'enseigner et d'etudier les belles lettres some observations on the appreciation of art. As we have seen,³⁴ he appears to imply that taste is entirely a matter of feeling and even undefinable, while being at the same time a faculty of judgment belonging to the intellect. Yet there is much to suggest that Rollin regards good taste as a spontaneous reaction, present in all men but more perfect in those who have received an education. Whether they be scholars or not, all men can discern a good orator, for example, and are shocked by dissonance even without a knowledge of musical theory:

C'est que la nature leur a donné du goût
& du sentiment pour l'harmonie.
(I,lxxxij).

Similarly, the layman, without an awareness of the technique of painting, is well able to gain pleasure from the visual arts:

... le sentiment fait à peu près en lui ce
que l'art & l'usage font dans les connois-
seurs.
(I,lxxxij).

Although Rollin does not define what he means by "sentiment", we can infer from the general trend of his argument that it is a faculty opposed to the power of reflection and

³⁴See p. 10 above.

to any faculty which judges art with reference to a precise set of rules. It may be less developed in some men and susceptible of improvement through education, but in the first instance it functions independently. Its object, for Rollin as for other theorists, is a certain "harmony", in that it responds spontaneously to things which may be said fittingly to exist together.

In his Lettre III. Sur la naissance, les progrès & la décadence du Goût Rémond de Saint-Mard launches a swingeing attack on criticism conducted according to a knowledge of the rules. Asserting that there are no longer any good writers, he adds that in any case " ... si la Nature nous en envoyoit, quelle fourmilliere de fautes ne leur trouverions-nous pas: tantôt ce seroit une faute de Grammaire qui nous impatienteroit; tantôt un petit vice de Versification: car ce que nous avons perdu en goût, nous l'avons gagné en exactitude."³⁵ Here we see, therefore, a primary cause for the decline in good taste, namely an obsession with detail and correctness. It is implied that appreciation of art should be a more immediate and subjective affair; certainly our ability to be affected by a work of art is being distorted as far as Saint-Mard is concerned:

... elle (notre vanité) est poussée au point que nous n'exerçons notre sensibilité, que nous ne nous remercions d'en avoir que pour être mieux en état de remarquer les défauts d'un Ouvrage, sensibilité funeste, délicatesse pernicieuse ...

(III, 238).

Man should thus trust himself to his "sensibilité", but to a "sensibilité" allowed to operate freely and independently

³⁵ Ouvres, III, 236.

through his feelings.

In Sur la poésie En général³⁶ Saint-Mard examines in greater detail the psychology of the response to a work of art. The "Avertissement" contains his premise, which is that to write a poetic treatise

... il faudroit aller plus haut que les regles, remonter à ce qui les a fait faire, les vérifier sur les impressions mêmes; d'où il résulteroit une plus grande certitude dans les regles, & ... l'honneur de savoir sur quoi ces regles ont été fondées; c'est-à-dire, leur rapport avec notre maniere de sentir.
(IV,ij).

Like that of Dubos, therefore, Saint-Mard's system is based on an inquiry into the way man functions and, as we can see, it is founded on the notion that the affective side of his being is the more important in this question. This writer states indeed, in another "Avertissement" which first appeared in 1729 at the head of a Morceau sur la Poésie en général, that

... attentif à la maniere dont sont frappés les hommes dans la Poésie, je recueillerai fidelement les impressions qu'ils ont reçues, & celles qu'en conséquence de la disposition de leurs organes, ils sont nécessités à recevoir encore. (IV,xx).

Sur la poésie En général itself opens with a statement of the old 'classical' idea that imagery is essential in poetry, principally because it arouses certain passions:

³⁶This was originally published as Réflexions sur la poésie en général in 1734; it is included in the complete works together with Réflexions sur l'Eglogue, sur La Fable etc. under the title Poétique prise dans ses Sources. The Morceau sur la poésie en général referred to by the editor was first published under the title Examen philosophique de la poésie.

... les images ne servent pas seulement à peindre & à nous rendre attentifs ... elles ont encore des rapports secrets, des convenances délicates, une analogie sourde, avec les principales affections du cœur; & c'est en vertu de ces convenances qu'on est quelquefois si vivement touché. (IV,12-13).

It is in fact enjoyment of passions awoken by images which have an affinity with them which constitutes for Saint-Mard the chief pleasure to be found in a work of art. Each image produces a different reaction and, moreover, given our nature, it is inevitable that each time a particular image strikes us, we experience a particular reaction:

... soyez sûr que nous éprouverons, tous tant que nous sommes, un mouvement à peu près pareil toutes les fois qu'on nous présentera une image bien choisie & bien frappée; parce que nos passions sont des especes de cordes toujours tendues, & toujours prêtes à recevoir l'unisson de quelqu'image. Or, jugez de l'ébranlement agréable qui doit arriver à l'ame, lorsque cet unisson se trouve frappé avec une grande justesse. (IV,16).

The metaphor which Saint-Mard uses here makes it possible for him to avoid finding a precise term to designate the faculty in man which appreciates art. He does not speak of "bon goût" in this essay, nor does he have in his system a sixth sense. It is plain, however, that imagery does more than strike the imagination; in exciting a passion, it goes to the heart. In language strongly reminiscent of that of Dubos, Saint-Mard claims that "... tout y va dans la Poésie, son but est d'aller remuer un cœur qui veut continuellement être agité ..." (IV,17). Thus the heart, centre of all affections, is always open to impressions, poetry "agite, remue, intéresse le cœur, fixe & soulage l'imagination ..." (IV,19). More than this, it is exactly calculated to appeal, because

"... sensibles comme nous sommes, c'étoit bien assez pour nous plaire" (IV,19).

One may say that, in common with Dubos, Rémond de Saint-Mard has devised an aesthetics of sentiment. He insists throughout the Poétique prise dans ses Sources that the feelings alone can make a reliable appraisal of a work of art. Discussing the effect of harmony in its widest sense in the world around us, for example, he says:

Celle-là (harmonie de la Nature) n'est point érigée en Art, il n'y a point de syllabes à compter ... c'est par instinct qu'on la sent, c'est par instinct qu'on l'attrape, & ce n'est qu'à l'aide d'un sentiment exquis qu'on peut trouver cette cadence si délicieuse pour qui la sait sentir. (IV,28).

We see once again in this part of the essay the notion that man is moved by things in nature which may be said properly to belong together. Saint-Mard's contention, expressed in the passage quoted above, is that an instantaneous response of the feelings makes this possible. Such an idea is repeated in the assertion that harmony is essential to both prose and poetry:

... elle (l'harmonie) a un rapport réel, non-seulement avec nos oreilles, mais encore avec notre cœur, & par ce double rapport, elle devient également nécessaire à la Prose & à la Poésie. (IV,29).

We have seen that in spite of a change in emphasis and interest in the first half of the eighteenth century, many of the old 'classical' concepts about art and poetry still remain, together with the use of key words such as "inspiration", "imagination" and "invention", which had always been central to the discussion of aesthetic questions in France

from the sixteenth century onwards. Where the artist, be he poet or painter, is concerned, Dubos employs all three terms in describing the creative process, but associates them with a capacity for feeling, or sympathy, in the artist for that which he creates. Rémond de Saint-Mard, on the other hand, believes in the necessity of genius for the poet, but also requires taste, that is to say a quality which determines the way in which a subject is to be treated and this, he maintains, belongs to the affective side of man's nature. Both writers, in common with a number of others, suggest that it is also this part of man which responds to a work of art and "sentiment" thus becomes a dynamic force capable of making a judgment. The "public" of whom Dubos speaks with such approval is in fact fairly restricted, since he includes only those who have received an education. This might lead us to assume that "sentiment" is the recognition that a poem or a painting has been created according to the rules, such a recognition being a product of the reason, however instantaneous. Throughout the Réflexions critiques, however, Dubos insists on the futility of rules in evaluating either poetry or art, advocating instead an independent appraisal based on movements of the "heart".

The rationalists, too, had urged independence in assessing the value of a work of art, but in so doing had replaced prejudice and convention with a strictly intellectual process which examined the internal logic of a poem, for example, and its adherence to the rules of the genre in which it was composed. This is perhaps a limiting and ultimately destructive attitude to aesthetics, since it starts from a pre-conceived notion of each type of poetry and attacks any work which does

not conform to an ideal. There are those such as the Marquis d'Argens in his Réflexions historiques & critiques sur le goût (1743) and the abbé Trublet in his Réflexions sur le goût, published in essais sur divers sujets in 1754, who continue to hold that reason is of the greatest importance in the creation and judgment of art. The rationalist approach also underlies the painstaking aesthetic systems of several writers of the time, among them the père Batteux, whose Les Beaux-arts réduits à un même principe (1746) attempts a definition and a categorisation of the beautiful.

The fundamental difference between writers such as these and, say, Dubos or Saint-Mard, is that the latter begin from a study of the individual and his nature, proceeding only then to analyse the way in which he responds to a work of art. Of equal importance is the emergence of a definite vocabulary with which aesthetic questions and indeed human psychology in general may be studied, this vocabulary including not only phrases such as "l'instinct du cœur", "de premiers mouvemens"³⁷ or "un mouvement du cœur",³⁸ but fundamental terms such as "le sentiment", "la sensibilité naturelle du cœur humain"³⁹ or "notre sensibilité",⁴⁰ to denote key ideas. It might be assumed from Dubos's use of the term "sixième sens" that his

³⁷ These are used by the père Bouhours, for example; see the discussion on pp. ~~19-21~~⁴⁷⁻⁴⁹ above.

³⁸ A phrase used by Morvan de Bellegarde, among others; see p. ~~22~~⁵⁰ above.

³⁹ These are both employed by Dubos; see particularly p. ~~27~~⁵⁷ and p. ~~33~~⁶¹ above.

⁴⁰ This is the form used by Rémond de Saint-Mard; see p. ~~15~~⁴³ above.

is a psychology founded on a theory of sensation or sense impressions, similar perhaps to that of Condillac, for example, later in the century. As we have seen, however, Dubos and others are not opposing the claims of the senses to those of the reason, but proposing as a more reliable source of judgment than the latter a generalised capacity for feeling. The terminology they choose advances and makes acceptable the notion that there is within man a quite separate, valuable and dependable faculty which operates without reference to the intellect.⁴¹ Despite the existence of aesthetic systems based on reason, the works which we have examined help to establish, for a century that was to hold it with conviction, the belief that man is primarily a "feeling" and not a "thinking" being.

⁴¹Some of the vocabulary needed by eighteenth-century writers is already present in the works of Malebranche. Although the word "sentiment", for example, is used with the meaning of "sensation", it can also signify an intuitive judgment: "Les biens du corps ne méritent pas l'application d'un esprit, que Dieu n'a fait que pour lui: il faut donc, que l'esprit reconnoisse de tels biens sans examen, & par la preuve courte & incontestable du sentiment" (N. Malebranche, De La Recherche de la vérité (1674), Cœuvres de Malebranche (Paris, 1958-70), I, 72. This volume is edited by G. Rodis-Lewis).

He also employs the term "sentiment intérieur" when describing spontaneous, non-reflexive judgments: "... personne n'a de connoissance de son ame que par la pensée, ou par le sentiment intérieur de tout ce qui se passe dans son esprit ..." (I, 389).

"Sensibilité", however, seems to be used in connection with the senses only. See Livre Premier, Chapitre V, I, 76.

CHAPTER THREE

Moral sensibility in the first half of the
eighteenth century

Pour moi j'ai toujours trouvé que cette inclination pour les choses aimables adoucit les mœurs, donne de la politesse & de l'honnêteté, & prépare à la vertu, laquelle, ainsi que l'amour, ne peut se trouver que dans un naturel sensible & tendre.

Written in 1701 and published for the first time in 1719 in the Nouveau Mercure de France, these words from Rémond le Grec's Agathon suggest, at the end of a dialogue concerned with the nature of true "volupté", that virtue is only possible in conjunction with a certain capacity for feeling. At the time that Rémond le Grec was writing, rationalist morals as they had been propounded towards the close of the seventeenth century by Malebranche in particular were those accepted by the majority. In Malebranche's moral system, the universe is governed by a principle termed "le Verbe", "la Sagesse Eternelle" or simply "la Raison", a principle which determines and controls the laws regulating all actions, those of God and man alike. The reason of both is part of the universal Reason, man thus being able to understand something of the workings of God's will.² For Malebranche man is free within this system, but he is also weak, so that although he may be drawn to the pursuit of truth and the preservation of order, wherein lies his real happiness, he is also attracted

¹Rémond, dit le Grec, Agathon. Dialogue sur la volupté. Par Monsieur R^{xxx}, Recueil de divers écrits, ed. Sainte-Hyacinthe (Paris, 1736), p. 133.

²N. Malebranche, Traité de morale (1684), Première Partie, Chapitre 1, Œuvres de Malebranche (Paris, 1958-70), XI, 17-23. This volume is edited by Michel Adam.

to more immediate pleasures. God allows those who use their freedom in an attempt to resemble Him more nearly, however, something of His own state of being:

Celui qui consulte sans cesse la Raison,
celui qui aime l'Ordre, ayant part à la
perfection de Dieu, aura donc part à son
bonheur, à sa gloire, à sa grandeur.
(XI, 23).

We can see, therefore, that only by consulting the supreme Wisdom or Reason behind the harmony of the universe will man become aware of his duty, and, furthermore, that virtue is always synonymous for Malebranche with a love of order. Indeed he states explicitly that:

C'est l'obéissance que l'on rend à l'Ordre,
c'est la soumission à la Loi Divine qui
est la vertu en tout sens. (XI, 24).

In such a philosophy as this, a virtuous action is one which is entirely motivated by a desire to maintain the harmony of the universe and a virtuous man one who examines a proposed action until he is assured that it is both necessary and beneficial. In this process the reason alone is active.

Malebranche's morals thus depend on an operation of the intellect and on religious conviction, two forces which must inevitably be linked in a system where virtue is a striving after the perfection of God, itself contingent upon the perpetuation of the order in the world, determined by a supreme Reason. A capacity for feeling has no place in such a scheme of things. It is true that Malebranche speaks of virtue as an "amour de l'ordre,"³ but throughout his work this love is made dependent on an examination by the mind of a projected

³"La disposition à s'acquitter de tel de ces devoirs (humilité, générosité, libéralité), n'est donc pas proprement vertu, sans amour de l'Ordre" (XI, 30-31).

act. While admitting that "une compassion naturelle" can and does inspire certain actions, Malebranche nevertheless dismisses such an impulse on the grounds, firstly, that it is pure, unreasoning instinct and, secondly, that it leads to acts which are virtuous in the eyes of man alone and which do not in reality tend towards the only admissible goal, namely eternal salvation.⁴ These theories rob man's actions of their spontaneity and genuine concern for the well-being of others. The one emotion possible indeed in Malebranche's philosophy is an admiration, amounting almost to awe, for the perfection of the universe. In every other respect he makes of man a wholly rational being.

Although Malebranche's influence was enormous and continued into the eighteenth century, his ideas did not spread without opposition. A morals based on something other than religion, for example, had been advanced since Pierre Bayle's time, but in spite of the fact that he divorces morals from religious belief and holds that man is governed by the desire of the moment, he yet retains in his system the concept of "conscience", which is a kind of Cartesian intuition, and maintains that Reason should determine the acts of all men.⁵ For a work which contains a new psychology of man and which

⁴Malebranche claims, for example, that: "Celui qui donne son bien aux pauvres ou par vanité, ou par une compassion naturelle, n'est point liberal, parce-que ce n'est point la Raison qui le conduit, ni l'ordre qui le régle; ce n'est qu'orgueil, ou que disposition de machine" (XI,28). As far as the second point is concerned, Malebranche proposes that a seemingly callous man "est plus vertueux & plus aimable que ces amis emportez, qui sacrifient aux passions de leurs amis, leurs parens, leur vie, leur salut éternel" (XI,31).

⁵See, for example, Pensées diverses sur la comète (1683), Chapitre CLXXVIII, ed. A. Prat (Paris, 1911-12), II, 122-25.

begins to suggest a fundamentally different approach to moral philosophy, we should look to John Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding (1690).

The main elements in Locke's epistemology are well-known; here we have to examine the importance of his notions of "sensation" and "reflection" for the enriching of the French notion of "sentiment". For the English writer, the source of man's knowledge is sensation, an impression of an object being made on a sense organ and communicated to the brain, producing there an "idea" or representation of the object. The mind, having perceived this image, may then proceed to contemplate it and to combine it with others creating eventually a new series of ideas, those of reflection or inner sense. The foundation of all that man knows is therefore the faculty of sensation:

If it shall be demanded then when a man begins to have any ideas, I think the true answer is, when he first has any sensation.

This in itself is a complete break with rationalist psychology and Locke is explicit in dismissing the claim, basic in Descartes's philosophy, for example, that the faculty of thought is the essence of the soul:

... nor can (I) conceive it any more necessary for the soul always to think, than for the body always to move: the perception of ideas being (as I conceive) to the soul what motion is to the body: not its essence, but one of its operations. (II, I, 81).

⁶J. Locke, An Essay concerning Human Understanding, ed. J. W. Yolton (abridged edition 1947; complete edition 1961; rpt. London, 1978), Book II, Chapter I, 88-89.

Locke goes further than this, however. In entirely rejecting the theory of "innate" ideas, or the capacity of the mind to have ideas not received from experience, he suggests that man's reaction to, as distinct from his image of, external objects, is something other than an inherent concept of the outside world. The response comes from an 'inborn principle', but this principle is not an "idea"; it is, as Locke puts it, "joined to" our ideas:

Delight or uneasiness, one or other of them, join themselves to almost all our ideas both of sensation and reflection: and there is scarce any affection of our senses from without, any retired thought of our mind within, which is not able to produce in us pleasure or pain.

(II,VII,99).

Locke maintains that delight or pain are deliberately made by God to accompany man's sensations in order that he may pursue those objects which are apt to procure his well-being and avoid those which are not. Sensations of pleasure and pain thus decide all man's actions; Locke had indeed stated at the outset:

Nature, I confess, has put into man a desire of happiness and an aversion to misery: these indeed are innate practical principles which ... do continue constantly to operate and influence all our actions without ceasing ... but these are inclinations of the appetite to good, not impressions of truth on the understanding. (I,III,27).

It would seem, therefore, that man has a distinct faculty in his make-up which enables him to respond to particular kinds of sensation; this is "feeling", although Locke does not in fact employ the term, using rather the expression

"internal sensations."⁷ Nor does he analyse the precise nature of the sensation accompanying the first impression and claims indeed that it would be impossible to do so, as personal experience is the only means of knowing it.⁸ Of especial interest as far as we are concerned, is the fact that in the case of a response to people, the "internal sensation" does more than make man aware of a source of good or evil; the pleasure experienced at the thought of a fellow human-being, for instance, leads man to desire the continued existence and contentment of that human-being. Man's pursuit of his own happiness thus produces in him the will to pursue that of others:

... hatred or love, to beings capable of happiness or misery, is often the uneasiness or delight which we find in ourselves arising from a consideration of their very being or happiness. Thus the being and welfare of a man's children or friends producing constant delight in him, he is said constantly to love them. (II, XX, 190).

⁷This appears to be the case in the following statement about the passions: "Pleasure and pain and that which causes them, good and evil, are the hinges on which our passions turn. And if we reflect on ourselves and observe how these, under various considerations, operate in us, what modifications or tempers of mind, what internal sensations (if I may so call them) they produce in us, we may thence form to ourselves the ideas of our passions" (II, XX, 190),

⁸"These (pleasure or pain), like other simple ideas, cannot be described, nor their names defined; the way of knowing them is, as of the simple ideas of the senses, only by experience" (II, XX, 189). To this he adds: "For, to define them by the presence of good or evil is no other wise to make them known to us than by making us reflect on what we feel in ourselves, upon the several and various operations of good and evil upon our minds ..." (II, XX, 189); it would seem, therefore, that although pleasure and pain are called "ideas", they are affective.

While it would be wrong to claim that Locke's Essay contains a complete moral philosophy, his theories, as we see, take him to the edge of a discussion on the origin of our moral notions. He demonstrates, moreover, the possibility of founding a moral system on a faculty other than the reason, since "ideas" of good and evil, firstly with relation to man himself and subsequently by implication with relation to others, belong to the affective side of his being.

French writers and philosophers became acquainted with Locke's work both through Coste's translation, published in 1700, and in some instances at first hand while living in England. Such was undoubtedly the case of Jacques Abbadie, a Swiss Protestant, who had been officiating as a clergyman in London since 1689 and who remained in England until his death in 1727. His Art de se connoitre soy-meme (1692) develops certain of Locke's ideas, his sub-title Ou la Recherche des sources de la morale, indicating the difference in purpose between the two. Abbadie's aim is to establish a logical moral system based on those principles which the majority of men possess "par sentiment."

The faculty of thought, for example, often considered to be the most fundamental in man, is one which can be neither shown nor explained. The movement of the particles in the tubes of the body, which is eventually communicated to the brain, cannot in itself be called thought and the exact process therefore escapes both definition and understanding:

Je ne sçaurois dire pour quoy je pense dans ce corps, dans ce moment, ni avec tous ces organes qui ne font rien essentiellement à la pensée & n'ont aucun rapport naturel avec elle: mais je sçay

pourtant bien que je pense; & c'est ici
une verité de sentiment.

Similarly, man's awareness of the external world is obtained through what Abbadie terms the "voye du sentiment," which he believes to be superior to the intellect for two reasons. In the first place it reacts more quickly:

... la voye du sentiment qui attache aux
objets nos propres perceptions, est bien
plus courte pour nous en faire faire usage,
que la voye des idées distinctes & de
l'intelligence. (p. 43).

Secondly, it is more reliable:

J'ajoute que cette voye du sentiment que
nôtre ame attache à ce qui en est l'occa-
sion, est plus sûre que celle de l'intel-
ligence. (p. 43).

The phraseology employed by Abbadie here is reminiscent of that chosen by Locke to convey one of the central notions in his psychology of man. Abbadie, however, seems to have omitted the initial stage of the sense impression made by an object and to have moved immediately to that which accompanies it. Moreover, the expression "la voye du sentiment" would appear to designate a separate faculty within our make-up, particularly in the first of the statements quoted, where it seems that the "voye du sentiment" is an active force with the power to associate a kind of judgment with an object apprehended through the senses. Certainly, for Abbadie, nature has endowed us with the ability to distinguish between phenomena in the outside world, especially as far as their usefulness or danger are concerned and this we do "en les révétant de nos propres sentimens" (p. 44). Thus pain is

⁹J. Abbadie, L'Art de se connoitre soy-meme, Seconde édition (La Haye, 1700), p. 32.

attached to the "idea" of fire:

... elle (la nature) attache en quelque sorte la douleur au feu, en me faisant concevoir dans cet Element une sorte de chaleur aspre & cuisante, pareille à celle que je sens, & qui n'est pourtant point en luy ... (p. 45).

Equally, smell, for example, is joined to certain objects "bien que cette odeur soit en nous & non pas en eux, puisqu'estant agreable ou facheuse, elle enferme un sentiment de douleur ou de plaisir, lequel sentiment n'existe jamais que dans nôtre ame" (p. 46).

Abbadie's analysis of the way in which we acquire knowledge reveals that there are, for him, two elements in the impression made by an object, namely the "sentiment" and "le principe que le produit" (p. 46). We see, too, that at this stage, despite the suggestion in the term "la voye du sentiment," "sentiment" is used with a meaning akin to that of "sensation". Abbadie's own summary of this part of his argument lends support to such a conclusion:

... il a esté ... necessaire d'attacher certains sentimens aux mouvemens du corps; pour nous avertir de ce qui pouvoit le perdre & le conserver le dernier; de sorte qu'on peut dire que la société raisonnable est la fin de la vie corporelle, comme la conservation de cette vie est la fin de la plûpart des sensations. (pp. 59-60)

Subsequently, however, the significance of the word "sentiment", whether it be used in the singular or the plural, becomes wider. The fact that man is capable of experiencing what we might call "internal sensations" inevitably produces a response to the self. A man who feels pain, for example, must necessarily hate it:

... si cette douleur est constante & inseparable, (il faut) qu'il haïsse son être propre, sachant bien que le sentiment de cette douleur ne seroit point sans son existence. (pp. 128-29).

The same reasoning applies to the sensation of pleasure:

On conçoit encore que l'on ne peut sentir le plaisir, sans aymer ce plaisir qu'on sent, & sans souhaiter la conservation de ce soy-même qui en est le sujet. Le plaisir fait qu'on ayme son existence; parce que sans cette existence, ce plaisir ne sauroit subsister. (p. 129).

Here there can be no doubt that the original sensation accompanying a sense impression has given birth to an affection for the self, a feeling, which Abbadie calls a "penchant naturel" or an "inclination".¹⁰ The whole of this section rests on earlier assertions that one of man's fundamental characteristics is a natural urge to survive.¹¹ Whereas in all previous discussion "sentiment" had been synonymous with sensation or an instinctive self-love, it now becomes a dynamic force with its own independent function:

La raison est le conseiller de l'ame, le sentiment est comme sa force ou le poids, qui la détermine, & cette force est plus grande ou plus petite selon les différences de ce sentiment. (p. 133).

"Le sentiment", where the desire for self-preservation is concerned, would therefore appear to be a capacity for

¹⁰"Ainsi l'amour de nous mêmes en soy est un penchant naturel ... Cette inclination n'attend donc pas les réflexions de nôtre esprit pour naître dans nôtre ame; elle précède tous nos raisonnemens" (pp. 129-30).

¹¹Abbadie states, for instance, that "naturellement nous nous aymons nous-mêmes, étant sensibles au plaisir, haïssant le mal, desirant le bien & ayant soin de nôtre conservation" (p. 75). He later elaborates on this statement in the following way: "Nous nous aymons ... nous-mêmes par Sentiment & non pas par Raison. L'amour de nous-mêmes précède le jugement que nous faisons, que nous devons nous aymer ..." (pp. 90-91).

feeling, to be guided, as we see, by the reason. In the plural, the word conveys feelings located in a separate part of ourselves, since self-love or "le soin de nôtre conservation, le desir de nôtre bonheur" (p. 256) are examples of the "premieres affections qui sont necessairement legitimes, des sentimens sans lesquels la nature de l'homme ne sauroit être ..." (pp. 255-56), contained within the heart. Abbadie has thus given a precise name to a power of feeling, for which Locke had found no specific term.

Moreover, he has moved away from a psychology of man to a simple morals. If man is dominated by self-love and an instinct for self-preservation, neither of which are to be condemned since without them he would perish, it follows that he has a duty to satisfy this love, which is in fact no more than an obedience to the first law of nature. It is on such a law that the concept of good and evil in Abbadie's system depends:

Il faut demeurer d'accord de la difference
essentielle qu'il y a entre le bien & le
mal moral, puis que le premier consiste à
suivre la loy de la nature raisonnable, &
l'autre à la violer. (p. 76).

Moral good does not therefore consist in conforming to a pre-determined moral order, but in obeying a law which commands man to pursue that which is likely to promote his well-being and avoid that which is not. Furthermore, the feeling which underlies man's moral notions with regard to himself is also a foundation for his relations with his fellows. Although virtue may appear to be a placing of others before oneself, in reality it is merely a form of self-love, for in loving another, man is doing no more than loving himself:

L'interêt peut tout sur les ames. On se cherche dans l'objet de tous ses attachemens ... Generalement parlant nous n'aymons les gens qu'autant qu'ils nous sont agreables ou utiles. (p. 286).

To make affection and solicitude for others dependent upon concern for oneself is naturally to imply that there is a degree of calculation in all man's relationships. For Abbadie, however, "aymer par interêt, c'est s'aymer directement soi-même, aulieu que les (les hommes) aymer par d'autres principes, c'est s'aymer par detour & par reflexion" (p. 287). As "l'amour de nous-mêmes" is not morally wrong, neither is the attraction to others to which it gives rise. More than this, if man's love for others is essentially a love of himself in them, it is plain that it is a feeling belonging to the 'heart', functioning independently of the reason. Indeed Abbadie says:

Le cœur ... pese l'utilité & non pas la lumiere, & ce n'est point la raison mais l'amour de nous-mêmes, qui nous determine dans nos affections. (pp. 299-300).

In his analysis of the origins of man's moral notions, as in his psychology of man, Abbadie has made of him a feeling and not a thinking being. This the abbé Gamaches also does in his Systeme du cœur of 1704. Gamaches bases his argument on the premise that an object in the outside world contains nothing but its own essential attributes or what he calls "les proprietes qui constituent sa nature."¹² This first principle means that "les qualitez sensibles" (p. 7) with which external phenomena are endowed can only come from within ourselves, Gamaches concluding that:

¹²E. S. de Gamaches, Systeme du cœur (Paris, 1704), p. 7.

... si les objets extérieurs nous paroissent revêtus de qualités sensibles, c'est à cause que par un jugement naturel nous leur rapportons les différentes impressions qu'ils font sur nous, ou les divers sentimens qu'ils excitent en nous par leur présence. Mais de plus, on voit bien que comme ces objets nous paroissent avoir des qualités semblables à tous les sentimens qu'ils nous donnent par eux-mêmes, on peut établir comme une vérité de fait, que nous transportons sur tous ceux qui nous touchent, toutes les impressions que nous en recevons. (pp. 12-14).

This passage clearly indicates that for Gamaches a part of man quite separate from his intellect effects a judgment on objects around him. We see too that he uses the word "sentimens" when referring to that in man which is transferred to phenomena perceived in the outside world. The precise sense given to it is not easy to determine, however. Since it occurs in juxtaposition to "les différentes impressions" it might be taken to signify "sensation" rather than "feeling"; certainly when elaborating on his preliminary theories, Gamaches asserts that some "sentimens" are, as he puts it, "abandoned" if they seem to be of no positive value:

C'est ainsi que les couleurs, par exemple, nous paroissent être hors de nous, & ne nous pas appartenir; au lieu que la chaleur nous paroît être tout à la fois & dans nous, & dans les corps qui en excitent en nous le sentiment. (pp. 14-15).

Elsewhere, however, the term might designate a response of the affections following an impression on the senses:

Après cela, l'on voit bien que lorsqu'un objet nous touche agréablement, nous devons nous complaire dans le sentiment de plaisir qu'il nous donne, mais qu'en même temps nous devons aussi le parer de ce qu'il y a d'agréable dans l'impression sensible qu'il fait sur nous ... (p. 16).

The wider meaning of "sentiment" possible here is also present, it would seem, in this passage:

... quand un objet nous presente ses qualitez agreables, s'il ne nous fait montre que des gratifications qu'il tient de la liberalité de nos sens & de celle de nôtre imagination, l'on peut dire que nous sommes sensibles à ses agrémens, & soutenir en même tems que nous n'aimons rien autre chose que le plaisir. En effet, aimer le plaisir comme un sentiment que l'on éprouve en soy, ou l'aimer comme une qualité sensible dont on pare quelque objet extérieur, cela ne revient-il pas toujours au même? (pp. 28-29).

Here the two senses of the word appear to come together and indeed to be used synonymously, such that a sensation caused in the body is also a feeling located in the affections. There is no doubt that for Gamaches it is ultimately the "heart", traditionally the centre of all emotion, which reacts to external objects. Like Abbadie, he believes that man seeks happiness in pleasure and thus avoids that which brings pain. If, therefore, phenomena in the outside world produce an agreeable sensation, they acquire an attraction for man:

... car dès qu'ils nous paroissent comme penetrez de la douceur du sentiment que nous donne leur presence, il leur est bien facile de déterminer vers eux le mouvement d'un cœur, qui ne les distingue plus du plaisir qu'il recherche avec empressement. (p. 17).

Gamaches thus believes man to possess an instinctive reaction to sense impressions; since he associates with it the "douceur du sentiment" occasioned by some objects, it seems that here again the word "sentiment" betokens for him a feeling in the affective part of man's nature as opposed to a sensation. Moreover, the qualities which man attributes to external things are in fact moral ones, as these objects become good or evil according to whether they are a source of pleasure or

pain. Indeed Gamaches defines the terms of love and hate in the context of the attraction or repulsion experienced by man, taking his discussion immediately into the moral sphere:

Selon cette idée, il est évident que l'Amour n'est autre chose que ce penchant qui nous porte au plaisir, & que la Haine ne differe point de cette impression naturelle qui nous éloigne de tout sentiment penible & desagreceable. (p. 19).

This process is repeated exactly where man's fellow human-beings are concerned, so that his love for them may be said to be born in the first instance of desire for pleasure:

... nous ne recherchons rien autre chose dans ceux qui nous plaisent, que les seuls sentimens agreables qu'ils nous donnent, & dont ils nous paroissent revêtus ... ainsi le mouvement qui nous approche d'eux, ne differe nullement de celui qui nous porte au plaisir ... (p. 21).

There is therefore the outline of a complete moral system in the first part of Gamaches's work; the second part deals specifically with the emotions of love and friendship, together with the basis of man's relationships in the widest sense with those around him. These are in many cases quite spontaneous:

Il y a des personnes pour qui nous avons de l'inclination sans les avoir jamais cultivez, nous nous sentons disposez à les aimer avant que de les connoistre ... (p. 175).

Such a reaction may be explained by a resemblance to a person already loved, but it is probable that there is a different and more fundamental reason for it:

... la favorable prevention de nôtre cœur pour ces sortes de personnes, vient bien plus souvent des impressions sensibles qu'elles font sur nous par l'air de leur visage. (p. 176).

Man is thus attracted to his fellows in the very way that he had been drawn towards pleasurable or useful objects: struck by the physical aspect of another, he endows this man with agreeable qualities and is thus moved to seek his company. Gamaches, like Abbadie, believes that the mind may adequately judge the correlation between appearance and character, but that the process is a lengthy one. Man has therefore been given by nature a separate faculty of more immediate response which intervenes in his relations with his fellows:

... elle (la nature) se charge de nous avertir icy par la voye du sentiment de ce qu'elle voit que nous ne pourrions que difficilement attraper par celle de l'examen, & qu'ainsi à la seule presence des personnes qui nous sont les plus inconnuës, elle nous fait interieurement sentir ce que nous devons juger d'elles par rapport à nos interests ... (p. 178).

We can see that Gamaches uses here the terminology already employed by Abbadie to express the idea that man possesses a quality independent of the intellect which is capable of forming a reliable judgment. While it may rest in the first place on evidence from the senses, it is clear that for Gamaches it is an active force and is more than a mere ability to experience sensation. He therefore gives to the phrase "la voye du sentiment" a wider meaning than Abbadie had done at the beginning of his work, where it had seemed to denote sensation only. As Gamaches uses it here, the expression is closer to Abbadie's "le sentiment", that is to say a power of feeling operating without reference to the reason. It is this on which all man's relationships are founded and which is the quality he should most value in others. To this basic human feeling which both ensures the sincerity of our

own regard and attracts us to our fellows Gamaches gives the name "sensibilité":

La sensibilité est le fondement de toutes les dispositions de l'ame qu'il nous est avantageux de trouver dans les autres & qui peuvent nous disposer à les aimer; en effet, sans elle on ne peut au plus avoir que les simples dehors des qualitez du cœur, c'est-à-dire, de celles qui sont utiles aux interests de la société. Il faut estre sensible pour estre véritablement généreux, complaisant, doux, traitable, officieux ... (pp. 180-81).

"Sensibilité" becomes here, by implication, more than a capacity for feeling: it betokens the opposite of pure self-interest and is a genuine solicitude for others. This "premiere qualité du cœur" is fundamental to all relationships, it is "le lien le plus ferme de la société" (p. 195), which enables man to fulfil readily and with pleasure his duty towards his fellow human-beings. For this reason, therefore, man's "sensibilité" is not only the most essential but also the most commendable of all his attributes:

... elle (la nature) nous fait souffrir lors que ceux avec qui nous avons quelque liaison se trouvent dans la peine, afin que recherchant comme par instinct à nous délivrer des inquietudes qu'elle nous donne, nous cherchions en même temps à les soulager dans les disgraces qu'ils éprouvent; c'est pourquoy il faut convenir, que de ce côté-là nôtre sensibilité est toujours véritablement estimable, puis qu'elle nous met & qu'elle nous affermit dans les dispositions où nous devons estre pour les interests de la société. (pp. 205-7).

Although self-interest remains to some extent as a motive behind man's concern for others, in that their pain causes him a pain which he necessarily wishes to alleviate, it can also be a more positive quality, which being initially pleasure in their company, becomes a desire to promote their

happiness. Gamaches's Systeme du cœur, like the earlier work by Abbadie, develops a philosophy out of man's primitive reaction of the "heart" to his surroundings: it makes of man primarily a feeling being and builds on his "sensibilité" a complete moral system.

Lévesque de Pouilly's Réflexions sur les sentimens agréables, published in 1736, is also an attempt to devise a psychology of man and a morals based on the feelings. This writer contends that the laws which govern them are of the same kind and subject to the same certainty as the laws of physics and that they may therefore provide the foundation for a moral philosophy. In his system, knowledge is acquired in two ways, either by the action of an object on the senses or by the reflection of the mind. In both cases, however, the ideas gained do not remain mere "spectacles" or representations; they are capable of provoking a reaction of the feelings and thus become affective:

... ils mettent le cœur en mouvement par les biens qu'ils promettent, par les maux dont ils menacent. C'est dans ces différentes facultés des sens, de l'esprit & du cœur, que la nature a ouvert les sources du plaisir & de la douleur.¹³

That which exercises the faculties without tiring them, which proves their perfection or gives hope of such proof, necessarily makes an agreeable impression and is endowed with favourable qualities. From the general principles outlined here as an introduction, he takes his first law, defined in these terms:

¹³L.-J. Lévesque de Pouilly, Réflexions sur les sentimens agréables, Recueil de divers écrits, ed. Sainte-Hyacinthe (Paris, 1736), pp. 143-44.

Il y a un sentiment agréable attaché à
l'exercice de nos facultés. (p. 145).

It would seem that "sentiment" is used here with the force of an affection or movement of the "heart" and not with that of "sensation"; when speaking of the pleasure to be had from intellectual activity, for example, Lévesque de Pouilly claims that "le sentiment intérieur apprend à tous les hommes que souvent on ne lit que pour s'occuper agréablement ..." (p. 147). Whatever the activity, it is a capacity for feeling which reacts to and makes a judgment on the exertion involved. It is significant that it operates too in the area of moral questions where certain responses to his fellows prove to man the perfection of his being:

En effet, tout mouvement d'amour, d'amitié, de reconnaissance, de générosité, de bienveillance, est un sentiment de plaisir. Aussi tout homme né bienfaisant est-il naturellement gai, & tout homme né gai est-il naturellement bienfaisant.
(p. 149).

The suggestion is therefore made from the first in this work that virtue is a source of contentment.

Lévesque de Pouilly's scheme of things is thus dependent on the belief that there is in man's make-up a separate power of feeling and that man seeks out that which is pleasurable for his own good. His response to others is occasioned, for instance, by their facial expression: "un air noble" indicates "de l'élévation dans les sentimens" and "un air tendre" would seem to be "un garant d'un retour d'amitié" (p. 158). Other expressions create a similar "idea" of the disposition of the person to whom they belong; communicated to the brain, they cause pleasure or pain and determine man's attitude to a particular individual:

Nos cerveaux semblent être comme des instrumens composés de filets nerveux différemment tendus; les airs qui annoncent des sentimens nobles, tendres, fins, vifs, y font une impression de plaisir plus ou moins profonde, suivant qu'ils y trouvent plus ou moins de cordes à l'unisson. (p. 158).

This process, by which man attributes attractive qualities to people who are in some way the object of his perception without tiring his faculties, has an exact parallel in the physical world. The "filets nerveux" spread throughout man's body, act as a warning; if they cause pain, man instinctively avoids the object which had occasioned the sensation; if pleasure, he inevitably pursues it. These reactions have as their function man's survival:

... dès que les impressions qui se font en nous, ou que les mouvemens du corps, de l'esprit, du cœur, sont tant soit peu de nature à favoriser la conservation ou la perfection de nos facultés, notre Auteur y a libéralement attaché du plaisir. (pp. 186-87).

Lévesque de Pouilly can therefore claim, as he had done at the outset when positing his first law on agreeable feelings, that physical laws form the basis of morals:

Telle est la loi des sentimens; l'expérience le démontre; & ce principe Physique, en se développant, va nous offrir tous les principes de la Morale. (p. 144).

If we seek happiness in the evidence of our own perfection, we shall find it not in "des biens étrangers, mais dans un usage de nos facultés, réglé par des jugemens dont la vérité nous soit clairement connue ..." (p. 198). While opulence and grandeur, for example, may seem to bring satisfaction, in reality they breed a spirit of evil and injustice and make us dependent on forces outside our control. True contentment

resides in abandoning a desire for wealth and in promoting the well-being of our fellows:

En effet, si tout mouvement de bienveillance est un plaisir, si tout mouvement de haine, de trouble, d'inquiétude, est une douleur ... notre bonheur sera d'autant plus complet, que notre façon de vivre portera dans le cœur plus de mouvemens de bienveillance, & en écartera davantage tout mouvement de trouble, d'inquiétude & de haine. (p. 210).

In this way, man's heart "éxemt de haine & de crainte" lives only for the good of others, "c'est-a-dire, pour des sentimens de plaisir" (p. 218). Lévesque de Pouilly has thus made of man's feeling of pleasure in his own happiness a solicitude for others and we see once again that a psychology of sentiment has produced a morals of sentiment.

For many years, political philosophers had expounded, with a different emphasis, the idea that man was desirous of living in harmony with his fellows. One of the most influential of such writers in France was Pufendorf, whose De officio hominis et civis juxta legem naturalem libri duo (1673) was translated by Darbeyrac and appeared as Les Devoirs de l'homme, et du citoyen in 1706. Pufendorf's analyses are straightforward and trenchant compared with those we have just studied, but his authority imposed the acceptance of a belief in the natural benevolence of men towards their companions. For Pufendorf, the predominant characteristic in man is self-love and he describes it in simple seventeenth-century terms:

... l'Homme, en cela semblable à tous les autres Animaux qui ont quelque connoissance, s'aime extrêmement lui-même, tâche de se conserver par toutes sortes de voies,

recherche ce qu'il croit bon, & fuit¹⁴ au contraire ce qui lui paroît mauvais.

Additionally man is weak on entering the world and in need of the help of others; they too have their own interests at heart and being ambitious, vain and jealous are naturally inclined to do him harm:

Toutes ces dispositions sont capables de produire & produisent en effet pour l'ordinaire dans le Cœur des Hommes une envie extrême de se nuire les uns aux autres.

(p. 65).

The conflict which would seem inevitable in this situation, however, is avoided by virtue of a second fundamental instinct in man and that is his desire to live in peace with his fellows:

... il ne sauroit subsister, ni jouir des biens qui conviennent à l'état où il se trouve, s'il n'est sociable, c'est-à-dire, s'il ne veut vivre en bonne union avec ses semblables, & se conduire envers eux de telle manière, qu'il ne leur donne aucun sujet apparent de penser à lui faire du mal ...

(p. 67).

In order to achieve the kind of society envisaged here, a law governing human conduct can therefore be devised:

... chacun doit travailler, autant qu'il dépend de lui, à procurer et à maintenir le bien de la société humaine en général.

(p. 68).

Although man would appear to be disposed to obey this law, in Pufendorf's system his belief in or fear of God plays an important part. For him, God exacts obedience to the natural law, with the threat of punishment for disobedience. It is indeed fear of God which gives rise to "ces vifs sentiments de la Conscience," which make man realise "qu'en violant

¹⁴S. von Pufendorf, Les Devoirs de l'homme, et du citoyen, trans. J. Barbeyrac, Troisième Edition (Amsterdam, 1715), p. 62.

la Loi Naturelle on offense celui qui a l'empire des Cœurs, & dont chacun doit redouter la juste colére ..." (p. 70). If, therefore, man had no fear of death and no apprehension of divine retribution, he would also have no notion of duty towards his fellows. In fact Pufendorf states explicitly that "sans la Religion il n'y a point de Conscience ..." (p. 89).

This concept of human conscience implies that there is an element of rational calculation underlying man's fulfilment of his duty. Despite this, however, man would seem to aspire towards relationships of sympathy partly for their own sake, since Pufendorf has said that he is "sociable" and "veut vivre en bonne union avec ses semblables." Man's examination of himself and his position in the universe which brings the realisation that his existence is linked to that of others and that "il fait partie du Genre Humain" (p. 95), entails in its turn three fundamental obligations towards mankind:

Le premier Devoir Absolu, ou de chacun envers tout autre, c'est qu'il ne faut faire du mal à personne. (p. 132).

Like the second, that man must regard his fellows as his equals, this duty poses little problem as it is negative and demands no action. The third, however, that "chacun doit contribuer, autant qu'il le peut commodément, à l'utilité d'autrui" (p. 151), is both more positive and more important, since it leads to this obligation:

... la Nature aiant établi une espèce de parenté entre les Hommes, il ne suffit pas de ne se point faire de mal les uns aux autres, & de ne témoigner aucun mépris pour personne: il faut encore entrer dans des sentimens d'une bienveillance mutuelle, & les entretenir par un commerce agréable d'offices & de services. (p. 151).

This is particularly significant because it advances the concept that mankind forms one family and proposes that impulses deriving from the affective side of their being are those which maintain the bonds between men. Thus virtue consists in disinterested solicitude for others born of a wider, more general concern:

... le but propre & naturel d'un Bienfait
... c'est ... de montrer, en n'exigeant
rien de celui à qui l'on donne, qu'on lui
fait du bien uniquement pour s'aquitter
des Devoirs de l'Humanité, & non dans
aucune vûe d'intérêt. (pp. 158-59).

While man's obedience to the natural law may therefore stem from a fear of God, it is apparent that it should also be a spontaneous movement of good-will. It is true that certain civil laws are necessary to guide man's conduct and to ensure in him acts of humanity which might not otherwise be forthcoming. Aware, however, that he cannot exist in isolation and aware moreover that his happiness cannot be gained at the expense of that of his fellows, each man is inclined to perform socially beneficial acts.

Pufendorf's work marks a change in several respects when compared with the view of human nature current in France in the seventeenth century. In the first place, there is no suggestion in it that man is corrupt. He may possess a strong degree of "amour de soi", but this is essential to him if he is to survive. Secondly, it contains the belief that nature has established a sympathy between all men which cannot be destroyed and which therefore means that man is inevitably drawn towards his fellows. His affection for them cannot be condemned and his actions, based on an instinctive feeling of liking, pity or generosity, are acceptable and praiseworthy.

Ideas such as these were expounded in works of very different kinds during the first half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, even before Pufendorf's Devoirs de l'homme, et du citoyen was published in France, a writer such as Baudot de Juilly could propose that all men are united by bonds of affection. His Dialogues entre Messieurs Patru & d'Ablancourt sur les plaisirs (1701) confronts a stern, Christian morality with greater confidence in human nature and seeks to reconcile the pursuit of pleasure with religious faith, chiefly through the arguments of d'Ablancourt, an Epicurean, who defends the former on the grounds that it is a necessary distraction and essential if man is to perceive that which is useful to him. One senses that it is d'Ablancourt's view with which Baudot de Juilly is in sympathy; nevertheless, Patru's initial statements are of interest, both for the concepts they contain and for the language in which they are expressed. He has a clear notion, for example, of the qualities which are to be commended in man:

Que dirai-je maintenant de ces autres vertus, de la pudeur, de l'amitié, de la douceur, de la complaisance, de la bonté de cœur, de l'humanité, & de la générosité, qui sont les plus doux liens de la société civile?¹⁵

It is worth noting that Patru's list of virtues includes not only "bonté de cœur" but also "humanité", which is already, it would seem, a regard for others as fellow human-beings. Furthermore, the qualities for which he is to be admired have their origin in a particular part of man's nature, to which Patru gives a name:

¹⁵N. Baudot de Juilly, Dialogues entre Messieurs Patru & d'Ablancourt sur les plaisirs (Paris, 1701), I, 55.

Ces gens qui mesurent tout leur bonheur aux plaisirs grossiers du corps, n'ont pas le sentiment assez délicat pour vouloir faire la félicité des autres. Enfin la pitié est une vertu que la bonne fortune n'apprend guères, & ces mêmes voluptez, ces délicatesses, ces aises de la vie, qui rendent l'ame si molle, rendent le cœur dur & impitoyable.

(I, 56).

Virtue is thus impossible without a capacity for feeling, which Baudot de Juilly, in common with Abbadie, calls "le sentiment", qualifying it in a way which suggests that it might exist in varying degrees. Patru and d'Ablancourt are not far removed in their theories on human relationships, but the latter's conclusions are founded on a different premise and in particular a more lenient attitude to man's spontaneous inclinations. For him there is no shame attached to living according to the dictates of nature and man is indeed intended to do so:

Cet instinct & ces mouvemens secrets qu'il (Dieu) a imprimez dans chaque animal, selon les différentes especes, sont des droits sacrez, qu'on peut & qu'on doit suivre; il n'y a qu'à les bien démêler & à connoître ce qui est effectivement de la nature. (I, 179-80).

These "mouvemens secrets" guide man in his relations with his fellows and make of him a feeling being:

De-là vient que nous avons naturellement pitié des malheureux, que nous aimons à faire du bien, que nous nous sçavons bon gré d'en avoir fait; que nous sommes ravis quand nous en voïons faire aux autres ... que nous sçavons qu'on ne doit faire aux autres, que ce qu'on voudroit qui nous fut fait à nous-mêmes ...

(I, 203).

It is thus plain that for Baudot de Juilly man possesses natural moral principles and social affections. Furthermore, he offers an explanation of the way in which they come into

being: he bases it on a belief that man responds instinctively to beauty and that from such a response is born a feeling with wider implications:

Or cette émotion douce qu'on sent dans le cœur, à la vûe de la beauté, est la naissance & le premier mouvement de l'amour. Ainsi cette passion est d'une part, le principe & le lien de la société humaine ... (II, 20).

If this first impulse, which Baudot de Juilly also calls a "sentiment"¹⁶ is reciprocated, a relationship of sympathy is formed, described as "une tendresse réciproque entre deux objets" (II, 22). It is in this way that the "émotion tendre" or "premier sentiment de l'amour" may become the foundation for all man's relationships with his fellows, whether they be ones of love, friendship or more general concern for their well-being.

There can be no doubt that all these relationships are formed without reference to the intellect. Moreover, the "union des cœurs" (II, 33), which is their essence, has a further quality to sustain it and that is man's natural feeling of "bienveillance" towards others. To deny that such a principle is present in man is to deny the existence of an important part of his nature:

Et sans mentir, c'est faire injure à la nature humaine, que de la croire incapable de cette sorte d'amour; c'est mal connoître notre cœur, & les sentimens délicats qu'il peut produire: Cette erreur n'est venue apparemment que de ce qu'on n'a point démêlé un certain instinct grossier & brutal, que nous avons de commun avec les bêtes, de la tendresse & de la

¹⁶"Au reste, cette même émotion tendre, qui comme je viens de dire, est l'origine & le premier sentiment de l'amour, est quelque chose de fort doux ..." (II, 22).

bien-veillance qui resident toutes dans
le cœur. (II, 34).¹⁷

As the emotion inspired by beauty had produced a feeling of pleasure, so the fulfilment of his desire to help others brings enjoyment in this system. Virtue, in short, is made agreeable and the realisation that one is capable of feeling is almost as important and valuable as the feeling itself:

Je crois qu'il n'y a point de plaisir plus
sensible & plus touchant pour un bon cœur,
que celui d'avoir de la vertu ...
(II, 225).

In his Dialogues des Dieux (1711), Rémond de Saint-Mard also proposes that man has a sympathy for his companions. While it may seem that nature has implanted seeds of hatred in all men and that a spirit of "bienveillance" is entirely superficial, "la Nature qui nous a donné un sentiment fait exprès pour nous ... a eu en même-tems la précaution de nous en donner un d'une autre espece, qui a pour objet l'avantage & le profit des autres."¹⁸ Existing alongside his "amour de soi", therefore, is a feeling for others, such that the motivation for acts of generosity, for instance, is a concern which has its origins in the affections. Certainly discussion or reflection is useless in the sphere of morals as man does not act according to the dictates of the intellect:

Qu'on apprenne aux hommes à penser comme
on voudra sur le chapitre des vertus &
des vices, ils agiront toujours comme il
plaira à leur cœur; c'est par le cœur que
les hommes sont conduits; l'esprit n'est

¹⁷The love referred to by Baudot de Juilly here is "l'amour de pure tendresse."

¹⁸T. Rémond de Saint-Mard, Dialogues des Dieux, Œuvres de Monsieur Rémond de St.-Mard (Amsterdam, 1749), I, 171.

que le spectateur de leurs actions ...¹⁹

Desfourneaux's Essay d'une philosophie naturelle (1724) is a more extended and systematic analysis of man's relations with his fellows. The philosophy of the "honnête homme", to whom Desfourneaux is addressing himself, should have two main elements, the first being "les avantages du Philosophe, à régler par la raison; c'est sa première & sa plus grande affaire."²⁰ There are those, however, in whom an awareness of their own needs, an awareness to which Desfourneaux applies the term "sensibilité",²¹ is so predominant that it destroys any consideration for others:

... il n'y a pas de place dans leurs cœurs, pour ainsi dire, ou il y en a trop peu, pour ce qui pourroit intéresser les autres: ils ne sont capables qu'en quelques rencontres, où il ne leur en coûte guères, d'être bienfaisans, amis, & peut-être, honnêtes gens. (pp. 55-56).

Thus Desfourneaux gives to the man who wishes to be a true "philosophe" a second objective, which "consiste dans les avantages pour autrui, à régler aussi par la raison qui est notre balance..." (p. 50). In spite of the reference to "la raison" here, man's obligation towards his fellows demands for its fulfilment a certain quality quite unconnected with the intellect, although guided by it and this is "bonté, ou sensibilité pour les intérêts d'autrui; laquelle nous

¹⁹ Nouveaux Dialogues des Dieux (1711), Œuvres, I, 336-37.

²⁰ Desfourneaux, Essay d'une philosophie naturelle, applicable à la vie, aux besoins et aux affaires, fondée sur la seule raison, et convenable aux deux sexes (Paris, 1724), p. 50.

²¹ A fundamental precept in man's conduct is: "Être assez sensible à ses avantages, & à proportion de leur importance ..." (p. 55), and Desfourneaux adds to this: "Que cette sensibilité soit limitée ..." (p. 55).

porte à faire le bien, suivant notre penchant & la raison ..." (p. 56).

Desfourneaux does not examine the process by which his "sensibilité" is born in man, either with respect to his own well-being or that of others. It seems clear, however, that his consciousness in both cases is one deriving from the feelings. Desfourneaux had spoken, for example, of men's hearts when condemning too great a concern for the self, the phrase "pour ainsi dire" indicating no doubt that the word is to be understood in a metaphorical sense. In addition to this, Desfourneaux makes "sensibilité" synonymous with "bonté", a desire to assist others which is carried out by a natural "penchant", merely guided by the reason. He is thus close to Gamaches in equating the term with a spontaneous impulse to do good; as the word is used by him it signifies not only a passive awareness of the needs of others, but also an active intent to satisfy those needs. This conclusion is borne out by Desfourneaux's subsequent description of "sensibilité", whether it be applied to man himself or to others:

La sensibilité est un état opposé à l'indolence: ceux qui sentent assez leurs intérêts, sont aussi disposez à agir assez pour leurs intérêts, que ceux qui vivent dans l'indolence, le sont peu ... Par elle on pratique ce que beaucoup de gens voyent seulement dans la speculation ... Par elle on est bien-faisant, Philosophe aimable & honnête-homme.(pp. 66-68).

"Sensibilité" allows man to do "avec goût, ce qui ne se feroit que par raison ou ne se feroit point du tout ..."

(p. 70), for it brings him a pleasure which ensures his own happiness as well as that of others. It is indeed to reawaken in man the desire for contentment, which he believes to be weak, that Desfourneaux is writing:

C'est pour réveiller cette sensibilité,
plus désirable, que des maximes de Morale,
que j'ay crû devoir engager les sujets
bien disposez à faire attention à quel-
ques objets qui peuvent contribuer à leur
bonheur. (pp. 82-83).

Despite his title, which had suggested that he was proposing to found a moral system on reason, Desfourneaux thus dismisses all principles drawn up by the intellect, since man's moral notions are to be found within his feeling for others. "La raison" plays a secondary role only and is often akin in meaning to "sagesse", or an understanding of the limits to be placed both on concern for oneself and for one's fellows.

