

*A Study on Dickens' Art and Philosophy
delivered in 'Oliver Twist'*

Eishin SODEYAMA*

(Received October 30, 1965)

Introduction

Oliver Twist first appeared, as is well known, serially in 1837-8 in Bentley's *Miscellany* under the title 'Oliver Twist, or a Parish Boy's Progress', which was later to be retitled 'Adventures of Oliver Twist' by the author himself. These two full titles will suggest that the work belongs, together with many of his tales, to the travel stories which form one of the main streams of the Modern English novel. In the paper 'Four Types of Travellers' the writer has classified this sort of novels into four, according to the types of the travellers, and among them, this work of Dickens' belongs presumably under the first group; for these two titles reminds us of the two masterpieces of the group, in which he is said to have been indulged in his childhood, namely, *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Adventures of Roderick Random*. Besides, the story itself turns out to be one as it is evident that it owes its construction to the first of the merits inherent in the convention, its pattern to the second, and its development depends more often than not on contingencies, and adding to that Oliver the traveller is presented not as a hero entitled with the positive rôle to evolve the story on his own account, but as a puppet at the mercy of the author's intention to supply his readers with a point of view through which they come in contact with the scenes drawn by him.

This story is meant to illustrate, according to the author's preface, the 'principle of good surviving through every adverse circumstance triumphant at last,' which reveals its affinity to *Pilgrim's Progress* suggesting to us that it is meant to be a moral fable rather than an adventure story like *Roderick Random*. It sometimes occurs, however, that stories of this type, intended to illustrate certain abstract principles are reduced to dull, crude propagandism composed of unnatural plots, melodramatic scenes and dry-as-dust arguments. In his *An Introduction to the English Novel*, Arnold Kettle enumerates two

* Lecturer of English, Faculty of Engineering, Shinshu University, Nagano, Japan.

of the ways in which the fables are enabled to avoid this kind of failure, citing *Jonathan Wild* and *Gulliver's Travels* as respective example. A moral fable can be 'successful and enduring' says he, either when the principle 'that it succeeds in adequately illustrating happens to be in itself so profound, so full of the stuff of life that it can bear deep probing,' or when 'the writer in telling of the fable, in the very act of illustration, so fills his creation with the breath and tensions of life that the fable transcends the idea which evoked it.'¹⁾ Since this criterion actually holds true in the fields of the twentieth century literature, providing us with *Das Urteil* successful in the former way, and *The End of the Affair* enduring in the latter way, we may with reason apply it to *Oliver Twist* to see whether it is a successful moral fable or a dull, crude piece of propagandism.

I

Dickens' philosophy on which the principle is founded must first be explained. It is undeniable that he regards Oliver as 'good' when he says 'good surviving through every adverse circumstance', since he remains good through any hardships which might have corrupted him, were he either a Noar Claypole or a Jack Dawkins. It follows that the essence of 'evil' should lie in such adverse circumstances as the workhouse and its neighbouring environments in 'a certain town' or Fagin's Crime School in the East End of London.

A workhouse was first instituted by the Elizabethan Poor Law with a view to putting the numerous loafers together, generated through the course of the decline and fall of the feudal society, to set them to work by an official hand. But it had been much abused of as not so efficient in considering the amount of the parish's or the nation's efforts made for that purpose, and the abuse was loudest when William Pitt introduced his Speenhamland System in 1795 in order to settle the urgent issue about how to deal with the poor originating now in the Industrial Revolution; for his amendment was an enlargement of the scope of the law, and it claimed that underpaid workmen should be spared a relief defrayed out of National Treasury. It is said that this system resulted in the degeneration of both employers and employees, giving rise to those bitterest abuses such as Malthus' *The Principle of Population* in which he insists that 'dependent poverty ought to be held disgraceful,' adding that 'such a stimulus seems to be absolutely necessary to promote the happiness of the great mass of mankind,'²⁾ until at last in 1834 New Poor Law was legislated under the strong influence of Benthamite school postulating that the 'principle of utility' affords mankind 'who is under the

governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure,' a 'base for every conduct.'³⁾

