Give Me Not Poverty, Lest I Steal!: Social Criticism in Selected Non-Fiction of Daniel Defoe, Projecting to His Three Criminal Novels

Beverlee Fissinger Smith
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/1230

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1971 Beverlee Fissinger Smith
"GIVE ME NOT POVERTY, LEST I STEAL!": SOCIAL CRITICISM IN SELECTED NON-FICTION OF DANIEL DEFOE, PROJECTING TO HIS THREE CRIMINAL NOVELS

By

Beverlee Fissinger Smith

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 1971
"GIVE ME NOT POVERTY, LEST I STEAL!": SOCIAL CRITICISM
IN SELECTED NON-FICTION OF DANIEL Defoe, PROJECTING
TO HIS THREE CRIMINAL NOVELS

This thesis investigates those non-fictional texts in the
Defoe canon relating to the poor, texts that shed light on a signifi-
cant minor problem of the age and that are seminal for an intelligent
and appreciative understanding of Defoe and of Moll Flanders,
Col. Jacque, and Roxana.

Chapter One, "England's Poor: The Recognition of a Growing
Problem," first outlines the problem of a growing impoverished class
as seen by Defoe and his contemporaries by tracing common attitudes
shown those who came to be viewed as a political and economic issue
and the factors that led to the poor being a distinct class within
English society. The next part briefly summarizes the poor laws
relevant to this study, laws that became more harsh and repressive as
the period advanced, and then assesses the merits and defects in the
poor law system.

"Parochial Tyranny," Chapter Two, providing a touchstone for
all of Defoe's works concerning the poor, is divided into three
sections; the first investigates Defoe's charges of tyranny, in-
efficiency, and corruption by parish officers, who thus contributed
to the increase in parish rates and to the misery of the deserving
poor who, ironically, bore the principal burden of parish taxes.
The other two sections analyze specific examples of parochial
tyanny: the first involves The Poor Skippers and Keelmen of New-
castle; the second demonstrates that Charity Is Still a Christian
Virtue. These works reveal Defoe to be compassionate but not
sentimental or indiscriminate. He is never quixotic, but is rational,
knowledgeable, and deliberate as he asks for justice as well as mercy
for the deserving poor.

Chapter Three, "Workhouses: The Panacea of the Age," ex-
amines the solution to the problem of the poor that was seized upon by
most writers, legislators, and parochial officers of the period, but
was attacked vigorously by Defoe as being, first of all, economically
unsound and, secondly, morally unsuitable. This chapter first traces
the history and purposes of the workhouse movement, and then examines
the general conditions found in most workhouses and the attitude of
the poor towards them. The second division is a study of Defoe's
cardinal work, Giving Alms No Charity, which was written in opposition
to Mackworth's bill that proposed establishing workhouses throughout
England. The last division studies Defoe's own proposal for a work-
house, demonstrating clearly that he was not an opponent of workhouses
"The Cry of the Oppressed," presents Defoe's defense of debtors sentenced to a living death, some for sums amounting to only a few pounds. After establishing Defoe's credentials, the chapter traces the history of relevant debtors' laws; presents a discussion of those affected by them, the evils attendant upon private ownership of jails and the fee system, and the conditions prevalent in most English jails; and then inquires into Defoe's seemingly irreconcilable and incompatible defense of both debtor and creditor as presented in his Remarks on the Bill to Prevent Frauds, The Unreasonableness . . . of Imprisoning the Body for Debt, and Some Objections . . . Offer'd . . . to the House of Commons, in which he takes the stance that most debtors' laws were not only cruel and barbaric but were also economically untenable for both debtor and creditor.

The next chapter, "Give Me Not Poverty, Lest I Steal!" takes its title from a quotation from Defoe's Review that succinctly expresses his position regarding England's new and growing criminal class, those who broke civil and/or moral laws because of economic necessity. Defoe's sanction of such infringements is based on (1) his acceptance of the law of self-preservation, and (2) his view of the nature of man. This chapter is divided into five parts: the first briefly summarizes the reasons behind the growing number of criminal poor; the second examines writers such as Baxter and Hobbes who are representative of two schools of thought concerning the plea of economic necessity and self-preservation; the third demonstrates Defoe's view of the nature of man, whom he sees as corrupted by original sin, subject to his baser passions, principally self-love, and unable to resist the pressures of economic or psychological necessity; the last two parts analyze tenets most germane to the issue as seen first in the Review and then in "An Essay Upon Honesty" from the Serious Reflections.

The final chapter, "Moll, Jack, and Roxana," projects the thesis to Defoe's three criminal novels, and argues that in them Defoe criticizes implicitly and explicitly those faults of his age in regard to their treatment of the poor that he criticized in his non-fiction and that the novels are thus a logical extension of those works. This chapter functions, however, only to suggest that there is sufficient material for a further, broader study based on this thesis and that such a study could shed new light on such aspects of the novels as structure and the relation between theme and character, inasmuch as all three protagonists plead economic or psychological necessity, crying "Give Us Not Poverty, Lest We Steal!"
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish at this time to express my gratitude first to Dr. James D. Barry, my advisor, for his many fine suggestions and for his tireless efforts on behalf of this study, and to my readers, Drs. Eileen Baldeshwiler and Douglas White. To Prof. John R. Moore go my thanks for his kind encouragement and for his generosity in lending me materials not otherwise available. I am equally indebted to Malvin Zirker and Maximillian E. Novak for their assistance in bibliographic matters. Without their help, the locating of vital materials would have been much more difficult than it was. And I must also acknowledge the assistance and cooperation of the reference librarians of the following institutions, whose aid was invaluable: Bank of London (Economics Division); Bodleian Library; British Museum; Huntington Library; Indiana University (Bloomington); Newberry; Purdue University (Calumet Campus); University of California (Berkeley); University of Chicago, Harper Library; William Andrews Clark (University of Southern California); and Yale University.

On a more personal level, I wish publicly to acknowledge my debt first to my parents and second to Bill Dwiggins, my teacher, mentor, and friend. Last, to my sons and husband, for their patience, encouragement, love—for all their efforts above and beyond—goes my deepest gratitude, for without them this study would never have been attempted, much less completed.

iii
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION.</td>
<td>1-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. ENGLAND'S POOR: THE RECOGNITION OF A GROWING PROBLEM.</td>
<td>12-47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. PAROCHIAL TYRANNY.</td>
<td>48-105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. WORKHOUSES: THE PANACEA OF THE AGE.</td>
<td>106-156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED</td>
<td>157-207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. &quot;GIVE ME NOT POVERTY, LEST I STEAL!&quot;</td>
<td>208-257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. MOLL, JACK AND ROXANA: A PROJECTION FOR FURTHER STUDY.</td>
<td>258-321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>322-330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY.</td>
<td>331-355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If men of Sense approve me, I need not value the Laughter of Fools, whose very Approbation is Scandal; For if a Thinking Man is to be laugh'd out of every good Intention or Invention, nothing will ever be done for the Publick Good. . . .

Defoe, Second Thoughts are Best.

INTRODUCTION

Until the very late nineteenth century, Daniel Defoe's reputation as an author rested primarily on one or two prose narratives that some writers hesitated to call novels. Those prose narratives were, of course, Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders. For the most part, pre-twentieth century critics regarded Defoe at best as a hack writer who had achieved some fame (or notoriety) by attempting to pass off fiction as non-fiction. They not only seized upon apparent weaknesses in the literal and/ or moral meanings of his works,¹ but also seized upon moral defects in his character, charging him, for example,

¹See Sidney Black, "The Critical Reputation of Defoe's Novels: A Reflection of Changing Attitudes Toward the Novel in England" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 1955) in which Mr. Black shows that critics such as Hazlitt could not accept the morality of Moll and Roxana, while others could not accept Walter Wilson's justification of the inclusion of the coarse material in the novels on the basis of Defoe's avowed moral purpose of bringing about social reform. Others, like Walter Scott, though praising Defoe's ability to create verisimilitude, pointed out four areas of artistic deficiency: style, structure, subject matter, and character. See Chapter Six below.
with being an unscrupulous liar and a trimmer. At the same time, most of Defoe's pre-twentieth century biographers chiefly occupied themselves with defending him from such attacks. Consequently, from the first Defoe biography, that written by George Chalmers (1785), to those by Walter Wilson (1820), William Lee (1869), and William Minto (1879), all were highly defensive in tone.

However, after re-examining Defoe in relation to his total literary output, many twentieth century writers have come to view him in a somewhat different light; and despite moral and/or ethical defects in his personal character (which lie for the most part outside the scope of this thesis), many have concluded that Defoe was a serious sociological critic of his age, whose social criticism, though most explicit in his non-fictional writings, is also implicit in his fictional

1John R. Moore, "Defoe and Modern Economic Theory," Indiana University Studies, XIX, Nos. 96-104 (1933-37), 4, 5.

2According to John R. Moore's A Checklist of the Writings of Daniel Defoe ("Indiana University Humanities Series," No. 47; Bloomington, 1960), Defoe published 547 separate works and contributed large portions to 27 periodicals. Many were published under other names; many were written anonymously. Defoe's name appears on the title page of only 10 works; 2 show his initials; "author of 'The True-Born Englishman'" identifies 50 more. In 1790 Chalmers listed 77 definite works; in 1830, Walter Wilson 210; in 1840 Hazlitt gave 235 works; in 1869 William Lee noted 254; in 1894 Thomas Wright also listed 254; but in 1913 Trent listed 370, which in 1940 he expanded to 424. Then in 1960 Moore named 547; and the Defoe canon is still incomplete. I wish to acknowledge my reliance on Moore's Checklist for those works definitely assigned to Defoe as well as for those generally ascribed to him.
narratives, especially in his three "criminal" novels, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jacque, and The Fortunate Mistress (better known as Roxana). Representative of these modern critics is Arthur Tieje, who, in discussing the movement for social reform as exhibited in prose fiction, claims that Defoe was the first to explicitly introduce the topic of "social purpose." Tieje also credits Defoe with having explicitly introduced "the subject of the edifying aim in general" and with being the "herald for the religious aim" as well. He additionally notes that "the humanitarianism of Dickens [was] at least once forestalled--and that, oddly enough, by Defoe." Similarly, Secord comments that Defoe is "a conscious moral critic, the sine qua non of a social critic," adding that in order to fully appreciate Defoe's narrative technique, one "must take into account his method as influenced by the writing of moral treatises..." An even more emphatic claim is C. B. A. Proper's assertion that the "Defoe of Moll Flanders is the Defoe of the 'Essay on Projects,' the pleader for a better place for women in society." Proper specifically points to Defoe's concern for homeless waifs in Colonel Jacque, for the treatment of bastard children in both Moll Flanders and Roxana, and for


the plight of the deserving poor in *A Journal of the Plague Year* as other examples of Defoe's social awareness. Also seeing a direct relationship between Defoe's non-fictional writings and his fictional narratives is Sherburn, who further notes Defoe's relationship with his age:

Defoe's stimulus—monetary returns apart—is that of his century: appetite for reflection upon the duty of man to man in a social world. The moral treatise thus becomes the positive pole in his fictional creations; adventure the negative pole.²

"Almost everything Defoe writes," observes Goyne, "is filled with social consciousness, though not in the strident manner we have come to expect of modern doctrinaires." Goyne furthermore states that Defoe, "always a realist . . . was nevertheless far ahead of his time in certain of his proposals."³ And in speaking of the many proposals found scattered throughout Defoe's non-fiction and especially in *An Essay on Projects* (1697), Brian Fitzgerald, one of Defoe's most ardent admirers, comments:

Defoe's projects were designed to assist the poor and the oppressed—the submerged classes, notably the working class. This was true, indirectly, of his project for a State Bank to regulate the finance of

---

¹ *Social Elements in English Prose Fiction Between 1700 and 1832* (Amsterdam, 1929), pp. 35, 26-38.


the whole kingdom. It was directly true of his project for the imposition of an income tax on the untold wealth of the rich. And it was true also of his various other proposals—e.g.—those relating to a Pension Office; Insurance; Friendly Societies; a Charity Lottery; the registration—not to say nationalization—of all seamen; and of his recommendation for more humane treatment of mental defectives.

Fitzgerald, like Goyne, concludes that "in all these proposals Defoe was . . . years ahead of his time." And in commenting on Moll Flanders, he furthermore declares that

Defoe was frankly a propagandist. He used literature to express his views on social and other questions and only secondarily as a craftsman and artist. . . . He formulated projects for social reconstruction. . . . Defoe created audacious, loveable Moll Flanders to stimulate into social criticism his post-revolutionary contemporaries. . . . Of Defoe . . . one can say: his genius was the sublimation of common sense, with the zeal of the reformer and the constructive power of the artist.

Novak similarly sees Defoe as an "ardent propagandist for the reformation of manners and morals," who frequently attacked the social defects of his age in both his fiction and non-fiction.2

In short, the general tenor of modern critical comment concerning Defoe is that most succinctly expressed by Preserved Smith, who simply called Defoe "the first social reformer of the modern age."3


3 History of Modern Culture (New York, 1930), II, 592.
Despite scholarly evidence, as cited above, that testifies to the fact of Defoe's social consciousness, no in-depth study has been made of works in the Defoe canon that reveal this bent. Among the works that have been (somewhat) neglected are those in which Defoe comments on such issues of the period as corruption and inefficiency in parochial administration of the poor, inequities in the laws relating to the poor, and workhouses. Also neglected are those works in which he examines the plight of the poor debtor, who was in effect sentenced to life imprisonment merely for being poor, and of the poor who were (or feared being) reduced to a state of necessity and thus were confronted with the problem of committing a crime against the State or of starving. With these issues and problems Defoe was intimately acquainted. He gained insight, for example, into the debtor problem when he himself was confined for bankruptcy in Newgate and Old Bailey. Then, too, he saw firsthand the effects of poverty when he journeyed throughout England and Scotland as an emissary for King William and as a secret agent for Robert Harley and others. Besides serving in these capacities, Defoe was, during his lifetime, a merchant and a pan tile maker as well as a journalist, essayist, and pamphleteer. Also, for many years Defoe attended the trials at Newgate and reported on them in Applebee's *Original Weekly Journal*. As Louis Kronenberger so aptly put it, "Defoe saw London, saw England, with a width matched by no other writer of
his day. He alone was really in the midst of life, and if Swift's dark pages are the greatest art, Defoe's are the greatest document of the age."¹ Or as Bonamy Dobrée remarked:

Here, then, we have a writer who speaks in the new voice of the eighteenth century intent upon actuality, the voice of the middle class which was soon to be almost all-pervasive, on whose ideas nearly all literature was to be based, and which during the century was to determine, if not the political structure of the country, at least the economic and largely the social. He was the sole genius. Swift, the only one of his politically active contemporaries to rank above him as a prose writer in that high company, came of a different mould. . . . He saw deeper, and was the aristocratic heir of ages. Defoe was the child of his time, if one can say such a thing of so very urban a figure, . . . who as often as not spoke as it came to him to speak, with the voice and accent of the people among whom he had his being, and lived his complicated life.²

Although a "child of his time," Defoe did not always agree with his contemporaries. Then, as now, the problems of the poor were complex and frustrating and admitted of no easy solutions. Defoe's writings indicate that in general he shared the basic philosophy that governed the attitudes of his contemporaries as they strove to deal with the problem of a constantly growing paupered class and the ever increasing parish rates. When he differed, it was seldom over principle; most often it was over the application of a specific proposal. Like his contemporaries Defoe was not blind to the faults of the poor; nor, however,

was he blind to their virtues. Hence, when one gleans his writings, one finds revealed a very complex man who expresses the gamut of emotions, emotions that range from sympathetic concern to angry disgust. And because his writings usually are about specific situations that arise from particular circumstances, that is, they are for the most part occasional works, no one statement can be taken as Defoe's definitive statement on the poor. Nonetheless, whether he chastizes, berates, praises or enjoins his audience, he always gives evidence of his belief in the importance, dignity and sanctity of the individual human spirit, and especially of the spirit to survive in spite of all obstacles. It is this spirit that pervades Moll Flanders and renders that work so memorable.

An in-depth study then of selected works from the Defoe canon that relate to the poor will not only shed light on one area long neglected and on a significant (if minor) concern of the age, but will also provide an opportunity for further study; for those works which stress the social conditions of England's poor and the attitudes of Defoe toward the deprived seem to contribute directly and indirectly to some of Defoe's most famous fictional prose, that is, to his three "criminal" novels. For example, the incessant and apparently ironical moralizing that many twentieth century critics see in Moll Flanders significantly appears less questionable, thinks Charles Eaton Bunch, when one sees, as eighteenth-century
critics seemingly did, "that the social morality stressed was fundamentally an extension of the program for moral and social reform which [Defoe] championed in his earlier writings..."¹

And just as the social awareness that is implicitly manifested in Defoe's fictional narratives is an extension of that explicitly manifested in his non-fictional writings, so also are his attitudes towards the deserving and undeserving poor an outgrowth, or more precisely, a product of his age.

This study, therefore, will begin by setting Defoe's writings about the poor in perspective; that is, it will briefly attempt to describe the social milieu that gave rise to these works by indicating the attitudes towards the poor that were held in common by Defoe and his contemporaries alike. Inasmuch as these attitudes were reflected in the poor laws, laws that not only governed the lives of the poor themselves but also governed the relationship of all other people to the poor, those laws relevant to this thesis will be examined. Next, Defoe's criticism of parochial administration of the poor will be presented. In these writings Defoe charges parish officers with "Crimes" ranging from general ineptitude to outright corruption. The following chapter will investigate Defoe's opposition to workhouses, which were seen by most of his contemporaries to be the best solution to the problem of

the poor. Defoe's attack on the plans proposed by many of the ardent supporters of the workhouse movement is illustrative of a point previously made; that is, that Defoe seldom differed with his contemporaries over a principle but he did differ with them over specific applications of a principle. Thus, one finds that besides delineating his objections to those workhouses already established and those usually proposed, Defoe offers his own plan for a workhouse. The plight of debtors who were, according to Defoe, unjustly and unreasonably sentenced to life imprisonment will next be presented. Because of his own bankruptcies and because he was haunted throughout his adult life by a fear of poverty, Defoe was especially sensitive to the problems of debtors. However, as a merchant and tradesman and as one who held the position that England must at all costs have a stable economy, Defoe also sympathized with creditors who were in many instances defrauded of their just dues. Janus-like, Defoe tries to eloquently defend the rights of both interests. The fifth chapter will look into Defoe's belief concerning the validity of psychological and/or economic determinism as a justifiable plea (or excuse) for the commission of crimes against the State. Defoe's belief that men pressed by necessity—or the fear of necessity, which he equated with poverty—were not able to withstand the pressures facing them and thus were not able "virtuously" to stand by and starve was shaped and colored by many things, for example, by his own
personal experiences as a bankrupt and by his own observations of the actions of his fellowman when they were placed in a necessitious condition. His belief, however, was more significantly formed by his acceptance of the Puritan doctrine of man's depravity. Of additional importance in the formation of his belief was his view that fallen man was not possessed with an innate moral sense but was instead motivated by self-love, and that the "great and first Natural Law" was self-preservation. The final chapter will indicate not only Defoe's use of the plea of necessity in Moll Flanders, Colonel Jacque, and Roxana, but will also indicate other facets of Defoe's social consciousness in the novels.
The Manner of providing for the Poor in England is so wrong, and hath been Productive of so many Evils, and may be of still more, that several wise and good Men have long contemplated of it, and thought some Alteration, if not a total Abolition, necessary. The whole Nation, indeed, is now become so sensible of this growing Evil, that our Representatives in Parliament have taken the Matter into Consideration ....; several Treatises have of late been published, and some new Schemes and Regulations proposed for better Provision and Management of the Poor. .... Alcock, Observations on the Defects of the Poor Laws, pp. 5-6.

CHAPTER I

ENGLAND'S POOR: THE RECOGNITION OF A GROWING PROBLEM

The period following the Restoration was one noted for great political, religious, and social change. It was also a period of great economic change. Paradoxically, however, England's economic growth was seemingly as productive of abject poverty as of enormous wealth, for both existed side-by-side. And despite legislative steps taken to curb, correct, improve, or alleviate socio-economic conditions, the number of poor on the parish rolls continued to escalate as did the parish rates. Moreover, regardless of how high the parish rates were, the poor complained of ill treatment. And though contemporary
writers were also cognizant of the ill-treatment the poor received, one finds that they principally focused their attention on the high cost of supporting a continuously growing paupered class and the evils attendant upon such increases.

England's poor, as a distinct class, was not generated overnight; many complex factors were responsible for the problem. Those most noteworthy, however, were the following: the decay of serfdom, which gave the peasant freedom, including the freedom to starve; the dissolution of the monasteries, part of whose income was set aside to provide for the poor; the increased use of enclosures, which "Massie, Young, and Eden all agree ... was too often carried out with utter disregard for the interests of the Poor"; the end of the civil wars, which released a great many men from serving in the army and navy, many of whom had no place or job to return to (and hence flooded the countryside as well as the large cities, particularly London, the mecca of the poor); natural calamities, for example, a wet season, which caused prices of necessities such as wheat, corn, and barley to fluctuate; and the relative stability of wages, which did not increase or decrease according to the real price of necessities, that is, according to the cost of living.¹

In spite of all these factors, as was noted above, the national wealth of England steadily increased. Consequently, many interested citizens and legislators, who saw increasing poverty, degradation, and parish rates\(^1\) on the one hand and increasing national wealth\(^2\) on the other, turned their attention to the poor, as evidenced by the significant number of pamphlets and treatises that appeared after 1660 dealing with the state of the poor and the increasing poor rates.\(^3\)

---

\(^1\)See below, pp. 21-22.

\(^2\)For example, the gross sum of import and export duties, according to Traill, is indicative of the condition of a nation's economy. In 1661 the customs duties amounted to £361,356; by 1688 £577,100 (IV, 621). T. Ashton (An Economic History of England: The Eighteenth Century [London, 1955], p. 252) gives the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Exports (Mil. L)</th>
<th>Imports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1705</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1710</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1715</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1720</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1725</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1735</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1740</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1745</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\)Marshall, pp. 17, 22. See Traill, IV, 655.
Representative of such interested citizens and legislators was Richard Hains, who, in 1674, complained that "Poverty seems to have invaded the whole Nation," and that with "Leases being thrown up constantly in the country, and tradesmen breaking daily in the City . . . and Labourers generally, if they have families, are ready to run abegging, the Poverty of most Parishes being such that they can hardly supply or relieve them." And in 1700 an anonymous author mirrored Hain's complaint:

Poverty is a universal Cry and Complaint both in City and Country. Diverse families have bin brought into distress by the Evils and Mischief of the Times. . . . Poverty is of it self helpless, not able to move without the assistance of others . . . . Indeed Poverty in itself is an Evil of that magnitude, that we need no artificial Glass to increase and inlarge it to our Eye. It is attended by so many bad Circumstances, that may easily move our Compassion, and oblige rational Beings to indeavour to remove it both from the Publick Society, as well as from ourselves. Were there nothing else but the Clamours and Mournful Outcries of the Poor that daily fill our Ears, and the sense of their urging Necessities, and of their Families; were there nothing but their Nakedness and Misery, this would be sufficient to render the publick Poverty grievous to us as well as to them. But it is a grand and chief Cause of many other Mischiefs among us.2

By 1738 the situation had not appreciably improved; in fact, another anonymous writer gloomily (and accurately) predicted that "Both the Number and Miseries of our Poor, are more likely


2A Present Remedy for the Poor (London, 1700), pp. 5-6.
to be increased, than diminished, in Time to come," and attributed his prediction to such factors as: the decay of local trades such as weaving; the "large Annual Drainings out of . . . Estates by Taxes"; the vices of the poor themselves, such as drinking gin and idleness; the neglect of parochial officials, who did not provide for the poor as directed by law; and the practice of large landlords who sometimes owned all the land in a parish of consolidating their lands and thus displacing many small tenant farmers.¹

A more pragmatic reason for the growing awareness on the part of many can be seen when one considers the change in attitude that took place from the time of the Tudors to that of the Stuarts. During the Tudors, according to Sidney and Beatrice Webb, in their excellent and comprehensive study, English Poor Law History, those who were reduced to a state of destitution were generally looked upon by members of the community and officials alike primarily "as troublesome nuisances." It was thought that "if they were able-bodied, they escaped from their parishes, infesting the countryside, such as vagrants and mendicants. . . . If they were sick, crippled, feeble-minded, infirmed or aged, they augmented the hordes of importunate beggars, defrauding the pious and spreading disease among the inhabitants while their dependent children died of

¹An Enquiry into the Causes and Miseries of the Poor (London, 1798), pp. 4-5.
neglect or were reared in idleness or crime." By the time of the Stuarts, when no king felt assured of his throne, these same nuisances were seen in an even more dangerous light; now they were also seen to be possible "willing recruits of rebellious factions."¹ Poverty, thus, came to be "regarded as a potential danger to the State, and . . . , therefore, a peril to the King," for it was feared that such hordes of "importunate beggars," vagrants, and rogues, who travelled up and down the countryside, "starving and discontented," could link up the nation with a "web of dis-satisfaction,"² They, hence, came to be regarded as a political menace as well as a social nuisance. Such an attitude seems to be behind the remarks made by Chief Justice Hale, who, writing in 1683, said that, while he considered helping the poor to be an act of charity "incumbent upon all Men," he nevertheless also felt that it was

an act of great Civil Prudence and Political Wisdom: for Poverty in itself is apt to Emasculate the minds of men, or at least it makes men tumultuous and unquiet. Where there are many very Poor, the Rich cannot loaf or safely continue such; necessity renders men of Phlegmatique and dull Natures stupid and indisciplinable; and Men of more fiery or active Constitutions rapacious and desperate.³

In short, if the poor were not to be relieved for reasons of charity, then they would have to be relieved for the sake of

one's own vested interest, that is, for the sake of "ensuring political security." Consequently, "Prevention and Punishment became the watchwords of the government when dealing with poverty."\(^1\) Or, as the Webbs so aptly phrased it, the system of poor relief from the Restoration until the Reforms of 1837 may be "described as providing for the Relief of Destitution within a Framework of Repression."\(^2\)

In order to understand the repressive measures that were taken against the undeserving poor (but which affected the deserving and undeserving alike), it is first necessary to know something about the poor and why they became in effect a class apart—legally as well as socially, economically, and morally. It is also necessary to see the attitudes that prevailed on the part of the other classes towards the poor, for their attitude was reflected in the poor laws and in other remedies that came to be proposed.

11

Although Defoe specifically divided the English populace into seven economic classes—"the great, who live profusely; (2) the rich, who live very well; (3) the middle part, who live well; (4) the working trades, who labour hard

\(^1\)Marshall, p. 17.

but feel no want; (5) the country people, farmers, etc., who
fare indifferently; (6) the poor, that fare hard; (7) the
miserable, that really pinch and suffer want. The poor,
primarily Defoe's last two divisions, were by Defoe's
contemporaries, commonly divided not according to an economic
principle but according to an a priori moral judgment; hence,
one finds that writers of the age, as well as the laws that
were enacted, more and more came to divide the poor into those
deemed worthy of relief and those deemed unworthy. The worthy,
or deserving, poor were those impotent poor who because of age
or condition were unable to work and fend for themselves, such
as infants, the aged, the mentally handicapped, or the
physically disabled. These poor did not receive much attention
from Defoe and his contemporaries, who focused their attention
on the unworthy, or undeserving, poor, that is, on the able-
bodied poor who sought poor relief. Although as early as
18 Eliz. c. 3. there was a legal distinction explicitly made
between those able-bodied poor who would have been willing to
work, if work had been available, and those able-bodied poor
who were unwilling to work at any time (these were usually
called vagrants, beggars, and rogues), the feelings of the

1As cited in Fitzgerald, p. 219.

2According to 39 Eliz. c. 4.: "All Persons calling
themselves Scholars going about begging; All Seafaring Men
pretending Losses of their Ships or Goods on the Sea, going
about the Country begging; All idle Persons going about in any
rest of the populace towards all unemployed poor eventually

County, either begging or using any subtil Craft, or unlawful Games or Plays, or fancying themselves to have Knowledge in Physiognomy, Palmistry, or other like Science, or ... such other like Phantastical Imaginations; All Persons that be, or utter themselves to be Proctors, Procurers, Patent-gathers, or Collectors for Gaols, Prisons, or Hospitals; All Fencers, Bear-wards, or Common Players of Enterludes ...; All Jugglers, Tinkers, Pedlars, and Petty-Chapmen, wandering abroad; All wandering Persons, and common Laborers, being Persons able in Body, using Loitering and refusing to work for such reasonable Wages as are tax'd, or commonly given in such Parts, where such Persons do or shall happen to dwell or abide, not having Living otherwise to maintain themselves; and all such Persons not being Felons, wandering and pretending themselves to be Egyptians, or wandering in the Habit, Form, or Attire of Counterfeit Egyptians; shall be taken, adjudg'd, and deem'd Rogues, Vagabonds, and sturdy Beggars." Carter adds that a rogue signified an "idle beggar, that wanders from Place to Place without a lawful Passport; and yet a Vagabond [signified] any one who wandereth about idly and loitering; and is a Rogue, though he beggeth not" (Samuel Carter, Legal Provisions for the Poor, 4th ed. [London, 1728], pp. 144-45, 146). And if such persons did not wander from their own parish but refused to work, they, if above seven years of age, were to be sent to a house of correction. Moreover if servants left their employment without a "testimonial" or if they had a forged one, they were to be apprehended and whipped as vagabonds (Ibid.). It is interesting to note that in 1734 Joseph Shaw observed that the laws regarding beggars and rogues were "severe enough" but not effective because they "proceed from one grand Mistake, that seems to run through all our Laws on this Subject, viz. the punishing real Objects of Charity as Criminals, instead of providing Hospitals for those who really are not able to work, and Workhouses, or at least, Work for all who really are able. ..." He noted that according to 12 Ann. c. 23., upon complaint of two persons, anyone found begging in the streets or just wandering about could be removed by the constable. If the person refused to leave, he could be stripped naked and whipped until his body was "bloody." In addition, if the constable refused to carry out these provisions of the act, he could be fined 10 s., which was to be used for the "Poor of the Parish" (Parish Law, Or A Guide to ... Parish Business [London, 1734], pp. 182-83). This law only reinforced the punishments outlined in 39 Eliz. c. 4. and subsequent poor laws. The 39 Eliz. c. 4. prescribed that a person could be whipped from one parish to another until he arrived back at the place of his birth or in a parish where he "last pass'd without Punishment" (Carter, pp. 148-49). See Shaw, p. 242 for a summary of laws pertaining to vagabonds, rogues, and beggars.
polarized into one hard attitude. Whereas the willing able-bodied poor who were unemployed were once primarily viewed as unfortunate victims of circumstances and not as victims of their own depravity, after 1700 such was not the case, just as it was no longer thought that the function of the government was to provide employment for the poor. Unfortunately, if not in theory, then in practice, the deserving poor came to be treated just like the undeserving poor, as poverty came to be considered a social and moral "crime"\(^1\) as well as an economic misfortune. In fact, by 1720, the idea of finding work for the poor "as a method of relief had practically died out" and workhouses were substituted in its place. The idea of segregating the poor, deserving and undeserving poor alike, in a place apart from the rest of society and the idea of running them as one would run a business, that is, for profit, was a distinct departure from the older paternal attitude seen prior to the Restoration.\(^2\)

Statistics from this period are generally unreliable or simply unavailable. Nevertheless some attempts were made to

\(^1\)Charles Gray, Considerations on Several Proposals, lately made, for the Better Maintenance of the Poor (London, 1751), p. 10. Gray states that beggars, vagabonds, and all who were idle were not affected by the "general plan for the Poor. . . ; they being indeed more properly the objects of the criminal law. . . ." (Ibid.).

arrive at an estimate of how many people fell within the scope of the poor laws and the amount of poor rate expended between 1660 and 1750. According to Laurence Braddon, Gregory King, in 1688, estimated England's total population to be 5,000,000 inhabitants; yet earlier in 1639 the Observator, using the Bills of Mortality, calculated the total to be 7,000,000, and in 1648 Chief Justice Hale 6,000,000. In 1717, Braddon, arrived at his own estimate of 10,000,000 for all of Great Britain. He arrived at this figure by taking the number of houses (1,350,000) contained in England's 10,000 parishes, and multiplying the number of houses by 6 (husband, wife, and four dependants). Hence, he estimated there was 8,100,000 people in England, and another 1,900,000 in Scotland and Wales. Of these 10,000,000, he further estimated there were 5,900,000 between ages 6 and 66; 3,600,000 under 6; and 500,000 over 66.\(^1\) Of the total population, according to King, who had based his figures on the hearth tax, the Bills of Mortality, and other unspecified data, over one-fifth of the population, over 1,000,000 persons, were receiving some form of parish relief in 1688, and the amount of poor-rate was over £600,000 yearly.\(^2\) although it had

\(^1\) Laurence Braddon, *The Miseries of the Poor are a National Sin, Shame and Charge: But by making them Happy We shall Remove that Guilt* (London, 1717), pp. xxiv-xxvi. In 1688 the rural population as compared to the urban was 3 to 1. In 1769 it was about evenly divided. In 1688, Braddon reports, there were about 4,100,000 people who lived in hamlets and villages. King also estimated there were 500,000 non-industrious poor at this time (Macky, pp. 131-32).

been only about £188,811. in 1650.\footnote{Thomas Ruggles, The History of the Poor: Their Rights, Duties, and the Laws Respecting Them in a Series of Letters (London, 1793), I, 168. \textit{[Letter XIV.]}\text} Using King's figures and those of Arthur Moore, the brilliant economist, Charles Davenant, in 1695, arrived at his own estimate of how much poor relief had been allotted each poor-relief recipient in 1688. He stated that it was as little as "Ten Shillings per Head."\footnote{An Essay Upon Ways and Means. . . (London, 1695), p. 79. To arrive at some idea of the amount spent on the poor, one should note that, according to Elizabeth W. Gilboy in Wages in Eighteenth Century England (Cambridge, Mass., 1934), wages for most laborers and tradesmen were from 1700 to 1787 1 s. 8. d. (p. 60). However, in 1698 Richard Dunning in Bread for the Poor estimated that a laborer earned 2 s. 6. d. to 2. s. 8. d. weekly, out of which he had to provide for himself and three children (supposing that his wife worked and earned enough to care for herself and one other child). He was to pay for his food, clothing, drink, fuel, and rent, which Dunning estimated would cost 2 s. 5. d. (p. 283). In 1708, a laborer could rent a house for about 52 10. s. a year, plus his poor rate assessment (Gilboy, p. 8). And though Defoe estimated that a laborer in Kent could earn 7 s. to 10 s. a week and 4 s. in the North, in 1704 (Giving Alms No Charity \textit{[London, 1704]}, p. 11), Aschrott estimates that the wages in and around London around the turn of the century were 20 d. a day and only 8 d. in and around Lancashire. By the middle of the century they were up to 24 d. in and around London but only 12 d. in Lancashire (p. 232). In 1757, Josiah Tucker, in Instruction for Travellers (London, 1757), estimated wages for the average male laborer to be 1 s. to 2 s. 6 d. a day, and 4 d. to 1 s. for women. His figures applied to workers throughout England (p. 19). The average workday at this time, it should be noted, was from six in the morning to six in the evening, six days a week. The average laborer had one and one-half hours off for meals. But if he was late finishing his meals, he could be fined 1 s. or one-fourth of his daily wages (Aschrott, p. 213).} In 1698 the total expenditure had risen to £819,000,\footnote{Aschrott, p. 12, note 2.} and, by
Braddon's day, it was up to £900,000—one-third more than it was in 1688.\(^1\) It was as a result of these vast increases in both the number of poor and in the parish rates that the attitude of the general populace towards the unemployed poor became polarized. As was said before, no longer were the unemployed viewed sympathetically; they now were viewed primarily as economic liabilities. And it is this attitude that characterizes much, if not all, of the writings on the subject of the unemployed, able poor after the Restoration.

Even as early as 1650, however, one can find writers explicitly making a distinction between the deserving—those unable to work because of age or condition—and the undeserving poor—those unemployed but able to work. For example, in that year, Samuel Hartlib wrote that the "Work of the Poor consists in two things, viz. Comfort, the honest helples Poor. Reform, the obstinate ungodly Poor." Hartlib also added that in dealing with the poor, one should adhere to the following principle: "he that will not work, should not eat." Furthermore, he suggested that all who persisted in their idleness be sent to a house of correction so that they would be "restrained from a begging idle life."\(^2\) And in the

---

\(^1\)Braddon, pp. 25-27. The amount of poor rate doubled again by 1785.

very early years of the eighteenth century, echoing Hartlib's suggestion, the Rev. Thomas Cooke, rector of St. Nicholas Church in Worcester, preached a sermon based on a text from St. Paul to the Thessalonians, "That if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3.), this, in effect, giving Biblical sanction to the idea that all who were able but were not willing to work should not be given any kind of assistance. Cooke concluded that idleness was the mother of all vice, thus implying that all who were willingly idle were vicious, and stated:

In short, so displeasing is this Sin to God, so detestable to all good men, so scandalous in itself, and so fatal in its Consequences, that the Apostle her[e] condemns it, and that beyond the extent of even Charity it self to Pardon, no Pity, no Commiseration, no Relief, must be extended to the Lazy Beggar. . . .

Although Cooke's remarks aimed at those who roamed the countryside begging, many of them professional con men, too often it was assumed that all who begged were unwilling to work, and that work was available to all who wanted it.

In 1706, one finds Defoe too making a distinction similar to that made by Hartlib and Cooke. In the Review Defoe implicitly indicated his attitude towards the "real" poor when he said: "I cannot but think it an Honour to this Work as well as to the Author: that these two Volumes have begun with so extraordinary a Work, as that of Christian Charity, and

---

Compassion for the Poor." And a little later in the same article, his attitude towards the undeserving poor was explicitly given when he recalled the suggestion he had given the previous year to a gentleman who had sought his advice about some money he wished to use in some charitable cause. Reviewing the advice he gave about who he thought would be worthy recipients of such charity, Defoe stated:

... I gave my Vote, and I see no Cause to alter my Mind.

1. Negatively, Neither the Noisie Clamouring, Importunate Poor, nor the Vagabond Begging Poor.

2. Positively, But the Poor, Industrious, Labourious, and Honest Families, Numerous in Children, and where Mouths are too many for their Hands; or where the Heads of the Families are snatch'd from them, or Sickness or Disaster renders them necessitious; and among these, I think the Greatest Misery is to be found.¹

Although compassionate to the real "poor," Defoe was not a sentimentalist. Always a pragmatist, he never showed pity for those able poor who could but would not labor; for he held honest labor as sacred as did Robinson Crusoe himself. In the same year that he had given his advice to the anonymous charitable gentleman, he had also made his views concerning all beggars known. In an article in the Review in April, 1705, he expressed his opinion that because there were, he felt, sufficient jobs available for all who wanted them, there was no reason for any one to have to beg. As he said, "... no Man

that has his **Limbs** and his **Senses**, need to beg, and those that **have not**, ought to be put into a Condition not to want it."

Thus, when he looked around and saw all the hordes of beggars who crowded the city and the countryside, he concluded that "... Begging is a meer Scandal in the general: **in the Able**, 'tis a Scandal upon their Industry, and **in the Impotent**, 'tis a Scandal upon the country." Like many of his contemporaries, Defoe did not offer any evidence to support his contention that there was a sufficiency of jobs. However, because he assumed that such was the case, his attitude towards all able-bodied unemployed poor was harsh and unsympathetic. And thus one finds him stating that "the Poverty of **England** does not lie among the Craving Beggars, but among Poor Families where the Children are Numerous, and where Death or Sickness, has depriv'd them of the Labour of the Father: these are the causes that the Sons and Daughters of Charity, if they would order it well, should seek out and relieve"; for, as he pointed out, "an Alms ill directed, may be Charity to the particular Person, but becomes an Injury to the Publrick, and no Charity to the Nation."¹ Twenty years later, one finds that Defoe's attitude towards the undeserving idle poor had not altered. At that time he proposed that "industrious poor," that is, the worthy, honest, poor be substituted for the "idle, vermin poor."

¹The *Review* (Vol. II, No. 14; Thursday, April 5, 1705), Fasc. Bk. 4, pp. 53-54.
who made London streets a hazard. Instead of carrying lamps as they were hired to do, many were actually shills for robbers, if not robbers themselves. He made the same charge against those poor who blacked shoes.¹ And a few years later, just three years before his death, Defoe further suggested that all incorrigible idle poor who steadfastly refused to work be sent to a house of correction.² Mirroring not only Defoe's attitude toward the undeserving poor but also Hartlib's some eighty years before, George Ollyffe, in 1731, advised: "... if any will not work, when they may and can, neither should they eat." And just as Defoe had earlier suggested that all incorrigible idle poor be punished, so also did Olyffe propose that they be "sent to a House of Correction ... there to be employed and restrained from a begging idle life."³

These words were written in the year of Defoe's death, yet the distinction between the worthy and unworthy, between the employed able poor and the unemployed able poor did not die with him. Moreover, the attitude reflected by Defoe and the other writers cited above was only representative of that

---


²Second Thoughts are Best: Or, A Further Improvement of a Late Scheme to Prevent Street Robberies. . . (London, 1728), p. 16. [Pseud. Andrew Moreton.]

generally shown the poor. The distinction between the worthy and unworthy poor that was made by them was made implicitly or explicitly by almost all writers of the period. Defoe not only did not quarrel with this distinction, as has been shown; he helped propagate it. Thus Defoe the defender of the real poor was also Defoe the attacker of the idle, able poor. Nor did he in general quarrel with the laws that reflected the general tenor of opinion that was held by him and his contemporaries.

To sum up, it would appear that legislators, parish administrators, and critics alike all had an ideal picture of what a poor person was supposed to have been like; if he did not fit the bill, he was then deemed "undeserving." Such an ideal person was one "remarkable for his industry, thrift and patient resignation in the face of hardship...", his response to deprivation was to pull in his belt a couple of notches and to pretend that nothing was happening. His clothes were cleaned and darned; his children washed and tidy... He was emphatically not a migrant..."¹ To reconcile the ideal with the actual was not easy. And as Hufton has remarked, "the difficulties involved in effecting that reconciliation became peculiarly apparent when the poor man ceased to be self-sufficient and sought to make a claim on the public purse--when he became in fact a pauper, or, to use the more specific French

terms, passed from being merely pauvre to being indigent."¹
The difficulties involved in that reconciliation became even more apparent as the poor laws became more repressive in the period following the Restoration, as they sought to maintain the distinction between the undeserving and deserving poor. In general, the poor laws as a system of relief failed to remedy the problems of the poor.² Hence, many of Defoe's contemporaries took issue not only with the administration of them, as did Defoe, but with the poor laws themselves.

iii
Proceeding from the premise that most of the poor were vicious and idle to the conclusion that only the vicious and idle were poor (for to work was to be virtuous and to be virtuous was not to be idle), legislators turned their attention to the poor laws that were already on the books and sought to find ways to re-inforce them. Therefore, more and more the laws tended to be repressive in intent, proscriptive in tone, and punitive in effect.

Although the poor laws were numerous and complex, only those that are of special significance to this study will be examined. It should be noted, however, that the earliest "real" poor laws, for example, the 27 H. VIII. and 5 & 6 Ed. 6., all

¹Ibid.
²See below.
pertained to voluntary alms. But, as one anonymous writer

1 The earliest poor law, that of Athelstane, ordained that "lordless men of whom no law can be got, the kindred be commanded that they domicile him to folkright and find him a lord in the folkmote." This law intended that every man was to have a settlement in some manor or parish and that the manor or parish was to be responsible for his conduct. Moreover, it gave the parish or manor jurisdiction over its inhabitants. The next law that passed in 1388 [12 R. II] which forbade the migration of country laborers, male or female. It also stipulated that all country laborers, servants, artisans, and apprentices were to help during harvest seasons. In addition, wages were controlled. However, no specific provision for the care of the poor was made. This law is the predecessor of the Law of Settlement and Removal in that it stated that the poor were to be returned to the place of their birth, if possible, and to "dwell there." In 1592 15 R. II. c. 6. ordered that every parish give part of its revenue to the care of the poor (yet the Webbs note that the tithe by the twelfth century had "ceased to supply any appreciable sum towards the relief of the Poor") /English Poor Law: Part I: The Old Poor Law, Vol. VII of English Local Government (London, 1963), pp. 1-4). The 11 H. V. II. c. 2. was an act aimed against vagabonds and sturdy beggars, that stipulated that they had to reside in their own hundred. If they ventured out, they would be branded with a V for vagrant. Impotent poor were still left to the care of the Church (Nacky, pp. 46, 113-17). The law of 1531, 22 H. VIII. c. 13. was significant in that it was "the first that can be said to make any provision for the relief of poverty; the previous legislation is wholly directed against vagrancy and mendicancy" (R. Pashley, Pauperism and Poor Laws [London, 1852], pp. 172-74). First of all, it made the local justice responsible for the poor of his own parish. Secondly, it directed "how aged, poor and impotent persons compelled to live by alms alone, shall be ordered, and how vagabonds and beggars shall be punished. The 27 H. VIII. c. 25. stipulated that (1) individual parishes were to be responsible for the poor within their parishes; (2) the poor, impotent, sick and diseased who were unable to work were to be relieved; such relief was to be provided by voluntary contributions, however; and (3) "such as be lusty, having their limbs strong enough to labour, were to be compelled to work with their own hands. The laws passed in Edward's reign, I Ed. VI. c. 3.; 5 & 6 Ed. VI. c. 16., and in Mary's, 2 & 5 Mary c. 5., only reinforced that of 27 H. VIII. c. 25. The legislation from 1536 to 1597 stressed voluntary contributions and left the responsibility for actually providing for poor to the Church. Yet after 1597-98, "for the first time
later observed, because these early acts did not provide "sufficient Security for the Maintenance of the Poor, it became necessary to have a Law more effectual, to prevent their Starving."¹ The earliest act still retained on the books during the period 1660-1750 was that passed in 1576 which provided for the establishment in every county of a house of correction where "men and women could be made to work" ¹¹⁸ Eliz. c. 3, 7. These houses of correction were commonly called Bridewells. (They were also called poor houses by social historians, but should not be confused with workhouses of a later period.) As directed by this act, the houses of correction were "for the punishing of the Poor who refused to work, who are to be there whipp'd and set to work" ² Bulst. 358, 7. In 1597 an act was passed repeating the earlier injunction that each county should

a statute required the appointment in every parish of Overseers of the Poor, and by specifically imposing on them, in conjunction with the Church-wardens, the duty of providing for all the various classes of the destitute," the civil power rather than the Church was "put in the forefront." However, as yet, there was no specific restriction on one belonging to a particular parish. Significantly, there is explicit recognition that voluntary contributions did not adequately provide for the poor (Webbs, VII, 64).

¹ A Short View of the Frauds, Abuses and Impositions of Parish Officers... (London, 1744), pp. 2-3. In 1683 Hale noted that, although the laws encouraged voluntary contributions to aid the impotent poor, they were largely ineffectual because they were "but Voluntary and not compulsory." He further observed that "although... some... may be charitably minded, yet for the most part, men are backwards in works of Charity; Self-Love, Covetousness... keep most from overflowing Charity" (p. 3).

² Ibid., p. 4.
build "Working Houses for the Poor," but this act [39 Eliz. c. 4. and c. 5.], significantly gave to the overseers of the poor in each parish power to levy a rate to support the poor of their parish.\(^1\) Thus, by 1597, instead of voluntary contributions, a system of compulsory taxation was implemented, and from this date onward, the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor was more sharply made. The setting of the poor to work, at this time, came to be seen as a "Charity of greater Extent \(\frac{1}{2}\) than the relieving of the impotent poor\(^7\) and a very great and important Consequence to the Publick Wealth and Peace of the Kingdom. . . ."\(^2\) The most influential of all the early poor laws, however, was that of 43 Eliz. c. 2., c. 4. and c. 5., which was passed in 1601. Not only did this act stipulate that the poor should be compelled to work, but additionally specified that each parish was to raise a stock for the poor by laying a tax upon the inhabitants of the parish and upon the "Occupiers of Land, Houses, &c. . . ."\(^3\) Although the parishes were called upon to set the poor to work, as was indicated before, after the Restoration, most no longer even went through the motions:

If the parishes made any effort at all of employing the Poor, they contented themselves with supplying individual persons with the implement of their

---

\(^1\)Joseph Shaw, pp. 190-91. (7 Jac. I. c. 4. later reinforced this power of the parish officers \(\text{Ibid.},\ p. 191\)).

\(^2\)Hale, pp. 6-7.

\(^3\)See Chapter Two below.
craft. . . . But with some few exceptions of this character, parishes appear to have completely avoided their responsibility for setting the poor to work by the methods indicated by 43 Eliz. c. 2.

Contemporary feeling, however, was by no means prepared to let the matter drop, for it was fiercely and resentfully felt that, given the opportunity, any able-bodied person was capable of earning his or her living, and that only idleness and laziness of all concerned prevented this desirable consummation from being achieved. . . and after the Restoration new and more ambitious methods of employing the Poor were attempted. . . .

Accordingly, in 1662, the Act of Settlement and Removal was passed. Inasmuch as one could gain relief only from his own parish, it was vital for the poor to establish a legal residence according to the comprehensive provisions of this act in case they ever had to seek parish assistance. It was just as important, however, for parish officers to know exactly who qualified for relief and who did not. If someone seeking relief was not a legal resident according to the provisions outlined in the act, he usually was cast out of the parish as soon as he applied for any kind of assistance at all. As long as he did not try to seek aid, though, the parish administrators usually let the individual alone. Consequently, many injustices arose when poor persons seeking relief found that after living in a parish for many years they were not entitled to any.

Moreover, in making a distinction between those who were qualified residents and those who were not, parish officers were generally very callous; and their attitude towards the

poor who came seeking their assistance was equally as callous, as can be seen in these remarks by Defoe:

With what Imperiousness do they ride the Parishioners? How do they lord it over the poor Wretches, who take relief at their Hands? and yet these Gentlemen to save Charges, are brisk enough to hunt a distressed Creature from Parish to Parish, till they perish for Want by the Way: How many poor Women in Labour have been lost, while two Parishes are contending to throw her on each other, tho' common Humanity and the Danger of the Circumstances makes all Delays in that Case inhuman to the last Degree.¹

A similar picture of such parochial tyranny is that given by Justice Burns, who, some years later, graphically described the role of a parish officer as follows:

The office of overseer seems to be understood to be this: . . . to prevent persons coming to inhabit without certificates; if a man brings a certificate, to caution all inhabitants not to let him a farm of £10 a year; . . . to warn them, if they will hire servants, to hire them half-yearly; . . . to maintain their poor as cheap as they possibly can; . . . to bargain with some sturdy person to take them by the lump, who yet is not intended to take them but to hand them over in terrorem; . . . to bind out poor children apprentices, no matter to whom or to what trade, but to take special care the master lives in another parish; to pull down cottages . . . to depopulate the parish.²

What is significant about Burns's remarks is that most of his charges stem from the violation of the provisions of the Act of Settlement and Removal. And what was true in 1764 when he was


writing was equally true in Defoe's day. It is interesting to note that Defoe's specific charge concerning pregnant women and Burns's allegation that parish officers deliberately prevented poor people from settling in their parish were graphically dramatized many years later by Thomas Hardy in *Far From the Madding Crowd*.

In general, a person could circumvent the actions of overseers of the nature described by Burns and Defoe and establish legal residency (a) by being born in a parish; (b) by being hired within the parish for at least one year; i.e., the person had to work steadily at one job for at least one full year; (c) by serving an apprenticeship within the parish; (d) by paying parish rates (presupposing that anyone who could contribute towards the parish rates would not himself be likely to seek relief); or (e) in the case of a woman, by marrying a man in the parish who already had a settlement. (One can see the complexity and serious ramifications of this law if one examines the case of a widow who remarries. If she lived in parish A where she bore children by her first husband, upon her marriage she would become a legal resident of parish B, if her new husband was a legal resident there. Those children under seven would be allowed to be with her, even if she received parish aid. However, as soon as the children that were born in parish A reached seven, they would be returned to that parish if the mother was still receiving parish assistance or if she
required it then. The act included literally hundreds of provisions for all sorts of cases, providing for bastards, servants who became pregnant by their masters, married men and women, etc.). Persons not covered by the above-mentioned provisions could in theory gain a settlement by other means, for example, by serving as a public official, such as a church-warden or overseer; by giving notice in writing, after forty days in a parish, that they intended to settle and establish legal residency; or by renting a lodging, the rent of which had to be at least ten pounds yearly (presupposing again that anyone who could afford to pay such rent would not likely be a recipient of parish relief). Technically, then, every one had a right to assistance, but in one parish only. And that parish had to be the one in which he qualified as a legal resident according to one of the above cited provisions of the Act of Settlement and Removal (1662).¹

The consequences of this one act cannot be over-stated, for the Act of Settlement and Removal not only affected the character, habit and daily life of every English laborer but also affected the economic character of England for many years thereafter. As Aschrott observed, because a "few wealthy landlords were desirous of lessening the burden of their own rates," not enough time was given for discussion of this act by

¹Shaw, pp. 110-19, 209. See also Carter, pp. 62-63.
"either parliament or public opinion." As a consequence, he adds, many workmen were forced to stay in a parish where they were neither wanted nor needed, where they could not even make a subsistence wage. Even if work was available for them in another area and even if they were willing to uproot their lives and go to the new area, they were by this one act prevented from doing so. Hence, many men ended up on parish rolls that would not have done so if there had been no law preventing their mobility.¹ The consequences of this act, moreover, were soon felt. Writing about 1688, Roger North remarked:

Surely it is a great imprisonment, if not slavery, to a poor family to be under such restraint by law that they must always live in one place, whether they have friends, employment, or not, or however they might mend their condition by moving . . . ;

and further added:

The poor are imprisoned in their town and chained down to their wants, so that they are deprived of means to mend their condition, but if any chance to move for experiment they are sent back and tossed from pillar to post in carts, till they return to their old settled misery again. No town willingly receives a poor man, though they want poor people to do the ordinary works of husbandry, because they say his family may become a charge to the parish. . . . ²

¹Aschrott, pp. 9-12. See also Macky, pp. 125-24.