Throughout his Essay d'une philosophie naturelle Desfourneaux links the "philosophe" and the "honnête homme" and bases his advice on the principle that both should be "bienfaisant".²² Nothing makes clearer the change in values taking place during the first half of the eighteenth century than this association of "bienfaisant" and "honnêteté", both of which, moreover, depend, as we have seen, on a certain "sensibilité". Two writers in particular at this time help to contribute to the transformation in outlook and to the evolution in meaning of several terms central to moral philosophy; they are the abbé de Saint-Pierre and Mme de Lambert.

The word "bienfaisant" is not uncommon in the seventeenth century as a qualification of both men and actions. It had existed indeed in Old French, conveying a general idea of "celui qui fait bien," so that it might be applied, for

²² "... la Philosophie de celui qui n'aime que soy, est un mauvais parti pour le Philosophe. Celle de l'honnête homme ... est bienfaisante; elle est aimable & capable d'attirer sur luy des avantages proportionnez à la sagesse qui peut diriger le penchant qu'il a à faire le bien" (p. 49).

instance, to a soldier who had done well in battle. Littré also supplies examples of the term used to signify "dont l'influence est utile." Eventually, however, it comes most often to designate one "who enjoys doing good" and as such it is occasionally linked to the notion of charity. Saint-Évremond had, for instance, referred to "ce que nous avons de charitable et de bien-faisant" as an impulse to perform a beneficial act.²³ In the eighteenth century, some effort is made to dissociate the two concepts and to apply "bienfaisant" to the man who possesses a spontaneous desire to help his companions.

As "bienfaisance" this concern for others was a quality much prized by the whole century. This word, too, is an old one, Brunot stating that examples of it may be found in the sixteenth century, although he does not in fact give any of them.²⁴ It is synonymous with the Latin "beneficentia" and in French largely replaces "bénéficence".²⁵ It is undoubtedly the abbé de Saint-Pierre who does most to make the term popular. In his Sur le grand Homme, & sur l'Homme Illustre,

²³Ch. Marguetel de Saint-Denis, Seigneur de Saint-Évremond, "Fragments d'une lettre sur la fausseté des vertus humaines," Cœuvres en prose, ed. R. Ternois (Paris, 1962-69), II, 193.

²⁴See F. Brunot, Histoire de la langue française (Paris, 1930-33) VI, Première Partie, Fascicule Premier, 113-16.

²⁵"Bénéficence" is often the word used by Barbeyrac in his translation of Pufendorf in the context of solicitude for others: "Il y a enfin une certaine maniere d'exercer convenablement la Bénéficence & la Libéralité ..." (Devoirs de l'homme, et du citoyen, p. 156). The Latin for this is: "Modus quoque dandi multum gratiæ beneficiis addit ..." (De officio hominis et civis, ed. W. Schücking (New York, 1927), I, 52).

first published in 1726 and reprinted many times, he develops the idea of "bienfaisance" as one of the essential human attributes. He begins by separating the concepts of power and greatness, believing that the term "Grand Homme" implies more than simply "homme puissant". Whereas power is the result of rank and fortune, true greatness demands a more personal quality:

... on ne dévient Grand Homme que par les seules qualitez intérieures de l'esprit & du cœur, & par les grans bienfaits que l'on procure à la Societé.²⁶

Whether by reflection or by action, by the discovery of the means of procuring general happiness or by direct intervention in the lives of others, the great man is the one who desires the greatest good for the greatest number. In short, the "Grand Homme" must be a "grand bien faicteur" (XI, 60), whose stature depends upon the scale of his achievement and the degree of difficulty overcome:

Plus le bienfait est grand, durable, étendu à un plus grand nombre de familles, & difficile à procurer, plus aussi celui qui le procure se distingue entre les Grans Hommes. (XI, 61).

Thus a seemingly great man such as Charles V cannot be regarded as a "Grand Homme", since his actions were undertaken with his own prestige in mind or the interests of a few courtiers around him. For Saint-Pierre such a man lacks an essential quality:

Pour le malheur de ses sujets & de ses voisins, il n'aprit point dans son Education, & ne conut pas dans le reste de sa vie de quéle inportanse lui étoit pour parvenir au titre de Grand Homme, de pratiquer plus constamment l'équité

²⁶Ch.-I. Castel, abbé de Saint-Pierre, Sur le grand Homme, & sur l'Homme Illustre, Ouvrages politiques (Rotterdam, 1738), XI, 33.

anvers tout le monde, & la bienfaizanse
anvers ses sujets & ses voisins ...
(XI, 65-66).

Saint-Pierre insists here and throughout this work that the "Grand Homme est toujours illustre, mais l'Homme Illustre n'est pas toujours Grand Homme" (XI, 71), the latter always possessing a spontaneous wish to improve the lot of his fellows. He also makes a distinction between the "Grand Homme" and the "Grand Saint" who "travaille pour plaire à Dieu" (XI, 73), and who therefore has a higher aim than the "Grand Homme". In this way "le motif de l'Homme Saint est beaucoup plus élevé que celui du Grand Homme, il est plus conforme à la raison universelle qui n'est, qu'une étincèle de la Raison suprême" (XI, 73).

Such a view of moral perfection is reminiscent of the theories put forward by Malebranche in his Traité de morale. Certainly "bienfaisance" is a quality given to man by God, who desires man's happiness²⁷ and there is no doubt that the impulse to help others is part of man's religious life:

... il (Dieu) nous invite par les grandes récompenses de la seconde vie, à l'imiter par des actions de bien faizanse dans notre première vie. (XI,74).²⁸

Saint-Pierre differs from Malebranche, however, in placing his emphasis on man's relationship with man and he in no way

²⁷This is plain in the following question: "... que pouvoit-il (Dieu) faire de plus sage que de nous doner d'un côté ... la liberté d'éviter le mal & de faire le bien, c'est à dire le pouvoir de nous abstenir des injustices, & de pratiquer la bienfaizanse ..." (XI, 74).

²⁸The same notion of effort is present in the statement that "cête bienfaizanse divine demande nécessairement des hommes qu'ils tachent de l'imiter, & par consequant qu'ils soient justes & bienfaizans les un, anvers les autres" (XI, 77).

disapproves of the urge to assist others for their own good. When comparing the "Grand Homme" with "l'Homme Illustre", for example, he says:

... le Grand Homme a des santimens & des motifs plus élevés, il se soucie fort du plaisir qu'il trouve à procurer un grand bonheur à ses concitoyens, & préfère souvant leurs intérêts au sien propre.

(XI, 72).

By making the possession of "bienfaisance" the hall-mark of a great man, Saint-Pierre not only attaches to it some significance, he indicates the possibility of a new scale of values with regard to human nature.

Mme de Lambert has often been seen as a rationalist and as one who maintains the moral philosophy of the previous century.²⁹ There are indeed elements in her theories, contained mainly in advice offered to her son and daughter, which propose both that reason is a sure guide in man's dealings with his fellows and that sound principles must be grounded in standards established by religion. A similarity

²⁹See, for example, J.-P. Zimmermann, "La Morale laïque au commencement du XVIII^e siècle. Madame de Lambert, Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, 24 (1917), 42-64 and 440-66. He believes Mme de Lambert to reflect the reaction against a morals of religion and, in spite of a call to perfect the heart, to found her philosophy on "la raison", that is to say, "la sagesse pratique" (60).

D. Mornet considers Mme de Lambert to be a proponent of the morals of order; see his Le Romantisme en France au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1912), pp. 1-2. So, too, does A. Adam; see his Le Mouvement philosophique dans la première moitié du 18^e siècle (Paris, 1967), pp. 85-86. He also suggests, however, that she may be regarded as among those who associate "amour de soi" and "amour des autres" (p. 99) and that she cannot withstand the "mouvement général des esprits vers une morale fondée sur la spontanéité du sentiment" (p. 98).

between Mme de Lambert and Malebranche, for example, is suggested in this assertion:

Les vertus morales sont en danger, sans les chrétiennes ... je demande seulement que l'amour de l'Ordre soumette à Dieu vos lumières & vos sentimens, que le même amour de l'Ordre se répande sur votre conduite: il vous donnera la Justice, & la Justice assure toutes les vertus.³⁰

The implication that man's realisation of the correct path to be followed is an intellectual one is present in Mme de Lambert's discussion of "amour-propre". This is of two kinds:

... l'un naturel, légitime & réglé par la justice & par la raison; l'autre, vicieux & corrompu. Notre premier objet, c'est nous mêmes; & nous ne revenons à la justice, que par la réflexion ... S'aimer comme il faut, c'est aimer la Vertu: aimer le Vice, c'est s'aimer d'un amour aveugle & mal-entendu. (pp. 29-30).

Such a statement would seem to demand that man's duty to himself, as to his companions, be decided and controlled by rational reflection on what is possible and appropriate.³¹

On the other hand, however, Mme de Lambert herself refers to the work written for her son as "des avis que vous donne une Amie, & qui partent du cœur" (p. 2), and much in these "avis" would lead us to conclude that it is the "heart" from which reliable moral impulses spring. Certainly, Mme

³⁰ A.-Th. de Marguenat de Courcelles, marquise de Lambert, Avis d'une Mère à son Fils (1726), Ouvres de Madame la Marquise de Lambert (Lausanne, 1747), p. 15.

³¹ The same notion appears to underlie this observation on human nature: "Il y a d'aimables caractères, qui ont une convenance naturelle & délicate avec la Vertu. Pour ceux à qui la Nature n'a pas fait ces heureux présens, il n'y a qu'à avoir de bons yeux & connoître ses véritables intérêts, pour corriger un mauvais penchant: voilà comme l'esprit redresse le cœur" (p. 30).

de Lambert, like many of her contemporaries, dismisses the notion that birth or wealth are a sign of true value; "la supériorité réelle & véritable" which distinguishes one man from another is "le mérite" (p. 18). In short, she believes that: "Le titre d'honnête-homme est bien au-dessus des Titres de la fortune" (p. 19). Mme de Lambert is close therefore to Desfourneaux in prizing "honnêteté" above all other qualities. While she may hold that societies between men are necessary and that "honnêteté" in one sense is obedience to the laws which have been found essential to maintain these communities,³² she also advances the idea that man may desire the good of others, as her definition of "honnêteté" begins to imply:

Tous les vices favorisent l'Amour-propre,
& toutes les vertus s'accordent à le combattre ...

L'Amour-propre est une préférence de soi aux autres; & l'Honnêteté est une préférence des autres à soi. (p. 29).

There is an unmistakable association between virtue and "honnêteté" here, a juxtaposition which already points to the change of meaning which the second concept has undergone during the first third of the eighteenth century. Throughout the Avis d'une Mère à son Fils Mme de Lambert constantly stresses the importance of consideration and generosity, always linking these moral qualities to the notion of pleasure:

³²In her discussion of man's social duties, Mme de Lambert says: "Les Hommes ont trouvé qu'il étoit nécessaire & agréable de s'unir pour le bien commun: ils ont fait des Loix pour reprimer les méchants: ils sont convenus entre eux des devoirs de la Société, & ont attaché l'idée de la gloire à la pratique de ces devoirs. Le plus honnête homme est celui qui les observe avec plus d'exactitude: on les multiplie à mesure que l'on a plus d'honneur & de délicatesse" (p. 22). It would seem that the word "délicatesse" begins to have a moral sense here.

Le plaisir le plus touchant pour les honnêtes-gens, c'est de faire du bien & de soulager les misérables. (p. 40).

Mme de Lambert condemns the search for "volupté" and is thus in no sense either an Epicurean or among those who consciously attempt to unite the Epicurean and Christian philosophies at this time. She does not reject the enjoyment of personal contentment, however; rather does she place it uniquely in beneficence to others:

Pourquoi dans ce nombre infini de goûts inventés par la volupté & par la mollesse, ne s'en est-on jamais fait un de soulager les malheureux? L'humanité ne vous fait elle point sentir le besoin de secourir vos semblables? Les bons cœurs sentent l'obligation de faire du bien, plus qu'on ne sent les autres besoins de la vie. (p. 20).

In this exhortation to her son, two features central to Mme de Lambert's moral theories emerge, the first being that the desire to assist others is specifically named "humanité" and the second that it is located in the affective side of man's nature. The term "humanité" exists with a meaning of a spirit of good-will in the seventeenth century, when it was possible to speak of fulfilling a "devoir d'humanité." Pufendorf, for example, places some emphasis on the "Devoirs de l'Humanité."³³ The word may also be used to convey that which defines man and which therefore links all men with indissoluble bonds. There is something of this usage in Mme de Lambert's advice to her son:

Sachez que les premières Loix à qui vous devez obéir, sont celles de l'humanité: songez que vous êtes homme, & que vous commandez à des hommes. (p. 43).

In the majority of cases, however, the term expresses in

³³See p. 93 above.

her work the notion of an instinctive liking or solicitude for one's fellows, as it had already done in Pufendorf and in Baudot de Juilly.³⁴ Moreover, it is clear in the Avis d'une Mère à son Fils that "humanité" is a feeling, both in the passage which we have quoted above and in this statement about generosity, for instance, which claims that: "La Liberalité se caractérise par la manière de donner: le Liberal double le mérite du présent, par le sentiment: l'Avare le gâte par le regret" (p. 41).

Indeed, the most important precepts which Mme de Lambert gives to her son demand a capacity for feeling as the one true source of judgments and moral energy in man's relations with his fellows. Stressing the value of friendship, for example, Mme de Lambert says: "Je vous renvoie à votre cœur, qui vous demandera un Ami, & qui vous en fera sentir le besoin. Je laisse à votre délicatesse à vous instruire des devoirs de l'Amitié" (pp. 28-29), advice which is doubly interesting, since it seems to suggest that "délicatesse" is being used once again with a moral force.³⁵ Similarly, in rejecting the common view of "volupté", Mme de Lambert suggests that virtue comes from the heart, "la source de l'innocence & du bonheur" (p. 48). Her attitude would appear to be

³⁴See p. 94 above.

³⁵The word is also used in a moral context in the Avis d'une Mère à sa Fille (1728): "Si vous êtes sensible & délicate sur la réputation, si vous craignez d'être attaquée sur les vertus essentielles, il y a un moyen sûr pour calmer vos craintes, & pour contenter votre délicatesse; c'est d'être vertueuse" (Oeuvres, p. 63). If "délicatesse" has not yet the sense of "moral scruple", it is possible to see, from the associations made here by Mme de Lambert, how it might ultimately acquire this meaning.

encapsulated in one of her last appeals to her son, which makes plain her belief in the primacy of the feelings over the reason:

Je vous exhorterai bien plus, mon fils, à travailler sur votre cœur, qu'à perfectionner votre esprit: ce doit être là l'étude de toute la vie. La vraie grandeur de l'homme est dans le cœur; il faut l'élever, pour aspirer à de grandes choses, & même oser s'en croire digne ...

... l'on n'est estimable que par le cœur, & l'on n'est heureux que par lui; puisque notre bonheur ne dépend que de la manière de sentir. (pp. 47-48).³⁶

Statements such as these coincide with others elsewhere in Mme de Lambert's writings. In the Réflexions nouvelles sur les Femmes (1727), for example, she insists that a capacity for feeling is as sure a means of attaining the truth as the intellect and asserts, in language which recalls Gamaches, that on such a capacity depend the most desirable qualities which we possess:

La Sensibilité est une disposition de l'ame qu'il est avantageux de trouver dans les autres. Vous ne pouvez avoir ni humanité, ni générosité, sans Sensibilité. Un seul sentiment, un seul mouvement du cœur a plus de crédit sur l'ame, que toutes les Sentences des Philosophes.³⁷

The Traité de l'Amitié (1732) also proposes that the feelings are at the centre of man's life. Friendship is "un sentiment qui est né avec nous,"³⁸ and demands reactions of the heart

³⁶This advice is almost exactly paralleled in the Avis d'une Mere à sa Fille: "... votre première attention doit être à perfectionner votre cœur & ses sentimens. Vous n'avez de vertu sûre & durable que par le cœur. C'est lui proprement qui vous caractérise" (p. 94).

³⁷Oeuvres, pp. 186-87.

³⁸Oeuvres, p. 119.

if it is to be regarded as sincere. More than this, however, Mme de Lambert's attitude towards this relationship would seem to rest on a view of human nature in general which is expressed in this way:

... les ames tendres & délicates sentent les besoins du cœur plusqu'on ne sent les autres nécessités de la vie. ... Enfin, les caracteres sensibles cherchent à s'unir par les sentimens; le cœur étant fait pour aimer, il est sans vie dès que vous lui refusez le plaisir d'aimer, & d'être aimé. (pp. 120-21).

It is true that Mme de Lambert warns her daughter against "ces grands ébranlemens de l'ame" (p. 73). She always makes a distinction, however, between passions and feelings and the latter, together with "le sentiment" or "la sensibilité", are held to be commendable and indeed essential in man's dealings with his fellows.

Ideas of a similar kind are advanced by Lemaître de Claville in his Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme (1734).

This is a work written for a young man about to enter polite society and contains advice of the most varied kind, in its attempt to outline the happiness or "volupté" to be gained from every aspect of life. From the first, Lemaître de Claville associates "true merit" with virtue, saying that: "La vertu & le vrai mérite sont synonymes"³⁹ and he recommends a particular kind of philosophy to achieve it:

Je ne conseille donc que l'usage d'une philosophie aisée, raisonnable, naturelle & chrétienne. C'est une philosophie de sentiment indépendante de la scholastique. (I, 18).

³⁹C. F. N. Lemaître de Claville, Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme. Nouvelle Edition (Francfort sur le Meyn, 1755), I, 17.

The assertion made here is developed in the second volume of the *Traité*, in which Lemaître de Claville describes in greater detail man's obligations to others. Remarking that serving one's fellows is a benefit to oneself and that such a principle can arouse "ou un sentiment réel, ou une réflexion qui vous fasse agir en conséquence" (II, 42), he adds the following advice, which is a clear indication of his preference for an instinctive concern for one's companions:

Vous, pour qui j'écris, & en qui je suppose une ame de la meilleure trempe, j'aime à croire que vous n'aurez pas besoin pour devenir bien-faisant de réfléchir sur les profits qu'on en tire. Livrez-vous tout entier à la bonté du cœur, le sentiment peut plus, pour mettre l'homme en mouvement, que toutes les démonstrations. (II, 42).

"Le sentiment" signifies for Lemaître de Claville a spontaneous regard for others, located in the feelings; it is a dynamic force, as it had been for Abbadie and can be equated with Gamaches's "sensibilité".

Lemaître de Claville's work, like that of Baudot de Juilly, is an attempt to reconcile the hedonist and Christian philosophies. Goodness is to be pursued, for instance, on the grounds that it is only through solicitude for one's fellows that happiness can be found: "...trouvons notre bonheur dans celui des autres, voilà le dernier période de la fine volupté" (II, 39). Christian virtue loses its austerity, however; the pleasures of the senses are no longer despised, although Lemaître de Claville always praises above all the satisfaction to be had from the pleasures of the mind and the soul. The "volupté" of the Epicureans also undergoes a certain modification, since man has the potential to care for

all his fellows and not merely a restricted circle of friends:

Vivons pour nous, vivons encore plus pour
nos amis; vivons sur-tout pour placer le
mérite, pour protéger l'innocence, pour
secourir l'homme qui souffre: songez que
vous ne sauriez être heureux, qu'autant
qu'on vous verra attentif au bonheur des
autres ... (II, 40).

As much as Mme de Lambert, therefore, Lemaître de
Claville shows the change in values which is taking place in
the first half of the eighteenth century. This is exempli-
fied not in his use of established terms with a meaning not
previously associated with them, but in his belief in the in-
sufficiency of those terms to express his ideal:

Toutes les qualités qui sont néces-
saires au galant homme ne sont que la
moindre partie du mérite personnel, & ne
produisent que de legers plaisirs; ce
sont de gracieux accidens qui ne doivent
entrer que comme par addition dans le
caractere de l'honnête homme; mais l'hon-
nête homme & le galant homme ne sauroit
être parfaitement vertueux qu'autant
qu'il remplira tous les devoirs de
l'équité, de l'humanité, de la bonté ...
(II, 46-47).

Lemaître de Claville requires in his ideal man the quali-
ties of "bienfaisance" and "humanité"; it has often been
noted that Voltaire too whole-heartedly approved of what he
saw as the invention of the term "bienfaisance" by the abbé
de Saint-Pierre and of the regard for others which it betokens.
He concludes the Discours en vers sur l'homme (1738) with these
lines, for example:

... il (le mot bienfaisance) me plaît; il rassemble,
Si le cœur en est cru, bien des vertus ensemble.
Petits grammairiens, grands précepteurs des sots,
Qui pesez la parole et mesurez les mots,
Pareille expression vous semble hasardée;
Mais l'univers entier doit en chérir l'idée.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Voltaire, Discours en vers sur l'homme, Cœuvres complètes de Voltaire, Nouvelle Edition ... conforme pour le texte à l'édition de Beauchot (Paris, 1877-85), IX, 424.

Both Voltaire's life and his work bear witness to the fact that a desire to assist others is a fundamental urge in man. The Traité de métaphysique (1734) makes plain that he believes man to possess an inherent concern for his fellows:

L'homme n'est pas comme les autres animaux qui n'ont que l'instinct de l'amour-propre et celui de l'accouplement; non-seulement il a cet amour-propre nécessaire pour sa conservation, mais il a aussi, pour son espèce, une bienveillance naturelle qui ne se remarque point dans les bêtes.⁴¹

The "sentiment de pitié et de bienveillance" is not born of self-love, as it is for several of the moralists whom we have examined, but exists in conjunction with it, if it is not extinguished by it. Like his "amour-propre", the good-will man experiences for others is an impulse which owes nothing to the intellect:

... que l'homme le plus sauvage voie un joli enfant prêt d'être dévoré par quelque animal, il sentira malgré lui une inquiétude, une anxiété que la pitié fait naître, et un désir d'aller à son secours.⁴¹

It is this same feeling, moreover, "qui nous dispose à l'union avec les hommes."⁴¹

In Voltaire's system, man's concepts of good and evil do not depend, however, on this basic moral urge; rather do they find definition within society and the laws which it has drawn up for its own sake:

Mais tous ces peuples, qui se conduisent si différemment, se réunissent tous en ce point, qu'ils appellent vertueux ce qui est conforme aux lois qu'ils ont établies, et criminel ce qui leur est contraire....

La vertu et le vice, le bien et le mal moral, est donc en tout pays ce qui est utile ou nuisible à la société ...

(XXII, 224-25).

⁴¹Traité de métaphysique, Œuvres, XXII, 222.

Virtue is not allowed of and a desire to help all mankind, but an obedience to laws devised by man; the intellect must therefore intervene here. Nevertheless, although a difference in the conception of virtue is inevitable in view of the difference in civil laws, certain fundamental laws exist everywhere and are based on a number of principles in man, whatever his origins:

... il (Dieu) a donné à l'homme certains sentiments dont il ne peut jamais se défaire, et qui sont les liens éternels et les premières lois de la société dans laquelle il a prévu que les hommes vivraient. La bienveillance pour notre espèce est née, par exemple, avec nous, et agit toujours en nous, à moins qu'elle ne soit combattue par l'amour-propre, qui doit toujours l'emporter sur elle. (XXII, 226).

That which determines the framework within which society operates is therefore man's natural feeling for others. In the Discours en vers sur l'homme such a feeling is far more than a basis for civil laws; it is the driving force behind all man's moral actions. Man having been commanded to love his fellows, Voltaire designates as virtuous the man who adheres to this most fundamental of all obligations:

Les miracles sont bons; mais soulager son frère,
Mais tirer son ami du sein de la misère,
Mais à ses ennemis pardonner leurs vertus,
C'est un plus grand miracle, et qui ne se fait plus.⁴²

The "honnête homme indolent" who lives oblivious of good and evil, pre-occupied only with his own pleasure, cannot be termed "vertueux":

Non; je donne ce titre au cœur tendre et sublime
Qui soutient hardiment son ami qu'on opprime.⁴²

The belief that man is naturally good finds increasing acceptance in these years of the century. In his Réflexions

⁴²Oeuvres, IX, 423.

sur l'esprit et le cœur (1736), Charost too asserts that man has inherent moral qualities and that these are located in the affective part of his being. In examining the processes of the heart, he suggests that its unique function is to react to objects and people and to form a judgment on them; to feel and to judge are indeed one and the same:

Il juge le bon, le vrai, le délicat, mais il le juge par sentiment. Sentir le délicat, à juger le délicat, est pour le cœur l'opération du même instant, pour ne pas dire la même opération. On peut donc réduire⁴³ au sentiment seul les opérations du cœur.

Like Abbadie, Charost holds that the spontaneous feeling aroused in the heart by impressions made upon it is more reliable than any evidence of the intellect:

Cet instinct qui conduit notre cœur, est un guide infiniment plus sûr, que les lumières qui éclairent l'esprit. (p. 288).

It is doubtless for this reason that he believes impulses of the "heart" to be so important in man's relations with his fellows, to the extent indeed that human intercourse is almost impossible without them:

... les qualités du cœur sont essentielles à la douceur & à la sûreté de la société, bonnes & utiles dans le commerce des hommes ... (p. 285).

Added to this, man is born, for Charost, with a moral sense, which produces a feeling of grief at the sight of suffering and one of indignation at that of vice rewarded:

Nous naissons tous avec un fonds de probité, avec un caractère de justice, si profondément gravé au fond du cœur, qu'il est ineffaçable. (p. 288).

⁴³Charost, Réflexions de M. le marquis de ^{XX}, sur l'esprit et le cœur, Recueil de divers écrits, ed. Sainte-Hyacinthe (Paris, 1736), p. 288.

It is impossible to do justice to all the books on psychology and morals which appeared in the first half of the eighteenth century. No mention has been made, for example, of the English philosophers, of Shaftesbury in particular and his theory of natural affection propounded in Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times (1711). It has been decided here to concentrate on a relatively small number of works in order to analyse both a current of thought and, more especially, the terminology which it requires. It can be seen that in France the terms "sensibilité" and "sentiment", central to the new movement, have a moral and intellectual quality. Even if the word "sensibilité" is not always used to denote the source of man's moral notions, a significant group of writers nevertheless maintain that only a capacity for feeling can ensure the sincerity of man's dealings with his fellows. The difference between the psychologists whom we have considered and the moralists is that whereas Abbadie, say, or Gamaches advance this idea after an examination of man and his "amour de soi", the moral and political philosophers expound the notion that a feeling for others is inherent and given to man by nature. This belief is therefore the premise and not the conclusion of their argument. Whatever the approach adopted, the systems and theories which we have studied create a climate of ideas which cannot be ignored as an influence on works of literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

Family relationships in the comedy ^{of} in the
first half of the eighteenth century

The comedy of the first half of the eighteenth century invariably takes place in a family setting, revolving usually around a relationship between a parent and son or daughter. Traditionally these characters are at loggerheads and it is normally from their antagonism that the principal action of the play derives. This convention goes back to classical drama, is adopted, in France, in the theatre of the Renaissance and then becomes a feature of much seventeenth-century comedy.¹ Here, the characters of parent and son or daughter find themselves at odds in the first place because of the very bond between them, attitudes widespread in society no doubt making acceptable the situation on the stage.² In addition, as was the case in several Greek or Roman comedies, the parent frequently forbids a son's or a daughter's choice of marriage partner, this indeed being the starting point of the plot. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for the conflict to be

¹Pierre de Larivey's Les Esprits, first published in 1579, for example, relies on the antagonism between a miserly father and his children, while in Odet de Turnèbe's Les Contens, published in 1584, the impetus to the action comes from a disagreement between Louyse and Genevieve, the former attempting to separate her daughter from her lover.

²As Valère says of the difficulty in befriending both father and son in Molière's L'Avare (1668): "On ne peut pas ménager l'un et l'autre; et l'esprit du père et celui du fils sont des choses si opposées, qu'il est difficile d'accommoder ces deux confidences ensemble" (Act I, scene I).

aggravated by the discovery that father and son love the same woman.³

Family relationships are similar in the "comédie de mœurs" at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century. Father and daughter are in opposition over the choice of a husband for the latter in Regnard's Les Ménechmes (1705), for example, and in his Le Légataire universel (1708) there is a lack of affection and much cynicism in the relationship between uncle and nephew in what is a painful situation.⁴ The pattern persists in the old style comedy until 1719 and Dufresny's La Réconciliation normande. Here the most important members of the family, a brother and sister, share an unequivocal dislike for each other, the intrigue depends on the attempts of one to score a victory over the other and the ending is totally without harmony or reconciliation between them.⁵

The traditional antipathy is still a feature of the new eighteenth-century comedy of such dramatists as Destouches and

³One thinks immediately once again of L'Avare. But in Donneau de Visé's La Mère coquette (1665), Arimant and his father Gêronte are rivals for the love of Bêlamire; in addition a mother and daughter, Lucinde and Bêlamire, are in love with the same man, namely Arimant.

⁴The plot revolves around Ergaste's attempts to trick the dying Gêronte into leaving him his entire fortune.

⁵The Marquise says to the Comte, for example: "Ma niece aura celui qui plus vous déplaira" (Act II, scene VI), and the Comte later remarks: "Traverser son amour, ah! quel plaisir pour moi!/ Ma sœur à cinquante ans devenir amoureuse!/ Oh! je m'en vengerai" (Act V, scene II).

The very title of the play indicates of course that there can be no question of sympathy between these two characters; as the servant Falaise observes: "Se réconcilier, veut dire en Normandie,/ Se le donner plus beau pour vexer l'ennemi" (Act III, scene VIII).

Nivelle de la Chaussée. In Destouches's L'Ingrat (1712), for instance, the plot is prepared in terms of a dispute between the characters of father and daughter, Géronte's attitude resembling that of, say, Arnolphe towards Agnès, or Démophon towards Isabelle in Les Ménechmes. In the same dramatist's Le Médisant (1715), the choice of a husband has again been made for a daughter, in this case by the Baronne, who brushes aside the notion that Marianne might be allowed some freedom in the matter. Similarly, in Voltaire's L'Enfant prodigue (1736), there is the familiar clash of wills between Lise and her father Rondon, who, in language strongly reminiscent of Arnolphe's, upholds his right to control his daughter and marry her off to suit himself.⁶ In his L'Obstacle imprévu (1717), Destouches has created a relationship between the characters of father and son where Lisimon disapproves of Valère's way of life. In addition, like Cléante and Harpagon, both wish to marry the same woman, or rather, such is Valère's sense of outrage on hearing of his father's intention to marry a young girl, that he decides to ask for her hand himself, his sole motive being one of spite.

Piron's L'École des pères (1728), contains a highly unusual situation of a father's feeling for his sons changing from affection to hatred. Géronte is prepared to give up the woman he loves in favour of a man more likely to attract her, namely one of his sons. His concern for them is not

⁶ Compare, for example, Arnolphe's words in L'École des femmes: "Comme un morceau de cire entre mes mains elle est, / Et je lui puis donner la forme qui me plaît" (Act III, scene III), those of Démophon in Les Ménechmes: "Et, de plus, Isabelle est une cire molle / Que je forme et pétris comme il me prend plaisir" (Act III, scene II) and those of Rondon in Voltaire's play: "A mon plaisir j'ai pétri sa jeune âme" (Act I, scene I).

reciprocated, however, and the callousness in them which he cannot ignore eventually transforms him, with the result that a mutual hostility is at the heart of their dealings on stage.

Other relationships of authority are also characterised by a lack of sympathy. In Campistron's Le Jaloux désabusé (1709), for instance, Dorante steadfastly refuses his consent to his sister's marriage with Clitandre, a stand which provides the impetus for the action of the play, as the rest of the characters unite to force him to change his mind. In Destouches's L'Homme singulier, Sanspair maintains it to be his right to decide on a husband for his sister, Julie.⁷ Antagonism of a slightly different kind occurs between the characters of aunt and niece in Nivelle de la Chaussée's La Fausse Antipathie (1733), where jealousy and not disagreement over a marriage partner underlies the relationship between Orphise and Léonore. With the same playwright's Le Préjugé à la mode (1735), we have a clash between the characters of uncle and niece, the opposition being intensified, because Argante is presumably acting as a kind of guardian to Sophie. In this instance the conflict arises over the very subject of marriage itself, a state which Sophie declares herself reluctant to enter.

All these relationships produce a discordant atmosphere in the plays we have mentioned and none of them, moreover,

⁷This play was originally intended for performance in 1744; it was withdrawn from rehearsal at the last minute by Destouches and published instead in the 1745 edition of his works. It was first performed in Paris in 1764. In subsequent chapters the date of 1745 will be given for this play.

undergoes any modification. If a character in authority does yield, thus contributing to the possibility of a satisfactory outcome to the action, it is more often than not through sheer self-interest, or because he has been defeated by the rest. Any reversal in the situation is due, in other words, to external circumstances rather than to a real change of heart or to a reappraisal of a relationship. The old ideas, hardened on occasion into cynicism, still persist, as this remark made towards the end of the first half of the century illustrates: "C'est pour le peuple enfin que sont faits les parents."⁸ Attitudes on the stage continue to reflect the state of affairs in society, just as dramatic technique produces situations similar to those portrayed in studies of contemporary manners. There can surely be few better descriptions of the lack of affection in many families of the time than this one by Hippolyte Taine:

Il y a d'abord la tradition aristocratique qui, entre les parents et les enfants, met une barrière pour mettre une distance. Quoique affaiblie et en voie de disparaître, cette tradition subsiste ... d'ordinaire, en présence des parents, les enfants sont muets, et le sentiment habituel qui les pénètre est la déférence craintive.

We have noted on the other hand, however, when discussing the character of Géronte in Piron's L'École des pères, that a different relationship between parent and child might obtain, were the father's affection to be returned. Even earlier than

⁸This statement is uttered by Cléon in Gresset's Le Méchant (1747), Act II, scene III.

⁹H. A. Taine: Les Origines de la France contemporaine (1876-94), L'Ancien Régime, Quatrième Édition (Paris, 1877), pp. 174-75.

this, in Dufresny's La Réconciliation normande, Angélique had cried out against hatred between members of the same family, thus suggesting that feelings of another kind could exist:

Comment peut-on haïr? Hélas! quelle folie
De se remplir le cœur de fiel & de venin!
Il n'est pas naturel de haïr. Car enfin,
On se fait plus de mal que l'on n'en fait
aux autres.
Des parens se haïr! (Act I, scene II).

These sentiments had already begun to find expression in certain works of political and moral philosophy. Pufendorf, for example, is among those who make stipulations regarding family relationships, his approach here being closely linked to his theory of Natural Law. As this law demands that man live sociably with his fellows, so it demands, on a smaller scale, that he live in harmony with the members of his family. To make this possible, Pufendorf suggests, nature has inspired all parents, in the first place, with love for their offspring:

La Loi Naturelle, par cela même qu'elle prescrit la Sociabilité, ordonne aux Pères & aux Mères d'avoir soin de leurs Enfans, sans quoi la Société ne sauroit absolument subsister: & même, pour les engager plus fortement à la pratique d'un devoir si nécessaire, la Nature leur a inspiré une tendresse¹⁰ extrême pour ces fruits de leur union.

This regard is reciprocated by the child, who, even after he has left home, still has "des sentimens d'affection & de respect" (p. 305) for his parents.

There is thus a kind of contract between parent and child. The former has a duty within the family to feed and

¹⁰S. von Pufendorf, Les Devoirs de l'homme, et du citoyen, trans. J. Barbeyrac, Troisième Edition (Amsterdam, 1715), p. 299.

educate the child and to aid him subsequently in the choice of a profession. The latter has no less of an obligation to honour his parents, not only because they are his superiors, but because they have provided for him:

Les Enfans, de leur côté, sont tenus d'honorer leur Père & leur Mère, non seulement par des démonstrations extérieures de respect, mais beaucoup plus encore par des sentimens intérieurs de vénération, comme ceux de qui ils tiennent le jour, & à qui ils ont d'ailleurs de si grandes obligations. (p. 307).

Inherent in this moral philosophy, therefore, is a notion that the duty imposed by Natural Law on both parents and child is perceived by the intellect. Pufendorf lays some stress on the fact that mutual consideration is essential for the preservation of society. In referring to the "tendresse extrême" of parents and the "sentimens intérieurs de vénération" felt by the child, however, he is implying that their relationship is also based on reciprocal feelings of affection and that fundamental bonds of love unite them.

Lordelot, in a conduct book entitled Les Devoirs de la vie domestique, adopts a similar approach. He speaks in the first instance, for example, in terms of all parents' obligation towards their children:

Le premier & principal devoir des peres & meres, est de travailler sans cesse à la bonne éducation de leurs enfans.¹¹

Like Pufendorf, he believes that part at least of a child's attitude towards his parents is founded on a realisation of the care which he has been given. As a result, an understanding by the intellect informs the relationship of parent and

¹¹B. Lordelot, Les Devoirs de la vie domestique. Par un pere de famille. (Bruxelles, 1707), pp. 38-39.

child, but Lordelot suggests that the ties within a family are not characterised by this one element alone. The unfavourable comparison he draws between man and the animals is an indication of this:

Voilà une grande humiliation pour l'homme, de voir que les animaux ... soient souvent plus sages que lui, & que les soins qu'ils prennent pour élever leurs productions, lui servent de modele pour ranimer dans son cœur l'amour & la tendresse qu'il doit avoir pour ses enfans. (pp. 39-40).

In the same vein, he attacks the majority of mothers for their neglect of their children:

Voilà un modèle bien sensible pour vous, meres barbares & cruelles, qui dans la crainte d'avoir un trop grand nombre d'enfans, passés le tems de vos grossesses à pleurer & gemir ... (p. 40).

These are appeals directed to the emotions of parents in an attempt to arouse their feelings for their offspring.

Similarly the gratitude which he believes to form the basis of a child's regard for his parents contains an affective as well as a rational element. Discussing all that a child owes his parents, Lordelot concludes:

... il n'y a que des cœurs durs & dénaturés qui ne ressentent pas interieurement cette reconnoissance. (p. 50).

Lemaître de Claville also believes that the notion of duty is instilled in all men by a kind of external force, in this case nature and religion:

La Nature de concert avec la Religion exige de nous tout le respect, toute la tendresse & toute la reconnoissance dont nous sommes capables envers nos peres & nos meres; nous devons toute notre attention à l'éducation & à l'établissement de nos enfans ...¹²

¹²C. F. N. Lemaître de Claville, Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme. Nouvelle Edition (Francfort sur le Meyn, 1755), II, 164-65.

There is a suggestion in these words, however, that a kind of sympathy exists between parent and child and indeed Lemaître de Claville paints an idyllic picture of the harmony which may be found in a household where all parties fulfil their obligations:

Dans les familles ... où la vertu & le mérite paroissent comme éternellement substitués, & passent sans s'alterer de génération en génération, quelle source de volupté ne produit pas l'accomplissement des devoirs du pere à l'égard du fils, du fils à l'égard du pere! Quel charme pour un bon pere de voir son fils tendrement aimé répondre toujours respectueusement, toujours tendrement à ses bontés, de le voir par un excellent caractere faire honneur à sa famille & à sa patrie!

.....
De toutes parts ce ne sont que tendres soins, qu'empressemens: on voit succéder tour à tour le plaisir, le travail & l'étude. Je me trompe; tout est plaisir. Tous les cœurs ne sont qu'un cœur ...

(II, 191-93).

In common with Pufendorf and Lordelot, therefore, Lemaître de Claville has moved from a conception of family ties based on an appreciation of duty to one in which they have their source in the affective side of man's nature.

In quite a different context, the works of Mme de Lambert reveal that affection between parents and children could exist in the eighteenth century. It is evident, for example, in the advice she gives to her son and daughter; it is clear also in an explicit statement to her son:

Je ne veux point de respect forcé; je ne veux que des soins du cœur. Que vos sentimens viennent à moi, sans que vos interêts les amènent.¹³

¹³A.-Th. de Marguenat de Courcelles, marquise de Lambert, Avis d'une Mere à son Fils (1726), Oeuvres de Madame la Marquise de Lambert (Lausanne, 1747), p. 17.

Some moral theorists in the first half of the eighteenth century thus combine with a discussion of man's nature and his relations with his fellows in the widest sense, a consideration of more specific human relationships, of the very relationships indeed on which the comedy has traditionally been based. We have noticed that antipathy exists in the new comedy and that where it disappears this is due not to sympathy or affection between the protagonists, but to force of circumstance. Quite a different reason, however, for the reversal of the old situation occurs early in the century in Boursault's Esope à la cour (1701).

Episodic in structure, the play revolves around a series of only loosely connected scenes in which Esope is asked for advice by a number of different characters. In Act III, Léonide, a mother shunned by her daughter, appeals to him for help. To Rhodope subsequently Esope recites a fable, which has the immediate effect of producing a change of heart in the daughter:

Faites, au nom des Dieux, qu'on me rende
ma Mere;
Plus elle est malheureuse & plus elle m'est
chere;
Je veux souffrir sa peine, ou me faire un
honneur
De lui voir avec moi partager mon bonheur.
Calmez l'émotion où me met votre Fable.
.....
... il n'est pas croyable, à vous parler
sans fard,
Qu'un Enfant pour sa Mere ait eu si peu
d'égard.
(Act III, scene IX).

There is no evidence of the capacity for feeling manifest in

this remorse earlier in the play, when Rhodope had appeared proud and inflexible. Yet the tears she sheds are the expression of genuine shame, and her assertion in this scene that she has "trahi la nature /.../ Et fait taire le sang qui coule dans (ses) veines," appears to imply that love for her mother had always existed and had been deliberately repressed. She is not therefore experiencing a sudden, unknown emotion, but a rebirth of forgotten feeling. It is this which alters the situation. Léonide, whose affection for Rhodope had withstood scorn and arrogance, responds instinctively to the latter's new attitude and a reconciliation is thus effected between the characters of mother and daughter:

LÉONIDE (à part)

Ce que j'entens me perce les entrailles.
Mon cœur est pénétré des plus sensibles
coups.

(Haut)

Venez ma chere Fille

RHODOPE

Eh! ma Mere, est-ce vous?
Après ce que j'ai fait puis-je vous être
chere?
Et reconnoissez-vous qui méconnoît sa Mere?
(Act III, scene X).¹⁴

Esopo confirms this new relationship with: "Ayez pour votre fille une tendresse extrême" and "Et vous à l'avenir soumise à son aspect, / Ayez pour votre Mere un extrême respect," spoken to Léonide and Rhodope in turn.

In this short episode we have witnessed, firstly, a dramatist's desire to create characters with a certain "sensibilité": the transformation in Rhodope stems from the affective side of her being only and Léonide, too, is entirely motivated by promptings of the heart. Indeed, the words: "Mon cœur est

¹⁴Léonide has overheard some of the previous scene between Esopo and Rhodope.

pénétré des plus sensibles coups" make this clear, her expression "sensibles coups" especially conveying to what extent she can be moved by affection in another character. We see in the second place that feelings of this kind can bring about a change in what had previously been a familiar family relationship, founded, for one protagonist at least, on antipathy, since at the end of Act III harmony has been established between mother and daughter. Furthermore, it is treated seriously by the characters involved and is consequently intended, it would seem, to give pleasure to and invite the approval of the audience.

In Baron's L'Andrienne (1703), an adaptation of Terence's Andria, there is the traditional conflict at the outset between the characters of father and son, Simon having decided that Pamphile shall marry the daughter of an old friend. This opposition, which provides a framework for the whole play, reaches a climax in Act V, when Simon, having heard that his son is secretly married, confronts him with this fact:

S'excuse-t-il enfin? Voit on sur son visage
D'un léger repentir le moindre témoignage?
Malgré les loix, les mœurs, contre ma
volonté,

Il aura l'insolence & la témérité
D'épouser avec honte une femme étrangere?

(Act V, scene V).

To this Pamphile responds with an appeal that Simon hear the evidence of a stranger about his wife's birth and status.

This appeal, which would have been rejected immediately in seventeenth-century comedy, arousing even greater anger, is heeded, Simon is persuaded to yield to Pamphile and a new effect is produced.

This change in Simon is perhaps not entirely surprising:

at the beginning of the play, for example, he had shown a certain capacity for feeling, particularly in his sympathy for Glycerie's sister:

Tout ce qu'on m'en disoit, me perçoit
jusqu'au cœur;
Et je cherchois déjà comment je pourrois
faire,
Pour soulager sous mains l'excès de sa
misere.¹⁵
(Act I, scene I).

In addition, he has an appreciation of Pamphile's good qualities, including his suffering on Chrysis's death:

J'apperçus qu'il tomboit des larmes de ses
yeux;
Je trouvois cela bon, & disois en mon ame:
Il pleure, & ne connoit qu'à-peine cette
femme!
S'il l'aimoit, qu'eût-il fait en un pareil
malheur?
Et si je mourois moi, que feroit sa dou-
leur?
(Act I, scene I).

In this opening scene Pamphile is presented as a man of feeling and so too, by implication, is Simon. Certainly his words betray an affection for Pamphile which his later authoritarianism tends to obscure. Reconciliation between the characters of father and son can thus be explained; above all, it introduces a note of seriousness into the play and produces a conclusion of sympathy.

The most intriguing question here perhaps is why Baron elected to adapt this particular play. He follows the original closely on the whole, the only major alteration being that Glycerie is ill and not pregnant in his version, a necessary change for an eighteenth-century audience at the Comédie

¹⁵Glycerie is Pamphile's wife and Chrysis her sister; Simon is referring in Act I, scene I to Pamphile's behaviour at the funeral of Chrysis.

Française. He uses the mixture of affection and antagonism which characterises the relationship of father and son in the Latin comedy and sees no reason to modify the emphasis of Simon's speeches in the scene of exposition. We may perhaps conclude, therefore, that he approves of the potential sympathy between father and son and is inviting his audience to share his attitude.

In these two plays there is potential for a new kind of family relationship at a time when the satirical "comédie de mœurs" is still popular and the old tradition still strong. The particular feature which we have observed, namely an attitude of antipathy turning to one of sympathy, is a significant element of several new comedies, one of the first of them being Destouches's Le Philosophe marié (1727). Here we have a conflict between uncle and nephew; while Ariste shows a degree of respect for GÉRONTE, he, on the other hand, is irascible and unapproachable, oblivious of family ties and prone to issuing the kind of ultimatum frequent in the comedy:

LISIMON

Mon frère, nous parlions de notre mariage.

GÉRONTE

A demain, mon neveu; sinon déshérité.

ARISTE

Mais différez du moins

GÉRONTE

Le sort en est jeté.

(Act IV, scene III).

Nevertheless, when, in the final act, an appeal is made to him by Ariste's wife, quite another side of his nature asserts itself:

MÉLITE

Confirmez mon bonheur. Pour l'obtenir de
vous,

Je ne rougirai point d'embrasser vos genoux.

Mais si je presse en vain, si votre aigreur
subsiste,
Je ne veux point causer l'infortune d'Ariste.
En brisant nos liens, rendez-lui votre cœur;
Un couvent cachera ma honte et ma douleur.

GÉRONTE, attendri
Qui pourroit résister à sa voix de Syrène?
Ma nièce, levez-vous.

(Act V, scene IX).

This change is completely unprepared. Throughout the play, as we have suggested, G ronte seems insensitive.¹⁶ The implication in this scene, however, is presumably that he had been repressing a disposition of a different sort, which M lite's self-sacrifice and her reminder of what family relationships ought to be, bring into being again. As far as its structure is concerned, the transformation in G ronte furnishes the play with a "d nouement" in which all the protagonists can be united and a spirit of understanding can reign.

There is a relationship between father and son which changes from antipathy to sympathy in Destouches's Le Glorieux (1732). Although Lycandre might appear to have some feeling for his son,¹⁷ he is nonetheless angered by the Comte's selfishness and arrogance, with the result that a certain tension exists between the two characters, aggravated by the Comte's refusal to admit openly their true relationship. This situation is modified, however, with ultimate humiliation of the

¹⁶ He refers to Lisimon, his brother, for instance, as: "Mon vieux fou de fr re!" in Act III, scene XII and his greeting in the following scene is: "Eh bien! que voulez-vous?" Lisimon himself emphasises this lack of feeling in G ronte when observing of his own pleasure in having Ariste as a prop in his old age: "Sentiments inconnus   votre mauvais c ur" (Act III, scene XIII).

¹⁷ Witness this exchange in Act IV, scene VII: "Le Comte. Pour mon int r t m me  vitons un eclat./ Lycandre. Vous me faites piti . Je vois votre foiblesse,/ Et veux, en m'y pr tant, vous prouver ma tendresse ..."

It is interesting to note that in this play it is the son and not the parent who is the unreasonable character whose obsession has to be destroyed. The transformation, which is swift and complete, eventually produces a harmony between all the major protagonists. Moreover, considerable weight is now attached by the dramatist to the new attitude in the Comte: discussion and analysis of it are a significant feature of the last scene of Act V, so that we can assume him to be placing some insistence on the desirability of the change which has occurred.¹⁹

We may suspect Destouches of employing a convenient device in this play in order to solve a practical problem. He uses the same technique again, however, in La Fausse Agnès.²⁰ Here the action is prepared in terms of the opposition between mother and daughter, whose antagonism is apparent from the beginning of the play:

¹⁹There is a relationship between father and son which changes from antipathy to sympathy in Poisson's one-act play L'Impromptu de campagne (1733). On his father's arrival in the last scene, Eraste throws himself at Damis's feet and the latter yields: "Je veux bien oublier/ Tout le passé, mon fils, & nous réconcilier" (Scene dernière). This response is unnecessary as far as the plot is concerned, as it transpires that father and son had in fact chosen the same woman as a wife for Eraste. It would seem, therefore, to be a significant gesture from one character to another and evidence of a desire for affection.

²⁰The date of composition of this play is uncertain, but would seem to be 1726. See, for example, A. Bürner, "Philippe Néricault-Destouches (1680-1754): Essai de biographie," Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France, 38 (1931), 70-71; J. Hankiss, Philippe Néricault Destouches: L'Homme et l'œuvre (Debreczen, 1920), p. 135.

The play was published in 1736 and first performed in Paris in 1759. In subsequent chapters the date of 1736 will be given for this play.

ANGÉLIQUE

... la tendresse que j'ai lieu d'attendre de vous doit vous inspirer la bonté d'entrer un peu dans mes sentiments.

LA BARONNE

Et le respect doit vous faire céder aux miens.

ANGÉLIQUE

Je ne m'en éloignerai jamais, que dans l'occasion dont il s'agit.

LA BARONNE

C'est dans celle-ci précisément, que j'exige de vous une parfaite obéissance.

ANGÉLIQUE

Vous mourrez, dites-vous, si je n'épouse ce soir monsieur des Mazures; et moi, je mourrai si je l'épouse.

LA BARONNE

Eh! non, non, vous n'en mourrez pas.
(Act I, scene III).

The ensuing action, devised by Angélique to rid herself of her mother's choice, is fast-moving and witty, full of mockery of the pretentious des Mazures, with satisfaction for the audience in that the Baronne is being duped by Angélique and her lover Léandre. Yet, when it seems that Angélique has become deranged because of her mother's decision, the Baronne is suddenly filled with remorse:

Ah! quel égarement! Ma chère fille, ouvre les yeux, reconnois ta mère. L'état où je te vois ranime toute lattendresse que j'ai eue pour toi. Malheureuse que je suis! C'est moi qui ai causé son extravagance.
(Act III, scene XIII).

We notice here not only the move from the "vous" to the "tu" form, an indication of affection for Angélique, but the Baronne's use of the word "ranime," which suggests that in fact her tenderness has been reborn. Such a feeling cannot be created from nothing; on the contrary, the dramatist implies that it had always existed and had merely been suppressed.

This is significant in itself, but, in addition, the rediscovery of a former feeling coupled with Angélique's readiness to respond to her mother's repentance, in spite of the latter's previously authoritarian spirit, radically affect the play in two ways. In the first place there is a new tone. A certain comic element remains, it is true, with the Baronne's realization that Léandre has been masquerading as her gardener, a character for whom she had had a decided partiality. Once a change of heart has been experienced, however, she ceases on the whole to be comic and the new sympathy between herself and Angélique introduces into a play which had often been very funny a more serious note.

Secondly, the rebirth of affection removes all possibility of dramatic conflict and brings about a different kind of ending to the play from the one we might have expected: even with Angélique's admission that she has feigned madness in order to avoid marriage with des Mazures, the Baronne acts on her new feeling for Angélique and allows her to marry

Léandre:

ANGÉLIQUE

Blâmez-moi, punissez-moi, je souffrirai tout sans me plaindre. Trop heureuse si ma soumission vous touche, et vous engage à combler mes vœux.

LA BARONNE

Et moi, trop heureuse de n'avoir eu qu'une fausse alarme sur votre sujet; je vous confirme la parole que je vous ai donnée de ne me plus opposer à vos inclinations. (Act III, scene XIV).

The solution to this play therefore derives not from a fortuitous event which saves the situation, but from the transformation in the relationship between the characters of mother and daughter.

In Voltaire's L'Enfant prodigue (1736) the family relationship central to the play is that of Euphémon père and Euphémon fils; that between Euphémon père and his second son Fierenfat receives scant attention, while the antipathy between Lise and Rondon is not exploited after the end of Act II. At the beginning of the play, Euphémon père has disowned his son, but his bitterness conceals feelings of another kind, revealed in these words spoken when he believes his son to be dead:

Dans ces moments un père est toujours père:
Ses attentats et toutes ses erreurs
Furent toujours le sujet de mes pleurs;
Et ce qui pèse à mon âme attendrie,
C'est qu'il est mort sans réparer sa vie.²¹
(Act II, scene VI).

Voltaire has also created in Euphémon fils a character of understanding and sensitivity. This is his reaction, for example, on catching sight of his father for the first time:

Ah! que mon cœur palpitait à sa vue!
Qu'il lui portait ses vœux humiliés!
Que j'étais prêt de tomber à ses pieds!
(Act III, scene V).

This is not a sudden birth of feeling; Euphémon had once been in love with Lise and is seen to despair on learning that she is to marry Fierenfat. Marthe, Lise's confidante, also recalls that he had never been entirely bad:

Même dans ces mélanges
D'égaréments, de sottises étranges,
On découvrirait aisément dans son cœur,
Sous ces défauts, un certain fonds d'honneur.
(Act I, scene III).

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On seeing his son again, without in fact realising his identity, he says: "Il a l'air noble, et même certains traits/ Qui m'ont touché: las! je ne vois jamais/ De malheureux à peu près de cet âge,/ Que de mon fils la douloureuse image/ Ne vienne alors, par un retour cruel,/ Persécuter ce cœur trop paternel" (Act III, scene III).

Euphémon's affection for his father is therefore not surprising; further, it is deliberately exploited by the dramatist to provide a conclusion to the play. A perfectly satisfactory outcome, of the kind common in traditional comedy, could of course have been found in the reunion and marriage of Euphémon fils and Lise; Voltaire includes in his ending, however, a reconciliation between the characters of father and son, thus introducing a more serious mood into the play, but establishing a sympathy between the major protagonists:

EUPHÉMON FILS

De quels transports votre âme est-elle émue?
Est-ce la haine? Et ce fils condamné ...

EUPHÉMON PÈRE,

se levant et l'embrassant
C'est la tendresse, et tout est pardonné
Si la vertu règne enfin dans ton âme:
Je suis ton père.

(Act V, scene VI).

In La Gouvernante (1747) by Nivelles de la Chaussée, a certain tension exists between the characters of father and son, arising out of Sainville's refusal to obey his father's order to marry a rich woman. There is nevertheless an affection underlying their relationship: the Président is overjoyed, for example, when Sainville proposes to a problem occupying his father the same solution as he would himself have found and Sainville responds in this way:

Ah! grands Dieux! Que ma source m'est
chère!

Que je suis enchanté de vous avoir pour père!

(Il l'embrasse.)

Pardonnez ces transports à mon cœur éperdu.

(Act III, scene V).

It is hardly surprising, therefore, in view of this sentiment and the language in which it is couched, that with the discovery of the true identity of the woman Sainville loves, all antipathy should disappear between them.

It would seem that with this type of relationship we are witnessing an influence on the comedy of a transformation in outlook. If it is now desirable and praiseworthy to show a capacity for feeling, one of the most obvious ways for a dramatist to bring this out on the stage is to have characters display affection for members of their family. It seems difficult otherwise to account for the relationships we have discussed, which change in a way which the traditional comedy would not have deemed necessary: indeed in a great majority of cases reconciliation would be inconceivable, demanding as it does remorse on the part of the character behaving in an "unreasonable" way. The very nature of a Molière comedy, for instance, rules this out. More striking still, the new sympathy between members of a family provides the happy conclusion to the action: once again, classical comedy would have resolved a seemingly impossible situation quite differently, making use of chance or a "deus ex machina".