Though the New Poor Law was welcomed by the master manufacturers as 'eminently calculated to make the poor stand on their own feet; and therefore essentially in the spirit of *laissez-faire*,' it broght forth fierce dissenting opinions among the poor, as is delivered in the phrase of the moment, 'Damnation, eternal damnation to the fiend-begotten, coarse-food New Poor Law.'⁴⁾ Most presumably it should be his indignation with the new heartless administration, as well as his profound compassion on the misery of the paupers suffering in the workhouses called 'Bastilles' by Chartists, that drove Dickens out of Weller's world filled with cheers and laughters, into the these worlds of horror and misery, turning his eyes from the 'splendid' beadle Simmons to the heartless, bullying Bumble. It would not be difficult, therefore, to find 'goodness' in the poor, and 'evil' in the oppressing bourgeois, as actually does Arnold Kettle when he says that 'the living pattern and conflict of the book' is 'the struggle of the poor against the bourgeois state, the whole army of greater or lesser Bumbles whom the gentlemen in the white wastcoat employs to maintain morality and the *status quo*.'⁵⁾ But the fact is that in due course Oliver is transformed into a young bourgeois when he awakes from 'what seemed to have been a long and troubled dream' in the cozy and neat house of Mr. Brownlow, who tries to protect the boy arrested for picking pockets while in practise given by Fagin's School, into which he is introduced as soon as he arrives in London after having escaped the cruel environments in his native town. It is evident that here occurs a modification to the development of the story, and though it is by no means difficult to regard it as a failure and to blame author for his inconsistency, what matters now most is no more to accuse his philosophy than to investigate into the essentials of his philosophy concerning 'evil' and 'good.' Here what oppresses Oliver's existence is no longer 'the whole army of greater or lesser Bumbles,' for the second of his adverse circumstances is composed of outlaws who are neither proletarians nor bourgeois.

If it were the case, as Kettle insists, that the author tries here to rely on the stereotyped, 'pigeon-holed' good-or-bad intrigue, leaving the living conflict, it should be hardly possible to find an evil common to both of the adverse circumstances, which obviously Dickens does when he satirizes 'philosophers' almost outspokenly. For instance he interpolates followoing comments to the scene in which Dodger and Bates make a narrow escape sacrificing Oliver to be arrested.

... this strong proof of their anxiety for their own preservation and safety goes to corroborate and confirm the little code of laws which certain profound and sound-judging philosophers have laid down as the mainsprings of all Nature's deeds and actions.⁷⁾

Needless to say he is blaming here those individualist school of philosophers, from Hobbes, who asserts that a Law of Nature is 'a Precept, or general Rule by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the preserving the same...,'⁸⁾ down to Benthamite utilitarian thinkers taking over the political as well as ethical assumption underlying in the economic doctrine of Adam Smith who proclaims that 'by intending only his own security' and 'by pursuing his own interest,' every individual promotes those of the society' more effectually than when he really intends, 'led by an invisible hand.'⁹⁾

As to Oliver who fails to escape, he says, 'Although Oliver had been brought up by philosophers, he was not theoretically acquainted with the beautiful axiom that self-preservation is the first law of nature,¹⁰⁾' and by 'philosopher' he means here those officials of workhouse system, as according to him 'the member of this board were very sage, deep philosophical men,'¹¹⁾ and Bumble himself is proud of his philosophical knowledge when he says contemptuously, 'They haven't no more philosophy nor political economy about 'em than that.'¹²⁾

We must conclude then that what is taken by the author as 'evil' inherent both in the first adverse circumstances and the second, is 'selfishness', and in effect throughout the book 'the *egoist* mind, which enhances the principle of individuality to the highest point,' is regarded as 'hostile and evil'; and 'mind or heart as well as sentiment and conscience are linked and even identified with kindness,' while 'calculating and scheming person' is considered 'bad and evil' because they are 'heartless and unconscientious.' As his hostility toward Ralph Nickleby, Dombey and Bounderby will suggest, and his hostility turning to amity toward Scrooge, Martin and Gradgrind will indicate, this view of his that regards selfishness as the greatest of evils must have its root deep in his fundamental attitude.