²A Discourse of the Poor... (London, 1753), as cited in Macky, pp. 123-24. See Chapter Two, p. 105, note 2 below. According to the Webbs, at Cambridge, for example, between 1699-1715, 162 people were removed, only 17 of which were single men; between 1716-1732, 209 were removed. In Middlesex, between 1690-98, 212 were removed, and between 1699-1709, 265 (English Poor Law History, VII, 341-42; see also pp. 312-30, 348).
And writing almost one hundred years later, in a most famous passage, Adam Smith, in his *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, commented on the evils that were still attached to the act. He concluded that:

To remove a man who has committed no misdemeanour from the parish where he chooses to reside is an evident violation of natural liberty and justice. The common people of England, however, so jealous of their liberty, but like the common people of most other countries never rightly understanding wherein it consists, have now for more than a century together suffered themselves to be exposed to this oppression without a remedy. . . . There is scarce a poor man in England of forty years of age, I will venture to say, who has not in some part of his life, felt himself most cruelly oppressed by this ill-conceived law of settlements.¹

Therefore, even though this act was introduced during the reign of Charles II, the basic substance of the law, according to Aschrott, remained unchanged until 1785.² In the interim it was only reinforced by other acts, such as the act of 1722. By this act parishes were empowered to collectively or individually establish a workhouse without a special act of parliament that had been requisite prior to this date. The Act of 1722 also allowed several parishes to group together, even if they lay in different counties. It additionally and more importantly gave parish officers the right to farm out the poor to contractors, who paid so much per head to the overseer.


²Aschrott, p. 12.
or churchwarden of the parish. The contractor, in turn, was supposed to take care of the needs of his workers. This act gave great impetus to the workhouse movement; and after 1723, by making all relief dependent upon entry into a workhouse, the poor came to be banded together, segregated apart from the rest of society. Young and old, lazy and industrious, sick and well, men and women, innocent and corrupt, able and impotent—all were herded together. And this act was further strengthened by 17 George II. c. 5, which was passed in 1744.1

To begin to comment upon all acts2 relevant to this study that were passed even during Defoe's lifetime subsequent to 43 Eliz. c. 2. would not only be tedious but redundant. However, by way of summary, certain points should be noted. First, with the interference of the State in the province of

1Shaw, p. 116. See Chapter Two below.

2Shaw wisely divides the statutes into two groups, namely, those laws relating to the poor who were willing to work but were not able (p. 116):

43 El. c. 2.; 1 Jac. c. 25.; 7 Jac. c. 3.; 3 Car. I. c. 4.; 13 and 14 Car. II. c. 12.; 1 Jac. II. c. 17.; 3 and 4 W. and M. c. 11.; 9 and 10 W. III. c. 11.; 2 Ann. c. 6.; 4 and 6 Ann. c. 19.; 12 Ann. c. 18.; 5 G. I. c. 8.; and 9 G. I. c. 7;

and those relating to the poor who were not willing to work but were able:

5 El. c. 4.; 18 El. c. 3.; 7 Jac. I. c. 3. and 4.; 21 Jac. I. c. 27.; 3 Car. I. c. 4.; 13 and 14 Car. II. c. 24.; 10 and 11 W. III. c. 11.; 11 and 12 W. III. c. 18.; 1 Ann. c. 13.; 5 Ann. c. 32.; 12 Ann. c. 32.; and 5 G. I. c. 19.
poor relief after the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, legislation tended to be "purely negative in character." That is, it took the "form of measures, not for the benefit of the poor, but for the repression of mendicancy."¹ Second, under Elizabeth, there was a clear alteration in public opinion regarding the poor. This alteration in attitude is reflected in the various acts passed within her reign, and it became more and more pronounced as the century advanced. For example, between the years 1555 and 1563, licences to beg were freely given throughout all English parishes. Yet, by the Act of 1572, it was expressly forbidden for justices to grant licences to anyone to beg within a parish unless it was an extreme emergency. Moreover, there was even a penalty of 20 s. that could be imposed on anyone dispensing private alms. This last part of the act resulted in confusion, and was ignored by some citizens because they were at the same time being taught that the giving of charity was favored by God. Hence, to them, charity was a religious matter. Moreover, the acts passed during the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI which directed the populace to give alms for the poor were still in effect. Nevertheless, the intent of the act seems to have been that if almsgiving could be suppressed, all begging would end. It would seem that begging was by this time looked upon with disfavor, by the legislators, who usually reflected public

¹Aschrott, pp. 1, 4-5, 14.
opinion. Certainly, the act was the first that specifically tried to discourage begging and the giving of alms to beggars privately. The passage of 43 Eliz. in 1601 "formally admitted" that, on the one hand, begging and private almsgiving had not been suppressed, and on the other that a system of poor relief that depended on voluntary charity as directed by the earlier acts was inadequate to handle the growing number of poor.¹ And with the subsequent passage of 14 Car. II. c. 12., poor relief was henceforth intimately tied up with one's domicile. This law not only made the parish liable for the poor within its own boundary, as did the 43 Eliz. and earlier laws, but it went further and limited the responsibility of the parish to caring only for those poor who were qualified legal residents of the parish. All others were to be sent back to the parish of their birth or the parish in which they had a legal settlement. "The duty of relief in case of destitution was thus made dependent upon domicile. As such, the Law of Settlement and Removal constituted an essential part of the relief system."²

Next, as a deterrent to mendicancy, the poor relief system implemented especially following the Restoration (for, as Macky notes, from 1601 until after the Civil War, the 43 Eliz. was

¹Hufton, p. 303.

²Aschrott, p. 110. See also pp. 114-21 for a resume of all the various provisions of the Law of Settlement and Removal.
"but slightly operative"\(^1\) was based on three interrelated principles: (a) the right to receive relief had to be given; i.e., the poor man had to know that theoretically he was secure against starvation, regardless of the cause of his destitution; (b) poor relief had to be restricted to the minimum required to sustain life; it was antithetical to the philosophy of the age for anyone to even consider the possibility that the condition of a necessitous pauper should be in any respect equal to or better than the condition of the independent, industrious, hard-working poor (yet such was the case often times, according to critics of the poor laws\(^2\)); and (c) it was essential to associate the receipt of relief with such drawbacks that the poor would be induced to avoid seeking aid if it were at all within their means to do so. As Aschrott has said, the first of these principles was the "duty of a civilized State"; the second was only fair to the tax payer, especially the poor tax payer; and the last a necessity for any state that was "conscious of its duty as regards social reforms."\(^3\) Finally, as a remedy for the problem of the growing number of poor and the consequent rising rates, the poor law system had more defects than virtues, and, despite the good intentions of many

\(^1\)Macky, pp. 121-22.

\(^2\)See below.

\(^3\)Aschrott, pp. 129-30.
men, was more of a failure than a success. One cannot deny that the impotent and aged poor were legally provided for, yet such provisions fell short even by eighteenth century standards. Also the Act of 1722, the Workhouse Test Act, can be considered a success—if one looks only at the poor rates—for the rates in several parishes appreciably declined after the enactment of this law.\(^1\) But the cost to the poor cannot be reckoned. On the other side of the ledger, however, the defects in the poor law relief system are more striking: "conflict of jurisdiction, neglect of the law ordering registers and accounts, want of uniformity and incorporation, inefficiency of the overseers, prevalence of 'party-jobs and private views,' and certain signs of a sentimental wave."\(^2\) And because of inherent weakness in the poor laws, they drew much criticism.

Among those who criticized the poor laws was Chief Justice Matthew Hale, who, writing in 1683, felt that their cardinal defect lay in their vagueness, that is, in the lack of

\(^1\)The poor rate, as indicated above, was in 1698 £819,000; by 1750 it had decreased to £619,000. Yet Sir Frederick Morton Eden points out that a great part of this decline can be attributed to the fact that, because workhouses were so odious to the poor, the deserving as well as the undeserving alike, many who had previously sought and received assistance no longer did so (The State of the Poor, Or, A History of the Labouring Classes in England from the Conquest to the Present Period . . . (London, 1797), I, 285). See also Chapter Three below.

\(^2\)Traill, V, 179. For Defoe's views of these defects, see Chapter Two below.
precise language. He felt particularly that the description of such as rogues, vagabonds, the idle and disorderly was "very uncertain in reference to such Persons." He concluded that such vagueness left "the Justices with either too much or too little power." Hale further noted that when the poor were sent to a house of correction, most often there was no employment for them or the wages they received were so small in return for their efforts, that they came to "hate Employment as a hell than to Entertain it as a means of a confortable Support." Thus, although the laws may have been "fit or just" for those who were able to work and could get it if they had wished, he concluded they were not fit or just for those who were idle because they could not get work. Richard Dunning, fifteen years later, also criticized the poor laws, charging that they were responsible for increasing the number of poor who were on the parish rolls in that many times a common laborer could get three times as much from the parish than he could get from working. Dunning further charged that many poor after once receiving relief simply refused to work again even when work was available. Although this statement must be read cautiously, for Dunning was outraged by the high cost of supporting the poor, there is probably more than a kernal of truth in his allegations. And at mid-century, one finds Alcock

1Hale, pp. 10-11.
2As cited in Trevelyan, p. 278.
repeating Hale's earlier criticism of the vagueness of the laws being a contributory factor to the problem. He felt that the laws handicapped those who were charged with dispensing the poor relief. As he said:

In the first Place it is difficult in many Cases to determine, who are real Paupers, or proper Objects of Parish Charity. . . . The Idle, the Bold, the Impudent are always most forward to offer themselves, and most clamourous for Relief; while the bashful Poor, the really distressed, keep aloof, and almost starve in Silence, and are ashamed and afraid to open their Mouths for Charity, and come a begging. No law can define who are, or who are not properly Paupers. . . .

But Alcock believed that those who outwardly had the appearance of being destitute, that is, "all Nastiness, Poverty, and Rags," deserved "Chastisement rather than Charity, as having brought themselves into Distress by their Vices and Wickedness." Hence, one can see that to Alcock to be idle was to be vicious and to be vicious was to be idle. Consequently, his sympathy was reserved for the many poor housekeepers, tradesmen, small lease-holders, and renters, who, even though subject to adversity such as a sick wife or a "long Train of Children, or other Accidents and Misfortunes," were denied the benefits of the poor laws. In fact, he points out it was these worthy poor who were "oblig'd" to pay towards the "Maintenance of Persons that [were] much less in want then Themselves." Like Dunning, Alcock also felt that the poor laws directly contributed to the increase in the number of poor on relief; for with those who lacked moral character, the incentive or motive to work was
greatly "weakened, when a Man [had] the Prospect of Parish Pay to rely on in Case of future Wants or Misfortunes..." In short, he complained, "Men labour less and spend more, and the very Law that provides for the Poor, makes Poor."¹

If Defoe had been alive in 1752 when Alcock published his work, he would, no doubt, have agreed with many of his remarks. Like Alcock, Defoe would have reserved his sympathy for the industrious, real poor. He also would have sympathized with those industrious, hard-working poor who "fared hard," who had to support the idle, unworthy poor by their taxes. Unlike Alcock, however, Defoe, in his defense of the deserving poor, would not have concentrated on defects in the poor laws. On the whole, he felt that England had the best laws that were the worst managed of any nation. Instead, he would have concentrated his attack on the caliber of those parish administrators who were legally—and morally charged with caring for the deserving poor, focusing on their "sins" of omission as well as commission. For this is exactly what he did throughout his adult life.

I have always desir'd to make this Paper Useful to two purposes among many others; 1. To inform the Prejudic'd and Ignorant; 2. To Vindicate and Defend oppress'd Innocence; and both these are best done, by setting Truth in a clear Light, that indifferent and impartial Men may judge for themselves. . . .

Review (Vol. VIII, No. 168; Sat., April 19, 1712), Fasc. Bk. 21, p. 673.

CHAPTER II

PAROCHIAL TYRANNY

In spite of inherent weaknesses in the poor laws, such as those noted in the previous chapter, Daniel Defoe, like many of his contemporaries, came to feel that had the laws been

1For example, in 1679 Sir Josiah Childs said that it was not the poor laws but the administration of them that was defective, and that these administrators had failed to "sufficiently maintain the impotent" or "employ the indigent" as they were directed by law to do (as cited in Ruggles, I, 148). And in 1725, Samuel Carter too asserted that "it must be confess'd we have now excellent laws relating to the Poor, were they duly executed, and the Execution thereof well encourag'd and rewarded . . . (pp. iv-v). Furthermore, Gonzales, a Portuguese visitor to England in 1730, pointed out that "The legislature has provided an abundance of excellent laws for the maintenance of the Poor, and . . . yet by indolent management few nations are more burdened with them, there not being many countries where the Poor are in a worse condition" (cited in Basil Williams, "The Whig Supremacy, 1714-1760," in The Oxford History of England, 2nd ed., rev. C. H. Stuart; General Editor, George Clarke [Oxford, 1962], XI, 130). Another writer in 1738 anonymously assigned in his list of causes for the increase of the poor "the corruption [and] negligence in Magistrates and Under-Officers. . ." (An Enquiry into the Causes . . . of the Poor, pp. 2-3). And still in 1744 one finds another anonymous writer complaining that although English poor laws were in
properly managed by men who were both morally and educationally qualified, the effects of the weaknesses in the laws could have been mitigated, if not overcome. According to 27 H. VIII. c. 25 and all subsequent poor laws, the responsibility for caring for the poor was left to each individual parish.¹ Although data for the period prior to 1776 is not entirely reliable and by no means complete (thus one must rely for the most part on contemporary pamphleteers, who were not without their own biases, and on what records, such as the Bills of Mortality that are available),² there were some attempts made to arrive at population figures and at the total expenditure of poor relief. For example, Shaw estimated there were in England in the 1740s approximately fifteen thousand parishes that varied in size and the number of inhabitants.³ In each parish were

their intention an "Honour to the Legislature that formed them," they were "most grossly abused..." (A Short View of Frauds... [London, 1745], p. 5).

¹ According to Shaw, a parish "Collectively taken may be defined to be a Body of People living within a certain District, to which belongs a Parish Church, with a Right of Burial, and of having the holy sacraments duly administered there, with a Right of Tithes, and other Church Dues, and of making Parish Rates, and choosing their own Parish Officers, &c. which Officers, with the Incumbents, by Order of the Vestry, have the Direction and Management of all the Parish Affairs and Business" (p. 7).

² Sidney and Beatrice Webb, English Poor Law History: Part I: The Old Poor Law Law in English Local Government (London, 1963), VII, 132. See also The Parish and the County, I, 29.

³ Shaw, p. 7. See Webb's, The Parish and the County, I, 14.
elected the following officials: church-wardens (who were at the same time overseers), over-seers of the poor, a surveyor of highways, and a constable. These officials were under the jurisdiction of the local justice of the peace or magistrate, who could act in their place if they should, for any reason whatsoever, fail to perform their duties which, as well as their powers, were spelled out in the poor laws.\(^1\) All too often, thought Defoe, not only did parochial officers fail to perform their duties but also abused the powers given them, which was detrimental to the deserving poor. And one of the chief ways in which they abused their inordinate powers was in the area of taxation.

In his concern for the deserving poor, Defoe in 1717 launched an attack on what he felt were unjust tax practices of parish officers. Ironically enough, the principal burden of parish taxes fell not upon the rich but upon the hard-working poor.\(^2\) As stipulated in 43 Eliz., parish officers were empowered:

```
... to raise weekly, or otherwise, (by taxation of every inhabitant, Parson, Vicar, and other, and of every Occupier of Land, Houses, and in such competent Sums of Money as they shall think fit) a convenient Stock, ... to set the Poor on Work: And also competent Sums of Money for and towards the necessary Relief of the Lame, Impotent, Old, Blind, and such other among them, being Poor and not able to work. ... \(^3\)
```

\(^1\)Webbs, *The Parish and the County*, I, 14.


\(^3\)A Short View of Frauds..., pp. 3-4.
According to these provisions, the same officials who were to assess and collect the parish rates on lands, houses, and (supposedly) on personal property, i.e., on stock-in-trade, were also to dispense parish relief. It was precisely this double function of raising monies they alone were authorized to disburse that spelled danger and injustice to Defoe. These taxes he called "an insupportable Weight," stating that "Many Families, who were able to subsist before, have been suck/ed under/by the Pressure, and have been forc'd to give up, Dissolving into beggary which in a Word, speaking of Families, is Destruction and Dissolution; and this proves the Word insupportable to be most Just...." As a result of these

1One-fifth of parish revenue came from the land tax, but it was assessed with "ridiculous unfairness." From 1717-1721, the land tax was 3 s. in the L.; in 1722 it decreased to 2 s.; in 1727 it increased to 4 s.; in 1728-29, 3 s.; in 1730, 2 s. (Traill, V, 139, 160).

2Tax on houses was paid by renters, not by landlords. In addition rates varied from parish to parish (George, p. 80). See below.

3Although the land tax was originally supposed to have been on personal property, i.e., on stock-in-trade, as well as on land, the stock-in-trade of merchants, professional men, shopkeepers, as well as that of yeomen and small farmers usually escaped. See Traill, IV, 718-19; V, 160. Also see below.

4Fair Payment No Spunge, pp. 3-5. Defoe does not give more information concerning the amount of these "insupportable" taxes other than to say that if the land tax, then rated at 4 s. in the pound (Traill says 3 s. for this period) had been collected on a uniform basis and been well managed, the rate could have been lowered to 2 s. in the pound, and he thought two million more pounds could have been collected than then was. The rate was, however, so disproportionate that some poor, he
unfair tax practices, many families were brought to misery.

The crux of the matter lay in the interpretation by the parish administrators of the clause in 43 Eliz. which stated "as they shall think fit." Although the obvious intent of the law was that sums should be raised only when necessary and only to the extent necessary to care for the poor, that clause "as they shall think fit," became in effect an elastic clause which was stretched to the utmost, not for the benefit of the many, the poor, but for that of the few, the parish administrators. "It is shameful," declared Defoe, "to think what Taxes are paid where there are but few Poor, except the notes, paid 4 s. while other rich "Gentlemen" only paid 16 d. in the pound, and in some places the poor were paying as much as 4s. 6d. in the pound. He also reminds his readers that it was the renter, not the landlord, that had to bear the burden of this tax (Ibid., pp. 66-68). According to Braddon, who also published his treatise in 1717, the parish rate was then £900,000 (See Chapter One, p. 24, n. 1). Besides the fact that there was no one uniform rate for all parishes, there also was no one centralizing authority which made a record of the yearly rate charged by each parish. Therefore, the only evidence available concerning rates and taxes comes from what parish records are available, and these were not accurately kept, and from the works of contemporary writers. However, according to Marshall, the original intent of 43 Eliz. and other poor laws seems to have been that each parishioner was to pay according to his ability. But "Rent became, at an early date, a rough calculation on which it was possible to base a tax that in theory depended on ability to pay." Besides the tax on rent, land, and on stock-in-trade, all were charged a window and hearth tax, which especially were pernicious (Marshall, pp. 73-74, 79-80, 82; see below). Because of the inequities in the taxes, Defoe concluded that "a review of this scandalous Inequality would be a Work worthy of a Parliament that desir'd to be recorded for the Deliverers of their Country from insuperable Debts. . ." (Fair Payment No Spunge, p. 68).
Church-Wardens, &c. who grow rich at the Parish Charge, and
fatten themselves with what they extort from the Parish. . . ."
He therefore questioned, "Why should these Parish Tyrants tax
us at random, and make it penal to be industrious. . . ?" As
he was so quick to point out, the king could not levy taxes to
raise money without the consent of the Lords and Commons, nor
could they in turn tax without the consent of the Crown. Yet
the "Parish Tyrants" had much more arbitrary power. They could
"assess, reassess, and distress at Pleasure," and thus

the Wealthy cry out and think themselves oppress'd,
the Middling People are put backward in their Endeavors
to thrive, and the Meaner Sort are squeez'd to the last
Drop; insomuch that those who are not poor stand fair
to be made so, and those who are poor may be sure to
continue so to their Lives End . . . .1

In this quotation one can see Defoe's skill as a rhetorician,
for he deliberately chooses his words for their evocative
power, words and phrases like "cry out," "Oppress'd,"
"Squeez'd to the last Drop." Defoe implies that the oppressive
power of the parish officials was like the great stones of a
wine press, and the poor were the grapes beneath them being
"squeez'd to the last Drop." The effect of these taxes then
was to drain the life's blood from the people.

As noted before, the stock of merchants and tradesmen,
in principle, was to be assessed as well as land and houses.
However, it was virtually impossible, remarks Chief Justice

1Ibid., pp. 4-5, 2.
Hale, for the former to be taxed mainly because of a
"Gentleman's agreement" that existed between parish officials
and the merchants and tradesmen. The Chief Justice further
noted:

Because those places, where there are most Poor, con­
sist for the most part of Tradesmen, whose Estates
lie principally in their Stock, which they will not
endure to be searched into to make them contributory
to raise any considerable stock for the Poor, nor
indeed so much as to the ordinary Contributions:
But they lay all the rates to the Poor upon Rents of
Lands and Houses, which alone without the help of the
stocks are not able to raise a stock for the Poor,
although it is very plain that Stocks are as well by
the Law rateable as Lands, both to the relief and
raising a stock for the Poor.¹

Besides stock-in-trade not being taxed, "salaries, fees, and
wages" of the laborer and artisans were also omitted when any
estimate of one's ability to pay the parish rate was considered,
partly because of the difficulty of collecting from such
persons, and partly because weekly or yearly wages of such
industrious poor were so small that it was pointless to assess
them.² In most cases, they were part of that group Defoe calls
the "real Poor," who needed or received some kind of assistance
themselves.

In comparison with the tenant, however, the landlord,
who, Defoe notes, was "indeed able to pay,"³ certainly

¹Hale, pp. 20-21, 7. See also Carter, pp. 16-17.
²Marshall, p. 80.
³Parochial Tyranny, p. 3.
received benefits not given to the tenant. For example, if a landlord resided in the parish where he owned property but rented his lands out to a tenant, the taxes were not charged to him but to his tenant. In addition, if the landowner owned property in parishes other than the one in which he resided, whether he leased the property or not, he was not taxed for the property. Moreover, land values were based on "yearly Value and Quality thereof, and not by the Quantity or Content; and the natural Value, not as it is improv'd or impair'd." Then too, because the tenant was taxed for the property he rented, the rents received by the landowner were not taxed. The parish officers, many landlords themselves, thought that taxing the rents would have been double taxation. As one can see, all the advantages were definitely weighted on the side of the propertied, and not on the side of the poor tenant who was being "squeeze'd by the Parish Harpies." It appears that those

1 Carter, pp. 20-21.

2 Parochial Tyranny, p. 3; see also Fair Payment No Spunge. In 1738 the anonymous author of The Enquiry into the Causes of the Encrease and Miseries of the Poor . . . (Cf. footnote 1, p. 48 above) reiterated Defoe's arguments: "Now, as Nature dictates to every one the Principle of Self-Preservation, it is natural for every Person, if, of Himself, and another, ONE must suffer, to shift off, if he can, the suffering Part, from himself, to his Neighbour. Hence, too many of our Landed Men have found out the Way, to make their Tenants Bear the Burthen, which was originally designed to lie upon themselves, by raising the Fines and Rents upon their Estate; through Means of which, Tenants are forced to pay a double share of Taxes, (viz.) their own; having no Underlings on whom they can shift it off, and their Landlords, in the Advancement of their Fines and Rents. . .," for which they were also taxed (pp. 13-14).
that levied the parish taxes were unable or unwilling to see
that if the rent paid by the tenant to the landlord was a just
and adequate measure of his ability to contribute towards the
care of the deserving poor, so was the rent received by the
landlord an adequate measure of his. But the tax paid on
rents, as indicated above, was only a small portion of a
tenant's tax problem.

Although the tenant and the landlord both had to pay a
"Window Light" tax, there were many other taxes they had to
pay, which, in proportion to their ability to pay, fell hardest
on the industrious poor. These taxes were: "the Parson's
Rate, the Church-Rate, the Over-Rate, or Superfluous and
Extravagant-Rate, the Scavenger-Rate, the Sewer-Rate, the
Watch, the Highways, the Orphans (if in the City), the Trophies,
and other Rates without Number."3

1 E. Cannan, The History of Local Rates in England

The window tax was originally imposed in 1696. People
were assessed on the basis of how many windows their place of
lodging, rented or owned, had; on the size of the windows; and
on their location, e.g., windows facing the street were assessed
at a higher rate than those that faced the back or another
building. This tax caused many owners to board up windows to
escape paying. In 1710 an owner whose building had from 20 to
30 windows paid 10s.; if more than 30, he paid 20s. As Traill
remarks, this tax, repealed in 1851, did not raise large sums
of money, but was responsible, in addition to being a hardship
on the poor, for condemning "a growing population to insuffi-
cient air and light (V, 159, 580; IV, 718). See also George,
p. 77. J. Tucker, in 1760, noted that people should have been
rated 2d. per house and 2d. per window (Manifold Causes of the
Increase of the Poor [Gloucester, 1760], p. 14). Tucker also
wanted to charge ale-houses and all other places of entertain-
ment 4d. at least.

3 Parochial Tyranny, p. 3.
Defoe was always a realist, and he knew that, like death, taxes were inevitable. However, because they were unequally applied, he felt that they were most unjust, and thus he championed the cause of the deserving, industrious poor, the principal victims of this injustice. In *Fair Payment No Spunge*, Defoe not only argues that the taxes imposed by the parish were unfair to the poor, but that the excise taxes upon the necessities of life, e.g., coal, salt, leather, candles, and soap, were just as unfair to them. It is significant that his concluding remarks concerning these excise taxes apply equally to what he has said earlier in the pamphlet concerning the taxes imposed by the parish officials:

... in the laying of Taxes, this is True, tho' perhaps not a regularly determin'd Observation; when Land is Tax'd, the Rich pay more than the Poor; but when the Product of Land is tax'd, the Poor pay more than the Rich. ... A Tax upon Provisions then is equal, literally speaking, to the Poor, as to the Rich, but very unequal, in Proportion to their Capacity of paying it. ... This is in England, where we pretend to value ourselves upon making the Common People Easy, Free, and their Lives comfortable, where we have always been used to say the Poor paid nothing, where the Commons [the poor] have their Liberties, and claim to be well used; where Equality in taxing is boasted of, as the Care of the Publick, and everyone is made able to pay what is Demanded of them. Equalities cease to merit their Name, when, whatever their Appearance may be, they press harder upon one part than another. But what shall we say to those things which under the title of Equalities press hardest upon those who are least able to bear them, and pass those by who are really incapable of being Oppress'd by them? The Rich feel none of those Taxes by which the Poor are made miserable. ... 1

---

1 *Fair Payment No Spunge*, pp. 61, 62-63.
It is important to see that Defoe here, as elsewhere, not only pleads for mercy or compassion, but he also demands justice for the poor.

Not only were the poor made miserable by the unequal assessments of parish taxes and the tax benefits given to the landlords, but also by the power given to newly elected parish officers to levy their own rates once they assumed office. Thus, with each new administration, the parish rates went higher. To compound the problem, because 43 Eliz. stated that churchwardens were also to be overseers, these men consequently had the power to "... make Rates in their single Capacity of Churchwardens and ... [to] make unnecessary and exorbitant Rates as Overseers of the Poor. ... ."¹ In addition, although they had the power to levy new rates at their own discretion, there was no provision in the law to force them to dispense funds left over from the previous administration. They could either do it or not do as it suited them. If they chose not to, provided that there was a surplus, that is, the poor needing assistance suffered until taxes were rated and collected and dispensed according to the new rates. Furthermore, as if to rub salt into an open wound, the law stipulated that these officials could "out of that [tax money collected] retain enough to pay themselves."² Tanny's Case, Hil. 2.

¹Carter, p. 27.
²Ibid.
In addition to his charge of the inordinate use of power on the part of the parish officials, Defoe also charged them with inefficiency at best and corruption at worst; that is, he felt that the records of their transactions concerning the collections and disbursements of tax monies were, to be charitable, inexact. Against their ineptitude and corruption he became quite vocal:

Were the Poor to have the Money collected, and the Parishioners satisfy'd it was rightly apply'd, it would not be a Matter of such Complaint, but for them to collect what they think fit, to distribute it as they think fit, and give what Accompt they think fit, is intolerable: This makes their Partiality most evident, Loading some, and Excusing others; whereas, were all to have Neighbour's Fare, that is to say, to pay according to their several Rents, it would not fall to 0/ heavy on those who do pay: For if one is excused out of three, the Burthen must consequently fall heavier on the other two. . . .

And, of course, the one excused was a landowner, a friend, or someone whose vote was bought by the official, while the other two were the poor who struggled even to survive.

1 For example, the anonymous author of A Short View of Frauds... (see footnote 3, p. 50 above) wrote that these parish wardens often marked a parishioner as having paid his taxes, though in reality he did not, in exchange for his vote. If the person did not make enough money to qualify him as a voter, they falsified this too, for they "were mark'd as having paid, to a pretended Church Rate, if made but for One Penny in the Pound, that they may be qualified to vote the same Persons into Office again, or, at least, others of the same Confederacy, which amounts to the same Thing..." (p. 18).

2 Parochial Tyranny, pp. 7-8.
The trouble with the accounts, Defoe said, stemmed from two practices of the parish officials. One was that although they did keep some records, these records never gave any specific information. As he said, they never went beyond indicating that someone "spent such a Day," or gave "such and such a sum to a poor person, without saying to whom...," and yet, he protested, "these Accompts are pass'd, and the same Game still continues to go on in opposition to all Truth and Common Reason." The other practice involved the alteration of the books. That is, when a poor person paid his taxes to the Crown, he was given a receipt. But when he paid his taxes to the parish officers, they "gave no other Satisfaction for [his] Payment, than crossing the Book with a Pencil, which was rubb'd out with a Piece of Bread at Pleasure, and [he was] oblig'd to pay over again." Sometimes these officials made duplicates of whole sets of books for the parish, and collected the same rate all over again.¹

The corruption exemplified above did not stem solely from the fact that the parish books could be altered at will and tax receipts were not given; more importantly, until the enactment of 17 G. II. c. 3.² in 1727, parish records were not

¹Ibid., pp. 14, 7.

²According to 17 G. II. c. 3., it was enacted: "That the Churchwardens and Overseers, or other persons authorized to take care of the Poor, in every Parish, township, or place, shall give, or cause to be given, public notice in the church
open to public inspection. Consequently, no one knew exactly how much was collected and from whom, or how much was paid out and to whom. Why, Defoe asks,

...are not their Books open to general Inspection that we may see by whom the Money is paid, to whom it is paid, and whether any is left to be carried on to another Quarter, and lessen the succeeding Charge: This would be fair Dealing, and I think, reasonable Satisfaction to be given us for our Money ...1

It should not be forgotten, however, that these officials were called upon by law before 1727 to render an accounting of all their official transactions during their term of office; in fact, the 43 Eliz. (and all subsequent acts) specifically

of every rate for the relief of the poor, allowed by the justices of the peace, the next Sunday after the same shall have been so allowed; and that no rate shall be deemed or reputed valid and sufficient, as to collect and raise the same, unless such notice shall have been given." Furthermore, it stipulated that "There shall be kept in every parish, at the Parish Charge, a Book or Books, wherein the Names of Persons receiving Collections shall be register'd, with the Time when they are first admitted to have Relief, and the Occasion of the Necessity: And Yearly in Easter Week, or oftener, the Parishioners shall meet and have such Books produc'd before them, and the Persons receiving Collections shall be call'd, and the Reasons of their taking Relief examin'd, and a new list be made and enter'd of such as they shall think fit to allow to receive Collections; and no other shall be allow'd to receive Collections, but by the Authority under the Hand of a Justice of Peace residing in the Parish; and ... the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor, or other authorized as aforesaid, in every parish, township, or place, shall permit all and every Inhabitants of the said parish, township, or place, to inspect every such rate at all seasonable times, paying one shilling for the same; and shall upon demand forthwith give copies of the same, or any part thereof, to any Inhabitant of the said parish, township, or place, paying at the rate of sixpence for every twenty-four names..." (Cited in Carter, pp. 103-04).

1Parochial Tyranny, p. 7.
stipulated that, besides the levying of taxes, the churchwardens and overseers were to render an accounting to two justices of the peace of the sums they received as well as those levied but not necessarily collected. They also were to indicate what stock was remaining and if there was a surplus, and how much, that was to be turned over to their successors. These are precisely the points Defoe asks about. In addition, 43 Eliz. provided for penalties to be exacted upon those officials who failed in their duty in any way. For example, if they failed to give the account they were required by law to give every year after Easter, either because of absenteeism, i.e., failure to attend the annual meeting, or because of negligence, a token fine of twenty shillings could be given them. Moreover, if they persisted in their refusal to submit an accounting of their transactions, on the authorization of two justices, they could be sent to jail where they would be held without bail. If, on the other hand, they were found guilty of submitting a false statement, their estates could be confiscated, sold, and the money turned back to the parish.¹ (Dalton 154. Dom Rex. versus Carrock, 4 W. & M. B.R.) In view of Defoe's charges, 

¹ Carter, pp. 12-15. The Act of 1691, 3 W. & M. c. 11, however, only required that the account books be shown to the Vestry. The vestrymen were to then make up a new list of worthy recipients for the forthcoming year, stating what amount each was to receive. This gave the vestrymen, many churchwardens, great power (Aschrott, p. 14). See also Webbs, The Parish and the County, I, 30-31.
it would seem that these penalties were seldom imposed, for the justices usually left the parish officers alone. Besides, what good are penalties, Defoe asked, if no one knows whether a true account has been submitted or not.\textsuperscript{1}

That the law was imprecise and admitted of many loopholes, Defoe was the first to admit. However, if the character of the officials involved had been of a different cast, he doubts whether the corruption that was rife would have occurred to the extent that it did. The intent of 43 \textit{Eliz.} and all the poor laws was that "only substantial inhabitants, and Persons duly qualified," were to be elected. Thus, at the time of the enactment of 43 \textit{Eliz.}, only those whose abilities and characters qualified them were generally nominated by the justices of the peace and elected by the voting members of the parish. At the time the act was drawn up,

\textit{\ldots it was not then properly consider'd, that when so large and constant a pecuniary Trust was vested, Men of the least Abilities and worst Principles would be tempted to obtain the Office of Churchwarden; \ldots} [\textit{that} their lesser occupations would more than double in Number the greater, and consequently their votes be vastly more numerous \ldots; that the meaner Parishioners can always compliment one another with the Office of Churchwarden, that they may be complimented with it in Turn \ldots.}\textsuperscript{2}

And because of this lack of foresight on the part of Elizabethan legislators, Defoe was able to say that "Rogue succeeds Rogue."

\textsuperscript{1}Farochial Tyranny, pp. 7-8.

\textsuperscript{2}A Short View of Frauds. \ldots, pp. 2-3.
According to law, all of the following came to be exempt from serving in the capacity of churchwarden or overseer: all peers, clergymen, parliamentary members, the king's servants, lawyers and attorneys, physicians and surgeons, apothecaries, teachers, preachers of Dissenting congregations, registered seamen (even if not on actual duty) and all convicted of any felony, even those only convicted of stealing goods (if the goods was valued at more than five pounds).\(^1\) Thus, parish offices for the most part fell on those who were the "least responsible members of the population."\(^2\) And in light of the exceptions noted above, the justice in Defoe's allegation—that "Parish Harpies" generally were "impudent, illiterate, upstart Fellows, of much Leisure and little Business, who put themselves forward, while the more substantial, sensible and honest Part of the Parishioners, mind\(\text{ed}\) their own Business, too much to be ambitious of Parish Offices. . ."—is clearly seen. These offices afforded the ambitious many opportunities for corruption and fraud, and many officials became so

\(^1\)Shaw, p. 58. (Stat. 5 H. VIII. c. 6.; 32 H. VIII. c. 40.; 6 W. 3. c. 4.; I Ann. c. 11.; 10 Ann. c. 14.; 10 and 11 W. c. 3.).

\(^2\)Beatrice and Sidney Webb, The Parish and the County, I, 68-70. As a solution to the problem of having officers who were not qualified, many, such as Gray, proposed that only those whose income was annually 500\(\text{L}\) or more be allowed to serve. Gray felt that such men would be educated, and because of their wealth not likely to be morally corrupted. If such men were not willing to serve he thought they should be fined at least 20\(\text{L}\) (Maintenance of the Poor, p. 24).
"formidable by their Cabals" that they were "able to raise whole Parishes, to bring whole Communities under Contribution and enrich themselves with the Sweat of their Neighbour's Brow. . . ."¹ In fact, some parish officials were so corrupt and cunning, Defoe adds, that they went into business with "harlots and whoremongers," and received from them what is today known as a "kickback." Defoe's disgust and contempt can be seen as he questions: "I would fain ask by what Charter they hold this Hellish Commerce, and became the Devil's Brokers: Encouraging lewd Persons in their Sin, and making little better than Pimps of themselves, by Pocketing the Pence." Continuing, he angrily remarks, "this is a Trade no ways justifiable, and far below the character they would aggrandize to themselves. . . ."² As he has shown, there was a vast difference between the character they "would aggrandize to themselves" and that which they actually possessed.

In short, because of the unspecified and unlimited powers of the parish officers, because of the many loopholes in the law, and because of the character—or lack of character—of the parochial administrators, Defoe felt that they had too much power to "build, rebuild, alter, and pull down at Pleasure, without being call'd to Accompt."³ Instead of

¹Parochial Tyranny, p. 18.
²Ibid., pp. 19-20.
³Ibid., p. 10.
performing their cardinal duty to the deserving poor, that of
caring for their needs, these men took advantage of them by
misusing and abusing their inordinate powers to tax and also by
practicing other forms of corruption, all of which were most
unjust, and most unjust to the hardworking poor. And as Traill
has observed, "the arbitrary powers thus committed to
irresponsible and ill-qualified officials were destined before
the close of the century to manifest their disastrous results
to the full."¹ When officials were such that most could not
even read or write, and most could only make their mark, what
could one expect?²

Even though Defoe championed the cause of the deserving
poor, it must be pointed out that his concern for them was
typically that of the economist as well as that of the Puritan
humanitarian. Above all, Defoe was concerned that because of
the "insupportable Weight" of parish taxes, more of the hard-
working, industrious, honest poor would be forced to seek
parish relief, and thus they also would become economic
liabilities, instead of remaining economic assets. To Defoe,

¹Traill, V, 178.

²Marshall, p. 58. Marshall notes that not all official-
cials were corrupt; the "most to be said is that their circum-
stances did afford opportunities for fraud," of which too many,
thought Defoe, availed themselves. She concludes that the "law,
custom, and training alike conspired to make the administration
of the poor law, at best careless and extravagant, and at
worst full of loopholes for personal profit" (pp. 58, 60).
no matter how poor an individual was, he still had to buy food, clothing, pay for shelter; therefore, in his own small way, even the poorest of the poor contributed to the stability of England's economy. Consequently, Defoe saw the burden of heavy taxes not only as an injustice to the deserving poor but also as a danger to England:

It has been observ'd . . . that the Weight of the Taxes has principally fallen upon those of the People who live not on the Income of their real Estates, but on the precarious Fruit of their Daily Labour. . . . It is most just to say, that these are by far the most Numerous among the Inhabitants of Britain, and are the People who are in many Respects the Strength, the Life, and the Soul of the whole Body; like the Hands and the Feet to the Belly, by which it is filled, and the Body made Fat and Flourishing: As these are the Support of the Whole, so they should be the Care of the Whole, and the Nursing Fathers of the Commonwealth ought in more than ordinary Manner to show their Regard for them, and to be careful that they are not disabled, discouraged, and unhing'd from that Labour, and that Industry which is so Useful, so Profitable, and so Essential to the Commonwealth as to their own Families.¹

It is very typical of Defoe to pay his respect to labor, and to state that the welfare of the nation depended not on the state of the rich but on that of the industrious poor.

For the most part, Defoe's comments and criticisms in *Fair Payment No Spunge* and in *Parochial Tyranny* are quite general. However, he does offer a few suggestions. In regard to the power to levy taxes "as they shall think fit," and to the evils that resulted from the bookkeeping system that the parish officials used, Defoe thought the only effective recourse

¹ *Fair Payment No Spunge*, pp. 5-6.
would be to change the laws. Under the present system, the rates had tripled and the poor were worse off than ever before. He thus proposed that because "these cunning Vultures screen themselves behind old Laws, nothing but new Ones, and those more coercive, can restrain their unlimited Power and merciless Oppression."¹ He also suggested that instead of having a multiplicity of accounts and instead of permitting the parish officials to be solely responsible for the tax monies, a treasurer should be elected by all those who paid the parish rate. This treasurer would be responsible for the accuracy of the account books. Besides a treasurer, Defoe wanted a clerk to be hired, one who would have to "give security," and who would receive a salary "sufficient to engage his constant Attention." It would be his job to actually keep the records of all the monies collected and paid out. Moreover, his records were to be available to anyone in the parish at any time. In addition, Defoe proposed that a public notice be posted which would indicate what rate each parishioner was being charged. Not only would he know what he had to pay but what everyone else was paying as well. The responsibility for paying the taxes would then be up to the individual. He would have to pay the tax himself or make sure someone else did it for him. However, when the tax was paid, a receipt would be

¹Parochial Tyranny, p. 2.
given. But, if someone in a position to do so refused to pay his taxes, Defoe thought that he should be "punish'd by Fine, Imprisonment, or otherwise." Lastly, Defoe advised that monthly or quarterly meetings should be held at which time a full accounting of all the parish transactions would be given, instead of the yearly meeting the parishes did hold.¹

Even though these suggestions were quite general, and several points were incorporated into 17 G. II. c. 3., ² Defoe made several other recommendations in two works that were printed in the year after he wrote Parochial Tyranny and 17 G. II. c. 3. was enacted into law.³ In these works, he makes specific suggestions concerning particular tax situations. For example, in his opinion, not only was the scavenger tax fair but absolutely essential. However, Defoe would have preferred to have had that tax collected with the sewer tax, which he thought was "too much collected, too little paid out,"⁴ to cut down on the multiplicity of accounts. He also thought that too much of the money taken in to pay those men who patrolled the streets at night went into the private coffers of the parish

¹Ibid., pp. 28-29.
²See footnote 1, pp. 60-61 above.
³Street Robberies Consider'd . . . (London, 1728), and Second Thoughts Are Best (London, 1728).
⁴Street Robberies Consider'd . . . (London, 1728), pp. 58-60; see also Second Thoughts Are Best, pp. 8-9, 19-20.
officers. These watchers, as he says, were usually not of the best moral character and often were in the pay of the parish officials to whom they owed their jobs. Many times they got and kept their job in exchange for their vote when parish elections were held. These watchers often had to guard as many as four to five hundred houses—an impossible task—for which they received from the parish as little as six pence per night, or 9l.2s.6d. yearly. But Defoe charges that the parish collected at least one hundred pounds per beat yearly. The question was, where did the money go? His answer was, to the parish officials; and the monies depleted through fraud should have been used to benefit the parish in general and the poor in particular. Therefore, he suggested that, first of all, the monies raised by the Watch Tax be used to pay the watchers a living wage. But, instead of those who had to rely on the patronage of the parish officials, instead of those whose moral character was open to question, Defoe proposed that some of the honest poor be employed. He also suggested that the size of the beat they were to patrol be cut down to a realistic and workable size. The benefits resulting from these suggestions would be numerous. First, more of the poor that were presently receiving parish relief would no longer have to receive assistance as they would be working and receiving a living wage.

1Ibid., pp. 60-61.
Second, since the size of the beats would be cut and the
watchers would be of a sound moral character, fewer robberies
would occur; thus, the parish as a whole would also benefit.
And, third, since more men would have to be employed because
the size of the beat was cut, more poor would benefit. In
fact, Defoe says, everyone would benefit, everyone but the
parish officials.¹

Just as the powers of the parish administrators
extended beyond that of levying, collecting, and disbursing
monies, so also did Defoe's criticism of their corrupt
practices extend beyond that of general commentary. When an
occasion called for it, he did not hesitate to level his
criticism at particular offenders. Such criticism was often
found in his Review² and was entirely in keeping with the
principles upon which the Review was first founded:

... From the beginning of this undertaking /i.e. the
Review/ which I have now carried on almost ten years, I
have always, according to the best of my judgment,
calculated it for the support and defense of Truth and
Liberty. ... My measures are, to the best of my
judgment, steady. What I approve, I defend; what I
dislike, I censure without respect of persons only
endeavouring to give my reasons and to make it appear
that I approve and dislike upon good and sufficient
grounds, which being first well assur'd of, the time

¹Ibid., p. 61.
²See below.
is yet to come that I ever refrained to speak my mind for fear of the face of man. . . .

In the same year he made this statement, 1712, he had occasion to test it, and seven years later, he faced another similar challenge. He met both tests with equal determination and with his usual vigour. He did not hesitate, in either case, to call a "spade a spade," or, to be more precise, to call the parish administrators involved corrupt. The first incident involved the deserving poor from the town of Newcastle-on-Tyne. Most of the families of this town were those Defoe called the industrious, hardworking poor who "fared hard," who made their living loading coal into the keels of boats called lighters. The workers were called keel-men and skippers. The second incident involved the poor, innocent children of the charity school of St. Ann's in Aldergate and the minister who acted on their behalf.

Around 1698 about sixteen hundred poor skippers and keelmen plus their families, "those who were exceedingly burthensome to the Parishes where they lived," decided that something had to be done to alleviate the terrible conditions they found themselves in, for many of their "poor very often perish'd, and were lost for want of relief." Therefore, they voluntarily entered into an agreement

2Daniel Defoe, The Case of the Poor Skippers and Keelmen. . . (London, 1712), Broadside. Hereafter cited as Poor Skippers.
among themselves, without any Direction, or Influence, or Compulsion, as also without any Assistance, either from the Town of Newcastle, or any other Person whatsoever, to form a Contribution of Charity, by a Proportion out of every Man's Labour, for the Maintenance of their own Poor... to be paid into a Common Stock... .

Because this agreement relieved the adjacent parishes of the burden of caring for the poor of Newcastle, and, consequently, lowered their own parish rates, these parishes gratefully donated to the poor skippers and keelmen and their families a piece of ground that was located on the outskirts of the town itself. This ground was to be used for the construction of a hospital where the town's poor, "such as by Reason of Age, or Accident were past Labour, and /the Widows and Children of such as were Dead,"\(^2\) were to be cared for. And such was the case. However, although the ground was held in trust for the poor by the Governour and Company of Hoast-men in Newcastle, i.e., the coal owners, many of whom co-incidentally were parish officers, the building of the hospital was solely left to the care and direction of the poor skippers and keelmen. As Defoe points out when reviewing the case, "neither the town by the said Gift, /nor the Hoast-mens Company by the said Trust, had/ any claim or Pretense upon or unto, the Government or Disposition, either of the Stock, or Building, or Money or of any other [of] the Affairs of the Keel-men whatsoever."\(^3\)

\(^1\)Ibid.
\(^2\)Ibid.
\(^3\)Ibid.
For over a decade there apparently was no trouble; for over a decade the poor skippers and keelmen and their families contributed out of their daily labor the sum of one penny per tide each time a skipper of keelman worked loading coal onto the barges that went up the Tyne river to London and elsewhere throughout England. But little by little, unobtrusively at first, the hoastmen encroached upon the rights of the poor of Newcastle and began to name their own men governors and stewards of the hospital. Not only were the poor intimidated by the hoastmen in their capacity as employers but also in their capacity as parish administrators. Finally, in 1712, things were brought to a head when the keelmen and skippers presented a petition to parliament to have their case adjudicated. In their petition they charged that the hoastmen-administrators had encroached upon their rights and had misused funds for their own "private ends" that had belonged to the poor of Newcastle. They based their case upon the fact that the agreement they had entered into over a decade before with the hoastmen had been wholly voluntary; moreover, it had been only verbal. Therefore, they concluded that the government and the management of their own hospital and their charity organization were entirely within their own province. In the petition the poor skippers and

1Review (Vol. VIII, No. 141; Sat., Feb. 16, 1712), Fasc. Bk. 21, pp. 565-68.

2Poor Skippers.

3Ibid.
keelmen further alleged that as a result of the encroachment and mismanagement of the governor and the stewards who were appointed by the hoastmen-magistrates, they had "suffered great Loss and Inconvenience by the Persons entrusted with the said Money, by Mis-application, Embezzlement, Insolvencies, and other Disasters." Consequently, the poor petitioners were "greatly Injur'd, their poor miserably Starv'd, their Hospital which they ... built at their own Charge, entirely neglected, and the charitable Design of their said Contribution in danger of being Ruin'd and Destroy'd." What they specifically hoped for was that many of the hoastmen and their appointees would be called upon to give an accounting of their past actions and also be prevented from continuing their "oppressions" in the future. As they pointed out, although they had verbally agreed in 1698 that the hoastmen should be in charge of the money collected, they had also agreed that the money was only to be held in trust for them and was to be turned over to them at any time on demand. However, it was not until the skippers and keelmen saw their funds being misapplied, wasted, and mismanaged that they took any definite steps. At first, in 1710, the skippers and keelmen merely decided to stop contributing their

1Review (Vol. VIII, No. 141), p. 566.
2Ibid.
3Poor Skippers.
one penny per tide in the hope that the situation would improve. When it did not, with the help of one Sir William Blacket, ¹ they presented a petition to parliament, asking that they be given a "Charter of Incorporation to chuse their own Governour, Stewards, and other Officers, for the Direction of the said Charity, which they believed they had an undoubted Right to do, the Money being their Own."²

Defoe never reveals how he came to be involved initially nor why he later was asked to intercede on behalf of the keelmen, but that he was most impressed with the merits of their case and sympathetic with their cause is most evident when one reads his introduction to their petition which he reprinted in the Review while parliament was considering the disposition of the case. In addressing his readers, he said:

"Pray, Gentlemen, allow me one Review for an Act of Charity, in behalf of the Poor, under an Oppression, that I believe no Christian Man can read without Detestation."³ That Defoe the Puritan-journalist considered his efforts on their behalf to be an act of charity cannot be doubted, for he did not use just one "Review" to champion what he obviously thought to be a righteous cause, but many times he used his talents, his pen,

¹Not identified by Defoe, or in the DNB, Burke's Peerage, or elsewhere.

²Poor Skippers.

to awaken his audience to what was going on in Newcastle, to enlighten his readers about the oppression that the poor skippers and keelmen were fighting. As was mentioned before, characteristically, not only does Defoe seek pity or compassion for those he champions, he also seeks justice. To further illustrate the perfidy of the hoastmen-magistrates, Defoe points out that while the petition of the keelmen and skippers was being referred to the attorney-general by the queen's council, "Behold, a Caveat is enter'd by the magistrates of New-castle."¹ It seems that when these officials found that they were in danger of being "brought to Accompt," they exercised all the power they possessed both as magistrates and as employers, and appointed agents to act on their behalf and to coerce the poor skippers, keelmen and their families. Threatening them with the loss of their jobs, these agents forced the poor to sign a counter-petition which stated that they had a change of heart and desired that the management and control of their charity and hospital be given to the magistrates of Newcastle, the hoastmen.² Concerning this sudden turn of events, Defoe writes:

Now tho' it was something surprizing, that Men should Petition to have their own Hands ty'd when they were free, and that they should desire to have the Direction of their own Charity taken from them, that

¹Ibid.
²Ibid.
so, instead of preserving their own Votes, in appointing who should or should not be Reliev'd by their own Money, they should desire that they might be left to the Mercy of the Magistrates, and to the Hoast-men and Fitters, who have many Ways Injur'd and Oppress'd them, and to come perhaps on their Knees to them, for Admittance into their own Hospital; this was indeed Surprizring, but when I receiv'd the Copy of Petition from Newcastle, Sign'd by some of the same poor Men who were forc'd to sign the other, it was no more a Mistery [sic] to me; . . . the Original, as I hear, will suddenly be laid before the Parliament.¹

Consequently, the poor people of Newcastle bravely asked parliament to put aside their second petition which was made under duress and which was "'Forcible, Unjustly, and with unlawful Design, Extorted from [them]'."² Instead they asked that their original petition be considered in its place.

Although Defoe considered the plight of the poor of Newcastle to be "as distress'd a Case . . . as ever came before an English or British Parliament,"³ he states that the case had broader implications than just being another example of parochial tyranny. He felt that the real motive of those hoastmen who were also magistrates was to prevent the poor skippers and keelmen from striking for higher wages and better working conditions. It seems that in 1710 these coal owners and boat owners erected a "coal-chamber or coal-office" where

¹Ibid., pp. 567-68.
²Ibid., p. 568.
they made "By-Laws, impos'd Regulations and Fines upon the poor Keelmen by their own Arbitrary Authority."¹ But, writes Defoe, the keelmen and the others were not so stupid as not to realize that "the contract, as they call it, that is the combination of the coal-owners at New-castle and the Lightermen at London, is the cause of it."² Thus, Defoe concluded that the real cause of the oppression of the poor at Newcastle stemmed from "trade," and he charged that "All Trading Men in this part of England are Embark'd against it."³ If the hoastmen in Newcastle, and, by implication, all other oppressive employers, had their way, Defoe believed that they would in the long run be able to charge whatever price they wanted for their coal. Moreover, the city of London would end up paying more tax for coal,⁴ which would be another injustice, especially harmful to the poor, for the price of coal was already beyond the reach of most poor. If it went higher, none would be able to buy it. Thus, charged Defoe, if the members of parliament did not heed the Newcastle petitioners and redress their grievances, many evils would result that would affect the poor of Newcastle directly but the rest of

¹Review (Vol. VII, No. 42; Sat., July 1, 1710), Fasc. Bk. 17, pp. 163-64.
²Ibid., p. 164.
England indirectly; that is, if the poor skippers lost their right to manage their own affairs, the hoastmen-magistrates not only would have access to money which they would continue to mis-appropriate and mis-manage but would also have the workers under their thumbs. In addition, these officials would profit even more by selling their coal at higher prices. Above all, Defoe dreaded that they would set an example for other "oppressors" to follow. 1 In light of these circumstances, he thought it was a miracle violence had not occurred:

And it is a Wonder to me, I confess, that Misery and Poverty has not provoked them [the poor of Newcastle] to Demolish the Contract; a Way no honest Man can desire them to do it: But Hunger knows no Laws; and as Oppression makes a wise Man mad, so want of Bread makes honest Men Thieves; 2 Peaceable Men Tumultuous; and had these poor People fallen into any Excesses, as they have hardly been kept from, I must own the Coal-Owners ought to have Answer'd for the Consequences. 3

As one can see, although Defoe does not condone the "sin," he does nevertheless state that sometimes special circumstances arise that enable one not only to forgive the "sinner" but also to absolve him of guilt, and, perhaps, put the blame where it really belongs. To the credit of the Newcastle poor, no

---

1Ibid.