The new comedy also contains another kind of relationship which may owe something to the emergence of new attitudes, and that is one of sympathy between members of a family from the very start of the play. In this case the dramatist often presents us with observations about the ideal nature of the bonds between parent and child and then causes them to be put into practice, so that a capacity for feeling is seen in a character's behaviour. This is so, for instance, in Destouches's L'Irrésolu (1713). In the debate which opens the play, Pyrante outlines to Lisimon, a father of the traditional kind, his attitude to and treatment of his son:

to the problem.²³ In spite of certain reservations, therefore, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the sympathy between father and son outlined at the beginning of the play is regarded as admirable and praiseworthy.

In Boissy's Le François à Londres (1727) there is something of the same kind of relationship between father and daughter. It seems probable initially that Milord Craff and Eliante will find themselves in conflict: the former has chosen for his daughter a man she despises and a satisfactory outcome is reached only because Milord Craff meets and changes his mind about his original choice. It is possible that a mutual affection could have solved the problem, however, for there is a suggestion from the outset that such a feeling exists between the characters; these are Eliante's words, for example, on learning of her father's decision:

Ma grande jeunesse, la tendresse que mon
pere m'a toujours témoignée, le bien même
que je dois en attendre, ne me permettent
pas de me soustraire à son obéissance.

(Scene V).

If there is an element of self-interest here in Eliante's attitude to Milord Craff, a more genuine regard is revealed later, with her insistence that her brother invite their father to a dinner he is arranging, and, more important, her determination to follow Milord Craff's wishes, thus ensuring a spirit of harmony at the close of the play:

²³Of his treatment of his sons he says: "Mon fils aîné Clitandre/ Vouloit être d'épée; et, loin d'y condescendre,/ J'ai voulu qu'il portât la robe et le rabat./.../ Le second de mes fils n'est qu'une franche idole,/.../ J'en ai fait un abbé./ On m'a parlé pour lui, je n'ai point succombé./ Quand j'ai pris un parti, rien ne peut m'en distraire:/ Lorsqu'on est d'un avis, j'en prends un tout contraire" (Act I, scene I).

D'un fils dont le bon cœur s'est si bien
fait connoître;
D'un fils de qui l'amour, de qui les ten-
dres soins
Ont depuis si longtemps prévenu mes besoins.
(Act IV, scene II).

These words find an echo in those of Ariste about his father later in the play:

Mais j'ai tort, après tout, de craindre
que mon père
Veuille à cet attentat prêter son minis-
tère:
Sa bonté, sa vertu m'en sont de sûrs gar-
ants.²⁵
(Act V, scene VIII).

Owing nothing to the intellect, the relationship between Lisimon and Ariste has its origins in the affections and it is characterised, as we can see, by a lucidity in both about the feeling and consideration which are its essential elements. These features help to explain why they set themselves apart from and above G eronte and why they consider themselves entitled to adopt a moral tone in reproof of his cynicism and indifference. In this conflict between attitudes of the new and the old comedy, the former are by no means ridiculed by the dramatist. It is true that in many ways Ariste is a figure of fun: happily married, he still fights the idea of marriage and has kept his changed status secret for two years, in spite of the fact that M elite lives in his house. G eronte, however, is bad-tempered and domineering and Lisimon and Ariste, with their concern and understanding, more readily commend themselves, suggesting therefore that Destouches intended their relationship to appear more attractive.

Destouches also uses two kinds of family relationship in his L'Ambitieux et l'indiscrette (1737). Here the lack of

²⁵ Ariste is referring to an attempt to separate him from M elite.

sympathy between Don Félix and his son Don Fernand throws into sharper relief the liking of Don Félix for Don Philippe; the affection between them is evident in their first meeting on stage:

D. PHILIPPE

Du plaisir que je sens je ne puis me dé-
fendre.
Il est si grand, si pur, qu'il doit m'être
permis.
Oubliez le ministre, et ne songez qu'au
fils.
Dans son poste éclatant il prétend l'être
encore;
Et plus le sort l'élève, et plus il vous
honore.

D. FÉLIX

Oui, je le reconnois à cet accueil tou-
chant.
Mon cœur avec transport se livre à son
penchant.
(Act I, scene IV).

Such scenes of sympathy reveal in each of these characters a capacity for feeling and introduce into the play, moreover, a more serious and reflective note.

A most intriguing example of a family relationship is to be seen in Nivelles de la Chaussée's Mélanide (1741), where the characters of mother and daughter, Dorisée and Rosalie, are in conflict, but where the latter does not act upon their disagreement. The situation at the beginning of the play is the classic one of comedy: Dorisée, believing that she has found a suitable husband for her daughter, forbids her to see the man she loves. Rosalie submits, thus provoking a split not between herself and her mother, as would normally have been the case, but between herself and Darviane. The lovers do not therefore find themselves united against the tyranny of a parent, despite the real opposition between themselves and Dorisée. It is perhaps worth noting that the latter is

acting here out of genuine concern for Rosalie and not from any motives of self-interest, a point which immediately distinguishes her from the parent of traditional comedy. Nevertheless, Rosalie's deference to her mother means that this part of the plot cannot be exploited to furnish the action of the play and that interest must inevitably shift elsewhere.

The plays we have been examining seem to reflect a changing attitude of the time towards family relations. This might well be summarised by Forlis's statement in Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs (1740) that: "Le Ciel nous a donné des droits sur nos enfans, / Pour être leurs soutiens, & non pas leurs tyrans" (Act V, scene V). It is supported in his case by a refusal to dictate to his own daughter: "Ma bonté sçait borner l'autorité du Pere." The sympathy suggested here marks the relationships in a play after Mélanide, namely Nivelles de la Chaussée's L'École des meres (1744). In that of Doligni père and Doligni fils, there is disagreement about the choice of a marriage partner, but as Doligni fils implies in the words: "Il m'aime, je le sais, c'est sur quoi je me fonde" (Act I, scene III), there is in fact affection between them and when it is discovered that the girl they have chosen is one and the same, all possibilities for opposition and dislike are removed.

In another situation, although the Marquis is indifferent to anyone but himself, Mme Argant is besotted by him, declaring that: "Votre mere ne veut être que votre amie" (Act II, scene III) and devoting herself entirely to his well-being:

Votre établissement est l'objet le plus
doux

Que ma tendresse se propose ...
(Act II, scene III).

In addition, M. Argant's response to the Marquis's high-handedness implies that he would welcome bonds of a closer kind within the family:

Le nom de pere est-il devenu trop bourgeois,
Pour pouvoir à présent sortir de votre bouche?
.....
Sçachez, en m'appellant par mon nom véritable,
Que le titre de pere est le plus respectable
Qu'un fils puisse donner à l'auteur de ses jours.
(Act II, scene IV).

Voltaire's Nanine (1749), however, contains a relationship of reciprocal affection between the character of parent and child. In Act II, scene VII, for example, a letter intercepted and read by the Baronne expresses Nanine's pleasure on the arrival of Philippe Hombert, her father:

Ma joie et ma tendresse
Sont sans mesure, ainsi que mon bonheur.
Vous arrivez: quel moment pour mon cœur!
Quoi! je ne puis vous voir et vous entendre!
Entre vos bras je ne puis me jeter!

Moreover, part of the final act takes the form of a reunion, after long separation, of these two protagonists; here Nanine's impatience illustrates the strength of the bond between them:

NANINE, courant entre les bras de
Philippe Hombert, après s'être baissée
devant la marquise.
Ah! la nature a mon premier hommage.
Mon père!
PHILIPPE HOMBERT
O ciel! ô ma fille! ah, monsieur!
Vous réparez quarante ans de malheur.
(Act III, scene VIII).

that it is the dramatist's intention to appeal to and arouse the feelings of his audience, for this is the result of such a scene. The language which he gives to Chremés is also of interest, particularly the phrase "un secret mouvement," used of his response to Glicerie. Moreover, Chremés's affection, hinted at here in this first meeting, is only strengthened by the discovery of the true relationship between himself and Glicerie; admittedly, Dave stirs up events to provoke antipathy between them, but there is no question of this attitude persisting once all the facts are known and a bond is revealed to exist between Glicerie and Chremés. Their knowledge of each other is slight, and they do not meet again on stage, but the notion that they are related is sufficient for Chremés to show an eagerness to see Glicerie and to bestow on her his approval of her marriage with Pamphile:

Allons, Criton, allons la voir & l'embras-
ser.
Monsieur, un long discours me feroit trop
attendre.
Je vous donne une Bru, vous me devez un
Gendre.
Il suffit. (Act V, scene VII).

As far as the play as a whole is concerned, this expression of liking and goodwill adds to the harmony at the close produced by the reconciliation between Simon and Pamphile.

In L'Obstacle imprévu, Licandre and Julie are believed to be uncle and niece, Licandre alone being aware that they are in fact father and daughter. From the beginning it is evident that, whatever the relationship, they share an affection for each other, apparent in Julie's case from her words on learning of her uncle's return: "Mon oncle est ici? Ah ciel! ... Voilà un jour bien heureux pour moi!" (Act III, scene VIII),

and her instinctive faith in his desire to help her:

Il y a long-temps que mon oncle a mandé
qu'il reviendrait bientôt. Il me tirera
d'esclavage.

(Act I, scene VIII).

In this play the characters of father and daughter are brought together on stage in the last act when Julie is apprised of the facts about her birth: here she responds with even greater affection to Licandre and we notice her belief that her feelings should have awoken her to the real nature of the bond between them:

LICANDRE

Oui, me chère Julie, reconnoissez celui
qui vous a donné le jour.

JULIE

Ah! je dois vous reconnoître à la tendresse
que j'avois pour vous, et à celle dont vous
m'avez toujours honorée.

(Act V, scene XI).

The relationship between Lycandre and Lisette in Destouches's Le Glorieux is also one of sympathy. Unaware that she is his daughter, Lisette always shows a regard for Lycandre and an appreciation of his kindness, indicating in her account of his qualities the extent of his own regard for her:

Depuis près de deux ans, cet ami vertueux,
Sensible à mes besoins, empressé, généreux,
Fait de me secourir sa principale affaire

...
(Act I, scene VIII).

Moreover, by her constant entreaties to Lycandre to be told her father's identity and her vow that, despite his poverty, her love will be his, she reveals that she too has a capacity for feeling. We see this quality in both characters expressed in the form of mutual affection throughout the course of the action and it explains the intensification of their affection

in Act IV, scene III when Lycandre confesses the truth:

LYCANDE

Oui, ma fille, voici ce père malheureux;
Il vous voit; il vous parle; il est devant
vos yeux.

LISETTE, se jetant à ses pieds.

Quoi! c'est vous-même? O ciel! que mon âme
est ravie!
Je goûte le moment le plus doux de ma vie.

LYCANDE

Ma fille, levez-vous. Je connois votre
cœur,
Et je vous l'ai prédit, vous ferez mon
bonheur.

It can be seen from this exchange that the reactions of the characters involved in this situation are accorded greater prominence than they were in either L'Andrienne or L'Obstacle imprévu; they have become in fact one of the play's central issues, clearly intended, it would seem, to absorb the attention of the audience. Lisette's love and her continual references to a father she believes she has never seen, are deliberately stressed in order to build up to a climax in Act IV, scene III, where it becomes plain that the very notion of the bond between them is enough, for Lisette, to strengthen an already firm affection.

This tendency for scenes of discovery and recognition to form an important part of the comedy can be observed in Mélanide and several of the plays of Nivelle de la Chaussée after this. In the former, there is a pattern by now familiar: Darviane and Mélanide are believed to nephew and aunt, whereas Darviane is in fact Mélanide's son, a fact of which she alone is aware. The relationship between them is uneasy as Mélanide considers herself under an obligation to assert her authority and forbid Darviane's marriage to Rosalie. For

this reason it might be said that the antipathy between them is not one of temperament or one developing out of a real clash of interests, but one imposed by external factors. There is indeed much in the play to suggest that they share a relationship of sympathy: Mélanide has always manifested concern for Darviane, a sign of her affection for him, and he in his turn is grateful to her. The true nature of their attitude to each other is clear in their major encounter in Act IV, which, beginning with Mélanide's condemnation of Darviane for insulting the Marquis, soon moves towards a discussion of the ^{form} XXXXer's parentage, a subject in itself sufficient to arouse the emotion of both characters. This reaches a climax with Mélanide's confession:

MÉLANIDE

Que vous êtes pressant!

DARVIANE

Que vous êtes cruelle!

MÉLANIDE

Votre mere se rend; vous l'emportez sur
elle ...

Ah! mon fils!

DARVIANE

Quoi! c'est vous? Mon cœur est
satisfait.

Le Ciel a fait, pour moi, le choix que
j'aurois fait.

MÉLANIDE

Hélas! votre destin n'est pas moins déplorable.

DARVIANE

O mere la plus tendre & la plus adorable!
(Act IV, scene V).

It is significant that any resentment felt by Darviane is immediately forgotten with the discovery that Mélanide is his mother: the very idea, in other words, of the real bond which unites them is enough to destroy what degree of dislike

may have existed and to deepen the sympathy between these characters. Furthermore, Darviane's exclamation: "Le Ciel a fait, pour moi, le choix que j'aurois fait," reveals that there had been only reluctant antagonism on his part towards Mélanide.

Nivelle de la Chaussée uses this technique of concealing a relationship between the characters of parent and child, in the majority of his remaining plays and it is most frequently one of sympathy from the start. Such is the case, for example, with that of M. Argant and Marianne in L'École des mères, of Angélique and La Gouvernante in the play of that name, and finally in L'Homme de fortune (1750). In the first of these, M. Argant's affection for Marianne, who is thought to be his niece, is evident throughout the play and especially in his words to Doligni pere, expressing a refusal to send his daughter back to the convent:

Ma fille ... Non, Monsieur, je ne puis
m'en priver:
Pour la sacrifier, la victime est trop
chère.
(Act III, scene I).

This particular theme in the play, namely Marianne's identity and the nature of the feelings between her and the rest of the family, is exploited to provide one of the central moments of the action, in a scene of confession in Act IV; Marianne, on learning of the real bond between her and M. Argant, experiences the happiness we have seen in Lisette or Darviane:

MR. ARGANT
Apprends que toute ma tendresse
N'est que de l'amour paternel.
Ah! ... ma fille

MARIANNE

Qui! vous mon pere?
Eh! pourquoi si long-tems me cacher mon
bonheur?

.....
Puisque j'ai le bonheur de vous appartenir,
Le sort peut, à son gré, régler mon avenir.
Il m'a plus fait de bien qu'il n'en scau-
roit détruire.

(Act IV, scene IX).

In La Gouvernante, Angélique's mother has an affection for her, which is apparent mainly in pity for the state to which she has reduced her:

O tendresse du sang! Doux charme de ma
vie,
Qui devroit dès long-tems m'avoir été ra-
vie!

.....
Continuous les soins de la plus tendre
mere;

.....
Ah! Ciel, permets enfin qu'à travers un
nuage,
J'acheve de verser sur l'objet de mes
pleurs,
Les seuls biens qui me soient restés de
mes malheurs ...

(Act II, scene I).

In this play, however, there is potential conflict between these two characters, arising out of La Gouvernante's advice to Angélique to enter a convent, while she in fact loves Sainville. Significantly enough, although this suggestion is at first resisted by Angélique, the discovery that La Gouvernante is her mother brings complete obedience and immediate affection followed by remorse, in spite of the seeming lack of understanding and harsh treatment:

Ah! vous êtes ma mere; oui, je n'en veux
point d'autre.

Tout me le dit; cédez, & qu'un aveu si
doux
Couronne tous les biens que j'ai reçus de
vous.

Ah! Ciel! Mais quel remords vient déchirer
mon cœur!

(Elle se jette à ses genoux.)

C'est vous que j'ai traitée avec tant de
rigueur!

(Act V, scene IV).

In Nivelle de la Chaussée's last play quite a different kind of situation exists, in that the characters of father and daughter do not meet until Act IV scene XII and neither knows of the family tie. The resemblance in Méranie to his wife, however, produces an instinctive recognition in the Vicomte d'Ellon that she is his daughter. Suspense is deliberately created through a series of questions from Méranie, punctuated by exclamations such as "Quel trouble me saisit?" and "Plus je la vois, plus mes sens sont émus" from the Vicomte. Moreover, Méranie's spontaneous response to this emotion and her appeal to the Vicomte for help, quickly establish a sympathy between them, which is only strengthened with Brice pere's revelation of the truth:

MÉRANIE, en se jettant à ses pieds.
C'est vous: jamais mon cœur ne m'a si bien
servi.
.....
O moment plein d'appas!
Mon pere, qu'il m'est doux de me voir dans
vos bras!
Enfin, vous répondez à mes vives tendresses.
Pour la première fois, je reçois vos
caresses.

LE VICOMTE

Hélas! c'est le seul bien qui soit en mon
pouvoir.
(Act IV, scene XIII).

Such ready affection becomes easier to understand perhaps when one remembers that both the Vicomte and Méranie had previously expressed interest in and indeed love for the other, in spite of the fact that they had not met. These words from the Vicomte, for example:

Mais parmi les transports de la plus douce
ce yvresse,
Pardonnez ce soupir à ma vive tendresse;
Un intérêt bien cher, & qui voûs est connu,
L'arrache de mon sein. Ami, qu'est devenu
L'unique rejetton de toute ma famille,
Le reste de mon sang, ma déplorable fille?
(Act IV, scene IX).

are paralleled in this entreaty from Méranie, unaware that she is in fact addressing her father:

J'entretiens un ami de mon pere.
Ah! daignez me parler d'une tête si chere
Si je l'avois connu, que je l'aurois aimé!
(Act IV, scene XII).

It seems likely that Nivelle de la Chaussée is deliberately increasing the poignancy of scenes such as these by leaving at least one of the protagonists ignorant of the truth; it is again striking, moreover, that he has created characters for whom the mere notion of possessing a near relation is sufficient to arouse curiosity and affection, the feelings inspired by the idea of family ties being deepened by the revelation of the truth.

Finally, there is a relationship of the same kind in Destouches's last play La Force du naturel (1750). Here too the protagonists are unaware of the bond which unites them, but the Marquis's first words on seeing Babet, who is his daughter, reveal an immediate attraction towards her: "Oh! qu'elle a l'air décent! quelle figure aimable!" (Act II, scene IV). She reacts instinctively to the sympathy she senses in him, begging him to prevent a marriage she does not want:

BABET, au Marquis
J'implore à vos genoux votre protection.

LE MARQUIS
Ah! je vous la promets. Non inclination,
La pitié, tout m'y porte.

BABET, se levant avec transport
Ah! que je suis ravie!
Vos bontés, Monseigneur, vont me sauver
la vie.
(Act II, scene IV).

Mutual affection has clearly been rapidly established in this scene and the Marquis consequently wishes his wife to receive Babet. A degree of hostility might be expected in this situation, but there is an instinctive response in the Marquise, as there had been in her husband, to Babet's appearance and to the affection manifested by her while attempting to reassure the Marquise that her husband's interest is genuine pity:

LA MARQUISE

Mais souvent la pitié va plus loin qu'on
ne pense.

BABET

Celle qu'il a de moi n'a rien que d'innocent,
Madame; et, si mon cœur en est reconnoissant,
Ce n'est qu'un sentiment et pur et légitime.
Quoi! si je vous aimois, m'en feriez-vous
un crime?

LA MARQUISE

Tu m'aimes donc, Babet?

BABET

Autant qu'il est possible.
Votre premier aspect rend mon cœur si sensible,
Vous m'inspirez pour vous un si tendre
penchant,
Que je n'ai jamais rien senti de si touchant.

(Act III, scene V).

To Babet's continued protestations of love, the Marquise finally replies: "Fais-toi donc, mon enfant, je n'y puis plus tenir." Furthermore the dramatist uses the complete understanding between mother and daughter, expressed in the Marquise's appeal: "Viens, jouis dans mes bras de l'amour maternel./ O jour heureux! ô jour à jamais solennel!" and Babet's reply: "Jour que je dois nommer le plus beau de ma

vie!" (Act V, scene IX) to provide part of the dramatic impact of the close of the play.

The disguised relationships we have so far examined are ones of sympathy from the outset, whatever the circumstances or situation of the play; rarer, but nonetheless important, are those which move from antipathy to sympathy. Here we see even more clearly the power which the mere idea of a family tie may have over a character. We have already discussed the course taken by the relationship between father and daughter in Destouches's Le Glorieux and noted the increase in affection brought about by the revelation that they are related. Alongside this, there is the relationship of Lisette and the Comte, who are of course brother and sister, without realising it. Their attitude to each other is perhaps unusual: the Comte's brusque question to Isabelle: "Quoi! Lisette avec vous est en société?/ Je ne vous croyois pas cet excès de bonté" (Act III, scene II), betrays a complete lack of interest in and respect for Lisette, understandable in view of his character and her position as confidante. She, on the other hand, feels a liking for him, impossible to account for, but inspiring in her a desire to further his well-being despite his "Huretés"; these cause her pain but are overcome with: "N'importe, à le servir je trouve mille charmes" (Act IV, scene III).

The relationship between these two characters is therefore a mixture of sympathy and antipathy for the greater part of the play. Once the truth is revealed by Lycandre their reactions must of course be different: in Lisette, for instance, we see, as in other characters already analysed,

a deepening of affection for the Comte, together with a lack of surprise that they are related:

Sans doute, nous sortons de la même famille;
Oui, le Comte est mon frère; et, dès que
je l'ai vu,
A travers ses mépris mon cœur l'a reconnu.
De mon foible pour lui je ne suis plus
surprise.
(Act IV, scene III).

This ability to understand through the feelings the possibility of a bond between herself and the Comte, emerging from her words "mon cœur l'a reconnu," is only another aspect of Lisette's "sensibilité", which had rendered her superior to the Comte throughout the play. The latter, devoid of feeling, as we have seen, until humbled by his father, can then obey what is a natural tendency to goodness within him and offer Lisette affection, which she, forgetting his previous dislike, immediately accepts.

The change in the Comte, albeit expressed in a somewhat restrained fashion, is due in part quite simply to Lycandre's announcement, and therefore to the idea that he and Lisette are closely related: here, such an idea is seen to have the power not only to increase an already existing sympathy, but radically to alter feelings from contempt to love. This transformation in the Comte, moreover, brings about complete reconciliation at the end of the play, adding to the affection between the characters of father and daughter and his own new-found respect for Lycandre. With the union of Lisette and Valère and an assurance to Isabelle that she will be able to effect a lasting improvement in the Comte, nothing remains to mar the spirit of harmony at the close.

The impression which a changing attitude to family relationships is seen to make on the comedy in Le Glorieux is to

Avec quelque bonté daignerez-vous m'entendre?
Je viens chercher ma grace. A quoi dois-je m'attendre?
(Act V, scene II).

After a refusal to reveal the truth, followed by urgent entreaties from Darviane, the Marquis ultimately yields, faced with a demand that he should take his son's life:

DARVIANE
Vous allez m'arracher Rosalie; achevez,
prenez aussi ma vie; elle me désespere.

LE MARQUIS
Malheureux! qu'oses-tu proposer à ton pere?

DARVIANE
Ah! je renais! (Act V, scene II).

The fact that the Marquis is his father suffices to change Darviane's attitude and the Marquis too makes plain his love for Darviane. It seems that, as the nature of the bond in seventeenth-century comedy had decided that the relationship between father and son be one of antipathy, so in the new comedy it determines that it shall be one of sympathy. In Mélanide, the harmony between these characters adds to that already established between Mélanide and Darviane and to the reconciliation of the Marquis and Mélanide, thus assuring total agreement and understanding at the close.

Finally, there is again in Nivelles de la Chaussée's L'École des meres a disguised family relationship which is a mixture of sympathy and antipathy involving the characters of mother and daughter. Marianne experiences an affection for Mme Argant, which she, like Lisette in Le Glorieux, is unable to explain:

Que dis-je? un sentiment que je ne puis
comprendre,
A mon obéissance a servi de soutien;
Et mon cœur, étonné de se trouver si tendre,

M'a, je crois, rien omis pour mériter le
sien ...
(Act II, scene IX).

There is perhaps a suggestion in Mme Argant's words reported by Rosette: "Il faudra s'en laisser charmer;/ Cette petite créature/ Finira par se faire aimer" (Act IV, scene VII); that this affection might be reciprocated, but during much of the play we see a dislike in Mme Argant for Marianne, which is heightened by rumours that Marianne is M. Argant's mistress. Marianne herself recounts to M. Argant the cruelty of which his wife is capable, making clear too her own capacity for feeling:

Et ma tante elle-même, avec la dureté
La plus grande & la plus cruelle,
Vient de me chasser de chez elle,
Elle a poussé la cruauté
Jusques à me défendre à jamais sa présence.
(Act IV, scene VIII).

The reaction in Marianne to the discovery that Mme Argant is her mother is one of great joy, this spontaneous forgiveness of previously callous treatment being further proof of her generosity:

MAD. ARGANT, embrassant sa fille, qui se
jette à ses genoux.
O trop heureuse mere!

MARIANNE

Qu'il m'est doux de me voir entre des bras
si chers!
(Act V, scene IX).

Just as interesting, however, is the immediate birth of affection in Mme Argant, although in view of the words quoted above, we can perhaps conclude that M. Argant's revelation brings into being feelings which had been denied. Her change in attitude is exploited by the dramatist to provide a happy dénouement to the play.

The comedy had always confronted the prudent and the foolish where the handling of a son or daughter is concerned. While "classical" comedy, whether it be that of Terence and Plautus or of French dramatists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, uses the relationship between an unreasonable, irascible parent and his offspring as a framework for the action, the new eighteenth-century comedy focuses attention on the understanding parent and his sympathetic treatment of son or daughter. The patterns which we have noted in plays written for the Comédie Française are also a feature of some performed at the Théâtre Italien in the first half of the century. The conclusion to Boissy's La Vie est un songe (1732), for example, is a reunion between father and son after an initial, immediate interest has turned to hatred. The relations between parent and child in Marivaux are invariably ones of sympathy; the most famous expression of the indulgence of most fathers is undoubtedly that of Monsieur Orgon in Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard (1730): "Eh bien, abuse, va, dans ce monde, il faut être un peu trop bon pour l'être assez" (Act I, scene II). In Les Serments indiscrets (1732), however, Monsieur Orgon and Monsieur Ergaste are equally respectful of Lucile's and Damis's wishes and their regard is returned.

There is a crucial distinction to be made between the plays we have been examining and those of Marivaux. Whether writing for the French or Italian troupe, Marivaux makes no use of the disguised relationship between parent and child.

In the new comedy, it is one of the most striking, as it illustrates the significance attached to a close family tie. It has no comic potential, however. Furthermore, it removes from the play an important source of action. It is true that revelation and reconciliation are employed to create a major dramatic effect and often replace the force of the antagonism between characters in the old comedy. Nevertheless, in uniting his protagonists in affection and consideration, the playwright is destroying the traditional comic structure and forcing the comedy to take another form.

CHAPTER FIVE

The marriage relationship in the comedy
in the first half of the eighteenth century.

It is well known that for many during the Ancien Régime marriage was little more than a contract. Hippolyte Taine, for example, in his Origines de la France contemporaine has suggested that, governed by the conventions and life-style of the age, most aristocratic marriages were characterised by polite civility and a reluctance on the part of husband and wife, stemming from a fear of ridicule, to display any genuine feeling.¹ In La Femme au dix-huitième siècle the Goncourt brothers concede that there may have been a small number of couples who shared affection and understanding, but they too argue that for the majority the relationship was merely a convenient arrangement which allowed great freedom to both partners.² More recently the historian Lebrun has shown that middle class marriages were viewed in the same way as those of the aristocracy: a son or daughter was not necessarily consulted and a partner was very often found not only in the same class but in the same profession as that of the father.³ At every level, marriage was, in Lebrun's words "une affaire d'intérêt" (p. 21).

¹H. A. Taine, Les Origines de la France contemporaine (1876-94), L'Ancien Régime, Quatrième Édition (Paris, 1877), pp. 170-74.

²E. and J. de Goncourt, La Femme au dix-huitième siècle (1862), Nouvelle Édition (Paris, 1878), Chapitre V, pp. 230-45.

³F. Lebrun, La Vie conjugale sous l'Ancien Régime (Paris, 1975), Chapitre 1, pp. 21-30.

All these assertions are supported in works of many different kinds in the first half of the eighteenth century. Muralt, a Swiss traveller in England and France, comments at some length on women of quality in France, their disregard of moral obligations and of qualities normally associated with their sex:

Les Femmes de qualité, sur tout, dédaignent cette Timidité, cette Pudeur scrupuleuse. Elle leur paroît quelque chose de petit & de contraint, qui sied bien à des Bourgeoises, & pour s'éloigner de cette extrémité, elles s'éloignent de la Modestie.

A letter from Rica to Ibben in Montesquieu's Lettres Persanes (1721) describes the liberty within marriage:

Ici les maris prennent leur parti de bonne grâce et regardent les infidélités comme des coups d'une étoile inévitable. Un mari qui voudroit seul posséder sa femme seroit regardé comme un perturbateur de la joie publique ...

.....
Ils (les François) croient qu'il est aussi ridicule de jurer à une femme qu'on l'aimera toujours, que de soutenir qu'on se portera toujours bien, ou qu'on sera toujours heureux.

The Journal et Mémoires of Mathieu Marais, a Parisian lawyer dealing particularly with marital problems and divorce, also leave us with an impression of the unstable nature of many marriages:

Depuis que l'on a vu cette dame renvoyée, il a pris en gré à d'autres maris d'en faire de même, et M. de Lautrec, gendre de M. le Premier Président, a remis la sienne entre les mains de son père ...

⁴B. L. de Muralt, "Lettre Quatrième," Lettres sur les François, Lettres sur les Anglois et les François et sur les Voyages (1728), ed. Ch. Gould, Ch. Oldham (Paris, 1933), p. 228.

⁵Montesquieu, Lettres Persanes (LV), Oeuvres complètes de Montesquieu, ed. Roger Caillois (Paris, 1949-51), I, 212.

Ils n'ont point d'enfants. Le mari vivoit mal avec elle ... Il y a aussi M. et M^{me} d'Estaing qui se sont quittés. Enfin la mode vient de quitter les femmes comme on quitte une maîtresse infidèle.⁶

On the stage, marriage had long been a topic for jokes or an opportunity for facetiousness and the comedy at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries continues to poke fun at the institution. In Dancourt's Les Vendanges de Suresne (1694), for instance, Lorange remarks to M. Vivien at the close of the play:

... nous vous avons empêché de vous marier, ce n'est pas vous rendre un mauvais office. (Scene dernière).

Valentin, in Regnard's Les Ménechmes (1705) jauntily adopts a light-hearted approach to a proposal of marriage in order to reassure his master:

Sur cet engagement bannissez votre crainte.
Bon! si l'on épousait autant qu'on le promet,
On se marierait plus que la loi ne permet.
(Act II, scene I).

This convention continues into the new comedy. In Destouches's Le Médisant (1715), for example, Lisette flip-pantly lumps together all husbands:

LE BARON

Mais, Lisette, après tout, donnerai-je ma fille
A ce nouveau marquis? C'est un sot, franchement.

LISETTE

Et qu'importe? Un mari l'est ordinairement.
(Act III, scene I).

So strong indeed is the tradition that even those characters usually keen to marry, the young lovers, may express something

⁶M. Marais, Journal et Mémoires de Mathieu Marais sur la Régence et le Règne de Louis XV (1715-37), ed. M. de Lescure (Paris, 1863-68), II, 86-87.

less than enthusiasm for the idea; in Destouches's L'Obstacle imprévu (1717), for example, there is the following exchange between Julie and Lisimon, who is attempting to marry her against her will to his son:

JULIE

Il faudroit que ce fût l'Amour même pour
me faire oublier Léandre; encore ne sais-
je s'il en viendrait à bout.

.....

LISIMON

Il est bien question d'amour, ma foi,
quand il s'agit de se marier. Il ne faut
songer qu'à la raison.

JULIE

Eh! Monsieur, si on ne songeait qu'à la
raison, on ne se marierait jamais.

(Act I, scene VII).

If Julie's attitude is surprising, Lisimon's is common; the "raison", good sense or self-interest to which he refers here is usually financial. In the old comedy, M. Migaud in Dancourt's Le Chevalier à la mode (1687) plans a marriage in the coolest way purely in order to obtain money.⁷ Moreover, we have in this play the archetype of a new character who emerges at the turn of the century, namely the Chevalier de Villefontaine, a penniless fortune-hunter totally unsuited to marriage. He is paying court to two women, until such time as the extent of their wealth becomes clear and would have no scruples in addressing himself to a third should it prove worth his while. Such a character reappears in the Damis of Destouches's L'Ingrat (1712), who accepts the girl offered to him "par raison seulement" (Act I, scene VI), and in the Cléon of Gresset's Le Méchant (1747). In addition, "raison" can also be the necessity to carry on the family line

⁷See his remarks to Lisette in Act I, scene V.

and the unpleasant fact that for many women marriage is a state preferable to spinsterhood or a convent.⁸

Given these views, it is scarcely surprising to discover that husband and wife do or are expected to pursue separate interests.⁹ More than this, however, their attitude to each other is not usually mere worldly indifference: it is almost invariably outright antipathy. This is an old tradition dating back to Medieval France. Here, the husband, weak and cowardly, stupid and blind to his wife's infidelity or unwilling to take action if aware of it, is forever tricked by a wife superior in intelligence and stronger in character. Renaissance comedy relies on much the same relationship, despite the claims of the dramatists themselves to have broken

⁸In D'Allainval's L'École des bourgeois (1728), for example, Le Marquis states: "A la cour un homme se marie pour avoir des héritiers; une femme pour avoir un nom ..." (Act I, scene XII). See, too, Regnard's Les Ménechmes, where Finette warns Araminte that "rester vieille fille est un mal plus affreux/ que tout ce que l'hymen a de plus dangereux" (Act V, scene I).

⁹There is a most striking example of the lack of interest in each other of husband and wife in Dancourt's Les Bourgeoises à la mode (1692), where Angélique and M. Simon, a man much older than her, with whom she has nothing in common, meet only seldom. In the new comedy, Lisidor in Destouches's Les Philosophes amoureux (1729) maintains that this is the only way for husband and wife to tolerate each other. See his words in Act II, scene II. Jealousy, or the manifestation of jealousy, is out of the question. See, for example, Angélique's reaction to the fact that her husband is in love with Araminte (Les Bourgeoises à la mode, Act I, scene V). Many characters in the comedy have a horror of openly acknowledged feeling; see, for instance, the Marquis's reluctance to show any "empressement" in a love affair in Act IV, scene II of Lesage's Turcaret (1710), the words of the Marquis in Act I, scene XII of L'École des bourgeois and Clarice's description of married life in Les Philosophes amoureux, Act II, scene IV.

with the Middle Ages.¹⁰ The marriage of an ill-tempered and often authoritarian woman to a timid and gullible man immediately calls to mind several of Molière's plays, in particular perhaps Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme (1670) and Les Femmes savantes (1672). Disliking each other and opposed, ironically enough, over the choice of a partner for their daughters, husband and wife struggle to assert their will in a battle for supremacy which provides the framework of the play.

Playwrights continue to use the conventional structure at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries, when there is antipathy between husband and wife on the stage at all levels of society.¹¹ Nor does this pattern die out with the "classical" comedy. Destouches's Le Médisant, for instance, opens with an argument between husband and wife which concerns the subject of a partner for their daughter. In Destouches's La Fausse Agnès (1736) and

¹⁰In Jodelle's L'Eugene (1553), for example, the plot revolves around the attempts of Florimond and the abbé Eugene to seduce Alix, the "plus grand putain/ Qu'on puisse voir en aucun lieu ..." (Act I, scene II), Guillaume, her slow-witted husband being trapped in the centre of the intrigue, used and duped by all. It is not uncommon for woman to be regarded as a creature of easy virtue in the comedy; this view perhaps underlies Arnolphe's mistrust of women and fear of cuckoldry in L'École des femmes.

¹¹In Dancourt's Le Mari retrouvé (1698), Mme Julienne greets her husband on his return from the dead with: "Ah, ah! te voilà, je pense? & de quoi t'avises-tu de revenir ici, bon vaurien?" (Scene VIII), while in Lesage's Turcaret Turcaret and Madame Turcaret, who belong to the bourgeoisie, share dislike and a similar reaction on meeting again in Act V, scene X: "M. Turcaret, à part. Je n'ose la regarder; je crois voir mon mauvais génie. Madame Turcaret, à part. Je ne puis l'envisager sans horreur." Much of Dancourt's Les Bourgeoises à la mode is based on Angélique's tricks to extract huge sums of money from M. Simon.

Nivelle de la Chaussée's L'École des meres (1744), we have in the Baronne and Mme Argant ruthless characters who obtain their wish by dissolving into tears. With Destouches's L'Ambitieux et l'indiscrette (1737), a "tragi-comédie", we have come a long way from the farce, but the lack of harmony between Dona Béatrice and Don Philippe, their conflict over a husband for their niece, beginning with minor skirmishes and culminating in Don Philippe's decision to destroy his wife's plans, all belong to the old tradition. We can see, therefore, that whether it provides an impetus to the action, or whether it is the subject of this rather dour remark by the Pasquin of L'Obstacle imprévu: "Dieu m'en garde, je ne plaisante plus depuis que je suis marié" (Act II, scene IV), marriage can still be employed for comic effect.

From the end of the seventeenth century, however, a number of writers had begun to suggest that a more serious concept of marriage was desirable. Pufendorf approaches the subject from what might be called a political point of view and, considering it in terms of what is best for society and for the raising of children, lays emphasis on unity and fidelity in marriage. The former is necessary to ensure that the wife remains faithful and fulfils her duty:

C'est aussi un grand plaisir pour des gens mariez, bien assortis, que d'être toujours ensemble: & par là en même tems le Mari peut être plus assuré de la chasteté de sa Femme, que si elle ne demeroit pas avec lui. La Femme doit donc s'engager encore à être toujours auprès de celui qu'elle épouse, à vivre avec lui dans une société très-étroite & à ne faire avec

lui qu'une seule & même Famille ...¹²

In this relationship, the man would seem to be the dominant partner and to possess a greater degree of freedom than his wife, but Pufendorf's account of it also suggests that pleasure may be found in marriage and that husband and wife should share a common interest.

Lordelot, too, is categorical about the importance of the relationship, stating that: "La premiere & la plus Sainte de toutes les Societez est celle du Mariage."¹³ In addition, he places some stress on the thought needed in the choice of a partner:

Comme il (le mariage) forme une union qui doit durer autant que la vie, il faut bien prendre ses mesures avant de s'y engager: il n'y a que les bonnes mœurs & la conformité d'inclinations qui la puisse rendre heureuse. (p. 18).

Marriage would thus appear to be an affair of the intellect, but the reflection called for by Lordelot is intended to produce a kind of sympathy between husband and wife. The relationship is not one of equality, since the husband possesses the authority, but it is an authority which carries with it certain responsibilities of care and protection and which Lordelot describes as "une domination douce & agréable" (p. 23). If a man has power over his wife

... ce ne doit être que pour la protéger; s'il l'a associée avec lui, c'est pour être sa compagne fidèle, & non pas son esclave. La gloire d'un honnête homme est d'aimer, de considérer, & de rendre une Femme heureuse: la véritable marque de son amour, est de lui garder une fidélité inviolable ... (p. 23).

¹²S. von Pufendorf, Les Devoirs de l'homme, et du citoyen, trans. J. Barbeyrac (Amsterdam, 1715), p. 293.

¹³B. Lordelot, Les Devoirs de la vie domestique. Par un pere de famille (Bruxelles, 1707), p. 15.

Lordelot's ideal of a wife whose modesty reveals itself "dans la pureté des regards, dans la douceur des paroles, dans un maintien noble, qui inspire du respect" (p. 33), differs completely from the sophisticated, frivolous woman of contemporary and historical accounts. Nor could his vision of the almost idyllic life she should create be further removed from the majority of marriages of the time, either in society or on the stage:

... elle chérit & respecte son Mary, elle a un soin continuel de ses enfans, elle tient ses domestiques dans le devoir ...
... elle fait de sa maison un lieu ... d'où les vices sont chassés, où les vertus sont pratiquées, & où l'on trouve le bien-heureux séjour du repos & de la paix. (pp. 35-36).

Lemaître de Claville, who maintains that the duties of marriage are more important than any others, also advocates a knowledge of a prospective partner, in order that there should not be incompatibility:

A l'homme rangé, ni joueuse, ni femme dissipée ... à l'homme égal, point de capricieuse; en un mot, je veux absolument qu'on examine, qu'on connoisse & qu'on trouve dans le caractère un peu de sympathie, ou si on l'aime mieux, une espèce d'assortiment qui produise enfin la convenance des humeurs.¹⁴

Once again the intellect plays a large part in the choice of a partner, but its role is to ensure a liking after marriage; indeed Lemaître de Claville states explicitly:

Je veux donc que l'amour soit plutôt la suite que le motif du mariage; je veux un amour produit par la raison, un amour où nous fassions entrer la connoissance & le goût de nos devoirs, & non pas un amour extravagant qui ne fait faire que

¹⁴C. F. N. Lemaître de Claville, Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme, Nouvelle Edition (Francfort sur le Meyn, 1755), II, 169.

des folies. Il n'appartient qu'aux hommes corrompus de croire qu'un amour raisonnable soit un paradoxe. (II, 171).

While a capacity for feeling may not form a relationship in the first instance, Lemaître de Claville nevertheless believes in the necessity for sympathy between husband and wife.

Baudot de Juilly also condemns the marriage of convenience, but he lays more emphasis than others on the existence of a natural feeling before marriage:

Il me semble que bien loin de le blâmer (l'amour), il seroit à souhaiter qu'on le pût inspirer sur tout à ceux qui songent au mariage: car nous voïons que ces sortes d'engagemens ne sont malheureux, que parce que l'on s'y jette sans amour.

The love envisaged by Baudot de Juilly is not a destructive passion, but an "émotion tendre," producing what he terms "ces plaisirs si délicats" (II, 42); it is a spontaneous attraction which owes nothing to the intellect:

Car ce premier trait qui frappe, & qui penetre jusqu'au fond du cœur, s'y insinüe avec un agrément infini! & quand on continuë, que la personne qui a touché, se laisse toucher elle-même, & qu'il se forme une tendresse reciproque entre deux objets; ce commerce est le plus délicieux qui se puisse imaginer ... (II, 21-22).

Pufendorf and the other writers whom we have discussed extend the "bourgeois" concept of marriage to all classes. In so doing, they place particular emphasis on the character of the wife, tending to condemn the volatile pleasure-seeker of polite society and praising the virtuous woman who devotes herself to her family. This view of the ideal woman also appears in works which do not treat the subject of marriage.

¹⁵N. Baudot de Juilly, Dialogues entre Messieurs Patru et D'Ablancourt sur les Plaisirs (Paris, 1701), II, 43.

In his "Reflexions sur le Goût" (1702), for example, Morvan de Bellegarde, while stating that he has no liking for prudes, nevertheless says:

Je n'approuve nullement celles qui se décrient elles-mêmes de gaieté de cœur, par des manieres trop évaporées ... la gloire d'une femme ... consiste dans la régularité de sa conduite. Une sévérité scrupuleuse sied bien à une femme de mérite, qui ne doit jamais permettre que l'on s'émancipe devant elle ...¹⁶

Mme de Lambert advises her daughter that she must have the courage to devote herself to the pursuit of private, inner qualities and to the happiness of her family. Virtue alone brings contentment:

Il faut, ma fille, être persuadée que la perfection & le bonheur se tiennent: que vous ne serez heureuse que par la Vertu, & presque jamais malheureuse que par le dérèglement.¹⁷

The moralists approach the subject of the relationship between husband and wife from several different angles and do not necessarily believe that it should be primarily based on feeling. Nevertheless, for all these writers, success in marriage is not measured by the discretion with which each partner pursues his or her own affairs, nor is ridicule the attitude adopted towards the relationship. On the contrary,

¹⁶ J.-B. Morvan de Bellegarde, "Lettres de M^r l'abbé de Bellegarde, A une Dame de la Cour, qui lui avoit demandé quelques Reflexions sur le bon Goût," Lettres curieuses de littérature, et de morale (Paris, 1702), p. 59.

¹⁷ A.-Th. de Marguenat de Courcelles, marquise de Lambert, Avis d'une Mere à sa Fille (1728), Oeuvres de Madame la Marquise de Lambert (Lausanne, 1747), p. 65. She adds to the words quoted above: "... il y a à la suite de la Vertu un sentiment de douceur, qui paye comptant ceux qui lui sont fideles." (p. 65).

LE CHEVALIER

Et consentirez-vous, sans répugnance, que
je devienne votre époux.

MARIANNE

Voilà encore une chose que je ne saurois
vous dire; il me semble qu'on ne s'aime
plus quand on est marié

.....
Moi, je voudrois vous aimer toujours,
& il faudroit pour cela que vous m'aimassiez
toute votre vie. (Act IV, scene I).

Both these speeches betray not only an awareness of current attitudes, but, more important, a concern for the future on the part of a younger character where previously none would have existed. Constance, in Le Préjugé à la mode (1735) points to a similar apprehension in Sophie when referring to her "incertitude" and her need to "s'assurer du cœur qu'elle a rendu sensible" (Act I, scene III).

It would seem that the flippancy of certain characters, together with the cynicism felt to be predominant in society, affect the outlook of those normally enthusiastic about marriage. There can be no doubt that a new element enters into the comedy in the first half of the eighteenth century, namely far greater discussion between the lovers of both their own relationship and marriage in general and that in this discussion the protagonists have no hesitation in speaking of their own capacity for feeling and demanding affection in return. This involves more than a mere statement that "il faut aimer celle à qui l'on se donne"²⁰ and can become a debate of central importance in the play. This is the case, for example, in Destouches's Le Curieux impertinent (1710). Here, Léandre is a kind of Arnolphe, afraid of infidelity, but apprehensive too that love will disappear after marriage, a fear unknown to

²⁰These are the words of Valère in Le Médisant, Act II, scene II.

but might be held to indicate that she expects Léandre to be sufficiently disturbed to respond to a challenge. Certainly in a later scene between them, it is evident that Julie would welcome at least one sign of regret:

Quelque indigne que soit l'affront que vous
me faites,
Je vous aime toujours, tout ingrat que vous
êtes.
Ah! cruel, si ton cœur s'ouvrit au repen-
tir,
S'il t'échappoit du moins une larme, un
soupir!
(Act V, scene II).

These words introduce a more sombre note into the comedy, which together with the liking for analysis of feeling, robs the central relationship of the quality which belongs to that of, say, Agnès and Horace in L'École des femmes.

This pattern is continued in Destouches's L'Irrésolu (1713), a play which again revolves around the theme of marriage, with the lovers at the very heart of the action. Comedy derives from Dorante's inability to reach a permanent decision on any matter and his sudden changes of mind. His hesitation about marriage, however, has its origins in part at least in an awareness that the relationship is often devoid of significance. His own capacity for feeling emerges from this passage:

Un mari complaisant, libéral, jeune et
tendre,
Au bonheur d'être aimé peut aisément pré-
tendre,
Si, lorsqu'il se marie, il possède le cœur
De celle dont il veut faire tout son bon-
heur.
Son exemple est puissant sur l'esprit de
sa femme.
Vertueux, il soutient la vertu dans son
âme;
Rempli d'égards pour elle, il en est respec-
té;
Fidèle, il la maintient dans sa fidélité.
(Act I, scene VII).

The resemblance between this speech and the one which we have quoted by Léandre in Le Curieux impertinent is strong; in both men there is a desire for affection and a "lien des cœurs," together with the belief that a husband must be "plus amant qu'époux." In the later play, however, we see in Dorante a kind of moral scruple, expressed in the notion that a husband has a duty to set an example in order to ensure that both partners remain virtuous and thus faithful. Dorante's debates with himself are a marked characteristic of L'Irrésolu; continually undecided about his choice of wife, he experiences throughout the action a struggle between mind and feelings, as he determines to marry "par estime" to avoid suffering or for love to be assured of true happiness. Analysis and self-examination follow each new resolution and form a substantial part of the play; moreover, Dorante suggests that his ability to study his reactions in this way sets him apart from other men:

D'un homme irrésolu la noble inquiétude
Est l'ordinaire effet d'une profonde étude,
D'un raisonnement sain, et des réflexions,
D'où naissent sur un fait plusieurs opi-
nions.

Un pareil embarras n'est connu que du sage;
Mais un esprit grossier suit ce qu'il en-
visage ...

(Act III, scene I).

Reflection about his own feelings leads eventually to discussion with Julie about their relationship. There is agreement and sympathy between them on the necessity for affection in marriage:

FRONTIN (à Dorante.)

Mais vous ne risquez rien; car vous êtes
tout fait
Pour aimer votre femme.

DORANTE

Oui, je sens en effet
Que je l'adorerai, quoi qu'on en puisse
dire;
Et les mœurs d'aujourd'hui ne pourront me
séduire.

JULIE

Ni moi non plus.
J'aimerois un mari qui seroit mon amant;
Pour l'en récompenser, je serois sa maî-
tresse.
(Act IV, scene IV).

The real debate centres on their attitude towards their own status within marriage; here conflict had been inevitable. Julie is not a languishing heroine and has indicated in this same scene that she will not tolerate domination in a husband.²¹ Dorante, for his part, has often expressed a desire to remain his own master. Their argument is sparked off by the last words of Julie's speech quoted above, which Dorante chooses to misunderstand and to which he replies: "Et peut-être un peu trop." Julie explains her views on marriage:

Quand on s'aime, je croi
Que le désir de plaire est la suprême loi:
Sur deux cœurs bien unis, l'amour seul a
l'empire;
Mais rien n'est plus choquant que de s'en-
tendre dire,
Je veux, je ne veux pas.
Il faut, de part et d'autre, égale complai-
sance:
.....
Et, s'il faut achever de me faire connoître,
J'aimerois un mari, je haïrois un maître.
(Act IV, scene IV).

Julie's insistence here on equality stems mainly from her belief that love is essential to marriage: it is natural

²¹See also her words to Nérine: "Dussent me railler les femmes d'aujourd'hui,/ Tous mes vœux, tous mes soins ne seront que pour lui./ Mais à condition, pour prix de ma tendresse,/ Que je lui tiendrai lieu de femme et de maîtresse./ S'il s'en tient à l'estime, et porte ailleurs l'amour" (Act II, scene IV), which reveal both a capacity for feeling and strength of will.

that with love should come respect and a wish on the part of both husband and wife to consider the other. Apart from the ideas advanced in this scene, its very nature and the place which it occupies in the action are worthy of note. It can be argued that it forms the climax to the play: all the statements and actions lead naturally to it and it is the major confrontation on stage of these two protagonists. It is not based on a minor tiff, however, nor is it a scene of hatred; rather is it one of discussion in which both Dorante and Julie analyse their feelings in a way which is taken entirely seriously by the dramatist.

This tendency to examine the nature of love is a feature of shorter plays, too, as Boissy's one-act Le François à Londres (1727) reveals. Here Eliante adopts a didactic tone with the Marquis:

... Mais ce n'est pas ici (en Angleterre)
de même; nous sommes de meilleure foi, nous
n'aimons uniquement que pour avoir le plaisir
d'aimer, nous nous en faisons une
affaire sérieuse, & la tendresse parmi
nous est un commerce de sentimens, & non
pas un trafic de paroles. (Scene II).

It is significant that it is Eliante, with her inclination to reflect on the feelings, who is the character most given to outlining her predicament:

... Mon cœur est agité de divers mouvemens
que je ne puis accorder. J'aime le
Marquis, & je dois peu l'estimer. J'es-
time le Baron, & je voudrais l'aimer. Je
hais Rosbif, & il faut que je l'épouse,
puisque mon pere le veut. (Scene V).

This kind of self-examination is not as elaborate as it had been in Destouches's play, but it is interesting to see the terms employed by Eliante and in particular her use of the word "mouvement" to refer to conflicting emotions and desires.

There is greater complexity in the relationship of the lovers in Le Philosophe marié (1727), for although Damon is a straightforward character, Destouches has created a contrast to him in Céliante and conflict between the two is inevitable. Céliante is at once rational and irrational. She is capable of capricious behaviour and a desire to wound Damon, but in times of lucidity she reveals an ability to understand her own nature:

Depuis plus de deux ans, avec un soin extrême,
J'élude mon penchant, et le combats moi-même.
J'ai maltraité souvent un amant trop aimé:
Contre lui mon orgueil s'est hautement armé.
Enfin, pour me guérir, je me suis exilée;
Tout cela vainement. Je suis ensorcelée.
.....
(Act II, scene I).

Here we see again the struggle between the intellect and the emotions so characteristic of Dorante in L'Irrésolu; in the later play the split in Céliante no doubt explains her harsh treatment of Damon. The relationship of these two is made up of separations and reconciliations; their first encounter on stage, for instance, quickly develops into an argument which is then followed by a reunion. In this situation the lovers move together in an attempt to comprehend their feelings, with Céliante always displaying a capacity for analysis:

Il (mon esprit) se venge
De ce qu'il ne peut pas régler mes sentiments:
Il m'inspire souvent de certains mouvements
Qui suspendent l'effet du penchant qui m'entraîne,
Et tiennent du mépris, et même de la haine.
Vous êtes soutenu par l'inclination,
Mais souvent maltraité par la réflexion.
(Act II, scene II).

There is thus a very distinctive sub-plot to this play, which takes the form not of a trivial quarrel soon over, but of reflection and self-examination, with the result that an important part of the action is made up of discussion.

This striking combination of a capacity for feeling and an ability to comment objectively on that very quality is also present in Sophie in Nivelle de la Chaussée's Le Préjugé à la mode. The first of these elements in her nature is revealed in her assessment of Constance, whose suffering she clearly perceives: "Au fond de votre cœur j'ai surpris vos douleurs" (Act I, scene IV). It also causes her to spurn the idea of marriage. Her speech to Constance on this occasion contains evidence of a liking for general observation, a need for affection and an understanding of her own make-up:

L'estime d'un époux doit être de l'amour;
Oui, ce sentiment-là renferme tous les
autres.
Quoi! les hommes ont-ils d'autres droits
que les nôtres?
Se contenteroient-ils de n'être qu'estimés?
Tout perfides qu'ils sont, ils veulent
être aimés.
Quant à moi, je suis née & trop tendre, &
trop vive,
Pour oser m'exposer à ce qui vous arrive:
J'aimerois trop Damon; j'en ferois un in-
grat,
Et j'en mourrois, après le plus terrible
éclat.
(Act I, scene V).

These feelings have an effect both on the tone and on the structure of the play. Sophie rejects Damon because of Durval's treatment of Constance, but there is no real antipathy between the lovers, as there had been none between Céliante and Damon. They know what they feel and as a result there is no comic potential in this part of the intrigue. Furthermore, because of Sophie's fears, the sub-plot takes the form not of

action deriving from conflict between guardian and ward, but of debate about marriage and the character of a husband.

Argument and discussion again form a major part of the plot concerning the lovers in *Nivelle de la Chaussée's Mélanide* (1741). Rosalie's compliance with her mother's command to send Darviane away provokes him into this expression of his own attitude:

J'ai tort d'être sensible,
Et de ne point avoir cet air toujours paisible,
.....
Plus je sens vivement, plus je sens que je suis.
L'égalité d'humeur vient de l'indifférence;
Et quoi que vous puissiez dire pour sa défense.
L'insensibilité ne sauroit être un bien.
Quoi! jamais n'être ému, n'être affecté de rien,
Rester au même point tout le tems de sa vie,
.....
Est-ce là vivre? Non. C'est à peine exister.
(Act I, scene IV).

This is an explicit and striking assertion that in every sphere existence is defined by a capacity for feeling. Moreover, in condemning "insensibilité" and thus praising the opposite quality, Darviane is setting himself apart as a member of an élite. It is clear that the word "sensible" is not being used in this scene to convey only a feeling of love, but to imply a much more general response which is admirable in every respect. What would in the traditional comedy have been a superficial quarrel easily resolved in a fairly stylised manner, becomes here, and later in Act III, a significant confrontation, relying on analysis of feeling rather than petty accusations.

It is often difficult to separate discussions about love and those concerning marriage; since it is generally assumed in the comedy that the union of the lovers will be the outcome of the action, it is natural that the two themes should be closely related. Increasingly, however, the subject of marriage itself is one for debate, dramatists commonly using the device of opposing a dismissive or cynical attitude to one which denotes a more serious outlook. Already in Baron's L'Homme à bonne fortune (1686) Moncade, a character who is unscrupulous in his dealings with women, is challenged by Eraste in this exchange:

MONCADE

Je ne veux point me marier.