The quotations in the last paragraph are from Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, in which he assumes that such a view point is of *Gemeinschaft*. According to him *Gemeinschaft* is a community in which individuals remain untied in spite of all separating factors, while in *Gesellschaft* society they are essentially separated in spite of all uniting factors. 'In *Gemeinschaft* with one's family, one lives from birth on, bound to it in weal and woe,'

and 'one goes into Gesellschaft as one goes into a strange country.'¹⁵⁾ On this account following observation made by him is most noteworthy now:

If, confirming our attention to the economic sphere, we consider the advance of the Gesellschaft which takes place as the final culmination of the Gemeinschaft-like folk life, there stands out the transition from general home (or household) economy to general trade economy, or the transition from the predominance of agriculture to the predominance of industry.¹⁶⁾

Indeed England in the period the Industrial Revolution, during a century from the middle of the eighteenth century, illustrates one of the typical processes of the 'conversion of rural into urban communities.'¹⁵⁾ Richard Cobden noting how 'the old shopkeepers visited and helped their poor neighbours,' and how 'the new shopkeepers scarcely know the names of their nearest neighbours,'¹⁶⁾ points out a subtle aspect of its influences on his contemporary's heart. This observation implies an antagonism against the growing Gesellschaftly trend, an reactionary yearning for the old agricultural community prevalent in the age, expressing itself in the variety of 'Return to Nature' movements including those numbers of riots trying to destroy the machines that appeared to take the bread from workers' mouth. And the arguments exchanged between these reactionaries and so-called *laissez-faire* philosophers are, reflecting the age of contradictions inherent in the society in transition, so confused and complicated that it is hardly possible to tell who is conservative and who is radical. For instance, as the above note suggests, Cobden appears to be an opponent to the Gesellschaft, and yet his life is ruled by two master ideas, free-trade and non-intervention springing from Adam Smith and *laissez-fair*. Eventually, as D. H. Macgregor insinuates,¹⁷⁾ such words as '*laissez-faire*' or 'Benthamite' are turned into dark words, and it must be born in mind that even the doctrine of utility by Jeremy Bentham, considered as the outstanding exponent of the English Individualism, carries with it a doctrine of Gemeinschaft in its very foundation.

None is secure from his destructive premise claiming that 'Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure,' and that 'it is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as what we shall do.'¹⁸⁾ This ascribes every conduct of mankind, however ascetic or sublime it may seem, or even when it is done 'against one's will' to the desire to promote his own pleasure. It is applicable to the very suicide as one kills oneself because it is more pleasant for him to die than to go on living. It is as destructive and more persuasive than Freud's postulate ascribing all of the human conducts to libidos, and it is upon this premise that he develops the principle of Utility by which he meant,

'that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question.'¹⁹⁾ However, one may detect without any difficulty a distinct logical gap between the premise and the principle, since the former is referring to the pleasure of mankind as individuals while the latter is concerned with the happiness of the 'party'. The one is a destructive representation of the condition humaine, while the other is a constructive ethical motto developing itself into the axiom, 'It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong.'²⁰⁾

The key-word for him to fill up the logical gap is 'sympathetic affection', which he says, 'extends its influence... beginning with the small immediate relations where the tie of consanguinity, affinity, domestic contract or friendly intercourse are strongest ... and its links spread into diverse circles — domestic, social, professional, civic, provincial, national.'²¹⁾ It is based on this sort of Gemeinshaftly affection that he develops the premise about an individual into the axiom concerning the greatest number; and thus such abuse often heaped on him as 'he had a curious incapacity to enter into the feeling of others'²²⁾ should be taken as out of point. In effect, since the 'force of Gemeinschaft persists, though with diminishing strength even in the period of Gesellschaft, and remains the reality of social life,'²³⁾ a doctrine of Gesellschaft completely clear of Gemeinshaftly logic must be barren.

