CATCH-22: MAN IN AN ALIEN SOCIETY

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines social relationships and pressures of contemporary society as shown in Joseph Heller's novel *Catch-22*. Through a brief study of conceptual limitations within Heller's characters it demonstrates that they exist within a totally self-enclosed system divorced from reality but supported by complex justifications. Within this social matrix is seen the heroic strivings of Yossarian to save a world he believes to have gone mad.

As the study progresses, it shows that Yossarian and his friends do not in fact share the same conceptual basis as their apparent society. Their satiric efforts are seen to be useless to a society convinced of its own justifications for evil, and destructive to their own potentialities for human-beingness.

The ultimate goal of society is seen to be a physical and spiritual fascism in which no dissent is possible. Escape and death are shown to be the true alternatives for those who would maintain their individuality and ethics.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

_Catch-22_\(^1\) is held by many of its critics to be a satirical novel. It is my contention that it is not. The present essay is an attempt to correct this fundamental misreading of the novel. I will treat plot as plot and characterization as characterization, rather than viewing them as the mechanic elements of social satire. I do not find the inconsistencies hinted at by such critics as Sanford Pinsker\(^2\) and Norman Podhoretz\(^3\) who appear to think Heller an individualist objecting to the perceived corruption of his society: an apostle for its basic harmonies, disrupted as they may be. I do not see Yossarian as the defender of tradition and virtue against the rapacity of authority. Were he such a figure, representative of the reader's own complaints and wishes, he would be a heroic character in the tradition of soldier Schweick\(^4\) and gunner Asch\(^5\). But Yossarian neither endures under adversity nor perishes in the defence of virtue. He is not a hero who shows society what is wrong with it, but a man caught in a nightmare he would desperately like to change into a fairy tale. The attempt

\(^1\)Joseph Heller, _Catch-22_ (N.Y.: Dell, 1965). All references are to this edition.


does not succeed: it can not.

Language controls man as both individual and collective organism. This proposition, often labelled "romantic", is the ultimate explanation of individuality and social groupings. Within a given society there is much dissent, but a fundamental agreement must exist as to the nature of responsible action. The perceived consequences of any intercourse determine its use or abandonment. A fresh insight into irresponsible action often produces change in its social acceptability. This insight is the function of satire. If, however, that insight is common to all, but the society persists in its behavior, then the standard of acceptability becomes the issue. In short, the conceptual basis of society controls its actions. Wilhelm von Humboldt has expressed this proposition:

Man lives with his objects chiefly—in fact, since his feeling and acting depends on his perceptions, one may say exclusively—as language presents them to him. By the same process whereby he spins language out of his own being, he ensnares himself in it; and each language draws a magic circle round the people to which it belongs, a circle from which there is no escape save by stepping out of it into another.6

Catch-22 deals with the control which each magic circle has over all men within it. It considers both those who seem irresponsible in a satiric sense and those who merely support their society. It sees that even while the upper levels of command are disguising unacceptable facts by propaganda, the conceptual possibilities inherent in their magic circle are determining the nature of both unacceptable fact and disguise for it.

In this sense we must think of individuals rather than of the society they create. If laws, mores, and normality are in truth legislated by

common consent, as they are in war, the various positions within the whole become less distinguishable—more prone to satire. But it is still the individual with whom Heller and we are concerned. When "Caleb" Major discovers that he is really "Major" Major, "about whom he knew absolutely nothing and about whom nobody else had heard before" (p.87) we laugh at the stupidity and unnaturalness of the incident. To the symbolic logician and to the psychiatrist Major's dilemma is all too natural. Fact may be permanent, but man's interpretation of it is totally subjective. If one man, out of maliciousness, greed, or any other motive, can convince another that a "caleb" is really a "major" after all, and in doing so change that man's behavioral patterns, then that malicious man has gained his end. What he seldom realizes is that he has also destroyed his ability to manipulate "caleb". The world has become a different place, with new rules and new players. If this is true of "calebs", it is also true with "right", "wrong", "war", and every other non-literal word.

Susanne Langer has said that "behavior toward conceptions is what words normally evoke." This proposition, which I have discussed above, means that society as a whole is both modified by its members and exerts an equal returning modification on those same members. Words both create conception and control its nature. Propaganda is employed by unscrupulous people to convince the rest of society (but not themselves, obviously) that apparently anti-social behavior is acceptable. Each exercise of propaganda modifies the expectation of society. These new expectations

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7Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art (Mentor,--), p.61.
act inexorably upon their creator, so that he too soon subscribes to them. Only those removed from the society or totally aware of the transmutability of conception are safe from the process: they are the outsiders. Those within the circle strengthen their own predominant conceptual patterns to the point where differing conceptions become impossible. The magic circle is actually an inward spiral towards death.

For the satiric visionary this social conformity is not evident. By nature the hero believes his conceptions to be common to at least part of the society he functions in. He therefore opposes himself to what he sees as only a superficial decadence (engendered for personal profits by authoritative sources). Only after a continuing failure to arouse anyone to an awareness of the evils he perceives does he realize that he is in fact the inhabitant of a different conceptual circle from the society about him. When he realizes this, as do Orr and later Yossarian, he abandons the alien society and searches for what he thinks will be a less rigid and more individualistic one.

The point of Yossarian's progression from satiric vision to awareness of a different conceptual basis is twofold. The reader, who has identified with the virtues of individualism exemplified by the hero, discovers that these do not have relevance in American society. More important, the usefulness of satiric visions for regenerating modern societies is questioned. Society is seen as degenerate because of forces far more insidious than mere authoritarianism. It is the orientation behind the act which is important, and it is with a reshaping of conception that the would-be hero of today must deal.
CHAPTER II

THE VISION BEHIND THE SATIRE

There is a good deal of satire in *Catch-22*. Many of the characters Heller invents are seen by us as satiric foils and thereby produce the interplay between author and reader characteristic of ironic fiction. This attack is obvious both to the reader and to the society of *Catch-22*, but the latter considers it seditious. When Yossarian exposes things to us in such a way that they appear funny, he opposes all the social machinery created to suppress unwanted tendencies. Since we, as readers, approve of what Yossarian has to say it rapidly becomes obvious that Heller's society, which does not, is in some way different from us. We explain the difference by assuming that *Catch-22* is a caricature and a zany overemphasis of certain ridiculous tendencies in ourselves. Examine the anti-heroic standards which balance Yossarian's satiric visions to see if they are indeed cardboard conceptions. If they are, then we are dealing with traditional satire. If not, we are reading about human behaviour: about ourselves writ large.

Successful propaganda establishes a trained or even reflex acceptance of verbal authority. Whenever an intellectual, rational, and independent view is interposed, as it often is with Yossarian, the falsity of the propagandistic declaration becomes evident. Once the propaganda has passed into society and been assimilated, it is too late to expose it: reconceptualization has happened. The most that can then be hoped is that some heroic visionary will begin to fight against it, again like Yossarian. It
is to the advantage of the propagandist to eliminate anyone who might call
him a liar. It is also to the advantage of the society which is happy in
functioning as the propagandist dictates, for Yossarian and his kind are
trying to destroy a "good thing". Consequently,

Lieutenant Scheisskopf knew that Clevinger might cause even more trouble
if he wasn't watched. Yesterday it was the cadet officers; tomorrow it
might be the world. Clevinger had a mind, and Lieutenant Scheisskopf
had noticed that people with minds tended to get pretty smart at times.
Such men were dangerous, and even the new cadet officers whom Clevinger
had helped into office were eager to give damning testimony against him.
(pp.72-73)

In the same way, Captain Black, who is society's idea of an intelligence
officer, "which meant he was more intelligent than everyone else," (p.115)
brands a corporal as subversive:

Because he wore eyeglasses and used words like panacea and utopia, and
because he disapproved of Adolph Hitler, who had done such a great job of
combating un-American activities in Germany. (p.35)

Not only does this corporal look intelligent, he also uses words which
indicate an analytical mind. These two qualities in combination allow him
to formulate individual opinions contrary to those he is supposed to hold.
His capabilities may lead him to express a satiric vision harmful to the
authorities. He is suppressed.

The result as well as the acts of such authoritarian suppression
and control over a society is also demonstrated by Heller. Widely held
beliefs are shown to be contrary to perceptible evidence, yet they are held
because they provide a stable and readily available reference for action,
another form of "good thing". Nately, who is too young to disagree with the propaganda he has absorbed, best represents this in his argument with the old Italian, who insists:

"I was a fascist when Mussolini was on top, and I am an anti-fascist now that he has been deposed. I was fanatically pro-German when the Germans were here to protect us against the Americans, and now that the Americans are here to protect us against the Germans I am fanatically pro-American. . . ."

"But," Nately cried out in disbelief, "you're a turncoat! A time-server! A shameful, unscrupulous opportunist!"

"I am a hundred and seven years old," the old man reminded him suavely.

"Don't you have any principles?"

