

Dr. Sloper describes himself as an "anatomist" and argues that just as he is accustomed to assessing and looking into human beings (as a doctor) he can see through Morris' surface games and identify the man as a swindler. I 12 P a g e Sloper is entirely right in fearing Morris' greedy intentions, but Sloper uses false logic and abuses rules and conventions in order to have his way. Having identified Morris as guilty, Sloper does not take the time to prove his case logically. Having satisfied his own need for truth, he requests of Catherine: "I don't ask you to believe it, but to take it on trust." Morris lied so much that gullible Catherine couldn't help but consider him "artistic," as Aunt Penniman considered him "superior."

Morris is a fictional character who fictionalizes himself into a hero. His rakish poverty is redone as a moral description, some youthful excess from which Morris has drawn a lesson. Morris styles himself as a Spanish teacher, a stranger who has been around the world, and a commodities merchant who works downtown and most suddenly leave for New Orleans (Philadelphia) to speculate on cotton. Lavinia Penniman also has a weak control on truth and reality. Like Dr. Sloper, Lavinia seeks to recommend and advice others. If Dr. Sloper gives the right advice in the worst way, Lavinia has a "genius for consolation."

The narrator identifies this as "an ingenious sophism" (a sophism" is an argument apparently correct in form but actually invalid). And Dr. Sloper's interrogative methods undermines the values and truths he aims to support. He abuses the trust that Catherine has in him, as her father. As a great man of society, he tyrants a widow into speaking ill of her brother, as a means of protecting his own family. Once Sloper has his "revenge" on Catherine and allows her to suffer, he is unable to undo the consequences of the truth. At times, her character resembles Polonius from Hamlet, because she is often shoot out commonplace phrases and prosaicisms that contradict each other: "The important thing is to act" a few scenes after Lavinia warns the young ones to be patient. Lavinia is a romantic. Just as Morris has become "artistic" and molded a new self for himself, Lavinia has invented the idea of Morris and Catherine falling in love and realized this as best she could, all the while imagining herself as the "manager" or director of a "drama." We can separate Morris' hesitant and incomplete confession to Catherine from his energetic talkative self-advertisements at the beginning of the novel. Dr. Sloper's accusations of treason and betrayal are ultimately documented in the addition to his will – but that does not make the arguments, though legally required, any more legal. Regularly, Lavinia looks at Catherine's deficits of emotion and romanticizes them as hidden spaces. But just as Lavinia's actions are a corruption of artistic ideals, Dr. Sloper's idea of truth is a corruption of science and logic. Lavinia's artistic idea of truth as beauty is a contrast to Dr. Sloper's ideas of science and logic