There still remains, however, a number of pejoratives such as 'egoistic hedonism', 'selfish', 'self-interested', '*laissezfaire*', 'individualism', labelled by his contemporaries on Benthamite school, which, as Mary Mack insists,²⁴⁾ is in truth quite unapplicable to his philosophy. These pejoratives indicate that their whole attention was occupied by the destructive aspect of his doctrine, while other aspects were left entirely out of account, and the ethos of the age is to be detected reflecting in this biased view of theirs. It must have been that in the age of transition they were very alert to the inhuman and machinelike factors inherent in the coming Gesellschaft society, and could not help turning their eyes to the points where they are revealed most outright, with disgust.

The author of *Oliver Twist*, of course, was one of them. In his numerous succeeding works, conflict between the benevolent and the self-calculated is repeatedly drawn as the pattern of struggle between the good and the evil. To do him justice this view point of his is rather too Gemeinshaftly for an adult, and more often than not brings disastrous effects on many of the

later works, but on the other hand, when the story itself is assumed to be told from a view point which is by its nature Gemeinschaftly it might be so transcended as to become its strongest point. As will be discussed in other respects, the success of *Oliver Twist* owes most to the view point that is of a boy, through which readers' minds are quite naturally introduced into an infantile world, Gemeinschaftly in all essentials. In David Cecil's words 'he does best when he writes from a child's point of view,' for;

Children are instinctive, they have strong imaginations, vivid sensations; they see life as black or white, and bigger than reality, their enemies seem demons, their friends angels, their joys or sorrows absolute and eternal. They do not look at life with the eye of the intellect or the instructed observer, they are not ashamed of sentiment²⁵⁾

To conclude the matter, *Oliver Twist*, if it be successful, should succeed in the way that *Gulliver's Trvels* and *The End of the Affair* do, depending entirely on author's mastery to enrich his creations with the breath and tensions of life, sufficient to impress the intellect or instructed readers' mind with the profound sense of reality.

II

To see whether his creations satisfy these requisites, let us trace here the course taken by Oliver from the beginning to the end. Until about the middle of the seventh chapter he is in the workhouse and its neighbourhood in a 'certain town'. He escaped from it and becomes acquainted with Artful Dodger on his way to London, introduced into Fagin's Crime Scool and lives among the outlaws till the end of Chapter XI. Having been rescued by Mr. Brownlow he awakes up to find himself among tender, benevolent ladies and gentlemen, in the twelfth chapter, while in the fifteenth chapter he is recaptured by Fagin's followers only to dwell again in their den till in Chapter XXI when he is taken to Chertsey as a tool of their planned burglary, which in the twenty-eighth chapter turns out to be a failure and Oliver is so severely injured that he is forsaken. From the end of this chapter to the last he lives with angelic Rose and her family though at times his security is almost endangered by Fagin's intrigue. To sum up, he passes through four worlds — Bumble's, Fagin's, Brownlow's and Rose's; of which the former two are to be regarded as the worlds of the selfish and evil and the latter as those of the benevolent and good.

The characteristic feature of Bumble's world is symbolically presented in the 'live-board' episode in Chapter II, which delivers Oliver's astonishment when he is told that 'the board... said he is to appear before it forth with.'²⁶⁾

The irony of the passage is that apparently he mistakes the sense of the word for 'plank' because of his ignorance, instead of 'council', while in reality the 'board' is an institute as impersonal and irresponsible as a piece of lumber, without flesh or blood. This dominant note of inhuman and irresponsible horror struck at the start of the story by the parish surgeon saying, when Oliver's mother dies, no more than 'It's all over, Mrs. Thingummy,'²⁷⁾ is most solidly crystallized in the following gruel scene:

Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said: somewhat alarmed at his own temerity:

"Please, sir, I want some more." ...

"What!" said the master at length, in a faint voice.

"Please, sir," replied Oliver, "I want some more."

The master aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arms; and shrieked aloud for beadle.