"Of course not." (pp.251-52)

Nately, like everyone else, wants to live a long time. More specifically, he wants to survive the war in order to marry his whore. But the old man's hundred and seven years of unprincipled behavior do not suggest a course of action to him. We could not expect Nately to abandon the entire concept of principles at this point, but we could expect him to begin appraising those he has lived by. He does not do so, preferring to continue in the security he has been guaranteed by his elders: the security of easy decisions leading to death.

The schooled reliance upon official statement is most clearly seen in the actual functioning of the military society, which is a parody of civilian life. Despite evidence to the contrary, reality is construed as that which furthers the established pattern. One of the most absurd incidents in Catch-22 is the "death" of Doc Daneeka: "'The records show that you went up in McWatt's plane to collect some flight time. You didn't come down in a parachute, so you must have been killed in the crash'" (p.351). Although the absurdity of this statement is as evident
to Sergeant Towser as to the reader, he must insist that Doc is dead by the very nature of military life. Statements as well as commands must be absorbed unquestioningly, or else the entire construction which society has built will be destroyed. Doc has engaged in private propaganda, officially claiming flight pay while never flying; now both society and himself have no choice but to continue the charade.

This ridiculous yet serious revision of "reality" to conform to the established pattern can be seen even more clearly in the case of the C.I.D. man, who, as an enforcer of unthinking acceptance, "had caught cold from the fighter captain and come down with pneumonia" (p.16). The fighter captain had only pretended to have a cold as a propagandistic measure to avoid combat. The C.I.D. man has accepted the doctrine that reality is what you are told. In a less obvious manner this is how all men define their reality. Whether they welcome the social pressures as he does, or whether they become gradually accustomed to it, does not matter. Were chauvinism the "reality" instead of a cold, the world would be in danger.

Because of this near-absolute control by the definers of society over the possible interpretations of events, a discrepancy exists between the overt explanation of the war and the reasons given by knowledgeable individuals. Doc Daneeka points out that "'they had to manufacture fascism and start a war horrible enough to affect even me!'" (p.52). Fascism is an ethical code (or lack of one) which factually exists. But Doc suggests that it is not actual fascism which is being combated, but a synthetically created excuse for "they" to wage a profitable war. The war is not founded upon moral responsibility, but upon utilitarian desires: the individual
greed of men to whom a propagandistic mechanism is available. General Peckem instructs Scheisskopf in the function of Special Services:

"I have a crying need for a tough, experienced, competent officer like you to help produce the memoranda upon which we rely so heavily to let people know how good we are and how much work we're turning out. I hope you are a prolific writer. . . . Dreedle's on our side and Dreedle is the enemy. General Dreedle commands four bomb groups that we simply must capture in order to continue our offensive. . . ." (pp.329-32)

It is not the declared fascists alone who are guilty of war. Those like Peckem who pervert morality into greed and duplicity bear part of the blame. Others, who react to the greed as if it were morality and to the duplicity as if it were innocence, are the ultimate villains:

Men went mad and were rewarded with medals. All over the world, boys on every side of the bomb line were laying down their lives for what they had been told was their country, and no one seemed to mind, least of all the boys who were laying down their young lives. (p.16)

The martial spirit of ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen is based upon self-interest. Wintergreen is "probably the most influential man in the whole theatre of operations" because "he's not only a mail clerk, but he has access to a mimeograph machine" (p.311). Possessing the most effective propaganda machine, Wintergreen is able to concentrate directly upon profit through re-forging the moral purposes of military jobs.

Yossarian suddenly seized his arm. "Couldn't you forge some official orders on the mimeograph machine of yours and get us out of flying to Bologna?"

Ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen pulled away slowly with a look of scorn. "Sure I could," he explained with pride. "But I would never dream of doing anything like that."

"Why not?"
"Because it's your job. We all have our jobs to do...." "But I'm going to be killed at Bologna," Yossarian pleaded...." "Then you'll just have to be killed," replied ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen. "Why can't you be a fatalist about it the way I am? If I'm destined to unload these lighters at a profit and pick up some Egyptian cotton cheap from Milo, then that's what I'm going to do. And if you're destined to be killed over Bologna, then you're going to be killed,..." (p.126)

Wintergreen's explanation for not helping Yossarian is moralistic, yet not moral. He believes in exploitation of others, therefore his refusal to re-define necessary action in humanistic terms appears consistent to both himself and to Yossarian: but it does not seem right to the latter.

Heller's deeper than satiric vision is furthered by such incidents as Korn offering Yossarian return to the U.S. if he will support the regime. Korn, who is "an intelligent person with no moral character at all" (p.432) reveals his own lack of conviction about his actions when he tells Yossarian,

"You're going to loath it. It really is odious and certainly will offend your conscience. But you'll agree to it quickly enough. You'll agree to it because it will send you home safe and sound in two weeks, and because you have no choice." (p.434)

Both Yossarian and the reader are thus assured that a deliberate falsification of all "reality" is in progress. It is the deliberateness of the falsification which makes it propaganda and it is against the inevitable results of the motivating greed behind the system it maintains that Heller's vision is directed.

Simultaneously, he demonstrates the organic nature of society. Intent and method are presented as functions of each other. Owing to the continually shifting emphasis of propaganda, those who are aware of how "fact" is made have almost no basic stability.
Colonel Cathcart was impervious to absolutes. He could measure his own progress only in relationship to others, and his idea of excellence was to do something at least as well as all the men his own age who were doing the same thing even better. . . . Everybody was persecuting him. Colonel Cathcart lived by his wits in an unstable, arithmetical world of black eyes and feathers in his cap, of overwhelming imaginary triumphs and catastrophic imaginary defeats. . . . If word reached him that General Dreedle or General Peckem had been seen smiling, frowning, or doing neither, he could not make himself rest until he had found an acceptable interpretation and grumbled mulishly until Colonel Korn persuaded him to relax and take things easy. (pp.192-93)

Even in such an unstable world there are certain underlying assumptions which have strengthened into those fundamental conceptions in terms of which all events are interpreted: in *Catch-22* the primary assumption seems to be that of greed. This magic circle of conceptual possibility, as I have called it, is itself modified whenever propaganda is accepted. In order to continue in a state of warfare so deadly to the individuals involved, the makers of propaganda must minimize the importance of individualism. Here propaganda intrudes into the magic circle, or spiral, for as the members of society accept this de-humanizing process for practical reasons, they invariably begin to dissociate themselves from human considerations. While they practice a non-individualistic policy their conception of man's importance undergoes a parallel process, so that they soon hold beliefs totally in keeping with their actions. Colonel Cathcart, for example, who by necessity cannot consider individual needs, at the same time does not recognize their existence. His form letter to bereaved civilians reveals this in part:

"'Dear Mrs., Mr., Miss, or Mr. and Mrs.: Words cannot express the deep personal grief I experienced when your husband, son, father or brother was killed, wounded or reported missing in action.' And so on. I think that opening sentence sums up my sentiments exactly." (p.289)
The callousness of this letter surpasses mere propaganda, for it ignores rather than influences its recipients. Colonel Korn reveals the same lack of awareness about humanity:

"You've got my sacred word for it. Nobody is more distressed about those lousy wops up in the hills than Colonel Cathcart and myself. . . . Colonel Cathcart wants to come out of this mission with a good clean aerial photograph he won't be ashamed to send through channels." (p. 337)

While such examples of conceptual limitation are obvious, their effectiveness is reduced because the reader's awareness of Korn's attempt at de-individualization is usually kept upon the level of satire. The inference of Yossarian and of the reader is that society as a whole ultimately rejects this attitude. A statement of individual unimportance is striking, but it is also understandable for a commanding officer in wartime, and therefore seems less terrible. Such men are seen to be despicable in human terms, but society's toleration of them is not apparent as anything more than wartime necessity. Yet Korn actually believes in the "lousy wops"—lower beings suitable for exploitation—and he is relentlessly translating his belief into social action.

All conception is limited; the narrowness and directions of that limitation determine how desirable is the conception. In the case of Heller's society, the basis is greed. In order to advance personally, each character broadcasts propaganda calculated to either deny the frame of reference he acts in or to convince everyone else that it is they who have gained. Thus Colonel Cathcart can be moved to revise the potential interpretation of immoral action by defining it as legal: morally acceptable.
Colonel Korn was the lawyer, and if Colonel Korn assured him that fraud, extortion, currency manipulation, embezzlement, income tax evasion and black market speculations were legal, Colonel Cathcart was in no position to disagree with him. (p.216)

This juxtaposition of immorality and legality which strikes the reader so humorously is not seen as such by Cathcart, although it is by Korn. For Korn, the persuading of Cathcart to indulge in illegal but profitable deals is an act of propaganda. Korn knows that these actions are really illegal. But for Cathcart, Korn's propaganda is a new vision of reality. He believes these actions are good. All his future actions will be determined by the lie Korn has made him believe, a process Korn can only divert by another lie. Korn's actions will be determined by how he must act to keep Cathcart's sympathies. His lies will inevitably return upon himself, as upon society, in the guise of a new opinion or "moral" to be accounted for.