2Note Defoe's subtle plea of economic necessity, a plea he makes often in his writings. See below.

violence occurred. They bore their oppression courageously and peaceably until, happily, their case was settled in their favor by parliament.¹

Although Defoe would be the last to say that his efforts on behalf of the skippers and keelmen of Newcastle in any substantial way affected the outcome of the case,² one can at least say that it is to his credit that he tried to utilize his talents not only to right what he thought to be a grave wrong but also to awaken his reading public to an injustice which would have indirectly affected all of them. Like Donne, Defoe felt that the oppression, like the death, of any man diminished him, for he too was involved in mankind. As was everyone—he would remind his readers.

¹Review (Vol. VIII, No. 169; Tues., April 22, 1712), Fasc. Bk. 21, p. 678. The Commons decided in favor of the keelmen on March 29, 1711/12 (J.H.C., XVII (1711-1712), 160.

²Ibid. But he does say that the case of the skippers and keelmen "and the Magistrates there [at Newcastle], . . . has receiv'd a Turn in Parliament since I took notice of it, different from what some expected, tho' not from what I always thought the Justice of Parliament must produce. . ." (p. 678). And according to a letter Defoe wrote earlier to Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, his patron, on 14 February, 1711/12, Defoe thought the poor skippers' and keelmen's case had "So Much Justice and Charity" in it that he sought to persuade Harley to represent the skippers when their case came before the House of Commons. In the letter Defoe notes that he had many people appear before him with "Little Projects" which he did not bother to forward to Harley because he felt "Few of Them worth [his] Notice." Obviously, he did consider this case to be an exception (George Harris Healey, ed., Letters of Daniel Defoe (Oxford, 1952), Letter 183, p. 369).
In the case of the poor skippers and keelmen, Defoe explicitly charges the hostmen-magistrates and the Lighters and Fitters of London with collusion to defraud the people of England; however, in the case of the Reverend Mr. Hendley, who preached a sermon on behalf of the charity school children from St. Ann's, Aldergate, Defoe implicitly charges in his pamphlet Charity Still a Christian Virtue (1719) the justices of the peace and other parish officials of Chissellhurst with "crimes" of a different cast. Yet the crimes were just as far-reaching in regard to their effects on the deserving poor children of St. Ann's as were the crimes of the officials of Newcastle in regard to the keelmen and their families. In essence, Defoe charges the parish officers with malfeasance of office, which stemmed from their ineptitude and thorough lack of knowledge of the law as it pertained to Mr. Hendley and his case.

As Defoe reports in his treatise, on Saturday, August 23, 1718, after first getting the permission of the Bishop of Rochester and from his immediate superior, the rector of the cathedral of Chissellhurst, the Rev. Mr. Hendley took some of the children from his charity school at Aldergate to Chissellhurst in order to preach two sermons the following day in the hope of getting a sizeable collection, which was going to aid the children by defraying some of the expenses involved in running the school. At services the next day, Mr. Hendley,
after giving a sermon "suitable to the Occasion," proceeded with the offertory, at which time two trustees of the school, Mr. Chapman and Mr. Prat, began to take up the collection, going from "Pew to Pew." The people in church, Defoe notes, were very generous, and the collection went smoothly until one of the trustees came to the pew of Mr. Thomas Farrington, a Chisselhurst justice of the peace, who not only vociferously refused to contribute to the charitable collection but also seized the trustee, asserting that the collection was illegal. Moreover, Mr. Farrington stated that, in the eyes of the law, the children from the charity school were "Vagrants, Beggars, and Rogues." When Mr. Wilson, Mr. Hendley's assistant, came down from the altar and tried to proceed with the collection despite the interference of Mr. Farrington, Mr. Farrington and another justice of the peace, Sir Edward Bettison, told him to "desist" and warned him that if he continued, it would be at his "own Peril." To the dismay of the two justices, Mr. Wilson and the two trustees went on with the collection anyway, and the parishioners were so anxious to contribute before anyone stopped them that they began to throw their money into the collection plates. However, because of their refusal to stop

---

1 These men were commonly called trading justices, and were appointed by the Crown. Usually they were the local squire. These men generally resembled Henry Fielding's Squire Western, and most were untutored in the law. However, they wielded great authority and power in parish affairs, and were over the churchwardens and other elected officials.
the services and to turn the money over to the churchwardens who were present in the congregation, the Rev. Mr. Hendley, Mr. Wilson, and the two trustees of the school were physically escorted from the church. At the same time, Mr. Farrington and Sir Edward Bettison ordered the churchwardens and the parish constable to go to the altar and take the money that had been collected—money which Mr. Hendley had moments before, according to canon law, explicitly dedicated to God and had committed to the care of the Bishop of Rochester.

When taken later that evening before Sir Edward and Mr. Farrington, who acted in their official capacity as justices of the peace, and before Major Stephens, the High Sheriff of the County, the clergyman and his party were asked by what right did they "go about begging" without first obtaining a license or authority—a license, Defoe hastens to point out, that had to be "gotten" from the local churchwardens. When Mr. Hendley explained in more detail the purpose of his sermon and the collection, in case the justices were not fully cognizant of his mission, and further explained that he had received the permission as well as the blessing of the Bishop of Rochester and the rector of the cathedral of Chisselhurst, the two justices retorted that they "car'd not for Archbishops or Bishops, and were positively resolv'd the Thing shou'd not be pursu'd; upon which they [Mr. Hendley and the rest] were
order'd to be Confin'd." Consequently, Mr. Hendley, Mr. Wilson, and the two trustees, Mr. Prat and Mr. Chapman, were bound over to the Quarter-Sessions at Maidstone and charged with being "Rioters and Vagrants." Before they were dismissed, however, Mr. Farrington further threatened them and added that all justices throughout England were "resolv'd to suppress the Charity-Schools," because they "lov'd England." 2

At Maidstone, Mr. Hendley and the others found that no indictment had been lodged against them, and therefore they moved (and fully expected) that their case be dismissed. To their utter dismay—and contrary to law, says Defoe—the justice at Maidstone ordered them to put up fresh bail and to appear at the next Assize. When they did appear finally before the judge at the next Assize (held the following summer), they found that they were now charged with fraud, a conspiracy to defraud the parishioners of Chisselhurst, illegal begging, and with extortion—all very serious charges. 3

Just as they did not receive justice when they appeared before the justice at Maidstone, so also did Mr. Hendley and


2 Ibid., pp. 2-4.

3 Ibid., pp. 26, 35-38.
his friends not receive justice before the court at the Assize. First of all, it appears that the jury was "rigged," for Defoe notes that "the Jury for the County was industriously set aside," and men were "impanell'd out of the Grand Jury" in their Place. Such move was without precedent for a case like Mr. Hendley's. Moreover, the judge, "not knowing how to acquit the defendants of all charged," and being quite convinced that they were all "tools of Rome," proceeded to direct the jury to bring in a verdict in favor of the plaintiffs, i.e., for the justices and other parish officers of Chiswellhurst, and against the defendants, Mr. Hendley and his party, as a "sure Way to save one Party, and to leave the Other to remedy themselves by a Writ of Error against the Jury." As Defoe bitterly remarks, that was of little comfort to the minister who had already suffered a great deal and had been inconvenienced enough by the case. To begin a new one by an appeal would only have added insult to injury. Besides, the prospect of an acquittal at a later date did not appear to be any brighter than one did at that moment; for

no sooner had the Judge summ'd up the Evidence, then the Jury went out, and return'd with a dammatory Verdict, upon which the Judge immediately Sentenc'd the Defendants a Fine of Six Shillings and Eight Pence

1Ibid., p. 43. "For posterity," Defoe names each and every member of the jury so that all would come to know their "Infamy."

2Ibid., p. 67.
each, a very moderate Fine for the Offence.\textsuperscript{1} And as the Verdict was shot forth like a Fool's Bolt, his Lordship could do no less than pass upon them that Sentence, which drew upon him the necessary Consequences of blasting the Hopes of all the Poor forever.\textsuperscript{2} Thus, not only was the verdict delivered in a hurry, without much deliberation, but the sentence was equally precipitous. This was not the end of the case, however, for Defoe sadly reports that less than forty-eight hours after his return to his parish, the Rev. Mr. Hendley died. He was, as Defoe rather ironically notes, so charitable a gentleman that not only did he forgive his enemies but he also remembered them in his will. To Mr. Stephens and Mr. Farrington, he left each a gold ring, and begged to be excused for not remembering the third gentleman (Mr. Bettison?). It seems that the third man had not been a member of the church long, and his name had escaped Rev. Hendley. In addition to the above bequest, the minister left two hundred pounds to the charity school of Bromley. In regard to this bequest, Defoe notes that Mr. Hendley's enemies could now report that "according to Modern Sentiments, he dy'd Impenitent, and consequently, with some Men, he liv'd and dy'd a Supporter of Vagrants and Rogues."\textsuperscript{3} In this last remark, one can see Defoe's satiric kinship with his age.

\textsuperscript{1}Although the councils for the plaintiffs urged that the penalties be much more severe, the judge refused their request. However, the judge warned the defendants not to appear before him again on the same charge or the penalties would be much more severe than even the plaintiffs' councils asked for (\textit{Ibid.}, p. 68).

\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 67-68.

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 32.
In reviewing Defoe's summary of Mr. Hendley's case, many questions come to mind; for example, why was Defoe so interested in what was no doubt a sad but certainly not an isolated or earth-shaking incident, and why were these parish officials so determined to prevent Mr. Hendley from aiding the children of the charity-school of St. Ann's, especially when one recalls that, although these justices had tremendous power in the parish, they usually followed a policy of non-intervention in parish matters? In addition, why did the church-wardens and constables aid Mr. Farrington and Mr. Bettison? And why did the justices at Maidstone not dismiss the case? And so on. Defoe does not ever really answer these questions explicitly. He does imply, however, that what happened to the Rev. Mr. Hendley went deeper than his case just being an example of the hard-heartedness of a few isolated individuals. It certainly was that—but not only that. To Defoe, the Chiswellhurst and Maidstone officials were only representative of most parochial officials, whom he thought to be deficient in moral character and in ability as well as in compassion for the destitute, impoverished, impotent, deserving poor who were their charges. Such men not only failed to carry out the letter of the law but more importantly they failed to carry out its spirit. And, by legal definition, pauper children (and the charity children of St. Ann's were pauper children) were, along with the aged and the mentally and physically handicapped, designated as impotent
poor. Therefore, because the responsibility for caring for all impotent poor according to 43 Eliz. and other poor laws fell upon the parish, the care of pauper children also fell within the purview of parish administrators, especially the churchwardens and overseers. But it was the responsibility of the local justice to see that these men carried out the law. From their point of view, however, it was in the "best" interests of the parish to keep the number of impotent poor, including children, down to the barest minimum possible and to care for them as cheaply as possible. It was in their own "best" interests to turn economic liabilities into economic assets however they could, regardless of the toll. In a report made public in 1716, parliament gave ample testimony to the success of such efforts:

A great number of poor infants and exposed bastard children are inhumanely suffered to die by the barbarity of nurses, who are a sort of people void of commiseration or religion, hir'd by the church-wardents to take off a burthen from the parish at the cheapest and easiest rates they can [italics mine], and these know the manner of doing it effectively. . . .

The greatest number of children turned over to these nurses were illegitimate. Therefore, to insure that they would not be a complete financial burden to the parish, the father, if known, was forced to pay a sum of money to the churchwardens, money which was to be used to defray expenses in caring for the child.

In return, the father was released of all other responsibility for the child. In one parish alone, M. Dorothy George reports that the officers got money for over five hundred illegitimate children, and out of this number, only one survived. She also states that this was by no means an isolated case. The assumption that lay behind the actions of these men was this: because these children, both the legitimate as well as the illegitimate paupers, would probably (most definitely would if left only to their care) grow up to be rogues and vagrants,¹ the best thing for all concerned would be if they never grew up at all. While outright murder was not unheard of,² usually more subtle methods were employed, such as farming out the children to nurses such as those noted in the quotation cited above.

Besides the illegitimate pauper children, the parish officers were also responsible for those children who were deserted by their parents, a practice very common in those days, as Defoe himself notes in Moll Flanders and in Colonel Jacque. And the more children that had to be cared for, the higher the parish rates went. It would be no exaggeration, however, to say that these children were just as dependent upon


the churchwardens for "every detail of their very existence" as the illegitimate children were. Although those in the rural areas do not seem to have suffered too much from deliberate ill-treatment and neglect, the same cannot be said of the children in the large cities, particularly in London, where few of those who were left to the care of the parish under three years of age ever grew up to reach adolescence. It was these infants who were usually farmed out, as Dorothy Marshall says, to nurses "actuated solely by the desire for the two shillings or two and six paid weekly" to them. This insignificant sum was far less than what the parish officials received to provide care for them however. Moreover, because many nurses converted the money they received from the parish, little as it was, to their own use, more children died from starvation than from deliberate murder, ignorance, or mere neglect.¹ The lot of those pauper children who survived was little better; in fact, the lucky ones perhaps were those who died.

After age seven, according to 43 Eliz., the survivors were supposed to be apprenticed so that they could learn some useful trade and eventually become self-supporting. For each child that the parish administrators bound to a master, the parish was paid from two to ten pounds--a very lucrative business, Defoe observes. These children were apprenticed to a

master until age twenty-four for males, and until twenty-one or marriage for girls. The condition of these apprentices did not radically improve during their apprenticeship, for "there was practically no control over the inhuman wretches who starved and beat them and taught them no trade except that of stealing." ¹ One does not have to look to the fiction of Dickens to read of such horrible practices; one only had to read the non-fictional accounts of Defoe and some of his contemporaries who deplored the parish-directed apprenticeship program. ² Although they deplored the conditions these children

¹ Williams, p. 131.

² See, for example, Shaw, who notes that parish officials also made money when a master refused to take an apprentice, for the master was fined ten pounds. If he still refused, he could be fined again, or put into jail (pp. 117-19). See also Carter, pp. 42-43, 49-52. Defoe calls this practice of picking up fines "birding," which was a common practice among the parish officials. See too the Causes of the Encrease & Miseries of the Poor in which the author lists the evils of the apprenticeship program as directed by the parish as the sixth cause of the increase and misery of the poor. He also charges that one of the worst effects of the program was that these innocent children were placed "into any Man's Hands . . . The Master may be a Tiger in Cruelty; he may Beat, Strip-Naked, Starve, or do what he will to the poor innocent Lad, few People will take much Notice, and the Officers who put him out, the least of any Body." Furthermore, he indicts the parish officers for engaging in mock-apprenticeship programs. That is, if a child was bound out to a master in another parish, and if the child was kept for at least forty days, the first parish was no longer responsible for him. Thus, if the master did not take care of the child or if the child ran away from the master, he could no longer apply to either parish for assistance because he did not have a legal residence or a settlement in either parish. This practice of parish-trading in apprentices in order to reduce the number of poor children on parish rolls was very common (pp. 41-45). For Defoe's views of the apprenticeship program, see Second Thoughts are Best, pp. 32-34; 81-82, 86-87, and Chapter III below.
were forced to endure, they equally deplored the fact that after
serving such a long apprenticeship, most were still unqualified
to earn an honest living. Hence, not only were the children
victimized by such a program but the parish as well.

The only bright note in this rather bleak picture was
that of the charity school, which took pauper children and
trained them to become good and useful citizens. Although part
of the cost of maintaining these schools was defrayed by
wealthy patrons who donated money or who sponsored a particular
child, other means of meeting expenses were sought, such as the
appeal of Mr. Hendley for contributions for the school of St.
Ann. Between 1697-1713, according to available statistics, the
total number of pauper children taught by charity schools
throughout England was 4752 (3056 boys and 1696 girls); of
these 2250 (1529 boys and 721 girls) were apprenticed by the
schools to "good" masters who taught them a useful trade. By
1718 the total number of schools in London alone was 124,
which taught a total of 5109 children (3213 boys and 1896
girls) and of these apprenticed 4583 children (3253 boys and
1330 girls). One can see by these statistics the very
significant job the charity schools were doing. One can also
see the large amount of money which the parishes, that is, the
parish officers, no longer received inasmuch as the
apprenticeship fees for such children were now paid directly to
the schools.\(^1\) This amount must have cut rather deeply into the pockets of those parish administrators who went into office "as poor as Rats" and came out usually "too Rich to be poor again."\(^2\)

Although some attempt was made to teach reading, writing, and basic arithmetic, the main purpose of charity schools was not to train scholars \textit{per se}. They sought instead to instill the virtues of obedience and religion into their charges; hence, most of the instruction was religious in tone and content. It was thought that the virtuous and God-fearing would also be industrious and that the industrious would also be good citizens. (Therefore, one wonders with Defoe just why the officials at Chisselhurst and at Maidstone were so opposed to Mr. Hendley and his charity school.) Some of the material to which the children were exposed was taken from texts familiar to most English divines of the day: \textit{The Bible}, commentaries on the scriptures, \textit{The Book of Common Prayer}, Bishop Burnett's \textit{Exposition of the Church Catechism}, \textit{The Whole Duty of Man}, Bishop Taylor's \textit{Holy Living and Holy Dying}, Grotius' \textit{Of the Truth of the Christian Religion} (which had been translated by Bishop Patrick), \textit{Lessons for Children, Historical and Practical}, and \textit{The Anatomy of Orthography: Or, A Practical Introduction}

\(^{1}\)Anonymous, \textit{An Account of Charity Schools in Great Britain and Ireland . . . 1700-1718} (London, 1718), pp. 14, 25.

\(^{2}\)Parochial Tyranny, p. 9.
to the Art of Spelling and Reading English. Those of Grotius, Bishop Burnett, and Bishop Taylor were often recommended by Defoe himself as instructive reading. In the light of the exposure of the children to material such as this, it is easy to understand why Defoe would champion the cause of Mr. Hendley and the children, especially when one recalls that years earlier, in 1697, in An Essay on Projects, Defoe had outlined his views concerning the value of education as he did later in Col. Jacque.

As for the motives of the parish officials of Chisselhurst, they are not as easily understood. But Dorothy Marshall sheds some possible light on them when she notes that the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic was solidly opposed by tradesmen, many of whom were parish officers, who were beginning to ask how they were going "to set up their own children in life" if the pauper children "were to be educated in such a way that they would be competent to do the work hitherto performed by their immediate betters." Besides this fear of competition, others felt that educating pauper children would indirectly be a disservice to the upper classes who depended on the menial labor of the lower classes. Such an

\[1\text{An Account of Charity Schools, pp. 36-37, 39-40.}\]
\[2\text{See Chapter Five below.}\]
\[3\text{Marshall, English Poor, p. 161.}\]
attitude seems to have been behind the remarks of one anonymous writer who said that "the charity school is another universal nursery of idleness. . . destructive to the interest and very foundation of a nation entirely dependent on its trade and manufactures," for he felt that the "giving of an education to the children of the lowest class of her people. . . will make them contemn those drudgeries for which they were born."¹ Such too was the view of Mandeville, who observed:

Few children make any progress at school, but at the same time are capable of being employed in some business or other so that every Hour of those of poor People spent at their Books is so much time lost to Society. Going to school in comparison to Working is idleness, and the longer Boys continue in this easy sort of Life, the more unfit they'll be when grown up for downright Labour, both as to Strength and Inclination. Men who are to remain and end their Days in a Labourious, Tiresome and Painful Station of Life, the sooner they are put upon it at first, the more patiently they'll submit to it for ever after.²

Mandeville sees such an education as that provided by charity schools as being a disservice not only to the State but also to the individual himself in the long run.

Whatever was behind the actions of the officials at Chisselhurst and Maidstone, if jealousy and fear were not the case, then says Defoe, it must have been just plain hard-heartedness. Yet he doubts any one could be so uncharitable

¹As cited in Hufton, p. 308.

²Bernard Mandeville, An Essay on Charity Schools (London, 1723), p. 329. Although Defoe champions the concept of charity schools in Charity Still a Christian Virtue, in Moll Flanders (1722) he seems to imply that at times being educated above one's class is a disservice. For Moll is educated above her class and comes to feel that menial work, such as being a servant, is beneath her. See Chapter five below.
towards poor innocent children that they would take their spite out on their benefactor and try to use—or misuse—the law to do it:

Can therefore the Means [the collection taken by Mr. Hendley] be Injust, that in the most offensive Manner tend to a Good and Pious End, which has the Praise of both God and Man, of the Laws of Christianity, of Nature, and of our Country?¹

Defoe hastens to point out that Mr. Hendley was not the first to take up a collection for charitable purposes:

In the Memory of Man, we have an Instance of publick Charities collected for the Poor after the Fire of London, without any Suspicion of Vagrancy, before any Royal Proclamation came forth; and whatever was at the Time given, was secured by an Act [22 and 23 Car. 2. c. 16]. Were the poor People punish'd as Vagrants? or did the Magistrates interpose to stop the Torrent of Charity, as tho' it was a dangerous Flood and threatened the Peace of a Kingdom? In short, if the Method us'd at Chisselhurst came not within the Intention of any Law even in being, they cou'd not be taken up, or bound over to the Sessions for the same.²

But the point was that Mr. Hendley and his friends were taken before the Sessions and were found guilty. Defoe, therefore, examines various laws and sections of laws to see if by some slight chance Mr. Hendley had violated any of them, which would

¹Charity Still a Christian Virtue, pp. 8-9.
²Ibid., p. 9. It is interesting to note that Mr. Hendley had the permission of his bishop, yet the officials of Chisselhurst opposed his taking up of the collection, even though these men were "by custom and by common law, to say nothing of the Canons of the Church," responsible to "the Bishop or his Archdeacon" in all matters pertaining to the Church (Webbs, The Parish and the County, I, 20).
have put a different light on the actions taken by Mr. Farrington, Sir Edward Bettison, and the other parish officers involved in the case.

In regard to the laws pertaining to begging and vagrancy, Defoe did not rely only on the precedent noted in the quotation cited above to acquit Mr. Hendley. First of all, the law which was enacted to stop people from begging and which made it a felony to give alms to a beggar who did not wear a badge signifying that he had the consent of the parish administrators was aimed at protecting the citizen who was harassed by professional beggars; it was never intended to stop acts of charity. That Mr. Hendley did not obtain a license to beg alms for the children from the parish, Defoe admits. But he points out that the act, 12 Hen. 8. c. 12., which gave the parish the right to grant such licenses was meant to be applied to worthy necessitous individuals who needed to be relieved immediately, and who therefore were given the right to beg within the parish. It was these worthy people who were given a badge so that they could be distinguished from the "sturdy Beggar." Moreover, in calling Mr. Hendley a vagrant, the two justices displayed their ignorance of the law, for according to 2 Ann. c. 16., a vagrant was synonymously defined as a rogue or sturdy beggar, i.e., as one who "pilfers and begs thro' all the Kingdom." Certainly, this definition did not fit either Mr. Hendley and his friends or the poor
children from St. Ann's, who were passive throughout the incident and who never once solicited any alms from anyone. Therefore, concludes Defoe, "unless an Infant can be deem'd a Rogue, because he is born Poor, or descends from afflicted Parents; this Act can have no more relation to Charity Children, than the Act against Conventicles affects the True and Genuine Sons of the Church of England." But what, he questions, has all this to do with the charity schools? "Care for the Education of such Objects can in no wise be detrimental to the Kingdom,"¹ for if the act of 12 Hen. 8. c. 12. and the other poor laws had intended to destroy "all charitable Collections for the Poor, to destroy even Charity-Schools, and the Foundations of Virtue," they would have had to declare that the children involved were rogues, that those who by their efforts "rescu'd (them) from Infidelity and Barbarianism," were rogues, and that those who contributed their alms were rogues. To Defoe, such a thing was unthinkable: "O my God! in what an Age do we live! Are the Precepts of Christianity repeal'd by the Act against Vagabonds and Rogues? Are six Thousand Children bred up in the Principles of the Church of England, and of Virtue, only collected out to be turn'd into Rogues?"² Here, one can

¹Ibid., pp. 7-9. See also Carter, pp. 8-9. See Chapter One above.

²Ibid., p. 12. This figure is a slight exaggeration; see p. 93 above.
see the righteous indignation of this compassionate man, who saw the law turned against innocent and defenseless children by those he termed "illiterate and Impudent Upstarts."

In his examination Defoe also sought to find out what the Crown had to say relevant to the matter inasmuch as justices are appointed officials and represent the Crown in parish matters. Therefore, he quotes a letter written in 1713 by Queen Anne to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York (the Rev. Dr. Wake and Sir William Daives, respectively) in which she bestowed her blessing on the concept of charity schools:

"And forasmuch as the pious Instruction and Education of Children, is the surest Way of Preserving and Propagating the Knowledge and Practice of true Religion, it hath been very acceptable to Us to hear, that, for the Attaining these good Ends, many Charity-Schools are now Erected throughout this Kingdom, by the liberal Contributions of our good Subjects; we do therefore earnestly recommend it to you, by all proper Ways, to encourage and promote so excellently a Work, and to countenance and assist the Persons principally concerned in it, as they shall always be sure of our Protection and Favour."1

In addition to this letter of Queen Anne, Defoe also cites a proclamation of Queen Elizabeth that was enunciated in 1559 but was still in effect—just in case the justices had not heard of Queen Anne's letter. (He implies they should have at least been acquainted with a royal edict.) In the proclamation Queen Elizabeth declared that there was to be placed in every parish church a poor box in which the alms collected for the

1Ibid., p. 16.
needy of the parish were to be placed. Secondly, although each minister was to decide for himself on the "Time and Opportunity" to take up the collection, all were called upon to "exhort" their parishioners to be as generous as they could be. In addition, the proclamation gave permission to others than churchwardens to take up such a collection. Therefore, because Mr. Hendley was in the right to take up his collection, Defoe asserts that he and his friends should have been acquitted of all charges.

In view of the fact that Mr. Hendley did not break any civil or criminal law and in view of royal approval of charity schools, Defoe felt that the Chisselhurst officers displayed a peculiar kind of "love for England." According to Defoe's examination, their claim that they acted to uphold the law was sheer nonsense, just as their desire to destroy all charity schools was most uncharitable, to say the least:

A very Pious Resolution to extinguish the Hopes of the Poor, and turn Children loose to their Native Savageness, who had been brought into Care of well-dispos'd Persons, to be under the Restraint of Laws and Religion. A design of this Nature is most agreeable to some Men, whose Manners have never been reduc'd into Form; and who still retain the same Vacancy of Principle, with which they were Born.

In the meantime they do peculiar Honour to the Government they pretend to Love; the Government must be supported, Ergo, the Seminaries of Virtue must be destroyed; the Children are there taught the Principles of the Church of England, Ergo, they are nurs'd up in

---

1Ibid., pp. 62-64.
Rebellion against King George. These are the Consequences that... are more fit to come from the professed Enemies of the Government than from their Friends.

Consequently, one can see Defoe still finds these parochial tyrants lacking in proper moral character as well as in professional acumen. In order to destroy them he takes their premise and reduces it to its furthest logical conclusion, one only a fool would agree with.

Obviously, if these parish officers had done their duty toward these poor pauper children in the first place, that is, had they clothed them, given them shelter, fed them, and educated them, such charity schools as Mr. Hendley's would not have been necessary and no funds would have had to be solicited. Therefore, these men failed to do their duty as stipulated in 43 Eliz. and other poor laws which called upon them to care for those impotent poor who because of age or condition were unable to care for themselves. It is evident that the children cared for by charity schools fulfilled both requirements; that is, by age and condition they were unable to fend for themselves. In effect, Defoe charges these parish justices and churchwardens with malfeasance of office.

Besides failing in their duty through omission, these men also failed through commission by violating the very laws they were sworn to uphold. For example, when Mr. Farrington

1Ibid., p. 27.
and his party disturbed the service and interrupted the offertory, they violated I W. & M. c. 18. and I. M. 2. c. 3. which made it unlawful for anyone to disturb any church service or to disturb any "preacher or minister by any overt act, word, or deed." Furthermore, they violated canon law which, as Defoe points out, was established by acts of parliament, as was the Book of Common Prayer, both of which the justices took an oath to uphold. They violated canon law by drawing a weapon in church and by preventing the collection to continue. The canon for the offertory specifically says that while the clerks are singing, "so many as are disposed shall offer to the poor mens box, every one according to his abilities and charitable mind." It also called upon the churchwardens to assist in—not to prevent—the collecting of the alms which were to be used to relieve the poor of the parish. ¹ For his final argument, Defoe turns to divine law, which he says is "superior to Human Ones in the first Place," and reminds these men indirectly of the last judgment which they would have to face someday. He also reminded them that charity is the greatest of all the virtues:

At the last Day our Lord may say to them, I was cloathed, and ye uncloathed me; I was fed, and ye made me hungry.

They have endeavoured to make the World believe, the Government is interested in the Destruction of these poor Wretches... Those whom God has afflicted, let no Man augment their Misery. It is against the Laws of Nature,

¹Ibid., pp. 14, 20-23. See also Canon Law 84, 1603, Book of Common Prayer.
and the Bowels of Compassion to cause the Eyes of the Widow to fail, and oppress the Poor, by stopping up the Fountains of Charity, which Water the barren Fields of Poverty and entail Blessings upon our Country.¹

Although this case did not end as happily as did the case of the poor skippers and keelmen, certain conclusions nevertheless can be drawn from them both.

It is very evident from both of these cases, as well as from the other works of Defoe cited, that in his fight against all forms of parochial tyranny, he is not a sentimental humanitarian, who lent his time and talents and sympathies indiscriminately to aid the poor. His approach is not quixotic; rather, it is deliberate and rational. Typically, Defoe tends to overwhelm his reader with evidence and appeals to various kinds of authority. What surprises the Defoe novice, thus, is the scholarship involved when Defoe seeks to prove or disprove a point; one does not think of the author of Robinson Crusoe and of the loosely-structured Moll Flanders as a very careful organizer and scholar. Moreover, although he manages to keep them in check, Defoe runs the gamut of emotions, displaying everything from sympathetic concern to angry disgust to righteous indignation over the injustices the deserving poor were forced to endure. Most importantly, he pleads for mercy, and he seeks justice and the redress of lawful grievances. Therefore, he defends the rights of those

¹Ibid., p. 17.
Englishmen who were victims of the parochial tyranny of men who "went into office as poor as Rats and came out again too Rich ever to be poor again." The men that he attacked generally in 1727 were those he had attacked specifically as early as 1710. It is fair to assume that Mr. Farrington and Sir Edward Bettison were only representative of many, for one sees that Defoe not only indict these men individually but that he also indict his whole society collectively.

In view of all the deserving poor had to suffer in an age when much was written about them but comparatively little was accomplished, one believes that Defoe would have concurred with the observation of Richard North, who said that "to be left to the Overseer's Allowance, and having no other means to subsist, was little better than a slow starving. A short life with less Pain were to be preferr'd to this pining Death with Parish Allowance."  

---

1 *Parochial Tyranny*, p. 9.

2 *A Discourse of the Poor* (London, 1753), p. 33. Although published in 1753, according to an editorial comment on p. 285, North's work was probably written between 1660-1688. Burns in his *History* also refers to it. See Webbs, VII, Part One, p. 8.
Perhaps he [Defoe] may give some Needful Hints here, at the State of our Poor; and if he differs from some, who in their Greater Judgments propose Methods for the Poor, he is Sorry; but he must be plain, he is no Enemy to ... Workhouses; but he cannot but think, that Methods to keep our Poor OUT OF THEM, far exceed, both in Prudence and Charity, all the Settlements and Endeavours in the World, to Maintain them IN THEM.


CHAPTER III

WORKHOUSES: THE PANACEA OF THE AGE

Because of many factors already noted--the growing number of poor seeking parish assistance; the growing number of able-bodied poor, willingly or unwillingly, unemployed; parochial corruption and inefficiency; the defects in the poor laws--most Englishmen were feeling more and more the pinch of the ever-rising parish rates. As a result, their outcries against the constant increases in taxes became more clamorous and vociferous. Thus, various solutions were sought to curb, if not erase the causes of, the growing rates. Of all the solutions proposed, one caught the imagination and enthusiasm of most writers, parochial officers, and citizens of the age. The solution so eagerly seized upon, especially after 1700, was
the establishing of parish workhouses in which the poor were housed together, apart from the rest of society, and compelled to work. Therefore, because economic liabilities became economic assets, workhouses came to be looked upon as a panacea of the age to all but a few, such as Defoe and the poor themselves. Defoe, however, did not quarrel with the aims of the workhouse movement; his quarrel, as noted before, was with a specific application of a principle. That is, he objected to the means employed to accomplish the ends, but not with the ends per se.

Just as English legislators looked to previous laws and for the most part only reinforced laws already in existence, so also did several interested parties look to an already established institution as a guide when trying to solve the problem of caring for the poor. These men came to see that the care usually provided the poor—outdoor relief, assistance in the form of money, clothes, food, fuel, shelter, etc.—was inadequate and the system employed inefficient and ineffectual both in curbing the rising rates and in keeping down the number of poor seeking assistance. The institution already in existence that they looked to was the local bridewells, that is, the houses of correction to which the able-bodied were to be sent for punishment. Reformers and other critics of the poor laws came to feel that having the poor, that is, all the poor, housed in one centralized location would make for a more
efficient operation. It was hoped that the deserving poor would be better taken care of and that the parish rates would decrease because they hoped to put all able-bodied, including children, to work; thus, the workhouse sought from the beginning to be a profit-making institution.\(^1\)

From the provision in 43 Eliz. and subsequent poor laws, which gave parish officers the right to "set the Poor to work," it was but a small step to establish a workhouse where the poor were compelled to go if they wished to receive any kind of assistance at all. In a sense, entrance into the workhouse became a test of one's destitution. Although the original idea behind the workhouse movement\(^2\) was to find a way to deal with the problem of the idle able-bodied poor, such as rogues, and sturdy beggars, as well as those able-bodied poor who would have worked if work had been available, they came to affect all of England's paupered class. In order to understand how this came

---

\(^1\)Dunning, pp. 50-51.

\(^2\)According to the Webbs, there were about six meanings of the term workhouse. But, they warn that the "student should bear always in mind that contemporary Poor Law Authorities, whether Churchwardens and Overseers, Incorporated Governours or Guardians of the Poor ..., rarely distinguished in their own minds between these several uses of workhouse, and invariably attempted to combine some or all of them." These six uses were:

1. The workhouse as a means of profitably employing the poor;
2. The workhouse as a penal establishment for the idle;
3. The workhouse as an asylum for the impotent poor;
4. The workhouse as a deterrent;
5. The workhouse as a means of applying the test by regimen;
6. The workhouse as an institution for specialized treatment (VII, 220). The second meaning was dominant prior to 1700; the first, third, fourth, and fifth after 1723. The last never was dominant.
to be, a brief explanation of the history of the work-house movement is requisite.

Although small workhouses, as was mentioned in the previous chapter, could be built by a parish with just the consent of the Quarter Sessions, any thing on a large scale first required the special consent of parliament. In the early stages of the workhouse movement, that is, prior to 1723, many parishes did apply to parliament for the requisite permission.¹ For example, in Bishopgate Street in London, a workhouse was erected in the late seventeenth century after the parish had received the consent of parliament. The parish purchased a very large house, which was converted into a workshop and living quarters in which the poor were housed. Children as well as adults were put to work spinning wool, knitting and sewing. The children were also supposed to have been taught to read, write, and do basic arithmetic. In exchange for their labor, the poor were clothed, fed, and sheltered. The money usually collected to care for the poor was to be turned over to the directors of the workhouse until the workhouse would become financially independent. Thus, in one house, the poor ate in common, prayed in common, and slept in common, for many families shared the same small room.

¹An Account of Several Workhouses, 1725 (reprinted in 1732) notes that prior to 1723, sixty such workhouses were already in existence (p. 5). See also Traill, V, 178.
The Bishopgate-Street experiment met with such success that it encouraged other parishes and cities to apply to parliament for permission to construct workhouses of their own. Thus, in 1696, another statute, 7 and 8 W. c. 3., was passed, which gave permission to the city of Bristol to erect a workhouse, which the city fathers called a corporation. In brief, Cary's proposals for the Bristol experiment, proposals which came to be copied more or less "up and down the kingdom for a whole century," can be summarized as follows:

1. There was to be a spacious workhouse large enough both to house the poor and to set them to work;

2. All able-bodied poor, including children, were to be compelled to work; they were to be provided necessary materials;

3. Those who could maintain themselves but not their children were encouraged to bring in their children so that they would be brought up to labor and so that laziness would be discouraged;

4. All impotent poor would be adequately cared for according to their needs;

5. The rates of the city were to be united into one common fund which would free the magistrates "from the daily trouble which they have about the settlement of the poor, the parish officers will be eased; the poor's stock will not be spent in law, but they will be provided for without being sent from parish to parish, and their children will be settled in a way serviceable to the public good, and not be bred up in all manner of vice as they now are";

---

1Braddon notes that the Bishopgate-Street experiment actually increased the parish rates there, not decreased them (p. 7). See Webbs, V, 121.

2Webbs, VII, 117.
6. That the head of the workhouse has the right to force "all poor people to work who do not betake themselves to some lawful employment elsewhere, but spend their time lazily and idly"; and,

7. That the director can apprentice out young people at "such ages as may be thought fit" and to bind them as apprentices "for a certain period of years"; that this will prevent children from being starved by the poverty of their parents and the neglect of parish officers, which is not a great loss to the nation, inasmuch as every person would by his labour add to the wealth of the public."¹

Thus, on January 18, 1696, the city of Bristol was given permission to incorporate nineteen parishes of the crowded city and to form a corporation, headed by the mayor, aldermen of the city, churchwardens of the parishes, together with four persons elected by a public meeting of the inhabitants of each ward.² The Bristol Workhouse became quickly known, and in 1704, a comprehensive bill entitled "A General Bill for the Relief, Settlement, and Employment of the Poor" was passed by parliament on February 15th, 1704, a bill which incorporated the Act of 1696 as well as several other acts that applied to individual parishes or city workhouses.³ From 1696 to 1712,

²Webbs, VII, 121.
³Braddon, p. xxxii, p. 2. Incorporated wholly or in part were the following laws: 14 Eliz. c. 5.; 18 Eliz. c. 3.; 3 Car. c. 4.; 1 Jac. c. 25.; 39 Eliz. c. 5.; 39 Eliz. c. 17.; 43 Eliz. c. 2.; 1 Jac. c. 26.; 21 Jac. c. 28.; 1 Jac. c. 7.; 7 Jac. c. 3.; 7 Jac. c. 4.; 16 Car. II. c. 12.; 3 & 4 W. & M. c. 2.; 8 & 9 W. III. c. 50.; 9 & 10 W. III. c. 2.; 11 & 12 W. III. c. 18.; 1 Ann. c. 18.; and 2 & 3 Ann.
thirteen towns--Crediton (1698), Tiverton (1698), Exeter (1698), Herford (1698), Colchester (1698), Hull (1698), Shaftesbury (1698), King's Lynn (1700), Sudbury (1700), Gloucester (1702), Worcester (1704), Plymouth (1708), and Norwich (1712)-- successfully applied and built workhouses. "The idea underlying all these Acts," as was indicated above, "was the desirability of organizing the labour of the unemployed, with the double object of maintaining them without disorder and of increasing the national wealth . . . the new workhouses were incidentally found of use in providing an alternative to the indiscriminate distribution of money by the Overseers. These early reformers had, in fact," note the Webbs, "accidentally stumbled on the discovery of the 'workhouse test'."

Hence, in 1723 Sir Edward Knatchbull induced the House of Commons to pass a general act, 9 G. I. c. 7., which gave parish officers the right to purchase or rent any house or houses in the parish wherein they could compel the poor to go, providing they had the consent of the voting members of the parish. What was significant about this act was that it was now no longer necessary to apply to parliament for special permission before a workhouse could be erected. In addition, this act gave parish officers the right to farm out the poor to contractors, just as they had the right to farm out parish

1Webbs, VII, 121.
infants to wet-nurses. The parish officers now had a new source of revenue, and the conditions in which the poor who were farmed out had to live and work were just as bad as those in which the parish infants were placed.\(^1\) Instead of officials trying to find employment for the able-bodied poor, they now sought ways to gather all of them together. Hence, within a decade over one hundred such institutions were erected.\(^2\) The poor were now segregated—a class apart. As one critic so aptly put it, this act officially sanctioned the transition that had been made "between the solicitude which required that work should be found for the Poor, and the harsh determination of the eighteenth century to compel the Poor to work."\(^3\) As a consequence of this one act, all weekly pensions, all farming out of parish infants, and all outdoor relief (similar to the care given at outpatient clinics today) was abolished. And as could be expected, this act brought with it a new flood of proposals for model workhouses by men who were no doubt humanitarians, by men who had the welfare of the deserving poor in mind just as much as they desired to decrease the parish rates.

That the economic goals of both the later and the earlier advocates of workhouses were usually unrealistic can

\(^1\) Shaw, pp. 247-48; see also p. 126.

\(^2\) Webbs, VII, 121.

be seen when one glances, even cursorily, at some of their proposals.\footnote{One cannot really divorce the social from the economic aim. For example, Josiah Woodward, who is representative of these reformers, stressed the need of providing "Work and Workhouses to employ the Hands of the Poor, which otherwise will most certainly be misemployed in sinful and vicious Courses... If we ask any Thief, Strumpet, or other Malefactor; what it was that brought them to their wicked way of Life? They often reply, That it was their want of an honest Employment, that they did it to get bread... (THE DUTY OF COMPASSION TO THE SOULS OF OTHERS, in ENDEAVOURING their REFORMATION /London, 1696/, a Sermon... /2nd ed., London, 1698/, pp. ix, x-xi). See also Burns who comments on the unpracticality of most schemes proposed, pp. 192-96.}

For example, as early as 1678, Richard Hains proposed that, besides the adults, all of the children of the chargeable poor be employed in houses rented by the parish as soon as they reached four or five years of age (a view Defoe shared). He further suggested that even the physically handicapped, those "impotent people having one Hand to work, and such that can make use of their Legs, though no Hand," who usually were excused, also be put to work.\footnote{A Model of Government for the Good of the Poor and the Wealth of the Nation... (London, 1678), p. 5. See also his Reasons for Erecting in Every County... a Workhouse (London, 1687).} In addition, his workhouse would also include all rogues, beggars, and vagrants that roamed the streets. Thus, his plan comprehended all the chargeable poor. What was new and somewhat revolutionary about his proposal was that he wished to use his workhouse for reforming all prisoners, even those sentenced to die, except those convicted of treason or murder. Prisoners who worked in his workhouse would then, he proposed, have time to prepare...
themselves for a new life. Those eventually released would profit by learning an honest and productive trade; those eventually executed would profit by being able to make themselves spiritually ready for that event. Most importantly, those confined to debtors' prisons, those who could not pay their debts or the fees they had accumulated while in prison, those who starved on the "three half pence" they were allotted daily (if they were lucky enough to get it) would also benefit from his plan. "This," said Hains

I rather press for, for that I have observed such dogged cruelties in some of our Prisons where many Poor famishing Persons have been crowded up in one little room, without any thing to lie on, save straw, and that so seldom changed, that "twas become muck, and only fit to breed Vermine: And to aggravate their misery, the Jaylor fasten'd broad thin Plates of iron pent-house wise across the Grates of the Prison, to prevent those who were Charitably disposed, that they should not give them Beer through the Grates, but that they might be forced to drink his, and pay two pence for little more than a Pint. This unmerciful cruelty have I seen in our Nation, and were it not better to have so many people comfortably at work, than languishing thus under unconscionable oppressors? These are the persons that may compose and fill up these Houses . . . .1

In the same year that Hains made this proposal (1678), an anonymous author calling himself Philo-Anglicus, Gentleman, wrote a long treatise called Bread for the Poor,2 in which he

---

1Ibid., p. 6. For Defoe's views of debtors' prisons and the laws pertaining to bankruptcy, see Chapter Four below.

2It is interesting to note that the style, phrasing, diction, capitalization, punctuation, tone and point of view, all bear a marked resemblance to Defoe's writings on this
too proposed that all above age five who were chargeable be housed together in workhouses so that they could be employed "to profit." Not only would the one hundred thousand beggars who he calculated were roaming throughout England no longer be a drain on the nation's economy but they would also be "kept in good order." To accommodate these poor, the author proposed that units larger than the parish be considered when the workhouses would be built. And since the poor would be employed in spinning, the nation would save at least one million pounds yearly, the exact sum he estimated that was being spent yearly at that time on imported linen. Moreover, England's farmers would profit from his plan because more hemp and flax would have to be planted and harvested.1

Although the plans suggested by Hains and this anonymous author did not call for the elaborate schemes later offered that were modeled after the Bristol Experiment of Cary noted above, one can nevertheless see that the genesis of the workhouse movement extended as far back as the Restoration itself. These early reformers were, as has been shown, very subject. For example, the author particularly wishes to avoid injury to English trade by a duplication of products and advised, as did Defoe, that the fish industry be expanded. Both felt that the fish industry had not been developed to its full potential. For Defoe's views on this particular point, see below.

1.Philo-Anglicus, Gentleman, Bread for the Poor, Or Observations Upon Certain Proposals Lately Offered to the King's Majesty and Both Houses of Parliament (London, 1678), Title Page, pp. 4-5.
interested in arriving at a scheme which would save the nation money and "manage" the poor at the same time. Many of the proposers of model workhouses were themselves involved in parish administration and were consequently intimately aware of all ramifications of the problem of the ever growing number of poor and the ever increasing parish rates. Representative of such men was John Bellars, who wrote in 1699 that it would be most advantageous if "some Effectual Expedient" were to be found whereby the idle poor would be profitably employed in such a way that not only would "a very heavy Burden" be removed from the shoulders of those who were then contributing to the parish rates but also in such a way that a great increase in English manufactures would result. Thus, he suggested that the bill he had submitted to parliament two years earlier be re-examined. His bill for the establishment of colleges of industry was explicitly aimed at those chargeable poor who were "thrown into Want by an idle Education; or, such as being supernumery in the Trade they were bred in, who are now accounted burdensome." ¹

Two decades later men were still proposing model workhouses and were still espousing noble goals, goals, however, that were no more economically realizable than those of their predecessors. In fact, in some ways, they were less

¹ Essays about the Poor, Manufactures, Trade, Plantation and Immorality . . . (London, 1699), pp. 1-4.
realizable and less realistic. For instance, in 1717, Laurence Braddon wrote that his Corporation of Fathers and Guardians of the Poor of Great Britain would take the two million chargeable poor of the nation and turn them into the "future Riches, Power, Glory, and Happiness of this United Kingdom." As a result of his plan, the poor would then produce "in Benefits and Gain, near Twenty Millions Sterling per. ann." Moreover, he assured the Crown that his proposal would not affect "the now Industrious Manufactures" of the country in any deleterious way. In order to accomplish this rather fantastic goal, he proposed that all above age three be employed. Consequently, he said, by the age of six these young children would no longer be economic liabilities but would be economic assets, for they would be making more than it would cost to feed and shelter them. Hence, he boasted, "by age six the Corporation will be making a profit even off of children," and he calculated that eleven million pounds sterling would be saved in this way annually. Furthermore, if his plan was implemented immediately, he promised that the national debts could be totally paid off within twenty years and that most of the taxes that were placed on the necessities of life, such as on salt, coal, candles, soap, could be permanently removed as well. On the other hand, he warned that if his plan was not effected immediately, if England's poor were
continued in their present miserable State of IGNORANCE, IDLENESS, POVERTY, and CORRUPTION, /the/
Poor-Rates will then annually increase; and these Payments to the Poor, and our Present Taxes, will become very burdensome to the People . . . which are sensibly felt by all degrees of Men; but by none so much as the poorer sort, whom our Enemies endeavour to corrupt with seditious Principles and Practices, against the best of KINGS, and the Happiest Government upon Earth. For our Adversaries would despair of Success, if they did not hope to make it the principal Instruments of our own Destruction. But in passing One proper General Law relating to the Poor, their IGNORANCE, POVERTY, and CORRUPTION would be (almost) entirely removed, and instead of Rebellious, truly Loyal Principles instil'd into them; consequently, the Foundation of our Enemies Hopes destroyed.1

As one can see, there was no divorcement of the needs of the poor, that is, the social end of workhouses, from the political end, that is, the reduction of the poor from being possible rebellious, dissatisfied malcontents to satisfied, controlled members of a workhouse, or from the economic end, that is, the reduction of the poor rates. Moreover, with pie-in-the-sky results promised on the one hand and such dire consequences on the other, 2 it was no wonder that the movement caught the imagination and the enthusiasm of so many Englishmen. In fact, when that "great capitalist entrepreneur of the day, Sir Humphrey Mackworth," introduced his bill into parliament that would have allowed parishes at their own discretion to erect workhouses (later done by the Act of 1723), his proposal

1 Braddon, pp. iii-iv, 8-10, 65, xix.
2 Ibid., pp. xi-xiii, xxv, 62-64.
met almost "universal acceptance," and was met with "great applause" in the House of Commons "through all its stages."¹

To sum up, all of the proposals offered to remove the idle poor from the parish rates and to employ them to profit; all planners desired to instill into the poor the "fear of God;" all desired to insure that the "proper" end of charity was carried out, that is, that the money given in taxes to care for the deserving poor was not wasted either by them or by the parish officers; and, lastly, all sought to provide adequately for the poor in a more efficient and less expensive way.

In theory and in intent, workhouses were first proposed to solve the problem of the high parish rates by giving an alternative way of caring for the poor than the usual system of day-by-day or week-by-week outdoor relief; in practice, however, they came more and more to be used as a deterrent. That is, they came to be used as a threat held over the heads of those who would have otherwise applied for some kind of parochial assistance. As one anonymous author stated:

I must . . . acquaint you, that the principal Advantage to the Publick, by encouraging these Foundations, arises from the Spirit of Industry that is provok'd by it among the Poor. Many of our People, who before depended chiefly on what they could get weekly or monthly, by teezing the Overseer of the Poor, now buckle to Labour; and since they find they must give their Labour to the Publick, if they will depend on

¹Webbs, VII, 113-14.
the Publick, they have exerted themselves, got Wheels and Materials for Spinning, and work early and late to avoid coming into the Workhouse.¹

Or as he later says, "the advantage of the workhouse to the parish does not arise from what the poor people can do towards their own subsistence, but from the apprehensions the poor have of it. These prompt them," he continues, "to exert and do their utmost to keep themselves off the parish and render them exceedingly averse to submit to come into the house until extreme necessity compels them."² It is no doubt true that some idle poor were forced to assert themselves because of the threat of being sent to the workhouse if they sought relief, but it is equally true that many innocent real poor suffered as a direct result of the workhouse system, especially when it was used as a threat. The conditions in the best of them were horrible even by eighteenth century standards.³ Hence, many poor chose to starve rather than ask for assistance, that is, rather than subject themselves to the workhouse. Consequently, the parish rates in several parishes dropped significantly. For instance, the parish of Chelmsford was able to reduce its rates from 3s. 6d. in the pound in 1716 to

¹An Account of Several Workhouses for employing and maintaining the Poor (London, 1732), pp. 114-15. [Hereafter cited as An Account of Several Workhouses.]

²Ibid., pp. 115-16.

³See below.
in 1721, and that "included the churchwarden's rates." At Hanslope, where the poor were also threatened with being sent to the workhouse, the parish rates began to appreciably decrease. And it is interesting to note that at Maidstone (where the case of Mr. Hendley was disposed of) in 1720 when their workhouse was finished and the poor on the parish rolls were ordered to appear there, only half of those that had been receiving parish relief showed up. Hence, their rates too appreciably declined. The poor, deserving and undeserving alike, now only had two choices: to submit to the workhouse or starve, for refusal meant that one was not entitled to any kind of assistance. Because evidence, such as that cited above, indicates that many poor refused to submit to the "terror" of the workhouse, choosing instead to retain their liberty and dignity, and consequently the rates noticeably decreased in many parishes, workhouses were looked upon as a success and were warmly received. As the Webbs report, within a short time, no fewer than one hundred and fifty other workhouses were built, and they were successful in reducing their rates too. It would seem that many poor preferred to starve slowly outside of the workhouse than slowly within.

---

1 An Account of Several Workhouses, 1732, pp. 61, 101, 121.
2 Webbs, VII, 245. See also pp. 243-44. Later in the century, writers also state that the principal advantage of workhouses lay in the terror they held for the poor. See Webbs, p. 245, and Eden, II, 266-72.
What awaited those who did submit themselves to the workhouse was confinement and discipline and hard work at best and semi-starvation, total lack of privacy, and degradation at worst. Those in charge of workhouses, as well as those who proposed them, utilized the principle of rewards and punishments to the fullest in order to get the most work done with the least amount of trouble from the inmates. At the same time they wished to spend the least amount possible caring for their charges. This practice is illustrated by Braddon, who did not hesitate to propose that food and other necessities be allotted to those in his workhouse according to the amount of work each inmate produced. He did not think

. . . that such as are VICIOUS, LAZY, or IGNORANT, in the respective Arts to which they were respectively bred and do not add (to) the Nation’s Wealth FOUR SHILLINGS per Week per Head, should eat and drink so well, as they who shall add TWENTY SHILLINGS (and some more) per Week per Head, to the Riches of Great Britain.