The board were sitting in solemn conclave, when Mr. Bumble rushed into the room in great excitement, and addressing the gentleman in the high chair, said,

"Mr. Limbkins, I beg your pardon, sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more!"²⁸⁾

We find a personification of the impersonal horror in Bumble the beadle who is so characterized as to betray the essentials of the cruelty intrinsic to stock-and-stone organization. The first utterance of his is, 'Do you think this respectful or proper conduct Mrs. Mann, to keep the parish officers a waiting at your gate, when they come here upon parochial business connected with parochial orphans? Are you aweer, Mrs. Mann, that you are, as I may say, a parochial delegate, and a stipendiary?'²⁹⁾ Most impressisive and glaring among these words is, needless to say, an epithet 'parochial', occurring three times in the two sentences, which is to be brought on his lips so often later that we can numerate its usage by some thirty times, including such strange ones as 'a millstone round the parochial throat,' 'antiparochial weather,' 'any man parochial or extraparochial' and 'parochially.'³⁰⁾

To introduce a character by means of such a trade-mark as a strange behavior or a marked phrase is an easy-going, conventional way of characterization, very often accused by critics of its inability 'to realize the complexities of the ordinary human mind.' E. M. Forster, in his *Aspects of the Novel* calls this sort of characters 'flat', and says in their defence against the criticism above, that 'the novelist's touch as thus defined is, of course bad in biography, for no human being is simple,' but that 'in a novel it has its place,' adding that flat characters are 'best when they are comic.'³¹⁾ However, Bumble is in effect no comic character though he is caricatured, and the horror secreted out of his personality comes directly from

his flatness in the very biographic sense of word. For he represents those impersonal organization—men constituting Gesellschaft society, and it indicates straight his intention to display the dignity of the machinery established by law, to which he belongs, that adding to the repeated use of the epithet, he employs in the quotation plural nouns merely to denote himself who is singular. It is not of his own accord in the exact sense of the words that he bullies waywardly but only playing the rôle given to him by the organization.

Dickens illustrates succeedingly in Bumble the irresponsible horror common to the essentially flat figures composing the law-bound mechanic organizations of the modern world. Another trade-mark labelled on the beadle to impress his character is a cocked hat. For instance, he 'complacently glances' at it, or in 'a fever of parochial excitement' puts it on 'wrong side first,' and when he is 'in the full bloom and pride of beadlehood' it is 'dazzling in the morning sun,' while once retired from office, 'the mighty cocked-hat' is replaced by 'a modest roun^e one.' He is to cry out in despair, squeezing his round hat with both his hands, 'If the law supposes that, the law is an ass—an idiot... a bachelor,'³²⁾ once he is out of the shelter of the powerful organization, since he used to be mesely a rôle, and now he is equal to nothing. In the ironical description of the beadles, 'Mr. Bumble... smiled. Yes, he smiled. Beadles are but men; and Mr. Bumble smiled,'³³⁾ on his first appearance, the author fully exhibits the inhuman essence of the beadles, and Bumble is rendered to be a character symblic of the mechanical institute by being an impersonal, flat type.

In all the rooms, the mouldering shutters were fast closed: the bars which held them were screwed tight into the wood; the only light which was admitted, stealing its way through round hole at the top: which made the rooms more gloomy, and filled them with strange shadows.³⁴⁾

Above is the description of Fagin's den where Oliver is to live among outlaws whose first and utmost concerns are nothing but self-preservation since they are deprived of the protection of laws like our remotest ancestors in the most primitive age. For them every existence in the world is, not excluding other human beings, nothing but a mechanic function, either convenient to promote their own security, or hostile and endangering their own existences. These outlaws, quite alien to the 'sympathetic affection' are no more than so many isolated wild animals who thus deny the humanities in other persons, while Bumbles are so many flat monsters deprived of their own humanities by the mechanic organization. In a brief commentary that

every member 'of the respectable coterie appeared plunged in his own reflection,'³⁵⁾ is exhibited the fundamental solitude underlying their relations comparable to those among the wild animals of a flock. They do not refrain at all from internal strifes whenever any of their mates' existences are against their own interests, as is indicated in the scene below:

"Will you speak?" thundered the Jew (seizing the Dodger tightly by the collar)...
 "Why, the traps have got him and that's all about it," said the Dodger sullenly.
 "Come, let go o'me, will you!" and swinging himself, at one jerk, clean out of the big coat, which he left in the Jew's hand, the Dodger snatched up the toasting fork,³⁶⁾ and made a pass at the merry old gentleman's waistcoat....