Major Danby, an ineffective and pathetic humanist, functions as Heller's best example of the result. "I try to concentrate only on the big result and forget that they are succeeding, too!" (p.454) he says of the propagandists. Yet Danby, who certainly believes in individual importance after being ordered shot by General Dreedle, has absorbed the propagandist slogan of "the big result" as a limit to his humanism. He is willing to sacrifice individuality for his country, but is angry when individuals are sacrificed to other individuals. He cannot relate "country" with "individual" in the sense that the former is but a group of individuals, because conceptually the words have come to be unrelated. Consequently he can neither equate a country with wholesale exploitation of the masses nor perceive the folly of destroying living men for an abstract entity.
Colonel Cathcart's form letter has succeeded beyond his wildest dreams.

The results of this re-circulation of concept and advantageous lie from the original acceptance of self-interest take up a large part of Catch-22. Under its influence events which are destructive in human terms are hailed by society as great accomplishments, a paradoxical situation. One of the minor characters, Colonel Cargill, makes a living from being a failure: "Colonel Cargill was so awful a marketing executive that his services were much sought after by firms eager to establish losses for tax purposes" (p.28). Because his blunders make him a financial success, Cargill is absurdly proud of what Heller calls "his genius for ineptitude" (p.29). Traditional values have been replaced through conceptual progression into an all-encompassing concern for profit.

As Yossarian combats this with the energy of his more traditional values, Heller specifically demonstrates that all the warring cultures possess the same disease, which is the reason they are at war. Milo, the great exponent of capitalism who will not deal with the communists, points out that "'the Germans are not our enemies, ... Sure, we're at war with them'" (p.262). He does not intend this in a consciously misleading sense, for Heller takes pains to portray his earnestness: "to Milo, who had been gullible enough to volunteer for it, the position of mess officer was a sacred trust" (p.65). Although he will use propaganda, he will only do so to further what he conceives of as a praiseworthy enterprise.

"I only lie when it's necessary," Milo explained defensively, averting his eyes for a moment and blinking his lashes winningly. "This stuff is better than cotton candy, really it is. It's made out of real cotton. Yossarian, you've got to help me make the men eat it." (p.271)
The difference between Milo's view of the world and Heller's is symbolized by a flaw in Milo's vision. His basis for judgment resembles his "disunited eyes, which never looked at the same thing at the same time. Milo could see more things than most people, but he could see none of them too distinctly" (p.66). He is perfectly aware of the results of his actions in human terms, as Heller is, but relates those results to the profit involved rather than to the people concerned. The universal acceptance of such disunited vision is demonstrated by his success:

This time Milo had gone too far. Bombing his own men and planes was more than even the most phlegmatic observer could stomach, and it looked like the end for him. . . . Not one voice was raised in his defence. Decent people everywhere were affronted, and Milo was all washed up until he opened his books to the public and disclosed the tremendous profit he had made. He could reimburse the government for all the people and property he had destroyed . . . . And the sweetest part of the whole deal was that there really was no need to reimburse the government at all. . . . Milo explained . . . . "If we pay the government everything we owe it, we'll only be encouraging government control and discouraging other individuals from bombing their own men and planes." (pp.265-66)

The amazing thing about this public approval of Milo's actions is that it is not based upon the belief that "everyone had a share" (p.259). On the contrary, his popular esteem is due to recognition that he is supporting only his own interests.

Milo had been caught red-handed in the act of plundering his country-men, and, as a result, his stock had never been higher. He proved good as his word when a rawboned major from Minnesota curled his lip in rebellious disavowal and demanded his share of the syndicate Milo kept saying everybody owned. Milo met the challenge by writing the words "A Share" on the nearest scrap of paper and handing it away with a virtuous disdain that won the envy and admiration of almost everyone who knew him. (p.378)

The extent of his success is of course the extent of Heller's criticism of society. And Milo is the most successful man imaginable. He is mayor
Milo was the corn god, the rain god, and the rice god in backward regions where such crude gods were still worshipped by ignorant and superstitious people, and deep inside the jungles of Africa, he intimated with becoming modesty, large graven images of his mustached face could be found overlooking primitive stone altars red with human blood. (p.244)

If human sacrifice is the most primitive method by which Milo is lauded, it is also the most fitting. His success is directly related to his ignorance of the results to others of his own gain. But the blood sacrifices which his business continually demands are as much the responsibility of the society which permits them as they are his. It is this sanctioning of M&M Enterprises which is so shocking in Catch-22, for it embodies Heller's indictment of the operational assumptions of his society.

For Milo to become the founder and head of M&M Enterprises he must possess more than just the common misconception about the worth of profit. It is the ability to revise his own conceptions which allows him such amazing success. He is able, for instance, to differ from accustomed beliefs about the availability of eggs:

"Why do people come to Malta for eggs when they're so expensive there?"
"Because they've always done it that way."
"Why don't they look for eggs in Sicily?"
"Because they've never done it that way." (p.237)

To the public, part of the embodiment of "Malta" is an egg market, while
there is no such relationship in the term "Sicily". Milo's transcendence of this conception is the mark of his genius. He can similarly revise his moral standards in order to remain morally satisfied and yet make a profit:

"Bribery is against the law, and you know it. But it's not against the law to make a profit, is it? So it can't be against the law for me to bribe someone in order to make a fair profit, can it?" (p.272)

Milo thus demonstrably fulfills both the function of propaganda and that of reconceptualization. He can consciously lie to himself and directly absorb the lie as truth. This short-circuit of the normal pattern accelerates the process greatly. Only the god Milo seems to be could adequately control the results; since he is a man he destroys himself (temporarily) in the process. Nevertheless he points the direction his slower society is taking.

Propaganda which reassures while it destroys is at the mercy of the satiric visionary. To counter this, individualism and intellectualism must be suppressed, as has been pointed out. And to insure the success of his honestly held conceptions, Milo is prepared to promote fascism.

"It's the end," Milo agreed despondently. "There's no hope left. And all because I left them free to make their own decisions. That should teach me a lesson about discipline the next time I try something like this." (p.272)

At the end of Catch-22 Major Danby tells Yossarian that Milo, Colonel Cathcart and ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen have merged into an even greater M&M Enterprises. All three men have demonstrated their ruthlessness and disregard for human life. But besides this, Milo has gained his position through ex-
ploiting the vital food economy, Wintergreen has derived his power from the control of propaganda, and Cathcart has become important by virtue of his physical control over Army personnel. Milo, the direct exponent of profit, is supreme. He has merged with Wintergreen, the controller of information, and has given Cathcart, representing fascism, the less important post of vice-president. Each of these men, instigators of violence and death, represent the ultimate perfection of the disregard for humanity exhibited so fully in *Catch-22*. The circle engendered by an original conceptualization of personal interest as the highest morality is really a downward spiral into an authoritarian control over society's ambitions. The believer in self-interest lies to advance himself. The receiver of the lies eventually believes them and modifies his conceptions accordingly. He in turn begins to lie, reforming the original believer into a tighter "orbit" of potential, and so on to destruction. The contrasting possibility, expressed through Orr and Yossarian, will be discussed in later chapters.
It has been the assumption of this essay that Heller is dealing with the conceptual limitations of man: he is opposing the humane conceptions represented by Yossarian with what he perceives to be the actual ones prevalent in American society. If so, then a judgment of the society is implicit. The lack of respect for other individuals (which each member is seen to approve of) ultimately results in a punishment suitable to the crime. Heller's portraits of three successful Americans, Milo, Wintergreen and Cathcart, and their merger into a more powerful M&M Enterprises have been considered in Chapter two. The ultimate representative condition of M&M Enterprises has been seen to be that of an economic god accepting and promoting blood sacrifice in the interest of profit. What is good enough for Milo is good enough for his supporters.

It is Major Danby who points out to Yossarian the extent and results of Colonel Cathcart's physical control over society: "'Colonel Cathcart couldn't possibly requisition so many inexperienced replacement crews at one time without causing an investigation. He's caught in his own trap'" (p.451). In a similar vein Cathcart finds himself forced into approving the Glorious Loyalty Oath Crusade.

"It's that idiot Black off on a patriotism binge," Colonel Korn reported with a smile. "I think you'd better play ball with him for a while, since you're the one who promoted Major Major to squadron commander." (p.119)
Clearly the very people who are in apparent control are as subservient as those beneath them.

This premise is borne out by the fate of Doc Daneeka. He hates flying and as an influential person collects flight pay by falsifying the records. An ambivalent situation is then set up when the plane crashes, killing those who did not parachute down. Doc is assumed to be dead because of society's indoctrination in the validity of symbol over perceptible facts: if it says so, it is so.

The first person in the squadron to find out that Doc Daneeka was dead was Sergeant Towser, who had been informed earlier by the man in the control tower that Doc Daneeka's name was down as a passenger on the pilot's manifest McWatt had filed before taking off. Sergeant Towser brushed away a tear and struck Doc Daneeka's name from the roster of squadron personnel. With lips still quivering, he rose and trudged outside reluctantly to break the bad news to Gus and Wes, discreetly avoiding any conversation with Doc Daneeka himself as he moved by the flight surgeon's slight sepulchral figure roosting despondently on his stool in the late-afternoon sunlight between the orderly room and the medical tent. Sergeant Towser's heart was heavy; now he had two dead men on his hands—Mudd, the dead man in Yossarian's tent who wasn't even there, and Doc Daneeka, the new dead man in the squadron, who most certainly was there and gave every indication of proving a still thornier administrative problem for him. (p.350)

Doc finds himself victim of the same lack of regard as he held for others. It is easy for society to disregard his welfare and difficult for it to change the records. Doc has been removed from his position of authority by accident. The treatment he receives from his former peers is the same treatment he would unhesitatingly have given to others who had suffered similar fates.

