THE NOVELS OF CHARLES DICKENS

FIRST PRINCIPLES AND DOCTRINES IN THE NOVELS OF CHARLES DICKENS

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is that Charles Dickens proposes principles so fundamental that they become an artistically essential reference in his novels. This metaphysics, consisting of first principles and doctrines on Nature, Christian Theology, Good and Evil, Appearance and Reality, among others, is established mainly in the early novels, almost always quite explicitly and with great emphasis. Despite this emphasis the role of the metaphysics is to be a useful reference in the artistic background.

Beginning with David Copperfield, the metaphysics becomes imbedded in the artistic foreground. The original metaphysics is never renounced, but Dickens treats it quite differently.

The thesis attempts to catalog these first principles and doctrines, establish that they are a vital element in Dickens' narratives, and demonstrate how the novelist's art and metaphysics are organically linked. Four early and five later novels by Dickens form the thesis' purview.

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Introduction

One central fact that emerges from the novels of Charles Dickens is that there is an identifiable cosmos in them. However the reader views it, this cosmos is diverse, interrelated and consistent enough to form a distinct environment. As George Orwell has commented in his essay on Dickens' work: "It is not so much a series of books, it is more like a world" (127).

Several major critics of Dickens' novels have used the word "world" in the title of their work.[1] It is as evocative for a critic like Humphry House, concerned with the influences of the Victorian world on Dickens' fiction, as it is for J. Hillis Miller, who writes about the existential character of Dickens' novels, and the word "world" becomes a particularly serviceable one for Dickensian critics. As the novelist writes about "the changes of human life, and the extraordinary manner in which we are perpetually conducting ourselves" (Dombey and Son 969), the term suggests that the critic will discuss both these changes and the Dickensian environment necessary for seeing them in some perspective. To respond to "human life" in Dickens, one must also respond to the Dickensian world in which it is conducted.

The phrase "first principles and doctrines", applied to an author's work, is obviously another way of saying "world". Like all the "worlds" of Dickensian criticism it is limited by its emphasis, yet it has a major advantage as a title. It does not limit the critic to one

world, and this is useful when writing of a novelist in whose fiction there are two, this planet and Heaven. For the thesis proposed here is that Dickens' ontology includes more than the exploration of self and individual conduct on which critics like Edmund Wilson and Lawrence Frank have focused. Attempts like those of Myron Magnet to broaden this focus by examining Dickens' novels from the perspective of social psychology still ignore an important factor in the novelist's fiction. There are vital metaphysical principles in Dickens' worlds that are independent of human conduct, and to which this conduct is referred. The reference is an integral and essential component of Charles Dickens' art, and to miss it is to miss the tale Dickens has told.

In The Metaphysical Novel in England and America, Edwin Eigner describes Dickens as a writer of:

> ... the metaphysical novel, an oxymoron, in which experience is presented first in purely materialistic or associational or positivistic terms, which are then contradicted from the idealist point of view so that experience is mystically transformed and a new reality is established. (9)

Eigner (88) claims it is this transformation, with its rejection of Lockean empiricism and its a priori view of truth that permits the happy endings and also the sudden vision of truth and changes of character so frequently reviled by post-Victorian critics of Dickens like George Woodcock in his Introduction to A Tale of Two Cities (24-25).

Eigner's view of the metaphysical aspect of Dickens' fiction offers support for a thesis proposing the essential character of the novelist's metaphysical principles, and the critic's views on how Dickens approaches characterization will also be called on to support a major contention in this thesis. Yet there are basic differences

between the metaphysical novel Eigner describes, and the manner in which this thesis views Dickens' use of metaphysics. By focusing on these differences, several fundamental contentions of the thesis may be emphasized.

The thesis sees neither an "oxymoron" quality nor a transformation in Dickens' novels. There are not two realities in the fiction. There is instead a reference, often made in a clearly didactic fashion, to principles that are part of a single reality. There is no evidence of separate metaphysical and psychological realities in Dickens' work. The narrative thrust is on the fact that psychological and metaphysical elements are interrelated parts of a whole. To focus on a part, as Dickens does, does not make it a whole. This unity in Dickens' ontology is at the heart of his fiction. Put another way, this thesis contends that Dickens writes about the inevitable relationship of human life to Dickensian reality, not the relationship of one reality to another.

It might be helpful also to comment on Eigner's use of the adverb "mystically". It is easy to be sympathetic to its use. As we shall note in the thesis, Dickens expresses little admiration for philosophers, and Henry James has lamented the fact that Dickens himself is not more of one (Views 60-61). For those interested in Dickens' metaphysical principles, the result is frustration with the novelist's lack of explicitness in describing them. Dickens is more interested in the importance of his first principles and doctrines than he is in their meaning. The critic taking a metaphysical perspective must accept the frustration this entails. It is not a fact, however, that makes

Dicken's fiction mystical. It merely underlines the vital fact that as an artist he stresses significance, not metaphysical analysis. His references to his first principles and doctrines are too clear to be mystical, and the argument against a mystical character to the fiction is supported by the common complaint of John Ruskin, "Dickens taught us nothing with which we were not familiar" (Ford 8). Clarity and familiarity do not preclude mysticism, but in Dicken's novels they argue strongly against it. As a metaphysician Dickens is quite pedestrian.

That Dickens does not always amplify his metaphysics is one difficulty the thesis must accept. Another is that it relies on the assumption that frequently the first principles and doctrines in his novels espoused by characters are those of Dickens himself. Such an assumption can be supported, however, by a great deal of evidence. At least in the novels written prior to David Copperfield, Dickens in his role of discursive narrator is prolific in expressing his first principles and doctrines. It is quite obvious when a character's words or actions conflict with these. Dickens also imbues his characters with an air of authority when they pronounce on metaphysical matters. As she describes Heaven and the temporal quality of earthly life in Oliver Twist (295), the comments of even a minor character like Mrs. Maylie assume an anthem like quality the reader is reluctant to challenge. Conversely, when Pecksniff proclaims, "There is nothing personal in morality, my love." (Martin Chuzzlewit 65), there can be no question that the exact opposite must be true. Possibly the allegorial function, particularly of the minor characters, that Eigner considers an aspect of the metaphysical novel (71-76) accounts for the authority of Dickens'

characters on metaphysical matters. In any case the consistency of the principles and doctrines expressed by characters creates a consistent metaphysics. The debate about which Shakespearean characters speak for the playwright is not relevant in Dickens.

We will examine Dickens' principles and doctrines from two viewpoints, the early novels and the later ones, the dividing line being David Copperfield.[2] In general, Dickens is unashamedly didactic in the early novels, introducing his principles by discourse, polemics and rhetorical pointing. Overt moralizing may offend our contemporary tastes, but it is possible to conclude that Dickens reaches the summit of his artistry in these didactic passages. It is certainly not possible to ignore the emphasis with which Dickens stresses the significance of his principles.

Beginning with David Copperfield, the promulgation required to convert a principle into a doctrine becomes less evident. The principles function more in the narrative foreground, are not so clearly delineated, and the reference to them is not so obvious. They do, though, remain operative. However they are encountered in his fiction, the principles and doctrines we shall examine are at the heart of Dickens' worlds.

The title for the thesis was suggested by a passage in The Pickwick Papers, in which the author castigates the Reverend Mr. Stiggins for being one of:

> ... those false prophets and wretched mockers of religion, who, without sense to expound its first doctrines, or hearts to feel its first principles, are more dangerous members of society than the common criminal! (729)

Of course, the only danger posed by those readers of Dickens' fiction who ignore his first principles and doctrines is to their own enjoyment of the novels. In the case of a novelist like Charles Dickens, however, this fact is "wretched" enough.

The Early Fiction

I - Nature

One of the most fundamental principles in Dickens' early fiction is the importance of "Nature" (almost always capitalized). This importance is most apparent in Oliver Twist and Dombey and Son. In the latter novel the narrator states:

> It might be worthwhile, sometimes, to inquire what Nature is, and how men work to change her.... (737)

He does not answer his query in a manner likely to satisfy most metaphysicians, but he does strike out with a forceful polemic on how violation of "the eternal laws of outraged Nature" leads to physical and moral evil. He suggests the goodness of Nature when he states, "To see her in her comprehensive truth" one must rise "upon the wings of a free mind", and strongly implies that Nature is God's design, which he probably considers definition enough. The design is both moral and physical.

In Oliver Twist (290) Nature is a physical world of "balmy air", "green hills" and "rich woods" near an inland village. "One short glimpse of Nature's face" is able to transport those who are weary and dying to "a new state of being", one much superior to their former worldly one. We shall see later how this state of being is related to concepts of life before birth and after death, but at this point it is made clear that both physical and moral Nature (it is far from clear

that they are to be separated except logically) are first principles in man's existence. It is also clear that each is both good and vulnerable. This is vital in Dickens' fiction, for it is the vulnerability of moral Nature especially that is the first principle that offers the possibility of drama.

That Nature is good, and "the world" spoils things is pointed out in Oliver Twist when the narrator introduces an elderly lady who appears too grotesque to be "the work of Nature's hand". He comments:

> Alas! How few of Nature's faces are left alone to gladden us with their beauty! The cares and sorrows and hungerings of the world, change them as they change hearts; and it is only when those passions sleep, and have lost their hold forever, that the troubled clouds pass off, and leave Heaven's surface clear. (223)

The principle is pointed out to the reader again in the novel:

> Men who look on nature, and their fellow men, and cry that all is dark and gloomy are in the right; but the sombre colours are reflections from their own jaundiced eyes and hearts. The real hues are delicate, and need a clearer vision. (307)

Nature left alone is fine, and that it functions well also is pointed out not in a discourse, but in the history of Oliver's birth in the first few pages of Oliver Twist, Nature and Oliver together "fought out the point" (46) of his breathing. Intervention by unaffordable and profoundly wise doctors would have killed him in no time. The narrator steps in to inform the reader that apart from producing babies efficiently, Nature does so fairly. It is the world which labels them noblemen or beggars.

The early fiction is emphatic in its doctrine that man has his origin in the goodness of the "mighty mother" (Dombey and Son 737) that

is Nature. There is no mention of any other "creator", though it is strongly implied in Dombey and Son (737) that Nature is God's design. That Nature and man may be perverted (739) is one of Dickens' first artistic principles, and unquestionably a first principle in the vital metaphysical background of the early novels. It becomes a doctrine that Dickens makes certain his readers do not miss.

That the importance of Nature is so central to Dickens' early fiction makes it the more frustrating that in all Dickens' metaphysics Nature is the principle least clearly defined. No doubt Dickens would answer that such frustration is likely to be suffered primarily by philosophers, and his early novels demonstrate little sympathy for the struggles of the "worldly scholars" (Martin Chuzzlewit 274) who profess this discipline. The reader may sense that Dickens has assumed the validity of the Natural Law Victorians were beginning to debate (Houghton 66-70), and one may also sense the pastoral view of Nature so important to the Romantics and a nostalgic memory for the Victorians (79-80). The reader will note however that while Dickens has not been explicit in his definition of Nature, he is quite explicit in Oliver Twist and Dombey and Son about referring human conduct to it. The antecedent role of Nature in that conduct is made explicit by discourses and asides in both these novels.

The metaphysical aspects of Nature proposed in the early fiction are not renounced in the later novels, but they are no longer an obvious factor in them. There, as we shall discuss, Nature assumes a physical, pastoral role, with the restorative power that reflects the Nature of the Romantics, a Nature that as we have suggested, was becoming a

nostalgic memory amidst the tumult of Victorian thought (Houghton 79-80). In the later novels, too, the design that is Nature becomes imbedded in the forefront of the narratives and loses its metaphysical role.

II - Time and Eternity

Dickens' concept of time is perhaps best expressed in a metaphor in Dombey and Son (516), where he describes a steeple-clock reflecting "the countless ripples in the tide of time that regularly roll and break on the eternal shore". That time is no friend of man is suggested by the negative image given Mr. Dombey's watch and the foreshadowings of disaster that one notes in the fiction. It is made explicit on the first page of Dombey and Son by a discourse on the malevolence of Time. The discourse points out that it is a powerful and dangerous enemy:

> Time and his brother Care had set some marks, as on a tree that was to come down in good time--remorseless twins they are for striding through their human forests, notching as they go--while the countenance of Son was crossed with a thousand little creases, which the same deceitful Time would take delight in smoothing out and wearing away with the flat part of his scythe, as a preparation of the surface for his deeper operations. (49)

The eternal seems safer and more benevolent. References in Dombey and Son to the "Eternal Majesty of Heaven" (692) and "the eternal laws of outraged Nature" (737), and to the "Immortality" of humanity (298) confirm the author's view of an eternal quality to the cosmos, and this is a fact which Dickens' fiction suggests offers solace to suffering humanity, though it is not with this solace that his fiction is primarily concerned. It is, however, clear that the importance for

man of this eternal quality of the cosmos is that he will be around to experience it. There is no doubt in the early fiction that this experience is the final phase of man's existence. What is ambiguous is the beginning phase. In Oliver Twist Dickens states:

> The memories which peaceful country scenes call up, are not of this world, nor of its thoughts and hopes. Their gentle influence may teach us how to weave fresh garlands for the graves of those we loved, may purify our thoughts, and bear down before it old enmity and hatred; but beneath all this, there lingers, in the least reflective mind, a vague and half-formed consciousness of having held such feelings long before, in some remote and distant time, which calls up solemn thoughts of distant times to come, and bends down pride and worldliness beneath it. (290)

This curious comment is anything but clear, but it appears to remove the "distant times" from this world, and as Dickens is discussing the reflections of the dying, the "distant times to come" would seem to refer to life after death. It is the feelings "in some remote and distant time", "long before", that, as they too are removed from this world, suggest the possibility of life before birth. That the feelings "purify", and that Dickens implies in his fiction the early stages of life find man at his most pure, give more plausibility to the assertion that the author is postulating life before birth.

The comment in Oliver Twist may remind the reader of Wordsworth's ode, Intimations of Immortality (441-43).

> Hence in a season of calm weather
> Though inland far we be
> Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither,

It is interesting to note Dickens' setting is an "inland" village and other aspects of this ode may be noted in Dickens' early fiction also. Wordsworth's immortal sea is a central image in Dombey and Son, though

in that novel the image centres on the journey to it rather than the journey from it which is the focus of Wordsworth's ode.

Other lines from the ode remind us of Dickens as well:

> Shades of the prison - house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy
>
> The Youth who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's Priest.

Both Wordsworth and Dickens stress the essentially malevolent quality of time as it carries us from the east, yet neither concedes defeat to his enemy. Both claim the victories attributable to the human heart, and Dickens postulates the eventual unconditional surrender of time to immortality.