.....

ERASTE

Ne m'avez-vous pas dit que vous aimez ma Sœur?

MONCADE

J'en demeure d'accord.

ERASTE

Hé! que prétendiez-vous en l'aimant?

MONCADE

L'aimer.

.....

ERASTE

Vous aimiez ma Sœur, & ne songiez point à l'épouser!

MONCADE

Epouse-t-on toutes celles qu'on aime?

ERASTE

Il y a certaines gens qu'on feroit mieux de ne pas aimer, avec de pareils sentimens.

(Act III, scene IX).

What is only a short scene in this play becomes a more important episode in Boursault's Esope à la cour (1701). Here the King, torn between a marriage of convenience, which would increase his power, and one of love, seeks advice from his courtiers; while two of them attempt to persuade him that considerations of prestige are the only valid ones, Esope argues that affection is essential in marriage:

Il faut que pour bien vivre ensemble
L'Amour ait soin d'unir ce que l'Hymen
assemble:
Il est sûr qu'on s'entend bien mieux.
(Act II, scene II).

Esope in fact believes that marriage is based on two qualities, sympathy and virtue; he demands firstly "des liens par où le cœur s'engage," but adds of Arsinoé: "Sa vertu vous répond d'un bonheur infailible" (Act II, scene II). This statement echoes his words to Rhodope in the previous scene:

Soit que je vous épouse, ou qu'un autre le
fasse,
S'il en est temps encor, faites que votre
Epoux
N'ait aucune raison de se plaindre de vous;
Et portez-lui pour dot, comme une rare
offrande
Toute l'intégrité que l'Hymen vous demande.
(Act II, scene I).

Boursault is exploring this theme by confronting two conflicting attitudes, as Baron had done; as we can see, Esope, like Eraste, tends to become didactic and to link with the idea of happiness that of virtue and moral respectability. These notions are not mocked by any character and the King indeed replies to Esope: "Que tu me touches bien par où je suis sensible!" (Act II, scene II), making clear that he accepts Esope's advice not because the course he suggests would be sensible or prudent, but because he instinctively

feels it to be the best. He, like Esope, is a man of feeling and the sympathy between these two means that the discussion about marriage takes place in a serious fashion and that comic treatment of the theme would be quite inappropriate.

In Destouches's L'Ingrat Géronte, insisting that Isabelle marry Damis, offers her this vision of married life:

Il (Damis) n'est point relevé par des titres pompeux;
Mais il m'aime, il vous aime, et c'est ce que je veux;
Vous ne vous direz point, ni Monsieur ni Madame,
Il sera votre époux, et vous serez sa femme;
Ces beaux noms consacrés à la société,
Et bannis par l'orgueil et l'infidélité,
Seront, conformément aux coutumes antiques,
Vos titres les plus doux et les plus magnifiques.

(Act III, scene VII).

It is not easy to assess how these words are to be interpreted, however; Géronte is not a likeable character and he is of course mistaken in his judgment of Damis. Furthermore, Lisette makes fun of his terms "femme" and "époux", a fact which might imply that the audience too should laugh at Géronte's ideas. Nevertheless, these seem to spring from a genuine concern that Isabelle should not risk unhappiness by marrying out of her class and we might perhaps conclude that his is an attitude for which the dramatist is inviting approval.

There seems no doubt, on the other hand, that in L'Irrésolu Pyrante's support for Dorante and thus his view of marriage is intended to be taken seriously. For him love is essential to the relationship:

Mais comme en ma jeunesse
J'ai goûté les plaisirs d'une vive tendresse,

Je dois trouver fort bon que mon fils, à
son tour,
S'abandonne aux transports d'un légitime
amour;
Je ne condamne point ce que j'ai fait moi-
même.
J'aimois quand j'étois jeune; il faut que
mon fils aime.
(Act I, scene II).

The lovers in the comedy also tend to discuss the nature of marriage in the context of the moral obligations which it imposes. It is interesting to note that already in Dancourt's Le Mari retrouvé Clitandre, formerly something of a libertine, has been reformed by love and has given some consideration to the qualities which are necessary in marriage. Rejecting any suggestion that Colette's birth makes her unsuitable for him, he believes that "c'est le mérite & la vertu qui font des mariages" (Scene I). This more serious view exists alongside the relationship between Julien and Mme Julienne which we have mentioned,²² providing a contrast to it and challenging in addition the assumptions of Lépine.²³ A new or changing outlook is thus opposed to the old.

In L'Obstacle imprévu Destouches confronts the cynical view held by Valère and Pasquin that no affection is possible between husband and wife and the moralistic outlook of Angélique, first expressed in this speech:

Voilà ce que c'est. Je vous suis desti-
née pour femme: ce titre vous déplaît
d'avance. Que je pense différemment!
Plus je songe que vous serez mon époux,
et plus mon cœur s'attache à vous

²²See p. 168, footnote 11 above.

²³In reply to Clitandre's claim that "jamais je n'aimerai qu'elle," Lépine says: "C'est-à-dire que vous voilà déterminé à ne vous point marier; car, apparemment, vous ne voulez pas faire la petite Neuniere autre chose qu'une maîtresse?" (Scene I).

sincèrement. Dans les cœurs tendres et vertueux, il se forme les passions les plus violentes, quand le devoir autorise l'inclination. (Act I, scene II).

While marriage is repugnant to Valère, Angélique is drawn to the very idea of the relationship in the abstract and we see not only that she has a capacity for feeling, but also that she links the notion of love to that of duty. Furthermore, there is an intellectual quality in her feeling, since she is well able to examine her own heart. Angélique's awareness of her nature and of the fact that she is unusual at this time leads her ultimately to a sense of her superiority. It is no doubt this which inspires in her a desire to reform Valère; to Pasquin's description of the course of most love affairs in Paris, she replies:

Je veux que vous m'aimiez autrement que cela, Valère, et que vous vous distinguiez des personnes de votre âge; qu'enfin vous rameniez la mode des beaux sentiments. (Act I, scene II).

Angélique is unsuccessful in her attempt to change Valère, it is true, but this does not necessarily imply that her words are to be discounted; she is sympathetically portrayed throughout the play and possesses some nobility of character. This becomes apparent in Act V, when she allays Valère's fears that, seeking revenge, she will attempt to harm him; she assures him, for example, that "je vous ai trop aimé pour pouvoir vous nuire ..." (Act V, scene V). Angélique emerges at the end of this scene a more attractive protagonist than Valère and we might therefore conclude that her standards are those approved by the dramatist.

There are two distinct features in L'Obstacle imprévu, namely a new set of values and the particular technique used

by Destouches to represent them, He retains a character of traditional views, but deliberately exploits him to emphasise an attitude of a different kind. This device is employed again in Les Philosophes amoureux where the theme of marriage and discussions about it are predominant. Here Léandre has a tendency, like Angélique, to analyse his responses, especially where his relationship with Clarice is concerned:

Enfin j'aimai Clarice; oui. L'aimerois-je
encore?
Cela se pourroit bien. Mais pourquoi? Je
l'ignore.
Comment puis-je l'aimer? je ne l'estime
pas.
Qu'importe? C'est le cœur qui juge des
appas ...
(Act II, scene I).

Torn between his reason and the affective side of his nature, he is clearly guided by the latter, but betrays nevertheless an ability and moreover a desire to understand his feelings. He then brings this more rational part of his being to bear on the subject of marriage, around which the first scenes of Act II all revolve, and he asks: "Et que dit la raison touchant le mariage?" (Act II, scene II). His own opinion is this:

Que de deux cœurs unis c'est un saint
assemblage
Que forment de concert l'amour et la ver-
tu.
Tel est mon sentiment, aujourd'hui com-
battu
Par l'attrait odieux d'un intérêt sordide.

For Léandre marriage, a "lien sacré," is a relationship based on mutual affection and virtue; this second concept remains rather vague, but presumably contains above all the notion of fidelity. Léandre certainly rejects in a subsequent scene with Clarice the accepted idea that either partner may take a

Quant à l'amour, c'est tout un autre point;
Les sentiments ne se commandent point.
N'ordonnez rien; l'amour fuit l'esclavage.
De mon époux le reste est le partage;
Mais pour mon cœur, il le doit mériter ...

The two sides of Lise's nature, namely her capacity for feeling and her tendency towards reflection, are seen again in Act II when, considering the marriage proposed for her by her father, she describes an ideal of the pleasure possible in this relationship:

... l'état du mariage
Est des humains le plus cher avantage
Quand le rapport des esprits et des cœurs,
Des sentiments, des goûts, et des humeurs,
Serre ces nœuds tissés par la nature,
Que l'amour forme et que l'honneur épure.
Dieux! quel plaisir d'aimer publiquement,
Et de porter le nom de son amant!
(Act II, scene I).

This, and in particular the phrase "quel plaisir d'aimer publiquement" is in stark contrast to the attitude of, say, Clarice in Les Philosophes amoureux. Her enthusiasm is akin to that of Isabelle in Poisson's one-act play Le Procureur arbitre (1728), who also speaks of the obligations inherent in marriage when attempting to convince Ariste that she is of an age to undertake its responsibilities:

Faire de son Epoux tout son contentement,
Ne mettre qu'en lui seul tout son attachement,
Régler ses volontez sans cesse sur les siennes,
Ainsi qu'à ses plaisirs, prendre part à ses peines,
Donner à ses enfans de l'éducation;
C'est, je croi, ce qu'exige une telle union.
(Scene XVII).

In Poisson's Le Mariage fait par lettre de change (1735), Hortense also anticipates marriage with pleasure:

Une union parfaite émeut si fort mon ame,
Que cette seule idée & m'enchante, & m'enflâme.

A celui qui m'attend, & qui m'est destiné,
Aussi je vais offrir un cœur passionné.
Que l'Hymen & l'Amour vont nous être pro-
pices!
Que nous allons goûter de charmes, de dé-
lices!
(Scene VIII).

Lise, in Voltaire's play, goes on to speak of children, in what becomes a vivid evocation not only of marriage, but of family life:

Et vos enfants, ces gages précieux,
Nés de l'amour, en sont de nouveaux nœuds.
Un tel hymen, une union si chère,
Si l'on en voit, c'est le ciel sur la
terre.
(Act II, scene I).

The same importance is attached to the idea of marriage by the Infanta in Destouches's L'Ambitieux; indeed she is present incognito at the court of Castille in order to judge the character of the King before committing herself to him. Don Philippe, to whom she confides her plan, calls it "héroïque" and adds:

J'y vois de vos vertus une preuve authen-
tique:
Et vouloir que la main soit un présent du
cœur,
C'est chercher dans l'hymen le souverain
bonheur.
(Act III, scene II).

Here once again we see the notion that marriage should be founded on affection, but it is clear too that Don Philippe gives to the Infanta's scheme a kind of moral quality, a scruple which makes of her a praiseworthy and superior character. Adoption of a disguise is therefore used for a purpose other than contributing complexity to the intrigue. The more serious theme which it introduces into this play is continued in the encounter between the Infanta and the King. Here the former states her views without shame or hesitation:

... se faire aimer, c'est son ambition.
Elle veut tout un cœur; et le moindre par-
tage
Feroit de son haut rang un affreux escla-
vage.
Du reste, à dominer elle n'a nul penchant.
Elle ne connoît point de plaisir si tou-
chant,
Que les tendres douceurs d'une amour mu-
tuelle ...
(Act III, scene VII).

There is a resemblance between this part of the plot and Le Jeu de l'Amour et du hasard (1730), but whereas Marivaux's intrigue has great comic potential, that of L'Ambitieux has none. The Infanta is not trapped in a scheme of her own devising as Silvia had been and she is allowed to remain in control of the situation. This would seem in itself to be an indication of Destouches's aim, which is to present in a serious context the ideas of a central protagonist on a major subject.

In Poisson's L'Amour secret (1740), marriage is again associated with certain moral considerations; Clitandre, a former libertine, states, for example, that:

Il est vrai qu'une femme aimable, jeune,
sage,
Arrête comme un frein, fixe un homme vo-
lage,
Forme ses sentimens, regle ses actions;
Et change en revenus ses dissipations.
(Scene III).

This attitude is further taken up in an exchange in the same scene with Eraste, where, in addition to approval of the relationship, we also see ideas expressed in the theoretical writings of the first half of the century:

ERASTE
Il est des unions dont mon ame est ravie,
Et que je ne puis voir sans y porter envie.
Qui pourrions-nous choisir qui pût nous
convenir?

The development which we see in L'Andrienne at a time when sarcasm about marriage is still the predominant note in the comedy reappears with Campistron's Le Jaloux désabusé (1709), in a relationship between husband and wife of much greater complexity. At first it would seem that there is a complete lack of sympathy between them. The servant Justine's description of Dorante as a pleasure-seeker who "plaît, commande aux belles de Paris" (Act I, scene I) contrasts with her portrayal of Celie as a woman who, while enjoying fashionable society, has a fundamental virtue.²⁵ Their relations are based on no more than mutual tolerance.

At the beginning of Act II, however, when Dorante outlines the nature of his life before the opening of the play, it becomes apparent that he has undergone an important change:

Rien de ce que j'aimois ne flatte mes desirs,
Et le Ciel m'a donné, pour finir mes plaisirs,
Un bourreau de mes jours, un tyran de mon ame.
(Act II, scene II).

Campistron has chosen to create, in short, a character who has fallen in love with his wife and whose jealousy reveals his feeling: "Je n'ai connu ma flame, / Qu'aux mouvemens jaloux qui déchirent mon ame ...". Coupled with this is a certain respect for moral standards which had been stifled by the frivolous life into which he had been tempted; Dorante now rails, for instance, against the common outlook in France:

Ah! François qu'à bon droit les autres Nations

²⁵Justine claims that Celie "croit, lorsque le cœur est en effet fidele, / Qu'un souris, qu'un regard n'est qu'une bagatelle" (Act I, scene I).

Regardent en pitié toutes vos actions;
Et blâmant votre esprit de mode & de ca-
bale,
Condamnent justement votre fausse morale!
(Act II, scene II).

We might have supposed, to judge from Justine's words in Act I, scene I, that Dorante would resemble the cynical libertine of the time, but he has sincerity and experiences a real dilemma, of which he is acutely conscious.²⁶ From the beginning of Act II, therefore, there is a new interest in the play and the dramatist exploits it immediately to make of it the focal point of the action, by bringing together husband and wife in Act II, scene III.

Here and for the rest of Le Jaloux Désabusé the dramatist creates a certain tension between the two as Celie refuses to believe in Dorante's transformation and she joins the plot of the others to force him into allowing his sister to marry the man of her choice, albeit with some reservations.²⁷ Campistron is using a misunderstanding between husband and wife for the purposes of plot, but it is significant that there is no real dislike between these two protagonists. That we are witnessing a change in the familiar framework of the comedy becomes evident at the close of the play when, with Celie's confession to Dorante of her part in the scheme and his recognition of her virtue, the two are united and Celie agrees to leave for the country with Dorante:

²⁶ See his analysis of his situation at the end of Act II, scene II, where part of his debate contains the following speech: "Parlerai-je à ma femme? ou faudra-t-il me taire!/
Quand je veux avec elle entamer ce discours, / La honte que je sens m'en empêche toujours."

²⁷ In Act II, scene V, for example, she says: "... sans être perfide enfin ni criminelle, / Je cause à mon Epoux une peine mortelle. / Ne pardonnera-t-il son trouble, sa douleur?" and to this she adds such remarks as: "Je crains de l'offenser; mon devoir m'épouvante."

DORANTE

J'admire la vertu que vous me faites voir,
Et croirois faire un crime osant m'en pré-
valoir.
Demeurez à Paris; vivez à l'ordinaire.

CELIE

Je mourrois mille fois avant que de le
faire.
Je rends graces au Ciel de m'avoir en ce
jour
montré par vos transports jusqu'où va
votre amour.
Cet amour fait lui seul le bonheur où
j'aspire.
Je veux le ménager, quoique vous puissiez
dire;
Et me cachant au monde, au moins pour quel-
que tems,
Vous prouver qu'avec vous tous mes vœux
sont contens.
(Act V, scene VII).

The most striking feature of this play is the change in the relationship between characters who, in classical comedy, would have been as implacably opposed at the end as they had been at the beginning.

In Destouches's Le Philosophe marié Ariste and Mélite are in sympathy from the outset. Despite his fear of being ridiculed as he has ridiculed others, Ariste is attracted to the mere idea of the status of husband, as these words to Damon demonstrate:

Entre nous, ma foiblesse
Est de rougir d'un titre et vénérable et
doux,
D'un titre autorisé, du beau titre d'époux,
Qui me fait tressaillir lorsque je l'arti-
cule,
Et que les mœurs du temps ont rendu ridi-
cule.
(Act I, scene II).

Mélite later makes this simple and direct statement of her feelings to Ariste:

Vous avoir pour époux
Est un bonheur pour moi si touchant et si
doux;

What he terms "les mouvements de ma tendresse," however, are repressed in order that he may test the Baronne; indeed this plan is proof both of the sincerity and the delicacy of his own feelings, a quality to which he himself draws attention:

Autant que j'en puis juger ... il n'y a rien de répréhensible dans la conduite de ma femme; cependant il me reste de certains doutes, de petits scrupules très-fâcheux pour un homme qui aime aussi délicatement que moi. (Act V, scene V).

Destouches thus relies on a kind of tension to provide the interest in the latter part of this play. It rests on a situation in which the Baronne, unbeknown to herself, describes her love to her husband and proves the extent of her fidelity. Moreover, the suspense is maintained for as long as possible by the dramatist, and it is only in the last scene that the Baron drops his mask and that the characters are finally reunited:

LA BARONNE, accourant.
... Quel bonheur de vous revoir! Est-il possible que je vous possède encore? Est-ce bien vous? J'ai peine à croire mes yeux. Je suis si charmée, si transportée, que je ne puis exprimer ma joie.

LE BARON
Cui, je respire encore pour vous estimer, pour vous chérir, et pour vous aimer mille fois plus que moi-même.
(Act V, scene XIII).

In Nivelle de la Chaussée's Le Préjugé à la mode it would seem that once again the action depends on a difference in temperament and outlook in husband and wife. In the central scene of Act I, for example, where Constance and Durval meet on stage for the first time, they are at odds over gifts received by Constance; Durval's apparent lack of concern about her sense of shame and his suggestion that she keep them

establish a rift between them.

Their disagreement is, however, a false one: as in Le Jaloux désabusé, the interest revolves here around a husband who has fallen in love with his own wife. His feelings are expressed in Act II, scene I to Damon:

J'aime ... Hélas! que ce terme exprime
foiblement
Un feu ... qui n'est pourtant qu'un renou-
vellement,
Qu'un retour de tendresse imprévue, inouïe,
Mais qui va décider du reste de ma vie!

It is significant that in using words such as "reprendre" and "renouvellement" here, Durval is suggesting that his feelings are not new but have simply been rediscovered.²⁹ A certain weakness or a fear of fashionable opinion still guides his conduct, as this declaration makes clear: "Je me sens retenu par une fausse honte./.../ Je sens le ridicule où cet amour m'expose." This apart, however, he reveals in this scene a tendency to reject the cynicism of his time and to see his present attitude in a moral context. Of his treatment of Constance, he remarks, for instance: "Mes infidélités vont être bien vengées...." Furthermore, he now has an appreciation of Constance's nature and can say to Damon: "je viens de jouir de toute sa vertu."

From the beginning of Act II, therefore, the audience is aware that there is no conflict between the characters of husband and wife and certainly no dislike. As far as Constance is concerned, affection for Durval is evident in her distress

²⁹He also says to Damon, for example: "Cet objet si charmant dont je reprends les loix,/ Mais que je crois aimer pour la première fois;/ Cette femme adorable à qui je rends les armes,/ Qui du moins à mes yeux a repris tant de charmes .../ C'est la mienne."

at his neglect, while her refusal to create antagonism between them is plain in her reluctance openly to criticise his conduct. Indeed her statement to Argante in Act I scene III that: "Un éclat indiscret ne fait qu'aliéner/ Un cœur que la douceur auroit pû ramener" bears witness both to the gentleness of her disposition and to her desire for a relationship of sympathy with Durval.

The playwright uses this situation to provide the main dramatic interest in Le Iréjugé à la mode. In Act II, scene II, for example, that is to say immediately after Durval has confessed his love for Constance to Damon, husband and wife are brought together on stage for the second time in a scene which revolves around attempts by both to express their regard. Durval responds instinctively now to the unhappiness conveyed in Constance's: "Ah! j'étois respectée, & je ne le suis plus," and the stage direction that he "l'embrasse, & tendrement" is deliberately inserted to emphasise his affection. Any exchange of feeling between these two protagonists must in a sense be implicit, however, in view of Durval's continuing hesitation to reveal his love. There is no doubt that this is genuine, but Durval addresses himself to Constance through Sophie and Damon:

S'il est un sort heureux, c'est celui d'un
époux,
Qui rencontre à la fois dans l'objet qui
l'enchanté,
Une épouse chérie, une amie, une amante.
Quel moyen de n'y pas fixer tous ses desirs!
Il trouve son devoir dans le sein des plaisirs.
(Act II, scene II).

Once again the dramatist insists on the latent sympathy between these characters by adding stage directions to the exchange

which follows this speech:

CONSTANCE, tendrement.

Je sens que ce portrait devrait être fidele.

DURVAL, en la regardant de meme.

Madame, on en pourroit trouver plus d'un
modele.

The potential sympathy between husband and wife in this play is therefore considerable. It is true that it is shattered for a time by Durval's belief that Constance is unfaithful, but as this belief is entirely unfounded, the affection which is at the heart of their relationship is quickly reborn. In Act V, in a scene deliberately engineered by Damon, Constance's description of torment provokes remorse in Durval and this finally brings about a reunion. To a statement of devotion made in a letter to her, Constance replies:

Cher époux, leve-toi. Va, je reçois ton
cœur:
Je reprens avec lui ma vie & mon bonheur.

Dorante's question: "Quoi! vous me pardonnez l'outrage & le parjure?" is answered with: "Oui; laisse-moi goûter une joie aussi pure" (Act V, scene V) and the couple finally achieve an understanding which brings about the dénouement.

A comparison between Le Préjugé à la mode and, say, Le Jaloux désabusé, to which it bears some resemblance, is interesting when an attempt is made to assess the development of eighteenth-century comedy as far as the theme of marriage is concerned. There is a definite moral tone in the later play and the harmony in the relationship of husband and wife is more explicit at the end as indeed their affection had been throughout the action. Even when Durval's hatred for Constance seems to be at its height, it rapidly changes, when he learns the truth, to repentance and to a fear that her love

for him might have died.

To create a permanent relationship of sympathy between the characters of husband and wife after many years' separation is one of the major sources of action in Nélanide.

Nélanide's own desires emerge in a speech to Théodon:

Croiriez-vous que l'amant, que l'époux le
plus tendre
le laisse dans l'honneur du plus profond
oubli?
.....
Mais le dois-je accuser de tant de perfidie?
Non, le moindre soupçon m'auroit coûté la
vie.
.....
C'est pour le retrouver que mon cœur vous
implore.
Tout peut se réparer. S'il respire, il
m'adore.
(Act II, scene III).

There is no doubt that the Marquis once reciprocated Nélanide's affection as he refers to their relationship as a "secret hymenée, / Dont on ne fit briser la chaîne fortunée. / Vous savez quelle fut la douleur que j'en eus" (Act II, scene I). Moreover, he now experiences a certain guilt because he has broken vows never to love again in wishing to marry Rosalie. The dramatist indeed insists throughout not only on the potential sympathy between husband and wife but on the moral implications of this situation. Nélanide, for instance, is prepared to resort to reminding the Marquis of his family ties:

Renouvellez-lui bien la foi que je lui
donne
De lui garder toujours ce cœur qu'il abandonne;
Ce cœur qui lui parut un don si précieux.
.....
Parlez-lui de son fils; il sauvera sa mère.
Qui peut mieux resserrer une chaîne si
chère?
(Act IV, scene I).

Théodon too, emphasises to the Marquis his obligations:

his lovers to the front of the stage and makes of the establishment of a relationship of sympathy the main intrigue. His characters possess a capacity for feeling and it is undoubtedly this which forms a bond between them, whether or not they realise it. In the Seconde Surprise de l'amour (1728), the Marquise says to the Chevalier, for instance:

... il n'y aura que moi qui vous plaindrai véritablement, et vous êtes le seul qui rendra justice à mes pleurs; vous me ressemblez, vous êtes né sensible, je le vois bien. (Act I, scene VII).

In many scenes in Marivaux's theatre the feelings are the subject of discussion; indeed one might say that the lovers talk themselves from one attitude into another, for once a possibility has been stated it must remain in the mind and influence subsequent behaviour. In the Seconde Surprise the Marquise replies to the Chevalier's "ce n'est point une amitié faite comme les autres":

... c'est là précisément l'amitié que je demande, là voilà, c'est la véritable, elle est délicate, elle est jalouse, elle a droit de l'être ... (Act II, scene IX).

Moreover the Chevalier mentions love:

Ma foi, je défie un amant de vous aimer plus que je le fais; je n'aurais jamais cru que l'amitié allât si loin, cela est surprenant; l'amour est moins vif.

"Amitié" and "amour" are almost synonymous here, although the characters themselves may be unconscious of the fact, but once the second word has been spoken, it makes inevitable the feeling which it denotes. As this relationship reveals, the timidity or resistance to love in many of Marivaux's protagonists means that there is a gap between the coming into being and the coming into consciousness of a feeling which can be

exploited by the dramatist to provide comic and dramatic irony.

In the new comedy there is no such possibility. Lovers and married couples alike have a capacity for feeling and believe in the supremacy of that feeling. Mélite's pronouncement in Le Philosophe marié: "Et de plus, quand un cœur consent à se donner, / Il n'examine pas, il se laisse entraîner" (Act III, scene IV), is echoed by Damon in the same play: "Eh! délibère-t-on quand on donne son cœur? / Il se donne lui-même, et nous fait violence" (Act III, scene VIII). In spite of the fact that the protagonists allow the heart to triumph, they use the rational side of their being to observe a split in their own or human nature in general. The intellectual quality of "sensibilité" is indeed manifest in all the scenes in which characters analyse in a logical and coherent fashion conflicting or successive "mouvements". Their pride in a capacity for feeling is such that it would be unthinkable for them not to comment on it. There is thus no discrepancy between a character's image of himself and what the spectator perceives to be the truth and therefore no comic potential in his relations with others.

Where a married couple is at the centre of the intrigue, we have seen a gradual movement towards a new or better understanding between the characters of husband and wife at the end of the play. In general the sympathy established is in effect an expression of a feeling which had always existed and not one which has come into being during the course of the action. The disagreement between the characters, which is in any case superficial, is not exploited to any significant

extent and a number of devices are therefore employed in order to create a kind of tension on which the play may be based. Once again we may say that playwrights are breaking what might be called the traditional rules of dramatic structure.

CHAPTER SIX

Comedy and moral approval

The principle established by Horace that art, and poetry in particular, should be both pleasurable and useful (De Arte Poetica, ll. 343-44), is a common one in European literature. It came to France mainly by way of the Italian Renaissance and was widely adopted in the sixteenth century and subsequently in the seventeenth, as "plaire et instruire," by poets and critics alike. Writers such as Chapelain and La Mesnardière take up the idea that art, to merit the name, must have a serious purpose and the statements of the major classical authors on the subject are by now well-known.¹

The eighteenth century had a great interest in morals and studies in human nature, which constituted the only legitimate reading. As far as comic drama is concerned, several playwrights, while offering a commentary in a general sense on human behaviour, claim to be producing works of an improving kind. That Boursault, for example, had a definite moral aim in writing Esope à la cour (1701) is evident in the Prologue to the play:

Et je souhaiterois, avec l'aide d'Esope,
Pouvoir déraciner des cœurs
Les vices qu'on y développe.²

His method, in attempting this, is to present his audience not with "les plus judicieux conseils," but with their own

¹For a study of this subject see R. Bray, La Formation de la doctrine classique en France (Paris, 1927), Seconde Partie, Chapitre premier, pp. 63-84.

²E. Boursault, Esope à la cour, Prologue, Theatre de feu Monsieur Boursault (Paris, 1746), III, 374.

likeness which will shame them into reform. He thus agrees, in part at least, with dramatists such as Molière when he states:

Si quelqu'un par hazard d'un mauvais caracté-
tère
S'y trouve si bien peint qu'il soit presque
parlant;
Il ne tient qu'à lui de bien faire,
Il ne sera plus ressemblant.
(III, 375).

Later in the century these ideas find expression in Poisson's L'Impromptu de campagne (1733), where Éraсте, defending his disguise as an actor, claims:

La Comédie est belle;
Et je ne trouve rien de condamnable en elle:
Elle est du ridicule un si parfait miroir,
Qu'on peut devenir sage à force de s'y voir.
La Comédie enfin, par d'heureux artifices,
Fait aimer la vertu, & détester les vices.
.....
Corrige les défauts, instruit en amusant,
En morale agréable en mille endroits abonde,
Et pour dire le vrai, c'est l'Ecole du
monde.
(Scene II).

It is Destouches, however, who seems the most consistent and enthusiastic adherent to the classical notion that art should be instructive. Indeed he quotes Horace when discussing the function of comedy:

On sait que j'ai toujours devant les yeux
ce grand principe dicté par Horace:

Omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile
dulci.

et que je crois que l'art dramatique n'est
estimable, qu'autant qu'il a³ pour but
d'instruire en divertissant.

There can be no doubt that for him comedy is imperfect, even dangerous, if the playwright does not intend to "corriger les

³Destouches, Le Glorieux (1732), Préface, Œuvres dramatiques (Paris, 1820), II, 307-8.

mœurs ... tomber sur le ridicule ... décrier le vice ... et mettre la vertu dans un si beau jour, qu'elle s'attire l'estime et la vénération publique" (II, 708). In all the Prefaces and Prologues which Destouches has left us, this theme is one which constantly returns. The Prologue to Le Curieux impertinent (1710), for example, declares of the dramatist that:

Il a pour objet principal
De prêcher la vertu, de décrier le vice;
Ou son innocente malice
Nous égale aux dépens de quelque original;
.....
en divertissant il instruit ...⁴
(V, 429).

The Prologue to L'Ambitieux et l'indiscrette (1737) reiterates this assertion and takes plain that there is pleasure for the audience in the moral aim of the play:

.... au public elle (la pièce) prouve
le zèle
D'un auteur dont tous les travaux,
Et les innocentes malices,
Ont pour objet de plaire en corrigeant
les vices.
(V, 453).

The most obvious way for a playwright to offer this kind of pleasure and indeed to be instructive is for his characters to utter observations on life: the "sentences" of sixteenth and seventeenth-century drama, for example, help to fulfil this purpose. What one might call well-formulated maxims are frequent in the new comedy of the eighteenth century, being very often remarks made in conclusion to a discussion. Don Fernand's statement in L'Ambitieux:

⁴This Prologue was written several years after the play itself for a private production in the country. See "Septième Lettre. A Madame La Comtesse de C^{xx}.", Oeuvres, V, 415-6.

Quand la fortune s'offre on doit en profiter, ...
Et tant qu'elle nous porte il faut toujours
monter.
(Act II, scene IV).

amounts to a rule of conduct and is evidence of a liking for observations of general and universal significance, based in the first instance on a particular circumstance. In Poisson's Le Procureur arbitre (1728) Lisette, commenting on her mistress's desire to examine Ariste before marriage, ends her speech with this judgement on contemporary society:

Une telle prudence est rare parmi nous;
Et par l'extérieur nos cœurs se prennent
tous.
On étale à nos yeux des graces singulières;
Ce sera de l'esprit, ce seront des manières,
On se rend; & l'on voit que ces dehors
charmans
Estoient des imposteurs, lorsqu'il n'en
est plus tems.
(Scene XII).

Ariste himself reveals the same tendency when drawing from his encounter with and opinion of a client a rule about human behaviour:

Des hommes la plûpart voilà le foible af-
freux:
Ils blâment dans chacun ce qui domine en
eux.
(Scene IV).

In Nivelles de la Chaussée's L'École de la jeunesse (1749), the servant Rosette says to the Marquis: "Souvent .../ Le cœur a des secrets que l'esprit ne sçait pas" (Act I, scene IV), while Géronte in La Fausse Antipathie (1733) delivers the following speech about women, derived from his experience of Léonore's conduct:

La femme est une espece à qui rien ne res-
semble;
C'est tout bien ou tout mal; & tous les
deux ensemble.

Est-elle vertueuse? elle l'est à l'excès.
.....
C'est toujours à l'extrême où son pen-
chant la guide.
(Act III, scene II).

Similarly, G ronte, in Le Dissipateur (1736), observes of
one individual woman's success:

Je remarque
Qu'une femme prudente et qui se donne au
bien,
Vaut cent fois mieux qu'un homme.
(Act IV, scene I).⁵

It can be seen that these statements are made in isola-
tion and demand no reply: indeed, as we have suggested, they
are intended to conclude, in the neatest possible fashion, a
train of thought or a preceding discussion. It is not uncommon,
however, for a conversation to take the shape of an exchange
of such maxims, as it does for example in Act III of Les
Philosophes amoureux (1729):

ART NICE
Les sages sont discrets.

DAMIS
Les sages... s'il en est, ignorent le mys-
t re;
Car ils ne pensent rien qu'ils soient for-
c s de taire.
C'est aux fous   cacher ce qu'ils ont dans
le c ur.

ART NICE
Ils ne le peuvent pas; et c'est l  leur
malheur;
Mais le sage se tait; c'est l  son privi-
l ge.
(Act III, scene III).

There are clearly limits to the length of such a conversation,

⁵Le Dissipateur was published in 1736 and first performed in
Paris in 1753. In subsequent chapters the date of this play
will be given as 1736. It has been suggested that Destouches
had a plan for it before he left for England in 1717. See A.
B rner, "Philippe N ricault-Destouches (1680-1754): Essai de
biographie," Revue d'histoire litt raire de la France, 38
(1931), 63-64.

but Damis's words: "O ciel! à tant d'appas comment échapperai-je?" (Act III, scene III), reveal an admiration for Arténice's ability to argue in this way. The tendency we have been examining is not therefore regarded as pompous; on the contrary, it is an indication of a character's superiority.

The facility for expressing ideas in neatly phrased epigrams can also be seen in observations made by certain characters on themselves or their fellows. In Destouches's L'Homme singulier (1745) the Comte claims to Sanspair:

J'ai l'air d'un étourdi; mais, ô futur
beau-frère!
L'air ne décide pas toujours du caractère

(Act V, scene XII).

This statement about Julie in La Force du naturel (1750) is no more original:

Non, l'éducation, malgré tous ses efforts,
Ne parvient pas toujours à parer les dehors.
Quand même elle y parvient, le naturel subsiste ...

(Act III, scene V).

These remarks are proof of the predilection for drawing a general conclusion, amounting almost to a lesson, from personal acquaintance. We are moving away here, however, from comments intended as abstract guides of behaviour to comments more closely related to people, showing an attempt at insight into human nature. Nowhere is this inclination clearer than in the liking, common in the seventeenth century and still evident in the new comedy, for portrait-painting. In Baron's L'Homme à bonne fortune (1696), for example, Marton remarks on Moncade's character with some pride in her knowledge of his "type" and of the way in which he is likely to react:

a guide for others and are intended to be useful while containing no explicit moral "lesson". Many protagonists also tend towards introspection. Damon, in Le Curieux impertinent, for example, reveals clear self-knowledge when comparing himself with Léandre:

... j'ai plus d'amour, plus de délicatesse;
Je porte un cœur exempt d'une telle foiblesse.
Croyez-vous que ce cœur ait pu feindre avec vous?
Il fait, de vous aimer, son bonheur le plus doux ...⁶
(Act IV, scene XI)

Furthermore, this speech to Julie establishes a scale of values and suggests qualities which are worthy of consideration. The same approach is adopted by Léandre in Les Philosophes amoureux, when analysing his own nature and the sources of his happiness:

Ma solitude à tous moments abonde
En plaisirs innocents que n'offre point le monde.
Dans un repos parfait, exempt de passions,
Ici tout est matière à mes réflexions.
.....
... quand je veux m'étudier moi-même,
Je sens que je suis né pour un bonheur suprême ...
(Act I, scene III).

To study oneself in this way is therefore a pleasurable and useful pursuit; it is mocked by Lisidor, but is not for that to be condemned: Lisidor is an irascible and authoritarian father, unlikely to arouse sympathy in either reader or audience. It is Léandre's standards and not those of Lisidor or a superficial and hectic polite society which are being praised by the dramatist here. This is indeed the case whenever a "philosophe" such as Léandre appears in the new comedy.

⁶The "foiblesse" referred to by Damon is Léandre's uncertainty.

Both Ariste, in the first scene of Le Philosophe marié (1727), and Arténice in Les Philosophes amoureux are allowed to expand on the contentment to be found in retreat from society. This is Arténice's meditation on solitude which combines appreciation of its pleasures with comment on the moral benefit to be derived from it:

Ah! que deux cœurs, unis par l'hymen et
l'amour,
Goûteroient de plaisirs dans ce charmant
séjour!
J'en ferois mon bonheur, j'en ferois mes
délices.
La vertu, la raison, en banniroient les
vices,
Pour n'y faire régner que la tranquillité,
L'amour, la complaisance et la fidélité.
(Act III, scene I).

Many characters also pause to reflect on the motives for and the propriety of their actions. A servant is as capable of this in the new comedy as are the main protagonists; in Nivelle de la Chaussée's La Fausse Antipathie, for example, Nérine questions her acceptance of a ring from Damon:

Je ne sçais, à présent que j'ai le diamant,
Je vois que je me suis oubliée un moment:
Réfléchissons un peu sur mon étourderie.
Je devois refuser cette galanterie.
(Act II, scene VII).

Nérine's self-recrimination is short-lived, it is true, and her dilemma easily resolved, but she possesses nonetheless certain scruples which, moreover, she feels compelled to examine. Damon in L'Amour usé subjects his generosity to a similar scrutiny:

Mais cette action est-elle bien pure, et
n'y entre-t-il point un peu de dépit, de
malice et de ressentiment? Ne suis-je
pas piqué contre Lisidor, qui se cache
de moi, et contre Isabelle, que j'ai si
longtemps aimée, et qui m'a toujours mé-
prisé?
(Act IV, scene IV).

In Mélanide, Théodon pauses to consider events together with his own conduct:

Ce que je viens de faire est un coup de par-
tie
Qui les sauve tous quatre, & moi-même avec
eux.
Car enfin il étoit pour moi bien douloureux
D'être, sans y penser, le complice d'un
crime
Dont Mélanide alloit devenir la victime.
Mais, en réparant tout, j'ai rempli mon
devoir...⁷
(Act III, scene VIII).⁷

As we can see from this, pleasure at having brought the lovers together is less important to Théodon than satisfaction in the knowledge that Mélanide will not suffer and that his own integrity has been maintained.

A character's examination of himself and others is, therefore, not always objective. Alongside the portraits we have mentioned and the traditional comments about appearance, age and wealth, are statements about moral qualities. They are didactic in the sense that they make a value judgment and ultimately seek to establish ideal moral standards. Léandre's opinion of Damon in Le Curieux impertinent, for example "En mérite, en vertu, tu n'as guère d'égal" (Act I, scene VII), is far from being a detached observation, as his words contain a suggestion of that which characterises a man of true worth.

This tendency had already been present in the comedy. Justine remarks of Celie in Campistron's Le Jaloux désabusé (1709): "Elle a de la vertu, mais elle est belle, & femme..." (Act I, scene I). A more positive assessment, containing potential approval of virtue, is offered by Dubois, when

⁷Théodon has reunited Darviane and Rosalie, thus making impossible a marriage between the latter and the Marquis, Mélanide's husband. At this stage in the play he, the Marquis, is unaware that Mélanide is still alive.

urging Dorante to confess his love to Celie: "La vertu dans son ame est si bien établie,/ .../ Que vous n'en recevrez que du contentement" (Act II, scene II). It is true that the terms "vertu" or "mérite" are vague. Lisette says of Cléon, for example, in L'Ingrat: "Il joint bien du mérite à sa haute naissance" (Act I, scene III), and Lisimon speaks to Julie of "vos charmes, votre bon esprit, votre vertu" (Act III, scene IV) in L'Obstacle imprévu (1717). A new attitude is nevertheless discernible. In L'Ingrat, for instance, Damis says of Géronte: "Son trop de probité, sa candeur, sa droiture,/ Tiennent incessamment mon âme à la torture ..." (Act IV, scene VII), an observation in which is clearly implied a condemnation of Géronte's virtue. The dramatist, however, is surely suggesting that these qualities, ridiculed by an unscrupulous character, are admirable. In L'Irrésolu (1713) Frontin describes Célimène as "tendre, et fidèle, et constante" (Act I, scene II), while in Le Philosophe marié Méliste, according to Ariste, is "sage et vertueuse" (Act I, scene I).

In L'École des pères, Angélique says of Géronte: "J'ai vu sa gratitude, & sa vertu m'est chère" (Act IV, scene X) and Géronte in his turn refers to Angélique as: "D'appas & de vertus un si rare assemblage" (Act V, scene VII). A similar technique is evident in Destouches's Le Glorieux where Lisette speaks of Lycandre as "cet ami vertueux" (Act I, scene VIII) and her judgment that Valère has "toute la sagesse et la vertu d'un père" (Act I, scene IV), is almost exactly echoed by Lycandre's assessment that her desire to leave Lisimon's house before he can refuse her marriage to Valère is "une preuve insigne/ Et de votre prudence, et de votre vertu" (Act I, scene IX).

In Le Tambour nocturne (1736) the Baronne uses slightly different words when describing her husband to express an attitude which is essentially the same as those which we have already noted:

C'étoit l'honneur, la probité, la sincérité
même. Sa bonté, sa douceur, sa complai-
sance ne se sont jamais démenties un seul
moment. (Act V, scene VI).

These terms, "douceur", "complaisance" and in particular "probité", are those which recur in judgments of a character in the new comedy and the qualities which they denote are intended by the dramatist for approval. As the Comtesse's statement about Sanspair in L'Homme singulier suggests, they are the attributes of an admirable character:

Et Sanspair est au fond un caractère
aimable:
Il est doux, complaisant; sa singularité,
Effet de sa candeur et de sa probité,
Ne met dans son esprit ni travers, ni
caprice.
Ami de la vertu, fier ennemi du vice,
Il ose ouvertement pratiquer la vertu ...
(Act V, scene VII).

The notion of "probité" is taken up again in the Marquis's judgment, in the same play, of both his son and Sanspair: "C'est un jeune éventé;/ Mais il a le cœur noble, et d'une probité/ Qu'on ne peut justement comparer qu'à la vôtre" (Act V, scene XI). In Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs (1740), Lucile gives the preference to virtuous qualities when drawing a contrast between the Marquis and the Baron:

Jugez combien il perd dans le fond de mon
ame
Par la comparaison que je fais de sa flame,
Avec le feu constant, tendre & respectueux
D'un Amant jeune & sage, aimable & vertueux
Vous possédez, Marquis, le mérite solide

...
(Act IV, scene XIII).

Act I, scene VII of Voltaire's Nanine abounds in admiration of one character by another. The Comte states to Nanine, for instance, that "je vous rends ce que votre conduite, / Votre beauté, votre vertu mérite," while Nanine herself recognises the Comte's superiority:

Eh! que ferais-je, et que verrais-je au
Après avoir admiré vos vertus?⁸ monde,

Comment on or analysis of another character thus gradually takes on a didactic overtone, which gives the plays one of their most recognisable features. It can be seen that the same words and notions tend to recur without precise explanation; even this definition of merit made by the Commandeur when speaking of the Marquis in Nivelle de la Chaussée's L'École de la jeunesse, adds little to what can only be an impression of the quality mentioned: "Voilà le vrai mérite. Il est simple, modeste / Ne présume de rien, & se vante encore moins" (Act II, scene II). A simple allusion to goodness or probity is clearly sufficient to indicate a completely virtuous nature. It is interesting to note, however, some of the terms which are used in association with "vertu" and which, in some cases indeed, even supplant this word. In Le Glorieux, for example, where, as we have seen, the virtue of several characters is commented upon with approval, Lycandre in giving advice to Lisette, says this:

Songez qu'une naissance illustre
Des sentiments du cœur reçoit son plus
beau lustre:
.....

⁸In addition there is this exchange between the two characters: "NANINE. Au dernier rang les destins m'ont comprise. LE COMTE. Dans le premier vos vertus vous ont mise."

Et si le sort cruel vous a ravi vos biens,
D'un plus rare trésor enviant le partage,
Soyez riche en vertus: c'est là votre apa-
nage.

(Act I, scene IX)

We see that allied to virtue are attributes belonging to the affective side of man's being, namely "sentiments du cœur." Feelings and moral scruples are thus closely linked in Ly^candre's mind; indeed, feelings are moral scruples and "sentiment" can mean "vertu", or at least a kind of moral principle. This is a new and extended usage of the word and is present from the first in the new comedy, even where the moral sense in question is condemned. In Le Curieux impertinent, for example, Crispin observes of Damon's reluctance to act as rival to Léandre:

Quoi! se sacrifier pour un ami? Ma foi,
Ces beaux sentiments-là ne sont pas faits
pour moi.

(Act I, scene II).

In Nivelles de la Chaussée's La Fausse Antipathie, Léonore's refusal to obtain a divorce in order to marry Damon is dismissed firstly with these words: "Ma nièce, en vérité, tous ces grands sentimens/ Sont des inventions pour orner des romans" (Act III, scene IV) and subsequently with this reproach which connects "sentiment" and moral sense even more closely: "Pourquoi s'abandonner au torrent des scrupules?/ De trop grands sentimens sont souvent ridicules" (Act III, scene VI).⁹

In by far the greatest number of cases, however, the term "sentiment", often in the plural, is used to convey approval of the moral sense it denotes, and is often qualified by

⁹Léonore's refusal is based on a fear of hurting both Damon's wife and her own husband.

adjectives such as "beau" or "noble", which suggest that attitude. In Destouches's L'Ingrat G ronte refers to Damis's apparent willingness to sacrifice Isabelle to Cl on as "de si beaux sentiments" (Act II, scene V). Don F lix reacts to his son's decision to place King and State before Don Fernand, his brother, with the words: "O nobles sentiments, qui m'arrachent des larmes!" (Act I, scene IV). In Pamela (1743), the association of "noble" and "sentiment" is automatic where the latter is used in a moral context; Mme Andrews observes of Pamela's scruples, for example: "Je reconnois enfin ces nobles sentimens/ Qu'autrefois t'inspira ton pere" (Act III, scene V). Miledi also uses the phrase in Act V, scene III when praising Pamela's desire to resist Milord's love for his own good: "Conservez, Pamela, ces nobles sentimens ...". The Marquis in La Force du naturel seems to be employing the word in its new sense when referring, with approval, to Babet's conduct: "... vous lui trouverez de nobles sentiments;/ ...  prouvant qu'elle est aussi sage que belle ..." (Act III, scene II).

The word "sentiment" alone and without qualification can also imply a moral sense. In Le Tambour nocturne the Baronne says, when condemning the Marquis:

J'ai trouv  qu'il n'aimoit que mon bien,
qu'il n'avoit point de sentiments, qu'il
 toit libertin, insolent, pr somp tueux ...
(Act V, scene VI).

Conversely, Ariste, in Fagan's La Pupille (1734) comments with approval on Julie's character:

... elle a des sentimens dignes de sa
naissance: elle est douce, modeste, atten-
tive, en un mot, je ne vois rien de plus
aimable ni de plus sage. (Scene II).

love: Crispin's words here may not therefore be sincere, but his choice of terms is nevertheless interesting. Euphémon fils in L'Enfant prodigue also uses the word in connection with a moral quality and is moreover unequivocal in his approval of it:

Il m'accompagne, et son âme grossière,
Sensible et tendre en sa rusticité,
N'a point pour moi perdu l'humanité ...
(Act III, scene I).

The only play in which "sensibilité" might be said to have a moral force is Le Glorieux and even here it takes a negative form. Lycandre's words: "Quel bon cœur d'un côté! / De l'autre, quel excès d'insensibilité!" (Act IV, scene III), referring to the Comte's harsh or indifferent response to Lisette's concern for him, indicate in an oblique fashion that "sensibilité" can signify virtue.

If a variation is sought for "vertu" or "probité", it is likely to be "délicatesse", whose usage in this context is not new. In Le Curieux impertinent and La Fausse Antipathie the word is synonymous with "sentiment", being used in the two situations already mentioned to imply moral scruple. In the play by Destouches, for example, Crispin remarks of Damon's hesitation:

Ménager un ami, respecter sa maîtresse,
Craindre de la tenter, belle délicatesse!
(Act I, scene II).

Similarly, Damon refers to Léonore's moral notions in La Fausse Antipathie as: "Ces frivoles raisons ... / Qu'invente contre moi votre délicatesse" (Act II, scene VIII). The same word is applied by the Baron in Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs to the Marquis's reluctance to harm a friend:

Sur cet article-là votre scrupule est
grand!
A son plus haut degré c'est porter la sa-
gesse.
Si vos pareils avoient cette délicatesse
(Act II, scene II).

This term is used to describe Pamela's refusal to be swayed by Milord's gifts in Nivelles de la Chaussée's play.¹⁰ Here and in other instances quoted, the word does not appear to express approval of the moral feeling which it is used to signify: rather it serves, when referring to the conduct of others, to single them out, making a distinction between them and those of less rigorous moral principle. The dramatist's attitude may not necessarily be that of the character who makes the judgement, however; on the contrary, the characters designated "délicats" are invariably ones whose standards are vindicated at the end of the play.

Precise principles are also referred to in the new comedy as worthy of attainment. In Fagan's La Pupille, for example, Julie, in condemning the superficiality of contemporary society, suggests a positive moral quality deserving of recognition:

Je connois quelqu'un à qui on ne sçauroit
reprocher aucun de ces défauts; qui est
humble, sensé, poli, bienfaisant, qui
sçait plaire sans les dehors affectés &
les airs étourdis qui font valoir tant
d'autres hommes. (Scene VI).

"Bienfaisance" is much praised, as we have seen, in the theoretical works of the first half of the century. On the stage, the term "bienfait", in the sense of a deed of good-will, is common and occurs in all the dramatists of the period, often in a quite neutral form. In L'Ingrat, for example, Damis remarks:

¹⁰ Milord remarks of Pamela's determination: "La délicatesse est extrême" (Act II, scene I).

"Des bienfaits de Cléon la mémoire m'est chère" (Act II, scene V). Mondor in Fagan's L'Étourderie (1737) uses the term in a similar way: "Avec ce bienfait que je viens de recevoir de vous, j'ai de quoi m'occuper bien agréablement" (Scene X). In Nivelles de la Chaussée's L'Homme de fortune (1750) Brice pere remarks that "je puis garantir/ Qu'ils sont moins mes bienfaits que ceux de la fortune" (Act V, scene II).

There is no doubt, however, that the word is also used in a moral context, particularly in the works of Nivelles de la Chaussée, although this usage can be seen in other playwrights. In L'Obstacle imprévu "bienfait" is the term chosen by Léandre when united to Julie: "... je ne mourrai point ingrat d'un bienfait si précieux" (Act II, scene VIII). The note of appreciation here is seen again, and in a much stronger form, in a statement by Mme Armance in L'École de la jeunesse where moral approval is clear: "Si ma fille est heureuse, / C'est le rare bienfait d'une ame généreuse ..." (Act IV, scene VII). In Le Préjugé à la mode (1735) the change in Durval's attitude is revealed in his statement that: "On s'attache encor plus par ses propres bienfaits" (Act II, scene I). The word occurs often in the dialogue of the new comedy as the act of beneficence frequently denotes a relationship of sympathy between the characters.

In general, however, "bienfait" is connected with the notion of a reward received through virtue. The idea expressed in La Pupille that: "Les bienfaits n'étant point de lui, il n'en doit point recueillir le salaire" (Scene XVI) is put slightly differently by Léandre in Les Philosophes amoureux in that the "bienfait" is itself a reward: "Et je vous la

cachois pour vous mettre à l'épreuve,/ Pour voir si vous pourriez mériter mes bienfaits" (Act V, scene VI).¹¹ This sentiment is echoed in Ariste's advice to Monrose in L'École des amis: "Les bienfaits sont à ceux qui les ont mérités./ Quoi! vous osez/ Poursuivre des bienfaits comme on poursuit des dettes!" (Act II, scene II).

In Nivelles de la Chaussée's work, the term "bienfaiteur" is used to express a relationship of gratitude. It is in fact a kind of joyful appellation in both L'École de la jeunesse, where the Baron exclaims to the Marquis: "Le Comte de Clairval! O mon cher bienfaiteur " (Act V, scene VI) and L'Homme de fortune, in which the Marquis addresses Brice pere thus: "Généreux bienfaiteur, ami trop secourable" (Act II, scene IV). Both this term and "bienfaisant", which, as we have seen, conveys the same approval of a character, are, however, much rarer than "bienfait" and, with some exceptions, occur late in the period under discussion. In L'École de la jeunesse the Baron continues his speech with: "Illustre protecteur/ Que le ciel bienfaisant procure à ma vieillesse" (Act V, scene VI) and in L'Homme de fortune the Marquis praises Brice pere in this way: "A vos soins bienfaisans, puis-je me refuser?/ Tant de bontés, Monsieur, ont de quoi me surprendre" (Act II, scene IV). Brice pere's goodness in fact is specifically referred to as "bienfaisance": "Oui, l'aveu qu'il m'a fait de votre bienfaisance/ L'assûre, autant que vous, de ma reconnoissance" (Act II, scene IV). Although there is agreement here between the concepts of the philoso-

¹¹Léandre is referring to proof (la preuve) that he was prepared to give his rights as eldest son to Clitandre.

phical works of the first half of the century and the qualities of characters on the stage, the use of the new term "bienfaisance" itself is extremely rare. The only other incidence of the word in the plays under discussion appears to be in L'École de la jeunesse: "C'est donc en ce temps-là que votre bienfaisance/ M'engagea pour jamais à la reconnoissance,/ Par tant de biens versés sur ma fille et sur moi?" (Act I, scene I). As we can see, "bienfaisance" is here a moral quality, as it was for the abbé de Saint-Pierre.

In Voltaire's L'Enfant prodigue Jasmin, a servant, applies the word "bienfaisant" to Euphémon père:

Ah, l'honnête homme! ô ciel! pourrait-on
croire
Qu'il soit encore, en ce siècle félon,
Un cœur si droit, un mortel aussi bon?
Cet air, ce port, cette âme bienfaisante
Du bon vieux temps est l'image parlante.¹²
(Act III, scene IV)

While the phrase "âme bienfaisante" refers to Euphémon's kindness, the speech is nonetheless significant in that it shows a change in the concept of "honnêteté". The "honnête homme" now, as personified by Euphémon père, is one who is concerned for the well-being of others. "Honnêteté", in something like its old sense, persists, it is true, in eighteenth-century comedy. Sanspair, in L'Homme singulier, comments, of his decision to return a portrait in person: "La politesse oblige à cette honnêteté" (Act I, scene VI). In L'Ingrat, however,

¹²It is interesting to note that Voltaire had originally written: "Ses cheveux blancs, son air, et sa démarche,/ Ont, à mon sens, l'air d'un vrai patriarche;" this was censored by the authorities and the actors substituted: "Ses cheveux blancs, son air et ses manières,/ Retracent bien les vertus de nos pères." It is only in the 1738 text that the final version appears. See Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire, Nouvelle Edition ... conforme pour le texte à l'édition de Beuchot (Paris, 1877-85), II, 485.

Pasquin's judgement of his master's decision to repay a friend's former kindness would seem to lead to the notion, in the form "honnête homme," a new sense of moral goodness: "Ce qu'un honnête homme eût fait en pareil cas, / Vous l'avez fait, Monsieur ..." (Act II, scene VII). The same association seems to be present in Rosbif's words in Le François à Londres (1725), although Boissy's meaning is difficult to determine:

Qu'est-ce qu'elle vient me chanter avec son
homme de qualité? Je me moque, moi, d'une
noblesse imaginaire, les vrais Gentilshommes
ce sont les honnêtes gens, il n'y a que le
vice de roturier. (Scene VIII).

Rosbif, as his name might imply, is a figure of fun in this play and one could therefore assume that no weight is to be attached to his words. It is possible, however, that in 1725 Boissy is experimenting with a notion that is not yet clear or accepted, with no wish to be mocked by a critical public.