Some workhouses even went so far as to incorporate a similar statement into their by-laws. For instance, the workhouse at Cripplegate, St. Giles, in 1725, had Rule VII that stated that if any able-bodied worker either refused to work or created any kind of disturbance, such as grumbling about food rations, he was only to be given half-rations. If his persistence or the

\[1\] Braddon, pp. 29-30. His 20s. would be beyond most workers, if one looks at the average wage earned by laborers at that time. See Chapter One, p. 23, note 2.
disturbance continued for more than one day, he was to be placed on bread and water only. If he continued to refuse to work or if the disturbance then did not abate, the guilty worker was to be sent to a House of Correction and there severely punished. This harsh attitude did not abate for many years (if ever, if one is to judge by many 'modern' penal institutions).

In light of the evidence cited above, it is obvious that many writers of pamphlets and treatises and many legislators and parish officers viewed workhouses as a panacea to the problem of the poor and the rising rates. But to those most immediately affected by them, the poor themselves, who were now a segregated, institutionalized class within the body politic, they were odious. In The Village, George Crabbe eloquently captured the feelings of those who had to live and work in the workhouse:

Theirs is yon House that holds the Parish-Poor,
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
There, where the putrid vapours, flagging, play,
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day--
There Children dwell who know no Parents' care;
Parents, who know no Children's love, dwell there!
Heart-broken Matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken Wives, and Mothers never Wed;
Dejected Widows with unheeded tears,
And crippled Age with more than childhood fears;
The Lame, the Blind, and, far the happiest they!
The moping Idiot, and the Madman gay.
Here too the Sick their final doom receive,
Here brought, amid the scenes of grief, to grieve,

1An Account of Several Workhouses, p. 7.
Where the loud groans from some sad chamber flow,
Mixt with the clamours of the crowd below!
Here sorrowing, they each kindred sorrow scan,
And the cold charities of man to man:
Whose laws indeed for ruin'd Age provide,
And strong compulsion plucks the scrap from pride;
But still that scrap is bought with many a sigh,
And pride embitters what it can't deny.

(Bk. I, 11. 231-52)

Although Crabbe's picture (1776) applied to those who lived after Defoe's death, a similar picture was drawn graphically by one of Defoe's contemporaries, Joseph Stot, who after visiting the workhouse in his parish in London, reported that he was surprised to find an old friend there. This man was dressed totally in rags; that is, his clothes were full of holes and patches, but they were the only clothes he owned. Moreover, his friend had no shoes, which was especially tragic because this man had once been an excellent shoe-maker.

Stot adds that he was curious to see if all the inmates were in the same circumstances as his friend; therefore he inspected the rest of the workhouse and discovered that "hardly any of the inmates had Cloaths to their Back that were worth two Groat—that they had no Change, not even two Shirts—that most of the Children were scaldpated, and lay four or five in a Bed; and that both Old and Young were miserably affected with the Itch." Regrettably, these conditions were not the exception, but the rule. It is thus understandable that many poor refused

1 A Sequel to the Friendly Advice to the Poor... (Manchester, 1756), pp. 26-27.
to enter the workhouse and submit themselves to such inhuman conditions: if they were to starve in the workhouse, they may as well starve without, where they would at least retain their dignity and, more importantly, their liberty. In short, because no assistance of any kind was given to any poor unless he submit himself first to the workhouse and because those who did come in were "ran to profit," the rates in many parishes, as indicated above, noticeably decreased. Consequently, other parishes looked at the success of parishes such as Chelmsford and Hanslope and built workhouses of their own. And because some of their poor refused to enter and those who did were also "ran to profit," their parish rates accordingly decreased, giving further encouragement to still other parishes. And so a vicious circle was formed, which caused untold suffering to those in and out of the workhouse. Yet the workhouse as an institution for caring for the problem of the poor was still advocated long into the nineteenth century.

What aroused Defoe's initial interest in the workhouse movement is not known, but his interest almost spanned his entire literary career. For four years before his death he was still commenting adversely about them, about their morally and socially deleterious effects. ¹ It was, however, in 1704 that

¹ See page 153 below.
he made his first public fight against them. At that time a bill was presented to parliament by Sir Humphry Mackworth, entitled "For the Relief and Settlement of the Poor in England." This bill, which intended "to support workhouses in every parish, with parochial capitals," was received with great approbation in the House of Commons where it easily passed.¹ But, according to Ruggles, Mackworth's bill was thrown out of the House of Lords because of the impact of arguments presented by Defoe in his pamphlet Giving Alms No Charity, which was first published on November 18, 1704. Writing in 1795, Ruggles comments that Defoe's was a solitary voice crying out in the wilderness, for no other work had been written on Mackworth's bill and against workhouses (or if other works were written at that time, they were not extant).²

The full title of Defoe's pamphlet expresses succinctly views held by him throughout his lifetime. The title of the first edition is as follows: Giving Alms No Charity and Employing the Poor a GRIEVANCE to the NATION. Being an ESSAY Upon this Great QUESTION, Whether Work-houses, Corporations, and Houses of Correction for Employing the Poor, as now practis'd in England, or Parish-Stocks, as propos'd in a late Pamphlet, Entituled, A Bill for the Relief, Employment,

¹See page 120, note 1 above.
²Ruggles, I, 185, 190 (Letter XVI).
and Settlement of the Poor, etc. are not Mischievous to the Nation, tending to the Destruction of our Trade, and to Encrease the Number and Misery of the Poor, Addressed to the Parliament of England.¹ Perhaps in order to placate political foes, Defoe wrote in the introduction that he hoped that the "private picque" of some members of parliament would not dissuade them from considering his arguments on their merit. He further took pains to assure them that he had no personal vested interest in the outcome of the bill other than what would be good for the nation as a whole. Thus, he states that "he seeks no rewards; to him it shall always be reward enough to have been capable of serving his native country, and honour enough to have afforded something for the publick good worthy of consideration."² This cloak of humility and selflessness was exactly the correct rhetorical stance for him to adopt, since he wished to persuade so august a body as the House of Lords.

Defoe's purpose in writing the pamphlet was to show how English commerce could be restored to the state of prosperity it had enjoyed under Queen Elizabeth by showing that workhouses

¹(London, 1704) in A Collection of Pamphlets for the Poor (London, 1787). [Hereafter cited as Giving Alms No Charity]. The title page of the fourth edition differs from the first edition only in orthographic matters. However, because the first edition seems to follow Defoe's usual practices in regard to capitalization, italicization, and spelling, I have chosen to follow it.

²Ibid., p. 66.
impeded the natural flow of trade, which had decreased since the advent of the workhouse movement. This decrease, to him, was threatening the whole economy of the nation as well as being particularly injurious to the poor. From the time of Elizabeth until the Civil War, trade had increased from 400,000 crowns annually to 2,000,000 pounds sterling annually. However, by 1704, trade was decreasing yearly at a very alarming rate, and this was the tide that Defoe hoped to turn.1

In order to understand his arguments, Defoe began by putting Mackworth's bill in perspective. Consequently, he first discussed the basic issue that lay behind the problem of workhouses, i.e., the causes for the great increase in the number of the poor. Obviously, if there had not been so many poor out of work, there would have been no need for workhouses; and, said Defoe, if there had been no workhouses, trade would not have decreased to the extent that it had. The first cause of the poverty of those for whom workhouses were intended was, he announced, the inordinate drinking habits2 of the idle poor,

1Ibid., p. 70.

2Drinking gin was a problem that received much attention of English writers as well as English legislators, especially between 1720-1750. In Second Thoughts Are Best, Defoe himself observed: "But not so far are our Common People infatuated with Geneva, that Half the Work is not done as formerly. It debilitates and enervates them, nor are they so strong and healthy as before. So that if this Abuse of Geneva be not stopt, we may go whoop for Husbandmen, Labourers, &c., Trade must consequently stand still, and the Credit of the Nation sink . . ." (pp. 5-6). See also Daniel Defoe, The Case
habits which kept them in a state of "continuous Destitution" and left their children "Naked and Starving to the care of the parish." Moreover, a contributing factor was sloth, for England was the "most lazy diligent Nation in the world . . . . There is nothing more frequent than for an Englishman to work till he has got his pocket full of money, and then go and be idle, or perhaps drunk, till it is all gone, and perhaps in debt . . . ." Because he felt drinking was "so deep Rooted in the Nature and Genius of the English," he named it as the chief cause of the poverty of the poor. "This is the Ruine of our Poor, the Wife mourns, the Children Starve, [the] Husband had Work before him, but lies at the Ale-House, or otherwise idles away his time, and wont Work. 'Tis the Men that wont work, not the Men that can get no Work which makes the Numbers of our Poor." To support his point, Defoe stated that if he were given but a short notice, he personally could "without difficulty" produce more than one thousand families who were starved and poorly clothed simply because the heads of the households either did not choose to work, even though they

of the Distillers and of the Distilling Trade in ENGLAND . . .
could obtain jobs which would have paid them "their 15 to 25s. per week," or they spent their salaries on gin. ¹

Because of his sympathy for those paupers who tried to earn a living, Defoe took particular care not to indict all of the poor. Hence, he specifically defines his poor and then proceeds to lay down what he calls his fundamental maxims. In the context of his argument, the undeserving poor were those idle people usually called rogues, vagabonds, or sturdy beggars, or those he says who formed "a crowd of clamouring, unemploy'd, unprovided for poor People, who made the Nation uneasy, burthened the Rich, clogged the Parishes, and made themselves worthy of Laws, and peculiar management to dispose of and direct them." As one can see, Defoe had no sympathy with these poor at all. To him they were nothing but human parasites, and should be treated as such. His attitude towards these poor was simplistic perhaps, but it was typical of the period. In keeping with this attitude, he lay down his fundamental maxims:

1. There is in England more Labour than Hands to perform it, and consequently a want of People, not Employment;
2. No Man in England, of sound Limbs and Senses, can be Poor merely for want of Work;
3. All our Work-houses, Corporations, and Charities for employing the Poor, and setting them to Work, as now they are employ'd, or any Acts of Parliament to empower Overseers of Parishes, or Parishes themselves, to employ the Poor, except

¹Giving Alms No Charity, pp. 85-86.
as shall be hereafter excepted, are, and will be
publick Nusances, Mischiefs to the Nation which
serve to the Ruin of Families, and the Encrease
of the Poor; [and]
4. That 'tis a Regulation of the Poor that is wanted
in England, not a setting them to Work.¹

To support his first, second, and fourth maxims, Defoe pointed
to the great number of beggars that roamed the English streets.
Although it would appear that these beggars refuted his
contention that there was work for anyone who wanted it, Defoe
hastened to add that to him begging constituted an employment
since men did it from choice and not from necessity. And in
order to "prove" this statement, he argued that if jobs were
really as scarce as beggars would have men believe, men would
be fighting for them and would be willing to work for any wage
rather than starve. And since these beggars were not fighting
for jobs and were not willing to work, even though wages were
high, then these men begged from choice and not from necessity.
(Although to the modern reader, Defoe's "proof" seems specious
and to beg the question, it obviously did not appear so to his
contemporaries, if one is to judge by Ruggles' statements,
which praise Defoe's arguments; it would appear that many of
the period shared Defoe's views towards these poor beggars: to
them beggars were idle because they were vicious, not vicious
because they were idle.) Consequently, charged Defoe, all

¹Ibid. See also Review (Vol. IV, Nos. 8-12; Thurs.
Feb. 27, 1707; Sat. March 1, 1707; Tues. March 4, 1707; Thurs.
March 6, 1707; Sat. March 8, 1707), Fasc. Bk. 9, pp. 29-48.
those citizens who, in their mistaken notions of charity, contributed alms to these beggars, actually were as guilty as they in making begging "a scandal upon the Country." To him, these idlers were not the poor who were worthy of charity, and thus he concludes "an Alms ill directed may be a Charity to the particular Person, but [it] becomes an Injury to the Publick, and no Charity to the Nation."¹

Just as parochial corruption stemmed from a failure to properly execute the poor laws, so also did Defoe believe such mistaken notions of charity gave rise to workhouses and to Mackworth's bill, which would not only have permitted every parish to erect a workhouse but also to have the workhouse engage in the manufacture of woolen goods. Consequently, as an economist, Defoe felt obliged to oppose not only Mackworth's bill but the very concept of workhouses that usually were proposed, for all "tended to the increase and not to the relief of the poor."² Because he believed that the proposed dispersement of woolen manufactures into every parish would prove fatal to English trade, Defoe had to try to persuade the House of Lords not to support Mackworth's bill or any other like it. In order for the natural flow of trade to occur, it was necessary that products be brought to London, the "Heart thro'
which by proper Pulsation, these Streams pass in their due Course," and then passed from the carrier to the wholesaler to the merchant, from the warehouse to the shop to the buyer, and then by a "Counterchanging again . . . be transmitted to all the several Parts of the Kingdom." But if this circulation was impeded, if each parish or workhouse made the same goods, what would happen to the excess products that were not consumed within a parish? What, he asked, would happen if markets were glutted with the same product? For example,

What must the Poor of Colchester do? There they buy a parochial settlement; those that have numerous families cannot follow the Manufactures and come up to London, for our parochial laws impower the Churchwardens to refuse them a settlement; so that they are confined to their own country, and the Bread taken out of their Mouths; and all this to feed Vagabonds, and to set them to Work, who by their choice would be idle, and who merit the Correction of the Law . . .

There are Arcana in Trade, which though they are the natural Consequences of Time and casual Circumstances, are yet become now to essential to the publick Benefit, that to alter or disorder them, would be an irreparable Damage to the Publick . . .

That is,

The Manufactures of England are happily settled in different corners of the Kingdom, from whence they are mutually conveyed by a Circulation of Trade to London by wholesale, like the Blood to the Heart, and from thence disperse[d] in lesser quantities to the other Parts of the Kingdom by retail . . .

By this exchange of our Manufactures, abundance of trading families are maintain'd by the carriage and recarriage of Goods; vast Numbers of Men and Cattle are employed, and numbers of Inholders, Victuallers, and their dependencies subsisted.¹

¹Review (Vol. IV, No. 4; Tues. Feb. 18, 1706), Fasc. Bk. 9, p. 15. See also Giving Alms No Charity, p. 77.
Consequently, any scheme that would stimulate this circulation of trade would do more for England and her poor than all the workhouses put together, even though he conceded that a workhouse may be beneficial to the particular town, city or parish in which it is located and may even be beneficial to the poor, especially to the children. But, in general, he observed that the familiar old adage, "penny wise, pound foolish" applied to those who advocated the erection of workhouses throughout England. Adopting a tone reminiscent of Christ chastising the Pharisees, Defoe admonished the legislators for their lack of economic acumen in favoring a charity which looked good on the outside but which was bad on the inside:

... the Woe of Trade, be on you, ye Hypocrites, who Gild your Follies with Outside Shams, while Essentially and Effectually, you Eat the Bowels of your Native Country, Starve the Diligent Hands, that honestly labour for their Bread; that having first turn'd Numerous Families into the Street, you pick up their Ruin'd Orphans for Vagrants, and boast of their Numbers, as an Instance of your Charity.

Your House of Correction ought to be turn'd upon yourselves, and you should there perform the Penance due to your shortsighted Politicks; you are the Ruine of our Labourious Poor, the Discouragers of Industry, the Foundation of Poverty, and the Encrease of Vagabonds.

Defoe here turns on those who were in responsible positions of authority, on those who framed the laws that permitted

---

1 Defoe came to change his mind about workhouses being possibly beneficial to children; in fact, he came to feel that they were morally dangerous to children. See below, pp. 150, 153.

2 Review (Vol. IV, No. 4), p. 15.
churchwardens and overseers to "purchase or rent any house. . . ." wherein the poor would be compelled to go, just as they were responsible for those laws which permitted the same parish officials to raise the parish rates as they saw fit. In short, they were upholding a system that would only "Rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul" and would throw two hundred families who were then employed in manufactures or who depended upon the circulation of these manufactures for their subsistence out of work or into another phase of their business, which in turn would throw other poor out of work.¹ And if it is true, Defoe asked, that "what rises in one Place, falls in Another," i.e., "a Manufacture rais'd in one Town, must decay in Another," then of what benefit are workhouses, especially when they "only perform that Work by the Hands of Vagabonds, which was before perform'd by the Diligent Labouring Poor?" He warned the legislators that if the products made by the inmates of workhouses continued to duplicate those made by the diligent poor and continued to undersell those made by independent workers, they would be responsible for the results: the markets would be glutted, prices would fall, and the diligent poor would become pauperized, and eventually would become inmates of workhouses themselves. Nothing new was being added to the market; much, however, was being subtracted. Consequently, workhouses did

¹Review (Vol. IV, No. 5; Thurs. Feb. 20, 1706), Fasc. Bk. 9, pp. 18-20.
not benefit the independent industrious poor nor keep the number of poor who were dependent upon the parish from rising.

In fact, the trade of the nation, that gave England her economic stability, was being imperilled by the very thing that was supposed to have helped it. As a result, Defoe again questioned:

What do these Gentlemen merit, that in their Superlative Cunning, found out such a Sublime Invention, and got so much applause, so many good old Womens Prayers and Blessings for their Charity, and Fiddled our Credulous Representatives into a Belief of fine things to be done for the Poor; when, in short, the Upshot of the Matter was both to leave the Nation, and the Manufactures just where they found them; the Poor worse, and the Parishes worst of all . . . .

Thus, Defoe implies that perhaps the legislators were being hoodwinked into letting England sink into a sea of poverty, just as the Roman senators watched Rome burn while Nero fiddled.

Pauper labor as employed in workhouses would, in effect, undermine the prosperity of the whole nation. It would most drastically affect those poor who struggled daily to eke out a living and to stay off the parish rates and out of workhouses. Regardless of the good intentions of those who sponsored workhouses, the products made in them undersold those made by independent workers, who were barely making enough to subsist as it was. What was a worker to do?, he asked:

1Review (Vol. II, No. 9; Sat. March 24, 1705), Fasc. Bk. 4, pp. 33-34.

2Concerning Defoe's arguments, one critic has said: "... apart from all misstatement and cynicism, it must be
... and this Contention brings it to this: No (says the Poor Man that is like to be put out of his Work) rather than that Man shall come in, I'll do it Cheaper: Nay, (Says the Other), but I'll do it Cheaper than you: And thus one Poor Man wanting but a Days Work, would bring down the Price of Labour in a whole Nation; for the Man cannot Starve and will work for anything rather than want it.1

But when prices reached rock bottom, the only thing left for the worker to do would be to go to the workhouse and assist in making products that would undersell other independent workers and eventually cause more to come to the workhouse.

Defoe here was not as vitally concerned with enunciating economic theories as he was with giving practical suggestions that came from his personal and intimate knowledge of economic affairs. As John R. Moore notes, the most famous economist of the eighteenth century, Adam Smith, "read lectures on political economy in a cloistered college and wrote his Wealth of Nations in the retirement of a provincial Scottish town," whereas Defoe acquired his extensive knowledge of economics from England itself. For Defoe "was a citizen of the world of trade," says John R. Moore, "from infancy to old age. He was born, he lived, and he died in the greatest of trading cities, admitted that his main argument is conclusive ... even if it leaves the main problem unsolved" (Webbs, VII, 115).

1 Giving Alms No Charity, pp. 72-73. See also Review (Vol. II, No. 14; Thurs. April 5, 1705), Fasc. Bk. 4, pp. 53-54; and Review (Vol. IV, Nos. 7 and 9; Tues. Feb. 25, 1707; Sat. March 1, 1707), Fasc. Bk. 9, pp. 27-29, 35-36. See also Daniel Defoe, A Plan of English Commerce (London, 1728), p. 45.
and he engaged in trade almost everywhere he went on his travels. . . ."¹ Therefore, his long and intimate acquaintance with commerce came long before he enunciated any theories on the subject. Moreover, although it is true that he often wrote pamphlets and treatises solely for party interests (such as those advocating the union of Scotland and England that appeared in many volumes of the Review) as his enemies and detractors often charge, that charge could have no validity in this situation. Just as it is difficult to see what personal advantage he might have been supposed to have gotten from defending the poor skippers and keelmen of Newcastle, so also is it difficult to see what personal advantage he might have gotten by attacking workhouses. Or for that matter, what political profit would have been had.

In order to persuade the members of parliament to his point of view, however, Defoe cited examples familiar to his audience. His examples are of areas where poor people had been employed manufacturing products that were in direct competition with those made by other poor people in workhouses. Yet there was not a sufficient market to support both groups. Hence, the manufacture of these products in these areas only served to enrich "one poor Man to starve another" in that it only put "a Vagabond into an honest Man's Employment." A good example was

¹Citizen of the New World, pp. 307-12.
that of the workhouse at Colchester. To add insult to injury, the poor thrown out of work at Colchester could not even move to London or elsewhere to seek new work. It was impossible for them to do so because the Law of Settlement and Removal gave churchwardens the right to refuse them permission to enter their parish. As a result they were confined to their own parish, and "the Bread was taken out of their Mouths; and all this to feed Vagabonds, and to set them to Work, who by their Choice would be idle, and who merit the correction of the Law."

The city of Norwich provided him with yet another example. Norwich and the surrounding area had for years manufactured "stuffs" and stockings, sending vast quantities of hand-woven worsted hose to London. However, this trade had all but been wiped out because weavers in another near-by area had begun to weave hose by the frame faster and cheaper than the Norwich weavers could by hand. In one day a weaver could weave on a frame what it took one poor woman to do in eight or ten. Again, because consumption did not increase in accordance with production, the market was glutted and prices dropped until finally the masters of Norwich were forced to move away or go into other businesses. As a result, many poor workers were unemployed and left to the care of the parish. Thus, a business and a community which had once employed many poor families and which had returned at least "5000 s. per Week" to
the national economy ("some say twice that Sum") dwindled to such an extent that it then contributed "a Sum not now worth naming."¹

Significantly, Defoe's principal (but not only) objection to workhouses was not sociological, ethical, or even moral, as one might have expected, but, as it has been shown, was economic. That he consistently adhered to his principles shall be seen later when his own proposals for a workhouse are discussed, proposals which, for example, avoided "transposing the Manufacture from Colchester to London, and taking the Bread

¹Giving Alms No Charity, pp. 75-78. See also Defoe's The Just Complaint of the Poor Weavers Truly Represented (London, 1719) in which he shows that the English manufacture of calico caused the decline in the manufacture and consumption of English muslin, which had been the chief product of the area around Norwich as well as that of the Spittlefield weavers since the turn of the century. However, the Spittlefield weavers did not have the proper looms for calico; hence, most could not convert and many were thrown out of work. Defoe uses their situation to warn the English legislators what would happen to the whole country if home manufactures were not more carefully regulated and protected. Defoe also suggested that imports be taxed so high that people would be encouraged to buy only native goods, for when calico had been imported, people tended to buy native muslin because it was cheaper. Hence, at that time, the imported calico did not present any danger to the English economy. As soon as the English began to weave calico, however, the situation changed, and the muslin trade declined to such an extent that the increase in the economy caused by the manufacture of calico did not make up the deficit. Therefore duplication of manufactures was to Defoe just as much danger to English trade as was the transposing of goods from one area to another. See also Giving Alms No Charity, p. 82; Review (Vol. IV, Nos. 15 and 18; Sat. March 15, 1707; Sat. March 22, 1707), Fasc. Bk. 9, pp. 58-60, 71-72; Review (Vol. IV, Nos. 156-158; Tues. Feb. 10, 1708; Thurs. Feb. 12, 1708; Sat. Feb. 14, 1708), Fasc. Bk. 11, pp. 621-30.
out of the Mouths of the Poor of Essex to put it into the Mouths of the Poor of Middlesex."¹ It is also significant that Defoe did not in conscience object to the principle of rewards and punishments upon which workhouses for the most part were based. Writing about the Japenepers and the Black Guard, the "execrable Villains" and "idle Vermin" who roamed the English streets supposedly to blacken people's shoes, Defoe indicated where he stood in regard to this principle:

I therefore humbly propose, that these Vagabonds be put immediately under the Command and Inspection of such Task-Masters as the Government shall appoint, and that they be employ'd, punish'd, and reward'd, according to their Capacities, and Demerits, that is to say, the industrious and docile to Wool-combing and other Parts of the Woolen Manufacture, where Hands are wanted as also to Husbandry and other Parts of Agriculture. . . . Nor is there any need for transporting 'em beyond the Seas, for if any are refractory, they should be sent to our Stannaryed and other mines, to our coal-works, and other Places, where hard Labour is requir'd.²

¹Ibid., p. 86. For Defoe's other objections, see below, p. 153.

²Every Body's Business, Is No-body's Business, p. 27. In this work, Defoe characteristically proposed substituting "Antient Persons, poor Widows, and others who have not enough from their respective Parishes to maintain them" for the disreputable poor. In effect, he proposed the regulating and licensing of shoe-cleaners, and desired that an inspection system be instituted to prevent parochial corruption. In that way, only authorized shoe-cleaners could walk the English streets. Each cleaner would have either his own stand or territory to walk. In that way, "many thousands of Poor" would be provided for and no longer a burden to their parishes. As for the beggars who persisted in their idleness, Defoe still proposed that they be "sent to a Place where they shall be forced to work. By this Means Industry will be encourag'd, Idleness punish'd, and we shall be fam'd as well as happy, for
Although Defoe here is quite harsh and perhaps even inhumane as he offers his suggestions of what should be done to the idle undeserving poor, at other times, as has been shown, another more sympathetic side of his nature is revealed. For this reason, he appears at times to be inconsistent or even hypocritical. But that is not the case. Any statement of Defoe's regarding the poor must be read in context (as is true of any author). For as harsh and unsympathetic as he could be when talking of the able-bodied idle poor, he could be just as tender and compassionate when talking of the real poor. For example, although he was very concerned about the damage to trade that workhouses would cause "should every County but Manufacture all the several Sorts of Goods they use," he knew "no Case in which the People were so very open to a destructive Disaster" as the one presented by Mackworth's bill; for, said Defoe, trade is the "Food of the Poor, 'tis their Wealth, their Bread, their Independence."¹ He was additionally fearful that, if the bill passed the House of Lords and was enacted into law, the poor would be intimidated by the justices and overseers into buying only those products made in the workhouses. Consequently, the very shopkeepers who were taxed our Tranquility and Decorum" (Ibid.). This last statement aptly and succinctly summarizes Defoe's lifetime goals in regard to the poor.

¹Review (Vol. IV, No. 19; Tues. March 25, 1707), Fasc. Bk. 9, pp. 75-76.
to support the workhouses and who were the "Support of our Inland Circulation" would be ruined. Defoe again stressed the fact that the workhouse system could only "beggar the Nation to provide for the "idle" Poor."¹ Not only was such a policy "Penny wise, pound foolish," but it was also an injustice to those industrious poor who bore so many other injustices already.

iii

As has been shown, Defoe was absolutely convinced that a natural economic order existed--that "Nothing obeys the Course of Nature more exactly than Trade, Causes, and Consequences follow as directly as Day and Night . . . . If a Manufacture grows in one Place, that or another will sink somewhere else."² Therefore, as could be expected, a proposal based merely on sentimental sympathy for the poor or on mere convenience carried no weight with him at all. Instead, he concentrated on the effects of workhouses that were established and offered a counter proposal, one which would take the merits of the workhouses that already existed but which would at the same time in his estimation avoid their defects. For example, he wished to avoid injuring trade and increasing the number of poor that were on the parish rates.³ He also wished to avoid

¹Giving Alms No Charity, p. 79. See also Review (Vol. IV, No. 19), p. 76.
affecting the price of land, which he had observed had fallen in those areas where the poor were turned out of work because of the duplication of manufactures. As soon as the poor were turned out, local shopkeepers and farmers who had sold their products to many of the poor workers also had to leave the area. Hence, the land they either owned or rented decreased in value. In addition, Defoe wanted to avoid injuring the reputation of English manufactures abroad, which he maintained would suffer if the same goods were manufactured in every workhouse in the land. At present, English goods were still bought abroad according to their respective names, that is, "Serges, Baize, and other goods \[were\] bought abroad by the Character and Reputation of the place where they \[were\] made."

And lastly, he wished to avoid injuring the carrier trade, which now was not circulating as much goods as it did before the workhouse system was adopted in England so fervently.¹ Therefore, he suggested that:

if these worthy Gentlemen \[members of the House of Lords\], who show themselves so commendably forward to Relieve and Employ the Poor, will find out some new Trade, some new Market, where the Goods they make shall be sold, where none of the same Goods were sold before; if they will send them to any place where they shall not interfere with the rest of that Manufacture, or with some other made in England, then indeed they will do something worthy of themselves, and may employ the Poor to the same glorious advantage as Queen Elizabeth did, to whom this Nation, as a trading Country, owes its peculiar Greatness.

¹*Giving Alms No Charity*, pp. 79-82.
If these Gentlemen could establish a Trade to Muscovy for English serges, or obtain an order from the Czar, that all his Subjects should wear Stockings who wore none before, every poor Child's labour in Spinning and Knitting those Stockings, and all the Wool in them would be clear gain to the Nation, and the general Stock would be improved by it, because all the growth of our Country, and all the Labour of a Person who was idle before, is so much clear Gain to the General Stock.

If they will Employ the Poor in some Manufacture which was not made in England before, or not bought with some Manufacture made here before, then they offer ... something Extraordinary.

And the next year he again proposed:

... so let me however say this for our Workhouses, there is a Way how they may still be made Useful ... This is, in short, by setting the Poor to Work upon something, 'tis not to my purpose, to Enquire What, provided it has but this one Qualification, viz. That it was never made here before, some foreign Manufacture, which the Nation wants, and which we are now oblig'd to buy with our Money, and which does not interfere with our Manufacture.

Even though Defoe does not stipulate what product should be made (hence he could not be accused of having any vested interest in his proposal, as he was not encouraging the manufacture of anything in which he might have had an interest), he does carefully note the conditions under which workhouses would be acceptable to him: 1) that they produce a product not then manufactured in England; 2) that there be a ready market for the product so that it would not cut into the consumption of any other native product then being sold in England; 3) that

1Ibid., pp. 75-76.

such a product not interfere with the natural flow of trade. If these conditions were met, he promised that the poor who were "a Burthen" and the nation itself would meet with untold prosperity as the newly introduced product would involve many more people than those directly involved in its manufacture. For example, it would involve the carriers who would transport it throughout the land, the merchants who would distribute it, and the shopkeepers who would sell it to the customers who would finally buy it. Such an example was sailcloth, which Sir Owen Buckingham, the then present Lord Mayor of Reading, had introduced into his workhouse. Previously, all sailcloth had been imported from Holland or Normandy. Another example was Defoe's own pan-tile factory, which had employed over one hundred poor people. Before Defoe's factory began to manufacture them, pan-tiles had been purchased from Holland. These conditions, which he announced so early in his literary career, were conditions he adhered to throughout his life "with the utmost Zeal for the Good of England." ¹

In 1713, in a published treatise entitled Proposals for Implying the Poor in and About the City of London Without any Charge to the Publick,² Defoe amplified his original thoughts concerning workhouses and the problem of beggars who, he noted,

¹Ibid., p. 35.
²(London, 1713). Hereafter cited as Proposals for Implying the Poor.
despite all efforts to curb them, were still increasing daily. In this work, Defoe deplores the fact that most of those who were idle were "almost without any Sense of the fear of GOD, whose name they had continually in their Mouths, and who train'd in Atheism and Profaneness, and a most stupid Ignorance of the Principles of Religion." Regretfully, he observed that these people often sought to relieve their conditions by "Theft, Robbery, &c. at the Hazard of their Lives." These poor were not only deprived of the necessities of life but just as importantly they were deprived of the foundations for a moral life, i.e., of the principles of religion that sharply defined right and wrong conduct. Then too, they were deprived (either from choice or from necessity) of honest, gainful employment that would have at least earned them "a Groat or Six Pence a day."¹ Significantly, as was his practice, Defoe implies that poverty was a direct cause of crime.²

The principles that Defoe enunciated in 1704 were the same that he enunciated in Proposals for Implyoning the Poor. For example, he once again repeated his suggestion that the deserving poor be employed in manufactures that would not interfere with English trade. But rather than suggesting again

¹Ibid., pp. 3-4.
²See Chapter Four below.
that a new product be manufactured, this time Defoe proposed that the fishing industry in England be developed and expanded, for he felt that England had not made the most out of the fact that it was an insular nation, as had Holland, her great commercial rival.\footnote{It is interesting to note that Braddon four years later makes a similar proposal, stating that because many cities were situated on or near a navigable body of water, fishing would provide an excellent industry to develop that would prove beneficial to the poor as well as to the country as a whole. Like Defoe, he too suggests that the fish caught be used as supplemental food for the inmates of workhouses. He further proposed that boys be trained in related crafts connected with the fishing industry and in the rudiments of the sea. In fact, he insisted that all boys be trained to serve on ships until age eighteen. Then, if the boy wished to serve an additional three years, he would at the end of that time be permitted to set up a business anywhere in England. In effect, these three additional years would earn him a settlement in any parish in England (pp. 81-82, 86-87).} Besides, using fish as a supplement to the diet of the inmates of his proposed workhouse, the workhouse fisheries could sell the excess fish to others in the parish, and thereby make a profit. Moreover, the poor could be employed profitably in making ropes, sails, fish nets, fish hooks, and in maintaining the fishing vessels belonging to the workhouse. Although the workhouses here would be in competition with private fisheries, such competition would not hurt trade but would help it, because the fishing industry had not developed to its full potential and because there would be a ready market that would consume the products involved (the fish, fish nets, sails, etc.). For instance, the ship-building
industry would profit because more fishing vessels would have to be built. In addition, because many more families would be involved in this venture than those directly involved in the catching of the fish, for example, those who would sell the excess fish, there would be more poor families off the parish rates, families who would be spending the money that they earned. Hence, the whole economy of the nation would be stimulated since more money would be in circulation. And because his plan would decrease the number of poor that were receiving parish assistance, instead of increasing their number as did other plans, he felt his proposal was worthy of consideration.  

In addition to workshops, Defoe's comprehensive plan called for sufficient grounds so that part could be used for a garden in which the poor would grow their own fruits and vegetables. He also thought that the grounds to be used for gardens could be used as recreational areas for the poor, that is, that the poor could be permitted to take walks through them when weather and time permitted. In addition, Defoe's plan called for separate quarters for children who were orphaned, and, above all, Defoe wanted separate quarters for men and women.  

---

1 Proposals for Employing the Poor, pp. 5-9, 11.

2 Ibid., p. 9. In his plan for separate quarters for men and women, one can see that Defoe was not unaware of the moral evils associated with most workhouses at this time. He
farmed out, and for the aged, there was to be a hospital and an infirmary. Also there were to be quarters for the administrators, who were to function also as justices of the peace, having powers to punish offenders, and for the schoolmaster and chaplain. Although the administrators would be appointed by parliament, Defoe cautiously proposed that the revenues of each workhouse be supervised and managed by an elected treasurer. And in order to prevent parochial encroachment or having too much of the revenue of the workhouse go towards the salaries of administrators, he suggested that officials in minor capacities be selected annually from the poor inmates themselves. Besides the honor involved, as an additional incentive, those selected were to receive some small remuneration. As one can see, Defoe did not quarrel with the principle of rewards and punishments; he merely altered the principle to fit his own system.

Because it was vital that his proposed college of industry be economically independent, Defoe advised that all sorts of handicrafts and trades be followed. However, he stipulated that only enough should be made of any one product as could be readily consumed. Products unrelated to the

had personally seen the consequences of the practice of non-segregation of men and women, and of children and adults when he was in Newgate, where innocent children were not only witness to all sorts of depravity but also were the victims as well. See p. 153 below.

Ibid., pp. 9-10.
fishing industry were not to be sold on the open market in competition with other native products. He also expressed the desire that parliament should disallow all taxes on the college and its stock for a period consistent with the best interests of the public.¹

Although the primary purpose of Defoe's plan was to offer a workhouse that would not endanger the nation's economy, a secondary purpose was to offer a plan that would also train those in the workhouse to be good, Christian citizens. Hence, Defoe's plan provided that not only the children but the adults as well were to receive religious instruction. However, the children of the workhouse, as well as those from nearby charity schools, were also to be taught to read, write, and "Cast Accompts" until such time as they could be taught some aspect of the fishing trade. Boys were to be taught the rudiments of the sea; consequently, says Defoe, in five years the college would be able to "furnish the Navy with as many Hands as they shall want."² To sum up, in every aspect of his plan, Defoe made no suggestion that would in any way beggar the nation or endanger any other worker. His plan could only add to the wealth of the land, not subtract from it.

As one can see from this brief summary of Defoe's proposals, he was not an underlying foe of workhouses per se.

¹Ibid., pp. 10-11, 16-17.
²Ibid., pp. 11-16.
What he opposed was the faulty economic, or charitable, prin-
ciple upon which they were founded, a principle he felt was
dangerous to the stability of England's economy. That Defoe
was more silent than one would have expected him to have been
about the dehumanizing aspects of the workhouse movement can
not be denied. He did not often address himself to the terrible
conditions in which the poor were forced to live and work, nor
did he often comment specifically on the shame and degradation
felt by those poor who, in effect, became a class apart.
However, he was not unaware of or unconcerned about these
aspects in view of the very sympathetic portraits he gives in
his criminal novels of those victimized in one way or another,
of those dehumanized by circumstances beyond their control,
for example, of Moll in Newgate or of Jack as a young boy
sleeping on the coals of a glass house. That he was aware of
the social and moral implications of workhouses can also be
seen in isolated comments that appear throughout his works.
For instance, in Parochial Tyranny, the evil promiscuity that
occurred in the workhouses along with their filth and squalor
were at once complained of. "These workhouses," he wrote,

though in appearances beneficial, yet \( \text{they} \) have in
some respects an evil tendency, for they mix the good
and the bad, and often make reprobates of all alike.
We all, alas, are subject to misfortune; and if an
honest gentleman should leave a wife or children
unprovided for, what a shocking thing it is to think
they must be mixed with vagrants, beggars, thieves,
and night-walkers: to receive their insults, to bear
their blasphemous and obscene discourse, to be suffocated
with their nastiness and eat up with their vermin. . . ;
and he added:

If we must have Work-houses, let there at least be separate Wards and Tables; let some Differences be made between once substantial and contributing House-keepers, and Vagabond Wretches; let all Communication between the Parties be cut off, that the innocent Children of honest unfortunate Men may not be corrupted. On the contrary, let them have a Christian Education, and be sent to Church every Sunday at least... If they do not think fit to send'em to Charity-School, let some Care at least be taken that they be taught to read and write, and they be virtuously brought up, notwithstanding their Poverty...1

It is evident that at times either his commercial or his moral bias led him to take a position seemingly inconsistent or incompatible with the other. But each of these biases ran deep, and each often monopolized, as in the case of workhouses, the devotion and singleness of purpose that he as a party journalist was bred to exhibit. Hence, Defoe subordinated one of these biases to the other when the occasion demanded it.

That his solution and view of the problem of the great numbers of poor seem somewhat naive and all too simple cannot be denied. Yet, Ruggles, who lived when the great numbers of poor were still an issue in England, appraised Defoe's proposals thusly:

There are in this tract [Giving Alms No Charity] many excellent observations, expressed with great dignity. That part which tends to prove that giving alms no charity, lays down some sensible maxims... which tend to prove that parochial workhouses should not be encouraged for the purpose of parochial manufactures... That Mr. Defoe is right in these principles, there surely can be no doubt; and the truth... that the

1Parochial Tyranny, pp. 33-34.
poor should be trained to do the work that the nation can find them; \( \text{and} \) the schools of industry must therefore be the means. 1

Unfortunately, Defoe's proposals concerning the education of poor children and the erection of hospitals and infirmaries to care for the sick and aged, as well as his proposals for separate living quarters for the sexes, went unheeded during his own lifetime as well as during Ruggles'.

As the century advanced, after Defoe's death in 1731, more and more advocates of the workhouse system came to be disillusioned, and discontent was rife. Consequently, more and more pamphlets appeared, especially after the sixties, which indicate that, although their authors still believed as much as ever in the theory of workhouses, they were very dissatisfied with the administration of them. As a result, almost all of these advocates suggest modifications of some sort; a few even propose that they be abandoned and that work be distributed to the poor who would use it in their own homes, a proposal that later was widely accepted. Even though by 1787, men such as Thomas Gilbert were writing: "Our feelings for the sufferings of the Poor are daily wounded," 2 it was not until the reforms of 1832 and later—when the leaders of parliament addressed themselves to the question of the poor and considered the

1 Ruggles, I, 190-91 (Letter XVI).

social end, the needs of the poor, to be primary over the political or the economic end, thus heeding the cries of an increasingly outraged public—that any significant improvement in the lives of the poor was seen. What Defoe's reaction to the reforms of 1832 would have been, one can only speculate. But since his sympathies were always with the deserving, real poor, it does not seem likely they would have changed, for he said he thought any method of keeping the poor out of workhouses more charitable and prudent than any plan, including his own, to "Maintain them IN THEM."¹

¹The Review (Vol. III, No. 1; Tues. Jan. 1, 1706), Fasc. Bk. 6, p. 3.
To talk of Humanity and Mercy, and Confine Men to perpetual Imprisonment for Debt... Men ruined by known Disaster, as well as Men of Fraud, to put Men to Torture and Famine, and neither let them Work to Pay, nor to Live to smother Men in Noysome Dungeons...; to condemn them to the Temporal Hell of a Gaol... For Shame... This Paper [the Review], I hope, shall never want a Word for the Miserable, and the Time to speak is when it may do them Good or never...

The Review (Vol. III, No. 25; Thurs. Feb. 21, 1706), Fasc. Bk. 6, pp. 90-91; and (Vol. IV, No. 130; Sat. Feb. 4, 1710), Fasc. Bk. 16, 9, 519.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED

As a nation whose economic stability rested for the most part on trade and commerce, England faced yet another problem besides that of rising parish rates and the growing number of poor. This problem affected all of her citizens, but most of all the industrious poor, i.e., the common laborer, the artisan, the small tradesman, and the servant. This problem arose from the extension of credit, and several complex factors contributed to it. For example, much credit was extended to all classes, even to the industrious poor noted above, because there was an actual shortage of minted coin in circulation,
especially of coins of small denomination. Moreover, many of
the working class—laborers, artisans, servants, etc.—were
only paid yearly or at the end of a three or four month period.
Consequently, they were given credit so that they could buy
the necessities of life. In addition, most "entrepreneurs"
were at one-and-the-same time "borrowers and lenders, debtors
and creditors." Therefore, the extending of credit "penetrated
to relationships from which it is largely excluded today, and
often it was the humble people who were forced to provide it."¹
As a result it was very easy for one to become a debtor, and
upon a warrant being issued by a justice upon complaint (falsely
or not) by an individual, one could just as easily be sent to
debtors' prison. And all too often the debtor was imprisoned
for years or even for the rest of his life for debts as little
as a few shillings. Concerning the plight of debtors, Lecky
wrote: "There is nothing more scandalous in the history of
England in the eighteenth-century than the neglect by
legislators and statesmen of these abuses."² Defoe, of course,
was one who did address himself often in the Review and in
treatises to the abuses suffered by debtors (as well as those
suffered by creditors), whose cause struck so close to home.³

¹T. S. Aschton, An Economic History of England in the
²W. E. H. Lecky, The History of England in the
Eighteenth Century (London, 1887), VI, 249.
³See Michael Shinagel, Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class
Besides being bankrupt at least three times (1692, 1703, 1731) and imprisoned several times (ostensibly)\(^1\) for debt, and

\(\)\(^1\)Professor Moore writes that although "he \(\text{Defoe}\) did not experience a long term in debtors' prison," he "knew many debtors, and he gave an exceptional amount of thought to imprisonment for debt... Defoe was in prison or jail several different times, and after his first bankruptcy \(1692\) he was often in some danger of imprisonment for debt. But he was not imprisoned for debt more than eleven days (after March 23, 1713), and that was the result of political persecution rather than a desire to collect from him. He was, of course, hiding from a professed creditor when he died--but that again was almost certainly the result of political persecution" (Personal Letter from John R. \(\text{Moore}\) to Beverlee Smith, July 4, 1968).

Defoe also wrote of his political persecution when he was discussing a bill intended to relieve debtors (1706; see below). At the same time he discussed the cruelty of creditors who demanded everything of the debtor and yet placed him in prison after he was stripped. He then proceeded to comment on his own unique situation:

I should enquire, I say, farther into these horrid Things, were it not that it might seem to be drawing the Picture of my own Case, which is now upon the Stage, ... and no man is worse treated, on his flying to this Sanctuary of the Law for Deliverance.

And yet, which is still worse, he does not complain of real Creditors, whose Demands are just; Nay, nor of some of them, who oppose rather to prevent being call'd to Account for what has been cruelly extorted from him, than from Hopes of obtaining more.

But I confess myself surpriz'd at my own Affair... Several Debtors have been used hardly by Creditors, and their Discharge vigourously opposed. But was ever the World so Mad! the unhappy Author of this, claiming a Discharge from old \(1692\) Misfortunes on a clear Surrender, as by the Law is directed, finds himself opposed, not by those he owes Money to, but by those that owe him Money; not by those who by Disaster are wrong'd, but by those that have wrong'd, cheat'd, and plundered him on that Money ...; to whom he never owe'd a Shilling, of whom he never borrow'd, but to whom he always lent, and who actually defrauded him of near 500 L. advanced in Compassion to save them Destruction ... has any Bankrupt been thus treated before? ... But this is not yet all. and tho' I confess, I did not expect it from any Body, yet as some Whisperings have been spread of a further
haunted and hunted by creditors most of his life after 1692, Defoe reports in his *Tour Thro' the whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-1727) that he surveyed most of the prisons in London. In that work he lists London as having 22 regular jails, 5 night prisons or "Round Houses," and 144 "Tolerated Prisons," which included 119 spunging houses for debtors. Moreover, between 1720 and 1726, he reported weekly on criminal trials in *Applebee's Journal* and thus came into contact with many criminals, many of whom turned to crime as a result of bankruptcy. As a consequence, as Shugrue remarks, these experiences also explain his "interest in the plight of the debtor,"\(^1\) an interest that spanned his entire public life as author and social critic.

He, of course, was not alone in the fight for more humane treatment of debtors, for the conditions that existed in all English prisons\(^2\) were infamous even in his day. In this period the insensate savagery shown poor debtors characterized the laws as well as those who enforced (or failed to enforce) them. Unrealistically, eighteenth-century law presumed, just

---

Plot, even against the Life of this unhappy Debtor, and that among his Friends too... (the *Review* Vol. III, No. 100; Tues. Aug. 20, 1706, Fasc. Bk. 7, pp. 397-400).


\(^2\)Since debtors and felons were usually housed together in the same prisons, conditions described in this chapter are applicable to both, unless otherwise specified.
as it did in the case of paupers, that everyone was, could, and should be solvent.

Although the laws relating to debtors and creditors were not as numerous nor as complex as were the poor laws, they nevertheless affected the lives of those that fell within their purview just as much as the poor laws did. And like the poor laws, improper administration and lack of foresight, as well as base motives, led to corruption and thus injustice for all debtors, especially for the poor honest working man.

The first statute which gave bailiffs the right to detain the body of a person as well as his chattels was enacted during the twenty-fifth year of the reign of Edward III. However, this statute was later repealed by Edward during the forty-second year of his reign, because he grew more and more aware of the "mischievous inconveniences and dishonour that it had put upon the people," and he thus resolved "to file those Shackles, from off the Subjects feet, and to reinvest them into Liberty and Freedome of the Land." Such was the situation for over two hundred years thereafter. Then the situation reversed again, and once more man as well as his property was again subject to seizure.¹

¹William Cole, Legal and other Reasons (With All Humility) Presented to his Most Excellent Majesty, King Charles II, and to Both His Honourable Houses of Parliament, Why the Subjects of England, Should not be Imprisoned for Debt or Damage, or Anything thereunto. . . (London, 1675), pp. 2-5.
With the rise of capitalism and the corresponding rise of the small tradesman, credit came to play a very significant role in the development of England's economy. Yet, with the growth of credit came a corresponding increase in the number of bankruptcies and the subsequent rise in the number of insolvents imprisoned for debt. Thus, between 1640-1660, six acts were passed for the benefit of imprisoned debtors.¹ None of the six acts included a clause of limitation: they applied, in other words, to all debtors regardless of how much they owed. Later, in the reign of Charles II, two more acts were legislated.² The first was similar to the previous six; the second placed a five hundred pound limitation on the amount of indebtedness allowed a single individual. Thus, this act only benefitted those who owed less than this amount. As one can see, it did not aim at the small businessman, but sought to curb those bankers who were breaking, that is, seeking refuge in the Mint, or who were leaving the country fraudulently.

¹ These acts were passed on: Sept. 4, 1648; Dec. 21, 1649; April 6, 1650; April 27, 1652; Oct. 5, 1653; and June 27, 1657 (Moses Pitt, The Cry of the Oppressed Being a True and Tragical Account of the Unparall'd Sufferings of Multitudes of poor Imprisoned Debtors, in most of the Gaols of England, Under the Tyranny of the Gaolers, and other Oppressors . . . . [London, 1697], p. 6). This work is a compilation of letters written by prisoners, which related their experiences and which described the physical conditions of their jails. These letters were then forwarded to Pitt, who in turn sent them to an investigating committee of parliament.

² Ibid. These acts were passed April 14, 1671, and May 29, 1678.

³ The Mint was that area in London that gave criminals and others temporary sanctuary from arrest. Defoe himself
The trouble with these acts, according to Defoe, was that they only illustrated three very obvious points: 1) that it was very difficult to distinguish fairly between the "Justice due to the Creditor, and the Justice or Humanity due to the languishing Debtor"; 2) that there was a vast difference between the debtor who deliberately set out to defraud and the one who ran into debt because of unfortunate circumstances, i.e., the one who "fairly and honestly stripped himself to pay his just Debts"; and 3) that these acts only "proved" that all debtors were entitled to some relief, or else no act would have been legislated in the first place. And to the man who was a victim of circumstances, Defoe felt there was a special "Concern and Compassion due not from his Creditors only, but from the whole Nation" as well. 1

resided there several times when pressed by creditors or political foes. "By the act of James I (1623), sanctuary as far as crime was concerned, had been abolished throughout the kingdom. But the privilege had lingered on for civil processes in certain districts which had been the site of former sanctuaries and which became the haunts of criminals who there resisted arrest. ... So flagrant became the abuses that in 1697 the 'Escape from Prison Act' finally abolished all such alleged privileges. A further amending act of 1723 completed the work of destruction. The privileged places named in the two acts were the Minories, Salisbury Court, Whitefriars, Fulwood's Rents, Mitre Court, Baldwin's Gardens, The Savoy, The Clink, Deadman's Place, Montague Close, The Mint and Stepney" ("Sanctuaries," Encyclopaedia Britannica /1965/, XIX, 931.

And then in 1684, another act was passed stipulating that if an incarcerated debtor took an oath saying that he did not have more than five pounds, he would then be "fairly and actually discharg'd from his Creditors, and . . . full Liberty would be given him to begin the World again." This act was the only one passed within a forty year period that gave "Compleat Deliverance to the Miserable" in prisons, for all others were "faint, narrow, contracted, and limited . . . wherein they were defective."¹ Regrettably, in 1695, the good effects of this law were nullified when another act was passed stipulating that any agreement made between two-thirds of a person's creditors was binding upon the rest. Hence, the liberty of the debtor was left entirely to the mercy or vengeance of his creditors. Ironically, no sooner was this bill enacted into law than creditors successfully sued to have it repealed, alleging that too many frauds were being committed.²

After 1695, attempts to relieve debtors primarily aimed at placing a limitation on the time in which a creditor could act against a bankrupt. As it was, creditors could act against


²Defoe states that he would rather the creditors had sought to amend the act than to have destroyed it as they did. To him, "it was the best Ground Plot for a fair and equal Discharge of the Debtor, and Security of the Creditor; that could have been contriv'd . . . " (Review (Vol. V, No. 148; Tues. March 9, 1709), Fasc. Bk. 13, pp. 590-91).
a debtor any time, even years after his bankruptcy occurred. Some even waited until the insolvent was released from jail before bringing in their charges against him. Consequently, there were in England at this time many miserable [debtors], Cold and Hungry, left to the mercy of Creditors every day in the extremest Severities, lying on the naked Floors without Fuel or Covering, and . . . without Food in the late violent Cold, poison'd with Stench, and stabb'd to the Heart with the wretched Company and Place, promiscuously mingled with Murthers, Thieves, and Traytors, whose better case gets frequent Deliverance by the Gallows—But these [debtors] [had] no End to their Miseries, no View of Deliverance. . . .