The claim that Dickens has an essentially Hobbesian view of childhood is strongly stated by J. Hillis Miller:

> In Dickens there is no Wordsworthian theory of the child's filial bond with nature. There is no moment of primitive or infantile identification of subject and object, self and world, followed by a "fall" into the cruel realm of time and division. (World 251)

Miller's comment is made as he discusses Great Expectations, and in the context of that novel it finds obvious support. Indeed, that Dickens' children are each "the small bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry", as Miller states (251), seems clear from Oliver Twist onwards. On the psychological level "The Dickensian hero is separated from nature" (251). Yet the metaphysics of the early fiction gives this assertion a somewhat different hue. In Oliver Twist and Dombey and Son Dickens stresses the "identification of subject and object" in his metaphysical discourses. It takes workhouse authorities and a Fagin to destroy the Wordsworthian identification, and they serve

in "the cruel realm of time". Miller is right in saying there is no "fall" into the psychological state Dickens portrays, but in omitting Dickens' metaphysical principles in the two early novels, Miller has ignored the fact that Dickens' children have been pushed into psychological alienation from metaphysical identification with nature.

III - Heaven, God and Christ

There are two places in Dickens' cosmos, this planet and Heaven. There are so many references to the latter in Oliver Twist and Dombey and Son that nothing is gained by listing all of them. Heaven is a place where we go after death and are transformed into "angels" (Dombey and Son 298), (Oliver Twist 224). The early fiction excludes no one from this process. Perhaps a more comprehensive view of Heaven is given us by Mrs. Maylie in Oliver Twist:

> for Heaven is just; and such things teach us, impressively, that there is a brighter world than this, and that the passage to it is speedy. (295)

The "brighter world than this" is noted or implied in several death scenes as well.

Heaven is also a symbol for the governing principle of human existence. That this principle is God is implied in the phrase "Eternal Majesty of Heaven" and the context in which it is used on page 692 of Martin Chuzzlewit. I have found only one reference to Hell (Dombey and Son 737), and there it is used as a rhetorical counter-balance in a polemic, and as a metaphor for human misery and moral evil, what Dickens calls a "perversion of nature" (739). There is no evidence in the fiction that it is a place.

In the early fiction there is not only Heaven, of course, but God. This fact is frequently given artistic expression by reflections of "The Lord's Prayer". Mrs. Maylie's assertion that "God's will be done" (Oliver Twist (295) and the reference to Florence's refuge "her Father who was in Heaven" (Dombey and Son 772), are two examples. The metaphysical significance of "The Lord's Prayer", if we may briefly step outside the early novels, reaches a peak in the death of Jo in Bleak House.

The importance of "The Lord's Prayer" in Dickens' theology reflects the importance given to Christ. It is the "benignant, mild, and merciful" Christ figure (Dombey and Son 264) Paul Dombey thinks of as he prepares to leave Blimber's school, and it is the "divine" Christ (297) who stands beside Paul's dead mother to welcome him as the child dies. It is Christ who:

> "through the round of human life, and all its hopes and griefs, from birth to death, from infancy to age, had sweet compassion for, and interest in, its every scene and stage, its every suffering and sorrow." (923)

It is his "sacred name" the repentant Alice murmers as she dies. Interestingly, Dickens never himself mentions Christ by name in his fiction.

It is not clear what Dickens means by "divine", but at the very least Christ is second to "The Father" in his theology, and His interest in humanity is clear. Despite the many references to God, who is just and a good architect, the theology described above is all Dickens proposes in his fiction.

There has been much discussion of his "Christianity" by Dickensian critics. Other than unflattering comparisons of "a good

many" Christians to Bill Sikes' dog (Oliver Twist 182), officious sextons and oily preachers, Christianity is barely touched on by Dickens in the early novels. The centrality of Christ in his metaphysics is clear. What else he might envision Christianity to be, if anything, Dickens does not say, though, as we shall discuss, it is quite likely that the benevolence the author espouses, in effect an imitation of Christ, may be Dickens' Christianity.

It is useful to note here how Dickens keeps his religious first principles and doctrines, as he does all his metaphysics, under tight artistic control. By never naming Christ, while at the same time being explicit about His being the central figure in man's cosmos, he may the more easily use Him as an artistic reference point when it is dramatically useful to do so, and still retain the essential majesty of His metaphysical role. To bring Him more to the foreground would destroy this vital and delicate architecture. Dickens' Christ could not work as a character in his novels. He is effective as a metaphysical element, where His role is to be a reference point, like so much in Dickens' metaphysics.

IV - Good and Evil

Nature, Time, Heaven and God are part of Dickens' fiction, and a vital part, but they are in the background. Dickens' fiction is about humanity, both individual and social. While the distinction is clear, Dickens emphasizes the links between individual and society as strongly as any novelist. Whether individual or social, his interest in humanity

is primarily in whether it is good or bad. This begs the question of what the author means by the terms, but he has been fairly explicit in explaining them. A key principle is illustrated by Pecksniff's refusing to shake hands with John Westlock and saying, "I have embraced you in the spirit, John, which is better than shaking hands" (Martin Chuzzlewit 71). This, and Pecksniff's simpering, "But not, not now" (72) in explaining his emotional inability to talk to Westlock as he waves the latter to the door, receive a one word response, "Bah!". The point has been made dramatically. Embracing "in the spirit" is an artifice, an excuse for not meeting one's obligation to the real, positive, and moral act of shaking hands or of open discussion. When Tom Pinch defends Pecksniff by reminding Westlock that the former has stated he would shed blood for him, Westlock asks Tom whether he needs blood or decent food. Goodness is in action, not words, and in Dickens' fiction the two are often at variance. It is not Pecksniff's words, but his actions that define him as a bad man. That noble words are subsituted for noble acts makes him worse. It is the practical charity of Mark Tapley that defines him. In Oliver Twist, the elderly Mr. Brownlow travels to the West Indies to help Oliver. Mrs. Maylie does not sniffle over orphans; she takes them into her home. As Dickens' points out at the beginning of Oliver Twist, "a long grace" will not save "a short commons" (56). While benevolent characters say kind things, Dickens asks his readers to judge them by their actions .

More than anything goodness is practical benevolence, and this requires effort. Nature ensures that goodness is triumphant. Man makes

work for man. In effect goodness is the New Testament "do unto others...", and one cannot ignore the word "do".

There is another aspect to goodness as well. While this is secondary, it is made explicit in a comment on human happiness we shall note in the section of the thesis dealing with that principle. That comment stresses acceptance of the centrality of Christ as an aspect of goodness. As, except in the death of Alice in Dombey and Son, where the acceptance is dramatized as a redemptive act, this Christian theme plays no major dramatic role (it may, however, be noted in the death of young Paul Dombey), it is necessarily less active and visible than the benevolence which is part of the drama in the early fiction. Yet Dickens does give it a metaphysical role in Dombey and Son, and accepting the centrality of Christ is an aspect of goodness he presents to his readers.

Apart from exhibiting practical charity, good people look on the bright side of life. To do otherwise is "jaundiced" (Oliver Twist 307). Good people also forgive (Pickwick, Harriet Carter, Tom Pinch, Florence Gay), and this forgiveness is vital to the fiction and a key element in the narrative.

There is always a quietness to the good acts of the sympathetic characters. It is not difficult to see this rooted in the "mild" Christ who is Dickens' paragon of benevolence. Good characters love, come what may (Florence Dombey). The truly saintly have a simple heart (Tom Pinch). They are good even when they are lean and lank and find it hard to live (Mrs. Todgers). They may read "The Sermon on the Mount" (Captain Cuttle). Their moral qualities are more important than their

intellectual ones (Mr. Toots). They know, and act on, the difference between right and wrong (Cousin Feenix). Usually, but not always, their goodness is rewarded in this life. Sometimes (young Paul Dombey) the reward comes in the next, where Heaven, Christ and Eternity will attend to matters. This latter fact points out the importance of the background metaphysics, for Dickens parenthetically comparing Mrs. Todgers to the Good Samaritan relieves the reader of any doubt as to her fate.

In quite another category of goodness is Oliver Twist. He is a totally passive, totally innocent, punching bag. As Angus Wilson points out in his Introduction to the Penguin edition of Oliver Twist, Oliver is a device to illustrate childhood threatened by lurking evil. Wilson could have added the word "innocence" to "childhood". Yet this innocence seems "good" and another species of goodness, perhaps related somehow to that pure state before birth Dickens suggests in the novel.

Far less allegorical and very much more active is the deluded innocence of Tom Pinch. The reader, like Tom's friends, may be impatient and critical of this, but Dickens is not. Westlock, who has no patience for the fact, explains

> Strange, is it not, that the more he likes Pecksniff --the greater reason one has to like him? (Dickens' italics) (Martin Chuzzlewit 262)

The next sentence directs us to Tom's entrance. He is smiling radiantly and "was as happy as only Tom Pinch could be"; that is, the author has made clear, happier than the rest of us. Dickens goes to great lengths to stress Tom's wisdom, and it is clear deluded innocence has its roots in goodness, not error, and results in a good man, not a fool. Tom's

delusion ends, but Dickens compares the type of wisdom he has always possessed, as he will do later in the portrayal of Mr. Toots, to a more practical wisdom by saying the latter is "an idiot's folly weighed against a simple heart" (Martin Chuzzlewit 692).

Evil, like goodness, is an important artistic principle in the four novels. Both flow from the metaphysical principle of Nature, evil in any of its forms being a perversion of Nature's goodness. As the second Mrs. Tony Weller lies dying (often a good point for the reader to notice the author's first principles and doctrines as well as his artistic genius), she says:

> but I hope ven I'm gone, Veller, that you'll think on me as I was afore I knowd them people, and as I raly was by natur'. (The Pickwick Papers 829-30)

Evil, again like goodness, is an active principle, and here the active element is "them people". The perversion of nature is its quality, and its power is a result of human weakness, which is morally neutral, the latter fact being significant in Dickens' artistry. The author gives great attention to weakness as he depicts evil. The elder Paul Dombey, Jonas Chuzzlewit, Edith Dombey and Noah Claypole are set off on their wrong course by evil forces playing on the weakness for which they bear no initial moral responsibility. Dickens implies that this fact does not absolve them from later responsibility, but he is emphatic about circumstances at least mitigating this. The comments of Edith Dombey, speaking of the husband she apparently hates are one illustration of this principle:

> --and think that when I thought so much of all the causes that had made me what I was, I needed to have allowed more for the causes that had made him what he was. I will try, then, to forgive him his share of

> blame. Let him try to forgive me mine! (Dombey and Son 968)

The squalid poor are in an analogous position. There evil takes the form of neglect, as it does that of a warped parent in the case of Edith and Jonas. Sometimes, of course, evil has its origin in the character himself, Mr. Carker illustrating this. It is possible to debate whether Dickens sees pride as evil or weakness, but the dramatic emphasis in the novels supports the former, non-psychoanalytical, view.

Dickens, as he does with goodness, gives us many of the qualities of evil. In general, as has been pointed out, it is a perversion of that goodness which has its source in "Nature". Specifically it is traceable to an active source. It can be a matter of omission, the failure of the favoured to meet their obligations (probably rooted in The New Testament) to those needing help, or the more dramatic evil of commission. Apart from the plight of the poor and a major polemic in Dombey and Son (738-39), Dickens writes mainly about the evil of commission, as one would expect from so dramatic a novelist. In fact probably the principal artistic feature of his fiction is the active struggle between good and evil, though in The Pickwick Papers, a comic novel, it might be more accurate to state that the struggle is between convenience and inconvenience. Even here, however, the later theme is foreshadowed by the interpolative tales.

A major form of evil in the early fiction is selfishness, ranging from what a modern reader, though perhaps not the author, might see as the milder form in Mr. Stiggins to the more sinister version in Jonas Chuzzlewit or Mr. Carker. It may take the form of cruelty, or greed, but whatever form it takes it is always the self expropriating

what Nature gives it no right to. The result is personal and social perversion.

There is another result in all major instances which form a central part of the narrative, and that is that evil does not triumph. In Dickens' metaphysics active perversion of Nature is necessarily less potent than the larger and overriding Nature it perverts, and that Nature is good. It is axiomatic in Dickens' fiction that Nature may be challenged, but not defeated. However jarring (and interesting) the apparent success of evil, it is doomed by the very plan it tampers with. One artistic consequence of this fact is the Dickensian dénouement so satisfying to Victorian readers and, annoying to several prominent later readers like Henry Miller, who notes "the harmless rosewater vaporings of the back pages of Charles Dickens" (Ford 63).

In Dickens and the Social Order (3-4), Myron Magnet points out the absolute quality of good and evil in Dickens' personal view of social morality. Magnet relates several instances of what modern readers would consider crude harshness in Dickens' actions towards, and articles about, malefactors. This harshness (Dickens advocated forcing criminals in prisons to do degrading work that should be done nowhere else) seems out of character for a social reform advocate who stressed benevolence. Yet Magnet argues that such a harsh view of the malefactor is entirely consistent with the absolute view of good and evil Dickens espoused throughout his life.

This same view exists in Dickens' novels. Good and evil function in bitter equilibrium, and Dickens cannot depict both without

giving balancing significance to each. Yet in Dickens' metaphysics the balance is ultimately in favour of goodness.

Such a metaphysical view should not be isolated from Dickens' artistry, however. For our purposes this can be summarized by the final comments of Cousin Feenix, towards the end of Dombey and Son, as he explains to Florence and Edith the course of action he recommends:

> I do conjure my relative, not to stop half way, but to set right, as far as she can, whatever she has done wrong -- not for the honour of her family, not for her own fame, not for any of those considerations which unfortunate circumstances have induced to her regard as hollow, and in point of fact, as approaching to humbug -- but because it is wrong, and not right (967).

This view reflects the metaphysics of good and evil in Dickens' fiction we have discussed; yet a few paragraphs later the final words of Cousin Feenix in the novel add another element:

> And in regard to the changes of human life, and the extraordinary manner in which we are perpetually conducting ourselves, all I can say is, with my friend Shakespeare -- man who wasn't for an age but for all time, and with whom my friend Gay is no doubt acquainted -- that it's like the shadow of a dream (969).

The reference to Shakespeare and the comment on him make the assumption that Cousin Feenix is speaking for Dickens quite plausible and "the shadow" clouds the tidy metaphysics claimed in this thesis. Yet it does not distort it. Dickens is not primarily a metaphysician; he is a novelist. He writes of people, and while his characters often have much of the caricature, their suffering and their actions are often complex, Mr. Dombey being an obvious example. Dickens the metaphysician may have his ideas on good and evil. Dickens the artist writes about good and evil in people, sometimes (the senior Paul Dombey) the same person. That is why the metaphysical "weakness" discussed in this paper becomes

so important as an artistic principle. "The shadow of a dream" clouds the warfare between good and evil, and occasionally that struggle within a character (Paul Dombey), or between characters (the two Martin Chuzzlewits). The shadow is absent in the polemics rising from the warfare between the narrator and the object of his scorn. When the warfare is not abstract, it is conducted in the shadow that is cast by the psychological factors that allow it to exist. Both comments of Cousin Feenix illustrate the work of Dickens as moralist.

The "shadow of a dream" quality of human conduct is a vital first principle in Dickens' novels; and since it becomes more apparent in his later fiction, it will be examined at length in the second part of the thesis.