In L'École des pères, the old restriction of the word to urbanity and politeness has disappeared from Gêronte's general observation about human conduct: "... l'honnête homme à la reconnoissance, / Sur toute autre vertu, donne la préférence: / Un bienfait le captive; & des vices du cœur, / Il voit l'ingratitude avec le plus d'horreur" (Act III, scene V). His speech, in which the term "bienfait" is once more used in a moral context, establishes an indisputable link between the idea of virtue, gratitude and "honnêteté".

In L'Enfant prodigue the association of goodness and "honnêteté" recurs several times. Lise, for example, presents to Euphémon père the image of his son as a reformed character, an "honnête homme":

Si sa raison, par le malheur instruite,
De ses vertus rallumant le flambeau,
Le ramenait avec un cœur nouveau;
Ou que plutôt, honnête homme et fidèle,
Il eût repris sa forme naturelle ...
(Act V, scene V).

Elsewhere in the play the notion of "malhonnêteté" implies a lack of humanity and brotherly love:

... ce sont tous de malhonnêtes gens,
Vrais ennemis du cœur et du bon sens,
Si dans leur code ils ordonnent qu'un frère
Laisse périr son frère de misère ...
(Act II, scene V).

The ideal of "honnêteté" does not therefore disappear, rather does it lose its narrower meaning and in so doing, reflects a development which takes place in the moral treatises which we have already examined. A feeling for one's fellows is also regarded as praiseworthy on the stage. As we have seen, Euphémon fils values Jasmio and refers in particular to his "humanité", a quality much prized by the eighteenth century.¹³ In Le Médisant (1715) Lisette remarks with approval: "Le baron, notre maître, est plein d'humanité ..." (Act I, scene VI). The term occurs too in Marivaux's L'Île des esclaves (1725) where the attempt to awaken Iphicrate and Euphrosine to their disregard of the rights and dignity of their slaves is called by Trivelin "votre cours d'humanité" (Scene II). Similarly in Destouches's Le Glorieux, the word is used to denote sympathy for one's fellow human-beings in Lycandre's criticism of the Comte's callous treatment of Lisette: "Voulant tout asservir à ses injustes droits, / De l'humanité même il (son orgueil) étouffe la voix" (Act IV, scene III).

In Voltaire's Nanine, the Comte argues for the supremacy

¹³See p. 227 above.

of "honnêteté" and "vertu", terms ultimately linked with the notion of "humanité", over the prestige bestowed by rank in an argument with the Baronne:

LA BARONNE

Un vil savant, un obscur honnête homme,
Serait chez vous, pour un peu de vertu,
Comme un seigneur avec honneur reçu?

LE COMTE

Le vertueux aurait la préférence.
(Act I, scene I).

Subsequently, to the Baronne's charge that: "Vous dégradez ainsi la qualité!" he responds: "Non; mais j'honore ainsi l'humanité" and concludes with a refusal, as a rational being, to be guided by custom:

Le singe est né pour être imitateur,
Et l'homme doit agir d'après son cœur.

This belief that the heart is the only source of moral judgement echoes a previous statement to the Baronne:

L'éclat vous plaît; vous mettez la grandeur
Dans les blasons: je la veux dans le cœur.

For the most part the terms we have been discussing refer to specific characters in a particular play. A wider, almost political, statement is made by Euphémon fils in L'Enfant prodigue however: "Né mon égal (puisqu'enfin il est homme) ..." (Act III, scene I). This sentiment is shared by Sanspair in L'Homme singulier, who explains in this way to Pasquin his theory on the treatment of servants:

Cessez de prendre pour façons
Ce que l'humanité prescrit à l'homme sage,
Et ce qui devrait être en tous lieux en usage.
Vous êtes en service; et moi, par mon bon cœur,
Je veux vous faire ici supporter ce malheur.
(Act I, scene III).

This solicitude is based on a view of human nature in

Les Philosophes amoureux, opposes falsehood to "délicatesse":

En toute occasion la vérité m'enchante,
Et je l'aime encor mieux fière, désobli-
geante,
Qu'un mensonge flatteur, dont le miel em-
pesté
Par un cœur délicat est toujours détesté.
(Act III, scene IV).

We have noted that the term "délicatesse" can be used by a character to imply certain moral scruples in another.

Equally, as we see from this statement and the one made by Julie which we have already quoted, "délicat" can be employed to refer to a moral sense. In the case of Arténice, moreover, dislike of hypocrisy is a standard dictated by the heart; the heart indeed can make a moral judgement.¹⁵

In Le Curieux impertinent, where Damon's reluctance to threaten Léandre's love is dismissed by Crispin as a "belle délicatesse," this very reluctance and his sense of outrage at feigning love for Julie are a sign of Damon's principles:

Me crois-tu donc capable d'imposture?
Qui? moi, j'irois, d'un ton faussement
langoureux,
Feindre que ta maîtresse est l'objet de mes
vœux!
Non. A tous mes discours la vérité préside;
Je ne veux point passer pour un ami perfide.
(Act I, scene VII)

¹⁵The words "délicat" and "délicatesse" are in fact often used by characters with reference to themselves, although not necessarily when condemning deception. The Baronne in Le Tambour nocturne says of those wishing to marry her for her money alone: "Ils vouloient me persuader le contraire; et ma délicatesse, qui pénétroit jusqu'au fond de leur cœur, y voyoit l'intérêt bien plus vif que l'inclination" (Act II, scene V). In L'Amour usé Damon remarks of his scruples: "... je suis trop délicat. Si tout le monde examinait le motif de ses actions, ma foi, les meilleures ne seroient pas trop bonnes ..." (Act IV, scene IV). When expressing a reluctance to marry a man who does not love her, thus making herself vulnerable to the pain of his infidelity and allowing him to give her the "affreuse liberté qui produit la licence," the Comtesse in L'Homme singulier states that: "Il (mon cœur) est trop délicat pour vouloir s'exposer/ Aux tourments infinis qu'on pourroit lui causer ..." (Act V, scene VII).

A character in the traditional comedy, particularly at the beginning of the century, would not have hesitated to exploit Léandre's offer, especially if he, like Damon, loved the woman in question. Crispin in this play happily disregards all moral notions; but Destouches has created in Damon a character who, with his idea of the duties imposed by friendship and of Julie's potential suffering, is concerned both for his own dignity, of which he is fully conscious, and the happiness of another.

Similar integrity and moral indignation are the chief characteristics of the Marquis in Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs. He too is in love with a woman betrothed to his friend, but guided by certain scruples, his intention is to sacrifice Lucile to the Baron:

Le moyen à present, Monsieur, que je la
vois
Promise à mon Ami dont son Pere a fait
choix?
Mon cœur doit renoncer plutôt à ma Maî-
tresse;
L'honneur & le devoir y forcent ma ten-
dresse.
(Act II, scene II).

His virtue becomes clear when this suggestion is resisted by the Baron, who, unaware that he is himself involved, urges the Marquis to adopt the standards of the majority. The Marquis has no very strong or varied arguments to advance in the face of the Baron's advice, saying merely: "L'amour vous feroit-il manquer à l'amitié?" and "Eh quoi, voulez-vous donc que je trompe en ce jour/ Un homme que j'estime, & qui m'aime à son tour?", but his "Le remords que je sens ..." and the mention of an "affront si sanglant" reveal in him principles not possessed by the Baron, a man belonging firmly in the

salon society of his time. As we see in the following act, these two characters are in fact irreconcilable. The Marquis's familiar "Oui, tromper un ami révolte mon idée,/ Et je sens que je blesse au fond la probité," leads into a long argument on the moral standards of the day, including a bitter and sarcastic attack on polite society from the Marquis:

Quel travers dans les mœurs, & quel affreux
délire!
.....
Et l'amour tendre & pur devient un nœud
frivole, ...
Où l'on est dispensé de tenir sa parole.
Le joug de l'Amitié n'est pas plus respecté;
On veut qu'ils soient tous deux exempts de
probité ...
(Act III, scene I).

It is clear that in concluding: "Nous ne devons jamais rougir de la vertu," the Marquis has moved away from outrage at the notion of betraying a friend to a far more general moral statement.¹⁶

In Le Procureur arbitre Poisson has created a character who has set himself the task of proving his integrity in a position which normally corrupts those who hold it:

D'ailleurs, j'ai voulu voir si sous ce
vêtement
Un homme ne pouvoit aller droit un moment
.....
(Scene II).

Refusing to act "contre la conscience" for the first part of the play, in the central scenes Ariste is entrusted with a sum of money, which, briefly, it enters his mind to appropriate:

¹⁶This assertion is reminiscent of Léandre's admonition to Clarice in Les Philosophes amoureux: "On ne doit point du tout rougir d'être jaloux;/ Mais rougir de donner matière à jalousie" (Act II, scene IV)

Mais quelle erreur extrême!
Que dis-je, malheureux? Ne suis-je plus le même?
Qui me fait tout-à-coup à ce point m'oublier?
C'est la maudite robe; elle fait son métier:
.....
Allons, il faut s'armer d'une force nouvelle.
(Scene X).

This horror at his own dishonesty, which proves the strength of his moral principles, is moreover associated in his mind with "délicatesse": his conclusion at the close of this self-examination, for example, is that the case be taken up by "quelques gens moins délicats que moi," if his decision is rejected.

In Boissy's Le Médecin par occasion, Montval's rejection of dishonesty is also a product of his "délicatesse" and proof of his probity: "Je ne puis me résoudre à cette indigne feinte, / Et ma délicatesse" (Act II, scene I), while the Marquis's refusal to countenance a scheme based on deception in L'École de la jeunesse supports his claim of possessing new moral values:

C'est toujours un détour:
Je ne puis m'y prêter. Achevons l'aventure.
La meilleure finesse est d'aller en droi-
ture.
Tout moyen détourné dégrade qui s'en sert.
(Act II, scene V).

There is indignation of a different kind in the Celie of Le Jaloux désabusé: her reaction is caused by the fact that in Eraste's mind all women are classed together as flighty and unfaithful:

Soyez persuadé qu'il est aussi des femmes
Qui des folles ardeurs savent garder
..... leurs ames,
Posséder la vertu telle qu'on doit l'avoir,
Et vivre dans le monde en faisant leur
devoir.
(Act IV, scene VII).

"Vous prétendez, Monsieur, me rendre la complice/ D'un coupable abandon fondé sur un caprice" (Act II, scene VIII), bears witness to this preoccupation just as much as to a sympathy for Damon's wife, however strong this may be. Certainly her sense of guilt is overwhelming when she learns that her husband is still alive: "Il vit, & je suis infidelle!/ Grand Dieu! dans quelle horreur me précipitez-vous?" (Act II, scene IX). The mere idea of love for another man is sufficient for Léonore to regard herself with horror and her reaction here is perhaps a reminiscence of that of Phèdre in Racine's play. There can be no doubt that the language she employs in self-condemnation is that of tragedy rather than comedy: "Victime d'un penchant devenu criminel,/ J'allois m'envelopper d'un opprobre éternel ..." (Act III, scene IV). Gêronte indeed calls Léonore's principles "sa triste vertu" and the result of this awareness and obsession with virtue for its own sake must be the introduction of a more sombre note into the play.

This is the effect of Constance's sense of duty in Le Préjugé à la mode. Her name alone, of course, is a clear enough indication of her nature, but her own consciousness of herself and her obligations as a wife, lend support to Damon's judgement of her: "Epouse vertueuse autant qu'infortunée!" (Act I, scene I). At the outset she states: "Le devoir d'une épouse est de paroître heureuse" (Act I, scene II), but her knowledge of her own virtue is apparent during the action of the play, in her horror and unhappiness on receiving anonymous gifts:

Je laisse dans l'oubli ce qui doit y rester.
.....
Je voudrais ignorer que je suis offensée.
(Act I, scene VII)

Dominated by a sense of duty and of her own moral worth, Constance instinctively responds to cynicism where what she conceives of as virtuous conduct is concerned and is not ashamed of expressing her views. It is not surprising, therefore, that Clitandre's story about a mutual friend who has returned to his wife should draw from her this pronouncement, characterised by her belief in the close association of affection and duty in marriage:

C'est un cœur égaré que le devoir ramene,
Que l'amour fait rentrer dans sa première
chaîne,
Qui n'a jamais trouvé de vrais plaisirs
ailleurs,
Et qui veut être heureux en dépit des
raillleurs.
(Act II, scene III).

In L'École des amis, Monrose's scruples give rise to moral torment. His reluctance at the beginning of the play to approach a woman he believes superior to himself, becomes a moral feeling with the deterioration of his position and his apparent ruin:

MONROSE
Ma constance est du moins un secret ignoré.
.....

ARISTE
Qui peut vous imposer ce pénible silence?

MONROSE
La probité l'exige, & l'intérêt d'Hortence:
.....
J'ai craint de l'offenser, j'ai craint de
l'attendrir.
.....
La distance à présent est trop grande
entre nous;
Il faut que son amant puisse être son
époux.
(Act III, scene III)

This probity, on which all his conduct is based, accounts for his horror in Act V, on being accused of appropriating Hortence's inheritance:

Ah! ciel! quelle noirceur! Je deviens fu-
rieux.
.....
L'horreur qu'on m'attribue est-elle imagi-
nable?
.....
Jusques à mon honneur, quoi! l'on ose at-
tenter!
(Act V, scene I).

Pamela's consciousness of her own virtue is as strong. Constant reference is made to it by all the protagonists, but she herself speaks of a precise aim:

Leur probité les a dédommés de tout.
Elle est telle en effet que chacun la ré-
clame,
qu'elle passe en proverbe, & qu'il est
établi,
Lorsqu'on en veut citer un modèle accom-
pli,
De dire, vertueux comme Andrews & sa femme.
Sa seule ambition est de les imiter.
(Act II, scene I).

In these plays, the principles of the central characters and the suffering caused by them, begin to affect the nature of the plot. Already, in Le Jaloux désabusé Celie's objections to the trick about to be played on Morante provoke an argument. In Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs opposition of a more radical kind stemming from a difference in outlook between the Marquis and the Baron, creates a clash with considerable import as far as the structure is concerned, in that several of the main scenes are given over to discussion on the conduct of the day. Le Irccureur arbitre depends on an attempt by Ariste to prove his integrity. Similarly, there is a moral problem at the very heart of La Fausse Antipathie, particularly for Léonore. That Damon possesses moral scruples is evident from his reluctance to confess his love in view of the fact

that he is married: "Mon aveu deviendrait un outrage, / Qui deshonoreroit l'objet de mon hommage" (Act I, scene VI). It is Léonore's dilemma which is greater and which, increasing with every twist in events, is exploited to furnish much of the action of the play. This inevitably takes the form of questioning and debate. We have noticed, for example, Léonore's sense of outrage at the beginning of Act II on learning that she is believed to be the mistress of a married man; the theme suggested here reaches a climax, in so far as the play may be said to have one, with the argument revolving around what is for Léonore a moral issue, namely Damon's divorce. A heightening of the tension and the final climax to the play occur with Léonore's discovery that her husband is living. The conflict and self-recrimination end only with the revelation of the true identity of Léonore and Damon. The dramatic opposition which Nivelle de la Chaussée has chosen on which to structure his play, built up on a series of confrontations with each new aspect of the situation, is, therefore, a moral one, based as it is on the standards of the central character.

In Mélanide a significant part of the plot concerns the Marquis's dilemma when it is revealed to him that Mélanide is still alive. He is a man of principle, as his words to Théodon, expressing regret that he has broken a pledge never to remarry, make clear: "J'ai trahi mes sermens; j'ai vaincu mes scrupules ..." (Act II, scene I). The situation is not surprisingly one which has moral implications for him:

Cependant, quel/que soit cet amour si funeste,
J'armerai contre lui la vertu qui me reste.
(Act III, scene VI).

The problem on which the play focuses is seen in the same way by all the characters and there is no question of complete separation for the Marquis and Mélanide. Théodon remarks of the former, for instance: "Il reprendra, sans doute, une chaîne si belle./ Il est trop vertueux pour n'être pas fidele" (Act II, scene V). Mélanide also sees the situation in a moral context and urges an appeal to the Marquis's integrity: "On a tant de pouvoir sur un cœur vertueux./ Le sien est fait pour l'être: il l'étoit; j'en suis sûre" (Act IV, scene I). Much of the interest in this play thus rests on whether the Marquis will accept what, for all the characters, is his duty. Suspense is created by his seeming inability to forget Rosalie and the problem is only resolved when the Marquis, confronted at the end with Darviane and Mélanide, yields to the strength of family ties. His statement concluding the action: "O Ciel! tu me fais voir, en comblant tous mes vœux,/ Que le devoir n'est fait que pour nous rendre heureux" (Act V, scene III) suggests the advisability and above all the pleasure of performing one's duty.

Moral feelings also influence the plot in the plays where a character has undergone reform: one part at least of the action tends to be exploited by the dramatist to prove the sincerity of such a character's claims. In Le Préjugé à la mode, for example, Durval's affection for Constance is apparent in Act I, but the fact that he has experienced a kind of moral regeneration only emerges in the discussion with Damon at the beginning of Act II and later in Act III. Above all, it is statements of a didactic nature, such as: "On s'enrichit du bien qu'on fait à ce qu'on aime" (Act II, scene I) and the

attention centres in part on Durval's conduct in a situation which has moral implications. The dramatist creates suspense with Durval's inability to declare his love for his wife, but he always presents Durval as aware of the main problem in his relationship with Constance. At the beginning of Act V, for instance, he asks Damon:

Peut-elle désormais prendre aucune assurance,
Compter sur des sermons que j'ai détruits
d'avance?
(Act V, scene I).

Moreover, in confessing his love at the end, Durval insists as much on possibilities for atonement as on affection for Constance: to her request that past neglect be forgotten, his reply is: "Je veux m'en souvenir pour le mieux réparer," which echoes his first appeal to her: "Laissez-moi .../ Expier mes excès & venger tous vos charmes" (Act V, scene V). That he is completely reformed and that this change is intended by the playwright to provide an example for others, is emphasised in Durval's closing words to the play:

Que l'on m'approuve ou non, mon bonheur me
suffit.
Peut-être mon exemple aura plus de crédit:
On pourra m'imiter. Non, il n'est pas possible
Qu'un préjugé si faux soit toujours invincible.
(Act V, scene VI).

In Voltaire's L'Enfant prodigue a moral theme is established from the outset in the exchange between Euphémon père and Rondon, about Euphémon fils's conduct:

Et son aîné n'aura, pour tout partage,
Que le courroux d'un père qu'il outrage:
Il le mérite, il fut dénaturé.
(Act I, scene I).

The subject is taken up again by Lise, who, while condemning

Euphémon fils, increases the moral nature of the situation by referring to a desire to reform him:

S'il eût aimé, je l'aurais corrigé.
Un amour vrai, sans feinte et sans caprice,
Est en effet le plus grand frein du vice.
(Act I, scene III).

There follow complications of a comic kind with the untimely arrival of a woman to whom Fierenfat had promised marriage and the less comic news that Euphémon fils is dead, but in what might be termed the central scene of the play, the eventual confrontation between Euphémon and Lise, discussion revolves around the sincerity of his change of heart:

J'ai reconnu (j'en jure par vous-même,
Par la vertu que j'ai fui, mais que j'aime),
J'ai reconnu ma détestable erreur ...
(Act IV, scene III).

This theme, of Euphémon's attempts to convince Lise of his new moral standards, continues into Act V, when first Lise and then Euphémon himself win over Euphémon père. The general movement of the play illustrates that true repentance is possible and that virtue can be reborn, as Euphémon père's last words suggest:

Non, il ne faut (et mon cœur le confesse)
Désespérer jamais de la jeunesse.
(Act V, scene VII).

The aim of Pamela is similar. Nivelles de la Chaussée has created in Milord a character who, like Euphémon fils, has already undergone a change of heart before the opening of the play and he places him in a situation which tests his claims. Milord's remorse and desire to atone for the past are apparent above all in the monologue spoken after Pamela is believed to have killed herself:

Celui que je vous offre est sincere & fi-
dele;
Le vôtre lui sert de modele,
Et vos vertus l'ont épuré.
(Act V, scene VII).

The moral theme of L'École de la jeunesse is foreshadowed in D'Autricourt's words to the Marquis at the beginning of the play: "Sur-tout, attendez-vous à bien des injustices;/ Songez que vous avez beaucoup à réparer" (Act I, scene II). The transformation which has taken place within him is described in a speech by the Marquis himself in response to an unjust accusation. It illustrates furthermore that it is the heart which makes moral judgements:

Ce reproche, tout faux qu'il puisse être,
m'accable.
.....
Autrefois j'aurois pû me le dissimuler.
Mon cœur plus indulgent, laissoit accumu-
ler
Mes défauts, mes erreurs, mes torts, mes
ridicules;
.....
Mais, à présent, mon cœur ne me pardonne
rien.
(Act II, scene III).

The action of the play is devoted to the Marquis's attempts to change the accepted view of Clairval'and, therefore, of himself under the name which he has assumed. The didactic nature of this theme is suggested at the outset, during the scene in which D'Autricourt warns the Marquis of the difficulty of altering public opinion:

MARQUIS
Ne pourroit-on prouver, à tous tant que
nous sommes,
Combien la vanité rappetisse les hommes;
Que leur présomption, leur orgueil, leur
fierté,
Ne font que mieux montrer leur médiocrité;
Qu'être riche n'est pas un titre respec-
table?
Il n'est point, sans les mœurs, de grandeur
véritable!
Et la vraie indigence est celle des vertus.

D'AUTRICOURT

Ah! que vous m'enchantez! Ajoutez, au sur-
plus,
Qu'un prodigue a toujours perdu tout ce
qu'il donne;
Qu'à la reconnoissance il n'engage per-
sonne;
Qu'en répandant ses biens sans choix &
sans égard,
On peut s'imaginer les devoir au hazard.
(Act I, scene II).

The conflict of the play, however, that is to say the conflict between the Marquis and society, represented here by the Comtesse, comes into the open at the beginning of Act IV, in a discussion on the possibility of genuine reform. The Marquis's proposition that the "égaremens d'une aveugle jeunesse" are neither lasting nor a guide to true character, is opposed to the Comtesse's assertion that "les premiers pas sont les plus importants" (Act IV, scene I). The likelihood of reconciliation between these two seems in this debate to be remote:

LE MARQUIS

Quelles sont les vertus qui naissent avec
nous?
Eut-on, dès sa naissance, un partage si
doux?
La sagesse précoce est la moins assurée:
.....
C'est celle qu'on acquiert à ses propres
dépens,
Qui se soutient toujours, & nous suit en
tout tems.

LA COMTESSE

Les vertus qu'on acquiert sont si peu na-
turelles,
Que l'on doit, au besoin, fort peu compter
sur elles.
C'est un bien, dont le fonds ne nous appar-
tient pas,
Dont on ne peut jouir qu'à force de com-
bats;
Au lieu qu'un cœur bien né n'a pas à se
défendre;
.....
Il ignore le mal; l'occasion le fuit;
Son heureux naturel le guide & le conduit.

There is thus a certain tension underlying the action throughout the last two acts, a tension which is increased with the arrival of the letter from Paris which reveals the Marquis's identity. The Comtesse rejects him as a husband for Zélide, but the other characters, moved by his acts of virtue and generosity and his disinterested love for Zélide, come to his support. Mme Arnance, for example, finally reveals that it is he who has been helping her and her daughter for so long:

Ce n'étoit pas l'Amour qui l'inspiroit
alors,
Quand il a fait pour nous l'action la plus
belle,
La plus digne à jamais d'une gloire immor-
telle;
Et nous ne la devons qu'à sa seule vertu.
.....
La générosité ne peut être plus pure.
(Act V, scene V).

The play has again proved that virtue alone brings happiness - the Marquis is of course united with Zélide - and provides a warning, contained in the Marquis's words of remorse when his situation appears at its worst, to misguided youth:

Jeunesse déplorable! O source trop féconde
Des erreurs où l'on tombe en entrant dans
le monde!
.....
Que le passé devient une charge importune!
Qu'un début malheureux entraîne d'infortune!
(Act V, scene III).

The Marquis is essentially a man of virtue, as D'Autricourt's assessment of him implies: "Les vices de l'esprit ne sont pas ceux du cœur./ Les vôtres n'ont été que la faute de l'âge" (Act I, scene II). The corrupt conduct referred to in the play was an aberration and his heart, the source of all moral notions, had never changed. The generosity and consideration, the "bienfaisance" which he demonstrates before and

during the action are not therefore qualities suddenly acquired, but the result of a rediscovery of moral obligations. He and the Comtesse are in fact in agreement, since his is "un cœur bien né." The same is true of all the central characters in this kind of play. The change of heart of which they speak is not in effect a change, merely a rebirth of a certain side of their nature which had been suppressed or neglected. Damon says of Durval, for example: "Si le mode empoisonne un naturel heureux, / A quoi sert le bonheur d'être né vertueux?" (Act II, scene V), thus suggesting that he had always been good at bottom and had been lead astray by the fashionable prejudices and pursuits of his day. Similarly Euphémon fils claims of himself: "Le vice était étranger dans mon cœur: / Ce cœur n'a plus les taches criminelles / Dont il couvrit ses clartés naturelles ..." (Act IV, scene III). Pamela, who had observed of Milord at the beginning of the play: "La violence de ses feux / Altere, pour moi seule, un caractère heureux" (Act I, scene III), makes this judgement of him towards the end: "... ce qui me rassure, / C'est que la probité, la vertu la plus pure, / Dans cette ame si noble a repris le dessus" (Act IV, scene VIII).

The moral regeneration of the main protagonist has an effect on the structure of the play. The didactic tendency already evident in statements made by various characters about themselves and others, is made clear by the direction taken by the action itself, which would appear to prove that virtue is the only true source of contentment and will always be rewarded. The intention of the dramatists, who attribute principles to likeable characters, or who make them appear

likeable by the very possession of these principles, allowing them to triumph at the end of the play, cannot be mistaken. Presumably they also hoped to induce a feeling of pleasant satisfaction in the spectator by this means.

The features which are to be admired in a protagonist are not necessarily the result of noble birth. Indeed, as we have seen, the term "vraie noblesse" is often used to designate true merit as opposed to that depending on rank or wealth; Jasmin, a servant, is capable of feeling "humanité". A consistent pattern in the relationship between social position and moral worth is in fact difficult to discern in the new comedy. On the one hand, Lisette's statement in Le Glorieux that: "Mon cœur est au-dessus de ma condition./ J'ai des principes sûrs contre l'occasion" (Act I, scene IX), suggests that virtue is the attribute of the upper class only and Lisette is discovered to belong to that class. In La Force du naturel Destouches has created in Babet a character whose sentiments appear to be above her station; Mathurine says of her, for instance: "Elle a le cœur si haut que c'est une piquié" (Act II, scene V), before it is revealed that she is in reality of noble birth. The Baronne in Voltaire's Nanine states that: "Le sang fait tout, et la naissance donne/ Des sentiments à Nanine inconnus" (Act II, scene X). This statement cannot in any sense be called objective, however, in view of the Baronne's dislike of Nanine; indeed the Comte replies to it: "Je n'en crois rien" and, as we have seen, Nanine has strong principles.

The notion that moral standards are synonymous with rank is also challenged by the servant Guérault in La Force du

natural when he speaks of Julie's love for him:

Est-ce la qualité
Qui rend un homme aimable? ...
.....
Nous sommes immolés à la mauvaise honte,
Vous autres, vous de rien: mais un cœur gé-
néreux
Se donne au vrai mérite; et non pas aux
aïeux.
(Act II, scene I).

Julie herself is not conscious of her virtue as any woman of nobler birth: "Je n'ai pas le cœur haut, mais j'ai de la vertu./ Je veux rendre Pabet à son père, à sa mère" (Act IV, scene XII). Lise, the daughter of a "bourgeois" in L'Enfant prodigue, and Pamela in Nivelle de la Chaussée's play are both characters of high moral standards. In the latter the notion that the lower classes might possess virtue at first causes surprise, to Miledi at least:

Si ne le voyois, je ne pourrois comprendre
Qu'en un état si bas la vertu pût descen-
dre.
Pourquoi n'est-elle pas l'appanage du rang,
Le signe d'un illustre sang?
Par un effet triste & bizarre,
Plus on est élevé, plus elle paroît rare.
(Act V, scene IV).

As we can see from this speech, however, Miledi has moved from astonishment at Pamela's scruples to a suggestion that such probity can only exist at the lower end of the social scale. Nevertheless, in the same play La Jewks is portrayed as a woman with no capacity for moral feeling, good or bad: "Eh! ces sortes de gens n'ont ni vertus, ni vices./ L'exemple les dirige; & leur soumission,/ Dans leur cœur mal instruit, porte l'illusion" (Act V, scene VII).

The picture is thus rather a confused one and the conclusion which seems to suggest itself is that virtue is a quality

of those, in the lower classes, who have received a certain education or who have had some contact with aristocratic or upper middle class families, as Lisette, Pamela and Julie have all done. This is the pattern which would seem to emerge in spite of the fact that for those of noble birth moral scruples are instinctive, inspired so often by spontaneous feelings of the heart. If there is some uncertainty about this question, there can be no doubt that the qualities which receive praise and approval in the new comedy do not belong to the inveterate habitu  of fashionable society. "Vertu" and "probit ", as we have noted in Les Philosophes amoureux, Le Dissipateur or Les Dehors trompeurs, are increasingly opposed to and can hardly exist alongside the cynicism of the libertine or the superficiality and affectedness of the society man or woman.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Didacticism as a relationship between characters

The writers of the new comedy have thus created a kind of elite, who are both aware and proud of possessing a certain moral worth and who, in crude terms, "win out" at the end of the play because of it. It is but a short step from consciousness of superiority in oneself to a desire to reform others: indeed we have already seen that many statements intended as observation have a didactic ring to them. The tirade by Constance in Le Préjugé à la mode (1735), already quoted, might be said to contain a "lesson" for Clitandre just as much as approval of Sainfar;¹ similarly, the argument between the Marquis and the Baron in Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs (1740) involves the former in strictures to the Baron about his obligations.² Although the line between comment and a wish to change others is not easy to draw, the urge to offer advice and to correct indifference or immorality is clearly discernible in the new comedy. It may be said to revolve around two or three dominant themes, the first of them being moral attitudes in the most general sense.

In Destouches's Le Médisant (1715), for example, Damon is condemned by Valère, a man of principle, for his malicious gossip:

Vois jusques à quel point t'aveugle ton
penchant,
Et rougis avec moi d'un trait aussi mé-
chant.

¹ See Chapter Six, p. 243.

² See Act III, scene I, part of which is quoted in Chapter Six, p. 239.

Je viens me plaindre à vous de vos folles
dépenses.
.....
Il (votre père) avait bien
affaire
De suer, de veiller, d'entasser pour un
fils
Qui prodigue des biens si durement acquis!
(Act I, scene VI).

Unperturbed by the mockery of both Cléon and Le Comte, he concludes with an explicit moral lesson:

Le (mon fils) voilà ruiné,
Et par son père même il est abandonné.
L'exemple est fait pour vous, tâchez d'en
faire usage.

The warning about the future contained in the Baron's speech here is a feature of Don Félix's words to Don Fernand concerning his political success in L'Ambitieux et l'indis-
crète (1737):

En vous toute la cour adore la faveur,
Vous croyez être aimé; mais, au moindre
malheur,
Cette foule d'amis, que le crédit fait
naître,
Vous la verrez, mon fils, tout à coup dis-
paroitre ...
(Act I, scene VII).

Don Félix is in fact a character inclined to give advice to everyone⁴ and seems a kind of moral conscience in a court which, if not corrupt, is at least self-seeking and, in the case of Dona Béatrice, foolish and indiscreet.

In Nivelles de la Chaussée's L'Ecole des amis (1737) Ariste intends to reform Monrose, or rather to render him

⁴He gives this warning, for instance, to Dona Béatrice, concerning her attempts to make Clarice a centre of attraction at court: "Vous ferez beaucoup mieux/ De la cacher ici, que d'exercer ses yeux./ Leur silence sied bien dans un âge si tendre,/ Et peut-être trop tôt ils se feront entendre" (Act I, scene V).

less arrogant.⁵ He is a character with a liking for observation about certain sections of society, especially the court, of which he remarks:

La Cour est en tout tems
Une terre inconnue à tous ses habitans.
.....
On y marche toujours sur des pièges nou-
veaux;
.....
Tel, au gré de ses vœux, s'y maintient au-
jourd'hui,
Qui demain ne pourra faire tête à l'orage:
Et l'on finit souvent par y faire naufrage.
(Act II, scene I).

When provoked by Monroe's expectations of immediate recognition, Ariste develops his observations in order to correct such an attitude:

Les bienfaits sont à ceux qui les ont mé-
rités.
Les graces ne sont point des biens hérédi-
taires;
.....
Vos peres ont laissé leur nom à soutenir,
Leur vertu, leur exemple, & leur carriere
à suivre.
Voilà ce qu'après eux il faut faire re-
vivre ...
(Act II, scene I).

Ariste's language, and in particular his use of "il faut" and "vous devez" in this scene, makes plain his desire to direct Monroe and we can see that the dramatist is not merely confronting the wise and the unwise, as Molière so often did.

In Mélanide there is the same tendency to advise and even command. She displays firstly a general wish to calm

⁵It is interesting to note how many characters of this kind, like some of the so-called "raisonneurs" in Molière, have the name Ariste, which derives presumably from the Greek "aristos", meaning "the best". In L'Ingrat Géronte's brother, a reasonable man who supports the lovers, is called Ariste; so too are the principal protagonists, both men of feeling, in Le Philosophe marié and Le Procureur arbitre, while Ariste is a moralising character in L'École des amis and Le Méchant.

Darviane's impetuosity:

N'apprendrez-vous jamais
L'art de dissimuler, ou de souffrir en paix
Les contrariétés dont la vie est semée?
(Act I, scene II).

More specifically, however, she orders him to return to the army, concluding with this maxim, which reveals a belief that the heart is the source of moral standards:

Le cœur d'un galant homme est son plus sûr
oracle:
Interrogez le vôtre, & suivez son conseil.
(Act I, scene II).

The subject of marriage also creates a didactic relationship between characters. More often than not, the "lesson" involved here is given to a cynical character for whom the union is purely one of convenience; in other words we shall see again the conflict of two distinctly opposed sets of ideas. Damon offers Léandre advice of a kind in Le Curieux impertinent (1710), but his observation forms a simple confrontation of opinion:

Sur le mariage,
Voici tout ce que doit penser un homme sage.
On peut s'en trouver mal, on peut s'en trouver bien:
Mais on doit, en formant ce dangereux lien,
A tout événement s'attendre sans rien craindre,
Et si le malheur vient, le souffrir sans se plaindre.
(Act I, scene VII).

Far more characteristic of the new comedy is the judgement on the behaviour of Valère in L'Obstacle imprévu (1717), firstly by Pasquin, who asks Valère: "Comptez-vous de vivre comme vous faites, quand vous aurez une femme?" (Act I, scene I), and then by Angélique who believes in mutual affection in marriage and who states: "Je veux réformer votre cœur, et

le rendre capable d'une passion aussi délicate que la mienne ..." (Act I, scene II). The expression "passion délicate" is striking. It could be taken to mean that Angélique's is a gentle and discerning emotion, but it may be possible that there is in this feeling a moral element, particularly in view of the association of the phrase with "cœurs tendres et vertueux." In this case, it is love together with a sense of duty which Angélique is attempting to awaken in Valère - a truly didactic aim.

In Les Philosophes amoureux Léandre, for whom marriage is a union "que forment l'amour et la vertu," reproves Lisidor for his mercenary attitude towards the relationship:

... un homme d'honneur qui pense, qui raisonne,
A peu d'égard au bien, et songe à la personne,
Parce qu'il veut trouver son plaisir, son bonheur,
Dans celle à qui sa foi doit engager son cœur.
(Act II, scene II).

This notion is didactic in the sense that it appears to contain a desire to shame Lisidor into change. More important are Léandre's words to Clarice in Act II and the tone in which they are delivered. His standards are summed up in one moralising statement which attempts to alter Clarice's views:

On ne doit point du tout rougir d'être jaloux;
Mais rougir de donner matière à la jalousie.
(Act II, scene IV).

Once again the terminology chosen here by Léandre is a sufficient sign of the spirit in which this remark is made.

In Le Préjugé à la mode, despite Durval's new perception

The real debate, however, revolves around Durval's reluctance to declare his love to Constance, through fear of society's ridicule. This hesitation leads to clear-cut opposition between respect for contemporary prejudice and scorn of the latter, expressed in Damon's words, uttered "froidement":

Tout bien examiné, vous verrez qu'un mari
Ne doit jamais aimer que la femme d'autrui.

To this he adds "ironiquement":

Le serment de s'aimer n'est donc que pour
la forme?
L'intérêt le fait taire; il ne tient qu'un
moment ...

Damon in fact outlines with great sympathy the plight of women, the playwright deliberately inserting the stage direction "tendrement" to indicate the tone in which the following reproach to Durval is to be delivered:

Mais une femme n'a pour soutenir ses droits,
Que sa fidélité, sa faiblesse & ses larmes;
Un époux ne craint point de si fragiles
armes.
Ah! peut-on faire ainsi, sans le moindre
remord,
Un abus si cruel de la loi du plus fort?

This speech reveals a desire to change Durval, in particular by awakening his pity for woman's fate. It is thus a reform of the heart and not the mind which Damon advocates and which indeed concerns not only marriage but general principles. This is evident in his objections to Durval's notion that the dictates of fashion must be adhered to:

Oui, lorsqu'il ne s'agit
Que d'un goût passager, d'un meuble ou d'un
habit:
Mais la vertu n'est point sujette à ses
caprices;
La mode n'a point droit de nous donner des
vices,
Ou de légitimer le crime au fond des cœurs.

Il suffit qu'un usage intéresse les mœurs,
Pour qu'on ne doive plus en être la vic-
time;
L'ex^eemple ne peut pas autoriser un crime.
Faisons ce qu'on doit faire, & non pas ce⁶
qu'on fait.

The scene of confession here is a long one. Dominated by the tone which characterises the speech quoted above, by a call for constancy in moral standards and an individual conscience, it is markedly different from the similar scene in Le Jaloux désabusé. A simple comparison between the two scenes, one in 1709, the other in 1735, exemplifies the change which has taken place in the comedy particularly as Le Jaloux désabusé is itself a play which is moving away from the traditional mould.⁷

In L'École des meres Doligni fils is shocked by the Marquis's intention to gain pleasure by merely feigning love for Marianne and urges on him a different standard, namely "la probité":

Ah! Marquis, quel projet! quelle malignité!
Si vous réussissez dans cette indignité,
A vos remords, un jour, craignez de rendre
compte.
Croyez que, tôt ou tard, ils ne pardonnent
rien.
Renoncez à la gloire, ou plutôt à la honte
D'établir votre honneur sur les débris du
sien.
(Act I, scene V).

This evocation of the future is the culmination of constant questioning and admonition throughout the scene, although the Marquis himself remains quite unmoved.

⁶The "caprices" referred to here are those of "l'usage".

⁷In this play, the "confession" scene is based on Dorante's account of his former life and motivation in neglecting Celie, his abhorrence of the attention paid to his wife by other men and his hesitation about declaring his love to her. There is no moral debate, although Dorante does show remorse for his previous conduct.

In the same play, La Fleur, like Pasquin in L'Obstacle imprévu also tries to change his master:

Mais, encore une fois, sçachez vous limiter:
Si vous ne changez pas tout-à-fait de conduite,
Empêchez que du moins on n'en parle en
tous lieux.
(Act I, scene VI).

This advice is clearly founded to a certain extent on prudence, but a kind of integrity also prompts La Fleur to make these statements. The notion that La Fleur might in fact possess some moral feeling is supported by his exclamation: "Ah! pauvre malheureuse!" (Act IV, scene I), on learning that the Marquis has not the slightest intention of reforming in order to please his future wife.

The question of family ties is also discussed with a didactic relationship between the speakers. In L'Obstacle imprévu, for example, Angélique reproves Lisimon for his attitude towards Valère:

Ah! quel emportement! quelle fureur! En vérité, cela ne vous sied point. Un père de famille doit mesurer ses discours, et conserver toujours son caractère.
(Act II, scene V).

There is no mistaking the tone here, either in Angélique's words themselves or in Lisimon's reply, which accuses her "de me prêcher si mal à propos." Whereas Angélique is only an observer of the relationship, however, Ariste in Le Philosophe marié is involved in a family which is not totally united and his "lesson" to Géronte on the subject brings us close to some of the notions analysed in the moral treatises of the time. Ariste's affection for Lisimon, his father, becomes reproof of Géronte when he witnesses the latter's rudeness:

There is no question of their dilemma being presented in a favourable light, however, or of their hesitation being understood by anyone except themselves. Indeed in the original version of the play, Angélique utters a castigation of these characters which is extremely forceful, containing the accusation that they have "foulé sans pitié, / Et les devoirs du sang, & ceux de l'amitié" (Act IV, scene IX). Her speech is a long one and continues with the suggestion that:

... il pouvoit être doux
D'acquitter sa famille en s'offrant pour
époux.
Plaisir, honneur, devoir, pitié de sa
jeunesse,
.....
Les prieres d'un pere, & les bienfaits du
sien,
Que de motifs puissans qui sur vous n'ont
pû rien!

This is a part of the play which Piron chose to omit when revising it, but we can see that, in the first instance, he had intended Angélique's admonition to include observations about general standards of a fairly far-reaching kind.⁸

The subject of friendship also reveals in characters a didactic tendency. In Le Curieux impertinent Julie makes a reference to the duties imposed by the relationship when Damon announces his wish to ask for her hand in marriage: "Damon, c'est trop manquer aux droits de l'amitié" (Act IV, scene XI), but the theme is developed to a significant extent by Nivelles de la Chaussée in two plays, Le Préjugé à la mode and L'École des amis. In the former, there is a definition

⁸For Piron's account of the changes made in this play, see his Préface, Cœuvres complètes d'Alexis Piron, ed. R. de Juvigny (Paris, 1776), I, 10. The handling of the sons' attitude remains the same in the revised version, as does the overall direction of the action. The passage quoted above is taken from the first edition of the play, published in Paris in 1729.

of friendship by Damon in Act II scene I, before the debate about marriage which we have already analysed. Having dismissed false friends as tyrants, whose only wish is to enslave the object of their affection, he continues:

Mais la vraie amitié n'est point impéri-
euse;
C'est une liaison libre & délicateuse,
Dont le cœur & l'esprit, la raison & le
tems,
Ont ensemble formé les nœuds toujours
charmans;
Et sa chaîne, au besoin, plus souple &
plus liante,
Doit prêter de concert, sans qu'on la
violente.
(Act II, scene I).

For Damon the relationship is based on a rapport of both the feelings and the mind, and we see once more the liking for abstract statement in a man who is sure of his own principles.

In L'Ecole des amis, Ariste, interrupting a discussion between Aramont and Dornane in Act I, scene VI, remarks:

L'amitié qui se vante est souvent indis-
crette.
.....
L'amitié n'admet point de basses jalousies:
C'est à l'amour qu'il faut laisser ces fré-
nésies.

Subsequently there is a "lesson", or rather a warning to Monrose in Act III, scene III, which opens with an attack on a common form of friendship:

Quand j'y pense, entre nous, je vois pré-
sentement
Que l'amitié se donne & se prend aisément;
Elle est, comme l'amour, hazardeuse & lé-
gere.
Une conformité, frivole & passagere,
D'âge, d'état, d'humeur, & sur-tout de
plaisir,
Sans nul autre examen, suffit pour nous
saisir.

To this somewhat negative statement he adds a positive

description of the relationship:

Mais l'amitié, du moins comme je l'envisage,
De part & d'autre exige un long apprentissage;
Et vous devez sçavoir, à vos propres dépens,
Qu'un ami véritable est l'ouvrage du tems.

This in fact brings us no nearer an understanding of its nature; it does little more than link up with Ariste's former remark in Act I, scene VI that Dornane's account of the relationship, in which he states that it is characterised by complete similarity in taste and a desire to please, is better applied to love. Ariste's advice shows us above all that anything can be the subject for comment by a man of wisdom and moral principles with a belief in his own integrity.

Here and elsewhere the effect on the play is more significant than the ideas about the relationship itself and it is in fact by the outcome that a dramatist may seek to influence the spectator. The advice offered by characters such as Ariste is often ignored, indeed ridiculed. In Le Médisant, Damon replies to Valère's criticism, for example: "Qu'à ton âge il sied mal de faire le Caton!" (Act III, scene VII). Both Lisimon in L'Obstacle imprévu and Cléon in Le Dissipateur, despise the intention to "prêcher". Damis, in Le Préjugé à la mode, states, when distributing parts for a play: "Damon aura tout juste un rôle de Caton" (Act II, scene IV), and Dona Béatrice in L'Ambitieux says of Don Félix: "Un Caton à la cour est un triste animal" (Act I, scene V). The Baron, in Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs, advises the Marquis against a moral stance in society with: "Vous allez ... /.../ d'un Caton précoce acquérir le surnom ..." (Act III, scene I). It would

seem that the playwrights themselves, however, support a comment made by Valère in Le Médisant: "Il est beau de vouloir corriger son prochain" (Act III, scene VII), for moral "lessons" and the desire to reform others begin to determine, directly or indirectly, the very nature of the plot of the comedy. Increasingly, the opposition which invariably exists between a cynical man of the world and one of strong moral notions is exploited to provide part of the dramatic action. At the very least, the close of the play may often justify the didactic statements of one or more characters. In Destouches's L'Ambitieux, for instance, it cannot be said that the difference in outlook of Don Félix and Don Fernand provides the substance of the play - the moral pronouncements and discussions are too limited for that. Don Félix's warnings to his son in Act II⁹ and again in Act V before Don Fernand's final downfall, prove true, however.¹⁰ The overall direction of the play and its eventual solution would therefore seem to suggest that in the conflict of views here expressed, Don Fernand was wrong and Don Félix right.

Similarly in Le Curieux impertinent, Damon reminds Léandre of the duties imposed by friendship, and its limits, in a reproving fashion:

Poursuis, si tu le veux, sans moi ton entreprise;
Mais ne présume pas que j'en sois de moitié,
Quelques droits que sur moi te donne l'amitié.

⁹See p. 261 above.

¹⁰In Act V, scene II he states: "Ciel! quel aveuglement produit l'ambition!/. . ./. Ouvrez, ouvrez les yeux, et vous verrez vous-même/ Que votre esprit séduit mettoit un trop haut prix/ A des biens qu'un grand cœur regarde avec mépris;/ Que vous idolâtrez une vaine chimère."

Ces droits, mon cher Léandre, ont des bor-
nes prescrites;
Vouloir ce que tu veux, c'est passer les
limites.
(Act I, scene VII).

Even when he has been won over to carry out Léandre's plan, he repeats his warning with: "Cela tournera mal" (Act I, scene VII). In the subsequent action, when at certain crucial moments Damon confronts Léandre with Julie's reactions, his account is always accompanied by an admonition. In Act III, for example, we find this exchange:

LÉANDRE
Julie à t'écouter a moins de répugnance,
Tu crains de triompher.

DAMON
Non, mais, en vérité,
Si la chose arrivoit, tu l'as bien mérité;
Et je trouve, entre nous, qu'elle t'est
trop fidèle ...
(Act III, scene VII).

Events prove Damon right; Léandre, moreover, realises both this and the moral implications of the outcome, stating at the close: "Je perds tout ce que j'aime, et le mérite bien" (Act V, scene VI). In a sense, therefore, Damon's lesson or advice to Léandre is acted out on the stage, even though Damon does not set out with the specific intention of reforming Léandre. A moral is pointed at the end to underline the message, firstly by Léandre himself, as we have seen, but more forcibly by Crispin:

Pour réfléchir, Messieurs, la matière est
fort ample.
Amants, maris jaloux, profitez de l'ex-
emple;
Soyez de bonne foi, croyez qu'on l'est
aussi;
Et pour prendre leçon, venez souvent ici.
(Act V, scene VI).

Such an invitation to the audience can leave no doubt here as

servant to dupe his master, with or without the help of others.

The first comedy in which this type of plot is used is Baron's L'Homme à bonne fortune (1686). Here Lucinde has fallen in love with a man her friends and household believe to be unsuitable; much of Act I is in fact taken up with a series of attempts by the servants to make both her and Moncade adopt more reasonable courses of behaviour. This begins with Marton's words to Lucinde:

... dès qu'il a vu que vous le vouliez
toujours fidele & toujours amoureux, a-t-
il seulement pu se résoudre à conserver les
moindres égards pour vous? Que n'avez-
vous pas fait pour lui? Songez enfin,
Madame, que vous vous devez quelque chose
à vous-même. (Act I, scene IV).

This is followed by reproaches of a more explicit moral nature from Pasquin to Moncade, when told that his master has fallen in love with Lucinde's friend:

Leonor, amie de Lucinde, à sa vue! vous
n'y songez pas, ou vous voulez vous per-
dre absolument. Hé! Monsieur, où est la
probité, l'honneur: songez-vous, vous
dis-je (Act I, scene X).

Finally we see Marton, too, trying to reform Moncade:

Que ne donnerois-je pas pour vous voir
faire de sérieuses réflexions sur votre
humeur; pour moi, je vous crois trop
honnête homme pour ne vous pas reprocher
quelquefois votre conduite avec Lucinde.
(Act I, scene XI).

Moncade's only reply is the mockery of such statements as:

"J'aime les moralités, elles endorment" (Act I, scene X). We have therefore an unprincipled and superficial libertine set against a group of characters of pronounced moral persuasions. It is of course not unusual in the comedy for a servant to remonstrate with his master; no more obvious example of this

comes to mind perhaps than Sganarelle and his constant haranguing of Don Juan in Molière's play. One could mention too Dorine's attempts to reason with her master in Le Tartuffe and those of Toinette in Le Malade imaginaire. These characters have an affection for the family but are concerned about the inadvisability of certain kinds of behaviour, whereas Pasquin and Marton in L'Homme à bonne fortune, while they feel real sympathy for one character, namely Lucinde, also experience a sense of shock at Moncade's lack of integrity. The servants have thus become mentor figures. Faced, however, with flippancy or deafness in the master, they resort to trickery, not to show him the folly of his actions, but to gain revenge on behalf of another and to chasten. Most of the events after the initial moral lesson stem from Leonor's question in Act I: "Ne saurions-nous trouver le moyen de faire donner Moncade dans quelque panneau?" (Act I, scene II), an idea put into action by Marton and then by Pasquin. Moncade is unmasked at the end of the play and although he shows no sign of repentance, he is nevertheless abandoned by Leonor and Lucinde, who gives her hand to Eraste. At the close, Pasquin implies the moral of what has happened with the words: "Si cela pouvoit le rendre sage! ..." (Act V, scene IX).

In Destouches's L'Ingrat, where Damis is interested only in the fortune of the woman he is to marry, Pasquin attempts to arouse in his master a sense of what he owes to Géronte:

PASQUIN

Que dirat-on de vous?

DAMIS, en riant.

Tout ce que l'on voudra.

PASQUIN

C'est une ingratitude; on vous en blâmera.

DAMIS

Ingratitude ou non, je songe à ma fortune.

PASQUIN

Il n'est pas d'un bon cœur

DAMIS

Un bon cœur importune.

PASQUIN

On n'a pour un ingrat que haine et mépris.
(Act I, scene VI).

These recriminations, which recur in Act II, with asides from Pasquin to Damis on the perfidy of his behaviour to Isabelle, are clearly seen by Pasquin for what they are, moral lessons aimed at reforming Damis, for he says: "Je me tue à prêcher, vous allez votre train" (Act I, scene VI). They are remonstrations based both on notions of what is right, on qualities such as "vertu" and "reconnaissance" and on a concern for Damis born of long service. This affection, however, turns to disgust when confronted with cynicism and Pasquin seeks revenge by exploiting the reappearance of a woman to whom Damis had promised marriage and he finally succeeds in discrediting his master. Damis, unrepentant, is not reformed, but neither does he win Isabelle or Orphise. As Pasquin makes clear in his last speech: "(au parterre) Vous avez vu punir le plus grand des ingrats:/ Profitez de l'exemple et ne l'imitez pas" (Act V, scene VII), the entire action, bringing about Damis's downfall, presents a warning to the audience.

Pasquin in L'École des pères is a servant of a similar kind and he is moreover well aware that he is somewhat unusual for his time, distinguishing himself from "ces fripons qu'on voit, sur la Scène, à Paris,/ Toujours prêts à tromper les Pères pour les Fils" (Act I, scene IV). Although Pasquin himself does not attack Géronte's sons directly, certain themes

are established from the first scenes of the play and in fact the exposition takes the form almost entirely of moral discussion.¹¹ G ronte, for example, makes plain that he is aware of what he owes to an old friend, now dead, and that he sees it as his duty to provide for Ang lique, his friend's daughter. Ang lique in her turn reciprocates the gratitude felt by G ronte for her father:

Plus ce P re est trahi, plus son sort m'in-
t resse.
Je sens m me, oui, je sens qu'envers lui
ma tendresse
Me charge des devoirs que l'on ne lui rend
pas.
(Act I, scene IV).

Subsequently, G ronte presents the situation to his sons, asking that they fulfil the obligation he can no longer discharge:

[je] suis dans l'impuissance
De payer des bienfaits que jadis j'ai re-
 us;
A des Fils vertueux j'ai recours l -dessus.
(Act III, scene VII).

The plot is founded on the revenge taken against G ronte's sons by Pasquin and the rest of the characters and when all the tricks and false rumours of the play have revealed to G ronte his sons' true character, there can be no doubt of the moral intention of the play. G ronte's exclamation: "Enfans d natur s, que tout le monde abhorre,/ .../ L ches! qu'attendez-vous d'Ang lique & de moi?" (Act V, scene VII) is reinforced by Chrisalde's: "Ang lique & mon Fr re ont des

¹¹The original title of the play, Les Fils ingrats indicated that a moral judgment had indeed already been made by the dramatist. Piron altered it, however, believing that "l'ancien titre annon ait un vice horrible ..." (Pr face, Œuvres compl tes, I, 3). The play is still intended to have a kind of moral purpose in presenting a father's infatuation with his sons, however, and Piron would wish to "joindre l'utile   l'agr able" (I, 3).

vertus sans prix./ Ils sont récompensés, & vous êtes punis" (Act V, scene VIII). In this didactic relationship between the characters, the reproaches are taken to the point of open hostility.

The theme of a character wishing to correct another or to take a kind of revenge is also to be seen in Gresset's Le Méchant (1747). The title of the play is an indication of the dramatist's position and those who see through Cléon, namely Lisette and Ariste, desire to reveal him for what he is, not a ridiculous figure full of illusions, but a man who is morally reprehensible. At the end of the play Ariste underlines what has been achieved through the tricks devised by Lisette and shows that the dramatist has a moral aim:

Tôt ou tard la vertu, les graces, les ta-
lents,
Sont vainqueurs des jaloux, et vengés des
méchants.
(Act V, scene IV).

However plain the position of the playwright may be in the plays which we have examined, the character who is to be reformed remains unrepentant and does not participate in the spirit of harmony at the close. In Marivaux's L'Ile des esclaves (1725), however, the administration of a "lesson" takes a different form. Iphicrate and Euphrosine have become the slaves of Arlequin and Cléanthis for the purpose outlined by Trivelin at the start:

Nous ne nous vengeons plus de vous, nous
vous corrigeons; ce n'est plus votre vie
que nous poursuivons, c'est la barbarie
de vos cœurs que nous voulons détruire;
nous vous jetons dans l'esclavage pour
vous rendre sensibles aux maux qu'on y
éprouve ... (Scene II).

The reform envisaged, therefore, by Trivelin is clearly one which takes place as a result of an appeal to the heart. Admittedly, mockery, totally supplanting the moralising usually employed in a play with this kind of theme, is used by the servants, but it is designed to reawaken the "sensibilité" of their superiors and thus achieve a new understanding between master and servant. In need of pity themselves¹² and willing eventually to give compassion in their turn, Iphicrate and Euphrosine experience feelings previously unknown to them and admit the extent to which they have destroyed the dignity of those who are, supposedly, their inferiors. Indeed Iphicrate comments to Euphrosine of the servants' greater readiness to repent: "... quel exemple pour nous, Madame, vous m'en voyez pénétré" (Scene X). A splendid tirade from Cléanthis in this very scene completes her mistress's transformation and the four characters are brought together in complete reconciliation at the end of the play.

