In Good as Gold Joseph Heller not only satirizes American politics but critically scrutinizes the ultimately adopted, alternative set of values represented by the Gold family. On the one hand, prizing wealth and power, Heller's protagonist may become a member of the government; on the other, as opposed to the betrayals, authoritarianism, and intolerance that the novel shows to be necessary for obtaining power, he may choose to situate himself within the competing, familial means to fulfillment of cooperation, persuasion, and tolerance. Heller has not simply prescribed a "correct" choice with the clarity of a satirist but has developed the ambivalence involved in the protagonist's conflicted desires. Nonetheless, the Gold family, while far from perfect, does espouse values that are close to Heller's, and understanding Sid and Belle as defining the book's moral center provides a clear insight into the nexus of values from which the social criticism of Heller's other novels issues. In fact, a familial ethic is the figure in the carpet of Heller's fiction. It developed from conditions of Heller's childhood and adolescence and forms a basis for his antiauthoritarian stance and for his fictional analyses of what Levi-Strauss has termed modern society's "inauthentic" relationships.

Good as Gold begins the process of defining specific family values through inversions that show Gold abandoning them. The novel is based upon the