V - Suffering and Happiness

As Dickens is both novelist and literary populist, his first principles and doctrines might be expected to go beyond the "abstract and abstruse" (Random House) limits of metaphysics that so commonly inscribe that term. One of his key artistic doctrines is human suffering. The pervasive nature of that suffering is suggested by Mrs. Maylie in Oliver Twist, as she contemplates the possibility of Rose's death:

> I hope not, Oliver. I have been very happy with her for some years: too happy, perhaps. It may be time that I should meet with some misfortune; but I hope it is not this. (295)

The complex nature of human suffering is suggested by Job's comment in The Pickwick Papers (733), "tears are not the only proof of distress,

nor the best ones." Pain affects good and bad characters indiscriminately, though it is dramatized most spectacularly in the bad (Fagin, Sikes' death, Jonas Chuzzlewit, Mr. Carker, the unredeemed Dombey).

The author's comment in Oliver Twist on "The cares and sorrows, and hungerings of the world," (223) is just one of a number of occasions when in his role as discursive narrator (one frequently adopted in the early fiction) he emphasizes this basic doctrine of his novels. It would not be difficult for a reader to conclude that the principal matter to be resolved in the early novels is not the question of good and evil so much as it is the question of pain and happiness. For the good and redeemed characters the resolution comes in either a comfortable, pastoral life or a "Christian" death. For the unsympathetic it is usually resolved by appropriate earthly punishment (Mr. Bumble) or a grisly unredeemed death (Sikes, Fagin, Jonas, Carker). Sometimes for those whose goodness is not a major aspect of the drama (Mrs. Todgers, the children of the Scottish immigrants to America in Martin Chuzzlewit), the reward is foreshadowed only by the metaphysical principle that "Heaven is just" or the fact that suffering humanity "has each a portion" (Dombey and Son 923) in the benevolence of Christ, an illustration of how Dickens' background metaphysics can be so important to his artistry.

For the less spectacularly evil (Mr. Stiggins) there may be only qualified punishment, for Dickens does not postulate ultimate punishment as he does ultimate reward; or punishment may be ambiguously foreshadowed as in Mr. Perker's (not established as an infallible

authority on the matter) comments on the future of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg (The Pickwick Papers 755). In general, the major good characters are, or become, happy, and the bad are, or become, unhappy, the latter fact being illustrated by Jonas Chuzzlewit and Mr. Carker. What that happiness means, and who achieves it, is explained in Oliver Twist.

> I have said that they were truly happy; and without strong affection and humanity of heart, and gratitude to that being whose code is Mercy, and whose great attribute is Benevolence to all things that breathe, happiness can never be attained. (479)

It is interesting that the character Dickens is at most pains to describe as happy is Tom Pinch, his most saintly one.

VI - Forgiveness and Redemption

The importance of "The Lord's Prayer" in Dickens' fiction is reflected in the importance of forgiveness. Oliver Twist ends with a moving comment on Oliver's mother, who has appeared only briefly at the beginning of the novel as an unknown vagabond dying in childbirth:

> I believe that the shade of Agnes sometimes hovers round that solemn nook. I believe it none the less because that nook is in a Church, and she was weak and erring.

The statement makes explicit the novelist's confidence that the plea contained in "The Lord's Prayer" will be answered, and, seen in the context of his early fiction, leaves little doubt of Dickens' views on how Heaven will attend to the "weak and erring". Whatever the trespasses against them, all the major characters of the early fiction clearly portrayed as good forgive also. Pickwick, Florence Dombey and Tom Pinch are wronged, and the wrong done is a major part of the drama.

To forgive is both divine and human, if the human is good and forgiveness is required.

Dickens makes the point explicit in one of the many lessons given to young Martin Chuzzlewit, whose increasing self-awareness and moral growth the novelist traces. In tracing this growth Dickens inevitably postulates moral principles. The lessons he requires young Martin to learn are taught by Mark Tapley and Mary, Martin's fiancée. When they teach, Martin would do well to learn, and since what they teach is so integral to all Dickens' fiction, it is certain Dickens hopes the reader will take note as well.

In responding to Martin's bitter comments on his grandfather, Mary advises:

> 'Martin! If you would but sometimes, in some quiet hour; beside the winter fire; in the summer air; when you hear gentle music, or think of Death, or Home, or Childhood; if you would at such a season resolve to think, but once a month, or even once a year, of him, or any one who ever wronged you, you would forgive him in your heart, I know!' (Martin Chuzzlewit 305)

Forgiveness has been linked both to man's nobler instincts and to a fellow traveller rationale, and "any one who ever wronged you" echoes "those who trespass against us". Mary's advice is a variation on a theme, and the theme is "The Lord's Prayer". Dickens' recourse to the theme of forgiveness at dramatic moments in his novels is further evidence of its metaphysical importance in his fiction.

The element of forgiveness raises that of redemption, also a significant factor in the early fiction. Dickens' characters, whether fools or knaves, are redeemed through suffering (Job Trotter, Merry Pecksniff, young Martin Chuzzlewit, the elder Dombey). Sometimes the

redemption is assisted by others (Harriet Carker and Alice; Florence and Paul Dombey). The bad, however, can become good.

VII - Simplicity

There is another fundamental virtue extolled in the early novels, simplicity. It is always combined with the "open-hearted, unaffected, and good-natured" quality of an invitation given by Mr. Bevan to young Martin Chuzzlewit (Martin Chuzzlewit 343), though the former gentleman does not demonstrate the principle in the drama. It might be the material and spiritual simplicity of Captain Cuttle, the functional and hospitable simplicity of a well-run inn, the simplicity Victorian readers saw and loved in the bourgeois Mr. Pickwick, or the almost mystic simplicity of Tom Pinch. Dickens' praise of the virtue reaches its peak with his comments on Tom, with whom he ends Martin Chuzzlewit, and with whom he appears so taken. The author does not explicitly or dramatically relate the virtue to any prior principle, but it is not difficult to speculate that he associates the virtue with the loftier aspirations of the British spirit and his own view of the New Testament. In any case no other virtue receives such explicit tribute in his early fiction.

This explicitness is most evident in the rhetorical pointings in Martin Chuzzlewit, yet in that novel Dickens also brings his praise for the virtue from the clearly didactic to the artistic foreground. An example is a scene shortly after Tom Pinch's expulsion from Pecksniff's home:

> The man engaged to bear his box --- Tom knew him well; a Dragon man --- came stamping up the stairs, and made a roughish bow to Tom (to whom in common times he would have nodded with a grin), as though he were aware of what had happened, and wished him to perceive it made no difference to him. It was clumsily done; he was a mere waterer of horses; but Tom liked the man for it, and felt it more than going away (571).

Dickens also weaves his praise for simplicity into the narrative by his depiction of Ruth Pinch's novice efforts at housekeeping; yet the virtue is highlighted most by the novelist's didactic discourses. Perhaps his praise for simplicity comes close to its zenith in a paragraph that seems to refer to it by the synonym of "homely dress":

> Tom was composed by this time, and might have been the Spirit of Truth, in a homely dress --- it very often wears a homely dress, thank God! --- when he replied to him (Martin Chuzzlewit 841).

The Victorian meaning of "homely", and Dickens' own depiction of simplicity allow the reader to conclude that the novelist is associating simplicity with "the Spirit of Truth", and as we shall note in our study of Dickens' doctrines about truth, this "Spirit" is an aspect of truth that seems to supercede other aspects of it. The link places simplicity at the forefront of the intellectual sphere, as it is in the moral and social ones.

VIII - Appearance and Reality

A fundamental theme in the early Dickens is the ease with which appearance may be confused with reality. From The Pickwick Papers onwards, the theme is an important one in much of Dickens' work. Except for an aside in Little Dorrit (49) which reverses the pattern of explicitness in the early novels and integration in the later ones, the

difference between appearance and reality is a theme integrated into Dickens' fiction from the start and the concept differs in this way from the other principles and doctrines we are examining. Its metaphysical quality is less evident and it seems solely an aspect of human conduct, rather than a principle to which that conduct is referred. Yet the narrative thrust of the novels permits the reader to ultimately view it as a metaphysical principle as well.

Sometimes Dickens dramatizes the theme using irony and humour. The trials of His Majesty vs. the Dodger and Pickwick vs. Bardell are instances of this, and show how law may be confused with justice. How social policies may be confused with benevolence is dramatized with bitter irony in Dickens' depiction of the effects of The Poor Law Amendment Act in Oliver Twist. An equally bitter and ironic denunciation of Americans in Martin Chuzzlewit includes the impression that they have confused lack of responsibility with independence. There are numerous instances in the early fiction of mechanical piety substituting for religion. Mr. Carker's relationship with the elder Paul Dombey dramatizes how self-serving may be confused with loyalty. Appearance in all these instances masquerades as reality, and the results are consistently unfortunate. Once again in Dickens' fiction perversion leads to further perversion.

The unfortunate results may be relatively undramatic, as they are in misconstruing the humble but ultimately genuine friendship of Miss Tox, or they may be disastrous as they are in the defection of Mr. Carker. They may even be humorous, as seen in The Pickwick Papers comedy of errors. Always, though, the point is made: appearance does

not necessarily reflect reality. It may reflect quite the opposite, and is often designed to do so. Like all perversion in Dickens' fiction, the results reflect this perversion.

IX - Truth and Love

There are two other first principles and doctrines in Dickens' early fiction with which we shall conclude this section of our study, for taken together they place Dickens the metaphysician and Dickens the novelist in a useful perspective.

In David Copperfield (not yet a novel within our purview), Mr. Micawber uses the terms "in esse" and "in posse" (773), two of the most fundamental terms in traditional metaphysics. It is likely that Dickens encountered them in legal documents, not in reading medieval philosophers, and that he has used these traditional terms so accurately can be made too much of in a thesis concerned with his metaphysics. Yet the terms suggest what his fiction proves. Dickens was aware of and concerned with first principles and doctrines, and his fiction explicitly and implicitly refers to them. His comments on "philosophers" condemn more than the Utilitarians, as his portrayal of Captain Bunsby indicates, and he makes no claim to stand as a metaphysician, nor likely would he want to; yet perhaps the character of Dickens' metaphysics is best expressed by a comment of the narrator in Martin Chuzzlewit, as Tom Pinch returns a half-sovereign he could certainly have used to the even more destitute Martin, with a note saying he didn't need it:

> There are some falsehoods, Tom, on which men mount, as on bright wings, towards Heaven. There are some truths, cold bitter taunting truths, wherein your worldly scholars are very apt and punctual, which bind men down to earth with leaden chains. Who would not rather have to fan him, in his dying hour, the lightest feather of a falsehood such as thine, than all the quills that have been plucked from the sharp porcupine, reproachful truth, since time began! (274)

Few metaphysicians would knowingly subordinate "the sharp porcupine" to what they would "rather". That Dickens does so creates a metaphysics in which benevolence is more important than many things, and it is to this principle in his metaphysics that much of Dickens' art refers. Perhaps, too, Dickens' "sharp porcupine" reflects the shattering Victorian debate on the validity of a Natural Law that had never been challenged and Charlotte Bronte's comment on her first exposure to atheism and materialism: "If this be Truth, man or woman who beholds her can but curse the day he or she was born" (Houghton 68). "Wordly scholars" were shaking Victorian hearts even more than Victorian minds when Dickens wrote his novels as Houghton points out (64-77).

The comment on "reproachful truth" takes on added significance when juxtaposed with one on the "Spirit of Truth" (Martin Chuzzlewit 841) referred to earlier in the thesis. In practice Dickens has created a taxonomy of truth which is hierarchical. On its lowest rungs are those "taunting" truths which "bind men down to earth with leaden chains." Above these is the aspect of truth seen in Martin Chuzzlewit, when the net begins to close on Jonas Chuzzlewit:

> And now he heard the voice of his accomplice stating to his face, with every circumstance of time and place and incident; and openly proclaiming, with no reserve, suppression, passion, or concealment; all the truth. The truth, which nothing would keep down; which blood would not smother, and earth would not hide; the truth,

> whose terrible inspiration seemed to change dotards into strong men; and on whose avenging wings, one whom he had supposed to be at the extremest corner of the earth came swooping down upon him. (861)

This avenging truth does not bind men; it restores equilibrium by binding the man who has challenged it. It wages a just war and is therefore more useful (and moral) than the "sharp porcupine". This does not negate the malevolence with which it encounters its enemy. Dickens calls this aspect of truth "terrific" (Martin Chuzzlewit 867), and the Victorian meaning of the word suggests a parallel with the Old Testament God.

It is not difficult to equate "The Spirit of Truth" with the New Testament, and while there is nothing in Martin Chuzzlewit to suggest Dickens was conscious of the parallels, they are useful in understanding how "The Spirit of Truth" supersedes "reproachful" truth in his metaphysics.

The "Spirit of Truth" supersedes "reproachful" and "avenging" truth in the same manner The New Testament supersedes The Old in the Christian view of The Bible. Janet Larson, in Dickens and the Broken Scripture (10) reminds us that Dickens advocated ignoring parts of The Old Testament in the Biblical study he so strongly urged. Avenging wings do not soar so high as benevolence in Dickens' metaphysics, even if both are principles to which he refers.

The "Spirit of Truth" is firmly positioned at the head of the hierarchy of truth portrayed in Martin Chuzzlewit, and it is presumably here that "some falsehoods" dwell. The phrase itself is the only evidence for the Spirit's existence. There is no other reference to it in the early fiction, and indeed few references to truth in any form.

Yet in linking his comments on truth to Tom Pinch and Jonas Chuzzlewit, respectively among the author's most saintly and villainous characters, Dickens is able to give dramatic hues to the comments which establish the metaphysical significance of truth, even if there is some doubt as to its meaning. Ultimately the modern reader must do what the Victorian reader, used to the cadence of phrases like "The Spirit of Truth", would do more naturally, and assume the paramount importance of the concept. He should perhaps also assume Dickens intends the phrase to be self-evident, a reflection of Natural Law, which in Dickens' novels is also the good. The word "Spirit" implies a permanence and tenure that Dickens does not permit what he calls "perversion" (Dombey and Son 739) of the good. The good is permanent; its perverting agents are transitory. The "Spirit" then is both the correspondence to reality and the noble standards of which that reality consists. The reader is quite right to assume the phrase means what it seems to mean. The more philosophic reader might wish the meaning was more specific.

The final element in Dickens' first principles and doctrines we shall consider is love. It is an element difficult to find in the early fiction. Young people seem to marry because they are the appropriate age, are constantly together, are of the same social status, and are of the opposite sex. Older people marry for convenience, comfort or financial advantage. Marriage is a given, although it does not always give much back. In most relations the emphasis seems to be on the duties of one to another, rather than on the love most readers would assume would motivate the sense of duty in marriage or family. Dickens does not dramatize love, as does a novelist like Henry James. Perhaps

only in Dombey and Son is love much more than an assumption by the reader.