In Destouches's Le Glorieux (1732) the notion of "correction" is introduced as an important one at the end of Act I, by Lycandre's words of the Comte: "J'imagine un moyen qui le corrigera" (Act I, scene IX). This is followed by a direct attack from Lycandre on his son in Act II:

¹²See, for instance, Euphrosine's words to Arlequin in Scene VIII: "Tu peux ici m'outrager autant que tu le voudras; je suis sans asile et sans défense ... j'ai besoin de la compassion de tout le monde, de la tienne même, Arlequin ..." His reply: "J'ai perdu la parole" is indicative of the way in which his feelings have been touched; this exchange illustrates precisely how an appeal to and a response of the feelings brings about the dénouement.

Lisette also gives him what must be regarded as a moral "lesson", summing up her advice with: "Voilà mon sentiment. Profitez-en, ou non ..."

Le discours d'Isabelle étoit votre portrait,
Et son discernement vous a peint trait pour
trait.
.....
Je ne vous dirai pas: changez de caractère;
.....
Mais du moins je vous dis, songez à vous
contraindre ...
(Act III, scene V).

Lycandre is most closely concerned with this theme in the play, however, as we see when he reappears in Act IV and declares to Lisette:

Votre cœur le prévient, et l'ingrat vous
méprise!
Ah! je veux profiter de cette occasion,
Pour jouir devant vous de sa confusion,
Quand le temps permettra de vous faire
connoître.
.....
..... et sa présomption
Mérite qu'avec lui prenant le ton de père,
Je fasse à ses hauteurs une leçon sévère.
(Act IV, scene III).

The confrontation between father and son takes place in scene VII of this act, when an attempt is made to chasten and shame the Comte with reproaches; the latter is not reformed at this stage, however, and his ultimate punishment comes only in the final scene, where Lycandre reveals his identity before the entire household and leaves no doubt as to his purpose:

L'état où je parois, et sa confusion,
D'un excessif orgueil sont la punition.
(Act V, scene VI).

The culmination of a series of didactic scenes in this play takes the form therefore of a clash between Lycandre and the Comte, in which the latter, overcome by his father's "Redoute mon courroux, / Ma malédiction, ou tombe à mes genoux"

(Act V, scene VI), is, one might say, forcibly reformed. He certainly admits the error of his ways and, most significant of all, himself points the moral of the play at the end:

Il faut se faire aimer; on vient de m'en
convaincre;
Et je sens que la gloire et la présomption
N'attirent que la haine et l'indignation.
(Act V, scene VI).

We have already noted that in Le Dissipateur the Baron tries to change Cléon, but Julie had also suggested a desire to reform him when saying to Finette:

Tu sais que Cléon m'aime, et que j'aime
Cléon:
Mais à le corriger en vain je me fatigue;
Je ne puis mettre un frein à son humeur
prodigue.
(Act I, scene II).

It rapidly becomes apparent in fact that Julie and Finette are exploiting Cléon, that Julie indeed has initiated a whole series of stories and events destined to ruin Cléon financially and to prove to him the folly of his behaviour and misguided attachment to certain society figures. It is these inventions which we gradually witness taking effect during the course of the action. Ultimately in Act V, his fortune gone, Cléon is disillusioned and realises the error of his judgements:

Inutile remords,
Pourquoi me tourmenter? O raison trop tar-
dive!
Que ne prévenois-tu le malheur qui m'arrive!
Je suis abandonné, trahi, déshérité,
Et, pour comble de maux, je l'ai bien mé-
rité.
Compter sur des amis; quelle étoit ma
folie!
(Act V, scene XV).

This play takes the form of an acting out of the moral lesson given to Cléon by the Baron at the outset, the tricks and lies told by Julie and all the members of the household proving

that he was right. Cléon, in realising and accepting this, draws the moral of the play himself:

Pour comble de bienfaits, vous m'avez
rendu sage;
Et je vais éprouver dans les plus doux
liens,
qu'une femme prudente est la source des
biens.
(Act V, scene XV).

A plot of the same kind forms the basis of Fagan's short one-act play Les Originaux (1757). Indeed the Chevalier's very opening speech makes clear that the action of this comedy consists in the administration of a lesson:

... assurément le Marquis verra ici des originaux de toutes les especes: & s'il est vrai que, pour bien sentir le ridicule de nos défauts, il soit nécessaire de les considérer dans les autres, je vous réponds qu'il pourra prendre aujourd'hui une leçon des plus complètes. (Scene I).

The intrigue has been instigated by the Marquis's mother, who, believing that: "Du ridicule au vice la pente est bien facile ..." (Scene I), has decided to bring before her son a series of cynical, flippant characters in order to destroy in him a growing irresponsibility. It is these confrontations which are to bring about the change in the Marquis, for as the Chevalier observes: "Les exemples seront plus forts que toutes les leçons que l'on pourroit lui donner" (Scene I). During the course of the action, these encounters gradually influence the Marquis, inducing a realisation of his own short-comings and of his callous treatment of the woman he was to marry. Finally shocked by the behaviour of Gélaste, "un homme de plaisir," he concludes that man's inhumanity to woman is far greater than the latter's alleged flightiness:

Ah! si nous nous plaignons quelquefois de la légèreté des femmes, combien plus

souvent ce sexe aimable a-t-il d'inhumanités & de mépris à essayer de notre part?
(Scene XVI).

The action of the play is intended therefore, not, as it might have been in the traditional comedy, to illustrate the ridiculous nature of Marquis's behaviour, although this is suggested, but to reform him.

We have seen the didactic element of early eighteenth-century comedy take different forms: there is comment of a purely objective kind on people and conduct; there is the visible intention to establish those qualities which illustrate true moral value, in others as well as in oneself, together with the effect produced by this intention on the intrigue, and finally there are plots which consist of moral "lessons". Whatever form this feature of the new comedy takes, a climate of opinion is created on the stage and certain attitudes are portrayed by the dramatist as acceptable. This does not necessarily mean that there are no comic elements in the plays, that, as Voltaire states in his Dictionnaire philosophique, when talking of Le Préjugé à la mode, "le comique fut banni de la comédie"¹⁴ or that protagonists comic in themselves disappear. Voltaire had indeed written two comedies of the new kind, and L'Enfant prodige contains in Fièrenfat an obviously comic character who provokes Marthe to say, for instance: "Je ris déjà de sa grave colère" (Act

¹⁴Voltaire: "Art dramatique," Dictionnaire philosophique, Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire, Nouvelle Édition ... conforme pour le texte à l'édition de Beuchot (Paris, 1877-85), XVII, 420.

IV, scene III). "Comédie de mœurs" still exists, particularly in those plays where one of the characters is a "petit-maitre". Roles such as that of Moncade in L'Homme à bonne fortune, of Damis in L'Ingrat, or the Marquis in L'École des meres, continue in the new plays mockery of the cynical libertine, so strong in the comedy after Molière. This is especially true where, as in L'Homme à bonne fortune, a servant apes the manners of the master, thus increasing their comic impact. There is satire of other social types. Julie's description, for example, in Le Dissipateur, of the group assembled by Cléon in her house, is intended to poke fun at a wide range of characters, from gamblers to ageing coquettes and malicious wits.¹⁵ In the Preface to L'Ambitieux Destouches condemns "le trop facile et le punissable talent de la satire,"¹⁶ but it seems hard not to consider the play, in part at least, as a satire of court life with all its hypocrisy and superficiality.

In addition, the titles of many of the plays we have looked at would appear to suggest that they are "comédies de caractère". There are indeed characters who retain some of the features of Molière's great comic protagonists, who have, for example, the same illusions about themselves and who persist in a course of action in spite of reality - which they cannot or will not see - and in spite of all evidence that it is the height of folly. Moncade in L'Homme à bonne fortune, for instance, is convinced of his own charm and his ability to carry on several love affairs at once, believing that he

¹⁵ See Act II, scene I.

¹⁶ Oeuvres dramatiques (Paris, 1820), III, 225.

can extricate himself from every difficult situation. In Le Curieux impertinent, Léandre has no grounds for supposing Julie unfaithful, yet he devises a dishonest scheme to test her and insists on taking it to the limit, even in the face of Damon's assurances and his confession that he is himself in love with Julie. In L'École des pères there is the same comic blindness in Géronte, whose inflexibility and persistence in holding his sons to be good despite their behaviour, and warnings from everyone else, is in fact referred to by Pasquin as "votre tendre manie."¹⁷ Dona Béatrice in L'Ambitieux, convinced that she is at the centre of all the court intrigues, in a position of power, is clearly intended as a comic figure.¹⁸

The existence of characters such as these often means that there is a vein of irony running through the plays. This is so with Le Curieux impertinent where Léandre chooses, to feign love for Julie, a man whom the audience suspects of actually loving her. The irony is even stronger in Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs, where both the Marquis and the Baron love Lucile and where the Baron, persuaded of his own value and attraction, remains totally unaware until the final scene of the play that Lucile detests him. The comedy lies in the

¹⁷"Pour trois enfans gâtés, votre tendre manie, / Tout jeune, vous sevrera des douceurs de la vie ..." (Act II, scene V). Géronte's infatuation is indeed referred to by Piron as one of the "ridicules" which comedy should be offering (Préface, Oeuvres complètes, I, 3).

¹⁸See Destouches's justification of the character and the creative process here: "Résolu de me servir de ce personnage, qui me fournissoit la plus grande partie du comique de mon ouvrage, je m'attachai avec soin à le rendre essentiellement nécessaire ..." (L'Ambitieux, Préface, Oeuvres, III, 233).

fact that the Baron, ignorant of the true situation, urges the Marquis to attempt to win the woman he loves, even if it means betraying a friend. Throughout the play, therefore, he is unwittingly bringing about his own downfall.

We have also noted in many plays one of the stock situations of traditional comedy, which involves a character, oblivious of all but his own concerns, being tricked by others. Marton's claim of Moncade that "il donnera dans tous les panneaux que vous lui tendrez" (Act III, scene II), reminds one that in his vanity and stupidity, he comes close to the traditional dupe of farce.¹⁹ The play never descends of course to that level, but it does revolve around the scheming of Marton and the rest. Similarly, G ronte in L' cole des p res is easily fooled because of his intractability, just as his sons, because of their greed and conceit, are themselves immediately taken in by N rine's lies. In addition Julie, in Le Dissipateur, has no difficulty in completely fleecing Cl on.

Traditional comic situations and character studies therefore remain, but the moral dilemmas which the characters experience and the debates with others inevitably introduce a certain seriousness into the new comedy. Moreover, as Lanson has said, the intrigues which we have examined are not those of a Scapin, who revels in manipulating others and who delights in creating complicated situations in order to prove his ingenuity in unravelling them.²⁰ Nor are the plots

¹⁹See also Pasquin's words in L'Ingrat, referring to Damis: "Ah, foyrbe! je te tiens, et tu seras ma dupe" (Act IV, scene VII).

²⁰See G. Lanson, Les Origines du drame contemporain: Nivelles de La Chauss e et la com die larmoyante, Deuxi me Edition (Paris, 1903), Premi re Partie, Chapitre II, p. 42.

motivated solely by a desire for revenge in a lover who has been spurned or a family which has been disgraced. Marton and Pasquin in L'Homme à bonne fortune wish to reveal Moncade for what he is, admittedly, but they devise their plans just as much out of concern for Lucinde and a desire that she shall be caused no further suffering. This is why Léonor and Eraste support the servants in their scheme. Indeed even Marton's words of advice to Moncade himself, her moral "lesson" to him, stem in the first place from an affection which leads her to want his well-being:

Croyez moi, Monsieur, & vous croirez une
Fille toute affectionnée à vos intérêts
... (Act I, scene XI).

Similarly, if we see Pasquin preaching, as he himself puts it, in L'Ingrat, it is because he loves his master and is concerned for his future:

DAMIS
Sais-tu mieux que moi-même
Ce qui me convient?

PASQUIN
Oui; parce que je vous aime,
Je voudrais (Act I, scene VI).

Statements such as these are not merely the result of long and dedicated service to one master. Damon, for instance, in Le Curieux impertinent, argues with Léandre about his treatment of Julie, but it is precisely because he feels affection for him and a desire to avoid what he sees as inevitable betrayal of their friendship. In the opening scene of the play he had already said to Crispin:

... je perdrais plutôt cent fois la vie,
Que de faire à Léandre aucune perfidie.

The very fact that he at first refuses to co-operate with Léandre is an indication both of his capacity for feeling and

his moral scruples; however ridiculous he may be, Léandre is not therefore the butt of Damon's mockery, so much a cause for concern. In Act I, scene VII he says, for instance: "De ce que tu médites, / Ami, pour toi, pour moi, j'appréhende les suites."

The same pattern emerges from L'iron's L'École des pères. Both Geronde's sense of obligation to Argante and the demands which he makes on his sons originate in his love for Argante, as his words in Act III reveal:

Dans mon cœur attendri, son père vit en-
core.
Pour elle, par ma voix, cet ami vous im-
plores:
Je lui devois mes biens, & vous me les
devez;
.....
Que l'un de vous m'acquitte, en s'acquit-
tant lui-même ...
(Act III, scene VII).

Angélique, in her reaction to Pasquin's description of Geronde's sons, illustrates how closely moral notions and spontaneous feeling are allied in this play:

... tous gens de bien doivent être saisis
De pitié pour le père, & d'horreur pour les
fils.
(Act I, scene IV).

In Le Dissipateur, every character is gradually drawn into Julie's plan for ruining Cléon financially, but as she reveals at the end of the play, it is a plan based not on a selfish desire for wealth and revenge, but on love and on genuine concern for Cléon's survival:

J'ai tâché de vous perdre, afin de vous
sauver,
Et vous ai tout ravi pour vous le conser-
ver:
A votre aveuglement c'étoit le seul re-
mède.
Vous êtes maître encor de ce que je pos-
sède:
Mon cœur, mon tendre cœur vous l'offre
avec transport ... (Act V, scene XV).

One of the oldest comic techniques therefore survives into the new plays of the early eighteenth century, but in a radically altered form. The characters who are to be reformed, either by argument or through the action of the play are subjects for concern or the cause of sympathy for others. They can rarely if ever be figures of ridicule for those who wish to change them, therefore, because the latter are not sufficiently detached from the situation. This has implications in its turn for the stages in which the new comedy developed. Lanson suggests that the dramatists of the early eighteenth century, in particular Destouches, fearing that constant moralising on the stage would ultimately become tedious and unacceptable, added to their plays "de l'émotion et du pathétique,"²¹ in other words, it would seem, that the didactic tendency precedes the creation of characters with a capacity for feeling. It is of course not easy to determine in what order the elements discernible in the new comedy come into it. The moral purpose which we know Destouches to have had appears to have been shared by a number of other dramatists in the first half of the century, but the didactic traits in their protagonists are very closely allied to "sensibilité" and indeed, one might say, dependent on it. Characters who do not possess a capacity for feeling do not moralise. Nor are they reformed at the end of the play. Moncade shows not the slightest concern for anyone except himself throughout the whole of L'Homme à bonne fortune and he probably remains unrepentant at the close; his only utterance when realising that his hypocrisy has been proven is: "Juste

²¹ See Les Origines du drame contemporain, p. 42.

has Durval fallen in love with his wife, his affection marks a rebirth of his first feelings for Constance and his remorse, together with his anxiety that his love might not be reciprocated, are an indication of his capacity for feeling. In L'Enfant prodigue, Euphémon fils's reaction to the news that Lise is to marry and the terms in which he speaks of his own fate: "Le ciel, ce ciel qui doit nous désunir, / Me laisse un cœur, et c'est pour me punir" (Act III, scene V), bear witness to the fact that the most important of Euphémon's responses originate in the affective side of his being. Similarly Milord in Pamela (1743) is capable of repentance, particularly in Act II, after an attempt to trick Williams and Pamela, and when he is confronted with the innocence of Williams's love. In addition, Mme Andrews's words: "Vous vous attendrissez" (Act IV, scene VII), reveal in him a response of the emotions to her appeal for Pamela's freedom. The same nature is again seen in the Marquis of L'École de la jeunesse both in his self-reproach, dictated by the heart, and his love for Zélide, of which Rosette remarks: "Qu'on me trouve des cœurs toujours plus tendrement / Epris d'une Beauté que l'infortune accable" (Act V, scene V).

In the same way characters who admire virtue, who have themselves high moral standards and dictate principles to others, also possess "sensibilité". Lisette's "lesson" to the Comte in Le Glorieux, for example, has its origins in affection for him:

... votre erreur extrême
Me force à vous prouver à quel point je
vous aime.
Vous vous perdez, Monsieur.
(Act III, scene V).

Her final statement: "Mon cœur seul m'a dicté cette utile leçon," underlines the connection between the didactic tendency and a capacity for feeling. Mélanide says of her advice to Darviane that "tels sont les avis que l'amitié m'inspire" (Act I, scene II), friendship here being in reality a maternal preoccupation with his well-being. Ariste's advice to Valère in Le Nécant also stems from some feeling for him: "Si la raison ici vous a plu dans ma bouche, / Je le dois à mon cœur, que votre intérêt touche" (Act IV, scene IV). In L'École des amis, Ariste's kindness is evident in his words to Hortence: "A quelque chose enfin l'on peut vous être bon" (Act II, scene III), and Sanspair in L'Homme singulier (1745) talks of his "cœur trop facile et trop tendre ..." (Act I, scene I).

If one is to speak, therefore, of a concept on which the new comedy is based, it may be possible to suggest that the notion of a capacity for feeling - manifested in whatever way - precedes the possession of moral principles and a desire to reform others. We would have to conclude at least that the latter cannot exist without the former. In some plays, as we have seen, feelings and scruples are in fact inseparable. There can be no mistaking the scale of values established by the new comedy. If a capacity for feeling is praiseworthy, so too are the qualities deriving from it. Uncaring and therefore immoral characters still remain, but are rare, especially towards the end of the period under discussion; the comedy is dominated by a group of virtuous characters whose standards are approved by the dramatist. The action of the play makes them triumphant, virtue is rewarded and the purpose

of the action is moreover often underlined with a comment at the close. That the writers under discussion had a moral purpose seems undeniable, but the moralising tendency in their protagonists may arise quite naturally out of a new conception of man and his relations with his fellows.

It is the emphasis on virtue in the new comedy which distinguishes it of course from the traditional comedy of the seventeenth century. L'École de la jeunesse is a long way from L'École des femmes. The aim of comedy, in the first half of the eighteenth century, is to be fulfilled by example and not by ridicule, even supposing the latter to be possible. Not all contemporary critics favour this change in the comedy; J.-B. Rousseau, for instance, attacks it openly:

L'art n'est point fait pour tracer des mo-
dèles,
Mais pour fournir des exemples fidèles
Du ridicule & des abus divers
Où tombe l'homme en proie à ses travers.
Quand tel qu'il est on me l'a fait par-
oître,
Je me figure assez quel je dois être
Sans qu'il me faille affliger en public²²
D'un froid sermon passé par l'alembic.

Riccoboni on the other hand approves those characters who act "par le seul mouvement de la vertu" and believes that comedy can and should influence an audience in the most direct fashion:

... quand nous la (vertu) voyons briller
dans des personnes qui ne sont au-dessus
de nous que d'un seul degré, nous sentons
combien il seroit aisé à tout le monde de
se rendre la vertu propre & familière,²³ si
nous nous disposions à la suivre ...

²²J.-B. Rousseau, "Épître III. A Thalie," Épîtres, Livre II, Œuvres (Bruxelles, 1743), I, 474-75.

²³L. Riccoboni, "Lettre de Monsieur Louis Riccoboni à M. le docteur Muratori," Œuvres de Monsieur Nivelles de La Chaussée, ed. Ch. Sablier, (Paris 1762), V, 212. Riccoboni is arguing that it is "bien plus aisé de parvenir à la correction des mœurs par des Pièces de ce caractère, que par la Tragédie ..." (V, 212).

Others such as Fagan, du Sauzet and Yart also hold the view that virtue should be made appealing. Fagan is one of the first to suggest that comedy must strike out in a new direction, mainly because of the taste of the theatre-going public. Molière's admirers he says:

... veulent que l'argument d'une Pièce soit une Epigrame & non un sentiment, ou pour mieux dire, ils veulent que l'objet principal des Auteurs soit de peindre des défauts & non des vertus.

Mais n'est-ce pas un devoir indispensable aux Auteurs d'étudier le goût de leur siècle, & depuis quelque tems cette nouvelle espèce de Comédie n'a-t-elle pas été un peu mise en crédit?²⁴

This argument is most striking, not only because it links the notions of "sentiment" and "vertu", suggesting that a play might be based on them, but also for the awareness it indicates of the trend in the comedy. Fagan goes further, however; in creating a "genre nouveau" contemporary dramatists, unlike Terence or Molière, should attempt to

... peindre ce que la nature a d'aimable & de parfait.

Il est vrai qu'en suivant ce dernier genre, le fond sera toujours plus sérieux; jusques-là même qu'il pourra être larmoyant.

(I, 210).

Du Sauzet, when writing on L'École des amis, believes that it is entirely within the province of comedy to present an ideal code of conduct and he sees, moreover, the same kind of development as Fagan had done:

Qu'on n'aille pas s'imaginer, que nous voudrions interdire à Thalie le badinage & la gayeté. Nous aimons à la voir rire lors qu'elle veut nous faire sentir le ridicule du Vice; mais nous croyons qu'il

²⁴B.-C. Fagan, L'Amitié rivale de l'amour, Préface, Théâtre de M. Fagan, et autres œuvres du mesme auteur (Paris, 1760), I, 209-10.

lui est permis de prendre un ton un peu plus grave & plus sérieux, lorsqu'elle veut nous faire aimer la Vertu.²⁵

Furthermore, in discussing Nélanide and the aim of modern playwrights who "se sont attachés à y étaler les charmes de la Vertu," he says of them:

... ils ont instruit en attendrissant. ... Mais de nos jours la question est décidée; le Public a prononcé en faveur du Comique attendrissant & moral, par les applaudissemens infinis qu'il a donnés au Fréjugé à la Pode, à L'Ecole des Amis, à Nélanide.²⁶

Yart, in his "Observations sur la Comédie," makes a deliberate connection between the attitude of his time and the comedy and reaches a similar conclusion:

C'est au Poëte vertueux à exciter en faveur de nos parens, de nos amis, de nos semblables, la nature, la raison, l'humanité, quand même ils seroient indignes de notre secours par leur ingratitude: c'est à lui à exprimer ces sentimens avec le langage touchant de L'Esopé à la Cour, des Fils ingrats, de L'Ecole des Amis, de l'Enfant prodigue &c.²⁷

We have suggested here some of the reasons why the comedy becomes more serious. These eighteenth-century critics, writing at the time of the most significant development in the genre, propose that it must inevitably become "larmoyant" or "attendrissant".

²⁵Du Sauzet, Bibliothèque Française, ou Histoire Littéraire de la France (Amsterdam, 1741), XXXIII, Première Partie, Article X, 158-59.

²⁶Bibliothèque Française, XXXIII, Seconde Partie, Article IX, 354-55.

²⁷M. L. Yart, "Observations sur la Comédie," Mercure de France (Paris, Mars 1743), p. 444.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The tearful character and situation

Nothing aroused a stronger reaction in those opposed to the new comedy in the first half of the eighteenth century than the lachrymose element in the plays. Among the most virulent critics of the genre was Desfontaines, who, a rigid classicist and of the belief therefore that tragedy and comedy should be kept entirely separate, attacked almost all the new comedies and those of Nivelles de la Chaussée in particular.

In his Observations sur les écrits modernes he writes:

... M.R. se met à rabaisser la Tragédie par de mauvaises raisons, pour élever sur ses ruines ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui le Comique Larmoyant, genre absurde, selon moi, puisqu'il est contre la raison de vouloir dans un même Ouvrage Dramatique faire rire & pleurer; ce qui est traiter des Spectateurs raisonnables, comme des enfans.

Desfontaines continually condemns the suggestion that drama should attempt to reflect the mixture of laughter and tears normal in life, by arguing that any movement between two extremes is not in fact natural and that, furthermore, the new plays are not in any case at all comic:

Dans le fond je défie qu'on me cite une Comédie attendrissante, une de ces Tragédies Bourgeoises ... où les plaisanteries aient causé le moindre plaisir. Souvenez-vous de l'Ecole des Amis, de L'Ambitieux, du Préjugé à la mode. Les exemples sont donc jusqu'ici contraires au système du Comique attendrissant.

¹P.-F. G. Desfontaines, Observations sur les écrits modernes (Paris, 1737), XI, Lettre CLI, 22. Desfontaines is commenting on Luigi Riccoboni's "Lettre de Monsieur Louis Riccoboni à M. le docteur Muratori."

²Observations, XI, Lettre CLXIII, 303.

Marquis's intentions towards the Baronne⁵ and Finette in Le Dissipateur (1736) makes a pretence of crying in sympathy with Cléon, although she is in league with Julie, and as the stage direction at the end of her speech of commiseration indicates, enjoying herself at Cléon's expense:

C'est son bonheur outré qui vous rend mi-
séritable,
Et qui vient d'accomplir votre sort dé-
plorable.
Adieu; j'ai trop de peine à retenir mes
pleurs,
Et Madame (Cidalise) aura soin d'adoucir
vos malheurs.

(Elle s'éloigne, les contemple
quelque temps, et sort en riant
sous son éventail).

(Act V, scene VII).⁶

Crispin, in Fagan's Le Rendez-Vous (1733), refers in Scene III to tears shed by Lucile: "Elle se plaint, s'agite, & verse quelques larmes;" the spectator, knowing that Valère is being duped by his servant into believing that Lucile is in love with him, will inevitably laugh at this observation.

In all these incidents the characters and the situations in which they find themselves are calculated to amuse the audience and are therefore entirely in keeping with the spirit of the classical genre. In Baron's L'Homme à bonne fortune (1686), however, Marton's reference to her tears for Moncade contain a different element:

Mais, par ma foi, Madame, n'étoit que je
lui ai déjà vu jouer mille fois le même

⁵"Mme Catau, pleurant: Il m'a montré la chambre dans laquelle il veut, dit-il consommer le mariage" (Act II, scene VI). Mme Catau is endeavouring to set the Baronne against the Marquis by emphasising his effrontery in a number of respects. The Baronne is herself leading Mme Catau on and has no intention of marrying either the Marquis or Léandre, Mme Catau's choice for her.

⁶Finette is referring to Julie in the first line of this speech.

rôle, je ne saurois qu'en dire. Il m'a fait pleurer, moi, dans les commencemens; mais à présent je suis aguerrie.

(Act III, scene II).

If Marton were an impertinent confidante of the traditional kind, it would be possible to dismiss this emotion on the grounds that it is superficial, but unlike the majority of servants, she possesses a genuine solicitude for others. It is apparent that the tears mentioned here are linked to a concern for Moncade:

... vous savez si je suis dans vos intérêts, cela me fait peine de voir que vous ne vouliez pas devenir heureux.

(Act I, scene XI).

In view of this anxiety, it would seem that Baron is making a first tentative move towards creating a character with a capacity for feeling who is not afraid to express it in the most direct way, that is, in tears.

More intriguing are the tears of Nérine in Regnard's Le Joueur (1696). They are caused by compassion for Dorante, whose love for Angélique is unrequited:

DORANTE

Dis-moi donc, si tu veux, le sujet de tes pleurs.

NÉRINE

Il faut aller, monsieur, chercher fortune ailleurs.

DORANTE

Chercher fortune ailleurs! As-tu fait quelque pièce
Qui t'aurait fait sitôt chasser de ta maîtresse?

NÉRINE, pleurant plus fort

Non: c'est de votre sort dont j'ai compassion ...

(Act III, scene I).

The characters who shed tears in Regnard's plays usually have

a comic function,⁷ but there is no evidence here to suggest that he is mocking Nérine. She shows sympathy for Angélique and Dorante and her distress does not produce the same effect as that of Hector earlier in the play.

If we cannot be sure of Regnard's intentions, it is clear that in L'Andrienne (1703) Baron has created in Glicerie a tearful character whose distress is genuine. She is described by Simon as:

La plus belle du monde;
Mais, dont la modestie égalait la beauté,
Et tant de graces, jointes à tant d'honné-
teté,
La mettoient au-dessus de tout ce qu'on
admire.
(Act I, scene I).

Simon draws attention immediately, therefore, not only to Glicerie's beauty, as we might expect, but, more important, to a certain moral quality. This, together with a capacity for feeling, evident in her grief at her sister's funeral, establish Glicerie's superiority in Simon's mind. She is presented from the start as a character to be admired: her complete loyalty to Pamphile, in spite of his apparent infidelity, suggests her virtue, for example. Allied to this, and to be explained no doubt by a constant tendency to underestimate herself - she alludes, for instance, to "le peu que je vau", "mes foibles appas" and "mon peu de mérite" (Act IV, scene V) - is the absence of any desire for revenge. Her outburst at the height of her misfortune reveals this:

Au milieu de mes maux j'ai souffert sans
colere
La trahison du Fils & l'injure du Pere;
J'ai demeuré muette à toutes mes douleurs.
...
(Act IV, scene X).

⁷See for example, Hector's tears in Act II, scene XIV of this play.

He is also introduced by Simon in the first scene of the play, with an emphasis on the seriousness of his nature and his concern for others:

... il passoit cet âge difficile,
Ne préférant jamais l'agréable à l'utile.
A servir ses amis, il s'offroit de grand
cœur,
Pourvu qu'il crût pouvoir le faire avec
honneur:
Il avoit à leur plaisir une douce habitude.
(Act I, scene I).

Simon subsequently sums up the essence of Pamphile's character in the account of his distress at Chrysis's funeral:

Je prenois tout cela pour la marque infail-
lible.
De la bonté d'un cœur délicat & sensible.
...
(Act I, scene I).

Particularly striking here are the words "un cœur délicat et sensible." The Latin for this part of Simon's speech is: "Haec ego putabam esse omnia humani ingeni/ Mansuetique animi officia" (Act I, scene I). While retaining Terence's overall meaning, Baron would appear to have linked Pamphile's disposition to a changing attitude of his own time and to have created a man whose predominant trait is his capacity for delicate feeling. Moreover, there is already a suggestion, in the association made between "bonté" and "cœur délicat et sensible" of the desirability of such a capacity. He, like Glycerie, is deemed a superior character. In addition, his despair and his inability to assert himself are akin to Glycerie's, and he shares her impression that they are pursued by a cruel destiny:

Ah! Quelle main,
Sort cruel, choisis-tu pour me percer le sein?
(Act I, scene VII),⁸

⁸Pamphile is referring to the fact that his father is arranging a match for him.

Possibilities for a new kind of protagonist, both male and female, are therefore apparent in this play. Célimène in L'Irrésolu (1713) also has the qualities of "délicatesse" and "sensibilité"; indeed the similarity in the terminology used to depict her and Glycerie is striking, particularly in these words from Dorante to Frontin:

Tu nommes indolence un gracieux maintien,
Une douce langueur, un modeste entretien

...
(Act I, scene VII).

He can thus be seen to highlight almost the same aspects in Célimène as those which Simon had mentioned with reference to Glycerie in L'Andrienne. From the first Célimène is portrayed as a woman of serious disposition and strong moral principles:

Le sérieux de l'une, et sa langueur tou-
chante,
Lui disent qu'elle est tendre, et fidèle,
et constante ...
(Act I, scene II).

Uppermost in Célimène's nature, therefore, are loyalty and a sense of duty, which, as the association of the terms "tendre" and "fidèle" indicates, have their origins in the affective side of her being. The capacity for feeling suggested here becomes evident in her distress on learning of her rejection by Dorante. Her moral notions and her "langueur touchante" ensure, however, that for much of the play Dorante's somewhat heartless conduct provokes in Célimène no desire for revenge:

... Il me siérait mal d'affecter de la
haine,
Et vous connoissez trop le cœur de Célimène.
(Act IV, scene II).

Célimène has slightly more spirit than Baron's character, as her decision to accept the Chevalier merely to spite Dorante proves, but her being is defined in reality by a gentleness

he is her father, are proof of a capacity for feeling. Furthermore, her fidelity to Léandre during a long absence might be said to imply the possession of virtue; this quality is fully in evidence when she rejects Valère:

Et mon cœur vous répond sur-le-champ, qu'
il est trop équitable et trop délicat,
pour accepter les vœux d'un infidèle,
Quand je ne vous connoitrois point d'autre
défaut que l'inconstance, c'en seroit
assez pour me faire mépriser vos offres.
(Act V, scene VIII).

Loyal herself, Julie demands the same standards in a future husband and there is even a slightly didactic ring to her words here. As we see from her mention of a "cœur délicat" it is the heart which makes the moral judgment.¹⁰

Possessing the gentleness of Glycerie and several of the heroines who succeed her, Méliste, in Destouches's Le Philosophe marié (1727), is also depicted as a woman of firm moral standards. The virtue commented on by Ariste at the outset is emphasised by her resistance to the Marquis and his assessment of her:

Une femme constante est un monstre nouveau,
Que le ciel a produit pour être mon bour-
reau ...
(Act III, scene V).

This judgment, which tends to set Méliste apart, might indicate by implication her superiority. Méliste is undoubtedly a character to whom most of the others, including Géronte, are drawn, this conveying perhaps the dramatist's approval. Her "sensibilité" is apparent both in her affection for Ariste, even in the face of unreasonable demands, and her distress at

¹⁰ Julie's statement establishes a similarity between herself and Angélique in this play. The latter, although not a tearful character, speaks to Valère of "une passion aussi délicate que la mienne" (Act I, scene II).

Tufière, are all proof of a capacity for feeling.¹² Furthermore, her reluctance to marry Valère, founded on a belief that she is his inferior in rank, would seem to point to a certain delicacy. This spirit of self-sacrifice stresses the discrepancy between the nobility of Lisette's nature and her situation; indeed her own comment on the need for her to become a confidante shows an awareness of the injustice of things:

Ce ne fut pas pourtant sans verser bien
des pleurs;
Mais mon sort le voulut: et voilà mes
malheurs.
(Act I, scene IX).

Considering herself to be guided by a fate outside her control, Lisette therefore shares the tendency of, say, Glicerie, to succumb to misfortune.

In Nivelles de La Chaussée's La Fausse Antipathie (1733) Léonore, introduced by Frontin as possessing "une mélancolie" (Act I, scene I), herself evokes several years of suffering when alluding to "de foibles attraites flétris par les douleurs" and eyes "accoutumés à pleurer mes malheurs" (Act I, scene III). The rigidity of her principles, her refusal to permit Damon to divorce his wife and her adherence to the idea of her own fidelity, although she feels no love for her husband, all establish her virtue. We see therefore an association of langour, melancholy and moral rectitude in Léonore as in other tearful characters. There can be no doubt of the increased weight attached to this last trait by the dramatist, as it is stressed constantly throughout the play. Nevertheless, Léonore's inflexibility where her standards are

¹²Lisette's desire to be of service to the Comte is seen by Lycandre as evidence of a "bon cœur" (Act IV, scene III).

concerned cannot be said to betoken indifference to Damon, Indeed, paradoxically, her "sensibilité" is manifest in her distress at being unable to escape from the very notions which determine her conduct and which thus prevent marriage to him.

In this play, Nivelles de La Chaussée follows the pattern we have already observed of drawing a parallel between the central male and female characters. Although Damon has a greater ability than Léonore to take action, he possesses a temperament not unlike hers, for he has an inclination to despair and to feel himself trapped. Of his marriage, for example, he says: "Je gémiss dans les fers d'un cruel hymenée" (Act I, scene VI). Moreover, it is his reaction to the fact that he is married which provides an indication of his moral worth; this is evident not, as with Léonore, in a refusal to divorce his partner, but in his unwillingness to make a declaration of love to Léonore herself. This abstract concept of duty, together with his decision to leave Orphise's house where his presence causes Léonore to be harshly treated - her interests therefore taking precedence over his own - show that virtue and self-sacrifice govern his behaviour.

It would appear to be a deliberate intention on Nivelles de La Chaussée's part to create this similarity between hero and heroine, since he adopts the same procedure in most of his subsequent works. Despite initial impressions, there is a striking affinity, for example, between Constance and Durval in Le Préjugé à la mode (1735). As far as Constance is concerned, Damon's aside: "Eponse vertueuse autant qu'infortunée!" (Act I, scene I) immediately conjures up the notion of a virtuous and unhappy woman. This impression is reinforced by

à traverser ma déplorable vie!" (Act IV, scene II). Her language is stronger than that which we have previously noted, however, and different in kind. Damon, in La Fausse Antipathie claimed that "le plus grand malheur est celui d'être joint/ Au déplorable objet d'une haine invincible" (Act I, scene VIII), thus showing how closely the comedy, in its terminology, might approach tragedy, as it is understood in France. In Le Préjugé à la mode, we could almost believe Constance's lines to be delivered by a tragic heroine.

Many features of Durval's make-up bear witness to a capacity for feeling. Firstly, his reaction to Damon's charge of unfaithfulness and the bitterness of his "l'on m'accuse encor d'insensibilité" (Act V, scene I), confirm the sincerity of his claim to have reformed and of his attempts to convince the others of his affection for Constance. His "sensibilité" is indeed evident in his efforts to recreate the former understanding between himself and his wife, in his need for a demonstration of her love and in his remorse when reflecting on his treatment of her:

Que fait-elle à present? ... Que faut-il
que j'espère?
Dis-moi qu'est devenue une épouse si chère?
Ah! je suis son bourreau plutôt que son
époux.
(Act V, scene I).

In addition, the rebirth of love brings with it a moralising tendency, in the shape of an inclination to comment on and draw useful conclusions from experience.

A clear pattern has therefore established itself.¹³ The character disposed to shed tears has a seriousness and an integrity which distinguish him from his fellows, together with a tendency to resignation in the face of disaster. Furthermore, dramatists create, more often than not, two protagonists of the new kind within one work and all but obliterate any difference between them. Voltaire adopts this procedure in L'Enfant prodigue (1736). Lise speaks unashamedly, for example, with reference to Euphémon, of "mes yeux, qui, noyés dans les larmes,/ Pleuraient encor ses vices et ses charmes" (Act I, scene III). Described by Euphémon père as "un cœur aussi noble que tendre" (Act I, scene II), she has both a sense of outrage at the way in which Euphémon fils has been corrupted by his friends and a genuine solicitude for Euphémon père. Her response to his suffering is proof of the magnanimity of her nature:

Ah! oui, monsieur, j'approuve vos douleurs;
Il m'est plus doux de partager vos pleurs
Que de former les nœuds du mariage.
(Act II, scene VI).

Euphémon fils himself also possesses concern for others. Jasmin's remark that he was "volé ... Par bonté d'âme" (Act III, scene II), would tend to imply his ruin was the result of goodness of heart and not profligacy. Certainly the remorse which tortures him denotes a capacity for feeling:

¹³In Poisson's one-act comedy Le Mariage fait par lettre de change (1735), although characterisation is necessarily limited, two protagonists seem to have some of the qualities we have mentioned. Cléon, represented by the dramatist as suffering because, having pledged his word to one woman, he has fallen in love with another, is described as: "L'aimable caractère! .../ Toujours d'égal humeur, d'une douceur extrême" (Scene VIII). Philinte is alluded to as "plein de délicatesses" and "scrupuleux" (Scene V). His most striking trait is indeed his determination to remain faithful to a former love and to a vow of celibacy: "... je me suis lié par serment, de façon/ Que je me vois forcé de demeurer garçon" (Scene V).

... Oui, je suis cet aîné,
Ce criminel, et cet infortuné,
Qui désola sa famille éperdue.
(Act III, scene V).

Euphémon has the melancholy and the sense of inescapable destiny of other tearful characters; in this case, however, his guilt is such that he considers fate to be justified:

Quel coup du sort, ou quel ordre des cieux
A pu guider ma misère en ces lieux?
Hélas!

.....
(en pleurant)

Je suis ... je suis un malheureux mortel,
Je suis un fou, je suis un criminel,
Qu'on doit hair, que le ciel doit poursuivre,

Et qui devrait être mort.

(Act III, scene I).

It is significant that in this particular outburst and elsewhere in this scene, the "points de suspension" have been deliberately inserted by Voltaire to show that, paradoxically, the force of Euphémon's emotion is to be intensified by an inability adequately to express it. The sincerity of his feelings is thus continually reinforced by the dramatist, who makes of him, despite a brief explosion of anger at the end of Act III, a character of sorrow and resignation.

Both central protagonists in L'École des amis (1737) are portrayed as characters with a facility for shedding tears. Furthermore, there is a likeness in their dispositions and a similarity between them and others who have already appeared in the new comedy. The moral strain inherent in Hortence's nature, for example, is made plain in her attempt to suppress her love for Monrose because marriage seems impossible. That she is not indifferent to him, however, and possesses moreover a certain nobility, emerges from her decision to assist him, in spite of a conviction that he is unfaithful:

Je vais me perdre & me plonger
Dans une obscurité la plus impénétrable.
Férissent ma mémoire, & le sang déplorable
Qui m'a fait naître! (Act V, scene I).

The closeness of tragedy and the new comedy is further exemplified in the tone in which he alludes to the love between himself and Hortence:

Hortence, hélas! pourquoi nous avez-vous
connus!
Un bonheur assuré, des plaisirs continus,
.....
Auroient rempli le cours de votre destinée.
Quel contraste inouï! Funestes liaisons,
Que le Ciel en courroux mit entre nos mai-
sons!
(Act IV, scene XI).

In Pamela (1743) the heroine's dominant trait quickly establishes itself as a fierce moral integrity, but such a quality is scarcely heeded by the rest; whereas other characters share an impression that they are victims of an unjust fate, Pamela possesses rather the knowledge that she is misunderstood by those around her. The language in which she expresses her sense of hopelessness, however, is strikingly similar to that of other characters. In a scene with Miledi, for example, Pamela twice utters the phrase "mon sort déplorable" with a short space of time,¹⁴ thus illustrating that in the notions which govern her life and the terminology used to formulate them, she is akin both to previous characters in the new comedy and to the tragic heroine.

In L'Epoux par supercherie (1744) by Boissy, where a match has been arranged by his father for the Marquis, La Fleur

¹⁴ Her first statement is: "La pitié se refuse à mon sort déplorable" and her second: "Daignez prendre pitié de mon sort déplorable" (Act V, scene III). Earlier in the play, in reply to a suggestion from Milord that she loves Williams, Pamela says: "(à part). Mon sort seroit moins déplorable" (Act II, scene VIII).

alludes to the tears occasioned by his master's predicament.¹⁵
In the first place, his capacity for feeling is manifest in his reaction to loving Emilie:

La cruelle langueur dont j'ai pensé mourir,
.....
L'Amour en étoit seule l'origine secrète
.....
(Act I, scene I).

The dramatist appears to be creating the impression, particularly with the words "la cruelle langueur," of a character prone to despair. In addition the Marquis is a man of scruple. His reluctance to confess the true state of affairs has two sources, for example. As his comment: "Cette contrainte pour toi me retient davantage" (Act I, scene II) indicates, he is held back initially by an inability to cause Belfort embarrassment. He is motivated secondly by a desire to be certain of Emilie's love:

Il faut donc me résoudre à rompre le silence.
Mais par délicatesse encore je balance;
Et je voudrois avant de la tirer d'erreur,
Je voudrois par degrés m'assurer de son cœur ...
(Act I, scene II).

His expression "par délicatesse" is proof of a need for his love to be reciprocated and of a hesitation, perhaps, to force Emilie's feelings; it is a further sign, therefore, of his "sensibilité".

Boissy's Le Médecin par occasion (1745) contains several protagonists who might be termed tearful. The first of them, the Marquise, reveals genuine affection for her family: "J'aime beaucoup mon frere, & ma nièce encore plus" (Act II, scene III).

¹⁵He remarks to Belfort in Act I, scene VIII: "Il se leve, il s'assied, il se calme, il s'agite, / ... / Et puis on voit des pleurs qui coulent de ses yeux."

Her account of Lucile's unhappiness, moreover, is at once further proof of her love for her niece and of her own capacity for feeling:

Le chagrin de ma Nièce est plus attendris-
sant.
S'il éclate à nos yeux, ce n'est qu'en
gémissant.
(Act II, scene III).

The melancholy suggested in these lines and the fact that the Marquise goes on to speak of Lucile's "abattement", establish both protagonists indeed in the new tradition.

Lucile herself, when addressing a portrait of Montval, says:

Voyez le triste état où vous m'avez réduite:
Sur mon front abattu ma tendresse est
écrite ...
(Act III, scene V).

Even Montval, despite a certain facetiousness, has some of the traits of the lachrymose character. In particular his reaction to Lucile's sadness attests his "sensibilité":

Je ne puis, à ces mots, retenir mes trans-
ports.
Le bruit de mon trépas est payé de ses
larmes.
Que ce discours, Champagne, est pour moi
plein de charmes!
Regretté de Lucile, honoré de ses pleurs,
Ah! j'oublie, ou plutôt je benis mes mal-
heurs ...
(Act II, scene I).

A similar effect is produced, and something of a lachrymose scene develops, with his response to the Marquise's observation: "Dans son abattement elle a même ses charmes./ On se sent jusqu'au cœur pénétré de ses larmes" (Act II, scene III). Montval reacts thus:

Le seul récit sur moi produit le même
effet.
J'ai peine à retenir les miennes en se-
cret.
J'ai, quoique Médecin, l'âme infiniment
tendre.
(Act II, scene III).

There is no denying an element of flippancy here, together with an underlying comic force, due to the fact that the Marquise is being fooled. It may be the case, however, that Boissy wishes to avoid sentimentality and that the apparent frivolity in Montval is a result of the fact that he is not supposed to be evincing any involvement in Lucile's unhappiness. It is the playwright's intention, one might conclude, to create in his central protagonist a man of feeling, whose "sensibilité" must inevitably be at least partly concealed.

In Voltaire's play of 1749, *Nanine*, who is studious, like *Célimène* or *Ariste*, and whose character "est fait pour plaire au sage ..." (Act I, scene IX), has moral scruples and a capacity for self-denial, which are both clearly visible in her rejection of the Comte's offer of marriage:

Non, monsieur, non, je ne souffrirai pas
Qu'ainsi pour moi vous descendiez si bas:
.....
Oui, je vous dois des refus. Oui, mon âme
Doit s'immoler. (Act II, scene III).

Nanine is thus governed by real generosity and has risen, moreover, above the sense of victimisation which we have witnessed in other characters to a noble silence in the face of adversity and unjustified cruelty:

LE COMTE
Elle était abattue?
Elle pleurait?

GERNON
Elle faisait bien mieux,
Ses pleurs coulaient à peine de ses yeux;
Elle voulait ne pas pleurer.
(Act III, scene II).¹⁶

¹⁶ *Nanine's* virtue is inherited, it would seem, from her father, also a tearful character. In a short appearance at the end of the play, he reveals himself as a man of strict moral principles, horrified to receive money from *Nanine* which he believes her to have stolen. See his speech in Act III, scene VI.

of weakness; on the contrary, far from being unacceptable, in some situations they are indeed indispensable.

In Le Curieux impertinent (1710), for instance, tears would seem to be expected from Léandre, to betoken at least some remorse for his apparent infidelity:

Ah! cruel, si ton cœur s'ouvrit au repen-
tir,
S'il t'échappoit du moins une larme, un
soupir!
(Act V, scene II).

It is true that at this point in the play, Julie's attitude is difficult to determine: she is testing Léandre and pushing him to the limit in order to punish him by rejection. Some feeling for him may remain, however, and Julie's attack might in part be sincere. Even supposing that this is not the case, the incident is of interest in that Julie considers her reproach to be appropriate, despite the hypocrisy of her motives.

A similar problem of interpretation arises in L'Irrésolu. Dorante's wish that Julie show her suffering in tears is mocked both by Frontin and by Julie herself:

Puisqu'un air douloureux auroit pour lui
des charmes,
Je veux bien, par bonté, verser deux ou
trois larmes.
Mon cher Dorante, hélas! me quitter pour
ma sœur!
Quel triomphe pour elle, et pour moi quel
malheur!
(Elle feint de pleurer).
(Act IV, scene IV).

Tears have a comic effect here and Dorante's behaviour, in proposing to one sister and then the other, provokes laughter. Dorante's capacity for feeling, however, is not ridiculed by the dramatist; one might argue therefore that Dorante's reply to Julie: "Vous m'insultez, Madame, / Ce procédé cruel vient d'étouffer ma flamme," implies at the very least that

the expression of emotion is not a game and, furthermore, that the ability to shed tears is commendable, even essential.

Durval, whose distress in Le Préjugé à la mode is sincere, demands tears as a proof of feeling in Constance:

Non, de si grands chagrins ne sont point
si secrets;
Ils s'exhalent en pleurs, en soupirs, en
regrets.
M'a-t-elle seulement honoré de ses larmes?
(Act III, scene VIII).

Tears are therefore expected and, moreover, seem to distinguish or enhance the worth of the person for whom they are shed. Conversely, failure to weep where suffering is involved must inevitably denote a lack of concern.

If, in some situations, tears are desirable, in others they provide the only consolation. Glycerie in L'Andrienne, for example, unable to withstand a further series of misfortunes, decides to leave with Criton:

Il faut loin de ces lieux chercher une re-
traite,
Et pleurer, à loisir, la faute que j'ai
faite.
(Act IV, scene V).

Constance in Le Préjugé à la mode, overwhelmed by fate and unable to take action which would occasion embarrassment, turns to tears, which are, ironically enough, the only means of reducing her misery, as a speech to Sophie indicates:

Profitez du plaisir que l'on offre à vos
charmes,
Je n'ai plus que celui de répandre des
larmes.
(Act I, scene VIII).

Monrose, finding himself in a moral dilemma which appears insoluble again chooses flight in L'École des amis:

Ainsi je dois cesser une vaine poursuite.
Je n'ai plus que les pleurs, le silence,
& la fuite.
(Act III, scene II).

For the lachrymose character desirous of avoiding any problem, tears offer the possibility of expiation and, above all, oblivion. Thus they become, as Constance reveals, a pleasure for the protagonist who indulges in them. Moreover, if the spirit of Durval's question: "M'a-t-elle seulement honoré de ses larmes?" holds good in any sense for the characters under discussion here, in crying for themselves, they are emphasising their own worth. They belong, in short, to an élite.

These are two of the features of the new comedy associated with the lachrymose character. There are in addition a number of situations which provoke tears and which are significant in that they often furnish a substantial part of the plot. Firstly, incidents involving minor characters illustrate the way in which episodes of genuine distress, simply and directly expressed, are introduced into the genre. In Le Curieux impertinent, Lolive's report of the words of Léandre's father causes Géronte to shed tears on stage:

LOLIVE

Je ne te verrai plus, disoit-il d'un air
tendre,
Je ne puis l'espérer dans l'état où je
suis.

GÉRONTE, pleurant

Ah!

LOLIVE

Daignez m'écouter.

GÉRONTE

Hélas! je ne le puis;
La douleur me saisit.

LOLIVE

Suspendez-la, de grâce;
Car vous venez, Monsieur, de faire une grimace
Qui m'a presque fait rire, et j'en serois
fâché.

finds himself involved in Pasquin's distress.

Nérine, in L'Obstacle imprévu, possessed of a sharp tongue, a strong character, and no compunction in tricking her husband Pasquin, is quite unlike the lachrymose heroine and yet in Act III, scenes VI and IX, the unhappiness attendant upon seeing Crispin again is expressed in tears. In each of these scenes, and in the second especially, the contrast between Crispin's confidence and the reality of the situation can be exploited to provide laughter, but Nérine's response would seem to introduce a different element:

CRISPIN

Est-ce que tu ne me reconnois pas? Je
n'ai pourtant point changé, si ce n'est
que je me trouve embelli depuis notre
départ.

NÉRINE, pleurant

Adieu, Crispin; tu me fends le cœur.

(Act III, scene IX).

There seems no reason to consider Nérine's despondency as an object of ridicule. Neither is it easy to envisage Crispin and Nérine as a comic reflection of their masters - as they might have been in the *Commedia dell'arte* or the works of Marivaux, for example - since their fate is in no way similar to that of their superiors. The two scenes in Act III appear oddly superfluous unless they are meant to be taken seriously and to add to the effect created in the plot revolving around Julie and Léandre.

It is indeed with the dilemma confronting the central lovers that we come to one of the main tearful situations in the new comedy. In Baron's L'Andrienne, both Pamphile at the end of Act I, and Glicerie, in Act IV, are overcome by tears when realising the implications of Simon's decision to marry

Le bruit qui se répand d'un fatal hymenée,
Malgré tous vos sermens, malgré la foi
donnée ...

Moreover, this notion is clearly uppermost in both their minds, for it is the first aspect of the situation to present itself. It is tempting perhaps to explain this by the fact that the play is taken from a classical source, but Terence does not cause any character in this part of his comedy to blame the dilemma on ill-fortune. There are no corresponding speeches to Pamphile's outbursts in Act I, scene VII of L'Andrienne, for instance, and while Glicerie's fear of separation is touched on in the original, there is no allusion to a sense of destiny.

This is therefore a theme of Baron's invention and it is linked, where Pamphile is concerned, to thoughts of suicide, which might again be said to belong more properly to the tragedy:

... S'il n'est aucun secours,
Ce jour fatal sera le dernier de mes jours.
(Act I, scene VII).

In addition, misery is emphasised in the contrast, perceived by both Pamphile and Misis, between the dictates of fate and Glicerie's essential goodness; Misis's statement:

Elle craint en un mot que ce funeste jour,
A son fidele cœur, n'arrache votre amour.

finds an echo in Pamphile's one attempt at self-assertion:

J'exposerois ses mœurs, sa vertu non com-
mune,
Aux bizarres rigueurs d'une injuste for-
tune?
Cela ne sera point.

It would appear that throughout this scene Baron wishes to accentuate the unhappiness and helplessness of his characters and that he departs from Terence in so doing. The dramatic

quality of the episode is intensified by the seemingly insoluble dilemma with which Pamphile is confronted:

La pitié, le respect m'entraîne tour-à-tour.
Tantôt j'écoute un Père, & tantôt mon amour.
Ce Père me chérit, l'abuserai-je encore?
Faut-il abandonner la Beauté que j'adore?

This theme of moral obligation re-emerges with Pamphile's evocation of the scene around Chrysis's death-bed when he promised to care for Glycerie:

Ce que me dit Chrysis, parlant de Glycerie,
Occupe incessamment mon esprit & mon cœur.
.....
Je l'ai promis, Misis, je tiendrai mon ser-
ment.
Je ne trahirai point la foi la plus sincère,
Je te le jure encor. (Act I, scene VII).

A comparison of Terence's Andria and L'Andrienne reveals that Baron makes some significant changes in the whole of the end of Act I and that the tone of the two dramatists differs considerably. It is true that Dave is given a monologue in Terence, but the concern for Glycerie and the suggestion of impending doom, which we have observed as features of his speech in Baron's version, are absent in the original. Furthermore, there is no equivalent in Terence of the exchange between Dave and Misis in Act I, scene V of L'Andrienne; nor does Misis have a soliloquy in the Latin comedy allowing her to intimate her own fears. If we consider the tone of the two plays, we see that the opening speech to the culminating scene of Act I in Baron is:

Juste Ciel! Quel objet se présente à ma vue?
Pamphile hors de lui! Que mon ame est émue?
Que vois-je? Il leve au Ciel & les mains &
les yeux,
Notre malheur, hélas! peut il s'expliquer
mieux?
(Act I, scene VII).

In Act IV there is an episode involving Glycerie where unhappiness in love and enforced separation are once more a source of tears. The situation as far as Glycerie is concerned reaches a climax in Act IV, scene X, when, after Dave's apparent betrayal, she yields completely to misfortune:

De tous les malheureux, non, le plus misér-
able
N'a jamais éprouvé d'infortune semblable.
(Act IV, scene X).

The opening lines of this speech recall Pamphile's statement in Act I, scene VII: "Hélas! des malheureux, je suis le plus à plaindre" and thus establish a similarity in tone between these two parts of the play. Moreover, Baron deliberately builds up to the final point of despair over a series of scenes, each designed to emphasise Glycerie's pitiable state. Criton's compassion, Glycerie's own reply to it: "Ah, Criton, je me meurs," her total submission to Pamphile's will and her appeal to the gods before ultimate humiliation by Dave, all tend to intensify the seriousness of the situation and increase its dramatic impact.

This technique for devising an extended lachrymose episode is exactly that used by Baron in Act I. Further, all the scenes on which the incident is founded are Baron's creation.¹⁹ The most obvious question to be answered here is why he chose a dilemma of this kind to replace what had to be omitted in a French adaptation. The interest in most of the play, as in Terence, lies in the intricacies of the plot and Dave's attempts to save his master. Significant episodes are either changed or introduced by Baron and the action is

¹⁹They are a substitute for the intrigue in the original revolving around the birth of Glycerie's baby.

exploited at two crucial points, in Acts I and IV, to appeal to the emotions and not provoke laughter. It is possible to suggest that we are witnessing in L'Andrienne an effect on the comedy of the dramatist's desire firstly to create characters with a capacity for feeling and subsequently to give the spectator the pleasure of participating in that feeling.