The crux of the problem thus lay in the reconciliation of mercy with justice, since all laws were at-one-and-the-same time "insufficient to deliver the Debtor" and "insufficient to preserve the Creditor."¹

The next act, passed during the reign of Queen Anne, provided that any debtor who swore that he did not possess five pounds or more and who promised to enlist in the army or get someone to serve in his place would be discharged from prison. Unfortunately, poor debtors were victimized indirectly by some who prostituted the intent of the act. Although there were at least five or six thousand debtors discharged by this act, Defoe reports that not more than one hundred ended up in the army. It seems that army officers greedily took money from insolvents in return for placing the debtors' names on their

army rolls so that it would look as if they had really enlisted. (where these debtors got money to pay army officers when they had sworn they did not have more than five pounds is as much a mystery to Defoe as it is to this reader.) Thus, the term of enlistment for those debtors who in effect bribed the army officers was oftentimes less than one day; usually they were discharged from service immediately after paying their ten to forty guineas. On the other hand, those poor debtors who could not pay the bribe either had to stay in the army if they elected to take advantage of the benefit of the act or else remain locked up, "as miserable and as hopeless as had found them."¹

In effect, then, no one profitted from these acts, concluded Defoe, except possibly jailors. Not only was the severity of most of the bankruptcy laws, in his opinion, a "little inhuman" but they also were unjust in that they stripped the debtor of all he possessed "in a moment" and they furthermore made him "incapable of helping himself or of relieving his family by future Industry." Even if the debtor was fortunate enough to gain his release from prison, he usually was left with nothing; thus, he had to "starve or live on charity." If he attempted to start all over again, he lived in continual fear that some of his old creditors, who had not appeared before he went to jail, would suddenly place a judgment against

him, since "nothing more frequent than for men who reduced ... to compound and set up again" only to have old creditors appear and demand restitution of old debts. And thus the debtor was reduced once again. In short, then, the bankruptcy laws shut forever "the doors to the debtor's recovery," and most were sentenced to a living death of perpetual imprisonment.\(^1\)

It is a sad but irrefutable fact that this death sentence was imposed upon a good number of English during this period. In 1709 Defoe calculated there were "above 80,000" bankrupt tradesmen and other insolvent debtors, most of whom had "families, wives, and children innumerable, whose Miseries and Disasters deriv'd from the other." Whether in or out of prison, to debtors, the effects of insolvency encompassed their whole existence: they were either "starving and languishing, in want and Necessity, and living on the cold Charity of Friends, or eating and destroying their Estates of their Creditors." Of these 80,000 insolvents, he estimated there were 40,000 prisoners-at-large, who had bought their liberty from their jailors. Secondly, he estimated there were approximately 20,000 "Shelterers," that is, those who took sanctuary in the Mint or elsewhere, or who had the protection\(^1\)

of "Houses of Nobility." In addition, there were at least 10,000 "Absconders," who took refuge in private homes of their own or of friends, and there lived, as it were, "out of Sight of Danger, \textit{\textbar} Under the constant Terror of Arrests, Escape Warrants, and the Fury and Prosecution of inexorable Creditors." Furthermore, there were another 5,000 "banished Persons," who had fled England because of the cruelty of their creditors and the dread of perpetual imprisonment or because they simply were knaves, that is, cheats and frauds. Lastly, there were another 5,000 "closed Prisoners of sundry Sorts for Debts," whom Defoe deemed to be the "most miserable Objects of the Nations Compassion at this Time." Their situation was, he thought, "a great Scandal both to the Wisdom and Humanity of the English."\textsuperscript{1}

These last 5,000 prisoners, who were "actually immur'd and kept close," many of whom perished in prison, having "no Hope of Liberty, but by Death or an Act of Parliament," he subdivided "into the following Parts; and tho' it \textit{\textbar} was done but by

\textsuperscript{1}Review (Vol. V, No. 145; Tues. March 1, 1709), Fasc. Bk. 13, pp. 579-80. In regard to these estimates, Defoe wrote: "I do not insist upon the Nicety of the Calculation, but I am perswaded I am not far wide from probable Truth; and if not, it cannot but be worth the concern of the Legislation of Britain, to provide some Relief for such a miserable Multitude" (\textit{Ibid.}, p. 580). And according to Basil Williams, there were in 1716 as many as 60,000 debtors in England and Wales, and the Marshalsea alone housed between 700 and 800 debtors (XI, 135-36). In \textit{Idler} No. 33, Dr. Johnson calculated the number of imprisoned debtors to be (in 1759) at 20,000, but in later editions, he felt this estimate to be perhaps exaggerated.
probable Conjecture," as he said, "if \( \text{it was} \) near the Truth, \( \text{it was} \) as exact as the Argument require\( \text{ed}\)." Hence, he calculated there were approximately 2,000 debtors, mostly "meaner Tradesmen" and poor laborers, whose debts did not exceed one hundred pounds each. These debtors lived on the Common's side of the prison, (i.e., they did not have money to pay for a private room or even for other niceties of life such as bedding) and got what food they could by "begging at the Grates." There were another 2,000 debtors, "capital Tradesmen," "Gentlemen," and some clergymen, "whose Character and Education, rather than Substance," prevented them from living with the others. These prisoners, who languished—for Defoe could not "call it living"—could not beg or feed "on the Basket" because of their social position. Therefore, because they were used to more, they endured "a Thousand more Miseries and Extremities than those . . . whose Hardships and Sufferings \( \text{were} \) born with Silence and Mourning of Soul, rather than \( \text{with} \) Noise and loud Complainings." Of these 2000 debtors, the death rate was three times as great as it was for those on the Common's side. The third subdivision, numbering about 800, was comprised of those debtors whose social position was still higher than that of the two other groups. These debtors did not have sufficient funds to pay their creditors, yet they had enough to pay the various fees and expenses, which all prisoners were charged.\(^1\) However, 

\(^1\)See below.
as Defoe pointed out, since these expenses mounted up daily, their revenue did not last long, and consequently, they soon found themselves on the Common's side, a situation as injurious to their pride as to their health. Lastly, there were 200 "more miserable than the worst of the others." These debtors were in effect condemned to perpetual imprisonment, "seal'd up to Darkness and Oblivion, . . . Les Enfans Perdue," who were sacrificed on the altars of revenge and private grudges of creditors. For them, especially, there was absolutely no hope of release at all: "pay they never could and without pay the law would not release them." These were the "Gentlemen," who had accumulated, more through "misfortune than knavery, great Debts," yet, Defoe hastens to assure his readers, they had "great personal Merit." Many of these prisoners had been confined for many years and had grown "grey in their Misfortunes." In short, they were quite "lost to their Families." Perhaps because their case was so like his own, it was to these poor Enfans Perdue that Defoe gave so much of his time, attention, and talent; it was to all of these debtors that he wished to direct the attention of others, and, especially, the attention of parliament:

And, now Gentlemen, are these Men to be pitied or no? . . . Can it be imagin'd that a Man who has laid 7, 8, or 10 Years in Prison can pay? Is it not Punishment enough to satisfie any Man's Revenge? Is it possible, the Rage of a Creditor can hold so long for a meer Debt? If the Debtor cannot pay, and can
give . . . an Account how he became unable, is it fit to keep a Fellow-Creature longer in Misery?¹

Thus, Defoe questioned the validity and humanity of laws that did not in any material way aid creditors and yet inflicted horrendous punishment on those whose crime was judged to be "unpardonable," for, as he said, these poor unfortunates were locked up in dungeons where they were "punish'd more for Debt, than others were for Robbery." If these men were thieves, why not then deliver them to the gallows? Most of them, he bitterly remarked, would have been happy to have signed a petition to that effect, if, in signing, they would have been freed from their imprisonment. Death, to them, was not "half so terrible as a lingering, starving Confinement, without Bread or Liberty."²

It is indeed a sad indictment of the age that Defoe did not exaggerate the plight of these men in debtors' prisons.³


³The principal debtors' prisons were: Newgate, which also housed felons; the Fleet; Whitechapel; the King's Bench; the Queen's-Bench; the Marshalsea; Ludgate, which mainly housed "Gentlemen"; and various local Bridewells. The fact that more
where it was not uncommon to see prisoners fighting for scraps of food with their fellow inmates—the rats. In 1691 Moses Pitt described debtors as "Starving, Rotting with Soars and Carbuncles, Devour'd with Vermin, poison'd with Nasty Stinks, Knock'd on the Head, and that for no Crime, but for their Misfortunes, Miscarriages, and Losses by Trade and Merchandizing which, in no Time and Ages, could have been Avoided, nor Care of Industry prevent."¹

In general, prisons were so crowded that they were very unsanitary: many had no windows (since windows were taxed); no chimney for heat in cold weather; no rooms or other areas for exercise; and most had open drainage sewers that ran through the center of the floor to care for human excrement. Prisoners usually were given only straw to lie on, and it was changed but

than half of all English jails were privately owned and operated was a contributory cause of the terrible conditions that existed. For example, the Duke of Leeds owned the Halifax prison; Lord Derby, the Macclesfield; the Duke of Portland, the Chesterfield, which he contracted out for eighteen pounds yearly (Hibbert, p. 133). Moreover, the wardenship of the Fleet was regularly put up for sale. This prison had been bought from Lord Clarendon by John Higgins, for five thousand pounds, who in turn sold it for the same sum in 1728 to the notorious Bambridge (William E. H. Lecky, A History of England in the Eighteenth-Century, 2nd ed. Rev. /London, 1879/, I, 500-01). Fortunately, this "Veritable monster in human form" (Williams, XI, 136) was brought to justice and later sentenced to Newgate (although a murder indictment was dropped) when a report by Oglethorpe's parliamentary committee in 1729 brought his inhumane practices to light (Committee of Inquiry into London Prisons, Journals of the House of Commons, Vol. XXI, 1728-1729, as cited in Cadogan, pp. 88-89). See also House of Parliament Records, VIII, 708-48; and see below.

¹Pitt, p. 4.
once a year. As could be expected when many prisoners were shut up together in rooms often as small as seven to eight feet square—a situation by no means uncommon—epidemics of typhus, called jail fever, and smallpox were frequent. For example, during the Black Sessions of 1650 at the Old Bailey, a total of forty people caught jail fever and died. Among those who died, besides debtors and felons, were judges, attorneys, and prisoners awaiting trial. Three-quarters of a century later, conditions had not altered, for in 1729, a parliamentary committee, headed by John Oglethorpe, reported that three hundred prisoners in the Marshalsea died in less than three months. And Defoe described his own quarters in Newgate as "unbearable" and "filthy." Putting up with these terrible physical conditions was not the only horror to which prisoners, 

1Ibid., pp. 12-13; Hibbert, pp. 133-34; Tuberville, I, 316-17; Williams, XI, 135-36; and Jacob Ilive, Reasons Offered for the Reformation of the House of Correction in Clerkenwell (called Bridewell). . . (London, 1757), p. 39. Ilive was confined to Newgate and Clerkenwell for over two years. His release, like Defoe's, was secured through the influence of a patron, the Earl of Holderness, and a friend, Mr. Nathan Carrington. Defoe's patron, of course, was Harley. John Howard later noted that he found thirty-nine debtors, seven of whom had wives and children, in a room no bigger than 35' x 16' (State of Prisons [London, 1929], p. 19).


debtors and felons alike, were subjected. There were other facets of their imprisonment that equalled, if not surpassed, them.

One of the most common atrocities committed in English jails at this time was that prisoners, for long periods, were manacled with heavy leg irons, which caused open, seeping sores, that often became gangrenous. Often times prisoners were chained in dungeons where the stench and filth were unbearable. In other cases, it was not uncommon for prisoners to be locked up with dead rotting bodies or with the sick, who suffered everything from venereal disease to jail fever to small pox. And yet, still others were tortured with thumb screws.\(^1\) The usual way for prisoners to avoid these "discomforts" was to "gladly" pay the fees\(^2\) charged by jailors for privileges since, ironically, English law presupposed that all prisoners, including debtors, had money with which to care for themselves while confined, money not only for the so-called luxuries of life but for the necessities as well.

The basis for this assumption was a clause in 3 Jac. I. c. 10. which stated that a prisoner was, "if able," to bear all charges that arose from his confinement, "both \(\underline{\text{for}7}\) himself and \(\underline{\text{for}7}\) those that guard\(\text{ed}\) him." If the prisoner was not able

\(^1\)Pitt, pp. 84-85.

\(^2\)For more about the fee system, see below.
to do so—it was thought that such a prisoner would be the exception, not the rule—the parish was then supposed to be taxed for his support, for which the prison in turn was to receive a small daily allowance for each prisoner from the parish. But Statute 19, Car. 2. c. 4. stipulated that no parish was to be taxed above six pence a week per prisoner. This tax was to be levied by churchwardens every Sunday and then paid quarterly to the High Constable. ¹ Even though this six pence food allowance may have been sufficient when the law was enacted, as prices rose, it was not even enough to sustain the prisoners. ² To compound the matter, most churchwardens failed to levy, collect, and turn in this tax. Moreover, prisoners who were discharged of their debts but detained because they could not pay their jailor's fees were not entitled to this small daily food allowance, just as those prisoners who were waiting adjudication of their case were not entitled to any. Thus, these prisoners had to pay for their food or beg or starve. And what made matters even worse was that most jailors totally ignored the table of fees that had been established during the reign of Charles II, a table that was supposed to have been posted in all English prisons. Consequently, as a result of these laws, as a result of the fee system, jailors were able

¹ Carter, pp. 38-40.
² See below.
to exceed much their bounds, and they by
Ravishing Exorbitant Sums from the distressed . . . of
this Kingdom, . . . thereby advanced themselves upon
the Ruines of the distressed, so that whilst such
insolence pass'd without curbing, no Justice could
be expected at the Hands of Gaolers, in regard they
were a sort of People that bore no respect to the
Laws of Nature, much less to the Laws of the Land, and
that Consider'd no Mans Quality, Capacity, or
Poverty. . . .

Therefore, besides paying for not being tortured and for ease-
ment of irons, all prisoners were expected to pay for their
food, drink, bedding, and for their jailor's fees.

According to Ned Ward, jailors even employed spies
whose job it was to determine the financial status of all new
prisoners so that the jailors would know what amount to charge
them. These spies, he reported, would "for a Crown give any
bailiff help in dogging or setting even those of their
acquaintance to whom they profess'd the greatest friendship." 
Like Defoe, Ned Ward was intimately acquainted with London, and
he wrote that during his tour of that great teeming city, he (as
narrator of The London Spy) came across one debtor who had been
confined in a debtors' prison for six weeks and had been given
only bread and water, and occasionally a little beer to drink
during that period. The prisoner had been discharged of all his
debts, but was detained for fees, fees that only amounted to
five groats. 2 This man's situation was by no means exceptional.

1 J. F., The GAOLERS Extortion Expos'd, or the Prisoners

Hayward (New York, 1927), pp. 126, 107. Although an act
Firmin, in 1678, reported that he knew a man who, within a two year period, had helped secure the release of over five hundred debtors, who had originally been put in jail for owing small debts, but who had not been released because they still owed jailor's fees. He also knew another man, who had helped twice that number in a shorter period of time.¹ And Moses Pitt, who was himself committed to the Fleet, April 20, 1689, was charged eight shillings weekly to be permitted to lodge on the "Gentleman's Side," although the correct fee should have been but two shillings weekly. Once, when Pitt could no longer pay the exorbitant fees charged him, he was removed to the wards or dungeons, where he was locked up and not even given any straw to lie on, much less a bed. At that time, he was confined with seventy-seven other prisoners, "most of which liv'd on the Basket, and Beg'd at the Grate." When some of his friends (John Locke among them) protested his treatment, the warden denied their request to remove Pitt to a better chamber unless they agreed to pay Pitt's fees for him. Thus, Pitt was forced to stay in the wards for over eight months. When he was finally removed from the Fleet to the King's-Bench on May 16, 1691, the Fleet warden said that Pitt still owed fourteen pounds in Chamber-Rent fees, yet Pitt had paid him over thirty-five pounds passed in 1644 was supposed to have prevented such detentions, the law was flagrantly violated. Such cases were examples of outright extortion.

¹Firmin, pp. 10-11.
in fees during his confinement. And similar situations prevailed in other English jails. For example, at the jail in Salop, prisoners were charged fourteen pence weekly in fees, for which they received only a little bread and water, and a little dirty straw upon which to lie. Likewise, at the Rothwell prison in Yorkshire, the jailor, one Samuel Brogden, often placed as many as twenty prisoners in a closed hole. These men were not even permitted to "Ease themselves at the convenient Place appointed but when the Gaoler please[1]." This jailor had so mastered the fee system that it was an art. Once he charged a prisoner, Charles Thompson, forty-five pounds in various fees, and when the man could not pay, he forced him to deed over the only property the man yet owned, which Brogden then sold to a Mr. Boynton for one hundred pounds, of which Charles Thompson and his family received not one penny. Moreover, Brogden claimed that Thompson still owed the forty-five pounds in fees.\(^1\) Ilive, too, described the conditions of prisoners detained for fees as "pitiable." Many times, he said, he gave some debtors a half-pence for food, even though he was in great want himself in the same prison, because he saw that they were "starving without the County Allowance."\(^2\) Defoe too was not silent on this subject of fees. He recalls how he was told when

\(^1\) As cited in Pitt, pp. 85-86, 89, 91, 16-18.

\(^2\) Ilive, p. 24.
he entered the Newgate the first time that he could purchase better living conditions if he was willing and able to pay the jailor's fees. He was told that for an initial fee of twenty guineas and for an additional eleven shillings per week thereafter, he could lodge on the "Gentleman's Side." For these fees, Defoe would have been given a bed with clean sheets; however, the sheets would have cost him an additional five shillings, which he would have had to pay to the woman who brought the linen.\(^1\) To sum up, although jailors usually received an annual salary of only fifty pounds, through such extortive practices as described above, they frequently made as much as two hundred pounds clear profit a year.\(^2\)

It is evident that regardless of how profitable such a system was to jailors, its price in human suffering and degradation can never be estimated. Besides the horrible conditions described above, prisoners had yet another to face--

---

\(^1\) A History of the Press Yard, p. 11.

\(^2\) Ilive, pp. 25-28. Ilive calculated the profits and disbursements of jailors as follows (Ibid., pp. 34-36):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profits</th>
<th>£. s. d.</th>
<th>Disbursements</th>
<th>£. s. d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>50 0 0</td>
<td>To the Gatekeeper</td>
<td>15 12 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees</td>
<td>70 0 0</td>
<td>To Writing Calendar</td>
<td>8 8 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beds, etc.</td>
<td>50 0 0</td>
<td>Other Incidentalss</td>
<td>7 7 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>16 0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Rent</td>
<td>20 0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tap Rent</td>
<td>26 0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

£ 232 0 0
that of starvation. As was noted before, prisoners waiting the
disposition of their case or detained for fees were not entitled
to any county food allowance. Therefore, they had to subsist by
begging for food and on the charity of family and friends, who
often were not in a position to be of assistance. And the
plight of those prisoners who received the food allowance was
little better. More often than not, even though the food
allowance had been set at six pence, they only received a
"pennyworth or two pennyworth a day." Nevertheless, these
prisoners considered themselves fortunate. Unlike them, the
prisoners in the Cambridge jail, for instance, reported they
often did not even receive a crust of bread to eat, and those
at Chesterfield and elsewhere reported the same thing was true
in their jails.\(^1\)

Defoe himself reported that more than five
hundred families\(^2\) literally starved in Newgate, the Fleet, and
in the Queen's-Bench in one year. On the other hand, "those
reliev'd in one year," he added, "deliver'd by the Generosity
of Mankind \(\text{was}\) hardly to be reckon'd up."\(^3\) And, in 1729,
Oglethorpe's committee found more than three hundred fifty
prisoners were dying from starvation in one prison alone.\(^4\)

\(^1\) Pitt, pp. 20, 14.
\(^3\) \textit{Review} (Vol. III, No. 35; Thurs. March 21, 1706),
Fasc. Bk. 6, p. 138.
\(^4\) Hibbert, p. 135.
was because such atrocities as these occurred that men like Defoe and Ilive cried out in righteous indignation and in protest, asking that debtors be given enough food to at least keep them alive. But, as Ilive pointed out, as long as the fee system existed, such inhumane practices would be perpetuated—and perpetuated. He observed that when men's salaries were not "fixed," men were bound to seek other "certain Accidents, Fees," and so forth to bolster their revenue.¹

As a result of his intimate and very personal acquaintance with debtors' prisons, Defoe sympathized even with those men whose fear made them break, as he himself did on occasion. Even though he did not condone the action, he nevertheless understood what caused it:

There are some distresses which Human Nature is not qualify'd to bear; and this is one. The honestest Man in the World, if driven to extremity, will not eat his Neighbour's Loaf only, but he will eat his Neighbour himself, if he is put to it, ay, and say Grace to the Feast.... Despise not the Man who uses any Shift to keep himself out of a Dead Warrant's Hand, out of a perpetual prison. Thirst of Liberty and Hunger for Food are exactly Synonymous in this Case.²

As one can see, Defoe did not look at the world through rose-colored glasses. He did not present human nature as he wished it to be; rather, he presented it as he personally knew it to be. And because he personally knew the horror of imprisonment,

¹Ilive, pp. 43-44, 6; see also pp. 4-5, 8.

²Review (Vol. V, No. 136), pp. 543-44. For a more detailed examination of Defoe's plea of economic necessity, see Chapter Five below.
for himself, he declared:

If I were a Judge, I should not issue the warrant for arrest; If I were a Constable, I should not dare to execute it; if I were an Attorney, I should not dare to solicit or make out the warrant; If I were the Creditor, I should think my children should all come to die in gaols if I pursu'd it; If I were the Debtor, I should think it my duty to resist it--If I happen'd to hurt any body in doing so, I should think I had no guilt upon me; and If I dy'd in defending myself, I should reckon myself as much murther'd, as any man ever dy'd under forms of law.

Clearly, Defoe saw imprisonment as a death sentence; thus, he asked whether anyone could blame a debtor for preserving himself and his family "from perishing, tho it be at the cost . . . of creditors?" If he were free, he could once again start anew and perhaps even be able to pay his debts (as Defoe himself did), an impossibility if he went to jail. Thus, going to jail would serve neither the debtor and his family nor his creditors. And just as Defoe sincerely sympathized with honest debtors, so also did he sympathize with honest, moderate creditors. And just as he lashed out at "rigorous sever Creditors," whose cruelty caused the honest debtor to fear, so also did he lash out at those fraudulent debtors who were to blame for the cruelty of the immoderate creditors. Not only were these fraudulent debtors responsible for the revengeful acts of some creditors, but they were also indirectly

responsible for causing "many an honest Family to perish in
Return for their Knavery, who really had no hand in that
Knavery." These debtors, he concluded, deserved no mercy at
all:

To these indeed I am for giving no Quarter, like
Beast of Prey, to whom we give no Law; they ought to
be run down with a full Cry by the whole Nation-- And
let no Men spare them--They are the worst Sort of
Thieves--they rob Families, lay Snares for their
Neighbors, and devour every one indifferently that
comes in their Way--In short, they make Havock of
Justice, Honesty, and Conscience; they are a publick
Grievance to Property, Commerce, and to Credit--They
ruin Families, that's a personal Injury; they destroy
Trade, that's a general Injury--There can be no Plea
for such, no honest Man can say a Word for them; . . .
How many miserable Families owe their Fall to the
Villany of fraudulent Bankrupts? . . . Willful
Frauds impoverish Trade it self, and bring Tradesmen
in general into Distresses--It weakens the giving [of]
reasonable Credit to honest Men, and thereby disables
them to trade; and thus many . . . drop with meer
Decay of Trade; but where the Fraud falls, it blows
up like a Mine--destroys like an Earthquake, and over-
turns the most flourishing Families-- How many Families
date their Misfortunes at this Time from some of our
late Capital Bankrupts, who had both more Credit and
Substance, than many eminent Traders that are now
Flourishing . . . .

What was needed to correct this situation, thought Defoe, was
more stringent laws, laws that would make it as dangerous and
as costly for a person to contemplate "premeditated Bankruptcy"
as it was for one to contemplate premeditated murder. But, if
a nation by its "easie" laws encouraged these "thieves," that
nation, he added, in justice ought also to provide for "those
that are robb'd." As a result of more strict laws and strict
enforcement of those laws, he predicted that not only would "no
wilful fraudulent Bankrupt . . . escape the severest Punishment," but also there would be a greater willingness on the part of creditors to be merciful to honest and necessitous debtors, who needed protection just as much as the honest and compassionate creditor did.¹ In different ways, both were victims of fraudulent debtors, but victims all the same.

Because the honest debtor suffered indirectly at the hands of fraudulent debtors, who caused creditors to indiscriminately exact their revenge on the honest and dishonest debtor alike, Defoe felt that the "man honest in Principle, tho' distressed in Circumstances," who was willing to surrender his estate and present a true account, deserved better treatment than did the fraudulent bankrupt. Therefore, he advised that, in the disposition of any bankruptcy case, two points ought always to be considered: first, whether the proposed course of action, that is, the committing of a man to "Prison for Life," was consistent with the principles of "Humanity or Christianity," especially if that man was willing to give up all he had (for, if he was to be confined, must he, Defoe questioned, "perish for Want of Bread" and his family with him?); and second, whether the punishment to be exacted was in proportion to the offense committed on the part of the insolvent and in proportion to the "Claim of Right" on the part of the

creditor. More often than not, the answer to these two points was no. Consequently, because the actions typically followed by creditors were neither consistent with the principles of "Humanity or Christianity" nor in proportion to the offense committed, Defoe pleaded as eloquently for the honest debtor as he did for the moderate creditor:

To punish these men, to prevent their restoring themselves by their Industry, and mingle them with Thieves and Cheats— is an Act beyond the Cruelty of Death; it never was Criminal to be Unhappy. Debt was no where, that ever I read, punish'd with DEATH before. --No Law of Men ever directed against it. . . . How can you [creditors] be so cruel, so inhuman, so barbarous?

But we go farther, We take the Bed from the Man, and the Man from his Bed—we strip his miserable Family, and turn his Wife and Children naked into the Streets to starve; be the Man never so indigent; nay, if he had a Fever upon him, if he be sick in his Bed, we will take him away, carry him to Gaol; lay him on the bare Boards, and if he has not to feed him, he must starve and perish. . . .

It was precisely this kind of insensate cruelty that Defoe opposed, not the right of creditors to imprison fraudulent debtors. As has been shown, Defoe championed that right, which he felt to be fundamental if England was to have a stable economic structure.

In view of the above quotation and the preceding discussion, it is quite evident that Defoe devoted considerable time and effort to the debtor question and its two seemingly

---

1Ibid., pp. 523-24. See also Pitt, pp. 91, 95.

incompatible and irreconciliable aspects. He wrote much about the debtor-creditor controversy for over two decades (1705-1729) in various journals. He even published three pamphlets germane to the debtor question. Although of necessity, these pamphlets repeat many of the arguments already noted, arguments for the most part presented in the Review, they are nonetheless significant in their own right, if only because they reveal facets of Defoe's complex personality. The first work, published in 1705, was written in defense of a bill then pending to aid honest debtors and to prevent fraudulent debtors from abusing their creditors. The second, written in 1729, examined the unreasonableness of imprisoning men for life for insolvency. Therefore, he compared the English practice with Mosaic law; the laws of ancient Greeks, Roman, and Orientals; the laws of contemporary European nations; and finally with English common law. The third, also written in 1729, offered objections to a bill intended to help poor debtors, but, Defoe felt, too much at the expense of creditors and English trade.

The Bill to Prevent Frauds Committed by Bankrupts drew much opposition from those who felt the bill to be too severe and punitive to poor honest debtors. Thus, Defoe was among those who were pleased to see that the original bill was revised. In publishing his Remarks on the Bill to Prevent
Frauds, he not only sought to explain his opposition to the original bill but also to explain first the alterations that were made, and second, the subsequent effects the alterations would have, effects he thought would be for the "general Good... of" the trade of England, and in short "of" the whole Nation."¹

When the bill had been first introduced in parliament in late 1704, the session was nearing its end. Hence, there was time only to draw up a rudimentary bill, the substance of which revealed that it intended only to compel a bankrupt to deliver himself and his "Goods, Books, Effects to his Creditors, and to ascertain the Penalties and Punishments in Case he did not." Because the bill in this form was a "provision only to punish," many men, including Defoe, sought to improve upon the basic act before parliament met again the next year. Therefore, he and the "others" sought ways by which, as he says, the bill could be rendered useful, that is, to discover ways by which the honest debtor, who had fallen into disaster, would be encouraged to surrender himself and yet would not place his own future and that of his family in jeopardy. At the same time, they sought to secure "Trade against the numerous Mischiefs of Bankrupts for the Future."²

¹Daniel Defoe, Remarks on the Bill to Prevent Frauds Committed by Bankrupts With Observations on the Effect It May Have Upon Trade (London, 1706), Title Page, p. 1. ²hereafter cited as Remarks on the Bill to Prevent Frauds.

²Ibid., pp. 1-4. Although Defoe does not specifically identify the "others," one can from context assume he is referring to members of parliament.
As originally proposed, the bill left a bankrupt open to the charges of his creditors for an unlimited time. Thus, although creditors were called upon to bring in their charges against a debtor when he would first appear before the commission, there was nothing in the bill that prevented them from waiting years or even waiting until the debtor was released from prison. For creditors were "at Liberty to come in, or not come in . . . ., \[\text{and they could}\] lie still, and wait, and fall upon the poor Debtor at last." The good part of the original bill stipulated that, if the individual surrendered within thirty days after being notified by the commission and gave a true account of his estate, not only would he be set free but he would also be given five per cent of its value to begin life over again. However, the five per cent was not to exceed two hundred pounds. This provision of the original bill was not only fair, thought Defoe, to the debtor, who then would have something with which to care for himself and his family while he started all over again, but it was also fair to the creditor, who would no longer have to wait and wonder if his client would run and break. Because men would no longer have any reason to run to the Mint where they ate up their—and their creditor's—estate, the creditor would end up with a larger share of the remaining estate of the debtor. However, Defoe felt that the debtor still needed protection from those creditors who would not come in when the bankruptcy originally occurred. In
justice, he stated, they all ought to be compelled to come in at the same time or the debtor ought to be freed of all charges from those creditors who might appear later against him. Consequently, or co-incidentally, the House of Commons ordered "That the Committee be empower'd to receive a Clause for the Encouragement of Bankrupts as shall voluntarily surrender their Effects to the Use of their Creditor." The "Encouragement" that was inserted into the revised bill was exactly as Defoe and the others had hoped for: not only was the debtor given part of his freedom—freedom from imprisonment and freedom from worry about those creditors who failed to appear initially against him.

It would seem that the legislature saw that

... no Man could pay more than all; That to keep a Man in Prison, when /a creditor/ had stript him naked was unchristian and unreasonable; That to make a Man surrender all he had, and not give him his Liberty, was to starve him, and put him to Death for Debt, which, however a Crime, was not yet made Felony by the Law; That to force him to surrender all his Effects, and not give him leave to work for Bread, was to force Men upon Perjuries, and all sorts of extremeties, for fear of perishing. That would be the way to make more Bankrupts; and Bankrupts more Fraudulent, since Desperation would now run them upon all possible Methods to secure their Effects abroad, and afterwards themselves, and so the Commission would be able to reach nothing; That to make Men desperate, was to make them Knaves; as there never was any Law but some way or other might be evaded or avoided, this would put Mens Inventions upon the Rack for new Methods to defraud their Creditors.

Furthermore, the legislators apparently realized that the more fraudulent debtors there were, the more English trade would be adversely affected; for they saw
That not our People only, but vast Riches would be thus carried out of the Nation, all our Bankrupts being thus forced to carry their Creditors Estates with them to subsist them, and enable them to trade and maintain their Families abroad; that this Law [as originally proposed] was unjust in its Nature, because 'twas all Penalty and no Reward, and had a Tendency to bring Men to a Necessity of Punishment, without any room to avoid it, since the Man was bound to Misery every way; he was hang'd if he did not surrender, and starv'd if he did.\(^1\)

Consequently, the legislators saw that if the honest debtor was not encouraged to surrender his estate, the effects would be universal in that they would not only directly affect adversely the bankrupt and his family, as well as his creditors and their families, but would also indirectly affect adversely the stability of England's economy.\(^2\) Therefore, the revised bill protected debtors and creditors alike by removing those provisions contained in previous acts that caused men to break.

Because the revised bill eliminated those adverse effects mentioned above, Defoe could not help but wonder why it was so strongly opposed by creditors. Although he was hesitant to attribute greed as a possible motive, he was forced to infer ("I won't affirm . . . tho' . . . 'tis too true") that such however was the case since many debtors had entered into private and secret arrangements with many of their creditors. Not only were such arrangements illegal but they were also unjust to

---

\(^1\)Ibid., pp. 4-6.

those creditors who were not a party to the arrangements in that they were cheated out of their share of the debtor's estate. Moreover, because the arrangements were illegal, all monies clandestinely paid to creditors by debtors would have to be returned to the debtor when he appeared before the commission. "Unless these or such as these are the Reasons," Defoe states, "'tis a perfect Mystery to the World, why these Gentlemen, or any Man of Trade in England should be against the Bill."¹

It is regrettable but none-the-less true that other motives were involved, for some tradesmen-creditors acted more out of revenge than greed. These revengeful creditors were, he observed, of two different kinds, both of which he condemned. There were those who demanded exactly what the law provided: they did nothing but what was "barely honest," what was "literally lawful." Hence, they demanded that the insolvent be thrown into prison and not be released until he had "paid the uttermost farthing." These men felt in no way obligated to consider the debtor or even his family. Defoe thus rebukes them by reminding them that "the laws of the country indeed allow such actions as the laws of conscience can by no means allow." To him, the laws of conscience took precedence over the laws of the land, for they came from a higher authority. In some cases, demanding the fulfillment of the letter of the

¹Remarks on the Bill to Prevent Frauds, pp. 10-11.
law only led to the ruin of creditor as well as debtor, since, as has been shown, many debtors, when faced with the cruelty of creditors, chose to break and run, rather than surrender themselves and their effects to the altar of revenge. These creditors were not really honest men in the eyes of the Puritan, for honesty, to him, did not "consist of negatives, and "twas not sufficient to do [a] neighbour no personal injury in the strict sense and letter of the Law." Honesty to Defoe was "equity"; therefore, he advised every man--debtor and creditor alike--to look within himself and to be guided by the Golden Rule. If he did so, he would find as "fair an advocate for his neighbour as for himself." ¹ There were also those creditors who exacted whatever torture they could possibly inflict upon an insolvent. To leave debtors to their mercy was comparable he suggests to throwing Christians to the lions. In speaking about these creditors, Defoe reveals a rather "Hobbesian" attitude concerning his view of the nature of man: Man, he concluded, is

and Cruelty to his Fellow-Creatures in his Power, is so much the Bent of Man's Inclination, that really he ought not to be trusted with Power to Devour his Neighbour. This makes me condole the Miseries and Distresses of Families, who groan under the Barbarities of Creditors—And really, were I to speak to the most furious Creditor, I would ask, What do you generally make of your barbarous Pursuit of Miserable Men?—What Gain to you by the Bones of those you starve in Gaol, or What Produce of the rejecting the best Offers a Man can make?¹

As he points out, the folly in their opposition to the revised bill lay in that they as creditors stood to gain as much from the bill as did the insolvents. For, as a consequence of the act, "Obstinate creditors" no longer would be able to make "willing creditors" lose their fair share of an insolvent's estate or be able to force an insolvent to run to the Mint "to live upon the Stock that should have been divided among all creditors." In addition, creditors would profit because less of the debtor's estate would be spent on needless lawsuits, on jailor's fees, or on bribes.² It is thus evident that if Defoe could not appeal to their better instincts—for he implies above that such creditors were unregenerated men, who had not the benefit of grace—he would then appeal to their baser instincts—self-interest.

In addition to the bill benefiting new debtors and their creditors, it would also help many others. For example, many of

¹Review (Vol. VI, No. 134), p. 536. See also Review (Vol. VI, No. 27; Sat. April 12, 1707), Fasc. Bk. 9, pp. 107-8. Defoe typically asserts nature must and can only be perfected by grace.

²Remarks on the Bill to Prevent Frauds, pp. 11-14.
the "Ten Thousand Families of Mourning, Distressed, Industrious People that Sigh'd for Deliverance" who were already confined in debtor's prisons would be helped since the revised bill did not include a clause of limitation. Among those thus aided would be many aristocrats and "Gentlemen," who had previously "Lived in Good Fashion, and who were born of Good Families, well Bred, Well Taught." When these men were confined to prison, they were in effect sentenced to perpetual imprisonment because previous bills only helped those whose indebtedness did not amount to more than fifty or one hundred pounds (except that passed in 1678). Yet these men, Defoe remarks, were eminently qualified by birth and training "to serve to Enrich and be of Advantage to their Country." Furthermore, the bill would aid others, who had fallen "not by their Intemperance, Excesses, Extravagances, and Vices, but by the general Decays of Trade," as well as those who fell by their own "Villany and Frauds." In short, the revised bill would help any debtor, in or out of jail, who willingly and honestly surrendered his estate, for "Innumerable the Variety of Cases, under which Distress'd and Starving Families, cried to Heaven for aid, while the Deaf Creditor showed that Cruelty, he would himself Tremble to see the Effects of." Not only were these cruel creditors oblivious to the "agonies of Soul" of those unfortunates already "Starving in Gaols" and of those who were suffering "the Lingering Death of a Life in the Rules," but, even worse, they
were equally oblivious to the cries of "Children Starving without." How "such Creditors [would] answer it to God, themselves, or their Posterity, [he knew] not!"\(^1\)

As an economic pragmatist, Defoe took the opportunity to point out the advantages this bill would have on English trade. If he could not appeal to the humanity of legislators, he would appeal to their vested interests, for many of them depended for their livelihood upon trade. As a result of this bill there would be less fraudulent accounts made by insolvents, and more would be able to return to active life and once again would engage in business and commerce. Moreover, because separate agreements between debtors and creditors would no longer be necessary or profitable, the estate of the insolvent would be preserved, and the share to each creditor would be greater than if such arrangements had been made. Hence more money would be in circulation in the long run; and the more money in circulation, the more stable would be England's economy. In addition, as soon as those insolvents, who were then confined, were released from jail and returned to an active, productive, useful life, they too would add to the economy of the nation, instead of subtracting from it by lying uselessly and needlessly in prison.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Review (Vol. III, No. 26; Thurs. Feb. 28, 1706), Fasc. Bk. 6, pp. 101-03.

\(^2\)Remarks on the Bill to Prevent Frauds, p. 25.
Defoe had to concede, however, that there was one "Publick Misfortune" connected with the revised bill: it would impoverish many people who made their living on the "life Blood of Trade Men," who helped "pull down those that were falling fast enough of themselves." Among the "blood-suckers" he named were: bailiffs, jailor's turnkeys, "Marshal's-Men solicitors," and "petty-fogging Attorneys." He also named those who owned and/or operated private prisons, and those who ran homes in the Mint and other places of sanctuary, and charged excessively for quarters. All of these people would suffer a loss because of the bill. In his customary satirical fashion, however, he did not hesitate to suggest ways in which these people could compensate for their losses. He thus recommended that all, except the attorneys and other members of the court, enlist in the navy to make amends for the "damage they had done at Home, by ruining many Thousand honest Families they might have Sav'd." As for the members of the legal profession, he suggested that they become "Pick-Pockets" so that they would eventually receive the reward he thought they so richly deserved--the Gallows.  

Whether or not Defoe's arguments were in any way directly efficacious in regard to the final disposition of this bill is not known, though he states that he would accept any

---

1Ibid., pp. 27-29.
censure for it, if it turned out that he was responsible for its passage in any way.\(^1\) It is sufficient to say that despite the strong opposition of many creditors, the bill was enacted into law on March 19, 1706.

After the passing of the bill, Defoe did not stop fighting for the rights of debtors and creditors. Although his sympathies were with the honest debtor, he still maintained that the creditor had to have the right to sue for restitution. Thus, a few years after the passing of the Bill to Prevent Frauds, he again repeated his position concerning the rights of all creditors:

It is far from my Design, and they that expect otherwise of me will be very much Mistaken, that this Paper \(/\text{the Review}/\) should give any encouragement to Frauds, . . . or that under Pretence of Compassion to Debtors, I should expect, or plead so, as to have others expect, that as soon as men become Bankrupt, they should claim Exemption from their Creditors, and must not be prosecuted under pretence of Compassion, Charity, and Pity to Families; I shall not call every Prosecution Cruelty, every Imprisonment Barbarity, every Execution Murder; . . . and tho' I were liable to the same Distresses ten Thousand Times more than I am, yet I must forever grant, That the Power of attaching the Person of the Debtor . . . is the Foundation of that vast personal Credit, by which I understand Credit given by one Trading Man to another for Goods to be sold again; this, I say, is the Life of our Inland Trade . . . To preserve this personal Credit, it is absolutely necessary, that the Creditor have Power to attach the Person of the Debtor. . . .\(^2\)

---

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 2.

Thus, he reiterated his earlier conclusion that a creditor should pursue, arrest, and imprison the debtor, as well as use "all the Methods consistent with Reason, Religion, and Humanity" to compel him to pay" as long as payment was feasible. As he indicates above, he personally knew the anguish suffered by those threatened by creditors; yet he consistently adhered to his views concerning what he felt to be a basic right of creditors, a right that was absolutely essential if England was to have a stable economy. During the following years, he repeated his arguments time and again in the Review. But two years before his death, he took up his pen in defense of those debtors who could not pay back their creditors by writing a treatise showing the unreasonableness of imprisoning men for debt who had no way to make restitution. And to Defoe what was unreasonable was a priori unjust.

Defoe estimated there were in 1729 over 25,000 prisoners confined for debt in England, most of whom were centered in the two counties of Middlesex and Surrey. The indirect and direct cost to the nation for the maintenance of these debtors and their families, many of whom ended up on the parish rolls, he estimated to be about 1,000,000 pounds annually.


2T. Baston estimates there were (in 1716) 60,000 debtors in Great Britain (Thoughts on Trade and a Publick Spirit [London, 17167, p. 127). See also p. 168, note 1, above.
In addition, there were approximately 6,000 people, who were employed directly in caring for these prisoners in one capacity or another. At 60 pounds a year per person in salaries (not including what was extorted from prisoners), he estimated this figure to be at least 360,000 pounds. Added to these figures was another 930,000 pounds that the public lost annually because the prisoners could not contribute their labor to the general welfare of the nation. Included in this last figure was 180,000 pounds that Defoe thought should have been earned by the 6,000 employees who cared for the prisoners. He thought that they should have earned at least 30 pounds a year per man in what he called "honest employments." The total loss in revenue to the nation each and every year was an unbelievable 2,290,000 pounds. It was incredible to him that the English alone (including Ireland) suffered such a loss. No other nation, he observed, whose conduct was "just as wise and just" as England's practiced the "barbarous Custom of confining insolvent Debtors to starve in a Gaol."¹

To understand why England should have been in this unique position, Defoe examined divine law, "meaning the Mosaic Institution," and the laws of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks,

¹Daniel Defoe, The Unreasonableness and Ill Consequences of Imprisoning the Body for Debt, Prov'd from the Laws of God and Nature, Human Policy and Interest, Address'd to a Noble Lord (London, 1729), pp. 4-7. [Hereafter cited as The Unreasonableness and Ill Consequences.]
Mohammedans, and Turks, as well as those of contemporary European nations such as Flanders, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and Holland. He finally examined the laws of Scotland. None imprisoned men for debt or deprived a man of all means of supporting himself or his family. And in examining English common law, he could find no example before that in Edward III's reign, and then such a practice was not followed again for over two hundred years. Yet, at this time, to England's shame, there were more people imprisoned for debt in just one jail in either London or the suburbs than in all the "Gaols of the whole German Empire." And, as a consequence of such barbaric practices, he adds, many Englishmen took to a life of crime, becoming highwaymen and robbers, for

When a Man is not suffered to go about his lawful Business for fear (every moment) of being arrested and imprison'd for Life, it is much to be feared he will take to ill courses, perhaps rob upon the Way or fall into any Manner of Villainy rather than be at the Mercy of his inexorable Creditors who will not give him Time to pay his Debts by means of honest Industry.

Not only did adults fearing imprisonment take to a life of crime but all too often children, whose parent or parents were already in debt or in prison, took up crime to support themselves or other members of their family. Instead of imprisoning the poor honest worker, who got himself emmeshed in debts because of

1Ibid., pp. 7-16.

2For a more detailed examination of Defoe's views of the relationship between poverty and crime, see Chapter Five below.
accident, rather than because of fraud, Defoe suggested that only "Criminals and Cheats" be jailed. In that way, he thought, prison would look all the more terrible than it already was.

In short, to imprison the poor for debt was, in his opinion, "to do what Nature and Christianity, as well as all wholesome policies abhor, and to act in vain. . . ." Above all, it was unreasonable; and, if it was unreasonable, it was therefore unjust. He thus concluded his treatise by appealing to the Crown, asking that the Crown use its influence to see that parliament would pass an act that was fair and equitable to both debtor and creditor.¹

When that same year it looked as if an act to aid debtors was going to be passed, one would think that Defoe would have been one of its most ardent supporters. But, on the contrary, rather than prostitute his talents supporting a bill he felt to be unwise, i.e., unequitable to creditors, he instead used them to present his objections to the bill to the House of Commons. Although he still firmly believed that it was better if "Ten dishonest Debtors escape[d] than that one real Object of the intended Good [i.e., the bill] should perish," he just as firmly maintained his position that creditors had to be protected from fraudulent debtors. In the past, he noted, some tradesmen-creditors had as many as fifty insolvents discharged

¹The Unreasonableness and Ill Consequences, pp. 19-20, 23-27.
at one time by a single act; hence, many honest tradesmen were ruined by the very law intended to help others. The act then pending in Commons offered no protection to creditors, for it did not insure them that such injustices as occurred in the past would not occur again. Moreover, many insolvents, who had secured their release by a previous act, actually never spent even one day in prison. They had instead bribed jailors to enter their names on prison rolls, that is, to "own them as Prisoners in Custody, tho’ [they were] not really so." Thus, by previous acts, these debtors secured their freedom formally, which they had never lost actually. Unfortunately, the act then pending also did not take any steps to insure that jailors could not be bribed in exactly the same way again. Yet these were the very things to which Defoe thought the Commons should have addressed themselves in order to assure creditors that they were being given every consideration possible under the law—God’s and man’s.  

In order to eliminate the misgivings of creditors, Defoe thus proposed that a commission be established much like the one that Oglethorpe was then heading that was investigating the Fleet and other prisons. Such a commission would be "above the Reach of Fraud or Corruption," and yet would be fully

---

qualified to search into "those Deeds of Darkness to the Bottom." Defoe also proposed that a provision be incorporated into the act that would prevent any individual from claiming benefit of the act more than once. Thirdly, he suggested that the benefits of the act not apply to anyone who violated the law in any way, such as by refusing to come in, or claiming the benefits of the act after taking an oath before witnesses that they would not be applied for. Fourthly, he proposed that the benefits of the act also not apply to anyone who, after surrendering himself to the commission, presented a false account of his estate. Lastly, he wanted the commission to take steps to prevent jailors from keeping debtors "on their Books after they had been discharged, antedating their Commitments, and giving fraudulent Certificates of their being Prisoners, when really they were not. . . ."¹ If the creditor saw that these things were done for his protection, Defoe had no doubt that he would be more charitable to the truly honest and necessitous debtor.

In concluding his objections, the economist-pamphleteer once again stressed the significance of the creditor's being able to imprison fraudulent insolvents. Upon this power was founded, he said again, "the Freedom of the Tradesman" to trust his customer. He took the opportunity to again warn Commons that if they destroyed the coercive power of creditors out of

¹Ibid., pp. 8-11.
mistaken compassion for debtors, just as he warned them of their mistaken charity for paupers in establishing workhouses, they would in effect be destroying the economic stability of English trade; for, in this case, if a man could not be credited, he could no longer buy and trade. It was, he reminded them, the business of that legislative body to stimulate trade, not to injure it. What was demanded was a bill similar to that passed in 1705, a bill fair to all concerned, to individuals and to the nation as a whole. As he stated, if justice was the rule, mercy would no longer be necessary. 1 As one can see, regardless of his own sympathies, whenever there was a clash between the interests of an individual (even his own) and those he perceived to be the interests of the nation, the national welfare came first. Thus, he could not lend his support to a bill he felt would injure the land he so loved.

During the years Defoe was fighting for the rights of both debtors and creditors, he above all sought to maintain his objectivity. Nowhere is this seen better than in the closing years of his life, when it would have been easier for him, old

---

1Ibid., pp. 14-21. As early as 1697 in "On Bankruptcy," Defoe wrote: "... mistake me not, I am not pleading for a Liberty for Frauds and Encouragement to Men to turn Bankrupts, GOD forbid! I only argue, that the Measures of Punishment upon the Person of the Debtor, when it can legally appear, that he is really and bona fide unable to pay, should not be in the Breast of the Creditor, but in the Breast of the Law, that is, of the Judges and Magistrates, with whom the Execution of the Law is entrusted" (The Essay on Projects, pp. 115-16). See also Review (Vol. III, No. 2; Sat. Feb. 16, 1706), Fasc. Bk. 6, pp. 81-82.
and in debt, pursued by creditors and political foes, to have looked at the benefits he might have personally derived from such a bill as the one then pending in Commons in 1729. But he remained true to those principles he had enunciated years before.

I do not argue for an universal Discharge of all Insolvents without Limitation or Distinctions, no Man can imagine me so mad. Neither do I think, that no Man should be confin'd for Debt. . . . I know it is also very difficult to distinguish between the indigent and knavish Debtor, But I wish our parliament would once take into Consideration, whether proper Judges may not be appointed. . . who should have Power to hear and determine between Debtor and Creditor--These Judges should have absolute Power to deliver or detain, nay, even Corporally to punish the Persons of the Debtor, upon their being fully satisfy'd of his . . . knavish Reserve and double Dealing with them-- But to have no Power to concern themselves in the Estate, or take or dispose any Part of it. This would establish some certain Bounds to the Rage of Creditors, and yet leave them Room, if they could prove Prevarications, Concealments, and the like, to have the Debtor severely punish'd for his Knavery--And these Judges to be punish'd with Death, if they take any Bribe or Reward to influence their Opinions.¹

At the same time he made this declaration and wish, he also took the opportunity to chastize the immoderate creditor:

If there are any Men left so barbarous and inhuman, as not to approve of a Way so indifferent as this, they must be such as make such a Law the more necessary-- 'Tis on the Account of such Men that the Gaols are now so full of miserable Creatures, 'tis for Relief against such as these, that an Act of Parliament is desir'd . . . . And if Creditors had common Humanity, such an universal Cry had never been rais'd against them. . . .²

¹Ibid., p. 21. This proposal merely repeats and elaborates that suggested by Defoe in 1697 in The Essay on Projects. See footnote 1, p. 204 above.

Although he never modified his opinion of such immoderate creditors as those described above, he fought for their rights as hard as he fought for those of the compassionate creditor and honest debtor, oftentimes putting their interests ahead of his own. However, despite his own appeals and those of other reformers such as John Oglethorpe (and later, Jonas Hanway and John Howard, who were interested in prison reform in general, not specifically in the debtor question), the sad and inescapable fact is that prison reform for debtor and felon alike "was not of much concern to a largely complacent and uninterested public."¹

Yet after the death of Defoe, some interest was shown as several commissions were formed to look into conditions in debtor's prisons. For example, in 1735, there was one formed under the leadership of William Hay; in 1754, Oglethorpe again headed another. Although these commissions did not address themselves to the question of the bankruptcy laws, they were responsible for minor changes in the physical conditions of prisons. Then, too, in 1759, An Insolvent Act was passed, which made creditors liable for the support of debtors that owed them money while they were in prison. However, although creditors were supposed to pay a groat a day, the smallest possible sum, for the support of each prisoner indebted to them, the law was

¹Hibbert, p. 138.
seldom if ever enforced. Later, near the close of the century, the Society for the Relief of Persons Imprisoned for Small Sums finally got parliament to pass an act limiting the term of imprisonment for convicted debtors, but only in certain cases. The act did not apply to the majority of debtors, even the majority of those convicted for "small sums."  

Although these reforms were minute and really insignificant when one looks at the total picture, it is to the credit of those like Defoe, the Fieldings, Howard, Hanway, Oglethorpe, and Johnson (in the Idler) that they fought long and hard for much needed reforms and that they tried to stimulate the conscience of a nation.

---

1Williams, XI, 136.

2George, p. 11.
Self-preservation is the first law of Nature. . . . It is certainly true that few things in Nature are simply unlawful, but that all Crime is made so by the addition and concurrence of Circumstances.

The Four Years Voyages of Capt. George Roberts, p. 256; and The Compleat English Tradesman, I, 292.

CHAPTER V

"GIVE ME NOT POVERTY, LEST I STEAL!"

By the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, yet another effect of the constantly growing pauper class was making itself felt. Despite all measures taken such as the repressive poor laws and the workhouse movement, which aimed at compelling the poor to work, the number of unemployed poor continued to increase instead of decrease. Contributing to this increase were such complex factors as a general decay in trade and the enclosure system, which resulted in the eviction of many small tenant farmers, most of whom flocked to the already crowded cities to seek work.\(^1\) Concomitant with this escalation in the number of unemployed was an

\(^1\)Arnold Toynbee, The Industrial Revolution (Boston, 1960), p. 73. See also pp. 67-84. See also Bernard Mandeville, An Enquiry into the Causes of the Frequent Executions at Tyburn (1725) and Beth Ann (Croskey) Bassein, "Crime and Punishment in the Novels of Defoe, Fielding and Godwin" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, 1961), pp. 1-9, 53-68.
increase in England's crime rate, which reached its zenith about 1750.¹ In fact, so prevalent was crime in this period, especially in and about the city of London, one writer has commented that during "the first fifty years after the Revolution, highway robbery was one of the most ordinary events of life."² Several of Defoe's treatises, such as A Brief Account of the Lives of Six Notorious Street Robbers... With a Particular Relation of their Early Introduction into the Desperate Trade of Street Robbing... (1726), Street Robberies Consider'd; the Reason of their being so Frequent, with probable Means to Prevent' em... (1728), Second Thoughts are Best; Or, A Further Improvement of a Late Scheme to Prevent Robberies... (1729), and An Effectual Scheme for the immediate Preventing of Street Robberies... (1731), reflect the accuracy of the above-cited quotation. Further evidence of this increase in crime can be seen in his criminal biographies, the most famous of which are those of Jack Sheppard and Jonathan Wild,³ the

¹ Peter Quennell, Hogarth's Progress (New York, 1955), p. 80. See also JHC, XXVI (1750-1754), p. 3.