Yet, like so many of Dickens' first principles and doctrines it appears in one of the rhetorical pointings in which Dickens reaches the peak of his artistry. In Dombey and Son, the author comments on the love of Florence Gay for her dead brother and her young, very much alive husband:

> Of Paul and Walter. And the voices in the waves are always whispering to Florence, in their ceaseless murmuring of love, eternal and illimitable, not bounded by the confines of this world, or by the end of time, but ranging still, beyond the sea, beyond the sky, to the invisible country far away! (908)

The voices in the waves have been both a central and mysterious image in the novel, and the image reaches its climax and relieves the air of mystery in this declaration of the importance of love. As Dickens has placed the sentence at the end of the chapter, with its inherent pause, and led up to it with the centrality of the image in which the significance of love is contained, there is little doubt that he intends to support the reader's assumption of love in many of the relationships in the novels. It is interesting to note the other first principles and doctrines to which love has been linked, and in which it, like Dickens' fiction, functions.

X - Conclusion - The Early Novels

It might be well to conclude this section of the thesis with a summary of the relationship that exists between Dickens' first principles and doctrines and his art. First of all, in the early novels

Dickens' metaphysics acts as the reference points for his fiction. Once the point has been established, the link between it and the fiction might best be described as a line. It has no dimension but its direction is true, and its existence categorical and determined by finding its origin and its destination. Whether its origin is Dickens' metaphysics and its destination is whatever he decides it will be, or whether the reverse is true cannot be determined and does not matter. The line is the same. Usually the metaphysics are in the background and like his art controlled by the artist. If it heightens the drama to bring the first principles and doctrines to the foreground Dickens does so. He never allows them to recede too far back, and neither should the reader.

The Later Novels

I - Nature

In Dickens' early novels Nature is a physical and moral design. Since the author focuses on this design, Nature is seen from a metaphysical perspective. Beginning with David Copperfield the emphasis in the novels changes to what has been created from the design, and Nature loses its metaphysical role and moves to the forefront of the narrative. Shorn of the dramatic discourses that identify it in Dombey and Son, Nature is not so clearly delineated and not the obvious reference point it has been in the early fiction. Yet the concrete products of the design may be easily noted in the later novels, where they are imbedded in the forefront of Dickens' art.

Nature appears in three guises in the later fiction. The physical Nature that Dickens discusses in Oliver Twist assumes a major, if occasional, role in the later fiction. Essentially Dickens describes the physical Nature of the Romantics, and as we shall see the earlier metaphysical function even of physical Nature changes to an active one. In a second role Nature loses its upper case initial consonant and becomes the essential and specific quality of a Dickensian character. In yet a third guise Nature is metamorphosed into an adjective, where it describes the normal and proper behaviour of a character.

There are a few echoes of the metaphysical discourses of the earlier fiction. One of these is a rhetorical pointing on how Nature

has marked the appearance of Monsieur Rigaud with a warning of his sinister character. "Nature, always true, ... is never to blame" (Little Dorrit 402). One may also have recourse to a description of water "following eternal laws" (566), or the terrifying Carmagnole "showing how warped and perverted all things good by nature were become" (A Tale of Two Cities 307). Yet one doubts the wisdom of a painstaking search for references to metaphysical Nature in the later novels. It seems hardly worth the effort.

How Nature has become absorbed into the artistic foreground may be sensed in a comment made by Harold Skimpole to a pressing creditor, "we are all children of one great mother, Nature" (Bleak House 656), and another by William Dorrit when he pompously explains his relationship with his brother, "The voice of Nature is potent" (Little Dorrit 267). The focus is on the falsity of the speakers, and the literal truth of what they are saying has no significance other than to enable the author to develop his characters. Nature has moved some distance from the rhetorical pointings of the early fiction, and as a reference point it is difficult to find.

Physical Nature assumes both featured and secondary roles in the later fiction. Travelling to the Swiss Alps for which nineteenth century Englishmen had such a predilection, David Copperfield contends with the despondency caused by the deaths of his wife and Steerforth. There, in a pastoral setting that includes singing shepherds:

> All at once, in this serenity, great Nature spoke to me; and soothed me to lay down my weary head upon the grass and weep as I had not wept yet, since Dora died! (David Copperfield 887)

This resembles the sudden and mystical transformation that Eigner has discussed in another context (9). Within an hour all the "shadows" of David's mind are clearing (888) and he sets out on a new and fulfilling course.

In Little Dorrit Arthur Clennam, through the agency of Amy, has a similar experience with similar results:

> Yet Clennam listening to the voice as it read to him, heard in it all that great Nature was doing, heard in it all the soothing songs she sings to man. At no Mother's knees but hers had he ever dwelt in his youth on hopeful promises ... and [there were] echoes of every merciful and loving whisper that had ever stolen to him in his life. (884)

The restorative powers of the physical Nature Dickens is describing need not be so substantial. Breathing mountain air may be "like the having entered on a new existence" (504), though Dickens points out in the next sentence that such a sensation is merely a delusion.

Whether substantial or relatively minor, the restorative powers of Nature are those of cool water on a warm brow, and no more metaphysical. The transformation is both sudden and mystical, but it is psychological. Physical Nature has become an active element in the drama, and is no longer the reference point it has been in the early novels. In several instances it has become a vital element in the plot.

While physical Nature possesses a Wordsworthian quality in the later fiction, only occasionally does it change the direction of a character's life, and the quiet way it functions in non-dramatic moments in the narrative is seen in Esther Summerson's first venture into the countryside after her illness. She finds "everything in nature, more

beautiful and wonderful to me than I had ever found it yet.... How little I had lost, when the wide world was so full of delight to me (Bleak House 558).

As Nature moves to the foreground in the later novels it changes into a term that is frequently noted, "natural". In David Copperfield the reader notes phrases such as "What is natural in me" (518) and "but it came up so nat'ral, that I yielded to it afore I was aweer" (792). In Bleak House an unthinkable family relationship is described as "truly unnatural" (382). Lady Dedlock's conversation with her daughter encompasses "the only natural moments of her life" (566). Dickens writes of the "natural duties and obligations" of Mrs. Jellyby (593) and "a natural, wholesome, loving course of industry and perseverance" being "quite as good as a Mission" (594).

The term "natural" appears throughout the later fiction and in Little Dorrit is seen in phrases such as: "But it's not natural to bear malice, I hope?" (61); "Natural affection" (69); "our natural state" (286); "her own natural kind-hearted manner" (333); "the natural progress and change of time" (384); "men's natural relations to one another" (385). If there is any doubt that "natural" means the concrete functioning of the design that is Nature, it is relieved by Dickens' description of the essentially "genuine" Mr. Meagles in the august presence of Young Barnacle: "he was not so natural, he was striving after something that did not belong to him, he was not himself" (252).

In Great Expectations, where the focus on the unnatural is paramount, one notes the phrases "out of nature" (257) and "Surely it is not in Nature" (376). In commenting on Miss Havisham, Pip notes:

> She had secluded herself from a thousand natural and healing influences; that, her mind, brooding solitary, had grown diseased as all minds do and must and will that reverse the appointed order of their Maker; I knew equally well. (411)

The focus on the unnatural in the forefront of Great Expectations has resulted in a concomitant focus on what has been perverted, a juxtaposition the reader notes often in Dickens' description of human conduct.

Mr. Bucket has explained "natural" more pragmatically, and in a fashion that typifies the manner in which Dickens integrates Nature into his later fiction. Bucket advises Esther: "The naturalist way is the best way, and the naturalist way is your own way" (Bleak House 833).

A third guise assumed by Nature in Dickens' novels after Dombey and Son is Nature without its capital letter. Again the design has taken active form, and is now the essential and specific quality of a character. As such, nature must function in the artistic foreground. In David Copperfield one notes the phrase "such a nature as mine" (888) and in Bleak House Mr. Jarndyce explains the pernicious character of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce by stating: "If two angels could be concerned in it, I believe it would change their nature" (547). Dickens lashes out at the England which sinks "the immortal nature" of Jo "lower than the beasts which perish" (696). In Little Dorrit there is a reference to Flora's "good nature" (200). In a letter to Arthur, Amy writes of Minnie Gowan, "but I cannot help telling you what a nature she shows" (607). In Great Expectations Pip says of Miss Havisham's relatives: "They may be of the same blood, but believe me, they are not of the same nature" (411). He also accuses that lady of "keeping a part of her

[Estella's] right nature away" from Estella (411). Estella had earlier explained that "the nature formed within me" by Miss Havisham is now my [Dickens'italics] nature" (376).

Like physical Nature and the natural, nature is the design transformed into a specific form, a form that is an active element in the narrative. In the later novels the more philosophical reader may note the line postulated in the "Conclusion" of the section of this thesis dealing with the early novels, but this line, if it exists at all, has become very short.

II - Time and Eternity

In Dombey and Son (40) Dickens establishes Time as a central metaphysical principle. He does not, however, assign it a significant artistic role anywhere in the early fiction. Beginning with David Copperfield, Time becomes an important element in the forefront of the drama. It is an element with which humanity has no choice but to interact, and Dickens becomes quite explicit about this in his portrayal of Miss Havisham in Great Expectations. The malevolent character of Time proposed in the discourse on it in Dombey and Son is softened by a less harsh depiction in the later novels, but on balance in the later fiction Dickens' Time is not benign.

Usually, as Sylvère Monod points out (79), Time itself is a linear progression in Dickens' novels. While Monod does not discuss the inevitable forward momentum of this progression, it is the fact that man is inexorably impelled forward to the next point on the line, which may not be a good point to go, that gives Time its hostile character. This

metaphysical, linear quality of Time should not, however, obscure the fact that on the level of human conduct "any one point" on the line may radiate "backward and forward in a multitudinous web connecting it to past and future" (Miller 155). In the later fiction, human response to Time looms larger than its metaphysical qualities.

Nowhere in Dickens' fiction is human response to the linear points that comprise Time more a factor than in David Copperfield, a fact that has led both Monod and Miller to emphasize this novel when they discuss Dickens' techniques in dealing with Time. Early in the novel David muses, "What else do I remember? Let me see" (61). That the answer bears no proximate relation to the point on the line from which the question is posed is made clear in David's recalling the funeral of his mother, which has occurred many years earlier:

> All this, I say, is yesterday's event. Events of later date have floated from me to the shore where all forgotten things will reappear, but this stands like a high rock in the ocean. (185)

Along with the interaction of Time and psychological response, the reader will note the reference to Eternity, and the Wordsworthian shore which appears in Dombey and Son (297). Here, as everywhere in his fiction, Dickens assigns Eternity a purely metaphysical role, and it serves as a vital reference without which David's musings would imply a quite different ontology.

Time, like Eternity, has metaphysical qualities independent of human response in David Copperfield, though the narrative focus is elsewhere when Dickens proposes them. Recalling his engagement to Dora, David states, "of all the times of mine that Time has in his grip, there is none ... [I] think of half so tenderly" (551). It is a gentle and

tender statement, and it engenders the appropriate response. Yet a critic taking a metaphysical perspective will find echoes of malevolent Time in the noun "grip". An essentially optimistic and positive statement by Mr. Omer, where again the focus is not on Time, also suggests the hostile quality of that principle:

> ... we are all drawing on to the bottom of the hill, whatever age we are, on account of time never standing still for a moment. So let us always do a kindness, and be over-rejoiced. To be sure! (803)

This hostile quality of Time is indicated too by Ham's premonition of "the end of it like" at sea (519). The principal artistic function of the premonition is to add suspense to the narrative and to make Ham a more interesting and important character in the novel, yet the foreshadowing of disaster, reinforced by David's "haunted" response to it "even until the inexorable end came at its appointed time" (519), suggests that Time is not a benign principle in Dickens' metaphysics.

In Bleak House, despite the entire novel encompassing "a temporal system of cross references" as Miller states in his Introduction to the novel (29), Time is less a factor than in any of the later fiction within our purview. As Miller points out, the system is one of cross references, yet that these exist in Time is made explicit in only two incidents in the novel. Both might be useful to cite in this thesis, for each illustrates an important metaphysical property of Time.

As he and Esther pursue Lady Dedlock in an attempt to save her from doom, Mr. Bucket notes she has recently given her watch to a brickmaker. Bucket asks, "What should she give it to him for?" (836).

Mr. Bucket considers "a variety of answers" possible, and the incident serves to add drama to the chase. One of the possible answers that suggests itself to the reader, and possibly to Bucket, is that Lady Deadlock considers herself free from the grip of Time, and if that is the case both Bucket and the reader understand the only release is offered by Death. Mr. Bucket's question is immediately followed by the statement that Time "is the only thing that can't be spared in this case" (836). Whether the statement includes a pun on Lady Dedlock's sparing her watch is not clear, but the finite limits of Time's prescribed journey add suspense to the drama.

The unpredictable quality of this journey is noted in the unlikely companionship that develops between Mr. Jellyby and Mr. Turveydrop. Dickens describes it as an occurrence amongst "the chances and changes in life" (590) that suggests the unpredictable quality of the points in Time's linear progress, without his mentioning the principle by name.

As always in Dickens' fiction, in Bleak House Eternity is presented as a metaphysical reference. When it appears in the novel the focus is elsewhere, though the reference is still clear. Commenting on Mrs. Blinder's generosity to the Coavinses children, Mr. Jarndyce, a Dickensian oracle, says, "It is enough that the time will come when this good woman will find that it was [Dickens's italics] much" (264). Dickens gives dramatic emphasis to the comment by Mr. Jarndyce's pausing a few moments before his next, unrelated, statement.

The other reference to Eternity in Bleak House comes in a whispered remark by Miss Flite on Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce, "I expect a

Judgement. On the day of Judgement. And shall then confer estates" (251). The double meaning is obvious to the reader, if not to the speaker, and while the focus, as it is in Mr. Jarndyce's comment, is on the Judgement at the gate of Eternity, there is a complementary view of Eternity itself. One notes a doctrine Dickens stresses throughout his fiction. Eternity will ultimately attend to any adjustments required in the "temporal system" to which Miller alludes.

In Little Dorrit Time is portrayed in sketches that give it a variety of guises that portray it ranging from passively unfriendly to actively malevolent. There are two depictions of timepieces in the novel. The first is of a "large, hard-featured clock" that in his childhood took "savage joy" in tormenting Arthur Clennam and sounding "as if it were growling in ferocious anticipation of the miseries into which it would bring him" (72-73). Clennam is a well defined character whose responses are clearly his own, but allowing for the "jaundiced eyes and hearts" mentioned in Oliver Twist (307), this Time is that described in Dombey and Son.

Towards the end of Little Dorrit, as William Dorrit lies dying, Dickens describes "a pompous gold watch that made a great to-do about its going as if nothing else went but itself and Time" (712). The watch is a device used to draw a few final strokes in the sketch of William Dorrit, yet in the context it appears it also suggests the disinterested momentum of the Time it serves, and the servant's pomposity suggests both the master's power and arrogance.

Mrs. Clennam's stoic rituals of tea at nine o'clock and oysters at eleven are further evidence of the grip of Time. On balance in

Little Dorrit this grip is more unfriendly than crudely malevolent, and this balance is aided by Arthur's attempt to reconcile Minnie Gowan to "the natural progress and change of time" (384). Even allowing for the possibility that Arthur may be indulging in one of those falsehoods on which men mount towards Heaven (Martin Chuzzlewit 274), the comment helps to establish the less than determined malevolence that in general characterizes Time in the novel. In Little Dorrit "only Time shall show us whither each traveller is bound" (221). Dickens points out in this same discourse that "whither" may be either glory or disaster, and that makes the neutrality of Time more than a little suspect. Certainly in the novel the "flowing road of time" whereon mankind is "so capricious and distracted" (235) is not "the stream of time" down which John Chivery fantasizes gliding with Amy "in pastoral happiness" (256).