Not only the results, but also the very processes by which power is established, are decadent. General Peckem, who ultimately fails because
of the inward pattern he establishes, reveals his method to Scheisskopf:

"I sometimes think of myself as Fortinbras -- ha, ha -- in the play Hamlet by William Shakespeare, who just keeps circling and circling around the action until everything else falls apart, and then strolls in at the end to pick up all the pieces for himself." (p.332)

By deliberately accelerating such decay in efficiency Peckem nullifies all challenges to himself. The loss of creativity that results is ultimately exemplified by Scheisskopf being made General. And of Scheisskopf even Peckem is uncertain: "he began to wonder with genuine concern just what sort of shithead the Pentagon had foisted on him" (p.333).

Other authorities seem to be representative of similar spiralling conceptions. Captain Black is the squadron intelligence officer, "which meant he was more intelligent than everyone else in the squadron" (p.115). His intelligence is manifested in the form of knowledge about society's acceptance of various actions. His role as guardian of the status quo is shown by his condemnation of the intellectual corporal (see page 6). Equally revealing is his self-gratification through sadism:

Captain Black always made it a point to buy her each time he came to Rome, just so he could torment Nately with the news that he had thrown his sweetheart another hump and watch Nately eat his liver as he related the atrocious indignities to which he had forced her to submit. (p.166)

The fate of those who continue to espouse selfishness while being exploited themselves further demonstrates Heller's judgment upon even the most successful of self-interested people. Such characters are the true members of society, affirming its hold over them by aspiring to power within it. In Heller's terms, they are the people without brains enough to object
to what is happening: their intellectual limitations are such that con-
ceptions antithetical to society are impossible. Susanne Langer has
pointed out that

The limits of thought are not so much set from outside, by the fullness
or poverty of experiences that meet the mind, as from within, by the power
of conception, the wealth of formulative notions with which the mind meets
experiences.¹

These members of Heller's society have no less experiential data than do
Dunbar, Yossarian and Orr, but their translational ability has been chan-
nelled in such a way that only interpretations supporting society are pos-
sible.

Such is the case with Aarfy, "a dedicated fraternity man who loved
cheerleading and class reunions and did not have brains enough to be
afraid" (p.51). As might be deduced from his fraternal activities, he
has no objections to the world as Heller sees it.

Aarfy was an authority on the subject of true love because he had already
gained truly in love with Nately's father and with the prospect of working
for him after the war in some executive capacity as a reward for be-
friend ing Nately. (p.296)

The qualities society has endowed him with are reflected in his
idea of sexual gratification. He suggests to Yossarian and Nately that
they should keep three whores "here until after the curfew and then
threaten to push them out into the street to be arrested unless they give us
all their money. We can even threaten to push them out the window" (p.246).

¹Philosophy in a New Key, p.19.
Later he rapes Michaela the virgin maid and murders her by throwing her out the window. He then justifies the act to the horrified Yossarian:

"She was only a servant girl. I hardly think they're going to make too much of a fuss over one poor Italian servant girl when so many thousands of lives are being lost every day. Do you?"

. . . "Aarfy, don't you understand? You can't take the life of another human being and get away with it, even if she is just a poor servant girl." (p.428)

The results of Aarfy's lack of "brains are in this way clearly suggested by Heller. His criticism of American society is primarily that it destroys individuality, and society quickly demonstrates its approval of Aarfy's conception of individual unimportance:

Then the door of the apartment flew open, and two large, tough, brawny M.P.'s with icy eyes and firm, sinewy, unsmiling jaws entered quickly, strode across the room, and arrested Yossarian.

They arrested Yossarian for being in Rome without a pass.

They apologized to Aarfy for intruding and led Yossarian away between them, . . . (p.429).

One's final impression must be that Aarfy is the bland, typical member of society whose conceptions make him equally repulsive and durable.

Langer's differentiation between experience and the interpretation of it is clarified when a character is examined who is more experientially aware of death than Aarfy yet does not conceive of dying. Haermeyer, like many others, perceives the dangers in flying missions and comes to encourage Yossarian in defiance. But he will not actively join Yossarian because he upholds both the American ethic about cowardice and the American vision of success:
"Nah, I couldn't do that. I might bring some disgrace on my wife and kid if I acted like a coward. Nobody likes a coward. Besides, I want to stay in the reserves when the war is over. You get five hundred dollars a year if you stay in the reserves." (p.411)

His conception of man as unimportant individually is revealed by the sadistic pleasure he takes in opposing his firm conviction to "brainier" people's response to danger.

"I like to fly into Bologna straight and level with my head in the bombsight and listen to all that flack pumping away all around me. I get a big kick out of the way the men come charging over to me after the mission and call me dirty names. Even the enlisted men get sore enough to curse me and want to take socks at me." (p.337)

Heller's most powerful indictment of this sadism is his description of Havermeyer shooting field mice:

Havermeyer would chortle exultantly as he watched the tiny mammal freeze and roll its terrified eyes about in frantic search of the intruder. Havermeyer would wait until the eyes fell upon his own and then he laughed aloud and pulled the trigger at the same time, showering the rank, furry body all over the tent with a reverberating crash and dispatching its timid soul back to his or her Creator. (p.32)

Havermeyer's responses are governed by his ethical limitations, so that he sees being killed as an unrewarding action rather than as a personal catastrophe. His awareness of mortality is stifled by his conception of life's meaning.

But "McWatt was the craziest combat man of them all probably, because he was perfectly sane and still did not mind the war" (p.61). Sanity, as Heller defines it, is the opposite of social sanity as set forth by Yossarian's psychiatrist. Despite an awareness of personal identity, McWatt participates in the absurdity which Heller calls society.
The conceived value of human life—even his own—is irresponsibly disregarded:

"Aren't you ever afraid?"
"Maybe I ought to be."
"Not even on the missions?"
"I guess I just don't have brains enough." McWatt laughed sheepishly.  

McWatt possesses the same awareness as Yossarian does of society's willingness to destroy individuals. He thus differs from society in that he has a conception of individuality while the latter conceives of the individual only as a part of itself. McWatt does not mind the destruction of humanity while society does not see destruction in human terms.

It is the horror of kid Sampson's fate which finally translates McWatt's knowledge of individuality into a vital personal issue.

Some arbitrary gust of wind or minor miscalculation of McWatt's senses dropped the speeding plane down just low enough for a propeller to slice him half away. Even people who were not there remembered vividly exactly what happened next. There was the briefest, softest test! filtering audibly through the shattering, overwhelming howl of the plane's engines, and then there were just Kid Sampson's two pale, skinny legs, still joined by strings somehow at the bloody truncated hips . . . . Everyone at the beach was screaming and running, and the men sounded like women. They scampered for their things in panic, stooping hurriedly and looking askance at each gentle, knee-high wave bubbling in as though some ugly, red, grisly organ like a liver or a lung might come washing right up against them.  

The lack of viability in McWatt's conception of individual importance previous to this incident suggests that he has deliberately refrained from examining its inherent possibilities. He is completely to blame for the death of Kid Sampson, for he has never respected the sanctity
of anyone's life, including his own. In order to escape the guilt of his actions much as he has previously escaped the implications of his "sanity," he flies into a mountain (p.349)

It is not at all surprising that Heller should demonstrate the retribution which both American society and irresponsible awareness invite. Significantly, the heroic role played by Yossarian throughout *Catch-22* appears to be an equally culpable form of irresponsibility. Yossarian's attempts to change the treatment he is receiving from society are directed at that society. It has been pointed out that Yossarian believes himself to be dealing with a misinformed but sympathetic society when in fact their entire conceptions of life are in diametrical opposition. His true responsibilities lie in protecting himself and those who are not yet permanently established in society.

Nately is representative of the youth for whom each generation is responsible, and his death is the ultimate moral judgment upon those whose sanity and brains make them aware of other human potentials. Yossarian is the most complicit of such people, for his awareness is equal to Orr's, while his actions do nothing to destroy the evils he sees. Heller demonstrates this in relation to Nately:

For the first time in his life, Yossarian prayed. He got down on his knees and prayed to Nately not to volunteer to fly more than seventy missions.