³ For example, The History of the Remarkable Life and Death of John Sheppard (1724), A Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes, etc. of John Sheppard (1724), and The Life and Actions of Jonathan Wild (1725). See also John Kazantzis's "Defoe and the Criminal Lives: A Study in the Interrelation of Biography and the Novel as Genres" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 1964).
notorious thief taker, and, of course, in his *Moll Flanders*... (1722). And, if still more confirmation is required, one can look at the many editions of *The Newgate Calendar* that appeared during this time. Although pamphlets relating to that infamous prison were numerous in that "pamphleteering century, the seventeenth," from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards, there was a steady flow of literature concerning it. Soon after 1700, *The Tyburn Calendar, or Malefactors' Bloody Register* appeared; in 1720, *The Chronicle of Tyburn, or Villainy display'd in all its Branches*; and in 1776, yet another, *The Annals of Newgate*, was published. According to Howard Savage, however, the most reliable and best known edition is that by Knapp and Baldwin, published in 1826, consisting of ten volumes. This work, called *The Newgate Calendar*, was based primarily on the Sessions' Papers, which recorded the proceedings at the Old Bailey, and on records made by prison chaplains.¹ In examining the title page of a fairly recent three-volume paper-back edition based on that by Knapp and Baldwin, one can see the comprehensiveness and pervasiveness of crime in this age, for the "Memoirs" relate the tales of: traitors, murderers, incendiaries, ravishers, pirates, mutineers, coiners, highwaymen, footpads, housebreakers,  

¹As cited by Henry Savage in his introduction to *The Newgate Calendar*, ed. Edwin Valentine Mitchell (Garden City, New York [1926]), pp. 6-7.
extortioners, forgerers, pickpockets, fraudulent bankrupts, and "Thieves of every Description." 1

Besides the evicted tenant farmer and small businessman, many other unemployed poor congregated in London. But, unfortunately, like most other large developing cities in England, London came to be a "plague spot" for anyone out of work. In fact, London only complicated the problem. As Basil Williams has noted, except for port workers, weavers, builders, and a few skilled "optical and scientific instrument makers, and the watch makers," London had no significant industry. Consequently, the majority of the city's work force was occupied in seasonal labor, such as coach-making, book-binding, laundering, tailoring, in work that depended on the "carriage trade," that is, on the rich. However, since the "rank and fashion" did not frequent the city except from time to time, there were several "long spells of dullness." 2 Therefore, those seasonal workers joined the other unemployed paupers in seeking some means of subsisting during these dull periods. Added to this growing new "criminal class" were debtors. Many debtors released from prison did not have the means to begin life anew,


2 Williams, XI, 132.
since everything they had was taken from them either before they went to prison or while they were confined. Then, too, there were the fraudulent debtors, who refused to surrender themselves to starvation, degradation, and perpetual imprisonment. After consuming the remainder of their estates, they also had to find a way of maintaining themselves. And because starvation was a very real possibility to pauper and debtor alike, a search was begun for an alternative that was financially rewarding—if not legal.

The alternatives confronting the unemployed seemed basically to be two: compliance with the law (i.e., to work in a workhouse, if outside employment could not be secured) or starvation. And one must be reminded that no one was entitled to relief outside of his own parish, and then only if he had a legal settlement. Furthermore, if one did not agree to go to the local workhouse, he forfeited any right to any kind of parish relief, even if he was entitled to assistance according to the laws of settlement. However, even if one went to the workhouse, he eventually starved. What seemed, then, to be two alternatives turned out to be no alternative at all: one starved either way. Therefore, the only other option open to the unemployed was some illegal activity.

And as the problem of this new and constantly growing "criminal" class became critical, it caught the attention of clergymen, parliamentarian, pamphleteer, and citizen alike.
But, in typical eighteenth-century fashion, most critics did not seek to eradicate the causes that lay behind that increase in crime as much as they endeavored to curb the effects. Therefore, the penal code, already inhumane, became even more severe, and the number of capital offenses rose until by 1760 there were, according to that famed jurist William Blackstone, no less than one hundred and sixty capital crimes. And, like the punishments for capital offenses, the other common methods of punishing offenders—stocking, whipping, burning of the hand, or transporting—did not "reclaim" any more offenders or cause crime to decrease any more in the early part of the century than they did in the latter. Fear of starvation spoke more eloquently to the vested interests of this class than all the punishments the eighteenth-century could inflict. In fact, the very laws that sent so many to Newgate and to their death for committing what today would be considered a misdemeanor and not a felony only bred more criminals. As one critic remarked:

I believe, it would be very difficult for all our Bridewells, and County Jails to produce ten Persons, who have been Reform'd by any, or all Punishments. For, daily Experience proves, that young Criminals, upon their first Commitments, become acquainted with old Sinners, more cunning than themselves, who instruct those Pupils, to become more expert in the Devil's Service. So that,

---

generally speaking, all young Offenders become worse, and not better by being confirm'd amongst more experienc'd Transgressors.¹

Defoe himself amply testified to the aptness of this observation but no where did he say it more graphically than in Moll Flanders. In one passage, Moll questions her mother-in-law (i.e., her mother) about her past life, for it seems that her mother-in-law had "fallen into very ill Company in London in her young days," when she had gone on errands for her mother to Newgate. Moll thus comments:

Here my Mother-in-law ran out in a long account of the wicked Practices in that Dreadful Place, and child, says my mother, perhaps you may know little of it, or it may be have heard nothing about it; but depend upon it, says she, we all know here [in Virginia], that there are more thieves and rogues made by that one Prison of Newgate, than by all the Clubs and Societies of Villains in this Nation; 'tis that cursed Place, says my mother, than half peoples this Colony.²

Later, Moll gives her own testimony in what is perhaps the most often quoted and most famous section of the novel. Moll, in Newgate, has just spoken with a young girl, who has been confined there for only four months. Yet, during that short period, she has come to a point where, though she still feels

---


²The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders . . . (1722) in The Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe ("Shakespeare Head Edition"; London, 1927-28), I, 89. Hereafter cited as Moll Flanders; subsequent passages taken from this novel will be taken from this edition unless otherwise stated.
as if she were in hell, hell has become "natural" to her, so much so, in fact, that she is no longer disturbed about it. After she turns away singing and dancing, Moll notes:

I mention this, because it would be worth the Observation of any Prisoner, who shall hereafter fall into the same Misfortune and come to that dreadful Place of Newgate; how Time, Necessity, and Conversing with the Wretches that are there Familiarizes the Place to them; how at last they become reconcil'd to that which at first was the greatest Dread upon their Spirits in the World, and are as impudently Cheerful and Merry in their Misery, as they were when put out of it.

Moll proceeds then to relate the stages of her own degeneration:

It is scarce possible to imagine that our Natures should be capable of so much Degeneracy, as to make that pleasant and agreeable that in itself is the most compleat Misery.

All my terrifying thoughts were past, the Horrors of the Place, were become Familiar, and I felt no more Uneasiness at the Noise and Clamours of the Prison...; in a word, I was become a meer Newgate-Bird, as wicked and as outrageous as any of them; nay, ... a Degeneracy had possess'd me, that I was no more the same thing that I had been than if I had never been otherwise than what I was now.¹

That such a place as Newgate could become "Familiar" was to Defoe an outrage. If Moll, as an adult of some experience, could be so affected, one can imagine how the young were affected by being incarcerated in Newgate and other prisons throughout England. And like Defoe, Chief Justice Hale similarly concluded that prisons did not reform. To him, the penal laws were enacted more to "terrify offenders than to punish." Yet, he too notes that in this intent the law was apparently

¹Ibid., II, 101, 104-5.
frustrated of its design therein; for . . . more suffered at one Session at Newgate for stealing and breaking into houses, and picking of pockets, and such other larcenies out of the protection of clergy, than suffered in some countries for all offences in three years. Therefore, regardless of the severities of the penal code, starvation was an immediate possibility that presented a greater fear than the remote possibility of being caught and subsequently punished.

That many unemployed poor turned to a life of crime cannot be disputed, and, thus, in the legal sense, they became criminals. But, the question remained, were they criminals in the moral sense; for, as one anonymous writer said, "a great many who executed every Sessions and Assizes would never have committed such wickedness, if poverty had not driven them to such abominable actions." This conclusion was reiterated by another anonymous author, who stated that "where people are bred up to a trade, and can gain a livelihood no other way, immediate death is not so terrible, as the starving condition to which they would be reduced, by leaving off their

1 Hale, pp. 10-11.
2 There was no real police force until the time of Henry and John Fielding. This lack of an efficient police force was a major contributory factor in the increase of crime. See also Bassein, pp. 40-68.
illegal Practices."\(^1\) In short, as Hale observed, "as the multitude of Poor, and necessitous, and uneducated Persons, increas'd, the multitude of malefactors increas\(\overleftrightarrow{ed}\) notwithstanding the Examples the Severity \(\overleftrightarrow{of the law}\).\(^2\) Braddon, like the anonymous critics mentioned above, also questioned the culpability of these new "criminals." As he said:

It hath ever been held to be both the Duty and Interest of all Governments . . . that no Person (how Miserable or Infamous Soever) should be FORC'E either to BEG or STEAL for the necessary Support of Life. That Authority which commands him who stole to steal no more, but to Labour; supposeth that he may be employ'd, if he be but willing to work;

But if any Person endeavours to obey that Command and none will employ him; there is then just cause to fear; that his After-Guilt (in a great Measure) will lie at their door who refus'ed his Labour.

Braddon was particularly distressed because there were many thousands who were "almost starv'd for want," who did not have "above nine Pence per Week per Head, for Lodging and Diet, and all other Necessaries." Therefore, he concluded, "they must . . . steal for a farther Maintenance or must perish for Want." Yet, he too points out that these poor, who were forced to steal, "would otherwise have only BEGGED for Bread," if begging had been legal. But, as it was, even begging was considered to be a crime. Braddon further indicts private charities and other organizations as being inefficacious in curbing the causes

\(^1\)An Enquiry into the Causes of the Increase and Miseries of the Poor, p. 21.

\(^2\)Hale, p. 11.
for the increase in crime. Such organizations, he remarks, were of some help in keeping some from "being so vicious as they would otherwise have been," yet, he adds, "they did not (as ever he could hear) take any general Course to remove that necessity which too many were under, of continuing their crimes for bread."¹ In short, if many turned to crime as a means of subsisting, it would appear that there were (1) ample provocation and (2) no real alternative other than starving.

The question thus arose whether these individuals committed any crime at all; that is, did an individual reduced to a necessitous condition who violated a civil law in fact commit a moral or legal transgression? This question was answered by critics usually according to their interpretation of natural law and their view of the nature of man. Some critics felt that all goods were held by man in common in the state of nature before he entered into a formal societal arrangement, and afterwards, if he was truly in a necessitous state, all goods once again reverted to the position of a pre-societal state. Hence, necessitous man committed neither a moral nor a civil crime. On the other hand, other critics denied this contention. Moreover, they asserted that when man entered into a formal societal arrangement he gave up all rights to self-preservation in so far as necessity is concerned. Some asserted that man should seek his virtue before his own individual safety, that

¹Braddon, pp. 12-13, 6, 53, 57.
honor and virtue were more important to man than the mere saving of one's own life. Defoe, however, disagreed, and felt that man, even with grace, could not withstand the pressures of necessity, and offered in defense of those reduced to a necessitous state the following plea: "Give me not Poverty, Lest I Steal!" In effect, as shall be shown, Defoe contends that poverty or the fear of it was such that man was powerless to withstand it and that man in such a condition had the right to take any measure that could preserve his life, even if such a measure appeared to violate a civil and/or moral law. He thus offers on behalf of all unfortunates thrown into such a state due to conditions over which they have little or no control a plea of psychological or economic determinism.

Even though it is not the purpose of this thesis to present a definitive statement concerning the sources of Defoe's views of necessity and self-preservation, yet some examination of the position held by critics on both sides of the issue is fruitful in clarifying that held by Defoe himself. One important school of thought was that represented by such men as Clarendon, Cumberland, Eachard, Lowde, Shafte, and Tyrrell.¹

¹According to Novak, unlike "most philosophers of the natural law," Defoe did not make any distinction between the states of poverty and necessity, nor will any be made in this chapter when Defoe's thought is discussed. See Novak, Defoe and the Nature of Man, p. 72.

²See Novak, Defoe and the Nature of Man, p. 67.
who did not believe that any fall from virtue for any reason whatsoever could be excused or condoned. Thus they held that one could not transgress either the moral or civil law even if one was in a state of necessity, that is, reduced to a condition of such dire want that one's life was in serious jeopardy. One of the most influential exponents of this view was William Wollaston, who followed the tradition of Cicero, who long before argued that the "greatest necessity is that of doing what is honourable (honestatis)" and that man should value virtuous actions above even his own life.¹ Thus Wollaston contended that virtue and truth and honor were of greater importance to man than the desire to save his own life.²

Although Wollaston and the others noted above rested their arguments primarily on moral ethics, Bernard Mandeville arrived at a similar conclusion, but rested his argument principally on political ethics; that is, he contended that man, after entering into a societal arrangement, surrendered certain rights and that the common good came before that of the individual. Mandeville agreed with Hobbes³ that in "all living creatures, that fall under our Senses, we perceive an Instinct of

³See below.
Self-Preservation; and that... man, the most perfect of them, sets an inestimable Value on Life, and knows no fear equal to the Horror he has against Death." This fear, he adds, "is to be understood only of man in the state of Nature." But after man has reasoned to an awareness of a "First Cause" and has incorporated himself into a "community of vast Numbers" so as to "make one Body Politick," he must then consider not his own individual good, the preservation of his own life, but must consider "the Welfare of the Body Politic which he finds universally esteemed, as a concern superior to all others."

At this stage in his political and moral development, man should, thinks Mandeville, no longer fear his own death, for such a fear would be "prejudicial to the public good and common security, in which he has a share..." Although the good of the individual is ultimately united with that of society as a whole, the individual must nevertheless subordinate his own private good to that of the public good, even to the extent of conquering his great fear of death.

One of the most eloquent spokesmen for this school was Richard Baxter, who like the others noted above, permitted no fall from virtue. In his Christian Directory, Baxter not only gives "Instructions for the Poor" but also lists "The Temptations of the Poor." In his view poverty was a punishment...
sent by God to some because of sins of "Slothfulness and Idleness"; and he firmly adhered to the Biblical injunctions that "... any (that is able) will not work, neither should he eat, 2 Thess. 3:10" and "In the sweat of their face must they eat their bread, Gen. 3:19." Baxter therefore tells the poor:

To maintain your idleness is a sin in others. If you will please your flesh with ease, it must be displeased with want; and you must suffer what you choose...; and he warns them that they should become "acquainted with the Special Temptations of the Poor so that they "may be furnished to resist them," for "Every Condition hath its own Temptations to resist which persons in that condition must specially be fortified and watch against." 1

Among the temptations the poor should be on special guard against are the temptation to think "highlier of Riches and Honours" then they ought and the temptation to have an "over-much care about their wants and worldly matters; they will think that necessity requireth it in them, and will excuse them." But, says Baxter,

Satan maketh Poverty a snare to draw many needy Creatures, to greater Covetousness than many of the Rich are guilty of; None thirst more eagerly after more; And yet their Poverty blindeth them, so they cannot see that they are covetous, or else excuse it as a justifiable thing. They think they desire no more but necessaries, and that it is not covetousness, if they desire not superfluities... . . .

Yet questions Baxter:

1Cited in Practical Works (London, 1707), 1, 489.
... do you not covet more than God alloweth you? ... And doth not he know best what is necessary for you, and what is superfluous? What then is covetousness, if this be not?

Consequently he concludes that:

Poverty will excuse ungodliness in none! Nothing is so necessary as the service of God and your salvation; And therefore no necessity can excuse you from it ... The Poor will be tempted to use unlawful means to supply their wants. How many by the temptations of necessity have been tempted to comply with sinners, and wound their consciences, and lie and flatter for favour or preferment, or to cheat, or steal, or over-reach! A dear prize! to buy the feast that perisheth, with the loss or hazard of everlasting life. ... And thus he tells the poor:

Be willing to dye; seeing the world giveth you so cold entertainment ... be therefore true to God and Conscience. ... it is your duty rather to dye than to take another man's goods against his will, or without his consent. ...
Representative of another significant school of thought was Thomas Hobbes, who felt that man, in the state of nature, that is, before he entered into a covenant, was naturally depraved and was in a state of war. As he says, before man enters into a commonwealth in order to secure his own peace, a state of war exists in which "every man is enemy to every other man. . . . In such condition, there is . . . which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man," writes the philosopher, is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." In such a state, man's desires and passions, that is, motions, are "in themselves no sin. No more are the actions, that proceed from those passions till they know a law that forbids them." In addition, notes Hobbes:

To this war of every Man, against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have no place there. . . . It is consequent also to the same condition, that there be no propriety, no dominion, no mine and thine distinct, but only that to be every man's that he can get; and for so long as he can keep it. . . .

Consequently, in such a state man can make use of anything and everything that "can be a help unto him, in preserving his life against his enemies." To Hobbes, it "followeth that in such a condition, every man has a right to every thing; even to one another's body. . . ." However, as long as man is in this condition, he lacks peace or security; hence, man relinquishes
certain rights, while retaining others, and forms a commonwealth for his own security. 1

According to Leo Strauss, a noted Hobbesian scholar, the primary good to Hobbes was the preservation of one’s own life; death to him was the primary evil, especially a violent death, which man feared. 2 According to Hobbes, even though man, when entering into a covenant, gives away certain rights, the one right he cannot give away is the right or liberty to defend his own life; or, as Hobbes puts it:

... covenants, not to defend a man’s own body, are void. Therefore, if the sovereign command a man, though justly condemned to kill, wound, or main himself; or not to resist those that assault him; or to abstain from the use of food, air, or any other thing, without which he cannot live /italics mine/, yet hath that man the liberty to disobey ... It is one thing to say, kill me or my fellow, if you please; another thing to say, I will kill myself, or my fellow. It followeth, therefore, that no man is bound ... either to kill himself or any other man. ... 3

In addition, Hobbes states that in the state of nature, all civil law ceases; hence, all crime ceases, "for there being no other law remaining, but that of nature; there is no place," he


3 Leviathan, pp. 164-65.
adds, "for accusation; every man being his own judge, and accused only by his own conscience. . . . When therefore his intention is right, his fact is no sin: if otherwise, his fact is sin; but not crime. . . ."¹ Above all, he writes, "no man can be supposed to give away the right of preserving his own body; for the safety whereof all sovereignty was ordained. . . ."²

The second of Hobbes's "'two most certain postulates of human nature' . . . 'the postulate of natural reason,'" Leo Strauss observes, "in accordance with materialistic reasoning . . . is reduced to the principle of self-preservation: since the preservation of life is the condition sine qua non for the satisfaction of any appetite, it is the 'primary good'."³ Although Hobbes is careful not to excuse all crimes committed against the state, e.g., the deliberate plotting to kill someone who may pose a future threat to one's life, he does, however, allow some transgressions of civil law when they are committed in self-defense, i.e., to preserve one's life from an imminent danger:

If a man, by the terror of present death, be compelled to do a fact against the law, he is totally excused; because no law can oblige a man to abandon his own preservation. . . . when a man is destitute of food, or any other thing necessary for his life, and cannot preserve himself any other way but by some fact against

¹Ibid., p. 217.
²Ibid.
³Strauss, p. 15.
the law; . . . as if he take food by force or stealth, which he cannot obtain for money or charity; . . . he is totally excused.

As Hobbes remarks, not only can no man be "supposed at making a commonwealth, to have abandoned the defense of his life, or limbs. . . .," but also that the "degrees of crimes" must be measured according to their intent and their effects and "by the concurrence of times, places, and persons." ¹

In Hobbes's theory, thus, the object of every voluntary act has to be some self-good. And if the object of every voluntary act is a self-good, then one could not allow himself to be killed: there are, concludes Hobbes, "some rights, which no man can be understood by any words, or other signs, to have abandoned or transferred. As first, a man cannot lay down the right of resisting them, that assault him, by force to take away his life; because he cannot be understood to aim thereby, at any good to himself."² To Hobbes, then, the right of self-preservation was one which man retained even after he left the state of nature.

Two other commentators of the natural law with whom Defoe was also thoroughly acquainted were Pufendorf and Grotius, both of whom he cites in Jure Divino. In fact, Novak notes that Defoe's remark to the effect that he "had a 'very great

¹Leviathan, pp. 221-24.
²Ibid., pp. 103-05; see also p. 203.
Veneration for Grotius had higher praise than he ever gave Locke or Sidney.\(^1\) It was Pufendorf who wrote that "the case of Necessity is a thing in every body's Mouth and the force of it generally acknowledg'd in the world: Hence, . . . it hath no Law, that 'tis a suppos'd or presumptive Exception to all Human Ordinances and Constitutions; that . . . it gives a Right of doing many Things, otherwise forbidden."\(^2\) Although Grotius shared Pufendorf's opinion about necessity being an exception to the rule of law, that is, he contended that necessity returned society to a state of nature in which all goods were held in common (a view shared by such as Aquinas),\(^3\) he also stated that one necessitous person could not take from another person in the same state of necessity, and, in addition, restitution had to be made when possible.\(^4\)

Being familiar with both schools of thought on the subject of necessity and self-preservation, Defoe was eclectic, and formed his own ideas by taking from the best of both schools.

\(^1\)Defoe and the Nature of Man, p. 68, footnote 3.


\(^3\)For example, Aquinas says, "If, however, the peril be so sudden as not to allow of the delay involved by referring the matter to authority, the mere necessity brings with it a dispensation, since necessity knows no law" (Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas /New York, 1947/, I Pt. I. Q. 96, Art. 6, pp. 1021-22. See also Q. 96, Art. 4, pp. 1019-20.

\(^4\)Hugo Grotius, De Jure Belli ac Pacis, trans. Francis Kelsey (Oxford, 1925), II, 193 (ii.ii.6) and II, 194 (ii.ii.8).
what best suited him and what best expressed his view of the
time of man.\textsuperscript{1} What the reader finds, however, is not a
developed, well-thought out, systematized philosophic theory,
as one finds in Hobbes; instead he finds Defoe's thoughts spread
out in various works, works that cover Defoe's entire journal-
istic career. From these thoughts the reader can nevertheless
deduce his views.

iii

"Necessity," says Defoe, "is really above the power of
human nature, and for Providence\textsuperscript{2} to suffer a man to fall into
that Necessity is to suffer him to sin, because nature is not
furnished with power to defend itself, nor is grace able to
fortify the mind against it."\textsuperscript{3} This statement, made late in
Defoe's public life, only repeats what he had said throughout
his career as journalist and social critic. Defoe thought that
the law of self-defense, or self-preservation, was one which
held man's primary allegiance. This view was, in the opinion

\textsuperscript{1}See below.

\textsuperscript{2}"This I call Providence, to which I give the whole
Power of guiding and directing of the creation and managing of
it by man who is His deputy or substitute, and even the guiding,
influencing, and overruling man himself also . . . that it is
that operation of the Power, Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of
God, by which He influences, governs, and directs not only the
means, but the events of all things which concern us in the

\textsuperscript{3}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 34-35.
of Maximilian Novak, "more radical than Hobbes."¹

Hobbes maintained that short of the State taking an individual's life, the individual was obligated to obey all civil laws since that obedience, in a sense, constituted "the best means to his preservation." But if the State aimed at taking the individual's life, then such obligation ceased.² Defoe, however, argued that the laws of the State as presently constituted did aim, slowly but surely, at the taking of the individual's life. Even though Hobbes stated that self-preservation obligated a man, Defoe differed with Hobbes on the precise manner in which a man was "obligated." Howard Warrender explains that in Hobbes's hypothesis, "Self-preservation . . . is . . . a validating condition of obligation and not a ground of obligation. In other words, it is not true that I am obliged to do 'x' (my duty) because 'x' will preserve me; but it is true that I cannot be obligated to do 'x' if 'x' will destroy me." Thus, Warrender concludes that "... taken by itself, a rational principle of self-preservation belongs only to the theory of what the individual cannot be obliged to do." But he concedes that Hobbes could have intended "self-preservation to be not merely a validating condition of obligation, but also in fact a duty. "In that event," Warrender notes, "the individual

¹Novak, Defoe and the Nature of Man, p. 9.
would be **obliged** to preserve himself. . . ." In order to further clarify Hobbes's use of "right" and "duty," Warrender goes on to explain:

It would appear that self-preservation is a right . . . in the same sense as [Hobbes] uses the term when describing the right to all things or rights of nature, or the "true liberties" of citizens; that is that it is something the negation of which the individual **cannot** be obliged to perform. In his treatment of obligations to obey both the natural and the civil law, Hobbes consistently upholds the view that the individual cannot be obliged to destroy himself or not to resist mortal danger. To be obliged to do so would be to be tied to an impossibility, for self-preservation is what Hobbes described as a right received from the uncontrollable dictates of necessity.

Nevertheless, Hobbes did not contend that man was **obliged** to preserve himself. He also did not say that man was forbidden to do so. Instead, Hobbes speaks of the right to preserve oneself in time of great physical necessity as "'part of natural liberty,'" stating that natural liberty is not "**constituted**" but permitted by the law. Therefore, Hobbes concluded, says Warrender, that "if this natural liberty is then restrained . . . by the natural and then the civil law, self-defence would appear to be allowed but not commanded by the law . . . If this conclusion is justified," adds Warrender, then "'preserve thyself' plays the part of the supreme motive for the individual, but 'seek peace' is his strongest duty. . . . [Yet] where peace is impossible, he is allowed in the interest of his own preservation to take other measures such as the use of force and fraud, but Hobbes does not say he is obliged to do so."
Therefore, if "physical self-preservation" was a duty, such methods would presumably "where required be obligated."¹ However, Defoe consistently maintained that self-preservation was the first law of nature, a law which man was powerless to disobey.

Although one cannot forget that Defoe was himself at times a fugitive from the law and that he was haunted by debt throughout most of his adult life, and although one cannot entirely dismiss the allegations that his business practices, if not illegal, were not completely ethical, yet his views concerning necessity and self-preservation did not alter in times of "feast or famine." As early as 1701, he unequivocally stated that:

> No man was ever yet so void of Sense,  
> As to debate the Right of Self-Defence.  
> A principle so grafted in the Mind,  
> With Nature born, and does like Nature bind:  
> Twisted with Reason, and with Nature too;  
> As neither one nor t'other can undo²... (11. II. 828-33)

As time went on, the right of self-defense became to him a superior moral law, before which respect for the letter of traditional law was subordinated.³ In 1706 he again repeated

¹Ibid., pp. 212-17.
his assertion that self-preservation was an inherent right of man:

Nature Commands, and 'tis Prescribed to Sense,
For all Men to adhere to Self-Defence:
Self-Preservation is the only Law,
That does Involuntary Duty draw;
It serves for Reason and Authority,
And they'll defend themselves, that know not why;
The meanest Creature is upon its Guard,
By Nature Guided, and in part prepared;
There's not an Animal, a Life of Sense,
But has some Native Weapon for Defence,
Nature all the Rules and Methods shows;
Instinct the needful Force of Skill supplies,
By this he fights, or else by that he flies... 1

Hence, if self-preservation was an "Involuntary Duty," then self-destruction was, as he announced in 1697 in An Essay on Projects, an act of cowardice, 2 whether it was self-inflicted or merely passively unresisted. As one can see from the above-cited quotations, Defoe's view of necessity and self-preservation was based not only on his concept of the nature of man but also on his assumption that human conduct was determined in part by external conditions over which he had little or no control.

Defoe's view of human nature can only be understood in relation to his belief and acceptance of the Puritan doctrine of original sin. The doctrine served for him as an adequate explanation of human depravity. Defoe's view of man was that of the human soul hurrying "down the stream of his own affections,


2 An Essay on Projects, p. 44.
and with inexpressible lust, to what is gross, sordid, and brutish," whereas he pictured the acquisition of wisdom and virtue by the soul as being an "uphill 'battle' against the stream," for wisdom and virtue were "rather acquired than natural." And he added, "Let those who deny original depravity, answer this for me, if they think they can; for my part, I acknowledge it to be out of my reach, upon any other foot." ¹ While he did not deny that virtue was possible, he did state that virtuous actions were unnatural to man in his depraved state and that such actions were only acquired with great difficulty.

Such a view of man was also expressed in The Family Instructor (1715) in a dialogue between a father and his son:

**Father:** It is very plain that the *Effect* of that first Man's *Sin* is a corrupt Taint which we all bring into the World with us; and which we find upon our Nature, by which we find a natural Propensity in us to do Evil, and no natural Inclination to do Good; and this we are to mount over, and lament, as the Fountain of Sin, from whence all our wicked Actions do proceed, and this is call'd *Indwelling Sin*.

**Child:** Have I this in me, Father?

**Father:** Yes, Child, Did you not say, how should you do this or that, for you were not taught? You can be a naughty Boy without teaching, to *sin is natural!* ²

¹*Mere Nature Delincated: Or, A Body Without A Soul*... (1726) as cited in William P. Trent, *Daniel Defoe: How to Know Him* (Indianapolis, 1918), pp. 284-85. In the phrase, "gross, sordid, and brutish," Defoe is very close to Hobbes's "*vulasty, brutish, and short.*"

This belief in the natural depravity of man harmonized with Defoe's acceptance of man's nature as being essentially antirational, a conception conveniently compressed in La Roche-foucauld's maxim (No. XII): "L'espirit est toujours la dupe du coeur." Though this view was not dominant with him, it nonetheless made a distinct impact upon his thought. For example, in his Introduction to *Jure Divino*, he clearly portrays fallen man as utterly at the mercy of his grosser, baser passions:

His strong degenerate Passions are so gross,
So Contradicting, Retrograde, and Cross;
So Odd, so Incoherent, and Abstruse,
His Reason dies beneath the Grand Abuse;

Th'Eternal Drudge, the vilest Crime obeys,
And where his Sense abhors, his Will complys;
And tho' it shocks his Reason, Rules his Wits;
A Slave to strong Involuntary Crime;
He rules the World, His Passions govern him . . . 1

and later he remarks of man's motivations:

Self-Love's the Ground of all the things we do,
Which they that talk on't least do most pursue. . . . 2

Like Pope, Defoe saw self-love as "the spring of motion" that "acts the soul" 3:

Self, in a Word, governs the whole World; the present Race of Men all come into it. 'Tis the foundation of every prospect on Life, the beginning and End of our Actions; and whence those Actions, at any Time, do not

---

1 *Jure Divino*, Bk. I, pp. ii-iii.
2 Ibid., Bk. IV, p. 8.
answer this End, they are so far eccentric and put of square, 'Tis to move retrograde to the general System of Life. . . . 1

He found this self-love to be a characteristic peculiar to man alone. In the Serious Reflections, Robinson Crusoe observes that in several respects man is "worse than the brutes; for the brutes destroy not their own kind, but all prey upon a different species; . . . but man . . . devours his own species, nay, his own flesh and blood . . . ." 2 Although in this recognition of the lengths fallen man would go to when in the state of necessity there is no approval, Defoe simply posits as fact that there was at least one motive which would cause all men to devour their own, and that one motive he asserts is self-love in the form of fear for one's own life.

To Defoe, fear of something as momentous as starvation or poverty was equal in intensity as a motivating force to the actual thing itself. 3 Such fear was the basis behind many of Robinson Crusoe's actions when first marooned on his island. Thus, using Crusoe as his spokesman, Defoe says of this kind of fear:

---

1As cited in William Lee, Daniel Defoe: His Life and Recently Discovered Writings (London, 1869), III, 346. (The source of this passage is not further identified, and I have not been able to track it down.)

2Serious Reflections, p. 106.

3Such fear becomes the basis for the pleas made by Moll, Jack, and Roxana. See Chapter Six below.
indeed I must acknowledge, that of all the circumstances of Life that ever I had any Experience of, nothing makes Mankind so compleatly miserable, as that, of being in constant Fear: Well does the Scripture say, **The fear of man brings a snare;** it is a Life of Death, and the Mind is so entirely suppress'd by it, that it is capable of no Relief; the animal Spirits sink, and all the Vigour of Nature, which usually supports Men under other Afflictions, and is present to them in the greatest Exigencies, fail them here.

So great indeed was Robinson Crusoe's fear for his own life that it took him years before he ventured out to explore his island; so great was his fear that he even spent his first night in a tree. Therefore, because man was naturally depraved and because his strongest motivation stemmed from self-love, Defoe simply could not and would not accept the thesis that man could and would choose an "honourable" death before committing what might appear to some to be a vicious or illegal action, if that action would save his life. Such a "choice" was to him unnatural in the first place. Answering those of his age like Cumberland, Wollaston, and Shaftesbury, Defoe remarked that others could speak of natural religion all they wished, could speak of an innate moral sense, a sense of taste, and deny original depravity, but he was "for putting it to the general issue; if they [could] tell [him] by any one example when Nature of its meer undirected inclination guided Mankind to make the best choice of things, and rejecting the pleasing objects of

---

sense, led him to choose virtue by a meer propensity of will," then he might be able to "come into the notion of natural rectitude with some appearance of reason." But Defoe hastened to add that there was "something of original depravity in nature more than those Gentlemen think of." ¹

Even though Defoe's most unified statement concerning necessity is presented in his Serious Reflections, he indicated his position throughout his journalistic career. He presented his case most graphically in the Review, but isolated comments (such as have been noted in previous chapters of this thesis) can also be found in his pamphlets and treatises. For example, in Second Thoughts are Best, in a reference to the "Extortions and Cabals of Tradesmen," Defoe wrote that the poor were being "ground to Dust, in order to fatten a Pack of Misers, who knew no Mercy," and he pointed out that when men were not able to support their families by "Honest Labour," and became beggars because the price of necessities was too high, they grew "desperate" and in a sense were forced to "turn Rogues." "This assertion," he notes, was "but too true..."² And so Defoe asked, "Where is the Man? or Who is the Man that can resist the absolute Necessity?"³ For himself, he did not know.

² Second Thoughts are Best, pp. 20, 21.
³ The Compleat English Tradesman, II, 193.
Because the plea of economic determinism, or of self-preservation, was usually made by those who in some way violated a civil law, the question of what constituted honesty or who was an honest man became a central issue in Defoe's argument. To Defoe, honesty was much more dependent upon external factors over which man had little or no control than upon man himself. One such factor was the laws that he felt were responsible for forcing many poor, even many industrious but unemployed poor, to "choose" crime as an alternative to starvation. Although Defoe uses such an alternative as the basis for all three of his criminal novels, over fifteen years before they were published he had written that the "Law makes Knaves of Honest Men" and that "Extremity makes a knave." In 1706 the pamphleteer, writing of the debtor-creditor problem, devoted three consecutive issues of the Review to this point. Beginning his argument with his definition of what constituted an honest man, Defoe stated:

I am of the Opinion, that we have generally Mistaken Notions in the World about Honesty, and those that have never had occasion to try their Integrity, are too apt to Censure those that have; I believe there are Occasions, in which the Necessity is too hard, even for Humane Nature it self, tho' backed with Reason, and Fortify'd with Religion; how else have we known Men driven to Necessity of Eating one another, and very Solemnly say Grace, or crave a Blessing upon the horrid Repast? Were the Honestest Man in the World, brought to the Necessity of Starving, he would not only Borrow when he could not Pay, but Steal or do anything.
And addressing his readers, Defoe challenged:

You are an Honest man, you say! Pray, Sir, was you ever try'd? Have you seen yourself, Wife, and Dear Children, ready to Perish for Food, and having your Neighbours Loaf in your Cupboard, or his Money in your Hands, for 'tis all one, refus'd to touch it, and let them Starve rather than Taste it, because it was none of your own? I tell you, Sir, you would not Eat your Neighbours Bread only, but your Neighbour himself, rather than Starve, and your Honesty would all Shipwreck in the Storm of Necessity --Agar was a Wise Man, when he Prays, give me not Poverty, lest I steal! to me the Words very plainly Imply, Lord! keep me from Poverty, for I shall certainly be a Thief; and I firmly believe, there never a Man so honest, but would Steal before he would Starve, and if he did not, it was the want of Opportunity.

It must be admitted that in pleading, as he was in this case, for all "honest" debtors, he was also pleading his own case; yet he rose above the purely personal and concluded by saying that:

the Frailty of Human Nature ought to be so far consider'd, that even the Thief, that is driven to be so, for meer Importunate Hunger, should not be Punish'd; wherein the Scripture, tho' it does not justifie the Theft, requires Men to consider, that were they driven to like Extremities, Nature has the same Infirmitites in all, and would succumb and yield under the too strong Temptation of Irresistible Famine: . . . [yet] these Arguings have too much Reason in them to be resisted, especially when a Man has the prevailing Cries of a Distress'd Family, and Innocent Children, to prompt him to think of his Case. . . .

---

1 Defoe paraphrases loosely the following two verses, Proverbs xxx. 8-9 [King James Bible]:

8. Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me.

9. Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

It is quite evident that Defoe did not think that the responsibility for "crimes" committed when one was in a state of necessity lay necessarily with the perpetrator of the so-called dishonest act. However, he was very aware of the social implications of his views; his indictment of his age is here very pointedly made:

No, No Gentlemen, you will see the crime lyes deeper than the Fact; Necessity will make us all Thieves, but the Crime is in the Cause of that Necessity; and he that will impartially examine his Circumstances, and place things in a True Light, will see, that the Methods to bring him into that Necessity, Govern the Case.

Not only did Defoe exonerate the individual who was necessitous but he went farther and said self-preservation, like self-defense, was "lawful":

'Tis a Crime to kill a Man, but if Necessity or Self-Preservation, War, or Justice demand it, 'tis not only lawful, but a Duty; you are driven to a Necessity, you must run in Debt, or be undone, which is just the same thing, with Starve or Steal. But what brought you to this Necessity ...? There lay the Crime, and thus we bring ourselves under a Necessity, which Nature cannot resist.

And, consequently, Defoe turned his attack on those whom he felt to be responsible for legislating the laws that "made honest Men Knaves":

If you will force men to run upon Extremities and drive them into Misery; tho' they are Knaves in the Fall, the Crime lyes in the Cause, and ... if you will tempt Mankind, Tempt them to be Honest ... . If then you will establish Laws, Contradictory to the Law of God and Reason, it must be Lawful to break them, resist them, or anything ... .
Arguing that such laws were void in their "own Nature, as against the Laws of God and Reason, viz., the Great Law of Self-Defence," Defoe stated that man could and, in fact, did resist them:

I cannot deny it to be Lawful to RESIST such a Law, and should . . . do it my self, in a Case of the like Extremity. Self-Preservation, is the first and Sovereign Law of Nature, and whatever Power or Authority, makes that Criminal or Mortal, which is not so by the Law of God or Nature, tho' the Authority be legal, and therefore the Law Regular, and so binding, if the Law be Morally Evil, it ceases to be a Law to the Conscience. . . .

And, therefore, in keeping with his insistence that there was a distinction between that which was legally lawful and that which was morally lawful, and in keeping with his insistence that there was an authority higher than man to whom man owed his first allegiance, Defoe concluded that "a man may [commit] the Civil Crime, and yet [be] Guilty of no Sin against Heaven, because he might not have it in his Power to prevent it."¹

Although it could be argued that the essayist is just pleading—or excusing—his own moral feelings (or, in the terminology of today, "copping out") it is difficult to apply the same reasoning to his pleas, which were even more eloquent, for poor paupers, who were dependent upon the meager assistance given them by the parish. For example, he cited a case of a poor woman who was so distraught that she contemplated murdering her

¹Review (Vol. III, No. 29; Thurs. March 7, 1706), Fasc. Bk. 6, pp. 113-16. See also (No. 30; Sat. March 9, 1706), Fasc. Bk. 6, pp. 117-19. See also Serious Reflections, pp. 41-43.
three sleeping children. Defoe described her as being "without Employment, uncapable of Labour, without Friends, without Help, and without Bread." Her situation so disturbed the compassionate man that he remarked that the "Distress of it" so confounded "his Pen" that he could "say no more about it." But he turned to his audience and asked, "Are not these the very Conditions in which Theft is not to be despis'd?" As one can see, Defoe was absolutely convinced in his own heart, mind, and soul that man would not be starved and would do anything rather than bear it. He was just as convinced that what man would do to avoid it was not only permissible but justifiable. Therefore, it was on behalf of all "poor Families" such as the woman and her children described above that he took up his pen and it was on their behalf that he uttered his "Humble Prayer" that all men would oppose the conditions that many "... honest men made Knaves by insupportable Necessity" were forced to endure.

To sum up, years before the publication of Robinson Crusoe and the Serious Reflections (1719-20), Defoe had written about the problem of necessity and of men in the state of necessity. He saw human nature as subject to the effects of original

---


3Lee, III, 17.
sin, that is, as naturally depraved. He also saw fallen man as subject to his baser passions, chiefly self-love, which often took the form of fear of death. And because self-love was so grounded in the very nature of man, man was exceedingly responsive to any external condition that imperilled his existence. Furthermore, Defoe thought that, though virtue was possible to acquire, the grace of religion was not sufficient to enable man to withstand the pressures of necessity. Therefore, though not excusing, Defoe was inclined to understand the transgressions committed by man in the state of necessity or in mortal fear of being in that state. Though he was not a sentimentalist, as has been shown in previous chapters, human nature in genuine distress seldom failed to gain his sympathy. Compassion, to him, was that which had been commanded by the Christian religion, in which he professed a deep and sincere and abiding belief. And because the distress caused by being in a state of necessity removed from the "Soul all Relation, Affection, Sense of Justice, and all the Obligations, either Moral or Religious, that secure[d] one Man against another," compassion and understanding were needed more than ever.

---

1 It is interesting to note that the new American Heritage Dictionary defines the word depraved in terms of a deprivation; that is, to be depraved is to be deprived of rectitude. In a sense, then, natural depravity is a moral deprivation.

In 1719 Daniel Defoe's most famous work was published, a work that was destined to become a favorite story of children throughout the world, a movie, an animated cartoon, and a manual for all shipwreck victims. That work, of course, was *Robinson Crusoe*. With its publication and that of the *Farther Adventures*, a new aspect of the accomplished essayist's career was signalled. For within the next five years, not only did he write the *Serious Reflections*, which constitutes the third part of the *Crusoe* trilogy, but he also wrote his three "criminal" novels, *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jacque*, and *Roxana*. The *Serious Reflections*, however, is quite unlike the other two parts of the trilogy in that it is composed of a series of essays, and can be called, for want of a better term, a philosophic disquisition in which Defoe uses the persona of the elder Crusoe, who has returned from his adventures and thus reflects on all the curious events of his past. Pertinent to this thesis is Chapter Two, entitled "An Essay Upon Honesty," which largely deals with the plea of necessity.

Since Defoe could not argue that the actions committed by "pressed men of the best principles" in times of "extremities and exigencies" were "less sinful, either in their own nature or circumstances" than other acts committed by those not in necessity, the problem was to show how something that was legally a crime and also a sin was at one-and-the-same time
morally lawful. The solution to this paradox lay, in Defoe's opinion, in the difference between man's relationship to God and his relationship to his fellowman. Thus, Defoe argued that:

The guilt of a crime with respect to its being a crime, viz. an offence against God, is not removed by the circumstances of necessity, . . . though it was to supply starving Nature; . . . the question is not as to the right or wrong, whether I have a necessity to eat this man's bread or not, but whether it be his or my own? If it be his, and not my own, I cannot do it without a manifest contempt of God's law . . .

This statement, on the surface, seems to be a complete repudiation of the position he had previously taken. But Defoe carefully explains that when looking at honesty in this way, one is thus looking at it in terms of man's relation to God and in terms of "Honesty in General." Accordingly, honesty was thus "a general probity of mind, an aptitude to act justly and honourably in all cases, religious and civil, and to all persons, superior or inferior." However, because the "ability or disability to act so" was not "any part of the thing [the action] in this sense," and because "no man [could be absolutely] just to his Maker," Defoe announced that he would confine his discourse to honesty as it applied to mankind "among themselves, as it looked [from one man to another, in those necessary parts of man's life. . .]." Consequently, one had to consider that man acts in accord with his natural depravity. As such, there was no absolutely honest man; or, as Defoe remarked, "where is the man that partakes not of Adam's
fall, has no vicious contracted habit and nature conveyed to him from his grand predecessor?" Since such a man could not be found, he wished to remind his readers that human nature was always "subjected by the consequences of Adam's transgressions, to frailty and infirmity," and could only be understood in light of that subjugation. Hence, regarding honesty, "from man to man," Defoe asserted the "exigencies and extremities of straitened circumstances . . . to be the most prevailing arguments why the denomination of a man's general character ought not by his fellow-mortals (subject to the same infirmities) to be gathered from his mistakes, his errors, or his failings."

If man was to be judged at all by his fellowman, then Defoe argued it should not be according to any "extraordinary sin" but according to his customary behavior and according to the intention behind his actions, ordinary as well as extraordinary. In fact, he argued that some allowance ought to be made for "human infirmities" so that one could fairly distinguish between "an accident and a practice." Also, because guilt did not lie in the act only but in the intention "or desire to commit it," it was important, thought the philosopher, to ask whether an "extraordinary" action was a result of "distress . . . a storm of affliction and poverty [that had] driven [the individual] upon the leeshore of temptation . . . [or whether] the sin [was] the port steered for."¹ In these

¹Serious Reflections, pp. 41, 16-17, 21-22, 27, 94, 39, 8, 42.
remarks, one can see that Defoe presents the traditional ethical argument that what is objectively a transgression may or may not be a transgression subjectively, that is, that in the particular an action must be judged according to the intention of the agent and the circumstances surrounding the action.

To Robinson-Defoe, honesty was like a tender plant that needed nurture and cultivation if it was to grow strong and bear fruit. Like a young seedling, it would not thrive in poor soil, for it was then "apt to starve." In addition, it could easily be "scorched . . . with the droughts of poverty and necessity" to such an extent that one would assume it was "quite dead and gone." But with the "least mild weather," it would always quickly revive. In this analogy, it is obvious that Defoe is not concerned with the quality of the plant itself; rather, the very life of the plant is dependent upon conditions over which it has no control, such as the soil into which it is planted and the weather that either aids or hinders its growth. Man's honesty, argued Defoe, was similarly dependent upon factors over which he had little or no control. What made an honest man a knave? asked Robinson Crusoe. Necessity,¹ answered Defoe.

There were four major ways in which a person could fall into a state of necessity. The first way was by "vice and intemperance." But the honest man was not in this class, for "he cannot be an honest man who wants wherewith to pay his

¹Ibid., pp. 28-29.
debts after having spent what should have discharged them in luxury and debaucheries." The second and third major ways were through "ignorance and want of judgment" as in the case of businessmen who were defrauded and cheated and in the case of idiots. Although these individuals may be fools, they nevertheless may be honest men and not necessarily knaves. These men, Defoe asserts, enter business not because they are dishonest. Usually they fail because they lack the knowledge and experience necessary to be successful. And since "no man is answerable to God or man for that which he never was master of," they cannot be called dishonest, even "though weak ... in judgment." The last way was through "things that neither touch man's honesty nor his discretion," such as "immediate casualties and unavoidable accidents such as fire, enemies, storms, floods, and the like." While Defoe was willing to excuse those who fell into necessity because of a want of judgment or because of insufficient knowledge, he was unwilling to accept any plea from those who fell because of vice or intemperance. Although their distress was just as great as those who fell because of a lack of knowledge or experience, although self-preservation was still the "first Law of Nature," their poverty was "a sin," for it was "produced from a sinful cause." These men were necessitious men, but they were dishonest.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 43-46, 17, 18.}
There was another kind of dishonest individual. This person was "covetous, narrow," and "stingy." Yet this individual did all that the law required. Like the "honest" creditor, he paid "every man his own," and was in his own estimation, just "to a farthing." But such a man, in Defoe's eyes, committed the greatest injustice:

This is one meaning of that saying, *summum jus, summa injuria*. . . . Mankind can have no claim upon us if we do but just pay our debts, yet in heaven's chancery they will have relief against us, for they have a demand in equity of all the good to be done them, that is in our power to do, and this chancery court, or court of equity, is held in every man's breast—'tis a true court of conscience, and every man's conscience is a lord chancellor to him.

Thus, Defoe concluded that every man who failed to meet a debt was not necessarily a "knave" or a "liar." As he observed, if it were so, "the Lord have mercy on three parts of the city." ¹

A rich man then was not honest because he was morally superior: he was honest because he had "no Occasion to press upon his integrity." In other words, his honesty was always planted in rich, black, fertile soil and bathed by gentle wind and rain. Turning to such a man, Defoe repeated the challenge he had made years before in the *Review*, saying:

*You say you are an honest man, how do you know? Did you ever want Bread, and had your neighbours loaf in your keeping, and would starve rather than cut it? Was you ever arrested, and being not able by yourself or friends to make piece [*sic*] with your plaintiff, and at the same time having another man's money in*

¹Ibid., pp. 57, 59.
your cash chest to your keeping, suffered yourself to be carried to gaol rather than break bulk and break in upon your trust. God himself has declared that the power of extremity is irresistible, and that so, as to our integrity, that He has bid us not despise the thief that steals in such a case. . . .

Defoe had applied this same "There but for the grace of God, go I" philosophy many years before. In 1711 he had written:

How many honest Gentlemen have we in England of good Estates and noble Circumstances, that would be Highway-Men, and come to the Gallows, if they were poor? How many rich, current, punctual, fair Merchants now walk the Exchange, that would be errant K——s if they came to be Bankrupt? Poverty makes Thieves, as bare Walls makes giddy Housewives; Distress makes K——s of honest Men, and the Exigencies of Tradesmen, when in declining Circumstances, of which none can judge, and which none can express but those that have felt them, will make honest Men do that, which at another time their very Souls abhor— I own to speak this with sad Experience, and am not asham'd to confess myself a Penitent---- And let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall . . . ;

and turning to his audience, Defoe asked:

Will the honestest Man of you all, if ye were drowning in the Thames, refuse to lay hold of your Neighbour who is in the same Condition, for fear he drown with you? Nay, will you not pull him down by the Hair of his Head, tread on him with your Feet, tho' you sink him to the Bottom, to get your self out?

Therefore, speaking through Robinson Crusoe, Defoe uses the Serious Reflections only to repeat what he had said throughout his public life as essayist, journalist, and social critic. He

1Ibid., pp. 33-35.


merely repeats his belief that man, even with the grace of religion, was not able to stand up to the "extrems of Necessity," as one can see in the various examples cited by Robinson Crusoe. For instance, one example illustrates Pufendorf's thesis that necessity was a force above all human morality or virtue: Pufendorf had written that "to feed on man's flesh in the desperate Extrems of Famine, when no other Sustenance can be procur'd, is a lamentable indeed, but not a sinful Expedient." 1

In the hypothetical example cited by Robinson Crusoe, Robinson Crusoe states that there were five men in a life boat, and because they were without provisions, that is, in a state of extreme necessity, they called a council in order to decide which one would be killed so that the others could "feed on and eat him." Concerning the morality of the situation, Crusoe asks:

With what face could the four look up and crave a blessing on that meat? With what heart give thanks after it? Yet this has been done by honest men, and I believe the most honest man in the world might be forced to it; yet here is no manner of pretence, but necessity, to palliate the crime. If it be argued it was the loss of one man to save the four, it is answered, but what authority to make him die to save their lives? How came the man to owe them such a debt? 'Twas robbery and murder; 'twas robbing him of his life, which was his property, to preserve mine; 'tis murder, by taking away the life of an innocent man; and at best 'twas doing evil that good may come, which is expressly forbidden.

Moreover, such an act would be unnatural, for "it is in no man's power legally to consent to such a lot." Defoe also believed

1Law of Nature, p. 158 (ii. vi. 3).
that no man had the **right** to give away his own life for any reason whatsoever. Therefore, in regard to the example cited by Crusoe, Defoe concluded that "all that could be said for such an act is that Necessity makes the highest crimes lawful, and things evil in their own nature are made practicable by it" 

It is understandable that acting from necessity would be a very controversial subject. To some, as has been shown, such an action was merely an excuse for moral weakness; but, to Defoe, necessity—or poverty—was a force man could not withstand. Yet, as indicated earlier in this chapter, Defoe was not totally oblivious to the social implications of his arguments. Although he did not present his views in order to "encourage any man to make no scruple of trespassing upon his honesty in time of necessity," he nonetheless could not "condemn every man for a knave who by unusual pressure, straits, difficulties, or other temptation **had** been left to slip and do an ill action . . . which . . . this person would never have stooped to do if the exigence had not been too great for his resolution. . . ." **[italics mine]**. His plea, which is defiant rather than sentimental, was designed to draw the indignation of the oppressed as much as it was to draw the compassion and understanding of the oppressors. Above all he wished to make his age see these so-called criminals as human beings who were

---

1 *Serious Reflections*, pp. 35-36, 39.
largely victims of circumstances beyond their control and of the
laws to which they were subject but which they had no part in
shaping. When Robinson Crusoe speaks of the Portuguese captain
that rescued him, he makes a comment that is applicable to the
insensitivity of the age. Using Crusoe as his spokesman, Defoe
thus indicts his contemporaries, and reminds them that:

... he that refuses to save a life thrown into his
hands takes it away; and if there is a just retribution
in a future state, if blood is required there, the
blood of every man, woman, and child, whom we could have
saved, and did not, shall be reckoned to us at that day
as spilt by our own hands; for leaving life in a posture
in which it must inevitably perish, is without question
causing it to perish, and will be called so then, by
whatever gilded dressed-up words we may express and
conceal it now... [italics mine].