A central factor in man's relationship with Time is that he has no choice but to remain in its grip. This brings Time to the forefront of the fiction, which is where Dickens has placed human conduct. It is this metaphysical grip of Time and the impelling of man forward to the next point on its line that Dickens stresses in his depiction of the principle in Great Expectations.

Miss Havisham tells Pip, "I know nothing about time" (126), and all the clocks in her house have stopped many years earlier. Time has not stopped with the clocks, any more than it has been influenced by Miss Havisham's unnatural attempts to ignore it. The futility of her efforts to stay on one point in the line are demonstrated by Pip's noting that her bridal dress now resembles grave-clothes and her wedding veil a shroud. Miss Havisham can no more avoid the next point on Time's

line than Magwitch can "bend the past out of its eternal shape" (465). Her attempt to do so engenders results as distorted as her battle. It does not affect the grip of time nor her own journey forward.

It is this latter fact that argues against Dickens being a fatalist. Mankind must move on to the next point as it conducts itself in Time's grip. Yet, as is evident in the novelist's metaphysics of good and evil, to a significant degree the moral, social and psychological qualities of that point are determined by mankind itself. This is a fact at the centre of Dickensian drama and one which is discussed in the part of this thesis that examines Dickens' principles and doctrines on good and evil in the later novels.

The depiction of Time in A Tale of Two Cities is entirely consistent with the portrayal in the other novels. The tragic death of the young peasant who is a victim of the St. Evremondes occurs at noon after "he sobbed twelve times, one for each stroke of the bell" (355). Each of the twelve strokes in this potent image suggests the harsh journey along the line of Time to the zenith of the principle's power, and the collateral fact that even at the height of its power, as man measures this, Time must ultimately release its grip. Despite Dickens' metaphysics presenting this release as ultimately beneficial, there is little sense of this in the death scene of the young farmer. The final striking of each hour as Charles Darnay awaits execution conveys a similar impression, though with far less force.

In a discourse at the end of the novel, however, Dickens draws on "the wise Arabian stories" to describe Time as the "powerful enchanter" who "never reverses his transformations" and as the "great

magician who majestically works out the appointed order of the Creator" (399) This makes Time an important agent of the God Dickens clearly describes as good, and runs counter to the portrayal of Time so emphatically presented in the novelist's fiction up to this point. Retrospectively this "Arabian" Time is consistent with the Time Dickens has previously described. Except that, by introducing it as an agent with an often unpleasant task, he has changed it from the actively hostile principle he has consistently described. On examination this has not changed the action of Time, but by introducing a new metaphysical principle well into his canon Dickens has at one stroke clarified his metaphysics of Time and completely changed his reader's perspective on it. The Time in the vale of tears principle is consistent with the narrative thrust of Dickens' entire fiction and with his emphasis on the triumph of Eternity, as well as Christian tradition. However, the fact that he has witheld for so long a principle that demands an entirely new, but not inconsistent, definition of Time is testimony to the fact that Dickens is far more cavalier as a metaphysician than he is as an artist. While only those readers with an interest in the novelist's metaphysics of Time are likely to feel reason to complain, this is the only instance in Dickens' fiction where his sometimes less than specific metaphysics has resulted in confusion. .It is a little late in the day when Dickens finally explains that time is an agent, not a principal.

Perhaps the disillusioned metaphysical critic should long ago have been alerted to the untrustworthiness of Dickens' emphasis on the malevolence of Time, and been more alert to the sympathetic quality of

some of the points on its line. The much maligned and much enjoyed "happy" endings that conclude each of Dickens' novels all occur in Miller's "temporal system". Long before it becomes evident at the end of A Tale of Two Cities, Dickens has peremptorily rejected the inevitable malevolence of Time suggested in his fiction.

III - Heaven, God and Christ

Dickens' theology is slightly less sparse in the later novels than in the earlier ones, but no less explicit. The attempt by Dennis Walder in Dickens and Religion to demonstrate that the novelist's "beliefs are rarely explicit, they are embodied in the texture of his work" and not "easily abstractable" (3) results more than anything else in a portrait of that "passionate" involvement with nineteenth century Christian culture that Steven Marcus notes in Dickens' novels (68). Like Marcus, Walder suggests a distinction between religious culture and formal theology (1). That distinction forces Walder to rely on sources other than the novels "to provide a controlling perspective" (XIII). That perspective would have been more "easily abstractable" from the explicit theology whose existence in the novels he has decried. This theology is not only useful in gaining an insight into Dickens' "beliefs", it is essential in understanding his art.

Heaven is the "better land" it has been in the early fiction (A Tale of Two Cities 403), though in the later novels Dickens provides a more detailed description of it. It is a place where "there is no Time" and "no trouble" (403), and a place where families are reunited (377). It is metaphysically juxtaposed with "the prison of this lower world"

(Little Dorrit 831), and is "the morning without a night" that alone can clear away the "perplexities of this ignorant life" (700). It is where men go to join "their Father" high above the "mist and obscurities" (715).

That death is a necessary step to Heaven is stressed in both the early and later novels. However Heaven appears in the later fiction, its role is to provide a happy ending to unhappy events. It never is proposed in happy moments during the narrative. This artistic function is vital in the novels. Without it many of the major denouements in the complex plots would be quite different, and Dickens' tales very different ones.

That Heaven is earned (a thesis not at all clear in the early novels) is suggested by Arthur Clennam's realization that the first steps to it are duty and action, not words (Little Dorrit 368). Mr. Jarndyce suggests it will be a reward for Mrs. Blinder's kindness to the Coavinses children (Bleak House 264). Aunt Betey postulates Mr. Peggotty will receive this same reward (David Copperfield 792), and it is also offered to an innocent victim of the guillotine and the redeemed Sydney Carton (A Tale of Two Cities 403).

While it is not proposed in the early fiction, the possibility that admittance to Heaven is not automatic is suggested by a reference to the parable of the rich man and the kingdom of Heaven in Great Expectations (173), and the juxtaposition of Mr. Merdle's worldy glory with this same parable (Little Dorrit 673). Mankind must "all of us stand [before the great Judge] at His dread time" (David Copperfield 754). Dickens, perhaps obeying the New Testament injunction, never

speculates on the nature of the judgments, but in the later fiction there are difficulties suggested in entering Heaven that do not appear in the earlier novels.

That the "great Judge" is both good and benevolent is abundantly clear throughout Dickens' fiction. In the later novels it is He who takes those we love "to His rest", and it is to Him that the good commend those they love (David Copperfield 888). It is "our" God who guides us to tranquillity (937).

In Little Dorrit Dickens accuses Arthur Clennam's mother of reversing "the order of Creation, and [breathing] her own breath into a clay image of her Creator" (844). The distorted, avenging idol which results is a fantasy of Mrs. Clennam's distorted childhood, and she calls it "Jehovah" (846). Only after her redemption, which may appear somewhat qualified, does she say to Amy, "GOD bless you" (859), the name suggesting both the release of her grasp on the idol, and Mrs. Clennam's new awareness.

In the later novels awareness of God frequently seems most acute when the narrative focus is on death. At these times Dickens calls God by the name "Father" (Little Dorrit 715; A Tale of Two Cities 240). Often explicit in these matters, Dickens adds the rhetorical pointing, "O Father, blessed words" in A Tale of Two Cities (240).

That Dickens' God is aware of man is implied (not all the novelist's theology is explicit) not only in the designation "Father", but also in phrases like "God knows" (Great Expectations 488) and "God bless you, God forgive you" (493). While Dickens' theology may

sometimes be imbedded in the text, it appears in such dramatic fashion that it is not only "easily", but inevitably, abstractable.

In Dombey and Son (923) Dickens points out the centrality of Christ in man's cosmos. In the later fiction Amy confirms this centrality in Little Dorrit (861) and the final pages of A Tale of Two Cities reaffirm it. In this regard no novelist has ever been more "Christian". It is never clear whether Christ is part of a multi-personal God or only "divine" (Dombey and Son 297) and "Divine" (A Tale of Two Cities 240) in the sense that He is the benevolent "Master" of humanity (Little Dorrit 861). In either case it is Christ who points upwards to God in the fashion of the Victorian icon, and is the source of eternal Life (A Tale of Two Cities 403). In that novel it is Christ who allows the description of Paris that makes it seem as if Creation has been "delivered over to Death's dominion" to include the negating words "as if" (343). In a particularly poetic and effective passage, Dickens describes the illusion of death created by a great city just before dawn. The rays of the rising sun destroy this illusion, and as Sydney Carton "reverently" shades his eyes, Dickens describes a "bridge of light" conveying the promise of Christ that death cannot triumph.

As man's beacon Christ stands alone. There "can be no confusion in following Him, and seeking for no other footsteps" (Little Dorrit 861), and it is perhaps this assertion that results in Dickens' "primitive Christianity, whose foremost article of faith is that the meek shall inherit the earth, and whose moral precepts are those of the Sermon on the Mount" (Marcus 73). As Marcus and Larson have noted, other footsteps that are broadly religious may be found in Dickens'

fiction, but usually they fit into the larger ones of Christ, though this fact need not be the focus. Dickens uses Christ sparingly as an explicit factor in his art.

As in the earlier novels, in the later fiction Christ is a metaphysical reference point. Only in the cry of the fallen village girl, Martha, "Em'ly, Em'ly, for Christ's sake have a woman's heart towards me" (David Copperfield 397) does His name appear. Christ is named by appositives such as "Divine friend of children" (A Tale of Two Cities 240), and perhaps also in the ambiguous "Fisherman's daughter" name Emily uses in exile (David Copperfield 795). Ultimately He is the "Our Saviour" mentioned at the end of Little Dorrit (844).

The deletion of Christ as a metaphysical reference would completely change the death scenes of several of the characters in Dickens' novels, as well as the climactic ending of A Tale of Two Cities, and this synthesis of the artistic and metaphysical significance of Christ in the later fiction is best seen in the importance Dickens attaches to "The Lord's Prayer". "Reading The Lord's Prayer backwards" is a metaphor for social perversion in A Tale of Two Cities (264). That the prayer is "too poor in spirit" for Mrs. Clennam (Little Dorrit 86) symbolizes her distorted view of life. The prayer is a central feature in the death of Jo (Bleak House 704-705), an episode Ford informs us is one of two or three in Dickens' canon that have had the most impact on his readers (60-61).

One of Jo's many problems is that religious cant has substituted for authentic religious experience, and it hasn't worked. Jo has been the victim of both social and religious perversion and his death

releases him from both. How he escapes the former provides little satisfaction for the reader (at least metaphysically), but how he escapes the latter is at least as important an element in the drama. Victorian Christians attributed one supreme virtue to "The Lord's Prayer". It is the only prayer taught by Christ and the "'s" was one of the most significant icons in their religious culture, a fact reflected in the prayer's compulsory recital in the modern school systems that have many of their roots in the Victorians' attempts at mass education. Dickens uses this icon as an artistic device to convey the central drama. At the most dramatic of moments, Jo is freed from the "a-prayin" that has been one of the few things he has actually condemned (704) as well as from the entire under-side of Victorian life. He also receives his "portion" of what Christ offers (Dombey and Son 923). All this is conveyed by that most genuine of Victorian genuine articles, "The Lord's Prayer". Jo, of course, has no idea who Christ is. He follows Allan Woodcourt, one of the many Dickensian figures, usually female, who point the way, and the entire scene involves the images and significance of the prayer, along with the unstated line in it that follows Jo's dying words. The image of light coming, juxtaposed with the word "Dead!" allows an expansion of the drama to include Victorian society as its villain, a villain that society paradoxically enjoyed being in Dickens' novels. Critics like Angus Wilson (233) who find the combination of dying children and traditional prayers somewhat excessive have missed the point that without this prayer, and no other would do, the episode is maudlin. The prayer symbolizes the triumph of truth over sham, and that is Jo's hard won victory and the central drama.

The modern tendency to find such Christian references "powerful and moving" but likely to obscure the "central preoccupations" of Dickens' work (Frank 148) illustrates how our contemporary distrust of the obvious has made it difficult for modern readers to come to terms with Dickensian metaphysics, and this thesis would argue, with the art which is linked with it. Perhaps matters might be easier if Dickens' modern readers could grasp the obvious fact that to find Dickens' "central preoccupations" they need only find what is most "powerful and moving" in his work.

IV - Good and Evil

The metaphysics of good and evil in the later novels is essentially the same as in the earlier ones and both principles also continue to function in the narrative forefront. Dickens, in an exception to the general pattern claimed in this thesis, is no less explicit about the metaphysics of good and evil in his later novels. Perhaps this is tied to the fact that these principles seem to loom even larger in the later fiction. Nothing in the early novels matches the scale of the evil depicted in A Tale of Two Cities, and the duplicity of a Montague Tigg seems relatively innocuous compared to his later counterpart, Mr. Merdle, who is able to make the economy of England totter. No villain in the early novels takes so deadly a toll as Mme Defarge, and conversely the steadfastness of Florence Dombey appears to pale in comparison to the virtues of Agnes Wickfield and Amy Dorrit. Tom Pinch, Bill Sikes and Mr. Carker illustrate the hazards of the generalization, but good and evil seem to assume larger dimensions in

the later fiction. They also appear to be an even more dominant factor than they have been in the earlier novels.

Without amending his metaphysics of good and evil, Dickens expands it in the later fiction. In Little Dorrit the landlady of The Break of Day comments:

> ... there are people ... who have no good in them -- none. That there are people whom it is necessary to detest without compromise. That there are people who must be dealt with as enemies of the human race. That there are people who have no human heart, ... They are but few I hope; but ... (169)

The narrator's immediate support for this assertion establishes it as a Dickensian discourse, and the novelist has effectively denied the humanity of his more confirmed villains.

A metaphysical principle of good and evil made explicit in the later novels is the moral responsiblity of the individual who is part of a system. Speaking of The Court of Chancery, Mr. Gridley states, "I will accuse the individual workers of that system against me, face to face, before the great eternal bar" (268).

Individual responsiblity among the many is augmented by the principle of individual responsibility to the many. An illustration of this is a statement by Agnes Wickfield's father, as he discovers why his life has dissolved into alcoholic indifference, "I thought it possible that I could truly love one creature in the world, and not love the rest" (David Copperfield 642). The portrayals of the Calvinistic Murdstones and Mrs. Clennam illustrate another Dickensian principle, the evil of withholding emotional support, a principle that perhaps enlarges Dickens' definition of benevolence.