"Then get yourself grounded," Yossarian urged. "You've finished your missions and you don't need the flight pay. Why don't you ask for Chief White Halfoat's job, if you can stand working for Captain Black? Don't do anything at all about it until I talk to someone," Yossarian decided, and went looking for help from Milo, . . . (pp. 367-377, my emphasis).
All Yossarian's suggestions involve co-operation with society; don't volunteer for missions, don't fly for the extra pay if you don't need it, abandon sanity for safety, get help from the arch-representative of society. The realization of responsibility in "Nately's death almost killed the chaplain" (p.385), who only vaguely realizes his own guilt. Yossarian's greater responsibility brings upon him the physical retribution of Nately's whore, which he does not understand:

She was nearly as tall as Yossarian, and for a few fantastic, terror filled moments he was certain she would overpower him in her crazed determination, crush him to the ground and rip him apart mercilessly limb from limb for some heinous crime he had never committed . . . . More than anything else, he was embarrassed. He felt awkward because she was going to murder him. He simply did not understand what was going on. He had no idea what to do. (pp.402-403)

She has attacked him, he thinks, "for some heinous crime he had never committed" (p.402). Nately's conception of individual importance has derived from his love for the whore. Yossarian has not attempted to further this conceptual education, nor has he produced any constructive alternatives to living in American society. It is his responsibility to determine social maladies and rectify them for the younger generation: in this case to find the proper society for Nately. It is a responsibility he has not lived up to.

At the end of Catch-22 Yossarian discovers his mistake and sets out for Sweden. He tells Danby

"I've got responsibilities of my own now, . . . There's a young kid in Rome whose life I'd like to save if I can find her. I'll take her to Sweden with me if I can find her, so it isn't all selfish, is it?" (p.462)
Abandoning his hopeless fight against alien American conceptions, he sets out for a society whose ideals he shares. In his flight he determines to help the innocent sister of Nately's whore to a land which has freedom and regard for individual rights. Until he arrives at his goal, however, he has not atoned for Nately's death. His resolution is greeted by Nately's whore making yet another attempt on his life.
CHAPTER IV

THE METAPHYSICAL BASIS OF SOCIETY

Heller's perception of the American social atmosphere includes an examination of how its physical manifestations are reflected by its particular conception of God. Were God indeed the omniscient and omnipotent Creator that Christianity would have Him, then His approval of society would contradict Heller's criticisms. But in Catch-22 God is more a propagandistic invention than a Divine Being, and the two seem to merge inseparably. God permits Himself to be used for chauvinistic ends and thus becomes humanly fallible. Society simultaneously insists that He is infallible. Once again experience contradicts but does not influence social conception. Lieutenant Scheisskopf's wife expresses this neatly: "'the God I don't believe in is a good God, a just God, a merciful God. He's not the mean and stupid God you make Him out to be'" (p.185).

As a churchman, Chaplain Tappman functions in a role which Heller suggests is valuable to society, providing it with the assurance of a theological justification. "'wasn't he sweet' said Yossarian. 'Maybe they should give him three votes'" (p.15). As a man however, the chaplain understands that the theological conceptions he has been brought up with do not withstand the evidence of his senses. His religion soon becomes nothing but a pathetic desire for a God in which he can no longer believe:

The chaplain, who had conscience and character, would have yielded to reason and relinquished his belief in the God of his fathers . . . had it not been for such successive mystic phenomena as the naked man in the tree. . . . (p.294)
All that remains is his belief that "kindness and good manners" (p.275) are necessary for a responsible life. Yet he cannot practise these because they are contrary to the function of society, and so he becomes merely another social unit to be controlled by those whose ambitions override human needs.

There was so much unhappiness in the world, he reflected, bowing his head dismally beneath the tragic thought, and there was nothing he could do about anybody's, least of all his own. (p.213)

Unable to sustain his humane responses under such conditions, he eventually seeks release through actively adopting the ideals of society:

The chaplain had sinned, and it was good. Common sense told him that telling lies and defecting from duty were sins. On the other hand, everyone knew that sin was evil and that no good could come from evil. But he did feel good; he felt positively marvelous. Consequently, it followed logically that telling lies and defecting from duty could not be sins. The chaplain had mastered, in a moment of divine intuition, the handy technique of protective rationalization, and he was exhilarated by his discovery. It was miraculous. It was almost no trick at all, he saw, to turn vice into virtue and slander into truth, impotence into abstinence, arrogance into humility, plunder into philanthropy, thiévery into honor, blasphemy into wisdom, brutality into patriotism, and sadism into justice. (p.372)

Although he succeeds in this ideological suicide for the moment, he is more useful to Heller in the capacity of social foil. Tappman realizes that to achieve social success "required no brains at all. It merely required no character" (p.372). He therefore reverts to his hopeless attempts to convince society that individual needs are important until society marks him as an enemy and the C.I.D. condemn him.
His faith in God once again revives over Orr's escape, which he calls "a miracle of human intelligence and human endurance" (p.458). So reassured, he vows to fight against society at the very time when Yossarian is realizing the futility of such action: "'I'll stay here and persevere, and we'll meet again when the fighting stops'" (p.463). The pathos of such a statement, coming from a man already condemned by the C.I.D., reflects the narrowness of his Christian conceptual limits.

While anyone who propagates faith is considered valuable by society, great success is reserved for those who are aware of what they are effectively doing—contributing to society's strength rather than to the glory of God. Corporal Whitcomb the atheist is made a sergeant for his effectiveness:

What displeased Corporal Whitcomb most about the chaplain, apart from the fact that the chaplain believed in God, was his lack of initiative and aggressiveness. Corporal Whitcomb regarded the low attendance at religious services as a sad reflection of his own status. His mind germinated feverishly with challenging new ideas for sparking the great spiritual revival of which he dreamed himself the architect-- . . . . (p.207)

Colonel Cathcart believes "'Atheism is against the law,'" (p.198) or at least un-American and conceives of a separate God for the enlisted men:

"They've got a God and a chaplain of their own, haven't they?"
"No, sir."
"What are you talking about? You mean they pray to the same God we do?"
"Yes, sir."
"And he listens?" (p.199)

Although the Heavenly Kingdom is used by authority as a solace for present conditions, God seems to occupy a more subtle position than that of a mere propaganda tool. God is man's explanation of the ultimate
source of creation. He is the ultimate creator of man and his evils. Yet God is conceptually benevolent, a contradiction in terms with respect to the creation of present American society. Man's direct response to this paradox is represented by Dunbar: "'There is no God'" (p.129).

Heller exposes the fallaciousness of conventional Christianity when he has Yossarian apply the social concept of God's responsibility to his own experience:

"He's not working at all. He's playing. Or else He's forgotten all about us. That's the kind of God you people talk about--a country bumpkin, a clumsy, bungling, brainless, conceited, uncouth hayseed." (p.184)

He also presents a pathetic glimpse of continuing belief in the comforting father image of God despite experience:

"When you talk to the man upstairs," he said, "I want you to tell Him something for me. Tell Him it ain't right for people to die when they're young. I mean it. Tell Him if they got to die at all, they got to die when they're old. I want you to tell Him that. I don't think He knows it ain't right, because He's supposed to be good and it's been going on for a long, long time. Okay?" (p.191)

It is this kind of limited conception which maintains the present society. Its inevitable result is sadness and slavery in the present life. If God is neither dead nor merely propaganda, then He must indeed be held responsible for what Heller sees going on. For this purpose we are given a singular living symbol of God, Major de Coverley, whose powers are Godlike. Like all members of the society, his fate is controlled by the actions he condones. Because he is both propaganda tool and living God, there is confusion as to whether he is a tool to be used or a superior officer:
Major de Coverley was as great a mystery to him as he was to Major
and to everyone else who ever took notice of him. Colonel Cathcart
had no idea whether to look up or look down in his attitude toward Major
de Coverley. Major de Coverley was only a major, even though
he was ages older than Colonel Cathcart; at the same time, so many other
people treated Major de Coverley with such profound and fearful
veneration that Colonel Cathcart had a hunch they might all know something.
Major de Coverley was an ominous, incomprehensible presence who
kept him constantly on edge and of whom even Colonel Korn tended to be
wary. Everyone was afraid of him, and no one knew why. No one even knew
Major de Coverley's first name, because no one had ever had the
temerity to ask him. (p.216-217)

Major de Coverley exhibits the concern of a benign God
through his duties, which "consist entirely, as both Doc Daneeka and
Major Major had conjectured, of pitching horseshoes, kidnapping Italian
laborers, and renting apartments for the enlisted men and officers. . . 
(p.135). He is equally busy spearheading and sanctioning each American
advance against the Germans:

He seemed eternally indestructable as he sat there surrounded by
danger, his features molded firmly into that same fierce, regal,
just and forbidding countenance which was recognized and revered
by every man in the squadron. (p.136)

And, as a jealous God, he destroys the greatest threat to his invinci-
bility--the Glorious Loyalty Oath Crusade.

The hubbub began to subside slowly as Major de Coverley paused in
the doorway with a frown of puzzled disapproval, as though viewing some-
thing bizarre. He started forward in a straight line, and the wall of
officers before him parted like the Red Sea. Glancing neither left nor
right, he strode indomitably up to the steam counter and, in a clear, full-
bodied voice that was gruff with age and resonant with ancient eminence
and authority, said:
"Gimme eat."

Instead of eat, Corporal Snark gave Major de Coverley a
loyalty oath to sign. Major de Coverley swept it away with mighty
displeasure the moment he recognized what it was, his good eye flaring up blindingly with fiery disdain and his enormous old corrugated face darkening in mountainous wrath.