Because of laws such as those affecting debtors, because of
conditions operative in workhouses, because of the poor laws
that were so unjust to the poor, laws which in effect made more
poor, many of Defoe's fellow Englishmen were faced with the moral
dilemma of whether to adhere to the civil law and starve or
whether to break the law and live--with the fear of Newgate ever
present. Because of his own experiences, his own bankruptcies,
Defoe knew the agony of soul many experienced. As Michael
Shinagel has written, Defoe was never accused of actually
stealing when pressed by necessity. However, some of his
financial dealings, especially when he was pressed by creditors,
bordered on what today would be termed "shady," especially those

1Serious Reflections, pp. 40, 20; see also pp. 59-60.
with his mother-in-law around the time of his first bankruptcy in 1692. Shinagel, like Moore, feels Defoe never fully recovered from this experience. For one who took pride in calling himself a "gentleman," the humiliation of his bankruptcies was not forgotten.\(^1\) And it should be noted that at the time of his death Defoe was once again in hiding, running from creditors. Yes, Defoe knew what it was to be pressed by necessity and poverty, for he himself had "slipped" on occasion.

If it was the obligation of society to punish those of its citizens who violated its laws, it was, thought Defoe, even more the obligation of that society to see that such violations did not have to occur. Yet Defoe found that his society not only failed to provide for its deserving poor but also that it morally and socially condemned those who were unwillingly placed in a position where they were compelled to "Steal or Starve." It even went further and hanged its victims, whose only real crime, in most cases, as has been shown throughout this thesis, was that of being poor. Taking special cognizance of men reduced to starvation, to poverty, Defoe sincerely declared that he could understand (though not condone) their seeking relief which at times went beyond the normal concepts of morality as expressed by the commandments. For to him the "Great Law of Self-Preservation" took precedence. To

---

\(^1\) Michael Shinagel, Daniel Defoe and Middle-Class Gentility (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), pp. 39-54.
him, it was "a just way of arguing, that a poor man . . . [was] more an object of pity\(^1\) when he [made] a Slip, because his Distress [was] Great: He [had] perhaps a Family, and his Circumstances [were] low; the Temptation strong; the Necessity great, and who knows what he might do in this case? [for] 'tis a hard thing to see a Family starve . . . ."\(^2\) Therefore, to Defoe those who insensitively turned deaf ears to the cries of the oppressed were the real criminals, for it was they who refused to listen to the agonized appeals of the deprived poor. And unless and until conditions and laws were changed, those in

\(^1\)In pleading for understanding for all who pleaded necessity as the cause of their so-called crimes, Defoe refers to his own failings: "Not that I pretend, as I [have] noted before, and shall often repeat, that these circumstances render my failings, or any man's else, the less a sin, but they make the reason why we that have fallen should rather be pitied than reproached by those who think they stand, because when the same assaults are made upon the chastity of their honour, it may be every jot as likely to be prostituted as their neighbour's . . . ." (Ibid., p. 55). To some critics, however, it seems that Defoe is "copping out," that is, that he wants to have his cake and eat it too. These critics feel that by not blaming those who sought to preserve themselves by transgressing civil and/or moral laws, Defoe implicitly gives approval to such transgressions. That, they charge, is the effect of his words, regardless of his intent. It must be admitted that Defoe puts forth what may be termed situational ethics, and it is these ethics with all their moral ambiguity that pervade his three criminal novels, especially Moll Flanders. However, Karl Adam makes it clear that even to St. Thomas the proximate and immediate norm of all moral action is the conscience and not the objective moral law. (The Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Dom Justin Mc Cann, P.S.B. [rev. ed.; Garden City, New Jersey, 1954\(^7\), p. 207).

distress would continue to follow the great law of nature, self-preservation, and would continue to cry out in a loud voice, "Give me not Poverty, Lest I Steal!"
Scenes of Crimes can scarce be represented in such a Manner but some may make a criminal Use of them; but when Vice is painted in its low priz'd Colours, 'tis not to make People in love with it, but to expose it . . . .

Roxana, 1 XI, x-xi.

CHAPTER VI

MOLL, JACK, AND ROXANA--A PROJECTION FOR FURTHER STUDY

Sidney Black's comprehensive study 2 of the criminal reputation of Defoe's novels has revealed that a common critical attitude existed towards them for some years, an attitude in part perpetuated by such critics as Leslie Stephens, William Minto, Walter Raleigh, and George Saintsbury, all of whom have tended to praise Defoe's unsurpassed ability to create verisimilitude, but who have at the same time decried his vulgar scenes, lack of plot, lack of characterization, and lack of

1 The Fortunate Mistress or a History of the Life and Vast Vanity of Fortunes . . . of the Lady Roxana . . . (1724) in The Novels and Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe ("Shakespeare Head Edition"; London, 1927-28). [Hereafter cited as Roxana; subsequent passages will be taken from this edition unless otherwise stated.]

theme, i.e., his superficiality or lack of morality. However, with the advent of such critics as Ian Watt, James Sutherland, and, more recently, Maximillien Novak, a new sound has been heard, one that was signalled by the eminent Defoe scholar, John R. Moore. Professor Moore has pointed out that part of the problem one has in trying to evaluate the novels is that many past critics have tended to appraise them in light of Defoe's biographers, some of whom

followed their own fancies in making Defoe out a Protestant hero, a liar, and rogue, or a well-intentioned man whose moral fibre was broken by persecution and misfortune. His contemporaries of the 1690's had no such opinion of him. Even in the political controversies of the age of Anne, when invective was substituted for argument, the available facts do not place him in any such convenient category.

And though political historians such as "Trevelyan, Laprade, Morgan and the rest" have recognized this fact, many literary historians and critics have not, and have insisted on judging the works in light of their own biases. Consequently, writes Professor Moore, Defoe has been "reproached (as no modern writer should ever be) because his fiction was only fiction."¹

It cannot be denied--nor would one want to--that wherever one turns, Defoe's socio-moral views intrude into his writings, for instance, when his characters are pitted against a hostile environment in a battle for survival. In such a confrontation, a simple moral pattern seems to be imposed by the

author upon a heap of empirical situations. In other words, Defoe places his major characters in a world in which there existed a strict social stratification that sharply and coldly divided those with privileges from those without according to an economic principle. And because of their precarious financial footing, all his major characters incorporate into the statement "endure or go under" their most unreserved belief and code of behavior; all struggle to survive and in that struggle become, more or less, social pariahs. Their struggle for survival, moreover, is waged on two levels: the outer battle for life itself (according to natural law); and, with varying degrees, the inner battle for some sort of spiritual victory (according to Christian-Judeo ethics). This kind of conflict was of interest to the rising Puritan middle-class, whose demands for informational and moral literature were, as Mark Shorer has pointed out, in keeping with its social and religious beliefs. In short, the journalist in Defoe responded to those subjects that lent themselves to expose, while the Puritan in him responded to those "elements that allowed the expression of a ready impulse to admonish and exhort." The criminal novels, Moll Flanders, Roxana, and Col. Jacque, therefore, are a logical extension and consequence of Defoe's non-fictional writings.

1Kazanti, p. 185.

2"A Study in Defoe: Moral Vision and Structural Form," Thought, XXV (June, 1950), 281.
such as those that have been examined in this thesis.

Not only can the tone and style of his fictional narratives be traced directly back to his earlier non-fictional writings but also the theme common to the three works, that is, that poverty is the parent of crime. Ernest Baker has observed that Moll, Jack, and Roxana are all more or less portrayed as "victims of society" who, if circumstances had been otherwise, would have led different lives; that is, they would have led the lives of "good" middle-class citizens and would not have become criminals.¹ It is poverty that first leads each into crime, not inclination. Therefore, in each instance, the initial situation is depicted as a mal-adjustment of the individual to his environment due to factors beyond his control, and from this initial confrontation follows the complicating factor, which is the direct result of the preliminary mal-adjustment. Hence, each character follows the course circumstances have marked out for him--Moll becomes a prostitute and thief, Jack a pickpocket, and Roxana a courtesan. Each is the product of his society; each is confronted with the reality of a situation in which the choice afforded him is to adapt to circumstances--or to starve.

So forcefully has Defoe delineated his hero and heroines that several critics have found the novels to be structurally deficient and held together only by the vitality of the main

¹"Defoe as a Sociological Novelist," The Academy, LXXVI (1906), 502.
character; at best, they allow the novels to be "merely" episodic. Admittedly, these fictional narratives lack form if compared to the modern novel; yet, they do appear to have a cohesion of their own beyond that noted above. Running through each narrative is the same pattern: through a sequence of successes and failures, the protagonists move from innocence to knowledge via temptation and "crime." Or as Chandler says of Moll, "Defoe showed the decline of a soul from innocence to knowledge, temptation, and sin, and then its rise by virtue and repentance, from distress through honesty to prosperity and calm." Or as Robert Columbus says of Moll in a statement equally applicable to Roxana, "Through plot, she moves from innocence to guile, from love to material idolatry, from natural morality to natural amorality, and to a confusion between the two, from guilt to redemption and regeneration."  


2 "Conscious Artistry in Moll Flanders," SEL, III (1963), 430. Although the frequency and degree of sincerity of Moll's repentances have caused some modern critics discomfort, it should be noted that Defoe's contemporaries were not so troubled; they did not question her sincerity nor that of her creator. Defoe's views of repentance are quite traditional as can be seen in The Family Instructor, in which he presents four points relevant to the problem: (1) that repentance can occur anytime, anywhere, and more than once; (2) that the merest sincere desire at any given moment is sufficient; (3) that repentance does not originate within the individual soul but is external; that is, it is a free gift from God; and (4) that the soul must be in a condition to be receptive of God's grace (I, 184-85, 351). Also see below.
Thus, in each novel, the main character progresses from the point where he becomes aware of his "crime" to where he repents. And because to Defoe, as to Milton, innocence is "ignorance, both moral and practical" and because "the man of true moral worth is . . . the recanted rogue," Defoe's hero and heroines must eat of the "tree of knowledge before they know the meaning of good and evil." Above all, to Defoe, the fool is "no repository of sacred wisdom." 1

No author writes in a vacuum, and Defoe drew upon those elements of his age that had always captured not only his interest but more importantly his concern, and utilized them in his fiction as he did in his non-fiction. Mirrored in the novels 2 then are Defoe's view of his age, of its various practices and attitudes towards the poor. His characters are a product of his age and consequently reflect the society that produced them.

Although George Sherburn found little that he could call "conscious social exposé" 3 in Defoe's novels, perhaps a


2In regard to Defoe's fictional narratives, Miss Elizabeth Drew writes: "Defoe did not call his books 'novels.' If, however, we take as a working definition of the novel that it is a prose work of a certain length and a certain artistic unity, which purports to be a story of 'real' life and sets out to convince its readers that it is, then we may call Defoe the first novelist" (The Novel: A Modern Guide to Fifteen English Masterpieces *"A Laurel Edition"*, New York, 1963, p. 23).

3Sherburn, p. 855.
re-examination of his three criminal narratives in light of this study of his non-fictional writings concerning the poor might shed new light on Defoe's social consciousness. For interspersed throughout them are many passages concerning such relevant topics as: the practice of farming out infants to wet nurses; the lack of education for poor and homeless waifs; the consequence of that lack for society as well as the individual; the license of the period; the growing criminal class; Newgate; and the plea of economic necessity, which is made by all three protagonists. Moreover, a re-assessment of such passages could also bring out the closeness that existed between the socio-economic and moral concerns of the period that Defoe so minutely mirrors, a closeness that sheds light on the motivations of his characters who have been accused of having cash-register hearts and minds. The morality of Moll, Jack, and Roxana, it should never be forgotten, regardless of how repulsive it may be to some modern readers, is the morality of the mercantile mind, with all its predilections to measurement and calculation of assets and deficits.

The plot of Moll Flanders is so well known that it is unnecessary to repeat it in any great detail; yet, the title page of the novel indicates, Moll was "born in Newgate," was
"Twelve Year a Whore,¹ five Times a Wife² (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a Thief, Eight Year a Transported Felon in Virginia," and "at last grew Rich, liv'd Honest, and died a Penitent." Born a Newgate waif, Moll begins life at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, totally dependent even for her very life upon society, for Moll cannot even claim a parish, as she has no legal settlement. Thus, Defoe uses the situation to contrast the care given Moll with that given similar children in France. There children were, Moll notes,

... immediately taken into the Care of the Government, and put into an Hospital call'd the House of Orphans, where they were bred up, Cloath'd, Fed, Taught, and when fit to go out, placed to Trades, or to Service, so as to be well able to provide for themselves by an honest industrious Behaviour.

And then Moll laments:

Had this been the Custom in our Country, I had not been left a poor desolate Girl without Friends, without Cloaths, without Help or Helper, as was my Fate; and by which, I was not only expos'd to very great Distresses, even before I was capable, either of understanding my Case, or how to amend it, but brought into a Course of Life, scandalous in itself, but which in its ordinary Course, tended to the swift Destruction both of Soul and Body.³

¹Robert Alter states that Defoe's choice of words like whore instead of prostitute was intended not to evoke a sensual image but to "affirm a stern moral judgment" (Rogues Progress: Studies in the Picaresque Novel /Cambridge, 1964/, pp. 35-36; see also pp. 38-39).

²Ernest Baker notes that in presenting Moll as "five Times a Wife," the "social reformer" was speaking out against the Newgate and Fleet marriages, as they were called, an evil that parliament finally addressed itself to with the Hardwicke Act of 1753 (p. 502).

³Moll Flanders, I, 1-2.
Implicit in this passage is Defoe's concern with education, a concern that can be traced as far back as his "A Seminary for Women" in *An Essay on Projects*, which was published in 1697 but which Defoe claimed had been written five years before. As shall be shown below in the discussion of Col. Jacque, education was an answer to the problem of the poor that tried to deal with the *cause* and not the *effect*. Because there was no parish that would claim Moll, Moll was not put out to nurse. Instead she recalls that she was told that some relative took her away, but "at whose Expense, or by whose Direction," she never knew. Nevertheless, Moll does not exaggerate her plight when she remarks that she "had no Parish to have recourse to for *her* Nourishment in *her* Infancy" and how she survived she could not "give the least Account." Her own recollections of her infancy begin with her decision to leave a pack of gypsies at Colchester in Essex, where she was fortunate enough to find compassionate parochial officials who took pity on her and put her out "to Nurse." Moll was three years old at this time. Moll remains with the woman until her death when Moll is fourteen, at which time her circumstances drastically alter: "... the Parish Children were immediately remov'd by the Church-Wardens, the School was at an End, and the Day-Children of it had no more to do but just stay at Home till they were sent somewhere else..." The reality of her situation pressed so upon her that she "was frightened out of *her* Wits
almost, and knew not what to do"; for she was "as it were, turn'd out of Doors to the wide World. . . ." Once again fate intervenes. Just as Moll was to be turned "into the wide World," having no place at which to lodge and not even "a bit of Bread to Eat," neighbors take pity on her, and she is taken in by a wealthy family. Despite the kindness she was shown at age three and at this time, Defoe emphasizes the fact that Moll's confrontations with her hostile environment leave their mark: the "Fright of her Condition had made such an Impression upon her, that she did not want to be a Gentlewoman, but was very willing to be a Servant . . . , any kind of Servant they thought fit to have her be."¹ Therefore, because of fear Moll gives up her childhood cherished ambition, to be a "Gentlewoman," and realizes that if she is to survive she must adapt to her circumstances. In other words, even as a child she knew the choice was to "endure or go under." Moll always chooses to endure. In the final analysis, being a gentlewoman was not as important as subsisting. These passages are also relevant in that they stress Defoe's views concerning accidents of fortune and the effect such accidents--good or bad--have on one's actions.

At her new home, Moll was given an opportunity to acquire an education superior to that received by girls in her

¹Ibid., I, 3-4, 11-12. For the significance of this ambition, see Shinagel, pp. 142-60.
position. By being observant when the two daughters of the family were being tutored, Moll learned to speak and write French, to sing and play the piano, to dance, etc. Defoe stresses the fact that Moll learns faster and better than the two daughters, thus, denying the commonly held notion that the poor were dumb brutes who could not benefit from such an education and should thus only be trained to do the work necessary to maintain the upper classes and be of service to them. Unfortunately, Moll's education equipped her to be a lady; it did not equip her to earn her own living. After she is seduced by the older brother of the family, married to Robin, the younger brother, and eventually widowed, Moll leaves her two children in the care of her in-laws and takes lodgings for herself. 1

Moll's second husband, a draper, was, like Roxana's husband, a fool in financial affairs, and, at the end of two years, ended up in a spunging house where he sent for Moll, telling her to close up their house and remove everything she could that was of value before the creditors did. As for himself, he broke to France, leaving Moll in a very awkward position. She was married but husbandless, and she knew that she would never see her husband again "if he liv'd fifty Years. . . ." Assuming the name of Mrs. Flanders, Moll goes to reside in the Mint, and comments upon some of the men that she met there:

1Ibid., I, 49-53.
It was indeed a Subject of strange reflection to me, to see Men in the most perplex'd Circumstances, who were reduc'd below being ruin'd, whose Families were objects of their own Terror and other People's Charity; yet while a Penny lasted, nay, even beyond it, endeavouring to drown their Sorrow in their Wickedness; heaping up more Guilt upon themselves, labouring to forget former things, which it was now the proper time to remember, making more Work for Repentance, and Sinning on, as a Remedy for Sin past. . . . These men were too wicked, even for me; for there was something horrid and absurd in their way of sinning, for it was all a farce even upon themselves; they did not only act against Conscience, but against Nature. . . .

And Moll remarks that she often

. . . heard them, turning about, fetch a deep Sigh, and cry, What a Dog am I!

but in the very next breath say:

Well, Betty, my Dear, I'll drink thy health tho' meaning the Honest Wife that perhaps had not a Half Crown for herself, and three or four Children: The next morning they were at their Penitentials again, and perhaps the poor weeping Wife comes over to him, either brings him some account of what his Creditors are doing, and how she and the Children are turn'd out of doors, or some other dreadful News; and this adds to his self Reproach . . . but finding it all Darkness on every Side, he fled [sig] to the same Relief again, viz. to drink it away, debauch it away, and falling into Company of Men in just the same Condition with Himself, he repeats the Crime, and thus he goes every Day one Step onward of his way to Destruction . . . .

It is difficult to see how anyone could fail to note Defoe's moral indignation that is implicit in Moll's comments. Although he took refuge in the Mint when he hid from creditors, Defoe did not condone those bankrupts who ran there and then squandered the remainder of their estates in debaucheries and vice, leaving their families and those of their creditors to suffer. These
men, he remarks, sinned against nature, for they took in a very true sense from those who were as necessitous as they--they took from their own families. And the one inviolable natural law was that one could not take from another necessitous person even if it would save one's life. It must also be remembered that to fall into necessity, as these men surely would, though vice or intemperance was the one inexcusable plea to Defoe. Therefore, because "... these Considerations ... fill'd her with Horror" and because she saw before her "nothing but Misery and Starving," Moll left the Mint.¹ Over and over again Defoe impresses upon his readers that the fear of poverty and starvation is for Moll, as it is for Jack and Roxana, a very compelling motive for action. By the time Moll is actually reduced to a state of necessity, the fear of poverty and starvation have been ingrained upon her mind. In a sense, then, Moll's life can be compared to a highway that goes up and down along valleys and hills: the hills are those temporary periods of respite from the fear of poverty and starvation, while the valleys are those periods when poverty and starvation present very real threats. But from the top of the hills, though she is momentarily secure, she can always see the valleys beneath her. Thus, the spectre of poverty is never far away at any time in her life (much like the shadow of the bomb today).

¹Ibid., I, 60-65.
In these episodes is an implicit recognition of the fact that "money counted" during the Age of Enlightenment as much, if not more, than it does today. This thesis has shown that not only were the attitudes of the people of the eighteenth century influenced by the belief that God's material blessings were bestowed on those he favored and were withheld from those he did not but also much of the legislation as well. In short, the deprived were the depraved and the depraved were the deprived. And because poverty carried with it a moral stigma as well as a social one, who can blame Moll and Defoe's other major characters for their pre-occupation with financial success? Not only did their physical well-being depend on their financial resources, but their spiritual condition was suspect as soon as those resources were lacking (an assumption not confined to their age alone). Who then will cast the first stone when Moll states that "... beauty, wit, manner, sense, good humor, good behaviour, education, virtue, piety, or any other qualification, whether of body or mind, had no power to recommend; ... that money only made a woman agreeable [i.e., acceptable] ... ; the money was the thing ... whatever the wife was ..."?¹

Once more adapting to her circumstances, Moll takes a third "husband," who turns out to be her half-brother. Defoe, in using the incest theme, which was then in vogue, implicitly criticizes such "marriages," usually referred to as Fleet

¹Ibid., I, 66-67.
marriages. In carrying his example to the furthest extreme, Moll's incestuous relationship serves as a warning to his readers that such relationships were not only illegal but also morally hazardous. This episode also serves to introduce Moll vicariously to the evils of Newgate; thus, the tales of horror related by her Virginia mother serve to reinforce Moll's fear of poverty and starvation.\(^1\) After all, Newgate was a debtor's prison as well as a prison for felons.

Upon her return to England from Virginia, Moll once more is alone, friendless, and financially reduced because much of what she had been bringing with her to England has been lost at sea. Settling at Bath, where men found "a mistress sometimes, but very rarely look[ed] for a wife," Moll finds her next husband, with whom she lives six years and by whom she has three children. In reflecting upon this phase of her life, Moll comments:

\[
\text{It is true that from the first Hour I began to converse with him [her husband], I resolv'd to let him lye with me, if he offered it; but it was because I wanted his help, and knew of no other way of securing him. . . .}
\]

Moll is very honest in her admissions, yet Defoe makes it clear to his readers that Moll's prostitution is not caused from any propensity towards the vice, but from external conditions over which she has no control:

\[
\text{. . . tho' I was not without secret Reproaches of my own Conscience for the Life I led, and that even in the}
\]

\(^1\)Ibid., I, 89-91, 98.
greatest Height of the Satisfaction I ever took, yet I had the terrible prospect of Poverty and Starvation which lay on me as a frightful Spectre, so that there was no looking behind me: But as Poverty brought me into it, so fear of Poverty kept me in it, and I frequently resolv'd to leave it quite off; But these were Thoughts of no Weight.

Ibid., I, 106-25. In answer to critics who chastize Defoe for Moll's frequent repentances, it should be noted that it was Defoe's belief in the efficacy of repentance that enabled him to countenance the plea of necessity and to sanction infractions of strict morality when the law of self-preservation was involved. He did not "... doubt in the least but that there are many ... that, abating human Infirmity, may say, That they have endeavour'd after such a Perfection; who if they fall, rise again; if they slip, are the first to reproach themselves with it; repent, and re-assume their upright conduct; the general Tenor of those Lives is to be honest, and to do fair Things. And this is what we may be allow'd to call an honest Man; for as to Perfection, we are not looking for it in Life; 'tis enough if it /is/ to be found in the Intention and Desire: Sincerity of Desire is Christian Perfection; Heaven will accept it for such, and we ought to do so." (Complete English Tradesman, II, 42-43). Thus, in regard to Moll, Roxana (for a comparison of these two heroines, see below), and Jack, sincere repentance and a willingness to make reparations for wrongs done are the only requirements Defoe asks of a transgressor. "The man," wrote Defoe, "who if he slips, at any Time, both repents and reforms, re-assumes his Resolutions to do honestly, and to make Reparations where he has done wrong ... should pass for an honest Man with me, as long as I have any Reason or Rule to judge of an honest Man by ..." (Ibid., II, 45; see also IX, 189-91). Nor did Defoe forget there were "many mourning Penitents, who have the same Honesty, but are not blest with the same Opportunity of making Reparations of Wrong, and Restitution of Injuries done to others, whose Grief it is, that they cannot do so, and who sincerely wish for the Occasion. ..." (Ibid., II, 187). Significantly, Moll dismisses all thoughts of making reparations as impractical; Roxana tries to make reparations in regard to her own children; and Jack actually does make reparations in regard to the Kentish woman he robs. Because Jack saw the impossibility of making reparations for all his "crimes," he resolves instead to live a better life and steal no more. Unlike Roxana or Jack, critics are puzzled by Moll whom they find both honest and dishonest, sincere and insincere at the same time; hence they find a curious moral ambiguity in the novel. One solution, if indeed there is
As Defoe said, he is writing not of what ought or ought not to be, but of what is; therefore, Moll's resolutions to "leave it quite off" were, as she says, "of no weight" in face of her fear of poverty and starvation. She thus adapts to her circumstances; she had to "endure or go under."

Although Defoe had some precedents to fall back on when he excused theft because of necessity or poverty, he was quite alone in extending the plea to prostitution. However, this was not a new step for him; it was a posture he consistently maintained throughout his lifetime as author and social critic. Many years before Moll appeared, he had written in *The True-Born Englishman*:

> For where the Vice prevails, the great Temptation
> Is want of Money, more than Inclination... (ll. 164-65);

and later, a few years before his death, in *Some Considerations Upon Street-Walkers*, he repeated his contention that money drove girls to prostitute themselves, saying that "Necessity succeeds Sin and Want puts an end to Shame." Consequently, after her relationship with her Bath "husband" has ended, Moll

one, is that by Columbus, who suggests that Defoe presents a conflict between natural law and Christian-Judeo ethics. Thus, on the one hand Moll is honest, sincere, and innocent; and on the other she is dishonest, insincere, and guilty of civil as well as moral transgressions (pp. 428-29). See also Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley, 1959), pp. 128-30.

1XIII, 58.

tries to inveigle as much money from him as she can, pleading that she not be "put in some Condition, that she might be ... expos'd to Temptations from the frightful prospect of Poverty and Distress. ..."¹ Even if one can not condone her methods, one can at least understand the reasons behind them. She had a perfect right to be afraid of the "prospect of Poverty and Distress." Moreover, what else could she do? As she herself remarks, she knew what she "aim'd at, and what she wanted, but knew nothing how to pursue the End by direct means; ... wanted to be plac'd in a settled State of Living ..." And to Moll that meant a good marriage, one that was economically sound. In defense of Moll, it should be noted that whenever she entered into a relationship with some man, she was always to him "as true a Wife as Virtue itself could have form'd ..." and that she never gave any of her husbands any reason to reproach her during the time they were together. In stressing the fact that in Moll's case "the Vice came in at the Door of Necessity, not at the Door of Inclination," Defoe contrasts her situation with that of the London banker's wife who was a "Whore not by Necessity, which the common sort, but by Inclination and for the sake of the Vice."²

¹Moll Flanders, I, 131.

²Ibid., I, 13½-35, 141.
Though all of Moll's affairs are strictly on a "cash and carry" basis, the closest thing to an actual love affair occurs when Moll marries her husband, Jemy, who later turns highwayman. This episode tends to humanize Moll and make her less one-dimensional. After their mutual discovery that both are without funds and that each has misjudged the financial status of the other, Moll finds that Jemy has left her, and her first thought is of the man himself, not of her own plight. Even her longings when she discovers he is gone—"O Jemy! ... come back, come back, I'll give you all I have; I'll beg which she would not do for herself, I'll starve with you ..."—ring true as she utters them, and when Jemy does come back, Moll even returns the rings and money he had left for her. This is perhaps the only generous act Moll makes in the novel (except for her sorrow at discovering Jemy later in Newgate. At that time Newgate truly becomes a new-gate to the future for both.) when they travel towards London together and stop at Dunstable, about thirty miles from the city, Moll even pleads with Jemy to go to Virginia with her, but she fails and they part.¹ Therefore, at age forty-eight, at a time when she no longer can rely on youth and beauty, Moll must again face the

¹Like Moll's repentances, Moll's declaration that she would beggar herself and even starve for Jemy is sincere at the moment it is uttered (which Defoe says is sufficient). However, when faced with the actual prospect, i.e., when Jemy asks Moll to go to Ireland with him, Moll is true to the great law of nature—self-preservation, which comes before all else, in this case, even before love.
world alone and friendless. Moreover, she is once again pregnant, a fact that affords Defoe an opportunity to comment upon two great social evils of the day: the licence of the age and the farming out of the unfortunate "results" of affairs.

Moll's pregnancy is not an easy one for her, she remarks, yet she refuses to take "anything to make her miscarry." She finally takes up lodgings where she meets Mother Midnight, who knew her business as midwife, though she had "another calling too." Aware of what Mother Midnight is but equally aware of the precarious predicament she is in, Moll reluctantly accepts Mother Midnight's help and moves into her house. Once more, one can see that the novel presents situation after situation in which Moll must adapt or go under. In this case, she really does not have much choice. If she had been brought before the parish officers as a prostitute, concealing her pregnancy, she could have been stripped to the waist and publicly whipped through town at the end of a cart. Surprisingly, she would have received this sentence not for prostitution per se, which was not a legal crime, but for being a public nuisance. If jailed, she most likely would not have been given anything to eat or a bed to sleep on. Therefore, to survive a woman jailed for such an offense often continued to practice her profession while in jail. Such was the case at the jail at Clerkenwell that Ilive so graphically describes. Ilive had only been in the Clerkenwell Bridewell three days when the
following incident occurred:

... the Locker, who was also the Hemp-master, made me the following offer. ... "When Sir," says he, "you have a Mind to have one of these Girls you shall fancy, to lie with you all Night, you may have her;-- the Custom is, to pay for her Bed, and tip me a Shilling."

And Ilive comments:

The Intermixture of the Men with the Women makes this Place a Scene of Debauchery. ... Neither the Men nor the Women make any Secret of their Amours; ... The Keeper winks at all this for his own Gain; for if a Man and Wife lie in Bed, it is a Shilling each for the first night, and Six-Pence every Night after. The Keeper gets many pounds this Way. ... The girl prisoners here are called Moll because the far greater Number (of any other Name) of loose and disorderly Women are called by the Name of Mary. ... There are many Reasons that great[ly] conduce to the general Debauchery of this Gaol; but no one does so more than the following; viz. the extreme Poverty and Want of the Girls /Molls, as they are called/ (brackets Ilive's) who are committed hither. What is it that People in the continual Want of food, hungry, starving and perishing, will not be induced to? ... These molls, who have neither Friends nor Money to support them, fare very hard, and their Condition is very miserable. This Want exposes them to the Lust of every Felon, or other Man here confined /debtor/, who never fails of improving the Civility they confer on these Girls, of giving them a Mouthful of Victuals, and a Swill of strong Beer to their own wicked and debauched Ends.

What made their condition even more pitiful, Ilive concludes, was that when the girls could not pay their fees upon their release, they usually became the "Slave[s] of the Gatekeeper" and returned "in a direct line to their old Courses."¹ And if

¹Pp. 15-17, 21-22, 25-26. Defoe's description of Moll's descent into the hell of Newgate, discussed in Chapter Five, becomes all the more significant in light of Ilive's comments.
the parish officers had found out Moll was pregnant, her situation would not have been much better. She would have been thrown out of the parish unasmuch as she could not claim a legal settlement at Dunstable—or anywhere else, for that matter. Either prospect was not inviting to a woman, alone, pregnant, and without funds. Consequently, Moll accepts the aid of Mother Midnight as being the lesser of the evils given her. Defoe, as said before, uses this episode to comment upon the social evils of the day; thus, Moll mentions that during her stay with Mother Midnight, "no less than twelve Ladies of Pleasure . . . brought to Bed within Door," and that Mother Midnight had no less than thirty-two "Ladies of Pleasure" in her charge. "This was a strange Testimony of the growing Vice of the Age," says Moll, and "as bad as I had been myself, it shock'd my very Senses. . . ."¹ No doubt it also shocked Defoe's too.

After the birth of her son, Moll decides that she will put him out to nurse, for she has received a marriage proposal from a London banker. However, she cannot do it with an easy conscience. To this point, Moll has displayed remarkably little maternal feelings for any of her children, but one cannot doubt the sincerity of Defoe's feelings as he uses Moll to indict the license of his age:

I knew there was no marrying without concealing that I had had a Child. . . . but it touch'd my heart so forcibly to think of parting with the Child, and, for

¹Moll Flanders, I, 180-82.
ought I knew, of having it murther'd, or starv'd by neglect and ill-usage, which was much the same thing that I could not think of it without Horrors. I wish all those Women who consent to the disposing of their Children out of the way, as it is call'd, for decency sake, would consider that 'tis only a contriv'd method of murther; that is to say, killing their Children with Safety... .

This passage is echoed by Defoe in his Augusta Triumphans (1728) in which he reveals again the tenderness and concern he held for all innocent bastard children:

Is it therefore to be questioned if the Infant begot in Sin and without the Sanction of Wedlock... is... to be murther'd, starv'd or neglected, because his Parents were Wicked? hard Fate of innocent Children to suffer for their Parents' Faults!... I am as much against Bastards being begot, as I am for their being murther'd; but when a Child is... once born... we ought to shew /sic/ our Charity towards it as a Fellow-Creature and Christian; without regard to its legitimacy or otherwise... .

The conditions to which Defoe refers in these passages and in others in Roxana were no doubt familiar to his reading audience. Sadly, statistics, as was shown earlier in this study, bear out Moll's fears for her infant son, and thus make her fears the more credible. And, in a later passage, again using Moll as his spokesman, Defoe shows great insight into human nature and the needs of children. "It is manifest," says Moll,

... to all that understand any thing of children that are born into the world helpless, and uncapable /sic/ either to supply our own Wants, or so much as make them known; and that without help we must perish; and this

1Ibid., I, 185-86.

2Augusta Triumphans, pp. 12, 14.
help requires not only an assisting hand whether of the Mother of some body else, but there are two things necessary in that assisting hand, that is, care and skill; without both which half the children that are born would die; nay, tho' they were not to be deny'd food, and one half more of those that remain'd would be cripples or fools ... lost perhaps their Sense.... Since this care is needful to the Life of Children, to neglect them is to murther them; to give them up to be manag'd by those people who have none of that needful affection plac'd by nature in them, is to neglect them in the highest degree; nay, in some it goes farther, and is in order to their being lost; so that 'tis an intentional murther, whether the child lives or dies....

Certainly this is a very pointed indictment of a practice that was prevalent during this time and one that received quasi-official sanction in that churchwardens were responsible for caring for parish infants, including bastard children born to members of their parish or abandoned within the parish. However, passages such as that cited above cause some critics much consternation, for they cannot believe that Defoe intended his readers to accept Moll at face value. There is, they charge, such a discrepancy between her words and her actions. Thus, in such passages they find intentional irony. Other critics, though, remark that if Defoe was being sincere, then these passages are good examples of what they term unconscious irony; that is, even though Defoe may not have intended them to be ironical, the reader sees them as such. Therefore, there is a failure between intention and execution on the part of the author. Still other critics do not see any disparity at all in

1Moll Flanders, I, 186-187.
such passages. For example, after not finding any unconscious irony in Moll, Elizabeth Drew concludes that "there is nothing in the book to suggest that Defoe sees the situation any differently than his heroine. . . ."¹ And Francis Watson further remarks that "it is reasonable to conclude that Defoe's moral intent was an honest one."² In regard to whether Defoe was intentionally being ironic, that is, whether Moll Flanders is a work of irony or whether there are even passages that can be considered unconsciously ironic, Ian Watt perceptively writes:

We cannot today believe that so intelligent a man as Defoe should have viewed either his heroine's economic attitudes or her pious protestations with anything other than derision. Defoe's other writings, however, do not support this belief, and it may be surmised that the course of history has brought about in us powerful and often unconscious pre-dispositions to regard certain matters ironically which Defoe and his age treated quite seriously.

Among these predispositions, these ironigenic attitudes, two at least are strongly aroused by Moll Flanders: the guilt feelings which are fairly widely attached to economic gain as a motive; and the view that protestations of piety are suspect anyway, especially when combined with a great attention to one's own economic interest. But. . . Defoe was innocent of either attitude. He was not ashamed to make economic self-interest his major premise about human life; he did not think such a premise conflicted either with social or religious values; and nor did his age. . . .

And in regard to Defoe positing generous or pious sentiments on the one side and Moll's self-interested actions, such as

¹p. 30.
keeping money out and lying about her finances to her lovers, on the other side, Watt sees no conflict present or that one attitude "undermines the other." Hence, the modern critic must be careful not to impose his own biases or modern-day standards upon the novel even as he must resist imposing such standards in other areas, such as in the age’s treatment of the insane.

Thus, because so many "poor people" whose "gain consisted in being quit of the charge as soon as they could" took children such as Moll's, Moll, who no doubt felt the lack of love and care as an infant, takes pains to leave her son with a woman known to have taken good care of children. Defoe makes Moll's concern believable in that this child is the product of the closest thing to love Moll has experienced (she does not show even this much concern for any of her other children).

After placing her son in the care of a nurse, Moll departs for London and marries her London banker, who finally secured a divorce from his wife. This marriage gives Moll a much needed respite from her financial cares, but it is too short-lived, for the banker dies only five years later after he suffers severe financial losses. Reflecting upon this time in her life, Moll observes:

1The Rise of the Novel (Berkeley, 1959), pp. 127, 125.
0 had this particular scene of Life lasted, or had I learnt from that time I enjoy'd it, to have tasted the true sweetness of it, and had I not fallen into that Poverty which is the sure Bane of Vertue, how happy had I been, not only here, but perhaps for ever? for while I liv'd thus, I was really a Penitent for all my Life pass'd [sic], I look'd back on it with Abhorrence, and might truly be said to hate myself for it . . . ; but I prompted by that worst of Devils, Poverty, returned to the vile practice, and made the advantage of what they call a handsome face be the relief of my necessities, and beauty be a pimp to vice . . . .

Passages like this (and those in the Serious Reflections and the Review) emphasize Defoe's point that a man was not rich because he was honest but honest because he was rich, and that Moll would have been different if her circumstances (or bad luck, as some term it) had been different. As she herself says after seeing how much the London banker cares for her:

If I had a grain of true repentance for an abominable life of twenty-four years past, it was then. . . . How happy had it been if I had been wife to a man of so much honesty and so much affection from the beginning!

Then it occurred to me, what an abominable creature am I, and how is this innocent gentleman going to be abused by me! How little does he think that, having divorc'd a Whore, he is throwing himself into the arms of another. . . . Well, if I must be his Wife, . . . I'll be a true Wife to him, and love him suitably . . . I will make him amends, by what he shall see, for the abuses I put upon him, which he does not see.

Thus, Moll only violates the civil and/or moral code when in her perception it seems unavoidable. Passages, such as that cited above, give the reader insight into Moll's basic honesty

1Moll Flanders, I, 202-03.

2Ibid., I, 198.
and also reveal Defoe's contention that self-preservation is the first great law of nature. In spite, however, of her good resolutions--made sincerely at the moment--what counts with Moll is the present, not the past or the future. Therefore she adjusts her standards to conform to the moment in order to survive. What Defoe seems to posit then is a kind of situational ethics in which the subjective, immediate norm of conscience takes precedence over any kind of objective moral law such as Christian-Judeo ethics. And just as it is easier to be honest when rich, so also, implies Defoe, is it easier to be penitent when the spectre of poverty and starvation is not hovering overhead; for then one can recriminate in safety and in leisure. Regardless of whether they ought to or not, the demands of the body come to Defoe's protagonists before the needs of the soul.

With the death of her banker-husband, Moll was placed in a difficult position once again. And after two years of living on the remains of her husband's estate, she is overcome by fear of poverty. During the two years, her "apprehensions doubl'd the misery; for she fancied every six-pence . . .

---

1Dobree writes: "... makes this scandalous criminal so entrancing because he endows her with supreme honesty for the moment" (p. 222).

2It should be noted that Defoe uses the word fancied. Moll never really even misses a meal throughout the novel, but as Defoe has shown the fear of poverty is as compelling as the actual state itself. Such is the case with Moll.
paid for a loaf of Bread was the last [she] had in the World, and ... tomorrow [she] was to fast, and be starv'd to Death. ... She is nearly frantic. In her appeal to her readers, one can see the compassionate Puritan who sympathized with those who had to face circumstances similar to Moll's:

... 0 let none read this part without seriously reflecting in the Circumstances of a desolate State, and how they would grapple with want of Friends and want of Bread; it will certainly make them think not of Sparing what they have only, but of looking up to Heaven for support, and of the wise Man's Prayer, 

_Give Me Not Poverty, Lest I Steal!

Let 'em remember that a time of Distress, is a time of dreadful Temptation, and all the Strength to resist is taken away; Poverty presses, the Soul is made desperate by Distress, and what can be done? ... there are Temptations which it is not in the Power of Human Nature to resist, and few know what would be their Case, if driven to the same Exigences: As Covetousness is the Root of all Evil, so Poverty is the worst of all Snares. ... 2

This plea of necessity is made in conjunction with Moll's first theft, which results from a fear of poverty and starvation, and is in contrast to those made later when Moll had accumulated sufficient funds to have left off her life of crime. But, as if Moll were quoting from Defoe's _Review_, she adds that the "prospect of [her] own starving, which grew every day more frightful ... harden'd [her] Heart by Degrees" as she was "driven by the dreadful Necessity of [her] Circumstances. ..." 3

1Moll Flanders, I, 203.
2Ibid., II, 1-3; I, 203.
3Ibid., II, 15-17, 3-4, 6. See also Samuel Wright, _A Treatise on the Deceitfulness of Sin and Its leading Men to Hardness of Heart_ ... (5th ed.; London, 1753). For a
Hence, Moll continued her criminal activities, becoming very accomplished, prosperous, and well-known, until finally she was caught after attempting to steal a bolt of cloth, and sent to Newgate where she met again with her Lancashire husband, Jemy. Both were transported to the colonies, where Moll prospered. Eventually, she returned to England to await Jemy, resolved that both would spend their lives in a manner appropriate to that of penitents whom God had blessed.

From this examination of Moll Flanders, one can see that Defoe was aware of the possibility of fiction being an apt vehicle for social reform. As a social novel, Moll Flanders is still an embryo, yet the characteristics of the fully developed child are there. And by blending the religious and moral with the sociological value, Defoe paved the way for the genre as it is known today. It is true that Moll, like Jack, steals rather than begs, but as long as "indigence was both shameful in itself and presumptive evidence of present wickedness and future damnation"¹ and as long as begging was considered to be a crime, what was Defoe's heroine to do? As Elizabeth Drew has observed, Moll had little choice; for "however imperfectly worked out, Defoe's vision is of an individual pitted against a social discussion of fear as a motive, see also Louis Kronenberger, "Defoe—the Great Materialist," Saturday Review, XX, No. 25 (September 30, 1939), 1-4. For a comparison of Moll's and Roxana's pleas, see below.

¹Watt, p. 95.
system in which the scales of justice are weighted heavily against her." In the final analysis, it is Moll's "innate tenacity of spirit and vigorous intelligence alone" that save "her personality from extinction by poverty, by social injustice, and by misfortune. . . ."

iii

In the Serious Reflections, as was indicated in the previous chapter, Defoe states that there are four ways by which one can fall into a state of necessity: through vice and intemperance; through the vicissitudes of fortune, i.e., through accidental circumstances beyond one's control; through want of judgment; and through ignorance, i.e., through lack of knowledge or lack of experience. Only the first plea was unacceptable to Defoe. And in the Compleat English Tradesman, Defoe makes another distinction pertinent not only to Moll Flanders but to Roxana as well, declaring that:

'Tis not criminal to be poor; Necessity is no Offence till it makes itself a Snare and places in the Devil's Stead. But Avarice is a Crime in its Nature; 'tis a Devil in its very Kind, born of Hell, and infused in the very Soul itself: The first is an Accident to the Man, a Circumstance of Life, and comes from without; but Avarice is within the Man; 'tis mingled, as we say, with his Animal Life; it runs in his Blood; it has insinuated itself into his very Species, and he is truly as the Text says, drawn aside by his own Lust, and enticed.

---

1p. 28.

2II, 21-22.
Both of Defoe's heroines initially fall into prostitution because of necessity, because of accidental circumstances over which they have no control; both marry husbands who go through their estates and leave them penniless. Yet, there are some differences between the two women. At the time Roxana is deserted by her "fool" of a husband, she is the mother of five children, whom she tries to look after. Moreover, she does not have relatives who are willing to take her children. In fact, her condition is described as being the "most deplorable that words can express." Not only does Roxana get money to care for her family by selling everything she possessed that was of value, but she also humbles herself by pleading with her husband's relatives for assistance. All she receives for her trouble is discourteous replies. Roxana even visits them, telling them that if her children had not been so young, she would gladly have "work'd for them with her Needle" and would have only gone to them then to "beg some Work that she might get Bread by her Labour." But, as she points out, to "think of one single Woman not bred to work, and at a Loss to get Employment, to get the Bread of five Children, that was not possible." Despite her entreaties, she received "not one Farthing of Assistance from Any-body. . . ." When a distant aunt goes to the relatives for help for Roxana and her children, she fares little better: she only collects from all the relatives combined "eleven or twelve Shillings." Surely,
this is a sad commentary on the lack of charity in England, and Defoe believed firmly that private charity could do much to alleviate the distress of the poor, although he had little faith in organizational charities per se. Therefore, Defoe's heroine is not as fortunate as her counterpart, Moll: No one wants her or her children. She is reduced to a state of necessity, as can be seen in the passage where Amy, Roxana's faithful maid, and the distant aunt return to the house to find Roxana:

• • • in Rags and Dirt, who was but a little before riding in [her] Coach; this, and looking almost like one Starv'd, who was before fat and beautiful! The House, that was before handsomely furnish'd with Pictures and Ornaments, Cabinets, Pier-Glasses, and everything suitable, was now stripped and naked, most of the Goods having been seiz'd by the Landlord for Rent and sold to buy Necessaries; in a Word, all was Misery and Distress, the Face of Ruin was everywhere to be seen; [she] had eaten up almost everything, and little remain'd, unless, like one of the pitiful Women of Jerusalem, [she] should eat up [her] very Children. • • •

Roxana also differs from her counterpart in that she exhibits some maternal concern for her children. More importantly, Defoe reveals his development as an artist in that he pictures Roxana's condition rather than just telling his readers about it. In addition, Roxana is less one-dimensional than Moll in that throughout the book the reader is privy to her innermost thoughts, to her inner struggles; thus Defoe gives his readers some psychological insight into his character's mind. Consequently, because her condition was so desperate, Roxana allows
herself to be talked into leaving her four children (one was already being cared for by the parish officers, for the child was born in that parish; the others were not) with the relatives. The aunt had suggested that Amy just take them to the relatives and say that Roxana had gone away. Inasmuch as she had received nothing but coldness from the relatives, Roxana was afraid that they would turn her children out onto the streets or they would turn them over to the parish. This scene affords Defoe yet another opportunity to comment on the evil of farming out infants, as Roxana remarks that she was distressed when she thought of the many children who were "starv'd at Nurse, of their being ruin'd, let grow crooked, lam'd, and the like, for want of being taken care of." These remarks echo those of Defoe's other heroine that were cited earlier in this chapter. The emphasis placed by Defoe upon this social evil not only reveals how widespread the practice must have been but also it indicates the depth of Defoe's concern for innocent children. However, because the first natural law is self-preservation and because "the misery of own Circumstances harden'd Heart against own Flesh and Blood . . . when she consider'd they must inevitably be Starv'd and too . . . , she began to be reconcil'd to parting with them all. . . ." What finally decided her was that she was spared "from the Dreadful Necessity of seeing them all perish and perishing with them
In reviewing this episode, several points can be made. First, Roxana is in fact actually reduced to a condition of necessity, for she has willingly stripped herself of all that is valuable to provide for herself and her family as long as possible, whereas Moll is never in an actual state of necessity until after the death of her banker-husband. Second, she would have been willing to do honest work if it had been at all possible. Third, her motives in leaving her children are not entirely selfish, whereas Moll had remarked that her children were "happily taken off her hands" by her relatives. Fourth, like Moll, she learns that she must adapt to circumstances if she is to survive; thus, she too abides by the code, "endure or go under." Fifth, besides pointing out the social evil of the farming out of infants, Defoe also uses this episode to point out another social evil, that which made women legally the chattels of men. As in the case of Moll's second husband, Roxana's husband was a financial fool. While he squandered away his estate, Roxana, like Moll, could do nothing legally but stand by and pray, as she often did, that he would go away before everything was gone. Defoe had spoken out about the subjugation of women as early as 1697 in An Essay on Projects where he also stressed the need for a woman to receive a proper education, one that would equip her to take care of

2Moll Flanders, I, 203, 65.
herself. He felt that women needed to be trained to do more than sing, play the piano, and draw pictures. Unless a woman hoarded some money secretly, she was totally dependent upon her husband, for the woman's estate belonged to her husband after marriage. Lastly, Defoe again shows that man is subject to the whims of fate: like Job, man must learn that, although the Lord giveth, He also taketh away. And though Defoe does not go so far as to say that man's environment or circumstances form or determine man's actions, that is, he does not deny free will, he does believe that man's environment or circumstances greatly restrict the choices presented. Man is given the choice of starving or not starving, of committing a civil crime and living or of not committing a civil crime and dying: the choice is always his to make (although Defoe believes in the final analysis man actually has no choice because it is in his own self-interest to preserve himself). But, as far as the events or circumstances that bring man to the place where he must make that decision are concerned, Defoe shows that most often man has no control over them whatsoever just as Roxana can not control the events that bring her to a state of necessity.

After her children have been taken to her husband's relatives, who reluctantly take them in, Roxana closes the house to have it appear that she has left, but she lives in the house for another year rent free due to the "kindness" of the
landlord, who throughout the year plays the part of a perfect, charitable Christian gentleman. Yet, toward the end of that period, the landlord makes it known to Roxana that he intends to "relieve her," and Amy tells Roxana that the landlord's intention is to receive a "Favour" from her. Echoing Defoe's own Review, Amy, in a discussion of the problem with her mistress, declares that the landlord is very aware that "Poverty is the strongest Incentive; a Temptation against which no Virtue is Powerful enough to stand out." Thus, Defoe implies, as he did in the Serious Reflections that if man is to be tempted, let him be tempted to be good; hence, abolish poverty.¹

Although Roxana resolves to starve before she prostitutes her honor, like Moll, she adjusts to her circumstances and compromises her standards. But there is a significant difference between her actions and Moll's; for, though Amy tells Roxana that it would not be "Lawful" for her to give her "Favours" to the landlord for any reason "but for Bread" (a view Defoe would have agreed with) and that "Honesty is out of the question when Starvation is the Case," Roxana announces that ". . . without a question, a Woman ought rather to die, than to prostitute her Virtue and Honour, let the Temptation be what it will."² The crucial word in this quotation is the word

¹Serious Reflections, pp. 8-9.
²Roxana, XI, 26-30.
ought; for, as Defoe remarked in *Moll Flanders*, he was not writing of "what ought to be or not to be done," but "of what was." Yet, it is one thing to prostitute oneself out of necessity and quite another out of a sense of gratitude, which Roxana herself points out:

Had I . . . had my Sences about me, and had my Reason not been overcome by the powerful Attraction of so kind, as beneficent a Friend; had I consulted Conscience and Virtue, I shou'd have repelled this Amy. . . ; The ignorant Jade's argument, That he had brought me out of the Hands of the Devil, by which she meant the Devil of Poverty and Distress, shou'd have been a powerful Motive to me, not to plunge myself into the Jaws of Hell and into the Power of the real Devil, in recompense for that Deliverance. . . .; I shou'd have received the Mercy thankfully, and applied it soberly to the Praise and Honour of my Maker; whereas by this wicked Course, all the Bounty and Kindness of this Gentleman, became a Snare to me, was a meer Bait to the Devil's Hook; I receiv'd his Kindness at the dear Expence of Body and Soul, mortgaging Faith, Religion, Conscience, and Modesty for . . . a Morsel of Bread; or, if you will, ruin'd my Soul from a Principle of Gratitude, and gave myself up to the Devil to show myself grateful to my Benefactor: . . . I must do Justice upon myself, as to say, I did what my own Conscience convinc'd me at the very Time I did it, was horribly unlawful, scandalous, and abominable.

Regardless of this conviction, she too testifies to Defoe's contention that necessity or the fear of it could not be withstood, even with the grace of religion:

But Poverty was my Snare, dreadful Poverty! The Misery I had been in was great, such as wou'd make the Heart tremble at the Apprehension of its Return. . . .

Roxana here makes a distinction between the devil of poverty

---

1 *Moll Flanders*, I, 91.
and the theological devil, a distinction not made by Moll, who frequently equates poverty with the devil. And insofar as her conduct related to her fellowman, Defoe finds her guiltless at the bar of justice; that is, according to natural law, the law of self-preservation, Roxana commits no crime. But because she removes herself from that plane to another, she must be judged according to the new plane, that is, according to how her actions relate to God. Therefore, she states:

"... not that I plead this [her poverty] as a Justification of my Conduct, but that it may move the Pity, even of those that abhor the Crime. ... Add to this, that if I had ventured to disoblige this Gentleman, I had no Friends in the World to have Recourse to; I had no Prospect, no, not a bit of Bread; I had nothing before me but to fall back into the same Misery that I had been in before. ..."