In Bleak House another principle is stressed by Dickens. It takes virtually the entire novel, but by the end of it that innocent child, Harold Skimpole, has become arguably the most despicable character in Dickens' canon. His cheerful creed is:

> We admire the people who possess the practical wisdom we want; but we don't quarrel with them. Then why should they quarrel with us? Live and let live, we say to them. Live upon your practical wisdom, and let us live upon you! (654)

Dickens' portrayal of Skimpole leaves no doubt that such a parasitical attitude, and a refusal to develop practical skills, result in a monster as devoid of humanity as the novelist's most spectacular villains. The point is made much less emphatically in the sketch of William Dorrit and reinforced by the complimentary portrayals of the practical Esther Summerson and Daniel Doyce. The former is the hope of those whose lot is cast with hers, and the latter of a nation. Not to develop practical skills may be a quiet evil, but to Dickens it is a very real and insidious one.

Another evil attacked in the later fiction is fashionable indifference. This is properly linked to the author's emphasis on social responsibility, but the specific condemnation of it in a discourse in David Copperfield (587) seems to place it in a category of its own.

The passive goodness that Dickens associates with childhood in the early novels is noted in an episode in Bleak House that dramatizes loss of innocence. Richard Carstone, traumatized by his early contacts with Chancery, exclaims, "My head ached with wondering how it happened,

if men were neither fools nor rascals; and my heart ached to think they could possibly be either" (108).

A central principle that remains as vital in the later novels as it is in the earlier ones is the triumph of good over evil. Almost always this triumph is reflected by dénouements in the plots, and sometimes by the final physchological states of the good and bad characters, the same artistic devices one notes in the earlier fiction. However, in Little Dorrit this triumph is dramatized in a manner that blends explicit metaphysics with an artistic subtlety that results in one of Dickens' most forceful portrayals of the principle.

The unlikely cast in the drama consists of the self-effacing and mild Amy Dorrit and the iron-willed, reclusive Mrs. Clennam. More than anything the scene, despite the courtesy of Amy and the constraint of Mrs. Clennam, is a confrontation between good and evil and it has an allegorical quality. It is clear that goodness, represented by Amy, has conquered, and in perhaps his most moving presentation of the metaphysics of good and evil Dickens writes:

> In the softened light of the window, looking from the scene of her early trials to the shining sky, she [Amy] was not in stronger opposition to the black figure in the shade than the life and doctrine on which she rested were to that figure's history. It bent its head low again, and said not a word. It remained thus, until the first warning bell began to ring. (861)

In the later novels Dickens expands the principle that external forces, establishing a character upon an evil course, mitigate the character's moral responsiblity. He adds the principle that a defect of moral character may be another mitigating factor. That the character laments this defect clouds the distinction between weakness and evil in

the later fiction, clouds noted in the earlier novels as well. In David Copperfield, Martha rues the fact that she does not have "a better heart" (750) and Emily utters an agonized "I want to be a better girl than I am" (400). Pip's dissatisfaction with the moral quality of the decisions he has made is reflected in his comment to Biddy, "I wish you could put me right", and her "I wish I could" (Great Expectations 158) raises the question of whether evil is always a matter of responsiblity, or whether it also involves victimization, a question suggested by the earlier novels as well. The question is raised most dramatically by David Copperfield's encountering Steerforth staring morosely at the "pictures" in a fire, something he has apparently been doing for some time. Steerforth passionately exclaims, "I wish with all my soul I had been better guided! ... I wish with all my soul I could guide myself better" (David Copperfield 380).

The characters who lament the wrong course they are on are not the characters in the novels who have "no good in them", yet both types exhibit the difficulty of determining where one finds moral responsiblity in Dickens' metaphysics. Perhaps the answer is in the assertion of Walter Houghton that in Dickens' fiction "the organ of virtue is the sensibility rather than the conscience" (264). Such a view of the fiction is compatible with the novelist's portrayals of those who have no organ of virtue to draw on and of those characters, like Agnes Wickfield, who can apparently do no wrong, and of all the characters in between these moral levels. It is also compatible with the numerous Dickensian comments similar to that of David Copperfield on

Uriah Heep, "I had seen the harvest but had never thought of the seed" (David Copperfield 639).

Throughout Dickens' novels good and bad conduct seem more a matter of sensibility and concurrent circumstance than conscious choice, though the reader may well reach this conclusion retrospectively. Dickens' emphasis on the absolute quality of both good and evil makes the assumption by his readers that the novelist's characters consciously select one or the other, primarily as a matter of policy and free will, a natural one. Absolute morality is most frequently associated with absolute choice. However, as Houghton points out (264), Dickens' view of moral conduct was not uncommon among Victorians, though this emphasis "on the vitality of the noble emotions" rarely minimized the principle of free will in moral responsibility to the degree Dickens appears to have done. It is vital to note, however, Dickens never denies the principle of moral responsibility itself.

That the novelist has rooted moral conduct in temperament, and not will, should not obscure the fact that will plays at least a minor role in that conduct, even if the assertion relies on so obscure a comment as that of David to the despairing Martha, "We can all do some good if we will" (David Copperfield 754). As well, in the two Dickens' novels that view moral growth from the inside, David Copperfield and Great Expectations, one notes glimmerings of an active conscience in the protagonists, a fact implying that will occasionally plays at least a minor role in human conduct. On balance, however, that role appears minimal. Yet the metaphysics of moral responsibility are not clear enough for the reader to determine precisely what is being balanced.

That moral conduct seems to depend on sensiblity rather than conscious choice does not affect Dickens' preoccupation with good and evil and he praises the former as enthusiastically as he condemns the latter. This thesis would suggest that he also leaves his readers in no doubt as to which is which. Ultimately good and evil are among the primary principles of his metaphysics and the models of these principles the dominant ones in his art. The advice of Agnes to David Copperfield, "Perhaps it would be better only to consider whether it is right to do this; and, if it is, to do it" (David Copperfield 633) reflects the primary emphasis in Dickens' canon. It is easy to sympathize with Humphry House when he claims that no leading Dickensian character "has a moral policy, or a considered opinion about why he does good" (39) but Dickens has not had to rely on characters like Cousin Feenix and Agnes Wickfield to demonstrate his characters do good because it is good. Dickens is not alone in asserting that such a policy is the ultimate moral one and, as Agnes suggests, the only matter worth considering.

Dickens is not clear enough about the source of moral responsiblity to permit categorical conclusions about will and sensibility in the moral conduct of his characters, but other aspects of the metaphysics of good and evil provide explicit answers to the cental question on Dickens as moralist posed by Joseph Gold: "What sort of morality?" (1).

V - Suffering and Happiness

Walter Houghton quotes William Blake as stating:

> artists and poets, who are taught by the nature of their craft to sympathise with all living things, ... come at last to forget good and evil in an absorbing vision of the happy and the unhappy". (281)

Houghton informs us that such a "pure aesthetic" stance was to be adopted by a minority of mid-Victorians (281), yet within a few generations it was to become a more common one among artists and poets. The novels of Charles Dickens represent the antithesis of this aesthetic, for while Dickens never forgets the happy and the unhappy, he reverses the pattern suggested by Blake by coming "at last" to "an absorbing vision" of good and evil.

That Dickens' progress on the artistic journey suggested by Blake begins with a predominant focus on suffering and happiness is evident in the early novels. The metaphysics of good and evil are an important aspect of Oliver Twist and Martin Chuzzlewit, and may be noted in The Pickwick Papers, yet in the latter novel Dickens' art focuses on convenience and inconvenience. In his second novel, Oliver Twist, the focus is raised to determine whether the characters are ultimately happy or unhappy. Even in Martin Chuzzlewit, with its emphasis on the evil of selfishness, a murderous villain and a saintly major character, the focus on the happiness of Tom Pinch, a preoccupation with which Dickens ends the novel, reflects the novelist's prevailing concern for the fact that things should go well for his good characters, and badly for those who are not good. In Dombey and Son, where the importance of the psychological factors influencing good and evil foreshadows a theme paramount throughout the subsequent novels, Dickens seems still even more concerned with the happiness and unhappiness of his characters than

he is with the principles of good and evil, as important as these are in the novel.

The significance of good and evil and a clearly didactic emphasis on them permeate the early fiction, and the assertion made earlier in this thesis that Dickens' primary interest in humanity is in whether it is good or bad seems justified. This observation should not, however, obscure the fact that the primary artistic focus in the early fiction , as opposed to the numerous metaphysical assertions, appears to be on whether a character is happy or unhappy.

Beginning with David Copperfield this focus changes. That Mr. Micawber is finally able to provide for his family and finds respectable security in Australia is overshadowed by the skilled, painstaking and morally courageous manner in which he destroys Uriah Heep. That David achieves domestic bliss is not nearly so significant as his achieving personal maturity. The reader is not so concerned about the happiness of Lady Dedlock in Bleak House as he is about the moral quality of the character. It is the ambiguity of this that makes Lady Dedlock interesting. In Little Dorrit the focus reverts back to the happiness and unhappiness of Amy and Arthur, and this focus is on most of the novel's other characters as well. However, the portrayal of William Dorrit has a primarily moral tone, and the question of his happiness is of very secondary interest.

In A Tale of Two Cities the artistic focus switches from the issue of happiness to that of good and evil at the end of the novel. The reader is delighted that Sydney Carton is heading to "a far, far better rest" (404), but this happy fact is overwhelmed by the dramatic

one that totally dominates the end of the novel, and is clearly its climax. This overwhelming artistic emphasis is expressed best by Carton's assertion that "It is a far, far better thing that I do" (404).

Even the much discussed happy ending of Great Expectations involves more than the finally united Pip and Estella walking through the rising mists to the happiness that has so long eluded both. The reader is not likely to forget that walk is the result of two painfully won moral victories.

Good and evil and suffering and happiness are essential aspects of all Dickens' novels. The former two principles have a clear metaphysical basis evident in both the early and later fiction, and the dramatic models of these principles function in the artistic foreground throughout Dickens' fiction. The metaphysical aspects of suffering and happiness are clearly delineated in the early fiction where their artistic models are significant as well. In the later novels suffering and happiness function on the artistic level, the reference to their metaphysical basis being far less explicit. In the fiction taken as a whole that artistic level is perhaps best described as a progress from a brief emphasis on convenience and inconvenience, to a focus on happiness and pain, to a fiction where both happiness and suffering are submerged in a generally overriding "vision" of good and evil.

VI - Forgiveness and Redemption

While forgiveness appears in the narrative forefront in the early fiction, it also appears in a doctrinal guise that is an important metaphysical reference in the novels. In both appearances it is an

explicit factor in the fiction. In the later novels the principle of forgiveness is subtly woven into the fabric of the narrative, and the metaphysical reference is difficult to detect, though it is possible to abstract some metaphysical aspects of forgiveness. The principle also assumes an even more important role in the later fiction.

One of these metaphysical aspects of forgiveness, concerning the type of character who is eligible for forgiveness in Dickens' fiction and the type who is not, is illustrated by a scene in Great Expectations. As death approaches through the hatred in Orlick's voice, Pip is "softened" in his attitude towards his fellow men and seeks their compassion for his errors, as well as the pardon of Heaven. Excluded from this compassion is Orlick, whom Pip could have killed happily. Forgiveness is witheld from all the Orlicks of Dickens' novels, but it is open to "all the rest of men" (437).

The principle of forgiveness functions at a variety of dramatic levels in the later novels. It may be understated, as when both Herbert and Pip quickly forget their earlier battle, or appear as dramatically as it does in the scene in which the dying Miss Havisham, notwithstanding the fact that Pip's lips are touching her own, pleads, "Take the pencil and write under my name, 'I forgive her'" (Great Expectations 415).

Usually forgiveness is linked to the oneness of humanity theme noted in the later novels. This link may be implied pragmatically, as it is in the comment of Daniel Doyce forgiving Arthur Clennam's disastrous financial error, "I have done a similar thing myself, in construction, often" (Little Dorrit 892), or in the more metaphysical

comment of Pip to Miss Havisham, "I want forgiveness and direction far too much, to be bitter with you" (Great Expectations 410). The link is explicit in Bleak House when Richard asks Mr. Jarndyce whether he can "forgive and pity the dreamer". Mr. Jarndyce's reply is, "Indeed I can. What am I but another dreamer, Rick?" (927).

This link is less explicit in the dramatic attempt of Ham to rescue Steerforth in David Copperfield (864-65). The drama has begun earlier with Mr. Peggotty's fear of what might happen if Ham should ever again encounter Steerforth. What happens is that Ham sacrifices his life for Steerforth, and these two fellow travellers, whose lives have come into such dramatic opposition, are both crushed by the same deadly wave. Dickens leaves ambiguous the question of whether Ham has recognized Steerforth, and whether irony or forgiveness is paramount, yet the reference to Ham's "generous heart" (865) persuades the reader that Ham would have reacted as he did in any scenario, and forgiveness paradoxically becomes a central element in the drama without the reader being certain it is a motivating factor.

A scene in David Copperfield, where Rosa Dartle launches into an hysterical tirade against Mrs. Steerforth, the latter's dead son having just been brought to her home, again suggests the principle of forgiveness while being ambiguous about whether it is actually functioning. David is able to stop the tirade by asking Rosa to look at the stricken and helpless figure of Mrs. Steerforth, "even as one you have never seen before, and render it some help!" (873). Rosa does, and in a blend of melodrama and complex psychological forces it is difficult to determine whether elemental pity or forgiveness is her primary

motivation, yet it is the principle of forgiveness that the reader is likely to assume. As he has done with the episode of Ham's abortive rescue, Dickens has managed to highlight the principle of forgiveness, while paradoxically embedding it in the complex narrative, and leaving its very existence ambiguous. He has also subtly linked it to the oneness of humanity.

When forgiveness is noted at fairly inconspicuous dramatic levels, as with Frederick Dorrit's forgiving his brother for impoverishing him, Daniel Doyce's forgiving an ungrateful native land, the Meagles forgiving Tattycoram and Mrs. Rouncewell's forgiving George, forgiveness is rooted in elemental emotional bonds.

When forgiveness is more dramatic, it is not so automatic. Both Miss Havisham and Mrs. Clennam, in the fashion of the Victorian icon of forgiveness, prostrate themselves at the feet of the young people whose forgiveness they beg. This posture adds a dramatic element Victorian readers would immediately respond to, but it also highlights the metaphysical principle that forgiveness sought is not forgiveness granted, and both Pip and Amy, despite their flawless manners, have absolute power to say yea or nay, a power that Amy at least is quite conscious of. To Mrs. Clennam's "Forgive me. Can you forgive me?", Amy's response is, "I can, and Heaven knows I do! Do not kiss my dress and kneel to me; I forgive you freely without that" (858). The "I" suggests a significant metaphysical principle in those incidents in the novels where forgiveness is critical to the tale. The right to forgive rests in the person who forgives. This metaphysical principle in the fiction is established despite the artistic reality that in a Dickens

novel no character who seeks forgiveness is ever denied it by another character, and the reader is unlikely to conclude it will be denied by God when application is made, as it is.

That forgiveness is one of the "noble" Victorian emotions Houghton discusses (264) is clear in Dickens' portrayal of Sir Leicester's forgiveness of Lady Dedlock, and the link of human forgiveness to Divine forgiveness is noted in Aunt Betsey's comment as she copes with the news of the death of the husband who has betrayed her, a comment repeated by David as he considers the sadder side of life: "God forgive us all!" (David Copperfield 853). In the context in which it appears nothing could be further from a platitude, and this is the case whenever a similar comment appears in Dickens' fiction.