"Gimme eat, I said," he ordered loudly in harsh tones that rumbled ominously through the silent tent like claps of distant thunder. (p.120)

In this symbolic scene God combats the chauvinistic propaganda which codifies individuality. But while He sees chauvinism as an injustice, He fails to realize that His function in society is equally restrictive. God is not propaganda, for even Colonel Cathcart is uncertain of Him, but He is used to bolster propaganda. The conception of Him as benevolent and approving of society (which the controllers of society make the most of) renders impossible criticism of its primary aims. God's ignorance of this condition is owing to the celluloid eye patch which allows Him to remain binocular, but it, like Milo's disunited vision, warps what He sees. The old man who argues with Nately and believes in expediency has given Him this eye wound in one of His liberation spearheadings. As He is now unable to recognize His own relegation to the tightening spiral of conceptual limitation, He is indeed the fool Yossarian thinks Him, and ready to fall prey to the same sort of deliberate misrepresentation that created His public image in the first place.

Moving the bomb line did not fool the Germans, but it did fool Major de Coverley, who packed his musette bag, commandeered an airplane and, under the impression that Florence too had been captured by the Allies, had himself flown to that city to rent two apartments for the officers and the enlisted men . . . . (p.135)

Major de Coverley, the physical manifestation of God, is thus captured by the fascists while His propagandistic image is controlled
by American authorities. As Heller has made clear, the difference between fascism and democracy is one of method rather than intent. In both spheres those in authority are occupied with keeping themselves there. Significantly, Heller sees American propaganda giving way to a police state much as Adolph Hitler's propagandistic victories gave way to police brutality. Creation and maintenance of the universe, the traditional meaning of God, are in the hands of the appropriate authorities. The universe of man has been created by deception and will be maintained by force.

Yossarian's final realization that he is a sucker derives metaphysically as well as factually from his re-appraisal of the intent behind apparently democratic America. God is something other than the benevolent omniscience American authorities claim He is, for this conception of God functions as a limiting factor in social criticism. This American "God" is also demonstrably a fool and a prisoner of fascism. American intent is the same as German intent. And as Yossarian knows from his own experience, American justice is the same as German justice.
CHAPTER V

THE INDIVIDUALIST IN MOTION

Countering the overt satiric vision of Catch-22 is Heller's penetration into the potentials of conceptual limitation. This penetration is not expressed by the book so much as it is through it: the process of revelation goes on for both reader and character at the same time, becoming complete for either only at the conclusion. Yossarian, as the primary visionary character, acts wholly upon his satiric perceptions. Only near the end of Catch-22 does he make the necessary leap from the apparent cause of his distress—propaganda—to the actual cause—the conceptual basis of society.

The ending of Catch-22 has been criticised by such critics as Norman Podhoretz on the grounds that it does not follow from the traditional vision Yossarian earlier possesses.

If we take what this new Yossarian says seriously, then the whole novel is trivialized, for what we had all along thought to be a remorselessly uncompromising picture of the world written from the point of view of the idea that survival is the overriding value and that all else is pretense, lying, cant, and hypocrisy, now becomes nothing more than the story of a mismanaged outfit and an attack on the people who (as Yossarian puts it with a rhetoric not his own) always cash in "on every decent impulse and every human tragedy." No, the truth is that Mr. Heller is simply not prepared to go all the way with the idea that lies at the basis of his novel and that is the main tool he has used in making an incredible reality seem credible. He is simply not prepared to say that World War II was a fraud, having nothing whatever to do with ideals or values.¹

But when it is realized that Heller is demonstrating the futility of satire and portraying the growth of a more relevant social criticism, then it may be seen that the "inconsistent" ending is an organic part of the whole. Yossarian's visionary tendencies are transformed into significant action. This action is based upon his realization that a linguistic tyranny underlies an apparently well-founded society with superficial defects. The war has indeed been a fraud, but only because the ethical positions for which Yossarian has willingly fought do not exist anywhere within the warring structure: it is this lack which Heller insists upon.

From the beginning of Catch-22 we are made aware of Yossarian's visionary powers. He regards himself as a genius and an alienated man. "As he explained to Clevinger, to the best of his knowledge he had never been wrong" (p.21). Society hated him because he was Assyrian. But they couldn't touch him, he told Clevinger, because he had a sound mind in a pure body and he was as strong as an ox. They couldn't touch him because he was Tarzan, Mandrake, Flash Gordon. He was Bill Shakespeare. He was Cain, Ulysses, the Flying Dutchman; he was Lot in Sodom, Deirdre of the Sorrows, Sweeney in the nightingales among trees. He was miracle ingredient Z-247. (p.20)

He is any one of those who have achieved the critical attitude. He feels invulnerable to propaganda because of his ability to penetrate statements opposed to his observations. He can therefore perceive that from his conceptual basis the hospital ward full of social misfits (of which he is one) is the only sane ward in the whole hospital. Everybody is crazy but us. This is probably the only sane ward in the whole world, for that matter" (p.14).
The rebellion of Yossarian against society is founded upon this ability. The impetus for his criticism of propaganda "reality" lies in the death of Snowden:

Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret. Drop him out a window and he'll fall. Set fire to him and he'll burn. Bury him and he'll rot like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage. That was Snowden's secret. Ripeness was all. (p.450)

At one point Yossarian attends the educational sessions given by Captain Black's "subversive" corporal: "There was Yossarian with the question that had no answer: 'Where are the Snowdens of yesteryear?'" (p.35).

Yossarian's observation of death, the individuality he represents for all times and cultures, the name Heller gives to the sacrificial victim, and the way in which that death is questioned give a greater significance to the death of a B-25 tailgunner in 1944.

Tell me where, in what country, 
Is Flora the beautiful Roman, 
Archipiades or Thais 
Who was first cousin to her, 
Echo speaking when you hear sound 
From on the river or the pond, 
Whose beauty was of all much more than human? 
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

Where is the learned Heloise 
For whom, castrated and made a monk, 
Pierre Abelard, at Saint-Denis 
For his love having that pain, 
Likewise where is the queen 
Who commanded that Buridan 
Be thrown in a sack into the Seine? 
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

The queen white as a lily 
Who sang with a siren's voice, 
Bertha of great feet, Beatrice, Alice,
Haremburgis who held Maine
And Jeanne–the good, of Lorraine
Whom the English burnt at Rouen,
Where are they, where, sovereign Virgin?
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

Prince, you may not ask, of this week
Or of this year, where they are,
Since this refrain does not belong to you,
But where are the snows of yesteryear?

Villon's perceptions of the inhumanity of authority and the transience of individuality are closely related to Yossarian's perceptions of similar injustices in modern society. For Heller, the results of the satiric vision seem the same in both cases—in all cases—killing and plundering continue unimpeded. Yossarian's vision is clear, but it is futile. Unless it be transformed, it will also be as tragic as Villon's.

The result of Yossarian's conviction that society is being misled is an impossible rebellion on his part.

There were too many dangers for Yossarian to keep track of. There was Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo, for example, and they were all out to kill him. There was Lieutenant Scheisskopf with his fanaticism for parades and there was the bloated colonel with his big fat mustache and his fanaticism for retribution, and they wanted to kill him, too. There was Appleby, Havermeyer, Black and Korn. There was Nurse Cramer and Nurse Duckett, who he was almost certain wanted him dead, and there was the Texan and the C.I.D. man, about whom he had no doubt. There were bartenders, bricklayers and bus conductors all over the world who wanted him dead, landlords and tenants, traitors and patriots, lynchers, leeches and lackeys, and they were all out to bump him off. That was the secret Snowden had spilled to him on the mission to Avignon—they were out to get him. (pp.176-77)

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As an individual fighting to retain individuality he must oppose the propagandistic assertion that men are unimportant. It has already been pointed out in Chapter II that this dehumanizing policy of society is founded upon certain linguistic associations between "country" and "individual." The only alternative to the possession of satiric perception is the lack of it. If a member of society does not see his world satirically, he sees it from the common viewpoint: he agrees with its basic assumptions. Yossarian is fighting a conception made forceful by society's adoption of it, but he is fighting it as propaganda which he thinks is deluding the majority of people. He assumes his fellows conceive of actions in the same way he does, and are being misled about the action. Even so the barrier to success seems insurmountable.

It is in hospital scenes that Heller best portrays this mistaken conflict. Asked to impersonate a dead soldier, Yossarian is told "'one dying boy is just as good as any other, or just as bad. To a scientist, all dying boys are equal'" (p.187). Later he hears the same anti-heroic sentiments from Nurse Cramer

"I suppose you just don't care if you lose your leg, do you?"
"It's my leg."
"It certainly is not your leg!" Nurse Cramer retorted. "That leg belongs to the U.S. government. It's no different than a gear or bedpan. The Army has invested a lot of money to make you an airplane pilot, and you've no right to disobey the doctor's orders."

Yossarian was not sure he liked being invested in. (p.300)

On both occasions the reader as well as Yossarian thinks inhumane action stems from a lack of knowledge about the consequences; the act appears incongruous, absurd. Both think that providing information that propaganda is designed to withhold will correct future action. This is the
function of satire. But in fact, the relevant characters know the results of their actions and don't care that de-humanization is the result. They are not conceptually equipped to comprehend as Yossarian does.