L'Andrienne stands alone at the beginning of the century and a lachrymose situation based on unhappiness in love does not recur until Destouches's L'Ingrat. In Act I G ronte's ultimatum is followed by tears in both Isabelle and Lisette:

ISABELLE, pleurant
Ah! ma pauvre Lisette!

LISETTE, sur le m me ton
Ah! ma ch re ma trese!

ISABELLE
Je ne puis respirer, tant la douleur m'op-
presse.
Cher Cl on, pourrez-vous soutenir ce mal-
heur?

LISETTE, d'une voix entrecoup e
H las! le pauvre enfant! il mourra de dou-
leur.
(Act I, scene IV).

A stage direction indicates that Isabelle also sheds tears in Act V, when, about to triumph, she and Cl on are threatened once again by separation.²⁰ Neither here nor in Act I is disaster insisted upon, as it had been in L'Andrienne; indeed in Act I, Isabelle recalls Lisette to earth, demanding a practical solution to the problem. The tone of the two scenes mentioned is not as consistently calculated to reveal the feelings of the characters and touch those of the audience. There

²⁰ "Cl on,   Isabelle: Je vous dois le retour de monsieur votre p re, / Sans doute? Aidez-moi donc   le remercier. / Isabelle, en pleurant: Ah, Cl on! Cl on: Juste ciel!" (Act V, scene VI).

seems no reason to mock Isabelle's tears, however, and we may be justified in concluding that here, as with the scene involving Pasquin discussed earlier,²¹ Destouches is experimenting with the introduction of a more serious element into the comedy.

In L'Irrésolu, although Célimène's distress on losing Dorante is consciously suppressed, Frontin's words: "Elle est au désespoir, / Je crois qu'elle pleuroit; sa douleur est touchante ..." (Act III, scene VII) make plain that unhappiness had been expressed in tears. Furthermore, both Frontin's response to Célimène's distress and Dorante's sympathy and admiration for her allow us to call this short episode lachrymose. That Dorante is drawn to Célimène is clear:

Je suis désespéré du mépris de Julie.
Par les pleurs de sa sœur, mon âme est attendrie.
.....
Si l'une par ses pleurs a su gagner mon cœur,
L'autre par ses mépris irrite mon ardeur.
(Act III, scene VII).

Destouches appears once again to be incorporating into the comedy an element formerly alien to it, an element calculated to touch the spectator and to be regarded seriously.²²

²¹See p. 325 above.

²²It seems unlikely that Destouches approved of the comedy becoming completely lachrymose. Of his play L'Amour usé (1741), he says, for example: "Le sujet ... n'a point d'autre objet que celui de faire rire les spectateurs, et n'est soutenu ni par la versification ... ni par ce fond touchant, intéressant, pathétique, qu'on dérobe quelquefois à Melpomène, pour transporter à Thalie le don des larmes; heureux don que le bon goût ne lui refuse pas toujours, mais qu'il ne lui prodigue jamais, et que les partisans de ce bon goût ne peuvent lui voir usurper trop long-temps, et avec trop d'empire, sans protester hautement contre cette usurpation" ("Lettre de M. Néricault Destouches, A M. le Comte de L^{xxx}, Sur la comédie intitulée: L'Amour Usé," Oeuvres dramatiques (Paris, 1820), V, 284-85). This statement does not rule out the notion that some mixture of laughter and tears was permissible.

A situation arising out of unhappiness is central to Mélanide and it belongs both to the past and to the present. That the past forms a fundamental background to the action of the play is clear from the importance accorded to Mélanide's account in Act II scene III of the way in which she was forced to leave her partner seventeen years previously. This narrative may itself be termed tearful. Furthermore, the dramatist builds up to it slowly, preparing for it with Théodon's announcement that Mélanide's parents have died without forgiving her, with the sorrow experienced by Mélanide because of this and with her reluctance to reveal the truth about her past: "Je vais donc ... Le pourrai-je? ... Ah! quelle extrémité!/ Je vais mettre le comble à ma calamité." Finally, a further statement of shame accompanies the opening of her story: "C'est l'aveu d'une erreur qui m'a coûté ma gloire." Moreover, there is an insistence throughout Mélanide's speech on the danger faced by the lovers, on the injustice of parental antagonism and the fear engendered by it. This emphasis on the hopelessness of the situation, together with the language in which it is conveyed,²³ serve to underline the affinity, in Mélanide's mind, between her position and that of a tragic heroine and point to the fact that she is, in short, a victim. In this description, events past and present are a source of tears; Mélanide's portrayal of the beginning of love:

A peine eus-je cédé
Que notre amour naissant, si doux, si plein
de charmes,
En s'augmentant toujours, me coûta bien
des larmes.

²³ Mélanide, seeing Théodon "frémir" on hearing her confession, says: "A ce funeste effet je devois bien m'attendre./ Nous étions trop heureux; notre amour nous trahit;/ Ce funeste secret enfin se découvrit." She later adds: "A peine mon opprobre eut été prononcé,/ Par un pere en fureur il me fut annoncé ..."

is echoed in her depiction of constant and continuing despair:

Dans le fond d'un désert je me vis trans-
portée,
Où depuis dix-sept ans livrée à mes douleurs,
Aucun soulagement n'a suspendu mes pleurs.

It is significant that Mélanide has Théodon's support at every point in this scene, as we see from the exclamation: "Que votre sort est digne de pitié!" Théodon's compassion is presumably a reflection of the dramatist's sympathy for Mélanide and thus has the effect of involving the audience too in her dilemma.

This episode is followed by one revolving around Mélanide's return to the stage after seeing the Marquis in Dorisée's house. Even in joy there is reference to tears, as Mélanide asserts, for instance: "Tous mes pleurs sont payés" (Act II, scene V) and adds to this: "Je retrouve l'époux que j'avois tant pleuré ..." This discovery is in fact exploited to provide new dramatic interest, for Mélanide's happiness is misplaced and the sense of relief a delusion; with the revelation that the Marquis is in fact the man chosen by Dorisée for her daughter, comes renewed and greater distress: on this occasion, Mélanide, having uttered only "Oh ciel! quel coup de foudre!" and "Que vais-je devenir?", goes beyond tears and faints:

MÉLANIDE, en se laissant aller dans les bras de Théodon.
Hélas! je n'en puis plus.
(Act II, scene VI).

This is the climax to Act II, which in effect revolves entirely around Mélanide. The opening scenes, admittedly, concern the Marquis and his love for Rosalie, but his wish to marry her, while central naturally to his own life, is equally crucial for Mélanide and an existence which is presented as

spectator, by leaving the Comte in ignorance of Nanine's and the Baronne's plans.

A new episode, following Nanine's return, provides the substance of Act II, the action now resting on the Comte's mistaken belief that Nanine has a lover and on his decision to banish her from his house. In this situation Nanine endeavours to repress her tears, but the rest openly confess to their dismay or sense of injustice, as Germon's words reveal:

Elle a pris cette injure
Tranquillement, lorsque nous pleurons tous.
(Act II, scene XIII).

Voltaire subsequently makes the Comte too express his distress, a reaction to which the Marquise readily responds:

LE COMTE
Dans le chagrin où mon cœur s'abandonne,
Suis-je en état de parler à personne?

LA MARQUISE
Ah! vous avez du chagrin, je le croi;
Vous m'en donnez aussi beaucoup à moi.

This scene provides the climax to the act, but it is accorded additional importance in that it is continued into Act III, where both the unhappiness of the entire household and Nanine's nobility are insisted upon:

GERMON
Nous pleurons tous en vous voyant sortir,

NANINE
J'ai tardé trop; il est temps de partir.

GERMON
Quoi! pour jamais, et dans cet équipage?

NANINE
L'obscurité fut mon premier partage.
(Act III, scene I).²⁴

It is plain that before clarifying the mystery surrounding Philippe Hombert's identity and his relationship with Nanine,

²⁴Nanine is "vêtue en paysanne" in this scene.

Voltaire's purpose is to exploit the potential of a situation bringing distress to several minor characters.

In L'Andrienne Simon refers to the danger inherent in tears used as a means of persuasion:

N'exposons plus mon Fils aux charmes sé-
ducteurs
Aux larmes, aux transports, à ces feintes
douceurs,
Dont se sert avec fruit une Coquette ha-
bile;
Prévenons ce malheur, en mariant Pamphile.
(Act III, scene IV).

This suggests a second theme or situation in the new comedy. Misis urges Glycerie to exploit her helplessness in order to gain Chremés's compassion.

... De votre cœur, qu'il voye les allar-
mes,
Jetez-vous à ses pieds, baignez-les de
vos larmes.
(Act IV, scene VIII).

It is true that Dave interrupts the scene in which Glycerie and Chremés meet to cast doubts on Glycerie's story, but neither her appeal to Chremés nor his response to her suffering is mocked and a potential relationship of sympathy is created through tears. If this episode, which again is not in Terence, is considered in conjunction with the other tearful scenes in Act IV, it becomes clear that the dramatist's intention is to accumulate incidents designed to stir the feelings of the audience.

In Le Philosophe marié the change which we have observed in Géronte is brought about, in part at least, by tears. The heroine herself is instinctively aware that they can be employed as a weapon to sway Géronte:

Pour vous fléchir, Monsieur, je n'ai point
d'autres armes
Que ma soumission, mes soupirs et mes
larmes.
(Act V, scene IX).

We are witnessing at this point in the play a process by which G ronte is touched by capacity for feeling in another; indeed his very temperament seems to undergo a transformation and the stage direction "attendri" is presumably intended to emphasise that M lita's appeal has awoken the affective side of his being.

In Nivelles de la Chauss e's Le Pr jug    la mode Damon also conceives of tears as a resource and in endeavouring to arouse Durval's compassion for Constance's position, states:

Mais une femme n'a pour soutenir ses droits,
Que sa fid lit , sa foiblesse & ses larmes
..:
(Act II, scene I).

It is significant, however, that Durval, already remorseful, is aware of the attitude which will be necessary to reassure Constance:

Que de soins, de soupirs, de regrets & de
larmes,
Faudra-t-il que j'oppose   ses justes
allarmes!
(Act II, scene I).

Moreover, Durval's intention to exploit his own tears in order to bring about a renewed relationship of harmony between himself and Constance, is reflected by that of his wife, who, wishing to reach an understanding with Durval, rejects anger in favour of tears:

FINETTE
Moi, je d poserai, s'il en  toit besoin.

CONSTANCE
Je ne veux employer que mes uniques armes.

Dorante at the idea of hurting Pyrante:

... mon fils, tout à coup, vint s'offrir
à ma vue,
Les yeux baignés de pleurs, embrassant mes
genoux,
Avouant qu'il avoit mérité mon courroux ...
(Act I, scene I).

These are tears which derive from love between father and son and a desire not to harm the understanding they share.

In addition to tears shed by Ariste in Le Philosophe marié on the reconciliation between himself and Mélite,²⁵ we have those suggested in Lisimon's words:

Vous dévorez des pleurs qui coulent malgré
vous!
Vous pâlissez! Pourquoi vous mettre à mes
genoux?
(Act IV, scene II).

Ariste's emotion in this scene originates in the knowledge that his action in marrying Mélite without his father's consent may distress him. A previous statement to Damon in Act I, scene II: "Mais je crains sa douleur bien plus que son courroux," had implied a fear of destroying the harmony in his relationship with Lisimon and of causing him unnecessary suffering. The tears in Act IV are therefore a sign both of genuine alarm and solicitude for another and of a desire that relationships be based on love.

Despite her scorn on being told of the reconciliation between Ariste and Mélite, Céliante herself sheds tears when re-establishing an understanding with Damon:

CÉLIANTE, s'attendrissant
Damon, Damon!

DAMON, la regardant tendrement
O trop funestes charmes!

CÉLIANTE
Le traître m'attendrit, et m'arrache des larmes.
(Act II, scene II).

²⁵See p. 309 above.

her standards, never indeed completely dead, are reborn. This episode has considerable dramatic importance since Esope deliberately disbelieves Rhodope's change of heart in order to test her sincerity. Moreover Esope himself sheds tears on the reconciliation of Rhodope and Léonide in the following scene: "Je vous ai fait pleurer, & je pleure à mon tour" (Act III, scene X). The three principal characters in this episode are united and tears are once again proof of a relationship of sympathy, which they indeed consolidate.

In Marivaux's L'Île des esclaves (1725) the greater awareness of masters and servants for each other may be said to come into being with Arlequin's response to an accusation from Iphicrate that his affection has died:

ARLEQUIN, pleurant
Eh! qui est-ce qui te dit que je ne t'aime plus?
(Scene IX).

This, together with Arlequin's reproaches, brings about a transformation in Iphicrate:

Va, mon cher enfant, oublie que tu fus mon esclave, et je me ressouviendrai toujours que je ne méritais pas d'être ton maître.

Iphicrate has thus learnt the "lesson" proposed by Trivelin at the outset and his moral regeneration is expressed in tears:

ARLEQUIN
Mon pauvre patron, qu'il y a de plaisir à bien faire! (Après quoi, il déshabille son maître.)

IPHICRATE
Que fais-tu, mon cher ami?

ARLEQUIN
Rendez-moi mon habit, et reprenez le vôtre; je ne suis pas digne de le porter.

IPHICRATE
Je ne saurais retenir mes larmes. Fais ce que tu voudras.

Throughout this scene and the later one in which Euphrosine and Cléanthis are reconciled, there is considerable ironic comment, by Arlequin particularly, on the relationship between master and servant. In reuniting the two women, for instance, Arlequin remarks of Iphicrate and Euphrosine: "Ils sont contrits d'avoir été méchants, cela fait qu'ils nous valent bien; car quand on se repent on est bon; et quand on est bon, on est aussi avancé que nous" (Scene X). Such a statement undoubtedly denotes the close association of a capacity for feeling and recognition of guilt, but it brings to the last stages of the play, with its unexpected rearrangement of the normal hierarchy of moral worth, a humour absent from tearful scenes of this kind in the new comedy.

In Nivelles de la Chaussée's Le Préjugé à la mode, for example, Constance's tears, caused by what she considers to be an offence to her virtue in being sent anonymous presents, are entirely serious. Durval's totally unfounded accusations of infidelity produce a similar, although more powerful, effect; indeed such is the intensity of her suffering that no method of communication is adequate to convey it:

CONSTANCE

Hélas! dois-je mourir sans me justifier!
Que je sçache du moins ce qui m'ôte la
vie ...
J'y succombe ... Je meurs ...

DAMON

Elle est évanouie.
(Act IV, scene XI).

There is an interesting comparison to be made between this scene and Act III scene V of Campistron's Le Jaloux désabusé (1709). In the latter, Celie's fainting when charged with unfaithfulness by Dorante is merely a pretence: she is deliberately tricking her husband and remains entirely in control

his guilt and a desire to atone for and wipe out previous immoral conduct are automatically linked in his mind with tears. In reply to Constance's demand to be told where Durval is, he says:

Il est à vos genoux ...
C'est où je dois mourir ... Laissez-moi
dans les larmes,
Expier mes excès & venger tous vos charmes.

Tears, caused in the first instance by a recognition of heartlessness, have become proof of real remorse and of a genuine wish to change. They provide the play with a dénouement from which comic elements are entirely absent.

While in L'Enfant prodigue Euphémon's moral regeneration is again expressed in tears,²⁸ in Pamela it is hardly possible to speak of single lachrymose situations, since tears are shed or alluded to on so many different occasions. The cause of these tears, moreover, is not always easy to determine. In Act III, scene V, for example, Pamela draws attention to the emotion of Mme Andrews:

Quel changement subit s'est fait dans
votre voix?
Pourquoi répandez-vous des larmes?
Seroit-ce ... Ah! ciel! ma mere, est-ce
vous que je vois?

It is unclear whether these tears are due to the reunion with Pamela after so long a separation or to a mother's dismay at Pamela's dilemma. Certainly, Mme Andrews' speeches in this scene centre on the threat to Pamela's virtue; it would thus seem possible to assume that her distress stems in part at least from this moral issue.

A similar problem arises at the beginning of Act V. The tears of Pamela, summoned to see Milord, doubtless arise from

²⁸ See his appeal to Lise in Act IV, scene III, for example.

a reluctance to leave him and from an apprehension that there will be a renewed struggle within her. Her speeches in Act V, scene III, however, while supporting these two explanations of her unhappiness, suggest also that her tears may be linked to the fact that she feels her integrity to be threatened. Paméla refers to herself, for instance, as "l'innocence opprimée" and outlines her misgivings, which are increased by a recognition, "à travers de mes larmes," of Milord's good qualities, in this way:

Mais je crains bien plus ma foiblesse,
Lorsqu'il m'annonce sa tendresse
Sous le voile de la vertu.
.....
Miledi, je craignois le péril trop certain,
Où nous conduit toujours un hymen clandestin.

Many of her statements in this scene thus lead us to believe that tears are a result of lack of strength and of a fear that virtue will be lost. They are also an attempt to convince Miledi of the sincerity of this virtue.

Finally in this play it would seem that Milord weeps on stage when coming to a full realisation of his callousness. At the end of Act IV, scène VI, for example, he promises that his death will provide revenge and satisfaction for all:

Je fus votre fléau;
Vous serez tous vengés au gré de votre envie.
Paméla m'a laissé son désespoir affreux.
Je sens la même horreur qu'elle avoit pour la vie:
La mort va terminer des jours trop malheureux.

There is no stage direction here to indicate the shedding of tears. In the following scene, however, there is, in Milord's question to Paméla on her return: "Quel miracle vous rend à mes pleurs?" the implication that his remorse is accompanied

by tears.

The lachrymose situation has a dual aim. It causes a character to shed tears either on or off stage and thereby prove beyond doubt the possession of a capacity for feeling. Beyond this, it invites the participation of the spectator in a protagonist's dilemma, affording him the pleasure of indulging in tears. All the features of the new plays which we have observed so far are to some extent associated with the shedding of tears. Not all the characters in the genre can be called lachrymose, but there are many tearful situations, providing very often considerable variety within one play. A dramatist such as Destouches, while introducing into his works tearful episodes of different kinds, would seem to maintain that comic scenes remain an essential part of his chosen genre; a mixture of the touching and the amusing is permissible. Nivelle de La Chaussée on the other hand, gradually abandons all comic situations and concentrates instead either on one or two lachrymose episodes, or, increasingly at the end of his career, on a significant number of brief incidents containing an allusion to or accompanied by tears. Whatever technique he may prefer, the playwright insists on the most disastrous aspects of his situation - is indeed obliged to do so if the tears of his characters are to appear credible - and is forced to furnish an explanation of the suffering witnessed by the audience. This second point in particular suggests that the tearful situation, in common with the elements in the comedy which we have previously analysed, will bring about a change in the structure of plays in this genre.

CHAPTER NINE

Sentiment and Structure

Although most of our discussion hitherto has concerned the changing tone of the comedy in the first half of the eighteenth century, we have seen that in devising characters with a capacity for feeling, who share relationships of sympathy, playwrights are breaking what might be called the traditional rules of dramatic structure. Several writers and critics of the time seem to have been aware that the comedy is undergoing a transformation of this kind. Desfontaines, for example, believes that Mélanide (1741) might most aptly be called a "Drame Romanesque"¹ while Voltaire uses the same adjective in his defence of the new genre:

Cet académicien judicieux blâme surtout les intrigues romanesques et forcées dans ce genre de comédie ... Mais dans quel genre les intrigues romanesques et forcées peuvent-elles être admises? Ne sont-elles pas toujours un vice essentiel dans quelque ouvrage que ce puisse être?²

In later years "romanesque" becomes for Voltaire a convenient term of abuse.³ Indeed it is clear that the word is often employed indiscriminately as a means of attack by those opposed to the new plays. Collé, for instance, writing about a production of Nivelles de la Chaussée's L'Homme de fortune

¹See P.-F. G. Desfontaines, Observations sur les écrits modernes (Paris, 1741), XXV, Lettre CCCLXI, 28.

²Voltaire, Nanine, Préface, Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire, Nouvelle Edition ... conforme pour le texte à l'édition de Beuchot (Paris, 1877-85), V, 6. "Cet académicien" is Pierre-Mathieu-Martin de Chassiron, whose Réflexions sur le comique larmoyant had appeared in 1749.

³See, for example, "Art dramatique," Dictionnaire philosophique, Oeuvres complètes, XVII, 419.

(1750) in January 1751, says:

Cette pièce est purement romanesque. Suivant le détail qu'on m'en a fait, tous les personnages sont généreux, justes, raisonnables, sans défauts, sans ridicules.

Here the word condemns a lack of realism in a genre whose aim had always been to represent the ordinary existence of recognizable people. The remainder of Collé's attack on L'Homme de fortune and his reviews of both La Force du naturel (1750) by Destouches and Mme de Graffigny's Cénie (1750), which is referred to as "un petit roman en action" (I, 189), all demonstrate that the association between the novel and the comedy is made largely to discredit the latter.⁵ Indeed, when discussing La Force du naturel, Collé moves away from criticism of that work in particular to demolish the new plays in general:

Ce ne sont plus des pièces de théâtre, ce sont des romans, où pour vouloir peindre les hommes en beau on ne les peint plus au naturel. (I, 133).

Nevertheless, if the terms "roman" and "romanesque", with their old connotations of "merveilleux", "fantastique" and thus "invraisemblable", are employed as an easy way of dismissing the new comedy, on occasion Collé makes plain that a comparison between this genre and the novel is valid. When commenting on Nivelles de la Chaussée's L'École de la jeunesse

⁴Ch. Collé, Journal et Mémoires, ed. H. Bonhomme (Paris, 1868), I, 278.

When recording La Chaussée's death, Collé makes much the same judgment of his plays: "En formant ses caractères sur des romans, il n'a peint que des chimères ..." (I, 408).

⁵P. Clément is close to Collé in his review of Cénie: "... Cénie ... n'est pourtant qu'un de ces petits romans qu'on appelle Comédies ..." (Les Cinq années littéraires (La Haye, 1754), II, Lettre LXII, 153).

(1749), he places the eighteenth-century plays in the context of a broad comic tradition:

Il est bien étonnant qu'un auteur de la médiocrité incurable dont est La Chaussée ait donné, pour ainsi dire, le ton à son siècle, et qu'il ait eu le crédit de ramener un mauvais genre de comédie qui étoit proscrit et qui n'est nullement nouveau. On peut voir, par l'histoire du théâtre français, récemment imprimée, que les pièces de roman, et celles mêlées de tragique et de comique, avoient été à la mode jusqu'à ce que Molière eut donné le modèle de la vraie comédie: nous avons pris ce mauvais goût-là des Italiens, qui n'est nullement celui des anciens ni celui de la nature. (I, 53-54).

Collé is clearly recalling here the old comedies of plot, closer in form to a story than anything else. His review of Cénie also suggests that he has observed a change in dramatic technique:

Un autre défaut, qui est encore inhérent à ce genre, c'est l'obligation de cacher le dénouement et d'empêcher qu'on ne le devine; ce qui est cause presque toujours que l'exposition dure jusque dans les derniers actes, et que l'on a encore des faits même au cinquième acte dont il faut instruire le spectateur; et rien au monde n'est plus froid que le récit de ces faits qui coupent presque toujours indispensablement l'action, et justement dans le temps où tout est davantage en mouvement ... (I, 190).

It is in these two passages that Collé comes closest to an explanation of why the term "romanesque" might be apt when applied to the new plays. Writing at the end of the first half of the century, he is in a position to assess the main features of a genre which he has seen emerging, but an analysis of the way in which the transformation in the structure of the comedy comes about is absent from his reviews, as it is from those of Desfontaines or Clément. Nor can it really be

said to exist in the works of more modern critics. Lénient, for example, has, as one of the categories into which eighteenth-century comedy can be divided, the "comédie larmoyante et romanesque, genre hybride tenant le milieu entre le tragique et le comique ..."⁶ and Mélanide is referred to as an "espèce de mélodrame romanesque" (I, 164). Brunetière gives as the reason for La Chaussée's downfall: "C'est qu'il a mêlé trop de romanesque, aussi, lui, dans l'intrigue de ses pièces,"⁷ while Gaiffe holds that in plays such as Mélanide and La Gouvernante (1747), precursors of the drame proper, "on ... trouve déjà le romanesque dans la conception de l'intrigue."⁸ These judgments are strikingly similar, but rarely is there an investigation into the reasons for the change in comic structure.⁹

A superficial reading is sufficient to indicate the difference between the new genre and those plays considered to belong to the classical French theatre. Whereas in Molière or many of the "comédies de mœurs" at the turn of the century, we have a play which is an entity in itself, developing out of an initial situation through a series of confrontations to the inevitable dénouement, in the case of the new genre, we have an immediate sense of a complex plot, relying heavily on discussion, on the unexpected or on events which have occurred

⁶C. Lénient, La Comédie en France au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1888), I, 153.

⁷F. Brunetière, Les Époques du théâtre français (1892), Sixième Édition (Paris, 1906), p. 291.

⁸F. Gaiffe, Le Drame en France au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1910), p. 32.

⁹Petit de Julleville might be said to be an exception to the pattern outlined here. See Histoire de la littérature française, publiée sous la direction de L. Petit de Julleville (Paris, 1898), VI, 589-91.

some time before the opening of the play. The term "romanesque" is no more than a label, however, and it is perhaps to do justice to the comedy in the first half of the eighteenth century to seek the causes of a transformation which is so apparent.

We have established that many dramatists endeavour to arouse the spectator's sympathy for and approval of certain notions and attitudes and that they may do so in a number of ways. The existence of a relationship of affection, for example, can be conveyed by an explicit statement or, more commonly, by the interaction of characters on the stage. Several playwrights, however, deem it necessary to advocate the desirability of relations founded on spontaneous regard through the medium of a sometimes lengthy debate. Thus in Act I, scene I of Destouches's L'Irrésolu (1713), we see Pyrante and Lisimon setting out their respective views on the treatment of children, in L'École des amis (1737), we have Ariste's explanation of the nature of true friendship and in many plays, including Le Préjugé à la mode (1735), L'Homme singulier (1745) and La Gouvernante, an argument about or comments upon love and marriage. In all instances the opinion of the dramatist is clear. Furthermore, where these debates take place between the characters involved in the relationship, they may constitute one of the crucial scenes of the play. In L'Irrésolu, much of the action tends towards the central scene of Act IV, in which Dorante and Julie, in their first real encounter on stage, examine the subject of marriage in general and their own roles within it. Similarly, in Le Philosophe marié (1727), the culmination to Act I is the scene

in which Ariste and Mélite reaffirm their commitment to their relationship, while in Les Philosophes amoureux (1729), the plot seems to move towards the confrontation between Léandre and Clarice in Act II, scene IV and subsequently towards that of Damis and Arténice.¹⁰ Reflection on or analysis of particular relationships are a significant element of the new comedy and can often complete part of the preceding action.

A number of other themes provide a basis for discussion. The nature of the "philosophe" and his way of life is, as one might expect, an important topic in the two plays mentioned above, while fashionable Parisian manners are commented upon in such plays as Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs (1740), Nivelle de la Chaussée's L'École des meres (1744) and Gresset's Le Méchant (1747).

Scenes of debate, whether they be devoted to the examination of one subject or several, must by virtue of their very frequency, affect the nature of the comedy. In the first place, they inevitably slow down the action. Furthermore, they produce a change in structure, since the play is no longer a straightforward resolution of conflict. Scenes of discussion, stemming from a clash in outlook, are of course a feature of the traditional comedy, but whereas in Molière, for instance, they are used mainly as exposition or as a kind of interlude, a reminder of the issues at stake, in the new plays they are calculated to explore certain notions and prove a point of view. They thus make of the comedy a discursive genre.

¹⁰ This takes place in Act III, scene III, where Damis and Arténice examine, among other subjects, the nature of their relationship and where Damis attempts to resist the idea of love.

On occasion the element of real debate may disappear completely. In Act II, scene I of Voltaire's L'Enfant prodigue (1736), for example, where Lise discusses with Marthe her vision of married life, the presence of the suivante is almost dispensable and Lise's replies have, to all intents and purposes, become a monologue. As her remark "plus mon cœur s'étudie et s'essaie" reveals, an attempt by one protagonist to persuade another of an attitude can be transformed into self-analysis. We have already witnessed this to some extent in Act II, scene II of Le Philosophe marié and Act I, scene IV of Mélanide, where a lovers' dispute affords Céliante in the former, and Darviane, in the latter, an opportunity for reflection on their nature and conduct. The soliloquy proper, however, is a striking characteristic of the new comedy and appears to serve a number of functions.

Soliloquies here, as in any genre, allow feelings to be openly and freely expressed. In Campistron's Le Jaloux désabusé (1709) monologues enable Dorante to speak of the pain and confusion inherent in his relationship with Celie. Act IV, scene I, coming after Dorante has accused his wife of infidelity, sees an avowal of his "peine secrète;" the soliloquy here makes possible the admission of what, because of the shame attached to loving his own wife, Dorante is obliged to repress with others. The device employed to present a character "De ... tristes soupçons sans relâche agité ..." is exploited again at the end of Act IV and the beginning of Act V to convey Dorante's continuing anguish. Torn in Act IV, scene IX between a desire for revenge and repugnance at the thought of creating a scene in public, we find him in Act V, scene I, totally bemused:

Je marche, & je ne sçai où s'adressent mes
pas;
Dans ma propre maison je ne me connois pas.
.....
Mes sens à leurs erreurs asservissent mon
ame.
Ciel, as-tu de fleau plus cruel qu'une
femme!
Insensé que je suis de m'être marié!

The more intense Dorante's reactions, the longer and more disjointed his monologues become. They provide an occasion for self-analysis and reflection in solitude, essential, as far as the audience is concerned, for an understanding of Dorante's development. They are a preparation for his change of heart at the end of the play and thus a crucial ingredient in the plot.

In Le Philosophe marié the very opening of the play takes the form of a long monologue, revolving around Ariste's meditation on the enjoyment to be derived from study and a comparison between that and the demands of his household. This speech contains some introduction to events and therefore has a dramatic function, but an important element in the situation is Ariste's confusion and the glimpse we have of it is fundamental to our involvement in his gradual transformation as the play progresses. A further, extremely short, monologue at the end of Act II, revealing his uneasiness when told by Finette that the Marquis du Laurent is with his wife, is followed by a final longer one after Géronte's ultimatum, more indicative of the conflicting emotions within him:

Dans mes sombres chagrins, quel parti dois-
je prendre?
J'ai mille mouvements. Auquel faut-il me
rendre?
Si je forme un projet, un autre le détruit.
La raison m'abandonne, et le trouble me suit.
(Act IV, scene I).

In Fagan's one-act play La Pupille (1734), Ariste is twice given a soliloquy in which he considers the possibility that he might be loved by Julie, his ward. The second in particular allows an insight into Ariste's hesitation and modesty:

Quoi! Julie, il seroit possible qu'Ariste
eût obtenu quelqu'empire sur vous! Ah!
Julie, Julie, si ma raison ne m'eût pas
soutenu contre l'effet de vos charmes, pen-
sez-vous que je n'eusse pas été le pre-
mier à me déclarer pour vous? ... Ciel!
quelle est ma foiblesse! Osé-je croire
qu'elle pense à moi? Allons, rendons-
nous justice une bonne fois, & convenons
que pour quelques apparences, il y a cent
raisons qui détruisent une idée aussi
ridicule. (Scene XVII).

Since it is the purpose of this play to trace the development of love between Julie and Ariste and thus to analyse Ariste's feelings, which cannot be discussed with any character on stage, the soliloquy is clearly once again a device enabling confession and self-examination.

In Boissy's L'Epoux par supercherie (1744) disquiet and confusion lie at the heart of the monologues. We find Emilie, for example, troubled by guilt on learning that she, believed to be the wife of Belfort, is loved by the Marquis:

Et de ce feu fatal, c'est moi qui suis
l'objet!
Voilà ce que j'ai craint, & ce qui me dé-
chire.
.....
Ma raison en frémit; mon cœur en est ému.
Je ne puis surmonter, ni démêler mon
trouble.
(Act II, scene I).

The device is used at two further points in the same act, to permit the Marquis to express his despair, firstly in scene III, when he is incapable of speaking to Emilie of his love for her, and secondly in scene IX, when considering all

Belfort's advantages:

J'ai toutes les rigueurs, il a toutes les
graces;
On l'adore, on me hait; on le cherche, on
me fuit;
.....
En cet instant ou je suis à la gêne,
Ou je gémiss tout seul & dévore ma peine,
Il la conduit chez elle, il lui donne la
main,
Et l'on a des secrets à lui dire en chemin?

The frequency of the monologue would seem to suggest that one of the primary concerns of the dramatist is an analysis of the feelings of characters confronted with an apparently insoluble dilemma.

For several protagonists in the new comedy, a particular source of anxiety is a battle between love and reason and the soliloquy is an ideal form for the presentation of this struggle. Léandre, for example, in Les Philosophes amoureux, is well aware that there are two sides to his nature and that each makes a different judgment of Clarice:

Si j'en crois ma raison, je saurai l'évi-
ter;
Si j'écoute mon cœur, ma chute est infail-
lible.¹¹
(Act II, scene I).

The theme of this monologue, together with that in Act III, scene VII, is the futility of any attempt to repress the feelings, his first troubled conclusion:

..... mais la philosophie
Saura m'en préserver. Malheur à qui s'y
fie!
En vain contre les sens elle élève sa
voix ...
(Act II, scene I).

finding something of an echo in the later scene: "Pour me

¹¹The "le" in the first of these two lines is "le bord du précipice," that is to say, falling in love with Clarice.

vaincre, il est vrai, je fais ce que je puis;/ Mais, plus j'y fais d'efforts, plus mon amour augmente ..." (Act III, scene VII). The soliloquy thus permits a character knowledge of his own state of mind and the audience an awareness of his conflicting inclinations. That the dramatist accords considerable importance to the feelings of his protagonists is implied by the fact that he allows Arténice a long monologue in Act III, scene I and by the fact that Damis, no less than Léandre, is given a soliloquy in which the opposition of emotion and reason again predominates:

Indigne que je suis! Il est trop vrai que
Puisque je suis jaloux. J'ai honte de moi-
j'aime,
même.
.....
Dès que je l'ai (Arténice) revue,
La force m'a manqué, mon âme s'est émue,
Et ma fière raison m'a laissé retomber.
(Act IV, scene V).

In Destouches's L'Ambitieux et l'indiscrete (1737), Don Fernand endeavours to force a victory of reason, in the shape of ambition, over love for Clarice:

Et l'amour . . .
Veut sur l'ambition remporter la victoire;
Il le veut. Mais en vain il ose le tenter,
Et, quoiqu'il m'ait surpris, il ne peut
me dompter.
Est-ce à moi de sentir et ses feux et ses
flammes?
L'amour ne doit régner que sur de foibles
âmes . . .
(Act II, scene V).

The soliloquy also affords a character the opportunity to examine and solve a moral difficulty. Damon, for instance, in Le Curieux impertinent (1710), is given two monologues to consider the implications of the dilemma with which Léandre confronts him. The theme of the first, whose opening lines: "Où vais-je m'engager? A ma foible vertu,/ Trop indiscret ami,

quel écueil offres-tu?" (Act II, scene VII) are sufficient sign of Damon's uneasiness, is taken up again as if without pause in Act IV, scene IX, where he resolves the issue with the conclusion that the responsibility for the outcome of the situation is not his. The monologue has allowed Damon to set out the terms of the problem and subsequently to progress from a state in which he is tormented by guilt to one in which he has salved his conscience and can proceed on a chosen course of action. It is clear, therefore, that these speeches of reflection on a seemingly impossible position are an essential element both in his development and in that of the play as a whole.

Cléon, in Destouches's Le Dissipateur (1736), confesses his folly both in wasting his fortune and in his choice of friends:

Inutile remords,
Pourquoi me tourmenter? O raison trop tar-
dive!
Que ne prévenois-tu le malheur qui m'ar-
rive!
Je suis abandonné, trahi, déshérité,
Et, pour comble de maux, je l'ai bien
mérité.
Compter sur des amis; quelle étoit ma
folie!
(Act V, scene XV).

This function of the monologue is clearly illustrated in Fagan's Les Originaux (1737). The action here, which is based on a series of conversations between the Marquis and a number of eccentrics, is punctuated by the Marquis's observations on those he meets. His last soliloquies, however, are quite different in kind from the first: whereas these merely comment on the strangeness of the social types encountered by the Marquis, the later ones contain a recognition of error.

Scene XIV, for example, finds him undergoing a realisation of his own objectionable behaviour:

Seroit-il possible que j'eusse quelque
ressemblance à ce que je viens de voir, &
à tout ce que j'ai vû aujourd'hui? Si cela
étoit, en vérité, je serois bien haïssable.

Scene XVI, containing further solitary meditation, reveals a more general moral sense and marks the final stage in the Marquis's development.

Similarly Act III, scene XII of Le Méchant has Valère avowing the baseness of his conduct towards Gêronte and determining to adopt his own standards:

Ma conduite à mes yeux me pénètre de honte.
Pourrai-je réparer mes torts près de
Gêronte?
Il m'aimait autrefois; j'espère mon pardon.
Mais comment avouer mon amour à Cléon?
Moi sérieusement amoureux! ... Il n'importe:
Qu'il m'en plaisante ou non, ma tendresse
l'emporte.

Whatever the precise purpose of the monologue, it allows a character to seek an insight into his reactions and motives. As Léandre in Les Philosophes amoureux puts it: "Examinons un peu dans quel état je suis" (Act III, scene VII). Reflective soliloquies had become rare in the comedy. Indeed, monologues of any sort are not common, either in Molière or his successors. If the device is employed, it is normally to permit a character to formulate a plan of campaign and then to assess its progress or success. Such speeches are still a feature of the new comedy, affording both protagonists and audience time to consider the action and its implications. In Molière one also thinks of Arnolphe's soliloquy in Act IV of L'École des femmes, of Harpagon's distracted monologue in L'Avare or the opening speech from Argan in Le Malade imaginaire. Scenes such as

these are nevertheless small in number when viewed in the context of Molière's theatre as a whole. Moreover, Molière's great central characters, supremely oblivious of themselves and their folly, unwittingly betray their obsessions in their monologues: their lack of awareness indeed increases the comic impact of the play. Given the fact that it is a form of direct communication between protagonist and spectator, however, the soliloquy can arouse compassion and this is surely its aim in the plays we have been considering: it contains an appeal for understanding in a difficult situation. It is significant that the monologue is generally delivered by a character who has a certain capacity for feeling, which has already become apparent or which reveals itself during the course of the speech. Those who are cynical or superficial, who show a lack of concern in the widest sense, do not usually pause to examine their state of mind or the scope of a problem, should it exist.

As the tone of the comedy must inevitably be affected by this use of the monologue, so too will its form necessarily be modified. Spoken by characters, who, far from being ignorant of their real selves, are quite lucid in their appraisal of their emotions and controlled in their expression of them, the soliloquy makes the new genre introspective and brings it close to a study of the psychology of many major protagonists. Such an analysis forms no part of the traditional comedy and it might perhaps be said to suggest a resemblance between the eighteenth-century plays and the romanesque form. It is certain that both discussion and self-examination divert attention from the main plot, which is often forgotten for an entire scene, or number of scenes, and only recalled with a brief

mention at the end of a debate or monologue. More than this, however, so fundamental is the desire to put across a particular point of view, or to stress a change of heart, that in many cases indeed debate and soliloquy are the plot itself.

A further, radical effect on the structure of the comedy is brought about by one of its most significant features, namely the intention to advocate certain moral principles and to reform those characters without moral values. In the first place, a substantial degree of discussion enters the play and it may be lengthy, retarding the unfolding of the action and even interrupting it. No longer is it sufficient for a relationship - be it one of sympathy or antipathy - to be created whenever characters first appear on stage: a moralising comment on that relationship is now almost indispensable. Thus in Act III, scene XIII of Le Philosophe marié, discord within the family is made immediately apparent, but to it is added condemnation of G ronde, quite superfluous as far as the intrigue is concerned. In L'Enfant prodigue, Lise does not hesitate to state her opposition to Rondon's plans for her in Act I, scene II; any hero or heroine of classical comedy would do the same. There follows, however, an idyllic portrayal of married life, a digression which would have been quite out of place in seventeenth-century comedy.

The disruptive nature of the moralising tendency may be illustrated by the form of Act I in L'Obstacle impr vu (1717). The opening scene of the play depends on a recent clash between Val re and his father. The potential of this conflict is not exploited - or not immediately, at least - and the first scene leads into one between Val re and Ang lique, revolving

from the start around Angélique's accusations to Valère of neglect, her criticism of his attitude towards love and marriage and her determination to reform him. Several of the subsequent scenes are based on the same theme, with the result that the original point of interest, that is to say the relationship between father and son, has been temporarily abandoned and the action taken off at a tangent.

If the moralising scenes alter the expected course of the action, they seek in addition to eliminate divisions between characters. When Valère, for example, endeavours to change Damon in Act III, scene VII of Le Médisant (1715), or Lycandre the Comte in Le Glorieux (1732), Céliante the Baron in Les Dehors trompeurs, they are all attempting to bring the object of their homily closer to themselves. Where the whole of the action leads to the moral regeneration of a central protagonist, the play tends towards agreement and sympathy at the close, a movement which clearly distinguishes the new from the traditional comedy.

As we have already observed, the desire to show the audience the reform of a libertine and as a result the pleasure inherent in virtue, is a major feature of the works we are examining. With few exceptions, however, immoral or callous conduct is not presented by the dramatist on stage: a character such as Euphémon fils or the Marquis de Clarendon in L'École de la jeunesse first appears after he has realised the unacceptability of his original values. Where the new genre proposes, therefore, to illustrate the possibility of a genuine rebirth in moral standards, description and explanation are essential if the process undergone before the opening

of the play is to be appreciated by the spectator. Act I of Le Préjugé à la mode sees the setting forth of what would appear to be the most important components of the plot, namely Sophie's objections to marriage and thus her clash with both M. Argante and Damon; to this are added Dorante's neglect of Constance and her unhappiness. Dramatic potential seems to reside principally in the relationship of the young lovers. The focus shifts, however, at the start of Act II with Dorante's revelation that he loves Constance, a revelation which demands a significant amount of detail about the past and some clarification by Dorante of the development which has taken place within him.

This characteristic of the new comedy is yet more striking in Voltaire's L'Enfant prodigue. The introduction to events has apparently been effected in the first two acts with an outline of Euphémon fils's profligacy and selfishness. In Act III, however, we find what amounts to a second exposition with the return of Euphémon fils and his portrayal, in conversation with Jasmin, of events leading up to his present distressed state.¹² Euphémon is a reformed character, but in these scenes and in his confrontation with Lise, which occurs in Act IV, scene III, an account of both past and present is indispensable if Lise and the audience alike are to be convinced of his sincerity.

The tearful situation may also be said to interrupt the progress of the plot with pure narrative. If the audience is to sympathise fully with a character's predicament, all the

¹²The elucidation necessary here is, moreover, given in two scenes, separated by the interventions of Mme Croupillac and Euphémon père and thus takes some time to complete.

factors contributing to it must be known and must furthermore justify his distress. Many scenes in the new comedy thus contain a history of the past in order to explain unhappiness in the present. In Act I, scene IX of Le Glorieux Lycandre, having aroused Lisette's affection for her father, increases her concern and compassion with a lengthy evocation of the misfortunes which have befallen the family and, moreover, takes up the theme again in Act IV. Detail of a more recent past is required at the beginning of Act V in L'École des meres to account for Mme Argante's distress on her son's elopement and La Gouvernante, in the play of that name, describes for Angélique the fate of her parents in Act II, scene II. The demands of this component of the new genre are at their most striking in Mélanide. In Act II, scene III, Mélanide outlines to Théodon the catastrophe which occurred so long ago and which yet has such importance for the present. Again we see that at a comparatively late stage in the intrigue narrative is essential if the spectator is to participate in events. Mélanide's shame and consternation are such that the truth does not emerge in its entirety even in Act II, scene III and we have to await Act IV and scenes with Théodon and then Darviane for complete elucidation. Past misfortunes thus influence the structure of the comedy, which, in the case of Mélanide and indeed some other plays, is beginning to resemble a slowly unfolding story.

Factors fundamental to the new genre thus force it to break with the traditional methods of construction. The comedy becomes reflective and gains in complexity as discussion or secondary plots seemingly unconnected with the central

issue, are introduced into it.¹³ As we have already implied, however, the very relationships between characters can in themselves effect a change in comic structure. A small number of plays in the period we are studying, although influenced by the new climate of the time, do admittedly obey convention, which is to use conflict as a source of action. In Le Jaloux désabusé, for example, the intrigue stems from Dorante's opposition to his sister's choice of husband. The protagonists are clearly divided into two groups - Dorante and the rest - and the substance of the play derives from the stratagem to defeat Dorante. His change of heart at the end owes nothing to solicitude for Julie; on the contrary, it depends entirely on his selfish desire to rid his house of men who might be courting his wife. There is no doubt that this play contains elements, such as Dorante's soliloquies, his moralising comment at the close, and Celie's scruples in tricking her husband, which indicate a move towards a new genre, but in its basic framework Le Jaloux désabusé belongs to the old tradition.

So too does Piron's L'École des pères (1728), where again there are two firmly opposed sets of characters, one intent on destroying the schemes of the other. We have noted that the purpose of this play - to reveal the sons' lack of moral standards - is not that of classical comedy, but unmasking of a more general kind and this play, in developing out of tensions established in the first act, remains

¹³In some plays a whole act or sequence of acts may be devoted to discussion. Much of the first two acts of Destouches's Les Philosophes amoureux is taken up with debate and Boissy's Les Dehors trompeurs contains little but argument about moral issues in the first three acts.

faithful to the usual dramatic practice. A clash of wills also provides the starting-point for the plot of Destouches's L'Ambitieux, where Don Fernand, greedy for power, is radically at odds with Don Phillipe, whose only concern is the good of King and state. Their struggle, which comes out into the open at the end of Act II, gives the impetus to the whole of the ensuing action, in which each attempts to prevent the success of the other. To this hostility between brothers must be added that of husband and wife, Dona Béatrice too being determined to gain prestige at court, by marrying her niece to the King, a plan which is anathema to Don Phillipe. This work, in common with those discussed above, is by-and-large self-contained, in that there is little reliance on complicated events before or on shattering occurrences during its action. These are comedies which are conventional in structure, if not always in purpose.

There are yet others of which, at first sight, one might make the same judgment. In L'Ingrat, for instance, the plot seems to be prepared in terms of the disagreement between father and daughter, as it does in L'Enfant prodigue. The antagonism between parents and daughter in Le Médisant, between father and son or guardian and ward in L'Obstacle imprévu, between uncle and niece in Le Préjugé à la mode or brother and sister in L'Homme singulier, suggests that these plays will also follow tradition. Despite the fact that Lisette may remark to Isabelle in L'Ingrat: "Eh! je sais qu'il vous aime./ Il faudra qu'il se rende en dépit de lui-même ..." (Act I, scene IV), and that Lise, in L'Enfant prodigue says of Rondon "sous les plis d'un front atrabilaire,/ Sous cet

air brusque il a l'âme d'un père ..." (Act I, scene III), neither in these plays, nor in the others mentioned, is there any change in attitude on the part of the character in authority, still less any word of affection at the close. It might be supposed, therefore, that these relationships are used to furnish the substance of the play.

In every instance, however, the action moves away from what had appeared to be the principal focus of interest to centre on something quite different. Although, in L'Ingrat, the intrigue stems at the outset from Isabelle's struggle against Géronte, it soon turns first to the moral argument between Damis and Pasquin and thence to the attempt to discredit Damis. During the last three acts, Isabelle is fighting, indirectly, against her father, Orphise is intent on punishing Damis, while he is desirous of retaining the favour of both Géronte and Orphise, now a rich woman. Much of the action of the play derives from efforts by Damis, well aware of the plot against him, to pre-empt the schemes of the others. Conflict is always present in the play, but except in Act V, when Géronte orders Isabelle to sign the marriage contract, it is not explicitly one between the characters of father and daughter. The intention to unmask Damis is of course a consequence of the initial clash, which also undoubtedly gives an impetus to the action, but it would seem nevertheless that Destouches wishes to avoid arguments between parent and child on stage.

In L'Obstacle imprévu, the opposition between Lisimon and Valère, deliberately fostered by Julie in Act I, and between Julie herself and Lisimon, is exploited as a basis for

the first part of the play, as each character pursues his or her own ends. The intrigue eventually centres, however, on the despair felt by Julie and Léandre on discovering that the latter has married the woman believed to be Julie's mother. Equally, in L'Enfant prodigue, with the reappearance of Euphémon fils, the antagonism between father and daughter is abruptly forgotten. There is the suggestion of traditional comic structure in L'Homme singulier, with Sanspair's insistence on choosing a husband for Julie. A certain part of the plot derives, it is true, from Julie's attempts to hoodwink her brother into believing that the Comte is no longer a "petit-maitre", and that she herself has undergone a radical transformation to become sensible and studious, as indifferent to fashion and social approval as Sanspair. More important are the portrayal of Sanspair and his ideals, the self-analysis which we have already examined and his relationship with the Comtesse. The hint of rivalry with his nephew for the love of the Comtesse is not followed up.

It would be tempting to advance explanations for the departure from convention noted in these works. It is possible that playwrights such as Voltaire or Destouches enjoyed devising and unravelling an intricate plot; the complexities of L'Ingrat, for example, might support this notion.¹⁴ It would perhaps be wrong, however, to ignore the possibility

¹⁴ So, too, might a remark by Destouches in the Suite de la Lettre III: "Je suis fort avancé dans mes observations sur les deux Corneille, dont le cadet, plus je le sonde et l'examine, me paroît infiniment plus estimable qu'on ne se l'imagine ordinairement, surtout par rapport à l'invention et à la disposition des sujets. Jamais homme, à mon avis, n'a mieux possédé l'art de bien conduire une pièce de théâtre" (Oeuvres dramatiques (Paris, 1820), V, 211-12). Destouches is commenting in this letter to Monsieur le Chevalier de B^{xxx} on the progress of his history of the theatre.

that the writers under discussion had no liking for relationships of antipathy or for their exploitation. Antagonism, as we have shown, is disregarded at some point and is replaced, in almost every case, by a relationship of sympathy or the search for a relationship of sympathy. In L'Obstacle imprévu, for example, Lisimon relinquishes all claims to Julie himself and forgets his opposition to her union with Valère, since such a union appears to him inevitable and indeed beneficial:

Oh çà, ma chère Julie, je triomphe de la
foiblesse que j'avois pour vous, dans
l'espérance de prévenir la perte de mon
fils. Daignez me seconder, je vous en
conjure. Consentez à l'épouser ...
(Act III, scene IV).

This collusion between Lisimon and Julie removes from the play an important source of conflict and thus of dramatic action. Even the return of Léandre, which might have provoked Lisimon's aggression, is greeted with equanimity and once Léandre has received approval from both Lisimon and Licandre, no real tension remains. If, in L'Enfant prodigue, complete understanding does not immediately come into being between Lise and Euphémon fils, there is certainly a movement towards it as Euphémon urges Lise to believe in his reform and the two subsequently attempt to win over Euphémon père. A desire to find harmony underlies the last three acts of this play and the relationships of affection and understanding, potential or actual, are the dominant ones, overshadowing hostility.

This inclination to ignore conflict is also a feature of plays which are not prepared in the traditional manner. A number of relationships characterised by dislike are implied in the first act of Destouches's Le Glorieux, for example. In particular, Lisimon and his wife clash over the choice of

a husband for Isabelle; they never meet on stage, however, and although Lisimon threatens continually to assert his authority and the disagreement can be used, indirectly, to provide comic action in the confrontations between the Comte, favoured by Lisimon, and Philinte, supported by his wife, no real substance is to be had from a relationship where the protagonists argue off-stage. Moreover, at the end of Act IV, Lisimon announces a change of mind in his wife and any further action which might have derived from their difference is thus ruled out.

The possibility of opposition between Isabelle and the Comte is suggested in Act I:

LISETTE

Elle (Isabelle) est d'humeur liante, affable, sociable:
L'orgueil est à ses yeux un vice insupportable;
.....

PASQUIN

Si bien qu'avec mon maître elle est mal assortie?

LISETTE

Il aura son congé, s'il ne se contraint pas.
(Act I, scene IV).

In spite of the action latent in such a relationship, there is no encounter between these characters on stage in the first two acts. The meetings in Act III, scenes II and IV, in which Isabelle endeavours to demonstrate to the Comte the folly of his arrogance and her own distaste for it, are the only ones between the lovers until the final scene of the play. Here the anxiety felt by Isabelle throughout is assuaged without apparent difficulty by the reassurance that the Comte has undergone a genuine transformation.

Similarly all suggestions of conflict between Lisimon and his son Valère are played down, in spite of the fact that both are attracted to Lisette: after a brief confrontation in Act I, this traditional clash is forgotten. The hostility between the Comte and Philinte provides, as we have implied, some comic action in Act III, scene VII, but neither this, nor Philinte's refusal to obey Lisimon's orders to leave the house, is exploited in the last two acts. In short, the antagonism between the protagonists in this play is talked about or used sparingly as a source of action, but true antipathy is avoided.

The opposition between the Marquis and Darviane is minimised in Mélanide, as Nivelles de la Chaussée causes the argument between them to be conducted off stage, the audience being apprised of the incident through a letter from Dorisée to Mélanide, read in Act IV, scene III. In Boissy's L'Époux par supercherie there is a hint once more of conflict between the characters of father and son, but the former in fact never appears and neither the relationship nor the threat it poses can give impetus to the play.

Ignored, therefore, in some comedies, where it might have provided a structure, antipathy between characters is, in others, deliberately destroyed in a situation where it might most naturally be expected. In Le Curieux impertinent the trust between Léandre and Damon is threatened by the former's determination to test Julie through Damon, Léandre, however, not only urges Damon to: "Aime-la donc, morbleu! sois-en vraiment touché" (Act II, scene VI), he also absolves Damon of all guilt and responsibility. He states, for instance: "Ne crains point que par là notre amitié s'altère ..." (Act II, scene VI),

and subsequently adds the reassurance that: "Si tu te fais aimer, va, je te le pardonne ..." (Act III, scene VII). Even Damon's confession that he loves Julie elicits no anger; on the contrary, Léandre replies:

Eh bien! tant mieux pour toi;
Par là, tu mets Julie à la plus vive
épreuve.
.....
Si je suis malheureux, je ne m'en plaind-
rai point.
(Act IV, scene VIII).

No doubt Destouches wishes to heighten the absurdity of Léandre's plan with this show of reckless complacency, but a desire on his part to keep intact the friendship between the two characters cannot be ruled out. As far as the structure of the play is concerned, the fact that Léandre forgives Damon in advance means that all possibility of conflict is removed before it has even emerged. What might have been a comic rivalry, and thus a source of intrigue, certainly in the later stages of the play, is obviated from the start.

Ill-will and a desire to shame Dorante would be natural reactions in Constance, in Nivelles de la Chaussée's Le Préjugé à la mode. Fearful of jeopardising what still remains between them, however, she refuses to challenge him:

Je ne veux point aigrir son cœur & son
esprit,
Ni détruire un espoir que mon amour nour-
rit.
(Act IV, scene III).

Once more it would seem that the dramatist deliberately ignores conflict or the possibility of it, electing instead to emphasise the sympathy in the relations between his characters. This he does again in L'École des amis, where Hortence, informed that Monrose is unfaithful, decides to assist and not harm him:

Il est perdu pour moi. Sauvons-le seule-
ment;
Que ce soit comme ami, si ce n'est comme
amant.
(Act III, scene X).

More significant still, however, is the creation of protagonists with a capacity for feeling, in harmony from the outset with those around them. In L'Irrésolu, for example, Pyrante gives Dorante his approval of any course he might adopt:

Vous ne devez pas craindre
Qu'à prendre aucun parti je veuille vous
contraindre.
Je ne vous ai parlé que comme votre ami,
Et je ne serai point complaisant à demi.
Pesez, examinez, j'ai résolu d'attendre,
Et j'approuverai tout ...
(Act III, scene I).

We have a similar situation in Nivelles de la Chaussée's L'École de la jeunesse, where the Comtesse allows Zélide complete freedom in her choice of a husband. Equally, in Fagan's La Pupille, Ariste, Julie's guardian, remarks that "je l'ai vingt fois assurée que je ne gênerois jamais son inclination ..." (Scene IV); although in love with her himself, he is true to his word. Lisimon, in Le Philosophe marié, feeling compassion for Ariste in his dilemma, offers him help:

Il s'agit d'inventer quelques expédients
Pour amuser votre oncle: et nous devons tout
faire
Afin de lui cacher quelque temps cette
affaire ...
(Act IV, scene II).