Perhaps the importance of forgiveness reaches its zenith in Bleak House. There it is illustrated in the typically subtle manner in which Dickens weaves the principle into his later novels. Critics have paid scant attention to the fact there are two wills in Bleak House, but Jo's forms the title for one of the most memorable chapters in the Dickensian canon. By presenting it as the antithesis of the Chancery will, Dickens is able to subtly castigate that latter document. Jo's will is as explicit as that in Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce is abstruse. It is a simple plea for forgiveness for having infected Esther with smallpox, and its legal pretensions are limited to Jo's request that Mr. Snagsby made the letters as large as possible. One of Jo's roles in Bleak House is to be a weapon in Dickens' attack on Victorian society, and Jo's will does not cast the one in Chancery in a favourable light. Yet Jo is more than a blunt weapon, and there is little doubt Dickens sympathizes with

the appropriateness of his final testament, even if circumstances have made the document unnecessary. The dramatisation of this sympathy ends in Dickens' clear praise for the principle of forgiveness, while never making that principle explicit. The reader doubts whether even Dickens could have achieved such an effect with his dramatic discourses.

As it is in the earlier novels, redemption is achieved through suffering in the later fiction. However, in the later novels redemption is not so significant a factor. In the early novels a number of important characters who are foolish or worse become good. In Bleak House no character changes from bad to good, and in Litle Dorrit only Mrs. Clennam achieves moral growth, and this is qualified. The emphasis in David Copperfield is on David's maturation, rather than his moral qualities, which are not in doubt. In A Tale of Two Cities only Sydney Carton changes morally. Only in Great Expectations, among the later novels in our purview, is redemption noted in a number of the major characters.

In his comments on Dombey and Son, Joseph Gold states: "Dickens never will allow us or himself to lose faith in the possibility of redemption" (173). That faith is not lost in the later novels, but fewer shrines are constructed to honour it. That human conduct is more rooted in psychological realism in the later fiction suggests a plausible reason why redemption remains possible but not a matter for emphasis.

In the later fiction all the characters who are redeemed suffer before that redemption. Unlike the situations in the earlier novels, however, more than suffering may be involved in their redemption. Miss

Havisham and Mrs. Clennam achieve a new awareness. Sydney Carton is redeemed through a spectacularly noble act. Perhaps only Estella fits the pattern seen in the early fiction, where redemption is a possible outcome of suffering, though the maturity of David Copperfield and the moral growth of Pip are heavily dependent on that suffering.

As in the earlier novels, redemption appears in an artistic rather than metaphysical light, except as is the case in the death of Alice in Dombey and Son, when Christ is an explicit factor in that redemption.

VII - Simplicity

Except in Great Expectations, simplicity plays a minor role in the later novels. As the focus in Dickens' fiction changes to the psychological forces that impel human conduct, and to large-scale social ills, the virtue of simplicity seems to lose the metaphysical and dramatic importance it possesses in the early fiction. The principle does not disappear from the later novels, however, and examples of this are the simple boat-home near Yarmouth which is portrayed as an oasis in David Copperfield, and the portrayals of Mr. Peggotty and Ham, who lead simple lives the novelist intends his readers to admire. In Bleak House, the open-hearted, compassionate and accident-prone Mr. George provides further tribute to the virtue.

In Little Dorrit, the reader may assume Amy Dorrit exemplifies the virtue of simplicity, but on reflection he will note that Dickens has made no effort to portray her as simple. She is just poor and good. She never rejects her family's new found wealth for a simpler view of

life. It is only that she alone is incapable of coming to any terms with it. Amy is one of many Dickensian characters who demonstrate there is no inevitable link between goodness and simplicity in the author's fiction.

Only in Great Expectations does simplicity become an important factor in the later novels. A major theme in the novel is Pip's flight from the simplicity represented by Joe and the village forge to the morally threatening larger world. Pip's journey ends in an ideal Victorian solution. He becomes a hard working, modestly successful, simple businessman and achieves his ambition of rising from the working class, while regaining the simple elements in it he so admires.

The virtue of simplicity is depicted in Wemmick's cottage, a symbol of goodness obviously juxtaposed with the other side of Wemmick's life, and in Joe's simple "lies is lies" (100) which stands in marked contrast to the more complex morality of Mr. Jagger's office.

Praise for the virtue is evident too in Dickens' didactic comment, one of the few on simplicity I have noted in the later fiction, in which Pip notes of Joe and Biddy:

> No wisdom on earth could have given me the comfort that I should have derived from their simplicity and fidelity; but ... (341)

The explicit praise for the virtue noted in the early fiction appears rarely in the later novels, and as a principle in the dramatic forefront its role is equally limited.

VIII - Appearance and Reality

In his Introduction to Little Dorrit, John Holloway quotes Monroe Engel's assertion that the secondary theme in the novel is "the ambiguous distinction between illusion and reality" (20). While this theme is an important one throughout Dickens' canon, there is also an unequivocal distinction, and it is this principle that will be examined here, as it has been in the section of the thesis dealing with appearance and reality in the early novels.

That the principle of an "ineradicable human tendency to take the sign for the substance" commented on by J. Hillis Miller in his Introduction to Bleak House (34) continues to function on the artistic rather than metaphysical level is supported by Holloway's observation that Little Dorrit "ought in no way [to] be seen as interested in appearance and reality in any philosophical sense" (21). This observation applies to the fiction taken as a whole, though Dickens' discourse on the error of attempting "to put a smooth glaze on the world, and to keep down all its realities" (Bleak House 211) suggests there are exceptions. The fact that the "ineradicable human tendency" becomes so recognizable a principle in Dickens' fiction suggests, too, it has at least some metaphysical character.

Rarely does Dickens treat the principle lightly. The humorous scene describing the newly acquired nautical wardrobe of Mr. Micawber, and his tendency to cast "up his eye at the sky as looking out for dirty weather" (David Copperfield 874), a combination which results in his appearing far more nautical than Mr. Peggotty who has spent his entire life at sea, is perhaps the sole example. There is an element of humour

too in Herbert and Pip assiduously attempting to solve their financial conundrum by making notes on it, though the problem suggested by the conundrum looms larger than their amusing naivete in believing that writing down what one owes is the same thing as paying it.

The most sinister example of appearance being confused with reality in the later novels is that driving force of the English economy, Mr. Merdle. He turns out to be "simply the greatest Forger and the greatest Thief that ever cheated the gallows" (Little Dorrit 777). The saddest example is perhaps Steerforth, whose charm and confidence conceal a destructive personality and negative self-image. The cheerful optimism of Richard Carstone in Bleak House disguises an immature personality headed towards destruction.

Examples of physical appearance reflecting the opposite of reality are the patriarchal Mr. Casby, whose benevolent face and eyes conceal pure greed, and the Chief Butler of Mr. Merdle whose dignity impresses the rich and powerful and in some cases, including his employer's, intimidates them. He is actually a penniless servant. The inverse of these examples is John Chivery's father whose standard turnkey appearance covers a "natural delicacy" and "true politeness" (Little Dorrit 788).

The ironical aspects of confusing appearance with reality are demonstrated by the fact that both Pancks and Arthur are rich according to the most astute business measures. In fact, they have both been ruined by their investment. There is irony too in the lofty and intimidating Lady Dedlock living in constant terror of the unassuming old family retainer she treats so haughtily. There is bitter irony in

the dignified Father of the Marshalsea being in fact one of its most helpless children, and a less bitter irony in the Dedlock cousins being obliged to keep servants when they are unable to keep themselves.

The Father of the Marshalsea and the Dedlock cousins illustrate that false appearances need not originate in the deceiver. These appearances are created by the Marshalsea debtors requiring an element of dignity in lives that otherwise deprive them of this. That society requires the well born to keep up appearances cannot be blamed on the financially disadvantaged cousins. False appearances may be the result of forces that reflect social distortions as well as individual ones. Such social distortion is evident in the trial of Compeyson and Magwich. The gentlemanly manners and white pocket-handkerchief of the villainous Compeyson carry the day against the "common" appearance of the comparatively virtuous Magwich (Great Expectations 365).

One of the principal objects of Dickens' scorn throughout his fiction is the legal profession. The primary reason for his scorn is consistent throughout the novels. Dickens' lawyers, as a matter of deliberate policy, make the confusion of appearance and reality their principal function. The novelist's artistic emphasis is on the damage done to public affairs, and even more to individuals, by such a modus operandi and an episode in Great Expectations illustrates the root of the problem. It is vital that Mr. Jaggers and Wemmick conceal the fact that Magwich is in England. The legal penalty is death and therefore legally he must be elsewhere. Pip is advised he has been "informed" by Magwich, not "told". After all Magwich is legally in Australia (350). Jaggers and Wemmick deny his obvious presence by denying his name.

Referring to him only by his alias, they are able to create a new legal person far less inconvient than the actual one. Correct legal form, that is the form that best serves their clients' interest, is the ultimate reality. Jaggers' advice to Pip, "Take nothing on its looks; take everything on evidence. There is no better rule" (351) might serve as a prescription for seeking truth, but when one notes in Dickens' fiction how selective lawyers are in establishing evidence the maxim becomes a formula for perversion.

Dickens is occasionally extremely subtle in his presentation of "the human tendency to take the sign for the substance", reflecting the fact that the principle is embedded in his narratives. In Bleak House, Mr. Bucket is forced to discharge the unpleasant task of arresting George for murder. After a visit with George to the home of the latter's closest friends, a visit full of good fellowship to which Bucket has contributed, Mr. Bucket gently acts: "'Now George, old boy,' says Mr. Bucket, taking his arm at the shop-door, 'come along!'" (733). Mrs. Bagnet happily observes that Mr. Bucket "almost clings to George like, and seems to be really fond of him" (733). Mrs. Bagnet is correct on both counts, but "taking his arm" and uttering the phrase "come along" was the required form for a legal arrest in Britain. It is a few moments later that Bucket announces to George, and perhaps to many of Dickens' readers, that the latter is in custody.

An equally subtle example of the distinction between appearance and reality is noted in a conversation between Affery and Arthur Clennam in Little Dorrit. More than surprised that Affery and Flintwich have married, Arthur exclaims, "I should have thought that neither of you

would have married; least of all should I have thought of your marrying each other." Affery's reply suggests the inevitable dominance of reality over appearance, "'No more should I,' said Mrs. Flintwich, tying the pillow tightly in its case" (78). The term "Mrs. Flintwich" and Affery's emphatic knot completely vanquish appearance. When Holloway states that "everywhere" in Little Dorrit "seeming imprisons reality" (22), he has been remiss in ignoring that everywhere reality also escapes, as it does throughout Dickens' fiction.

While many secondary plots in Dickens' novels depend on the confusion between appearance and reality, in Great Expectations a central element in the plot is linked to the principle. The reader is likely to have no difficulty in believing Magwich might want to avenge his past by creating a gentleman, but that he has become obsessed by a youngster he has apparently shown no interest in while absorbed in a desperate attempt to escape comes as a complete surprise and demonstrates how the confusion of appearance and reality becomes a central element of the plot in this one novel.

There is another element in Dickens' portrayal of the confusion of appearance with reality. The confusion may have its roots in the deceived and the deceiver may be guiltless. This is reflected in Pip's comment on Herbert towards the end of Great Expectations:

> ... that I often wondered how I had conceived that old idea of his inaptitude, until I was one day enlightened by the reflection, that perhaps the inaptitude had never been in him at all, but had been in me. (489)

The statement also reflects the fact that in the conflict between appearance and reality in Dickens' novels, ultimately reality is the victor.

IX - Truth and Love

There are few explicit references to the principle of truth in the later novels. One of these occurs in a short discourse on the simple Mr. Dick's "mind of the heart" which "leaves the highest intellect behind" and draws to itself "some bright ray of the truth" (David Copperfield 689). The discourse reaffirms the link between the brighter rays of truth and simple benevolence noted in Martin Chuzzlewit and discussed earlier in this thesis. Except in a few rare appearances, however, truth does not seem to be an artistic or metaphysical principle in the later fiction.

In fact, Dickens approaches the principle of truth from an inverse perspective that gives the principle an implicit importance. His focus is on the "poor weak breast, so full of contradictions, vacillations, inconsistencies, the little peevish perplexities of this ignorant life" (Little Dorrit 699-700). Mr. Jarndyce says, "We were all bewildered, Rick, more or less. What matters!" (Bleak House 926). It matters a great deal to Dickens and much of his art is concerned with this bewilderment, an aspect of it we shall examine in the last section of this thesis. At this point it should be noted that in his later novels Dickens dramatizes the importance of truth by dramatizing the diverging path that so frequently characterizes human conduct. The always unfortunate results of this divergence give truth its implicit artistic role and metaphysical character.

While truth is vital in Dickens' metaphysics, it receives no succinct definition. Perhaps the attempt in this thesis to catalog the novelist's first principles and doctrines permits the conclusion that

Dickens has preferred to depict his concept of reality in a more varied way, and those willing to follow him on his journey will find the novelist's working definition of reality need not be succinct, or always explicit, to be discerned by his readers.

Love plays a much more visible role than truth in the later fiction. Perhaps this role is most evident in David Copperfield. Early in the novel David falls "in love" (87) with little Em'ly and though the purity and disinterestedness of such childhood love may not match the "high and ennobling" character of "the best of love of a later time" (87), neither is it necessarily "the first mistaken impulse of my undisciplined heart" (730) which has been so narrowly avoided by Annie Strong. That impulse is more closely associated with David's marriage to Dora, which falling dangerously far from perfection, still demonstrates that "Love's own temple" (551) enshrines happiness as well as error. Dora's death leaves the ratio undetermined, though perhaps foreshadowed in favour of error.

Love may be the "grumpy, frumpy story" (717) of Aunt Betsey's sad marriage, but that does not make it less significant in Dickens' fiction. It may be bizarre, as is Rosa Dartle's love for Steerforth, or virtually invisible, as is Murdstone's love for Clara, evident to the reader only on her death. It may be unlikely and questionable, as is Annie's love for Dr. Strong, until the reader understands that Annie's love is "founded on a rock, and it endures" (732).

Parental love, even when the child is not a natural one, is seen in Mr. Peggotty's unswerving love for Emily and in Peggotty's love for David. That friendship may involve love is reflected in David's comment

on Steerforth, "I admired and loved him" (145). Of the many forms love takes in the later fiction, perhaps the form suggested in "the power to fill up the void which somewhere seemed to be about me" (David Copperfield 713) is "the best of love of a later time". Only in David Copperfield is that void an obvious factor in Dickens' depiction of love, and nowhere does the novelist define love by focusing on its absence, as does Henry James in "The Beast in the Jungle"; yet like James, Dickens is aware of the immediacy created by describing love in negative terms. David Copperfield, looking back on the moment, suggests some of the character of love by recalling Agnes' "momentary look, not wondering, not accusing, not regretting" (644). Another quality of love is expressed in Agnes' hope that "real love and truth are stronger in the end than any evil or misfortune in the world" (572). The dénouements of the various plots suggest that this hope is often fulfilled in Dickens' fiction but it is important to note the qualifying word "real", the bond with truth, and to remember that in Dickens' novels a great deal occurs before "the end". The "real" love of Rosa Dortle, and that between Richard Carstone and Ada, suggest the hope is not always fulfilled, or that the link with truth requires more elaboration by the novelist, as does his use of the term "real".