Dunbar is similarly given an anti-propagandistic vision through a fortunate accident: "the fall in the hospital had either shown him the light or scrambled his brains; it was impossible to say which" (p. 339). It has in fact done both, since Dunbar no longer recognizes social standards but does jeopardize his life by revealing his new satiric viewpoint. He tries to convince his fellow patients that the soldier in white is hollow. The soldier in white seems to represent a particularly virulent and obnoxious piece of propaganda which persists despite such revelations as Wilfred Owen's "Dulce et Decorum Est . . .": his hollowness is the hollowness of chauvinism. "'They've stolen him away!' Dunbar shouted back. 'He's hollow inside, like a chocolate soldier. They just took him away and left those bandages there!'" (p. 375). But the soldier in white's name is Schmulker, which in translation means "one who is a swindle." As Dunbar correctly points out, he is not inside the bandages at all to anyone who possesses anti-chauvinistic conceptions, yet society, as represented by the medical staff who bandaged him, thinks he is. Were he merely the propagandistic construction Dunbar thinks he is, however, someone in authority would be represented as aware of his hollowness. In fact only Dunbar sees chauvinism as a hoax, and from the satiric rather than the conceptual viewpoint. Both parties are swindled, for the soldier in white really exists only as he is conceived. He does not represent a hollow, created form but an apparent form. To those who
think as Dunbar does, he is the soldier in white. He is neither and both.

A similar confusion between deliberate misinformation and conception occurs when Yossarian is condemned by the psychiatrist:

"You're antagonistic to the idea of being robbed, exploited, degraded, humiliated or deceived. Misery depresses you. Ignorance depresses you. Persecution depresses you. Violence depresses you. Slums depress you. Greed depresses you. Crime depresses you. Corruption depresses you. You know, it wouldn't surprise me if you're a manic-depressive!" (p.312)

What the psychiatrist is telling Yossarian is that sane people don't object to poverty and misery because they do not intend to suffer themselves. What Yossarian thinks the psychiatrist is doing is completely different. He thinks he is hearing a lie, which the psychiatrist would like him and society to believe, about response to inhuman acts; if the lie is believed then the psychiatrist can act as he pleases without opposition. It has not yet occurred to Yossarian that the statements might be a result of a fundamental conception about human rights, nor has it occurred to him that American society must hold such a conception in order to define sanity in this way. Herbert Marcuse has remarked upon this psychiatric-social phenomenon:

At the present stage, the personality tends toward a standardized reaction pattern established by the hierarchy of power and functions and by its technical, intellectual, and cultural apparatus. The analyst and his patient share this alienation, and since it does not usually manifest itself in any neurotic symptom but rather as the hallmark of "mental health," it does not appear . . . . When the process of alienation is discussed, it is usually treated, not as the whole that it is, but as a negative aspect of the whole.3

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The difference between social conceptions and Yossarian's own becomes defined over the issue of patriotism. Yossarian is a patriot in one sense, for he is willing to defend his fatherland against invasion. He thus chides Danby when the latter accuses him of being egocentric:

"Don't talk to me about fighting to save my country. I've been fighting all along to save my country" (p.455). But the country for which he is willing to fight is one symbolised in his mind: a country in which the prevalent beliefs are those he holds. The evils he has continually observed have been satirically attributed to a small unscrupulous group in power who have duped the public. Now Colonel Korn reveals that it is not a matter of deceiver and deceived, but rather one of almost universal agreement in principle.

"Won't you fight for your country?" Colonel Korn demanded, emulating Colonel Cathcart's harsh, self-righteous tone. "Won't you give up your life for Colonel Cathcart and me?"

Yossarian tensed with alert astonishment when he heard Colonel Korn's concluding words. "What's that?" he exclaimed. "What have you and Colonel Cathcart got to do with my country? You're not the same."

"How can you separate us?" Colonel Korn inquired with ironic tranquillity. . . . "You're either for us or against your country. It's as simple as that."

"Oh, no, Colonel. I don't buy that."

Colonel Korn was unruffled. "Neither do I, frankly, but everyone else will. So there you are." (p.433)

Colonel Korn admits that he is unique in admitting this. He does not believe he is inseparable from his country, and the idea is therefore propaganda for him. But for "everyone else" it is a conceptual force rather than an advantageous lie. Yossarian's appeal to his countrymen is really an attempt on his part to dissuade them from a conviction; not the exposure of falsification he believes it to be. The individual may object to his place in society, but he does not object to society's conduct.
When Yossarian tells Danby that "'between me and every ideal I always find Scheisskopfs, Peckems, Korns and Cathcarts. And that sort of changes the ideal'" (p.454) he shows his growing awareness of the relationship between men who have succeeded in taking power and what they do to the conceptual circle they manipulate. The Scheisskopfs, Peckems, Korns, and Cathcarts do not change Yossarian's ideals, they change those of society. The tightening spiral of linguistic potential based on ruthlessness has changed the entire society, not just manipulated it. The success which Milo and his cohorts have achieved is not a duping of society as Yossarian had thought, but a fulfillment of social desire.

Think of the colossal brutality, cruelty and mendacity which is now allowed to spread itself over the civilized world. Do you really believe that a handful of unprincipled placehunters and corrupters of men would have succeeded in letting loose all this latent evil, if the millions of their followers were not also guilty?

At the same time as Yossarian is realizing the difference in conception between himself and society he is approached by a furtive little man who tells him "'We've got your pal, buddy. We've got your pal'" (p.442). Speculating upon the meaning of this cryptic statement he sees that all the other satiric and potentially heroic characters have been killed through their association with the society:

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"I think it must be someone like Nately or Dunbar. You know, someone who was killed in the war, like Clevinger, Orr, Dobbs, Kid Sampson or McWatt." Yossarian emitted a startled gasp and shook his head. "I just realized it," he exclaimed. "They've got all my pals, haven't they?" (p.445)

Yossarian is in this way made aware that the satiric vision (which exposes falsehood to the hero) is not tolerated by society. The attempts of his friends to reveal the injustices done to them has motivated various representative social elements to remove them. From society's conceptual viewpoint, what seems unjust to the hero is seen as the "sweet and proper" conduct of man.

Combining his perception of the radically different conceptual viewpoints which Milo and others indicate as the social norms with his realization that the satiric function is unappreciated by his country, Yossarian comes to the inevitable conclusion that he has been fighting for a non-existent cause:

"What does upset me, though, is that they think I'm a sucker. They think that they're smart, and that the rest of us are dumb. And, you know, Danby, the thought occurs to me right now, for the first time, that maybe they're right." (p.455)

He has fought to save a country which he believed shared his ideals. Again and again it has demonstrated its divergent conceptions through its treatment of him. Like all his friends, he has nevertheless persisted in attributing his difficulties to the specific event of war and to a specific authoritarian group. He has repeatedly said "'They're trying to kill me,'" (p.17) believing that when the undisguised facts are layed before enough of society, undesirable conditions will be discovered and destroyed.
Yossarian has understood Catch-22 at the same time as he has paradoxically misunderstood it. Catch-22, as the old woman points out to him "'says they have a right to do anything we can't stop them from doing'" (p.416). Yossarian has objected because of his vision of injustice, yet at the same time has known that

Catch-22 did not exist, he was positive of that, but it made no difference. What did matter was that everyone thought it existed, and that was much worse, for there was no object or text to ridicule or refute, or accuse, criticize, attack, amend, hate, revile, spit at, rip to shreds, trample upon or burn up. (p.418)

Catch-22 is not an authoritarian invention, but a socially upheld conception of the right of any man to take authority over any other if he can. It is not a law, it is a belief.

With the difference between his own conceptions and those of society apparent, Yossarian understands that he has no possible place in society, but must leave it. The news of Orr's safe arrival in Sweden provides the stimulus for him to re-affirm his own values and avoid destruction. He exits as a man in search of a society reflecting his own ideals.
CHAPTER VI
THE INDIVIDUAL IN CONFLICT WITH SOCIETY

The basis of conflict in Catch-22 is to be found in the divergence between the ideals of Yossarian as a representatively critical individual and those of the society he lives in. Before the escape of Orr is known to Yossarian, no avoidance of a heroic martyrdom seems open to him. He is aware that his criticisms will cause society to "disappear" him as it has Dunbar: "'No hope at all, is there?"' (p.458) Orr's escape is therefore structurally necessary to broaden Yossarian's conceptual limits.

In order for Orr to bother planning and executing an escape to Sweden he must possess that understanding of conceptual differences which Yossarian lacks. He describes Appleby, the paragon of American ideals, as having flies in his eyes:

"Although he probably doesn't even know it. That's why he can't see things as they really are."
"How come he doesn't know it?" inquired Yossarian.
"Because he's got flies in his eyes," Orr explained with exaggerated patience. "How can he see he's got flies in his eyes if he's got flies in his eyes?" (p.47)

These flies which limit Appleby's vision are the prevalent ideals of his society. From Orr and Yossarian's point of view these conceptions appear unnatural and defective. They are seen as distorting what Yossarian subjectively feels to be the proper ideals of mankind. At the same time, the principle of conceptual limitation prevents Appleby from knowing he is conceptually limited. In order to gain such knowledge Appleby must conceive of possibilities he cannot at present conceive of. This he
later does when he encounters active dissent by Yossarian. Such dissent cannot be accounted for in his existing conceptual system, which must be enlarged to include it.