It is of course in Fagin that the brutal nature common to the members of the gang is most conspicuously realized, for he is at times fierce enough as is shown above, and cautious enough to give up drinking a glass of brandy treated by his mate after 'just putting his lips to it,' though he hardly opens his mouth without saying either 'my dear,' or 'my dears,' rubbing his hands with a grin on his cheeks. Sikes hits upon this self-centredness of the Jew when he corrects Fagin's expectation that Oliver would be theirs for life, if they once let him feel that he is one of them, saying, 'Ours! Yours you mean.'³⁷⁾ The sense of horror evoked out of his personality is intensified and rendered more profound as well as substantial by such outside descriptions as follows:

The mud lay thick upon the stones, and a black mist hung over the streets: the rain fell sluggishly down, and everything felt cold and clammy to the touch. It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and downways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved: crawling forth, by night, in search of some rich offal for a meal.³⁸⁾

As Graham Greene rightly points out, Fagin 'has always about him this quality of darkness and nightmare,'³⁹⁾ which symbolizes the weird horror intrinsic to the anarchic and chaotic world of outlaws respectively trying to carry out their own desires in the darkness like so many wild beast. The author relates that Oliver 'awoke... from what seemed to have been a long troubled dream,'⁴⁰⁾ when he recovers himself in Brownlow's comfortable room, rescued out of the dark world. It is suggestive of its nightmarish horror that including this scene, Oliver never fails to be in a 'drowsy state between sleeping and waking,' when he is on the borderlines between this world and other, and most impressive of the scenes is when Fagin and Monks pay a surprising visit to him, intending to kidnap him out of Rose's house. Oliver,

in the drowsy state, suddenly notices the presence of the Jew close before him at the window and calls loudly for help. The inmates of the house make a vigorous pursuit but the search is all in vain:

The grass was long; but it was trodden down nowhere, save where their (searchers') own feet had crushed it. The sides and brinks of the ditches were of damp clay; but in no one place could they discern the print of men's shoes.⁴¹⁾...

Of course it is absurd, unreasonable, but the strangeness, the mystery is the essence of the horror sensed by the normal toward the abnormal rascals. That vital horror, intrinsic to the outlaws is based solely on the fact that there is no knowing when, where, why and how will the calamity befall on us.

Thus we have observed both of worlds of the selfish realized with consistent solidity inspired by author's imagination, of profound sense of reality deriving directly from his appropriate grasp on their essential features. Let us now turn our eyes to the worlds of the benevolent, and we are surprised at their shallowness as compared with the undeniable solidity of their enemies. In Bumble's world we are introduced to individuals reduced to mere component functions of an immense machinery, and in Fagin's world, to isolated outlaws reducing every other individual to a function to fulfill their own desire, while in Brownlow's world and in Rose's, we find individuals reduced to functions to carry out the author's program indispensable both in rescuing Oliver out of the adverse circumstances and in preserving his uncertain security. Consequently, there is no qualitative difference between Brownlow's world and Rose's, and in either of them our interest is held, while we are persuaded that Oliver is quite safe, only by such incidental characters as Grimwig, Giles, Brittles, Blathers and Duff, who are comic relief with all the limitation the phrase implies. Here is Brownlow, obliged to represent the masculine side of the benevolent, as he first appears to Oliver:

Now, the old gentleman came in as brisk as need be; but he had no sooner raised his spectacles on his forehead ... to take a good long look at Oliver, than his countenance underwent a very great variety of odd contortions The fact is ... that Mr. Brownlow's heart...forced a supply of tears into his eyes by some hydraulic process.⁴²⁾...