Where important relationships are ones of affection, the impetus for the play, and indeed its very framework, must necessarily be something other than the conventional clash of wills. This is also the case to a certain extent in those plays where a relationship of antipathy changes to one of sympathy. There is clearly a degree of tension in such a

relationship, which can be used to provide some of the substance of the play. In Le Philosophe marié, for example, the disagreement between G ronte and Ariste is at the basis of part of the intrigue, which involves Ariste in an attempt to avoid the match arranged by his uncle. The moral arguments between L onore and Damon constitute the plot of Acts II and III of La Fausse Antipathie (1733), while Darviane's refusal to do M lanide's bidding, his determination to pursue his own desires, furnish some of the intrigue in M lanide. Similarly, the conflict between La Gouvernante and Ang lique or the Pr sident and Sainville in Nivelles de la Chauss e's La Gouvernante, or Brice p re and Brice fils in L'Homme de fortune, contributes to the action in both instances. As we have already observed, however, the hostility in these relationships is not deep-rooted and depends on a misapprehension or on incomplete knowledge rather than on genuine hatred: a revelation of the truth could and does remove the opposition between the characters in question, which in turn destroys dramatic potential. There is thus a limit to the action which can be derived from these relationships, with the result that the playwright is obliged, in order to maintain tension for as long as possible, to resort to the invention of incidents which conceal the real state of affairs. Were the facts to be discovered, the play would immediately come to an end.

The new comedies must, therefore, be different in structure from, say, the plays of Moli re or those of the very early years of the eighteenth century. Several of the works we have mentioned are contingent in the first place upon the

development of a love intrigue. Le Curieux impertinent, for example, can be said to follow the course of the relationship between Damon and Julie, from Damon's approaches, at Léandre's behest, in Act II, scene VIII and his subsequent decision to woo Julie on his own behalf in Act IV, scene XI, to Julie's eventual disenchantment with Léandre and her acceptance of Damon's hand. Much of the play moves inevitably towards each encounter between these two characters and attention is focused on the reactions of moral indignation and anger in Julie, together with the changing relations between her and Damon; the plot depends in other words on a gradual evolution of feelings.

It is, however, by no means as uncomplicated as this outline would imply. There are naturally sub-plots, one concerning the servants and arising out of Lolive's desire to test Nérine in imitation of his master; this part of the action exactly mirrors, on a lower level, that occurring between the principal protagonists. Another revolves around Lolive's hoodwinking of Géronte in an effort to postpone the wedding of Léandre and Julie and reaches a kind of climax in Act IV with Géronte's threats on discovering Lolive's lies. These two elements in the play provide the distraction from the central theme which one might expect in any drama. Into this framework, Destouches introduces Julie's reproaches to Léandre and the discussions between the latter and Damon about the success of Léandre's plan, accompanied by objections and warnings from Damon, both of which are fundamental to the purpose of the play.

In addition, however, there is a significant change of

direction in Act IV. In Act III, scene VIII, Julie had believed Damon's story that Léandre was unfaithful and had resolved to feign love for Damon in order to gain her revenge. This scheme might have lent substance to the rest of the play. Destouches chooses, in spite of this, to make Lolive confess the truth of Léandre's intentions to Géronte and it is thus passed on to Julie. Furthermore, Damon is informed of all this, since Crispin overhears the conversation between father and daughter. This transforms the nature of the intrigue. Julie is now in a superior position and commands the course of events, determining to punish Léandre for his lack of trust in her. Act V is thus founded on antipathy of a sort, but it remains essential, nevertheless, that one character at least, namely Léandre, be unaware of the real situation. At the end of Act V, scene II, for example, Julie deliberately leaves the stage before Léandre's confession and in Act V, scene V he in turn refuses to listen to Lolive's admission of his role in the affair. Ignorant but utterly confident, Léandre is humiliated and defeated at the close - he is in fact the classic "dupeur dupé" - which suggests that part of Destouches's aim is the deflation of his central comic character. The shift of emphasis in Act IV would appear to be indispensable in bringing this about. It is not impossible, however, that Destouches considered the growth of the relationship between Damon and Julie to be insufficient as a basis for the entire play and perceived the necessity of creating a twist in the plot to fill out the action. Whether this is the case or not, we might perhaps conclude that the absence of a strong relationship of antipathy influences the play in

two ways. In the first place, there is considerable variety within it and, secondly, it requires the use of somewhat artificial devices in order that dramatic tension be sustained.

A development in the feelings of lovers or potential lovers seems particularly suitable as the basis for shorter plays of three acts or less. In La Pupille, although some action might stem from the rivalry of the three male characters for the love of Julie, the intrigue is founded in reality on the relationship between Ariste and Julie; it is devoid of antipathy, as we have seen, and follows the course of Julie's attempts to reveal her love for him to Ariste. Indeed, her statement: "La difficulté est d'en instruire celui que j'aime" (Scene VI), might well be said to summarise the essence of the plot, which revolves around each encounter between Julie and Ariste, the former using various subterfuges to make Ariste see the truth. In short, the action, interrupted admittedly by the self-confident claims of the Marquis and Oronte, depends on the growth of love between ward and guardian. A comparison of this play and, say, L'École des femmes, could give no better indication of the change in attitude, and subsequently in structure, which has taken place in the comedy.

The plot of Boissy's L'Époux par supercherie derives from the Marquis's desire to win the love of the woman who is in fact his wife and from Belfort's attempts to woo Constance.¹⁵

¹⁵At the start of the play, Belfort is believed to be the husband of Emilie. In fact, the Marquis has secretly taken his place at the ceremony, unbeknown even to Emilie, because marriage to her would have been forbidden by her mother. Speaking of Belfort's desire to give up Emilie, he says: "Un obstacle cruel, & presque insurmontable, / Arrête cependant son dessein généreux. / Prêts à l'exécuter, nous sentons tous les deux / Qu'aux mains d'un Etranger, la Mere d'Emilie / Ne livrera jamais une fille chérie ..." (Act I, scene I). This "obstacle" is not mentioned again, nor does Emilie's mother appear in the play.

LÉANDRE

Vous m'aimerez, vous-dis-je; oui, malgré
vos refus.
Il le faut. Je me suis arrangé là-dessus.

ELIANTE

A moins que comme à vous la tête ne me
tourne,
Je ne souffrirai pas que l'amour y sé-
journe.
Je la crois assez forte.

(Act II, scene I).

These words and the initial framework of the play might be said to resemble those of many a Marivaux comedy. The speech by Eliante quoted above perhaps recalls a riposte from the Comtesse in La Première Surprise de l'amour (1722):

LE BARON, sérieusement

Madame, n'appellez point cette faiblesse-là
ridicule; ménageons les termes: il peut
venir un jour où vous serez bien aise de
lui trouver une épithète plus honnête.

LA COMTESSE

Oui, si l'esprit me tourne.
(Act I, scene VIII).

Similarly in Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard (1730) Silvia protests:

Tiens, Bourguignon, une bonne fois pour
toutes, demeure, va-t'en, reviens ... je
ne te veux ni bien ni mal, je ne te hais,
ni ne t'aime, ni ne t'aimerai à moins que
l'esprit ne me tourne.

(Act II, scene IX).

Marivaux, like the dramatists we have been discussing, endows his characters with a capacity for feeling and makes the creation of a relationship of sympathy the main theme of his plays. The spectator may suspect the protagonists themselves of less than complete awareness and sincerity where their feelings are concerned, however. Guided by pride, timidity or obstinacy, the lovers are reluctant to admit attraction: in Les Serments indiscrets (1732), for instance, Lucile and Damis,

having declared themselves hostile to the idea of marriage, are obliged to reject each other on first meeting in spite of a kind of understanding; Lucile's "vous ne vous souciez point de moi, je ne me soucie point de vous ..." (Act I, scene VI) encapsulates and determines the apparent nature of their relationship. The tension produced by attraction towards a character who in fact represents a challenge to an assumed attitude manifests itself in antagonism. Les Serments indiscrets, together with much of Marivaux's theatre, thus depends on verbal sparring, even though the opposition is more imaginary than real. In La Seconde Surprise de l'amour (1723) the agreement between the Marquise and the Chevalier contains the seeds of conflict should the question of love arise. At the beginning of Act II, the Chevalier does not confront his natural rival the Comte, because this would be tantamount to a confession of love for the Marquise; she in turn does not vent her anger on Hortensius, who had provoked the situation. Each attacks the other and the establishment of a relationship of sympathy thus provides the very action of the play.

In Boissy's play Eliante is alone in resisting love: Léandre is certain of success and the plot thus depends on a gradual wearing down of Eliante, rather than on a struggle within and between the lovers. In the relationship between Lucinde and Eraste, however, there is a degree of antagonism, for both are averse to marriage; indeed their relations are based in the first instance on Lucinde's desire to be given a "cours d'indépendance" by Eraste. There is a reluctance, therefore, to become involved, but it is clear that for Eraste at least apprehension is accompanied by attraction:

these is the exploitation of an event which appears sudden and even unconnected with the previous action. Thus in Destouches's L'Obstacle imprévu, for example, the last three acts rely almost entirely upon the return, not in itself unpredictable, of Léandre, Julie's former lover. In view of the understanding and collusion between Lisimon and Julie, which we have already noted, Léandre's arrival is most opportune, coming as it does at a point when the situation holds little dramatic potential. A degree of tension can be created initially from Licandre's possible opposition to Léandre, but the plot stems above all from the "discovery" that Léandre has married the woman believed to be Julie's mother and the reversal thus produced. There is, admittedly, some preparation for this in Act I in a scornful speech from Nérine:

La vieille folle!... Se marier en secondes
noces, sans en avertir personne! S'enri-
chir puissamment par ce second mariage
... s'amouracher d'un jeune godelureau,
le faire en mourant son légataire univer-
sel, et vous déshériter par son testament!
(Act I, scene VII).

Nevertheless, the introduction of a largely unforeseen incident lies at the basis of Acts IV and V, which revolve as a result around the lovers' despair. A resolution of the dilemma is naturally the purpose of the action, but the situation would be hopeless were it not for Licandre's revelation that Julie is not in fact the daughter of the Comtesse de la Filandière and can therefore marry Léandre. Thus we have an unexpected solution to an unexpected problem, although some suspense is created in Licandre's hint of the impossible to Lisimon in Act IV, scene VI:

... je vous révélerai certaines aventures
secrètes, par lesquelles vous vous con-
vaincrez qu'il n'est pas étonnant que
Julie tienne si peu de ma belle-sœur.

The last part of L'Obstacle imprévu thus relies on two main devices. The first is the use of an event from the past, extraneous, it would seem, to the action as it had been developing in the opening acts, where the antipathies and conflicts would have been adequate to provide an intrigue for the remainder of the play. In addition to this, we see the dramatist employing an element of mystery in the construction of his plot: the uncertainty arising out of lack of detail about Julie's mother is reintroduced and maintained as we have seen, in Act IV, scene VI, by Licandre's refusal to give a full explanation of the difference between Julie and the Comtesse. Elucidation comes in Act V, and then only for Lisimon and the audience, after further suspicion has been aroused.¹⁶ It is interesting that Lisimon observes on being told the truth: "Il a tout l'air d'un roman, ce mystère-là .. ." (Act V, scene I). The procedure adopted by Destouches is the gradual discovery, first to the spectator and then to the majority of the characters, of a crucial fact which annuls the dilemma confronting the central protagonists. The creation of suspense becomes a substitute for real action. There is nonetheless a necessity for what might be called padding in the later acts, in the shape of narrative scenes between Crispin and Nérine, covering events since Léandre's departure, and rivalry between Léandre and Valère, reflected, in comic fashion, by that of Crispin and Pasquin. If this comment is perhaps uncharitable, the apparent determination on the part of the playwright to avoid any true antagonism leads to a plot which is fragmented and continually shifting in focus.

¹⁶ There is a long preamble to Licandre's revelation of the truth in Act V, scene I.

Despite a clash between Sophie and M. Argant, the action in Le Préjugé à la mode rapidly comes to revolve around Constance and Durval, characters who are essentially in sympathy, despite Durval's neglect. This attitude contributes substantially to the plot, both in discussion and in the soliloquies which express the torment aroused by Constance's apparent indifference, itself caused by his inability to declare his love. Moreover, his hesitation in sending a letter and present to Constance constitutes the whole of the end of the third act. Indeed, the gifts received by Constance can be said to provide much of the intrigue, for although the audience is quickly made aware of their origin through Durval's aside: "Voyons un peu l'effet qu'ont produit mes présens" (Act I, scene VII), there remains an enigma for the characters on the stage and a desire to solve it. At the end of Act III, for example, Durval has placed diamonds in Constance's room without a message. The plot now rests on a further anonymous present, with the added complication that Durval's letters to a former mistress have come into Constance's hands. Dramatic irony is thus used to build up to what may be termed the first climax of the play in Act IV, a climax not the outcome of real conflict, for, as we have seen, Constance refuses to confront Durval with his misdemeanour, but one which stems in the first instance from an incident involving two minor characters, Damis and Clitandre, believed to love Constance.¹⁷ The scenes between them and Durval, which arouse

¹⁷The diamonds have been given to Damis and Clitandre by Finette, who assumes that one of them must be responsible for the gift. It is Durval's discovery of this fact, together with Damis's boasting about a portrait of Constance, commissioned by Durval, which he has come upon, which cause Durval's anger.

the latter's jealousy, lead to Act IV, scene X, in which Durval challenges his wife, and thence to Act IV, scene XIII, where Durval seeks to prove Constance's infidelity by insisting that letters which have fallen from her pocket be read out by each protagonist in turn. Two events are thus brought together at the end of Act IV to achieve Durval's humiliation and force him to do Constance justice. It is clear that there is significant exploitation here of an occurrence, namely an old love affair, which belongs strictly speaking to a time before the start of the play. The intrigue surrounding the anonymous gift, on the other hand, illustrates once again the extensive use of mystery in the new comedy. The whole episode is based on a misunderstanding, originating not in the nature of the protagonists concerned - although Durval's jealousy could be said to make him jump to conclusions - but in circumstances or characters independent of them and this produces complexity of plot.

The first act of Voltaire's Nanine is also rich in dramatic potential, depending as it does on the antipathy between the Comte and the Baronne and the latter's jealousy of Nanine: it is from this indeed that the main action at the beginning of the play, that is to say Nanine's flight from the Comte's house, derives. When, in the middle of Act II, Nanine has been brought back and the Comte has proposed to her, there seem to be few further possibilities for the ensuing plot. The dramatist therefore has recourse once again to an incident which exists outside the confines of the play: in this case it is Nanine's sudden decision to send a letter containing money to a character named Philippe Hombert. The letter is of course intercepted by the Baronne, misinterpreted

and used to have Nanine banished from the house; this event furnishes the substance, both in action and discussion, of Act III. As in L'Obstacle imprévu, a seemingly impossible dilemma is resolved by an unexpected revelation: Philippe Hombert is Nanine's father. In the cast list he is merely designated a "paysan du voisinage;" audience and protagonists alike are thus caught up in the mystery, which it is the purpose of the third act to clarify. It is plain that the happening used as a source of intrigue here has very little connection with the opening sections of Nanine and tends to make the play episodic in structure.

Other plots depend less on a misapprehension or on a sudden and unexpected event, than on the unravelling of a mystery deliberately created in the exposition, usually for both spectator and protagonists. In Destouches's Le Glorieux, for example, there is some obscurity surrounding Lisette, as her own words reveal: "Songez que je n'ai rien, et ne sais d'où je sors" (Act I, scene VIII). This theme is taken up again in Act I, scene IX with Lycandre's rather tantalising reassurance: "La fortune se lasse/ De vous persécuter." This is followed by a series of more precise statements, such as: "Et, respectant en vous une haute naissance,/ Ils brigueront l'honneur d'une telle alliance"¹⁸ and leads finally to the remark that Lisette's father is alive: "Il respire, il vous aime,/ Et viendra de ce lieu vous retirer lui-même." A further strand is thus added to a plot which is already relatively intricate; in this instance, however, the effect is the result of suspense as Lycandre refuses to complete his account:

¹⁸"Ils" refers to Valère's parents.

LISETTE

Moi, d'illustre naissance!
Ah! je ne vous crois point, si vous
n'éclaircissez
Tout ce mystère à fond.

LYCANDRE

Non: j'en ai dit assez.
Pour savoir tout le reste, attendez votre
père.
(Act I, scene IX).

Interest which is aroused, but not satisfied, here is maintained in Act II, scene II with the discussion between Lisette and Valère, and then carried over into scenes III and IV, since Valère mentions to Isabelle that Lisette is of higher birth than they imagine. This subject, allowed to rest for a time during Acts II and III, re-emerges in Act III, scene V with Lisette's remark to the Comte: "Il faut que je vous parle; on me l'ordonne; et moi, / J'en meurs d'envie aussi; mais je ne sais pourquoi," and finally reaches a climax in Act IV, scene III. Here again Lisette's allusions to her inexplicable concern for the Comte recall the enigma of her own origins, since both are shrouded in uncertainty, and once introduced, Lisette's identity becomes the central issue of the scene. Under pressure, Lycandre gives a long account of the circumstances of her father's life, admitting finally that he is her father. This part of the action is therefore built up over a considerable period of time and the tension, increased by Lycandre's preamble, is only released with his confession. The "discovery" is not merely a convenient device for bringing the play to a close; the action is dependent upon it.

While the audience is now in full possession of the facts, the majority of characters on stage are not and this dramatic irony underlies the closing section. Indeed, at the end of

Act IV and beginning of Act V, due to the sudden and unexplained capitulation of Mme Lisimon, there are no more than two elements in the intrigue, namely the correction of the Comte and the necessity of revealing that Lisette comes from a noble family. Act V thus has a clear line and moves steadily towards the humiliation of the Comte and the disclosure of the bond which unites him, Lycandre and Lisette.

Part of Le Glorieux relies therefore on the creation of mystery at the start, on reminders of its existence at certain points in the action and on the gradual elucidation of both characters and spectators. The intrigue derives not from conflict but from suspense, itself dependent upon the deliberate and indispensable ploy of omitting to divulge essential detail. Even in the cast list, for example, Lycandre is merely a "vieillard inconnu" and Lisette the "femme de chambre d'Isabelle." The effect on the structure of the play of this element of mystery is marked: it naturally makes the plot more intricate, but it also means that the intrigue revolving around Lisette and Lycandre, and, to some extent, around the Comte, must inevitably resemble a slowly unfolding story, a story which results, furthermore, from events which have taken place long before the opening of the play. The comedy is no longer an entity in itself. Its action relies on techniques belonging essentially to narrative fiction.

If the enigma surrounding the identity of an important protagonist is one component only of Le Glorieux, that associated with the central characters of Nivelles de la Chaussée's La Fausse Antipathie is fundamental to the entire play. In

the absence of any real dramatic potential in the relationship between Damon and Léonore, the playwright uses in constructing his plot the device of leaving in ignorance those involved in the action: crucial questions go unanswered, particularly with regard to Damon, who mentions neither the name of his wife nor the circumstances of his wedding. A reference to either of these and the play would, of course, be over. Thus, despite Orphise's hostility towards Léonore, we have the makings of an intrigue founded on the necessity to unravel a mystery.

Confrontations based on genuine or deep-rooted antipathy, are replaced by suspense, which is created firstly by the fact that the real names of Damon and Léonore are never employed in a way that would clarify the situation and secondly by tantalising or ambiguous remarks. In Act I, scene VI, for instance, Damon adds to the announcement that he is married, the observation: "Mais enfin/ Un prompt événement peut changer mon destin," and Finette, returning at the end of Act I with papers from Damon's lawyer, says: "Je ne sçais pas pour-quoi j'ose encore espérer" (Act I, scene VIII). The idea is thus sown that new facts remain to be uncovered and that the unexpected is possible; the tension at the close of the first act is indeed increased in Act II with Damon's: "Faisons cesser enfin le bruit de mon trépas" (Act II, scene V), and his news that his wife is seeking a divorce. If this suggests a happy outcome and thus an end to the action, the direction of the plot is abruptly altered with Géronte's revelation that Léonore's husband is still alive. This peripeteia introduces a further factor into a play which continually raises

expectations without satisfying them and which depends on avoiding all allusion, in the first acts, to the names Sainflore and Silvie. Act III, however, is founded on a misunderstanding between Damon and Orphise, arising out of the latter's question: "Quoi? voulez-vous deshonorer Silvie," (Act III, scene III) whom Damon naturally takes to be his wife, whereas Orphise is referring to Léonore.

We have seen that much of La Fausse Antipathie is contingent upon debates about a moral issue between Damon and Léonore and might thus be said to stem from a clash of outlook. As the title makes perfectly plain, however, the conflict between the lovers is in fact non-existent and comes into being purely because they are unaware of reality. It is essential that key facts be kept secret if the action is to continue: the devices outlined above ensure some kind of plot. Relying on the use of two assumed names, the intrigue is one of twists and turns, as new information and new events are brought into the play and additional, but insufficient, detail is given to audience and characters alike, producing a series of reversals. The spectator may guess the truth, but in common with the major protagonists, he is not enlightened until the end of the play and can therefore participate in the confusion and uncertainty.

Mélanide might be based on two relationships of antipathy, the first being that of Darviane and Mélanide, the second that of the lovers, Rosalie and Darviane. In neither case, however, is the antagonism real: Rosalie's resistance to Darviane is occasioned by her decision to obey her mother and the second relationship is ultimately one of affection.

that the Marquis is indeed the man she had loved seventeen years previously. Act II is thus made up of a series of incidents which begin to complete the events which occurred so long before the opening of the play. It unfolds like a novel, depending on an increase in information, rather than on a series of scenes which are confrontations or conspiracies.

This is the pattern of the play as a whole. As in La Fausse Antipathie, the plot is based on reversals and the sudden introduction or realisation of facts which change its direction and outcome: Mélanide discovers at the end of Act II, for example, that she has a rival in Rosalie and the Marquis learns in Act III, scene VI that Mélanide is still alive. In essence, therefore, the intrigue consists not of clashes of those in opposition, for these are systematically avoided on stage, but of episodes in a story, following the lives of the major protagonists as they evolve out of the initial situation, dependent itself on a fairly complex sequence of events prior to the start of the play, which are not revealed in the exposition.

This is the inevitable result of using mystery to replace real antipathy. Once the original enigma has been established as a source of intrigue, the complete picture can be revealed only gradually to the characters and indeed to the audience. Again there is no intimation of the family bond between the three main protagonists, since Mélanide appears in the "dramatis personae" as "amie de Dorisée," and both the Marquis and Darviane as "amant de Rosalie." Mélanide's confession to Théodon: "Voilà tous mes secrets. Ils sont si douloureux/ Qu'il faut les arracher les uns après les autres" (Act IV, scene I), might be said very accurately to describe the

structure of the play.

Without exception, the last works of Nivelles de la Chaussée, from L'École des meres to L'Homme de fortune, all use the technique of obscuring crucial information to provide a kind of drama. L'École des meres, for example, derives its substance from the belief that Marianne is M. and Mme Argant's niece; the audience, admittedly, is told that she is their daughter in Act II, scene VIII, but the dramatist deliberately brings into being a tension on which the rest of the play may be founded by causing M. Argant to demand secrecy of Doligni pere:

Sur-tout ne dites point ce que je vous
confie;
Pas même à votre fils.

That no more than two characters be aware of the truth is essential; it is indeed difficult to conceive how Nivelles de la Chaussée could have filled out his play were it not for the error of most of the main protagonists, so small is the antagonism between them. Opposition between the characters of husband and wife over a "marquisat" for their son briefly furnishes something of a plot in the second act, it is true, and Doligni pere had, at the outset, shown all the authoritarianism of the traditional father. M. Argant yields, however, to the pleadings of his wife and Doligni pere, learning that the woman loved by his son is the daughter of an old friend, finds himself in sympathy with Doligni fils by the end of Act II. The latter had in fact stated earlier in the play: "Il cessera d'être inflexible" (Act I, scene I), thus intimating that the clash between father and son was unlikely to prove a serious threat. At the end of Act II there is harmony

amongst most of the major characters and the only obstacle to the lovers' union is Mme Argant.

In such a situation, one possible source of action is irony, that is to say dissimulation or misunderstanding. Thus in Act III, scene VII, M. Argant's announcement that Doligni fils had been promised to his daughter - thought by all but himself and Doligni pere to be in a convent - throws Marianne into confusion and allows Mme Argant to consider herself triumphant: "(à part) Je sçais qu'il aime ailleurs; feignons." Playing along, therefore, with M. Argant's plans until they are rejected by Doligni fils, she leaves the stage before the disclosure of the facts:

MAD. ARGANT

à Messieurs Argant & Doligni pere
Tâchez une autre fois de vous arranger
mieux.

MR. ARGANT

La méprise n'est pas telle qu'on l'ima-
gine.
Sçachez, à votre tour

MAD. ARGANT, en s'en allant

Ah! ne m'arrêtez plus.
Allez, vous auriez dû m'épargner ce refus.
(Act III, scene VIII).

This abrupt departure and the manner in which M. Argant had broached the subject in the first place,¹⁹ are necessary if any dramatic potential is to remain in the play, for without

¹⁹At the end of Act III, scene VI, he says: "Cette fille, en un mot, que la prévention/ La plus injuste & la plus dure/ A peinte à votre idée avec tous les défauts/ Qu'on peut puiser au fond d'une clôture ..." and is interrupted by the entrance of M. Doligni. He continues at the beginning of Act III, scene VII: "Quels qu'ils soient, vrais ou faux,/ Telle qu'elle est enfin, on offre de la prendre;/ Et le fils de Monsieur, si vous le permettez. .../ .../ Avec plaisir deviendra votre gendre," thus omitting to reveal the identity of their daughter and the fact that marriage to Doligni fils would be entirely acceptable.

them a relationship of affection would immediately bring together Mme Argant and Marianne and terminate the action.

Antipathy of a sort thus underlies the plot here, but it is an antipathy which is false, kept alive only by artificial devices, designed to maintain suspense for as long as possible. For this very reason, it is scarcely a framework for the entire play. As a result, a number of different strands constitute the plot of L'École des meres; Act II, for example, depends in some measure on discussion between Mme Argant and the Marquis about the latter's future, a theme which is taken up again in Act III, scene IV, when mention is made of a possible match for the Marquis. In addition, much of the play, from the end of Act II onwards, revolves around Marianne's distress at the inhumanity of Mme Argant. Furthermore two incidents quite unconnected with the intrigue as it has evolved by the end of Act III are introduced by the dramatist to move the action forward, namely the rumour that Marianne is not the niece but the mistress of M. Argant, which lends substance to Act IV, and the elopement of the Marquis, made known at the beginning of Act V. L'École des meres relies partly on progress towards enlightenment of all its characters from a mystery or false premise consciously created by the playwright at the start, but it also requires incidents outside the scope of the initial action if it is to have any weight in the last two acts.

The complexity of structure to which the lack of any genuine antipathy gives rise in L'École des meres is equally striking in La Gouvernante. There is certainly hostility between Angélique and her mother, the Gouvernante of the

title, and it stems from the latter's insistence that Angélique renounce all interest in Sainville. Yet, as we have seen, dislike and suspicion disappear entirely once Angélique discovers that she is La Gouvernante's daughter. Dramatic tension had also seemed likely between the characters of father and son, in view of the Baronne's remark in Act II, scene X: "Sainville est dépendant;/ Jamais il n'obtiendrait l'aveu du Président," and of the Président's commands to Sainville in Act I. The relationship between them, however, is one of real sympathy. The Président indeed, guessing the truth about Angélique's identity and family ties in Act IV, seems to destroy what potential had existed in the disagreement between himself and his son with this assurance to Sainville:

Eh! rapportez-vous-en, de grace, à votre
pere:
Croyez que je prendrai le plus sage parti;
Bientôt de votre sort vous serez averti.
(Act IV, scene IV).

The intrigue derives in the first place from the mystery surrounding Angélique:

Au lieu de bénir chaque jour
La main qui vous a fait sortir de ce séjour,
Où les infortunés de qui vous êtes née.
Dès vos plus jeunes ans vous ont abandon-
née,
Vous songez à rentrer dans le sein de
l'ennui?
(Act I, scene I).

This speech from Juliette establishes uncertainty as to Angélique's origins, an uncertainty which is hardly removed by La Gouvernante's account of her family history in Act II, scene II. On the contrary, her announcement that Angélique's father was killed in battle and her refusal to respond to Angélique's tentative: "Sans doute que depuis un si malheureux

jour, / Elle n'a pû survivre à ce coup si funeste ..."20 only serve to increase the enigma of Angélique's birth and background. The audience, it is true, may begin to surmise the truth after La Gouvernante's monologue in Act II, scene I, but none of the characters on stage is at this point aware of it. The action can once again turn on gradual revelation and, as is the case in this play, on gradual understanding on the part of the characters themselves. La Gouvernante's confession to Angélique, for instance, does not occur until the beginning of Act V, suspense of a kind thus being maintained for the greater part of the play.

A further intrigue, also characterised by mystery, is added to and finally complements this central plot. It concerns the Président and a judgment made many years before the start of the play, which deprived a family of both money and status. Here, there is a slow build-up of tension over several acts, as the suspicions of audience and protagonists alike are aroused. In Act I, for example, we have a despairing question from the Président:

Mais se peut-il qu'enfin nul espoir ne
vous reste,
Et qu'en dix ou douze ans à peine révolus,
Des gens d'un si grand nom ne se retrou-
vent plus?
(Act I, scene II).

Moreover, his statement that "le défunt avoit une femme, une fille," is followed by the Baronne's hesitant:

J'ai bien quelques soupçons; mais ils sont
si légers,
Ils sont si dépourvus ...

All these remarks provide a context against which to set La

²⁰ Angélique is here inquiring about her mother. La Gouvernante replies: "Ne comptez plus sur elle, & revenons à vous."

Gouvernante's cry in the first scene of the following act:

"Grands Dieux! lorsque j'y pense, étoit-ce là mon sort?"

Interest created in this manner is intensified by La Gouvernante's explanation to Angélique of the necessity for placing her in a convent:

Vos parens ruinés par un procès fatal,
Furent forcés de faire un si grand sacri-
fice.
(Act II, scene II).

The two aspects of this plot, already too close to suggest mere coincidence, are brought together in Act III, scene IX with the Baronne's challenge to La Gouvernante: "Vous êtes sûrement la Comtesse d'Arsfleurs," the latter being the woman sought by the Président. This discovery does not, however, conclude the action. On the contrary, La Gouvernante refuses to inform Angélique of the truth, asserting that:

On n'est point malheureux, quand on peut
ignorer
Tout ce que l'on pourroit avoir à dé-
plorer.
(Act III, scene IX).

To the suspense made possible here is added an argument at the close of Act III between La Gouvernante who has returned her compensation and the Président, aware only that his victims have been found, but unaware of their identity. This situation can be exploited in Act IV, since the Président opposes and then begins to regard favourably the union of Sainville and Angélique, as enlightenment comes to him:

Plus j'y songe Ah! grands Dieux!
... allons chez la Baronne
La forcer de céder à mon empressement;
Il faut que j'en obtienne un éclaircis-
ment.
(Act IV, scene IV).

Clarification of the mystery at the heart of the play is

indeed always the central issue. To it are added tiffs of a superficial nature between Sainville and Angélique, inspired by La Gouvernante, and a certain struggle between this character and Sainville, as the latter attempts to win Angélique. All these threads are brought together in Act V, when La Gouvernante, who had been motivated throughout by pride rather than ill-will or contempt for Sainville, yields to the entreaties of the rest.

Many of the plays which we have been examining tend, by virtue of the devices used by the dramatist, to be episodic in nature. There are still others in the new genre which would be difficult to place in the categories we have so far established and which seem to be made up of a series of sometimes disjointed incidents. In Destouches's Le Philosophe marié, for example, the only true conflict is that between Ariste and G ronte and even this, as we have seen, can be easily destroyed by M lite's appeal to G ronte for understanding. His capitulation must be delayed, of course, until the final act and to that extent his authoritarianism and the threat he poses to Ariste's happiness might be said to provide the action of the play. He does not appear, however, until Act II, scene VI and at this point merely announces his plan of marrying off Ariste: the audience is aware of a latent clash of wills, but as far as the plot is concerned, battle is not yet joined. Moreover, the potential inherent in this situation is by no means exploited immediately; at the end of Act II and beginning of Act III, the intrigue centres on the arrival of the Marquis du Laurent, who, against marriage but in love with M lite, is doubly dangerous to Ariste. As the

latter himself remarks: "Bon! voici nouvelle affaire" (Act II, scene VIII). There follow scenes in which the Marquis taunts Ariste and pays court to his wife. Clearly these are events associated with Ariste's dilemma, but they are intended to make him appear ridiculous and do not in any sense evolve out of real antagonism between the characters. Furthermore, the action subsequently turns to revolve around Céliante and her desire to arouse Damon's jealousy. The relationship of the lovers, which had furnished an important part of Act II, thus again provides some substance here and the possible opposition between Géronte and Ariste does not re-emerge until the end of Act III. Even when conflict has declared itself, however, Lisimon and Ariste endeavour to reason with Géronte in an effort to delay catastrophe and the argument becomes one about the character and role of the "philosophe".

A number of distinct strands are therefore discernible in this play and the action appears to stem now from the development of relations between Céliante and Damon, now from Mélite's attempts to persuade Ariste to reveal the bond which unites them, now from the mockery of the Marquis du Laurent, his designs on Mélite and Ariste's fear of becoming a butt for satirical comment. In addition, Ariste's distress and self-analysis are, as we have observed, a not insignificant part of this comedy. Most of these different elements are aspects of the problem with which Ariste is confronted, it is true, but they would also seem to be a consequence of Destouches's desire not to emphasise and make use of the hostility between the characters of uncle and nephew.

The theme of L'Enfant prodigue, namely Euphémon fils's moral regeneration, inevitably demands a considerable amount

of discussion. This is scarcely sufficient as substance for the whole play, however, and Euphémon does not in any case appear until the beginning of Act III, Voltaire thus relying on creation of suspense in the first two acts, since there are constant allusions to Euphémon, his misdeeds and probable death. In addition to these and other ingredients which go to make up the opening stages of the play, there is, further, Euphémon père's request that Lise's wedding to Fierenfat be postponed. The action is therefore moving away from the opposition between Lise and Rondon as a new incident is introduced into the intrigue. It gives an indication, of course, of Euphémon père's state of mind and prepares later events;²¹ nevertheless, despite Rondon's threat to Lise at the end of Act I, attention now focuses in part at least on a hitherto unexpected occurrence and a different framework from that originally established is possible. It is used, indeed, in Act II scene VI, where Euphémon père, explaining his conduct, gives Lise an opportunity to employ stalling tactics, by refusing to sign a document which disinherits Euphémon fils. The second act also sees the rather sudden arrival of Mme Croupillac, to whom Fierenfat has promised marriage; this is again a diversion from the central issue, but a diversion which once more allows Lise to challenge her father's plan. Conflict between two of the principal characters can thus be said to underlie this act, but it is a conflict fuelled by rather opportune and somewhat unconnected happenings. Moreover, at the close of the act there seems to be little direction for the plot: Rondon's renewed command to Lise had tended

²¹Rondon remarks of Euphémon père: "Il dit qu'il sent une douleur insigne" (Act I, scene V).

to suggest that the play would continue to be founded on ruses for delaying the inevitable by both Lise and Euphémon père. Act III, however, introduces the real subject of the play and it becomes plain that Acts I and II, made up of a number of seemingly unrelated threads, were but the elaborate preparation for the rest, which moves towards harmony between the characters of father and son and reconciliation of sympathetic protagonists. Even here, however, appearances by Mme Croupillac are needed to fill out the action, which, like that of Le Philosophe marié, depends on the accumulation of several separate elements.

Plays based on the correction or unmasking of one of their characters are also episodic in structure. Julie's efforts to bring Cléon to a sense of his foolish extravagance constituting almost the whole of Le Dissipateur, for example, the intrigue is comprised of incidents designed to ruin Cléon financially; other characters join the scheme at Julie's request or are used by her, unbeknown to themselves, to achieve her aim. Thus Julie and Finette are in league to gain the Comte's assistance in extracting money from Cléon. The Comte is naturally unaware of Julie's plans, believing himself to be in alliance with her to defeat Cléon. As a result, the opposition which in fact exists in their relationship has virtually no dramatic potential. In addition, Julie is in love with Cléon and acting purely for his own good. There is thus no question of the plot evolving out of antipathy between the central protagonists. Cléon is in any case oblivious of impending ruin and blind to the gravity of the situation until the final catastrophe. This is clearly

essential to the success of Julie's plans, although presumably Cléon could have been apprised of Julie's actions, if not her real motives, and decided to fight her. Indeed, at the end of Act IV, he takes up her challenge at the gambling table with the ironic: "Puisqu'elle veut jouer, nous la ruinerons" (Act IV, scene VI). For most of the play, however, Destouches chooses to leave Cléon in ignorance and the plot takes the form of an accumulation of events and tricks devised to destroy him and discredit his friends. Furthermore, these events often occur off-stage and are reported to characters and audience alike. The play terminates with the systematic humiliation of Cléon in Act V, the previous action being a deliberate preparation for it.

Although the intrigue of Le Dissipateur derives from the implementation of Julie's schemes and can be said to resemble a slowly unfolding story, it is nevertheless interesting to note the substance of Act III. It revolves around the sudden appearance of Géronte, an uncle from whom Cléon is expecting to inherit. His inopportune arrival in the middle of the play has a purpose, in that his anger with Cléon's way of life causes Géronte to cut him off. Disaster is thus rendered more imminent. Much is made of this incident, however, as the servants endeavour to convince Géronte of a change of heart in Cléon, only to see their efforts brought to nothing through Cléon's inept behaviour. It would seem, therefore, that to provide variety, or simply because Julie's aims are not sufficient as a basis for the entire action, Destouches considered it necessary to introduce new material at this point. This procedure makes a work already dependent upon a series of

events, rather than on a clash of characters, each attempting to gain his own personal ends at the other's expense, even more episodic in nature.

The action in Gresset's Le Méchant, which has as its main aim the unmasking and, if possible, the "correction" of Cléon, unfolds in a household at odds with itself, as we learn from Lisette's opening remarks to Frontin:

. . . dans toute la maison
Il règne un air d'aigreur et de division.
. . . Au lieu de cette aisance
Qu'établissoit ici l'entière confiance,
On se boude, on s'évite, on bâille, on
parle bas;
Et je crains que demain on ne se parle
pas.
(Act I, scene I).

Indeed, scenes II and III in Act I immediately betray disagreement between the characters of brother and sister, Géronte and Florise, over the marriage of Chloé, Florise's daughter. In Géronte's assertion:

Sans l'avis de ma sœur, je marierai ma
nièce:
C'est sa fille, il est vrai; mais les
biens sont à moi:
Je suis le maître enfin.
(Act I, scene II).

we see the old battle for domination within a family, so often at the basis of the comedy in the past. If one of the themes of this play may be said to be the attempt to unite Chloé and Valère, we clearly have a framework of the traditional kind here, since a figure in authority is opposed to the marriage. In addition, outraged by Valère's affected and insolent behaviour in Act III, Géronte too forbids the union.

There is therefore some scope, it would seem, for classic dramatic action, but the possibilities in the situation are not exploited to any significant extent. In the first place,

there is a suggestion of affection between brother and sister; Géronte's claim in Act I, scene II "et puis, j'aime ma sœur," find an echo in Florise's words to Cléon: "Il m'a toujours aimée, et j'aimais à lui plaire ..." (Act II, scene III). As Lisette's statement quoted above appears to imply, the antagonism between the two is of recent occurrence and their relationship is usually one of sympathy. Of greater import as far as the plot is concerned, is Florise's reluctance, expressed in her: "Je ne puis me résoudre à le désespérer ..." (Act II, scene III), to enter into Cléon's schemes to force Géronte to prevent Chloé's marriage and Cléon himself is well aware that he cannot depend on her.²² Moreover, there is no further encounter between Florise and Géronte on stage until Act V.

Secondly, although Géronte's opposition to the young lovers' desires provides some action in Act IV, in that Valère and Ariste are obliged to persuade him that Valère is not what he had appeared, Géronte's dislike of Valère is not deep-rooted and is easily dispelled. His real attitude to Valère is one of affectionate interest and it is clear from the latter's response to Géronte's initial greeting: "Comment faire?/ Son amitié me touche" (Act III, scene VIII), that he in turn is drawn to Géronte. The antipathy between the two, such as it is, is purely fabricated by Cléon.

It is indeed Cléon who is the true cause of strife, his motive apparently being the pleasure of destroying happiness and creating discord. We return, therefore, to the substance originally proposed for the play, namely the necessity for

²²In Act II, scene IX he says: "Florise s'en défend; son faible caractère/ Ne sait point embrasser un parti courageux ..."

ridding the household of a morally unacceptable character, reducing him in stature in the process. This makes it no easier to define the structure. There is clearly a kind of conflict underlying the didactic aim, in view of the fact that Cléon, pursuing his ends, and Lisette in league with Ariste, pursuing theirs, are in opposition to each other. The struggle between them, inevitably, cannot be an open and frank clash between characters avowedly hating each other. On the contrary, as Lisette says: "Vraiment, pour mon projet, il ne faut pas qu'il sache/ Le fonds d'aversion qu'avec soin je lui cache" (Act III, scene I). It is essential for her purposes that Cléon believe her to be in collusion with him.

Much of the first part of the play, leading to Géronte's break with Valère in Act III, scene IX, is taken up with the preparation of the ground by Cléon and involves a great deal of discussion. Thereafter, Lisette's and Ariste's attempts to discredit Cléon constitute the major part of the plot, beginning in Act IV, scene III with Lisette's suggestion to Florise that she listen unseen to Cléon's real opinion of her - this plan being completed in Act IV, scene IX. Act V is entirely devoted to disabusing Géronte, as Lisette again makes plain:

Dans l'esprit de Florise il (Cléon) est
expédié.
Grâce aux conseils d'Ariste, au pouvoir
de Chloé,
Valère l'abandonne: ainsi, selon mon
compte,
Cléon n'a plus pour lui que l'erreur de
Géronte,
Qui par nous tous dans peu saura la vérité.
(Act V, scene I).

This is indeed a very fair description of the course taken by the action as a whole and of the form of the play: because of

its didactic nature, it is episodic since it relies on demonstrating to several protagonists in turn Cléon's perfidy and hypocrisy.²³ The plot in the last two acts is made up of a series of incidents which do not in essence evolve out of each other, but which are devised by Ariste and Lisette with a specific aim in view.

Some substance is provided by Ariste's debates of a moralising tendency with Valère in Act III, scene VI and Act IV, scene IV, together with his efforts to reform Cléon in Act IV, scene VII. After what might be termed the climax to the action in Act III, scene IX, each of the didactic elements in the intrigue is taken forward in turn: the play has a traditional structure, in that everything builds up to the clash between Géronte and Valère, but as we have seen, their antagonism is false. In reality the plot has no one definite line. The focus seems to shift continually as a result of the lack of any clearly defined opposition and the action depends on a number of different strands all bearing equal weight.

While the purpose of the plays just discussed might be called moral analysis, that of Boissy's Le Médecin par occasion (1745) is to unite a pair of lovers in the face of possible resistance. Family opposition to Montval, in love with Lucinde, is implied in Champagne's comment: "Un Amant sans fortune est un monstre pour eux./ Son mérite ne sert qu'à

²³Lisette had in fact stated at the start of the play: "J'imagine un moyen d'éclairer votre mère/ Sur le fourbe insolent qui la mène aujourd'hui ..." (Act I, scene VI). She is speaking to Chloé about Florise.

redoubler leur crainte" (Act II, scene I).²⁴ And yet an understanding is quickly established between Montval and the characters in authority. It is achieved by a trick on Montval's part, admittedly, but it is plain nonetheless that the dramatist is avoiding conflict between his major protagonists. The action takes the shape of a series of separate incidents in which Montval "cures" each character, the Marquise's remark in Act III, scene VIII: "Songés qu'après la fille, il faut guérir le Pere," providing a very adequate summary of the way in which the play is constructed, at least in the first four acts. Montval's aim realised, there is general joy in Act IV, scenes VI and VII, the Baron and Lucinde, both recovered, meeting on stage and delighting in each other's new-found contentment.

Further substance has thus to be devised for Act V and a play which is already episodic in structure now moves in a completely different direction, depending for the rest of its action on a misunderstanding between Montval and the others.²⁵ The way in which the situation is finally resolved casts a most interesting light on the form of the comedy. In Act V, scene XI, Montval approaches Cléon, who is his rival for the hand of Lucile, appealing to him, as if on behalf of another, to give up his claim to the Baron's daughter. Conflict between Cléon, an old friend of the family, and Montval had been suggest^ed on Cléon's long-awaited return in Act III and again in Act IV, scene VII when Cléon proposes to Lucile. In

²⁴The subjects of this statement are the Baron, Lucile's father and the Marquise, her aunt.

²⁵They believe for some time that the woman Montval wishes to marry is the Marquise.

neither case is it exploited in the plot. An open clash between the suitors is systematically avoided by the playwright, and this explains the necessity for the misapprehension at the basis of Act V. Moreover, in this act, the intrigue is prolonged and suspense maintained by the fact that Montval does not immediately divulge that it is he who wishes to marry Lucile. Furthermore his plea, couched in language characteristic of the time:

Signalez vos vertus par un effort nouveau;
.....
Et de deux vrais amans protégez la con-
stance.
Je vous répons, Monsieur, de leur recon-
noissance;
Vous goûterez le bien de faire des heu-
reux
En est-il un plus grand pour un cœur géné-
reux?
(Act V, scene XI)

is heeded by Cléon, who renounces his claim to Lucile and unites all around him in harmony. The solution is thus brought about because, and not in spite, of a rival, the sympathy and solicitude of the close reflecting attitudes which had existed throughout the play.

It is not easy, of course, to categorise the comedies we have been considering in terms of one single device. This approach has been adopted in order to give some impression of the most striking techniques used by the comic dramatists in the first half of the eighteenth century in default of opposition of characters. Their plays often resort to two, if not more, of the sources of action analysed above. Le Curieux impertinent, for example, may be said to follow the

unfolding of a love story, but it also exploits mystery or "irony" in the form of deliberate deception of one character by another. This is the case indeed in many of the works which seem to be based on a love intrigue. Le Glorieux, with its debates on moral issues, and the enigma concerning the identity of Lisette, the whole action depending on events which took place before the opening of the play, moves between one theme and another, one relationship or situation and another, gradually working towards the humiliation of the Comte. Le Préjugé à la mode also includes moral analyses and debate, together with narrative about Dorante's past and relies for its intrigue upon unexpected incidents and misapprehension, "reversals" and "irony".

Discussion of subjects important to the age is, as we have seen, an integral part of the comedy and it is clearly introduced into the genre quite deliberately by the major dramatists at this time. If, on occasion, one may suspect it of being a convenient means of padding out a play, there is no doubt that the desire to examine a particular notion through debate between characters and the wish to avoid serious clashes and deep-rooted antipathy complement each other perfectly. Moreover, in the comedies whose aim is to depict the regeneration of one of the protagonists and where the charactering administering the lesson is, by and large, in sympathy with the one to be admonished, there is little scope for an intrigue dependent on conflict. Such plays rely on the inclusion of extraneous matter or on coincidence, but all depend as much on words as deeds.

Moralising is scarcely sufficient, however, to fill out the action of an entire play. For a number of reasons, the comedy thus becomes episodic, in the sense that it is contingent upon an accumulation of unprepared, perhaps unconnected "péripéties", and weaves its way between a number of separate plots, all, more often than not, of equal weight. Indeed, it is not infrequently impossible to isolate one central intrigue in the works we have been discussing. If we are expecting a play which develops inevitably out of a situation established in the exposition, we shall not find it in the majority of the new comedies. Even when the traditional device of "discovery" is used, the plots cannot be looked upon as self-contained; they demand narratives of greater dimensions than themselves. As Collé had suggested,²⁶ there are resemblances between the new comedy and the "romantic" comedy of the seventeenth century. In spite of the use of the same structural devices, however, the new comedy is distinguished by its moral content from the old comedies of plot.

²⁶ See p. 356 above.

CONCLUSION

In his "Lettre à M. le Comte de L^{xxx}" Destouches states:

Après avoir essayé de l'imiter dans ses nobles élan, j'avois cru pouvoir marcher sur les traces de ce grand homme, en volant quelquefois, comme lui, terre à terre.¹

The subject of this comparison is Molière - "l'incomparable Molière" - and such might lead us to believe that the two dramatists share the same concept of comedy. Destouches gives this advice to the Chevalier de B^{xxx}, for example: "... ne perdez jamais de vue l'objet de la comédie, qui est de représenter naïvement les mœurs de nos contemporains."² Further, in the Prologue to "Scènes de Thalie et de Melpomène," Thalie claims: "Corriger les humains est mon unique emploi;/ Et je les peins d'après nature ..."³ Both these statements might recall an observation by Dorante in La Critique de l'École des femmes:

Mais lorsque vous peignez les hommes, il faut peindre d'après nature. On veut que ces portraits ressemblent; et vous n'avez rien fait, si vous n'y faites reconnoître les gens de votre siècle" (Scene VI).

Moreover, many of Destouches's Prefaces and letters betray, as do the titles of the plays themselves, a preoccupation with comedy of character, for which, one might argue, Molière also had a predilection.

Nevertheless, similarities between Molière and Destouches,

¹Destouches, "Lettre de M. Néricault Destouches, à M. le Comte de L^{xxx}, Sur la comédie intitulée: L'Amour usé," Œuvres dramatiques (Paris, 1820), V, 285.

²"Troisième Lettre à Monsieur le Chevalier de B^{xxx}," Œuvres dramatiques, V, 191.

³"Scènes de Thalie et de Melpomène," Prologue, Œuvres dramatiques, V, 464.

or indeed any other playwright of the first half of the eighteenth century, are few and the comic genre has undergone a transformation from a number of points of view. In the first place, it no longer opposes characters in irreconcilable fashion: it unites them with tender feelings which it endeavours in turn to inspire in the spectator. Theories of aesthetics, promulgating the superiority of a capacity for feeling, and theories of morals, founded on a belief that man, a feeling and not a thinking being, is drawn by instinct to his fellows, create a climate in which antagonism is both distressing and unacceptable. Rarely, it is true, do protagonists declare themselves "sensibles", but others comment on their capacity for feeling or their solicitude and thus indicate that they possess the quality so highly valued by the age.

"Sensibilité" also underlies what might be considered the most characteristic feature of the new comedy, namely its moralising tendency. Admittedly, Lanson has suggested that in this respect the theatre was usurping the role of the Church, which had lost its moral authority⁴ and Firon does refer to the author of La Fausse Antipathie as the "R. P. de La Chaussée."⁵ Evidence that playwrights regarded the theatre as a substitute for the Church is not easy to find, however, and

⁴ See G. Lanson, Les Origines du drame contemporain: Nivelles de La Chaussée et la comédie larmoyante. Deuxième Édition (Paris, 1903), Première Partie, Chapitre II, p. 36 and Troisième Partie, Chapitre IV, pp. 237-38.

⁵ See a note which would seem to have been written by Firon himself to the "Épître au Môme. (Monsieur le Comte de Livry). Il étoit à Fontainebleu" (Oeuvres complètes d'Alexis Piron, ed. R. de Juvigny (Paris, 1776) VI, 99).

Destouches, at least, was a religious man, who would perhaps be unlikely to set himself up as a rival to it. It is equally difficult to prove that his audience, or that of any other dramatist of the time, were unbelievers for whom the Church and religion had little relevance; religious poetry was after all enjoying great popularity at precisely the moment that the new comedy was at its height.

The urge to assert the supremacy of certain qualities and to administer a lesson depend in the first instance on a capacity for feeling and on the desire to see all characters joined together in the possession of the same moral standards. In some cases there is a specific reference to the "heart" as the source of a moral judgment, in others the character who makes a moral pronouncement or who seeks to reform a libertine has revealed a "sensibilité" of a more general kind. In this context, several areas remain for further investigation. In particular, the use on the stage of some of the most important terms of the age might form the subject of a more detailed study than has been possible here, where relationships between characters, the main concern of sentimental morals, has been the central issue. There can be no doubt, however, that the new comedy becomes serious, if not tearful. Tears mark the superiority of characters aware of their own value, resigned to the blows of a fate beyond their control; the situations in which they find themselves illustrate more often than not the injustice of the destiny which seems implacably opposed to them. The comedy no longer affords an opportunity for laughter.

The plays of Marivaux, on the other hand, although

influenced by "sensibilité", are those of a true comic dramatist. Attinger has asked what would seem to be the most interesting question here: "Pourquoi ... sa sensibilité échappe-t-elle à la sensiblerie générale, bien qu'il ait abordé quelques thèmes chers au larmoyant?"⁶ He himself proposes that the antics of Arlequin, the use of the mask, purely technical devices such as the "chassée-croisé" and the parallelism between master and servant, might provide the answer. The features he discusses may be insufficient to account for Marivaux's originality. Plays such as Le Prince travesti (1724) or La Mère confidente (1735), in which Arlequin or Lubin have roles of pure farce, remain serious; Le Petit-maitre corrigé (1734) treats a theme common in the new plays and is nevertheless comic. To Attinger's suggestions may be added the importance of dramatic irony in Marivaux's plays. Marivaux endows his characters with a capacity for feeling, but he also attributes to them a fear of commitment, stemming perhaps from pride, perhaps from recent unhappiness. The resistance to love is such indeed that many protagonists are unaware of the extent to which they have become implicated in a new relationship. Thus the discrepancy between word and deed can be exploited by the dramatist to create laughter for the spectator, always one step ahead of the characters on the stage. Feelings which are ambiguous and inchoate for the psychologist produce comedy for the playwright.

Further, the ambivalence of the central relationships, which take the form of a mixture of sympathy and antipathy, gives to Marivaux's plays a characteristic structure. Pulled

⁶G. Attinger, L'Esprit de la Commedia dell'arte dans le théâtre français (Paris, 1950), p. 369.

in two different directions, ill-at-ease with themselves, Marivaux's lovers instinctively attack the cause of their distress, that is to say the very object to whom they are attracted. This aggression can be used as a basis for the plot, which, in Marivaux's hands, moves from one confrontation between the protagonists to the next, until provocation and argument, destroying antagonism, paradoxically unite the lovers. With a confession of love, however reluctant, both comedy and action cease.

The complexity of the relations between the characters in Marivaux thus results in a striking simplicity of intrigue. The works of his contemporaries provide us with a complete contrast. In the plays which have been the principal subject of this study, the relationships between the protagonists, whether they be members of the same family, lovers or husband and wife, are understood by the characters concerned, uncomplicated and easily defined; even where a relationship changes from antipathy to sympathy, the transformation is sudden and carries with it neither anxiety nor torment. This feature of the plays which we have analysed would seem to demand complexity of intrigue. Lacking any real, unshakeable antipathy or, as in Marivaux, antipathy which is overcome by conflict, the new comedies are encumbered by, indeed constructed on, a long series of incidents which are often unexpected or unconnected with the situation as it is outlined in the exposition.

In his L'Envioux Destouches makes a distinction between a "pièce d'intrigue" and a "pièce de caractère," in which "il ne faut qu'une intrigue simple, naturelle, peu chargée d'incidents ..." (Scene XIV). Such, he believes, is Le Philosophe

marié, which is the play under discussion in L'Envieux. A speech by the Marquis in the same work describing a "pièce d'intrigue," much inferior to the comedy of character in Destouches's eyes, might more adequately characterise the structure of Le Philosophe marié, however, and indeed of the new comedy as a whole:

L'objet principal, dans une pièce d'intrigue, c'est de surprendre par un enchaînement d'aventures qui tiennent le spectateur en haleine, et forment un embarras qui croît toujours jusqu'au dénoûment. Comme il ne s'agit dans ces sortes de pièces que de les charger d'incidents, ils en font ordinairement tout le mérite; les mœurs et les caractères n'y étant touchés que superficiellement. (Scene XIV).

Whether or not it is the aim of dramatists in the first half of the eighteenth century to create comedies of this kind, they often find themselves obliged to do so by virtue of their concept of human nature. Simplicity of character and relationships of sympathy produce a plot which is intricate, not to say unwieldy: "sensibilité" has a radical effect on the form of comic drama.

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