Defoe seems to imply that if there are few things in nature that are simply unlawful and that crimes are made so by the concurrence of accidents and circumstances, so also can things that are seen to be crimes be rendered lawful by the concurrence of accidents and circumstances. It is noteworthy that while Moll reflects upon her actions after they are done, Roxana reflects before and after she acts. Roxana is aware that there are things that one ought to do, even if one is not able at the time to do them. It is also significant that fear plays as great a role in her decisions as it does with Moll and Col. Jack. Thus, she gives in to the landlord out of a combination of fear of poverty and starvation; and gratitude;
hence, in her honesty, she repeats that she "... yielded... not as deluded to believe it lawful, but as overcome with kindness as terrify'd at the fear of [her] own misery if he should leave [her]."¹ One can see from this quotation that there is a basic difference between Moll and Roxana: whereas whenever Moll enters into a relationship with a man, she always plays the role of wife, Roxana, refusing to be deluded, plays the part of mistress and courtesan, which is seen in the scene where she acts the part of a procuress and sends Amy to bed with the landlord, remarking that her action was something a wife would not have done, much less have watched. Although, like Moll, Roxana protests that her initial incursion into vice was not prompted by any inclination and that she did not derive any pleasure from her experience, that it was the "Dread of [her] own circumstances" which tempted her and overcame her abhorrence and reluctance, that the "Terrors behind [her] look'd blacker than the Terrors before [her]," Roxana degenerates in character as a result of her first experience in a way that Moll does not. Although she upholds Defoe's thesis that self-preservation is the first and great law of nature and that there are some things that no one can withstand, starvation among them, such an action as described above does exact payment from the human personality. As the song goes, "The piper must be paid." Therefore, the rest of

¹Roxana, XI, 40-41, 48.
the novel traces Roxana's degeneration: the more successful she becomes as mistress and courtesan, the wealthier she becomes; and the wealthier she becomes, the more avaricious she becomes. In fact, before she even receives any payment from her prince, she already has accumulated a fortune of ten thousand pounds. Any plea of necessity at this juncture would be ludicrous. Roxana therefore freely confesses that "tho' Poverty and Want is an irresistible Temptation to the Poor, Vanity and Great Things are as irresistible to others. . . . I now had no Poverty attending me. . . ." Thus, if poverty introduced her to her profession, it was vanity and avarice (like Moll later on) that kept her in it. To further indicate her degeneration, Defoe uses animal imagery as he has Roxana, reflecting back to the time when she was first deserted by her husband, frankly admit:

I, that knew what this Carcass of mine had been but a few years before, how overwhelm'd with Grief, drown'd in Tears, frighted with the Prospect of Beggary and surrounded with Rags and Fatherless Children; that was pawning and selling the Rags that cover'd me, for a Dinner, and sat on the Ground, despairing of Help, and expecting to be starv'd, till my Children were snatch'd from me to be kept by the Parish; I that was after this a Whore for Bread and abandoning Conscience and Virtue, liv'd with another Woman's Husband. . . .; I that was left so entirely desolate, friendless, and helpless that I knew not how to get the least Help to keep me from starving; that I should be carress'd by a Prince, for the Honour of having the scandalous Use of my prostituted Body, common before to his Inferiors, and perhaps would not have denied one of his Footmen but a little while before, if I could have got my Bread by it . . . .

Ibid. XI. 43-44, 47, 72-73, 84. Moll remarks: "... as Poverty brought me in, so avarice kept me in. . ." (11.16-17.18).
Besides giving the reader a neat summary of what had taken place (a technique Defoe frequently uses), this passage also points out Defoe's choice of language to render a "stern moral judgment" as seen in Roxana's use of words like *whore* and *carcass*, which, according to Alter, Defoe does not use to evoke a sensual image.¹ And to make his moral more explicit, Roxana continues:

I say I cou'd not but reflect upon the Brutality and Blindness of Mankind; that, because Nature had given me a good Skin, and some agreeable features, should suffer that Beauty to be a Dait to Appetite as to do such sordid, unaccountable Things to obtain the possession of it.

It is for this Reason, that I have so largely set down the Particulars... not to make the Story an Incentive to the Vice... but to draw the just Picture of... Man enslav'd to the rags of his vicious Appetite;...

This passage echoes those in *Jure Divino*³ noted in the last chapter which illustrated Defoe's contention that fallen man is a creature governed by his passions. It also shows that Defoe recognized man's nature for what it was, but did not approve of it: Roxana is a tradesman selling her "wares" to the highest bidder. She does not respect her clients, and neither does Defoe. And if one is to judge Roxana's (and Moll's) preoccupation with material wealth and find her guilty,

¹See Alter, pp. 35-36, 38-39.
²*Roxana*, XI, 84-85.
³See Bk. I, pp. 110-111, and Bk. IV, p. 8. See also Chapter Five of this thesis.
what judgment is one to render in the case of those human parasites like the prince and the landlord who fed off of her prostituted honor? Behind passages as that cited above there is an implicit indictment made by Defoe of the licentiousness of the age and of those rich who fed off the misery and defenselessness of the poor. Too many girls like Roxana and Moll became "so long habituated . . . to a Life of Vice that really it appeared to be no Vice. . . ." after a while. Though her wealth brings Roxana security, it does not bring her peace of mind. She cannot entirely escape her past:

What was I a Whore for now? for I confess I had a strong natural Aversion to the crime at first /italics mine/: partly owing to a virtuous Education, and partly to a Sense of Religion /which Moll apparently lacks until old age/; but the Devil of Poverty prevail'd, and the Person who laid Seige to me, did it in such an obliging, and . . . irresistible Manner. . . that . . . there was no standing it. . . /But/ the question remain'd unanswer'd, Why am I a Whore now? . . . as Necessity debauch'd me and Poverty made me a Whore at the beginning, so excess of Avarice for getting Money and excess of Vanity continued me in the Crime. . . These were my Baits, these the Chains by which the Devil held me bound. . .

In this passage Defoe illustrates the dangers attendant upon poverty and the use of the plea of necessity; while it may be valid and/or justifiable to transgress a civil law if one is in the state of necessity, it most certainly is not when necessity is no longer present. Although Moll, while she is a thief and prostitute, does not judge herself or her actions in terms of Christian principles, she nevertheless undergoes a similar

---

1Roxana, XI, 220; XII, 3-5.
degeneration. Like Roxana, she too, as an old penitent, recalls that there was a time when she probably could have left off her life of crime if she had wished:

... I was enter'd a compleat Thief, harden'd to a Pitch above all the Reflections of Conscience or Modesty, and to a Degree which I never thought possible in me.

Thus the Devil who, began, by the help of irresistible Poverty, to push me into this Wickedness, brought me on to a height beyond the common Rate, even when my Necessities were not so terrifying; for I had now got into a little Vein of Work, and as I was not at a loss to handle my Needle, it was very probable I might have got my Bread honestly enough.

I must say, that if such a prospect of Work had presented itself at first, when I began to feel the approach of my miserable Circumstances; I say, had such a prospect of getting Bread by Working presented itself, then I had never fallen into this Wicked Trade, or into such a wicked Gang...; but this practice harden'd me, and I grew audacious to the last Degree...;

Moll continues:

I remember that one Day being a little more serious than ordinary... it came strongly into my Mind, no doubt from some kind Spirit, if such there be; that as at first Poverty excited me, and my Distresses drove me to these dreadful Shifts; so seeing those Distresses were now relieved, and I could also get something towards a maintenance by working, and had so good a Bank to support me, why should I not now leave off, while I was well; that I could not expect to go always free;...

I had still a cast for an easie Life; but my Fate was otherwise determin'd, the busie Devil that drew me in, had too fast hold of me to let me go back; but as Poverty brought me in, so avarice kept me in, till there was no going back; as to the Arguments which my Reason dictated for perswading me to lay down Avarice stept in and said, go on, you have had very good luck.

... Thus, Defoe shows in both novels that crimes committed when a

---

1Moll Flanders, II, 16-17, 18.
plea of necessity is no longer valid take their toll by a
degeneration of the human spirit, even if one is not caught by
the law. And just as Moll's crimes eventually stem from within
rather than from without, that is, from vice in the form of
avarice rather than from external conditions, so also do
Roxana's. Hence, Roxana (and Moll) is as morally guilty of
wrong-doing as she is legally and socially. No longer does
Amy's doctrine of "Comply and Live, Deny and Starve" have any
validity or justification. It should be noted, however, that
whereas Moll rationalizes about her own actions at the time
she commits them according to natural law (perhaps in order to
overcome any guilt she actually feels) and does not then
consider them in terms of a Christian-Judeo ethic, Roxana
consistently views and judges her own actions in that light.
Moreover, whereas Moll and Jack tell their stories from the
vantage point of old age and a secure financial and social
position, Roxana narrates her story during "the anguish and
remorse of Christian repentance,"¹ and during a period in which
she is neither financially nor socially secure. Nevertheless,
the ability to draw the distinction between crimes stemming
from within and those from without and the conflict between
natural law and Christian principles is typical of Defoe.

Within the course of the novel, Defoe traces the
disintegration of a personality, beginning with Roxana's fear

¹Novak, Defoe and the Nature of Man, p. 86.
of poverty and ending with her fear of being discovered by her own daughter and the possible murder of that daughter by Amy. As a consequence of her initiation into "sin," she becomes hardened, and passes from unfortunate but virtuous wife to fortunate but vicious mistress. Whereas she is a passive victim in the beginning, she ends by becoming "a diabolical agent of the devil."\(^1\) Perhaps that is why she is eventually brought to misery instead of to prosperity, as are both Moll and Jack. Unfortunately, because of Defoe's (seemingly) truncated ending, the reader does not share in Roxana's downfall. Maximillian Novak offers two possibilities for Defoe's discontinuation of the novel. He suggests (1) that "he had exhausted the serious sociological message which he felt to be the justification for fiction,"\(^2\) and (2) that he thought "the tracing of Roxana's decline into despair and misery was not the kind of material his audience found of interest in a novel."\(^3\) Although no one will ever know exactly why Defoe

\(^1\) Spiro Peterson, "The Matrimonial Theme in Defoe's Roxana," PMLA, LXX (1955), 175.

\(^2\) See the Review (Vol. VII, No. 7; Tues. April 11, 1710), Fasc. Bk. 17, p. 25; and A New Family Instructor, p. 52, for Defoe's theory of fiction.

\(^3\) "Crime and Punishment in Defoe's Roxana," JEGP, LXV (1966), 464-65. In a recent article Robert Hume argues that Roxana is as complete as Defoe wished, and demonstrates that Defoe wanted to show the causes of Roxana's downfall, to show the process of her degeneration, and saw no need to portray the effects as they were self-evident; see "The Conclusion of Defoe's Roxana: Fiasco or Tour de Force," Eighteenth-Century Studies, III, No. 4 (Summer, 1970), 475-91.
stopped the novel where he did, the reasons offered by Novak seem to be cogent. *Roxana* may be incomplete, but it still offers the literary critic much sociological food for thought.

Whereas *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* are principally concerned with the plight of helpless women who are thrown into a state of necessity through no fault of their own, *Col. Jacque* is concerned with the plight of the innocent child, who was left to fend for himself in the streets of London. In this work the mark of the sociological novelist and the compassionate Dissenter is most pronounced. *Col. Jacque* is also Defoe's most legitimate treatment of the plea of necessity and an arraignment of the age to the bar of justice to answer for its cruel and insensitive abuse of its most vital possession, its destitute youth, who were for the most part ignored and permitted to roam the streets in packs, becoming such accomplished thieves before they had even reached the age of reason that they would have gladdened the heart of Dickens' Fagin. Touching upon such social issues as slavery and the transportation of felons to the colonies, *Col. Jacque* embodies two important themes, themes that are found throughout Defoe's fictional as well as non-fictional writings: (1) that poverty and crime are but two sides of the same coin, and (2) that education was a solution to the problem of the poor that
attacked the cause and did not merely try to eliminate the effects. Implicit also in the novel is the question of whether the character of a man is determined by his heredity or by his environment.

The reader is struck immediately by differences between Jack and Defoe's two heroines, and one of the first that is significant is that Jack is not privileged to have any early training or education. Although Moll was born a Newgate waif, she was cared for from age three to fourteen by a woman who obviously ran a day school of some sort, and, after fourteen, she was taken in by Robin's family, where she was exposed to such things as French, music, and art. Roxana too mentions that she received the education befitting a person of her social position, including religious training. However, such is not the case with Jack, as Defoe makes very explicit in the Preface to the novel:

Here's Room for just and copious Observations, on the Blessings and Advantages of a sober and well-govern'd Education, and the Ruin of so many Thousands of Youths of all Kinds, in this Nation, for want of it; also how much publick Schools and Charities might be improv'd to prevent the Destruction of so many unhappy Children, as, in this Town, are every Year bred up for the Gallows.

The miserable Condition of unhappy Children, many of whose natural Tempers are docible, and would lead them to learn the best Things rather than the Worst, is truly deplorable, and is abundantly seen in the History of this man's childhood, where, though Circumstances form'd him by Necessity to be a Thief [italics mine], a strange Rectitude of Principles remain'd with him, and made him early abhor the worst Part of his Trade, and at last wholly leave it off.
And to emphasize his point that poverty and/or necessity are the parents of crime, Defoe continues:

If he had come into the World with the Advantage of Education, and had been well instructed how to improve the generous Principles he had in him, what a Man might not he have been.

Defoe was not alone in seeing the relationship between poverty and crime and education. Thomas Cooke wrote:

Education is that great improvement of our human Faculties, upon which the great Hinge of all human Affairs at this Day turns; and as Reason is the discriminating Mark from Beasts, so Education is that only Character by which we excel and differ from one another; it is that on which all the worth we boast of doth alone depend; without this a Man is little serviceable either to himself or to his Country; A mere Man prefers his Passion to his Reason, and it is actuated by his Sences, more than his Understanding: The first thing that Nature teaches us, is its own great Principle of self-preservation, this is to be provided with the necessary supports of Life, as Food and Rayment, and truly where Education hath not instructed Children how to provide all these, they learn to Steal them . . . .

The first part of the novel, which traces Jack's progress from infancy to manhood, describes how necessity literally causes

---


2Sermon, pp. 21-22. Significantly, John Fielding turned his attention especially to the plight of deserted boys and girls from whom the thieves and prostitutes of London were largely recruited. In 1758, twenty-seven years after Defoe's death, John Fielding was largely responsible for the establishment of the Orphans Asylum for Deserved Girls. See his An Account of the Origin and Effects of a Plan of Police and A Plan for Preserving those Deserved Girls who Become Prostitutes from Necessity . . . (London, 1758).
Jack to become a thief; thus the word *formed* is used in the
dual sense of causality and character formation. At the same
time the novel illustrates Defoe's view that although man is
formed by his environment in that it limits or restricts the
number of choices open to him, man is also the product of
heredity, and at the end, blood will tell. On this level, the
novel is the story of the odyssey of Jack, born a gentleman-
bastard, who fights the vicissitudes of fortune and asserts
his individualism in order to recapture his lost heritage, his
birthright, and to establish himself as the gentleman he was
born to be.

As a bastard, Jack, like Moll, began life at the very
bottom of the socio-economic ladder. At birth, he was farmed
out to a nurse "for decency sake," as Moll expressed it, and
never knew anything about his parents, except that he was to
remember he was a "Gentleman." Until age ten, Jack lives with
the woman, who also cared for two other boys, her own son,
Captain Jack, and another boy, Major Jack. Upon her death,
when Jack is ten (the Capt. was eleven and the Major eight),
the three Jacks were "turn'd loose to the World," and, though
the woman was buried by the parish, the parish did not bother
about the boys nor did they trouble to seek aid from the
parish. Significantly, despite Defoe's respect for charity
schools, Jack does not go to one.\(^1\) Adhering to his belief that

\(^1\) *Col. Jack*, III, 2-4, 7-8.
the function of poetry (including thus fiction) was to teach
and delight, to inculcate virtue via example, Defoe obviously
felt that the tracing of Jack's experiences and the depicting
of his prolonged misery would be more effective than showing
Jack in a charity school, being drilled and regimented by his
instructors. (Perhaps that is why the Parable of the Prodigal
Son is also so effective.)

Defoe was not a believer in the natural goodness of
man, yet he does stress that Jack had inner qualities that set
him apart from his two companions. Not only was he trust-
worthy, but it was a point of honor with the young boy to be
punctual when trusted with a job, even though he "was as Errant
a Thief as any of them [the gang of boys with whom he
associated] in all other Cases...." Moreover, unlike Capt.
Jack, Defoe's hero is always singled out by passerby's who
comment on his eyes (windows to the soul?) and on his pleasing
countenance. But Capt. Jack was a

... surly, ill-look'd rough Boy, [who] had not a Word
in his Mouth that savour'd either of good Manners or
good Humour.... In a Word he got nothing of any body
for good will, but was as it were oblig'd to turn Thief,
for the meer Necessity of Bread to eat; for, if he beg'd,
he did it with so ill a tone, ... rather like bidding
Folks give him Victuals, then entreating them....

On the other hand, the Major was a "merry Thoughtless Fellow,
always Cheerful, whither he had Victuals or no, [who] never
complain'd and recommended himself so well by his good
Carriage that the Neighbours lov'd him, and he got his Victuals
enough one where or [the other]."¹ Thus, Defoe presents three boys, all approximately the same age, all a product of the same environment. Yet, each ends up differently: Col. Jack becomes a successful gentleman planter; Capt. Jack is hanged; and Major Jack, after escaping to France, becomes a famous highwayman and is eventually broken on the rack. Col. Jacque, therefore, demonstrates Defoe's belief that though man is determined by his environment in that it either narrows or enlarges the choices afforded him, he still retains free will. Moreover, heredity cannot be discounted in the end. (How successfully he reconciled these controversial concepts might well be the subject of another thesis.)

Just as the three boys had to get their own food, so also did they have to provide their own shelter. In summer they slept in the "Watch Houses" and on the "Bulk-heads";² in winter they "got into the Ash-holes and Nealing-Arches³ in the Glass-house, call'd Dallows." And Jack remarks that they "liv'd for some Years" in this Manner, perhaps two or more, and "neither did, or meant any Harm."⁴

¹Ibid., III, 8-9.
²Roofs of booths and stalls that projected into the streets from houses and shops.
³The annealing arches under which hot glass slowly cooled.
As could be expected, such innocence did not go long uncorrupted; for Jack notes that the three boys "fail'd not to fall among a Gang of naked, ragged Rogues like ourselves," who were "wicked as the Devil cou'd desire to have them be, at so early an Age, and Ripe for all the other Parts of Mi/s] chief that suited them as they advanc'd in Years." In this gang were about seventeen boys, all about the age of Jack, all who lived as he did, except that they already were initiated into a life of crime. Defoe makes it explicit that these boys lived as they did with the knowledge and at least tacit consent of the law, for Jack tells about an incident that occurred one night as he slept in the glass house. It seems that a constable and the watch appeared and rooted all the boys who were sleeping in the glass-house in order to search for a boy whom they thought had taken part in a robbery:

The alarm being given, we were awaken'd in the Dead of the Night with come out here, ye Crew of young Devils, come out and show yourselves: so we were all produc'd, some came out rubbing their Eyes, and scratching their Heads, and others were dragg'd out. . . ; it seems /Wry-Neck/, as they call'd him, was not among /us/ . . . so we were allow'd to return to our warm Appartment among the Coal-ashes. . . .

This lack of concern by parochial officers certainly reflects the age's general lack of concern for these children, which Defoe had demonstrated years before in Charity Still a Christian Virtue and in his Proposals for Implying the Poor . . . , in

1Ibid., III, 9-10.
which he urged that more foundling hospitals and charity schools be built to care for children like Col. Jack.

When Jack is about fourteen years old, Major Jack gets involved with a group of pickpockets, the oldest of whom is also only fourteen. After receiving his share of booty from his first venture into crime, Major Jack shares his ill-gotten gains with Col. Jack. In dramatizing the two Jacks spending the money on shoes and stockings, Defoe emphasizes their innocence and ignorance. Despite his chronological age, Jack exhibits the naivété of a child much younger, and Defoe uses Jack's innocence as much as he does the plea of necessity to acquit Col. Jack of his crimes. After purchasing their shoes and stockings, Jack states that they "put them on immediately to their great Comfort; for they had neither of them any Stockings to their Legs that had any Feet in them for a long time..." And because they "never had a good Dinner in all their Lives," they went to Rosemary's Lane where they bought "three pennyworth of pudding, a loaf of Bread, and a whole Pint of strong Beer, which was seven Pence in all." The Major finally gets so rich that he buys the first shirt he has ever owned. Even though the Major does not involve Jack directly in his crimes, Jack too gets involved with a pickpocket. He later recalls that:

... as to the Nature of the thing, I was perfectly a Stranger to it... for it was a good while before I understood the thing as an Offence; I look'ed on
picking Pockets as a Kind of Trade, and thought I was to go apprentice to it; 'tis True that this was when I was young in the Society, as well as younger in years, but even now I understood it to be only a thing, for which if we were catch'd, we run the Risque of being Duck'd or Pump'd, which we call'd Soaking, and then all was over, and we made nothing of having our Raggs wet't a little, but I never understood, till a great while after, that the Crime was Capital, and that we might be sent to Newgate for it, till a great Fellow, almost a Man, . . . was hang'd for it, and then I was terribly frightened. . . .

Not only are passages like this meant to evoke sympathy and understanding from Defoe's readers for London's street urchins but they also are an implicit criticism of the period, which appears not to have zealously prized and cared for its young and innocent poor. As Defoe stresses, Jack, at this stage of his development, is innocent of any wrongdoing. In his innocence, Jack first views his criminal activities as an apprenticeship; then he views pickpocketing as some sort of boyish prank for which, if caught, he might get "wet't'd." Most commentators of natural law would also have found Jack innocent at the bar of judgment, for they held that no one could be found guilty of violating any law that was beyond their capacity to understand. And as Jack says:

I walk'd out . . . a poor innocent Boy, who had no Evil in my Intentions; I had never stolen any thing in my Life, . . . I was so honest; but the subtle Tempter baited his Hood for me as I was a Child, in a Manner suited to my Childishness, for I never too this picking of Pockets to be dishonest, I look'd on it as a kind of Trade, that I was to be bred up to,

1Ibid., III, 15-19.
and so I enter'd upon it . . . and thus I was made a
Thief involuntarily. . . .

As one can see from the above passage, Defoe was vitally con-
cerned with the plight of the London urchin, and especially with
the influence that one's companions had on an individual. In
the Serious Reflections, Robinson Crusoe discusses the relation-
ship between an action and guilt, and remarks that the guilt
consequent upon an action does not lie in the commission of the
deed alone. It also lies in the intent or desire to commit that
act. Therefore, merely separating men from an object, such as
putting them behind bars, to make it impossible for them to
commit an action will not insure that they will not be guilty
of a crime. To insure that, says the aged philosopher, one
should be instructed in the beauty of religion, in all that is
good, and to have a contempt for all evil things so that the
affections, "by hourly imitation," would be "moved to delight
in what is good." Hence, it is necessary, he asserts, that one
have "the company of religious and good men," who are "a
constant restraint from evil and an encouragement to a
religious life." 2 It is precisely good companionship and good
examples that Jack lacks. Both Defoe's statements in Serious
Reflections and in Col. Jacque echo Locke, whom Defoe admired,
who wrote that "the prevailing infection of fellows [did] more

1Ibid., III, 19.

2Serious Reflections, pp. 8-9.
than all the precepts, rules, and instructions" put together to form the character of an individual, especially in childhood.¹ In this way, the novel is a dramatization of Defoe's acceptance of Locke's epistemological doctrine that at birth the soul is like an unwritten sheet, void of characters, and that ideas result from one's experiences.² In other words, Defoe's novel illustrates the part that environment and experience play in the formation of character. Yet Defoe's acceptance is only partial, for he does not completely negate the role that heredity plays in one's life.

Jack also operates on the level of natural law, and the turning point of the novel and of Jack's life is a vivid dramatization of the one natural law that was held by most commentators of the natural law, such as Grotius and Pufendorf, to be inviolate. It is also significant that after violating this law, unlike Moll, Jack never steals again. That law, of course, was that one could not take from a person who also was in a condition of necessity. Therefore, after Jack's robbery of the old Kentish woman who had pleaded with him not to take her only guinea and shilling which she needed to buy food for herself and her sick child, Jack was so distressed that he

¹John Locke, Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693) in The Educational Writings of John Locke, ed. John William Adamson (2nd ed.; Cambridge, 1922), Sect. 70, p. 79.

resolves never to steal again. He keeps his resolution even to the point of enlisting into the army rather than to go back to picking pockets again. Such was his distress that he even asks the old woman her name during the robbery, a fact that becomes important when he makes restitution to the old woman. Thus, throughout his life, the "abhorrence that fill'd his Mind at the Cruelty of that Act" never leaves him.  

After various adventures in the army and in Scotland, Jack is mistakenly "shanghaied" to the colonies where he serves as an indentured servant for five years, after which time he becomes a prosperous gentleman planter. In looking back on his life to the time when he was a child, Jack looks at his servitude as a release:

... first I had ... a secret Horror at things pass'd, when I looked back upon my former Life: That Original something, I knew not what, that us'd formerly to Check me in the first meanness of my Youth, and us'd to Dictate to me when I was but a Child, that I was to be a Gentleman, continued to Operate upon me Now, ... and I continually remember'd the words of the antient Glass-Maker to the Gentleman, that he reprov'd for Swearing, that to be a Gentleman, was to be an Honest Man, that without Honesty, Human Nature was Sunk and Degenerated...; These Principles growing upon my Mind in the present Circumstances [italics Defoe's] as I was in, gave me a secret Satisfaction, that I can give no Description of; and, in contrast to his past, Jack says:

1Col. Jack, III, 69-81, 99-103. See also Street Robberies Consider'd in which Defoe uses a similar incident in which a young thief, also age fourteen, robs a fruit pedlar and later resolves to make restitution (pp. 12-14, 20).
it was an inexpressible Joy to me, that I was now like to be, not only a Man, but an Honest Man; and it yielded me a greater Pleasure, that I was randsom'd from being a Vagabond, a Thief, and a Criminal, as I have been from a Child... that I was deliver'd from Slavery, and the wretched State of a Virginia Sold Servant, I had Notion enough in my Mind of the Hardship of the Servant or Slave... But the other shock'd my very Nature, chill'd my Blood, and turn'd the very Soul within me: The thought of it was like Reflections upon Hell, and the Damn'd Spirits; it struck me with Horror, it was Odious and Frightful to look back on, and it gave me a kind of fit, a Convulsion, or nervous Disorder, that was uneasy to me.

But to look forward, to Reflect, how things were Chang'd; how Happy I was that I cou'd live by my own Endeavours, and was no more under the Necessity of being a Villain, and of getting my own Bread at my own Hazard, and the Ruin of honest Families; this had in it something more than [was] commonly pleasing and agreeable, and in particular, it had a Pleasure, that till then I had known nothing of: It was a sad thing to be under a Necessity of doing Evil, to procure that Subsistence, which I could not support the Want of, to be oblig'd to run the venture of the Gallows, rather than the venture of Starving, and to be always Wicked for fear of want... /[italics mine/.

If one wonders about the sincerity of Moll and Roxana, though one should be reminded that Defoe's contemporaries did not, one cannot wonder about the sincerity of young Jack (or Defoe) who preferred the life of an indentured servant (which Defoe viewed somewhat too unrealistically) to that of a pickpocket. Jack's reflections, however, do not stem from any "serious Religious reflections" or from the "uneasiness of Conscience," but from his ideas concerning what a gentleman should or should not be. ¹ Consequently, after his period of servitude is over, Jack, age thirty, feeling that he had just passed from infancy to youth

¹See Shinagel, pp. 161-77.
and that he "had learn'd nothing" as a boy, begins to acquire a formal education (though he had been taught to read, write and calculate when in Scotland). And once more Defoe stresses the formative part education plays in one's life. In a sense, these lines from Defoe's *Of Royall Education* (n.d.) can be said to be the theme of Col. Jacque and the sum of Defoe's philosophy of education:

> where good education wants to be ingrafted in young plants, thou' sprung from gods, they grow extremely base: Degenerate and extremely base.

The importance of education plays another role in the novel when Defoe uses it to contrast Jack's legitimate plea of necessity with the illegitimate plea of his tutor, who, unlike Jack, cannot plead invincible ignorance. In order to understand Defoe's sanction of the law of self-preservation by the poor who because of their poverty and lack of education were unable to do other than violate civil or moral law, Defoe included the following long discussion between Jack and the


2 *Of Royall Education*, ed. Karl Bulbring (London, 1895), p. 13. "Lines not numbered." Defoe was frequently and severely criticized for his lack of learning by Swift and others. Yet he took fierce pride in his accomplishments, claiming the ability to work with Latin, Greek, Spanish, Italian, French and Dutch, and sometimes challenging his critics to compare their accomplishments with his own. Besides his knowledge of languages, Defoe's work supports his claim to being conversant with the law, theology, history, both ancient and modern, economics, geography, literature and politics. See Lee, III, 435-36; Review (Vol. II), Fasc. Bk. 5, pp. 149-50; and (Vol. VII), Fasc. Bk. 17, pp. 450, 455.
tutor:

... I once took the Liberty to ask how it came to pass, that he who must have had a Liberal Education, and great Advantages to have advance'd himself in the World, shou'd be capable of falling into such miserable Circumstances as he was in, when he came over? ... when I saw that ignorant, untaught, untractable Creatures come into Misery and Shame, I made no enquiry after their Affairs, but when I saw Men of Parts and Learning take such Steps, I concluded it must be occasion'd by something exceedingly wick'd; so indeed, said he, the Judge said to me when I beg'd Mercy of him in Latin, he told me that when a Man furnish'd with such Learning falls into Crime, he is more inexcusable than other Men, because his Learning recommending him, he could not want Advantages, and had the less temptation to Crime.

Thus, Defoe once again makes a distinction between crimes stemming from external circumstances and those from within man himself. However, the tutor dramatizes Defoe's contention that knowledge does not inculcate virtue, but only enables the individual to be more receptive to the grace of religion, and that even with the grace of religion and the advantage of a good education, there are things which the individual cannot withstand: man will not choose the virtuous thing, even if he knows that it is the virtuous thing to do, if it means that he is choosing death. The law of self-preservation is still primary when one is in a state of necessity; it is one's duty to save one's own life, even if one must disobey a civil law. The real responsibility for that disobedience rests primarily not with the individual, says Defoe, but with society, if the crime stems from without:
But Sir, said [the tutor], I believe my Case was what I find is the Case of most of the wicked Part of the World, viz. that to be reduc'd to Necessity is to be Wicked; for Necessity is not only the temptation, but is such a Temptation as human Nature is not empower'd to resist: How good then, says he, is that God which takes from you Sir, the temptation, by taking away the Necessity. . . . This Sir, says he, I am so sensible of, that I think the Case I am now reduc'd to, much less miserable than the Life which I liv'd before, because I am deliver'd from the horrid Necessity of doing such ill things, which was my Ruin, and Disaster then, even for my Bread, and am not now oblig'd to ravish my Bread out of the Mouths of others by Violence and Disorder; but am fed tho' I am made to earn it by the hard Labour of my Hands, and I thank God for the Difference. . . .

Well, but now, says I, you talk penitently, and I hope are sincere, but what would be your Case, if you were deliver'd from the miserable Condition of a Slave sold for Money, which you are now in? should you not be the same Man?

Blessed by God, says he, that if I thought I should, I would sincerely pray that I might not be Deliver'd, and that I might forever be Slave rather than a Sinner.

Well, but, says I, suppose you to be under the same necessity, in the same starving Condition, Should you not take the same Course.

He replied very sharply, that shows us the need we have of the Petition in the Lord's Prayer /italics mine/: Lead us not into Temptation; and of Solomon's or Agar's Prayer: Give me not Poverty, Lest I Steal /italics Defoe's/. I should ever beg of God not to be left to such Snares as Human Nature cannot resist. . . . I have some hope that I shou'd venture to Starve, rather than to Steal; but I also beg to be deliver'd from the Danger, because I know not my own Strength. . . .

Thus, Defoe recognizes that the ideal towards which man should strive is virtue, yet he is cognizant that, when reduced psychologically or economically to a state of necessity, man must, according to natural law, preserve his own life and will

do so at the expense of virtue. Poverty is not the cause of crime; man's fallen nature is. Poverty is, however, a necessary condition that gives free rein to man's tainted nature and allows it to operate. Governed not by reason but subject to his baser passions, man, according to natural law, must defend his own life from all that threatens it, even if it means the breaking of a civil or moral law. Therefore, Defoe's Col. Jacque makes explicit his contention that by removing those conditions such as poverty that reduce man to a condition of necessity, man would, providing that the crime did not stem from within the individual, no longer violate civil, moral, ethical, theological, or social law. In bringing his age before the bar of judgment, Defoe sadly found it guilty of shirking its responsibility to the impoverished, defenseless, and necessitous poor.

Because this brief examination of Moll Flanders, Roxana, and Col. Jacque has only scratched the surface of Defoe's three criminal novels, touching only lightly on the relationship between character and theme; character development; the use of scene to advance plot, illustrate theme, and develop character; structure; tone; and point of view, it ignores many significant aspects of Defoe's social thought not relevant to this thesis that a more detailed explication would bring to light. However, it has demonstrated that within the novel there is sufficient material for a further and
broader study\textsuperscript{1} based on Defoe's non-fictional writings relating to the poor, writings that have been the focus of this study. For the criminal novels have been shown to be the culmination of a lifetime of social consciousness in which their author, who clearly saw himself as some kind of social reformer and the novel as an apt vehicle for social reform, strove for justice while pricking the conscience of a nation on behalf of those poor who could not fight for themselves--on behalf of those who pleaded, "Give Us Not Poverty!"

\textsuperscript{1}One significant area of investigation not fully explored is that of Defoe's rhetorical style. Most of his non-fictional pieces such as those examined in this thesis and for those collectively found in the \textit{Review} appear to be examples of deliberative rhetoric (even those which may on the surface appear to be ceremonial rhetoric, such as \textit{Charity Still a Christian Virtue}), which follow the principles as outlined for deliberative rhetoric by Aristotle in his \textit{Rhetoric}. Other aspects of his style that have been somewhat overlooked are Defoe's use of satire, the chief elements of which are invective and irony. Other areas still open to investigation are the influence of Hobbes and Locke on Defoe's thought, especially in regard to his views of the nature of man and of education's formative value; and a comparison of Defoe and Pope (who published his \textit{Essay on Man} and \textit{Moral Epistles} two years after Defoe's death) in regard to the concept of self-love.
So much as I, or any one else, by the viciousness of our own nature, or the prevailing force of accidents, snares, and temptations, have deviated from this shining principle of absolute honesty, so far we have been foolish as well as wicked, so much have we to repent of towards our Maker, and be ashamed of towards our neighbour.

_Serious Reflections_, p. 54.

**CONCLUSION**

Writers in the eighteenth-century commonly yoked depravity and deprivation, criminality and poverty; and the posture, official as well as unofficial, shown the impoverished classes was more pragmatic than charitable. The poor were looked upon as economic and social liabilities that had to be dealt with or at least curbed. Hence, a vicious circle arose based on the premise that the deprived were depraved because they were deprived, and that the depraved were deprived because they were depraved.

As a result of significant changes in England as it shifted from an agrarian economy to a basically mercantile one, the number of poor steadily rose. Additional numbers resulted from the application of faulty economic principles, which were implemented by the workhouse system. Three other factors were also responsible for making the association of the poor with
the criminal class an easy one and for driving the poor into a life of crime: first was the practice of classifying as criminals those such as debtors and beggars, who were not really guilty of a felony; second was the harsh penal code which, numbering over one hundred sixty capital charges, severely punished all lawbreakers, even those, such as children, guilty of the smallest of transgressions; the third was the unjust, impractical, unworkable, repressive, and pervasive poor laws, especially the restrictive Law of Settlements and Removals, laws which aimed at keeping parish assistance to a minimum and, more importantly, which adversely affected not only the lives of the poor directly but also the economic stability of England indirectly.

The corpus of Defoe's works reveals him to be a man with a deep sense of the need for social reform. Beginning with his An Essay on Projects (1697) and concluding with An Effectual Scheme for the immediate Preventing of Street Robberies... (1731), Defoe offered, throughout his career as essayist, pamphleteer, journalist, and novelist, such various schemes concerning the poor—widows, orphans, keelmen, debtors, bastards and foundlings, textile weavers, and even the proverbial butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers, as to earn him the deserved reputation of being "...one of the earliest social reformers of modern times, who was immensely and vividly interested in social conditions, in economic
development, in the growth and decadence of social classes, in all that the modern thinker terms sociology. However, his writings on social problems are reactions to specific social troubles rather than part of a well-thought-out philosophic program. In general, Defoe's attitude towards the poor is enunciated in An Essay on Projects, an attitude he consistently maintains:

There can be no Beggar, but he ought to be either Reliev'd or Punish'd or both. If a man begs for mere covetousness without Want, 'tis a Baseness of Soul so extremely sordid, as ought to be us'd with, the utmost Contempt and Punish'd with the Correction due to a Dog. If he begs for Want, that Want is procur'd by Slothfulness and Idleness, or by Accident: If the latter, he ought to be reliev'd; if the former, he ought to be punish'd for the cause, but at the same time reliev'd also; for no man ought to Starve, let his Crime be what it will [italics mine].

In pamphlets, treatises, in journalistic writings such as the Review, the Puritan tradesman demonstrates a pragmatic and utilitarian attitude towards the poor; he is never quixotic or sentimental. Nor does he ever treat poverty or the problems of the poor humorously; nor is there any illusion about the blessedness or attractiveness of poverty to be found in his writings. Instead they reveal a deep awareness of the genuine sufferings that poverty lays over the souls of men. Poverty thus is depicted as a shroud that the poor wore from birth to death.


Although the age refused to adequately provide for its paupered classes, especially for the unemployed worthy poor, in that it did not attack the causes that lay at the root of the problem, it could not ignore the growing number of poor. Hence, as the period advances, writers of the period reveal a gradual polarization in their attitude towards all the poor, worthy and unworthy alike, an attitude reflected in the more repressive and coercive measures that were enacted that primarily aimed at compelling all able-bodied poor to work, even if it meant in workhouses.

The period thus provided Defoe with countless opportunities to dramatize the need for social reform. His non-fictional writings therefore are a wealth of information concerning such aspects of the age as parochial tyranny, corruption and inefficiency; the plight of debtors sentenced to a living death; penal corruption and brutality; the workhouse movement; infringements on the civil and human rights of the "un-privileged" by the privileged; the fee system; and the sexual license of the age. In addition, it gave him the opportunity to stress the needs of children, those foundlings, bastards, and other abandoned children who either became wards of the parish and thus were sent out to be nursed and/or die, or became wild beasts stalking the London streets. "Tis scarce credible what a black throng they are," Defoe exclaims. "Many of them indeed perish young and dye miserable, before they may
be said to look into Life; some are Starv'd with Hunger, some with cold, many are found frozen in the Streets and Fields, some are drown'd before they are even old enough to be hang'd. . . . "

Even though Defoe was quite aware of the faults of the poor, he did not believe that the simple answer to the alarming increase in crime was that the poor were criminals by nature. To him, crime was caused by poverty: in order to eradicate crime, society had to first eradicate poverty. Consequently, Defoe repeatedly proposed that the poor be educated and trained so that not only would they prosper individually but also so that England as a whole would. Moreover, the poor rates would then diminish. To the author-tradesman, the state of England's trade was directly and proportionately related to the increase of England's poor. He frequently affirmed that "as Trade... encreas'd, the miseries of the People... abated." And, as he remarked, ". . . whence is all the Poverty of this Country? . . . 'tis evident 'tis want of Trade and nothing else."2

Because the age tended to look upon its unfortunate and impoverished people as social, moral, and economic lepers that

1Daniel Defoe, Some Considerations on the Reasonableness and Encouraging the Seamen... (London, 1728), p. 44.

2A Plan of English Commerce, I, 51, 17. See also A Tour Thro' the Whole Island, I, 32, 43, 40, 118, 192.
had to be relieved or eliminated, preferably the latter, the poor were rarely considered in terms of human values. At all times, however, Defoe demonstrates an acute awareness of the impersonal and economic causes of poverty with which the behavior of the poor had nothing to do and over which they had little or no control. This awareness is most clearly evident in his sanction of the plea of economic necessity and his recognition of the natural law of self-preservation.

The problem of poverty did not yield easy answers, but it did present a challenge to its age and to Defoe as well. There can be little question of Defoe's personal, genuine, and active interest in the plight of the real poor. Although he has often been too harshly and unjustly criticized for advocating stands regarding all the poor that seem to place simple economic values before complex human ones, more often than not these stands have been taken out of context and not seen in relation to Defoe's total position. It must also be remembered that Defoe is a product of his age and to a great extent mirrors its attitudes, prejudices and limitations. Although he did not hesitate to stand apart if principle was concerned, as was the case with workhouses, he was first, last and always England's great apologist for trade. At the same time, however, he fought throughout his adult life, in his fiction and non-fiction, against tyranny and injustice. Not condoning all breaches of civil and moral law, he nevertheless
understood what lay behind many of them, and sympathized with those who, to him, were placed in a position by society where they had to either steal or starve, endure or go under. In addition, Defoe's fiction and non-fiction alike reveal that he consistently championed three related principles: (1) the great worth of the individual; (2) economic freedom; and (3) man's moral responsibility.

To sum up, a few basic conclusions can be drawn regarding Defoe's view of poverty and the poor. First, he demonstrates throughout his works an intelligent recognition of a whole set of complex reasons for the existence of an impoverished class. Second, repeatedly he indicates a deep concern and genuine sympathy for the real poor but a willingness to relieve all poor, for "no man ought to Starve, let his Crime be what it will." Third, never does he consider public charity, especially mistaken charity, such as workhouses, even for the impotent poor, to be a final solution to the problem of the poor; hence, despite his charitable sympathy towards them, he does not urge or accept various short-sighted solutions that seemed like charity "on the outside," like gilding, but which were economically unsound on the inside. Lastly, Defoe feels that other measures—such as the prevention of parochial corruption and inefficiency, the stimulation of English trade, the elimination of the duplication of English manufactures, the substitution of those who owed their jobs to
parochial patronage with real honest poor, and, most important, the educating of England's poor by means of charity-schools, etc.—were better alternatives to the short-sighted and short-ranged proposals offered by many of his contemporaries.

In conclusion, the purpose of this thesis has been to examine, against a backdrop of the early eighteenth-century's attitudes and practices, tenets in selected non-fictional writings of Daniel Defoe that relate to the problem of England's poor and that reveal his social consciousness. These tenets project to his three criminal novels, *Moll Flanders*, *Col. Jacque* and *Roxana*, novels that reflect a consistency of thought held by Defoe throughout his long career as essayist, journalist, pamphleteer, propagandist and merchant-tradesman. After describing the poor and delineating the problem, this thesis has centered on those non-fictional works that treat of parochial tyranny, the workhouse movement, the plight of debtors, and lastly the plea of economic and psychological necessity, which is seminal to an understanding of Defoe's three criminal novels. Not only do these works mirror minutely the period in which Defoe lived and wrote, but they demonstrate that:

... more than most writers of his day, Defoe is the typical Puritan in bringing together the religious and practical elements that appealed to the growing middle class and its increasing awareness of the role it was playing in the prosperous growth of the English nation. The Puritan, sixty years back, had been Cromwell, sword in hand; thirty years back, Bunyan
singing hymns in gaol; but now the Puritan was to be found in the tradesman-journalist Defoe.  

In 1700 Defoe wrote a poem entitled "Of Resignation," excerpts of which are a fitting apologia for his life and an equally apt conclusion for this thesis. Defoe then wrote:

Often I've been by Power oppress'd,
And with deep Sorrows try'd;
By the same Power I've been Caress'd,
And I have both defy'd.

By my eternal Guide kept safe,
Through both Extremes I steer,
These could not Bribe my Principles,
Or Those Excite my Fear.

The Patriots of the Cause I serve,
Those Services Contemn;
Yet move me not, because I serve
The Cause, and not the Men.

Ambition, Malice, Rage, and Hate,
Are Strangers to my Soul;
But Peace and Joy possess the Parts,
And Charity the Whole.  

These simple lines provide not only a touchstone for this dissertation but also a key to an intelligent and appreciative understanding of Defoe himself, who served those who cried out, "Give Us Not Poverty, Lest We Steal!"

---


SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES A: DEFOE

Collected Works:


Fiction: Novels and Criminal Biography


A Narrative of all the Robberies, Escapes, etc. of John Sheppard . . . London, 1724.

Non-Fiction:


A Brief Case of the Distillers . . . Shewing how Far it is the Interest of England to Encourage the Said Trade, as it is so considerable an Advantage to the Employment of the Poor. . . London, 1726.


The Case of the Poor Skippers and Keel-men of Newcastle. [Broad-side/], 1712.

Charity Still a Christian Virtue, Or An Impartial Account of the Tryal and Conviction of the Rev. Mr. Hendley, for Preaching a Charity Sermon at Chisselhurst . . . London, 1719.


An Effectual Scheme for the Immediate Preventing of Street Robberies . . . London, 1731.


Fair Payment No Spunge . . . and the Necessity of Setting the Nation Free from the Insupportable Burthen of Debt and Taxes. With a View of the Great Advantage and Benefit which will arise to . . . the Poor, by having these Heavy Grievances taken off. London, 1717.


A Farther Case Relating to the Poor Keel-men of Newcastle. [Half-sheet/], 1712.


Giving Alms No Charity, and Employing the Poor A Grievance to the Nation, Being an Essay Upon this Great Question, whether Work-Houses, Corporations, and Houses of Correction for Employing the Poor . . . are not Mischievous to the Nation, tending to the Destruction of our Trade, and to Encrease the Number and Misery of the Poor . . . (1704). In A Collection of Pamphlets Concerning the Poor. Ed. Thomas Gilbert. London, 1787.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/Editor</th>
<th>Location/Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A History of the Press-Yard: Or, A Brief Account of the Customs and Occurrences that are put in Practice in that antient Repository of living Bodies, call'd His Majesty's Gaol of Newgate in London.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>London, 1717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Just Complaint of the Poor weavers Truly Resented . . .</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>London, 1719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mere Nature Delineated: Or, A Body Without a Soul . . . (1726)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Indianapolis, 1918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Plan of English Commerce.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>London, 1728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Poor Man's Plea . . .</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>London, 1698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposals for Imploying the Poor in and about the City of London:</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>London, 1713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... Without any Charge to the Publik.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarks on the Bill to Prevent Frauds Committed by Bankrupts, with Observations on the effect It May Have Upon Trade.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>London, 1706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A Fascimile Edition.&quot; 22 vols.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Thoughts are Best: Or, A Further Improvement of a Late Scheme to Prevent Street Robberies . . .</td>
<td>- Pseud. Andrew Moreton.</td>
<td>London, 1728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 vols.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Considerations on the Reasonableness and Encouraging the Seamen.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>London, 1728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Considerations Upon Street-Walkers.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>London, 1726</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


. The Unreasonableness and Ill Consequences of Imprisoning the Body for Debt . . . . London, 1729.

PRIMARY SOURCES B: CONTEMPORARY WRITINGS


. Remarks on Two Bills for the Better Maintenance of the Poor, etc. London, 1753.


. An Account of several Workhouses . . . . 2nd ed. London, 1732.
An Account of several Workhouses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor: Setting Forth the Rules by which they are Govern'd, . . As also of Charity-Schools for Promoting Work and Labour. London, 1725.


A Present Remedy for the Poor: Or, the most probable Means to provide well for the Poor of the Nation: to free us in time from paying the Poor Rates: and to deliver us from the Publick Nusance of Beggars. London, [1700].

A Short View of the Frauds, Abuses, and Impositions of Parish Officers, With some Considerations Relating to the Poor, Shewing How the Deficiencies therein might be remedied, by fixing a Qualification for the Choice of Churchwardens and Overseers, by limiting the Sums to be rais'd by their Rates, and by bringing them to Account properly for the Monies that come into their Hands. London, 1744.

Some General Considerations Relating to the Relieving, Reforming, and Employing the Poor, But First to Begin with the Bills of Mortality. London, 1720.

Some Pitty on the Poor: or, A Way how the poor People may be supplied with labour and relief, without begging . . . London, 1650.

Some Thoughts Concerning the Maintenance of the Poor. London, 1700.


The Vices of the Cities of Westminster and London. Trac'd from their Original Being. An Impartial Detection of the true Cause and Source of the present Growth of Immorality and the Prodigious Number of Thefts and Robberies daily committed in the Streets. . . . London, [n.d.].

VOX CHARITATES: Containing a louder cry for bowels of Compassion, to the Lord's Poor Afflicted People, . . London, 1663.

Arthington, Henry. *Provisions for the Poore, now in the Penurie Out of the Store-House of God's Plentie*: which they shalle be sure to find in all Places, that are Indued with his Graces... *n.p.*, 1795.


*An Essay for Improving the Poor to Profit*... London, 1723.

*Essays about the Poor, Manufactures, Trade, Plantations, and Immorality*... London, 1699.

A Bill for the Better Relief, Employment and Settlement of the Poor as the same was Reported from the Committee to the Honourable House of Commons. London, 1704.


*The Form of a Petition Submitted to the Consideration and Correction of those Noblemen and Gentlemen who Desire to Subscribe what Sums Shall be Necessary for Relieving, Reforming, and Employing the Poor*... London, 1722.
Braddon, Laurence. The Miseries of the Poor are a National Sin, Shame, and Charge: But by Making them Happy we shall remove that Guilt. ... London, 1717.

Campbell, John. A Particular but Melancholy Account of the Great Hardships, Difficulties, and Miseries that those Unhappy ... Creatures, the Common Women of the Town are Plung’d into at Juncture. The Causes of their Misfortunes fully laid down. ... London, 1752.

Carriot, Thomas. A Proposal for the Relief and Punishment of Vagrants, Particularly such as Frequent the Streets and Places of Resort, Within the Kingdom. London, 1748.

Carter, Samuel. Legal Provisions for the POOR, 5th ed. In which are Added all the late Statutes and Resolutions relating to the POOR, down to the Present Year, 1725. London, 1725.


Chamberlayne, Edward. England’s Wants: or, Several Proposals ... Offer’d. London, 1667.


Firmin, Thomas. Some Proposals for the Employing of the Poor, Especially In and about the City of London. And for the Prevention of Begging, A Practice so Dishonourable to
the Nation and to the Christian Religion. London, 1678.
In A Collection of Pamphlets Concerning the Poor. Ed.

F.J. The GAOLERS Extortion Exposed, Or, The Prisoners

Foley, Robert. Laws Relating to the Poor, from the 43rd of
Queen Elizabeth to the 3rd of King George II (1601-
1730) . . . London, 1759.

Gairdner, Andrew. A Looking-glass for Rich People, . . . A
Plea for the Poor . . . Edinburgh, 1727.


Gilbert, Thomas. Bread for the Poor: or, Observations Upon
Certain Proposals Offered to the King's Majesty and

Gilbert, Thomas. A Collection of Pamphlets Concerning the Poor.
London, 1787.

. Considerations of the Bills of Mortality. London,
1787.

. A Scheme for the Better Relief and Employment of the
Poor . . . London, 1765.

Gildon, Charles. The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of

Gray, Charles. Consideration on Several Proposals, lately made,
for the Better Maintenance of the Poor. London, 1751.

Great Britain, Parliament, 1704: House of Commons. A Bill for
the better Relief, Employment, and Settlement of the
Poor . . . London, 1704.

Great Britain, Statutes and Laws, etc. A Help to a National
Reformation: An Abstract of Penal Laws against
Prophaneness and Vice . . . London, 1700.

. The Statutes at Large Concerning the Provision for
the Poor, being a Compleat Collection of all the Acts


A Model of Government for the Good of the Poor, and the Wealth of the Nation, With such a Method and Inspection that Frauds, Corruptions in Officers, Abuses to the Ill Administration of Materials, etc. . . . London, 1678.


Proposals for Building in Every Country /sic/ a Working Alms-House or Hospital: as the Best Expedient to Perfect the Trade and Manufactory of Linnen Cloath. London, 1677.


Letters on . . . the miserable State of the Infant parish Poor. . . . and an historical Detail of the whole mortality of London and Westminster from 1592 to this time. London, 1767.


---


---

*Journal of the House of Commons,* 1717-16.

*Journal of the House of Commons,* 1750-54.


---


---


---


---


---


---


---

*An Essay on Charity Schools.* London, 1723.


North, Roger. A Discourse of the Poor, Shewing the Pernicious Tendency of the Laws now in Force for their Maintenance and Settlement: Containing likewise Some Considerations Relating to National Improvement in General. London, 1753.


Select Trials at the Sessions-house in the Old Bailey, for Murder, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds, Bigamy, and other Offences . . . from 1720 to this time. London, 1742.


The Statutes-at-large concerning the Provision for the Poor, being a Compleat Collection of all the Acts of Parliament . . . to which is added, a Table by way of Abstract of all the said acts, digested into alphabeti-cal Order. London, 1741.

Stot, Joseph. *A Sequel to the Friendly Advice to the Poor of the Town of Manchester.* Manchester, 1756.


*Wilson, Thomas.* *Distill'd Spirituous Liquors the Bane of the Nation:* Being some Considerations Humbly Offer'd to the Legislature. 2nd ed. London, 1736.

---


**SECONDARY SOURCES A: WORKS DIRECTLY RELATED TO DEFOE**


        "Defoe and Modern Economic Theory." Indiana University Studies, XIX, Nos. 96-104 (June-September, 1932-34), 3-28.


        Defoe in the Pillory and Other Studies. "Indiana University Humanities Studies, No. 1." Bloomington, 1939.

        "Defoe's Use of Personal Experience in Colonel Jacque." MLN, LIV (May, 1939), 362-63.

        Personal letter to Beverlee Smith, July 4, 1968.


An Index to Defoe's Review. New York, 1948.


Quennell, Peter. "Moll Flanders." New Statesman and Nation, XX (September 7, 1940), 430-431.


SECONDARY SOURCES B: RELATED MATERIALS


Forsyth, W. Novels and Novelists of the Eighteenth Century in Illustration of the Manners and Morals of the Age. New York, 1871.


McGehee, Edward C. and William H. Hildebrand, eds. *The Death Penalty: A Literary and Historical Approach.* Boston,


Beverlee Fissinger Smith was born in Chicago, Illinois, on December 18, 1930.

She was graduated from St. Willibrand High School, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1949. After graduation she worked for R. R. Donnelley & Sons, Chicago, until her marriage to Marvin C. Smith in January, 1950. After her marriage, she worked for the Sherwin-Williams Company, Chicago, until the birth of her first son in April, 1952.

After her second son was school-age, she returned to college and received her B.A. from St. Xavier College, Chicago, June, 1962. She continued her education at Loyola University as a teaching fellow in the Department of English, and received her M.A. in June, 1964. After completing her doctoral course work, she accepted a position with the Department of English, Purdue University (Hammond) in September, 1966, where she is presently employed.
The dissertation submitted by Beverlee Ann (Fissinger) Smith has been read and approved by members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date: May 21, 1971

Advisor's Signature: [Signature]