Thus Dickens wrongly characterizes him with sentimentality, most feminine aspect of benevolence, which to make the matter still worse, bites into his own heart when he tries to depict the feminine representative of the benevolent:

The younger lady was in the lovely bloom and springtime of womanhood; at that age, when, if even angels be for God's good purposes enthroned in mortal forms, they may be, without impiety, supposed to aide in such as hers. She was not past seventeen. Cast in slight and exquisite a mould; so mild and gentle; so pure and beautiful; that earth seemed not her element, nor rough creatures her fit companions.⁴³⁾

It is a crude sort of sentimentalism begotten by an excessive emotional response on the author's part toward his creation that he decorates Rose with, which helplessly murs the whole presentation of her world.

The rose and honeysuckle clung to the cottage walls; the ivy crept round the trunks of trees; and the garden-flowers perfumed the air with delicious odours.... Spring fled swiftly by, and summer came. If the village had been beautiful at first it was now in the full glow and luxuriance of its richness. The great trees, which had looked shrunken and bare in the earlier months, had now burst into strong life and health; and stretching forth their green arms over the thirsty ground, converted open and naked spots into choice nooks, where was a deep and pleasant shade from which to look upon the wide prospect steeped in sunshine, which lay stretched beyond. The earth had donned her mantle of brightest green.⁴⁴⁾

Clearly he is dealing here with a standard topos, a locus amoenus,⁴⁵⁾ like Arcadia or a 'verger' in the midst of wilderness through which Arthur's knights had to pass. This accumulation of trite images and stock phrases associated with pastorals and romances is anything but a landscape or topography expected to be delivered in a realistic modern narrative prose.

As Kettle's saying is, the world of the selfish has 'a reality for us which the nice houses in Pentonville and Chertsey never achieve.'⁴⁶⁾ In criticism of the weakness of the part Greene puts a question, quoting above descriptions of the representatives, saying, 'How can we really believe that these inadequate ghosts of goodness can triumph over Fagin, Monks and Sykes?'⁴⁷⁾ But G. K. Chesterton's opinion that 'the little lamp-lit rooms of Mr. Brownlow and Rose Maylie are ... a mere foil to the foul darkness without'⁴⁸⁾ seems rather irrelevant, for how is it necessary for Bumble-Fagin world to be 'set off by contrast'? Reverse is the case. As a beam of the faintest light will increase its brightness when it is shed into an immense darkness, so Brownlow-Rose world is endowed with a sense of reality foiled by the overwhelming reality of its enemies. It is only in such a scene as above in which Fagin and Monks suddenly appear that the solidity of the 'good' world is impressed on our heart. This sort of paradoxical method has achieved a great success in a more exhaustive way, in our century, bringing forth a lot of immoral moral fables such as *Brighton Rock* and *Le Désert de l'Amour*.

Conclusion

Oliver Twist as a whole is rendered a successful moral fable type travel story with all its weaknesses, which are by no means completely overcome, but tolerably modified by the author's mastery that has succeeded, though not very consistently, in transcending his too childish philosophy, and it owes its success most to the view point in fortunate accord with the limited range of his. Moreover, we find this view point contribute in no small measure to its success by providing it with other sorts of profound artistic properties. Oliver is nine years old when the story actually begins, and is no more than thirteen years of age at the end, while his mind is also shown to grow mature, to a limited extent as it is, on occasions he encounters with various incidents initiating him into the world. From time to time the theme of his mental progress is brought out with success by means of the very effect of Dickensian comic irony, when his innocence, a sort of eccentricity comes in contact with the worldliness, as is symbolized in the 'live board' episode.