"If you want to catch malaria, I guess it's your business, isn't it?"
"That's all right, Appleby."
"But I was only trying to do my duty. I was obeying orders. I was always taught that I had to obey orders. . . . I don't feel too happy about flying so many missions either now that it looks as though we've got the war won." (p.409)

Orr also realizes that society approves conceptually of the unscrupulous actions of people such as Milo, even while it is unhappy with specific results. When Orr's plane is shot down, the Mae Wests of the crew fail to inflate. Milo has removed the CO2 cartridges to make strawberry and crushed pineapple ice-cream sodas and replaced them with mimeographed notes reading "what's good for M&M Enterprises is good for the country" (p.316). Sergeant Knight relates the men's reactions to Yossarian: "'Jesus, did we curse him, all except that buddy of yours Orr, who just kept grinning as though for all he cared what was good for Milo might be good enough for the rest of us'" (p.316). Orr has seen that each of them would act as Milo did were they given the chance. He knows that the society in which he lives is centered upon different conceptions.

In order for Orr's escape to have relevance for Yossarian the two must share the same linguistic circle. Orr is necessarily in full sympathy with Yossarian's ideals. "Unlike Yossarian's mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, in-law, teacher, spiritual leader, legislator,
neighbor and newspaper, [Orr] had never lied to him about anything crucial . . . " (p.47).

Aware of the difference in ideals between society and himself Orr sets out to escape. It is obvious to him that a heroic resistance such as Yossarian undertakes is doomed to failure. Instead of opposing society he disguises his own differences under a cover of genial idiocy. When Milo takes Orr along on a buying trip and asks Yossarian to divert him from finding out the business procedures, Orr helpfully diverts himself:

Yossarian pulled back from Orr adamantly, gazing with some concern and bewilderment at Mt. Etna instead of Mt. Vesuvius and wondering what they were doing in Sicily instead of Naples as Orr kept entreating him in a tittering, stuttering, concupiscent turmoil to go along with him behind the scheming ten-year-old pimp to his two twelve-year-old virgin sisters . . . . (p.235)

Not only does this technique re-assure Milo that his business methods are safe, it also reinforces the irresponsible image Orr has carefully built up.

Despite the reasonable safety guaranteed Orr by his disguise his different ideals can produce revealing blunders. On the one occasion he gets drunk this happens: "Orr got tipsy on gin and juice and smashed open Appleby's forehead with his paddle after Appleby had smashed back each of Orr's first five serves" (p.57). The resentment he feels at being made to live in the "American way" by the arbitrary rules characterized by Appleby gives rise to action paralleling Yossarian's physical resistance. When sober Orr knows such action is futile. He is quickly over-powered by Appleby and only Yossarian's intervention saves him from a beating.
In one of his oblique comments to Yossarian, Orr explains that his disguise is also hindered by not knowing the exact limits of American behavioral patterns. His own wider conceptions have obscured these limits, making it difficult for him to appear as a normal person. As he puts it, the crab apples in his cheeks (his conceptions) make it hard for him to convince society that he really only has rubber balls in his hands (society's conceptions). He no longer speaks the same language.

"With rubber balls in my hands I could deny there were crab apples in my cheeks. Every time someone asked me why I was walking around with crab apples in my cheeks, I'd just open my hands and show them it was rubber balls I was walking around with, not crab apples, and that they were in my hands, not my cheeks. It was a good story. But I never knew if it got across or not, since it's pretty tough to make people understand you when you're talking to them with two crab apples in your cheeks."

(pp.24-25)

Consequently he appears as a crazy figure to both society and Yossarian. The official view of him, as represented through Doc Daneeka, is one of tolerant contempt: "'He has to be crazy to keep flying combat missions after all the close calls he's had'" (p.46). Yossarian's view is that "'Orr hasn't got brains enough to be unhappy'" (p.315).

Under cover of this zany reputation Orr effects his escape. His first thought is to return to America, for which purpose he pays a whore to injure him. "'But she wouldn't hit him hard enough, so he had to row to Sweden'" (p.460). Yossarian later tries several variations upon this theme with equal lack of success. Society will not accept the removal of suffering individuals from situations where they are of definite use. Orr therefore selects Sweden as a place in which he can live unhindered
by such narrow conceptual boundaries. Sweden is the ideal of the wide potential and tolerant ideology. Yossarian has told him about it:

Sweden, where the level of intelligence was high and where he could swim nude with beautiful girls with low, demurring voices and sire whole happy, undisciplined tribes of illegitimate Yossarians that the state would assist through parturition and launch into life without stigma; . . . (P.318)

Orr practices crash landings while he awaits the best opportunity.

"'I guess I'm just about the best pilot around now when it comes to ditching or making crash landings'" (p.321). He also practices survival techniques, which tend to enhance his harmless image:

"Next he found some boullion cubes and aluminum cups and made us some soup. Then he found some tea. Sure, he made it! Can't you see him serving us tea as we sat there soaking wet in water up to our ass? Now I was falling out of the raft because I was laughing so much. We were all laughing. And he was dead serious, except for that goofy giggle of his and that crazy grin. What a jerk!" (p.317)

Orr finally does escape his "rescuers" after ditching on the Bologna mission. Society and the reader are prepared to accept that he is dead, a harmless and rather stupid victim of the forces Yossarian is heroically combatting.

If Yossarian were to understand the situation as Orr does, then *Catch-22* would be devoid of the heroic or satiric vision Heller wishes to refute. The reader could not identify with Yossarian without consciously rejecting his own society, an unlikely proposition. Only after vicariously experiencing total defeat in Yossarian's heroic purpose is the reader psychologically prepared to accept Heller's proposition. Thus
Heller makes Orr's cautious advice be misunderstood.

"Yes, sir—if you had any brains, you know what you'd do? You'd go right to Piltchard and Wren and tell them you want to fly all your missions with me."

Yossarian leaned forward and peered closely into Orr's inscrutable mask of contradictory emotions. "Are you trying to tell me something?"

"Tee-hee-hee-hee," Orr responded. "I'm trying to tell you why that big girl with the shoe was hitting me on the head that day. But you just won't let me."

"Tell me."

"Will you fly with me?"

Yossarian laughed and shook his head. "You'll only get knocked down into the water again." (p.325)

By the end of Catch-22 all the possibilities of existing within the society have been explored by Yossarian and the results carefully examined. No positive answers can be found.

"Suppose you did have the courage to defy somebody?"

"Then I wouldn't let them send me home," Major Danby vowed emphatically with vigorous joy and enthusiasm. "But I certainly wouldn't let them court-martial me."

"Would you fly more missions?"

"No, of course not. That would be total capitulation. And I might be killed."

"Then you'd run away?" (p.457)

It is at this time that the chaplain brings news of Orr's escape. Suddenly the strange quirks Yossarian has always noticed in Orr fall into a pattern and he rejoices: "'There is hope, after all.'" (p.459). Since revolt and submission equally end in death, what Yossarian must do is attempt to escape the entire matrix. It is too late for him to feign submission as Orr did. He can only praise Orr's practical vision, which contrasts so effectively with his own stubborn insistence upon the normality of his ideals:
"Danby, Orr planned it that way. Don't you understand—he planned it that way from the beginning. He even practiced getting shot down. He rehearsed for it on every mission he flew. And I wouldn't go with him! Oh, why wouldn't I listen? He invited me along, and I wouldn't go with him! Danby, bring me buck teeth too, and a valve to fix and a look of stupid innocence that nobody would ever suspect of any cleverness." (p.459)

Yossarian finally understands that he can only live by his own standards, which are not the same as those of society. Although many of them have the same name, the inference behind them is exactly opposite. He therefore firmly dissociates social conception from his own and tells Danby

"I'm not running away from my responsibilities. I'm running to them. There's nothing negative about running away to save my life. You know who the escapists are, don't you, Danby? Not me and Orr." (p.461)

The escapists are those whose conceptions differ from society but who persist in thinking that the two can be reconciled. They cannot, as all of *Catch-22* has been devoted to showing, and as Yossarian now states:

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

The contrast between this new, dynamic vision Yossarian has inherited from Orr and the pathetic strivings of the heroic position he has abandoned is revealed by the stupidity of Danby and the chaplain:

"It must be nice to be in Sweden now," he observed yearningly. "The girls are so sweet. And the people are so advanced."

"Goodbye, Yossarian," the chaplain called. "And good luck. I'll stay here and persevere, and we'll meet again when the fighting stops." (p.463)
Danby has barely escaped being shot on the orders of General Dreedle, the chaplain has been condemned by the C.I.D.. They are obviously bound to their society and the fate it promises them by the same heroic conception of society's ills which Yossarian has previously represented.
LITERATURE CITED