References

- 1) Arnold Kettle : *An Introduction to the English Novel* vol.1 (1951) Hutchinson's University Library p.19
- 2) T. R. Malthus : *An Essay On Population* (1798) Everyman's Lib. vol 2 p.49
- 3) John Browning ; *The Works of Jeremy Bentham* (1843) William Tait, vol.1 p.1
- 4) Asa Briggs ed : *Chartist Studies* Macmillan (1962), pp. 10, 11,35
- 5) Charles Dickens : *Sketches by Boz* (1833-6) The New Oxford Illustrated Dickens p.2
- 6) Kettle : *op. cit.* p.132
- 7) Charles Dickens : *Adventures of Oliver Twist*, Everyman's Lib. p.85
- 8) Thomas Hobbes : *Leviathan* (1651) Everyman's Lib. pp.66.-7
- 9) Adam Smith : *The Wealth Of Nations* (1776) Everyman's Lib. vol. 1, p.400
- 10) Dickens : *op. cit.* p.69
- 11) *ibid.* p.11
- 12) *ibid.* p.25
- 13) cf. Ferdinand Tönnies : *Community and Society* trans. by Charles P. Looms, Harper Torchbooks (1957) pp.130, 65, 33.
- 14) *ibid.* p.78
- 15) T. S. Ashton : *The Industrial Revolution* O. U. P. -Maruzen 1960 p.142
- 16) Crane Brinton : *English Political Thought in the 19th Century* Harper Torchbooks p.113

- 17) *cf.* D.H. Macgregor : *Economic Thought and Policy* 1949 O. U. P. *pp.* 68*ff.*
- 18) John Browring, *op. cit.*
- 19) *ibid.*
- 20) *ibid.* *p.*227
- 21) *cf.* Mary P. Mack : *Jeremy Bentham : An Odyssey of Ideas* (1962) Heinemann *pp.* 206-7
- 22) Brinton : *op. cit.* *p.*23
- 23) Tönnies : *op.cit.* *p.*232
- 24) Mack : *op. cit.* *p.*208
- 25) David Cecil : *Early Victorian Novels* (1948) Pelican Books *p.*48
- 26) Dickens *op. cit.* *p.*9
- 27) *ibid.* *p.*3
- 28) *ibid.* *p.*13
- 29) *ibid.* *p.*6
- 30) *ibid.* *pp.* 24, 170, 203, 405
- 31) E.M. Forster : *Aspects of the Novel* (1927) Edward Arnold *p.*68
- 32) Dickens: *op. cit.* *pp.*7, 35, 122, 273, 407
- 33) *ibid.* *p.*7
- 34) *ibid.* *p.*132
- 35) *ibid.* *p.*90
- 36) *ibid.* *p.*88
- 37) *ibid.* *p.*145
- 38) *ibid.* *pp.*138-9
- 39) Graham Greene : *The Lost Childhood and Other Essays* (1951) Eyre & Spottiswoode *p.*55
- 40) Dickens : *op. cit.* *p.*79
- 41) *ibid.* *p.*264
- 42) *ibid.* *p.*83
- 43) *ibid.* *pp.* 215-6
- 44) *ibid.* *pp.*242-5
- 45) *cf.* Ernst Robert Curtius : *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* trans. by Willard Trask (1963) Harper Torchbooks *p.*183 *ff.*
- 46) Kettle : *op. cit.* *p.* 131
- 47) Greene : *op. cit.* *p.*55
- 48) G. K. Chesterton : *Charles Dickens* (1906) Methuen *p.*87

Summary

Oliver Twist, with its developments very often dependent on coincidences, and with its hero who is 'inert,' should be classified among travel stories, and in view of the author's words that it is intended to illustrate the principle that the good survive through every adverse circumstance, it may well be taken as a moral fable type travel story.

To be successful as a moral fable, it is necessary that either the author's philosophy is profound enough to bear deep probing, or in the act of illustration his creations should be so filled with a sense of reality that the story transcend the idea which evoked it. The aim of the present paper is to explain the nature of Dickens' philosophy as well as his mastery in illustrating it, in the course of both of them it will be found whether it is successful or not.

Acknowledgement

The writer acknowledges his indebtedness to *Dickens' Style* by Tadao Yamamoto and others, concerning the second chapter of the present paper.