The principle that among love's conquests may be happiness is explicit in Great Expectations. Pip loves Estella "against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be" (253-54). That this impulse of an "undisciplined heart" finally leads to "the best of love" is purely

fortuitous. There is no suggestion in the novel that it is part of a happy pattern.

In Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels, J. Hillis Miller emphasises the importance of "the saving relation of love" (248) in Dickens' novels and in his critical assessment of A Tale of Two Cities Edgar Johnson describes the sacrifice of Sydney Carton as a "triumphant assertion of the saving and creating power of love" (2; 981).

The self-abnegation both Miller and Johnson see in Dickens' description of love and its redemptive quality are demonstrated in Sydney Carton's dying for "Her" (A Tale of Two Cities 404), and his death redeems his wasted life. As he awaits the guillotine, Carton's vision of the future illustrates how intimate bonds need not be bilateral in Dickens' fiction. Carton envisions himself as part of a spiritual ménage à trois with Lucie and Charles, where "each was not more honoured and held sacred in the other's soul, than I was in the souls of both" (404). This may not be romantic love, but Sydney is part of an intimate bond that suggests he is sharing in "the best of love." He has not competed with Charles for Lucie's love; he has joined him in loving her. Even Charles and Lucie's son, who bears Sydney's name and successfully assumes his profession, seems to be shared by the three in Sydney's vision.

That love need not be bilateral may be noted in other Dickens' novels and it is made possible by the fact that the sexual aspects of love are virtually ignored in his fiction. One may assume them, if he chooses, in Pip's attraction to Estella, but only readers with access to critical techniques that permit them to find sexual response on the head

of a pin are likely to find it in Dickens' fiction. In his novels, children are born after copulative verbs like "am" in the title of the first chapter of David Copperfield. This lack of sexual tension can provide real or envisioned domestic bliss for Tom Pinch and Sydney Carton, unsuccessful lovers who regain much of what they have lost on the swing on the roundabout.

Love permeates the later fiction. In the final paragraphs of Little Dorrit, Amy:

> turned back one last time with her hand stretched out, saying, 'Good-bye, good John! I hope you will live very happy dear!' (894)

Dickens' final depiction of the prison which has been Amy's only real world focuses on the noble young man who has always loved her there, and in the next sentence that focus changes to the shared love with Arthur that will maintain her in the "fretted and chafed" (895) world they are both entering. The principle of love "in the changes of human life" (Dombey and Son 969) is the one Dickens chooses to make the focus in this most important change of Amy's life. Love is the central feature of both departure and arrival. No doubt he has also intended to augment this principle with the background "painted figure of Our Savior on the window" (894) of the church in which Amy and Arthur are married.

The principle may be noted also in the scene in Bleak House in which Miss Flite announces the release of her birds on hearing of Richard's death (927). The announcement is obviously rich in symbolism, some of which Dickens has foreshadowed earlier in the novel. Yet not to be overlooked in the reader's almost obligatory search for symbolic meanings is the comparatively simple one that Dickens may have

ranked above the others. "Poor crazed Miss Flite" (927) loved Richard and Ada.

X - The Shadow and the Dream

Cousin Feenix's description of life being "like the shadow of a dream" (Dombey and Son 969) denotes the distance between human awareness and reality which becomes an evident principle in Dickens' later novels. Dickens emphasises the limits of human perception by dream metaphors and a consistent use of the imagery of shadows. As shadows have a number of symbolic meanings in the fiction, it is perhaps the metaphor of the dream that makes the limits of human awareness most explicit. The shadow imagery, which Dickens relies on more extensively, reinforces the principle.

In his PMLA article, "Dickens and the Psychology of Dreams" (984 - 1007), Warrington Winters writes of the novelist's theory that dreams are an allegorical projection of the dreamer's unresolved problems and cites instances in the novels where Dickens has incorporated this theory. Occasionally linked to this psychological aspect of dreams, but distinct from it, is Dickens' more significant reliance on the dream as a metaphor for man's separation from reality.

The metaphor of the dream is first noted in the death scene of Richard Carstone in Bleak House. Richard leaves "a troubled dream" reconciled with his fellow "dreamer", Mr. Jarndyce, for the "world that sets this right" (937). In Little Dorrit, where the importance of the dream metaphor reaches its peak, it is interesting to note also two classic examples of Dickens' interest in the psychology of dreams.

Arthur Clennam's unhappy life has made him "a dreamer after all" (80) and her family's newly acquired wealth has also changed Amy into a dreamer. Unable to cope with her new life, she dreams of the one she has known (609 - 10). Like Ernest Hemingway's fisherman in The Old Man and the Sea, Amy never dreams about the person she loves most. Hemingway never explains why this is so, but Dickens' theory that dreams only reflect immediate preoccupations allegorically is suggested in Amy's explanation of Arthur's exclusion from her dreams (610).

Encompassing both the psychology and the metaphor of dreams in Little Dorrit is the fact that Affery's wretched existence seems to consist mainly of dreams, the distinction between these and reality being ambiguous. The metaphor of the dream on its own is noted in the fact that William Dorrit's new lease on life has amounted to little more than "the dream through which [he] had since groped" (710). In Little Dorrit, William Dorrit's death is described in terms of a dream melting away and the lines of suffering on his face melt away with the dream that has been his life (712). The focus here, as it often is in the fiction, is on "the oppression of a dream" (742). It is "the fierce vexation of a dream" mentioned by Oberon in A Midsummer Night's Dream (IV.1), the play from whose epilogue "shadow of a dream" is an amalgam, that is the price mankind pays for its limited perception.

Another instance of the dreamlike quality of life depicted in Little Dorrit is the description of Arthur Clennam's resembling "a man who has been awakened from sleep" (797) when he discovers that Amy loves him. In A Tale of Two Cities, the dream metaphor is noted in the

plaintive realization of Sydney Carton that his love for Lucie Manette will not result in his "fighting out the abandoned fight". It is:

> A dream, all a dream, that ends in nothing and leaves the sleeper where he lay down (181).

The principle of man's separation from the real, a separation caused by his limited ability to know, is only one of Dickens' first principles and doctrines. As we have noted, Dickens does not consider the cosmos itself unreal, nor human conduct the "tale / told by an idiot full of sound and fury, / signifying nothing" the distraught Macbeth laments (v.v). Limited perception does not make human conduct meaningless, nor does Dickens equate it with moral, or any, nihilism. Humanity is limited, not idiotic. In Dickens these limitations simply give rise to, and explain, a great deal.

In Victorian Types, Victorian Shadows, his study of the relationship between the Victorians' literature, art and thought and their Biblical exegesis, George Landow has seized on the image of the shadow for his title. This reflects the thrust of his thesis, but it also reflects the Victorians' preoccupation with the image. No Victorian author demonstrates this preoccupation more than Dickens and shadow imagery is one of the principal devices he uses to describe the human condition.

One of the roles of this imagery is to be a symbol for the transitory quality of earthly existence. This is first noted in Martin Chuzzlewit with an aside on "the loveliest things in life" being "but shadows that fade away" (257). In Little Dorrit, Frederick Dorrit comments that he is "merely passing on, like the shadow over the sun-dial" (120). For a few moments Arthur Clennam notes no division between

"the real landscape" and its "untroubled and clear" shadows in a calm pool (Little Dorrit 382). Very soon the shadows sink away.

This latter image denotes, perhaps, the transitory contact with the real that is humanity's lot, but certainly it is one of the few instances in Dickens' fiction of a positive description of shadows. Another is the tale of the princess and the shadow in Little Dorrit in which an elderly lady treasures and hides a shadow that has meant a great deal to her, presumably a shadow of someone she has loved. At her death the shadow sinks with her, and at last they "rest together" (342).

Usually the shadow is a symbol of the undesirable. The image may be related to anxiety, as are "The Night Shadows" in A Tale of Two Cities. It may also symbolize a more general malaise, as it does in Richard describing himself as "a poor stray shadow on [Ada's] way" (Bleak House 927) or the shadows on Lady Dedlock's portrait. The Shadow sometimes symbolizes danger, as does the shadow cast by Mme. Defarge, or foreshadows the possiblity of unhappy events, like "The Night Shadows" in A Tale of Two Cities. The shadow may be a reflection of a person, like the "coloured shadows" of the dead Dedlocks which reside on the walls of Chesney Wold in "dreamy" remembrance (Bleak House 271), or as the shadow is in the description of Mrs. Snagsby being "bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, shadow of his shadow" as she spies on her husband (418).

Rarely is the exact image of Cousin Feenix in which the shadow is a reflection of the dreamlike quality of life employed. Dickens' shadows exist on their own and the principle of their being twice removed from reality is not stressed. Dickens' shadows are reflected

from real people, objects, landscapes and cityscapes, rarely from dreams. In Dickens' fiction it is the shadow and the dream. "The shadow of the dream" would seem an obvious extension, but Dickens does not often make it. The concept may be noted only in "The Night Shadows" in A Tale of Two Cities, which are related to the "private topics of uneasiness" (45) of Jerry Cruncher, his horse, and Mr. Lorry. It may also be noted in the dreamlike observations of Affery in Little Dorrit. However, Dickensian shadows are more likely to be linked to light as they are in the first chapter of Little Dorrit, "Sun and Shadow", than they are to dreams, and as is the case in Nature, in Dickens' fiction the primary role of the shadow is to denote the interruption of that light. Between man and reality is the shadow, and all the distortion it symbolizes.

That the "peevish perplexities of this ignorant life" (Little Dorrit 700) do not form the final chapter in Dickens' metaphysics does not make the principle of the limits of human intelligence any less useful in concluding this catalog of the author's first principles and doctrines and seeing them in a final perspective. The "twilight judgment of this world" (Little Dorrit 715), or what Engel has been quoted as calling the "ambiguous distinction between illusion and reality" in Holloway's Introduction to Little Dorrit (20), paradoxically provides an ideal vantage point from which to view the principles and doctrines that precede this one and those that follow in Dickens' metaphysics. Preceding the dreamlike quality of life in the novelist's metaphysics are the principles and doctrines of Natural Law, Heaven, Eternity and God and Christ. Included with the "ambiguous distinction"

are principles central to Dickens' narratives: man's relationship to good and evil and human suffering and happiness. Following these latter principles, which function in the centre of both Dickens' metaphysics and art, the reader moves on to what Henry Miller has described as "the harmless rose water vaporings of the back pages of Charles Dickens" (Ford 63). There, in the final chapter of both the novelist's metaphysics and art, the reader will note that Agnes Wickfield's hope "that real love and truth are stronger in the end than any evil or misfortune in the world" (David Copperfield 572), one way or another, is realized. The focus in these final pages is on those dreamers who have achieved their victory on the temporal plane, but for many others in the novels the resolution has occured much earlier. They have arrived at the "morning without a night" (Little Dorrit 700), and the "real love and truth" that remove them from both the shadow and the dream are not their own, reinforcing the vital importance of the first chapters of Dickens' metaphysics to his art.

Those who vanquish evil and misfortune without recourse to Eternity do not escape the dream. That escape is posthumous "only" (Little Dorrit 700). They escape the shadow, and "no shadow" (Great Expectations 493) is likely to make their dream a nightmare, nor an unworthy one. They remain dreamers and this will only change posthumously.

On "the back pages" of Little Dorrit, as Amy begins her rescue of Arthur, "The shadow moved with the sun, but she never moved from his side" (827). The shadow has, in fact, been vanquished in the preceding paragraph, when Amy's presence has caused it to fall "like a light" upon

Arthur. What Henry Miller has perceived as water vapor Dickens has perceived as light and it is with this light, so inextricably bound to his first principles and doctrines, that he concludes his novels and establishes the principle that for many of those who have earned it the final dream is bathed in light.

While it is this focus that usually concludes Dickens' novels, it is not the only triumph he allows his characters, and few novelists have been so explicit about the eventual annihilation of both the shadow and the dream.

Conclusion

Early in his study of Dickens' depiction of moral principles, Joseph Gold contends that "the novelist ultimately has only models, the philosopher abstractions" (6). No statement could be less true of the novels of Charles Dickens. His models are linked to his metaphysics as organically as his characters, excepting only Sairey Gamp's husband, are linked to their two legs. The common complaint that Dickens' novels lose that organic form first recommended by Aristotle and degenerate into an essentially "dogmatic" one described by Barbara Hardy is effectively challenged by Edwin Eigner (38). He asserts that Dickensian metaphysics do not disrupt the "logic" of his novels, rather they run counter to the metaphysical principles of many of his twentieth-century readers. Eigner implies that it is quite legitimate to disagree with Dickens' first principles and doctrines, but not legitimate to permit that disagreement to result in aspersions on the organic quality that links the novelist's metaphysics and art. Hopefully this thesis may be considered another argument for the organic unity of metaphysics and art in Dickens' novels.

The thesis has been an attempt to catalog the first principles and doctrines in these novels. While not all these principles have a primarily metaphysical emphasis, love, suffering and happiness being obvious examples, all have a metaphysical character that is a vital element in Dickens' narratives.

That the adjective "first" is a designation of the author of the thesis and not the author of the novels will hopefully be offset by a general consensus that the designation, while inevitably arbitrary, is also reasonable.

Finally, the thesis is linked to a phenomenon of Dickensian criticism perhaps first noted in the now classic essay by Edmund Wilson, "Dickens: The Two Scrooges". That is the tendency of many twentieth-century critics to view Dickens' novels with a dual focus. There is an early Dickens and a later Dickens, a crowd pleaser and a serious novelist, a comic and a serious Dickens. There is the associational and idealist Dickens of Edwin Eigner (9) and the Dickens who tries to resolve the search for "viable identity" and the "hidden center [which is] Dickens' deepest apprehension of the nature of the world and of the human condition within it" (329) of J. Hillis Miller. There is the Biblical and romantic Dickens of Barry Qualls and the reformer and reactionary of Myron Magnet. There is Steven Marcus' Dickens, who "From this point on [after Dombey and Son]" confronts "the problem of the past and the problem of the will" (357). There is also a more general perspective that sees a light Dickens and a dark Dickens. To this litany of the dual quality of Dickens' fiction might be added the more modest authority of this thesis for the validity of a dual focus on Dickens' metaphysics and art.

Often, as is the case in the thesis, the duality submerges into unity. Sometimes, as Edmund Wilson's essay would suggest, it is left unresolved. Why this dual focus has become so central for many of Dickens' later critics is properly a subject for another thesis, but

perhaps that thesis may support the argument inherent in this one that "hearts" and "sense" (5), a duality proposed by Dickens himself, might be usefully engaged in a careful examination of the novelist's "first" principles and doctrines, and hopefully the argument may yet yield more fruit.

Notes

[1]The critical works referred to are:

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Dorothy Van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's". Sewanee Review LVIII, (1950)

Angus Wilson, The World of Charles Dickens. London: Secker and Warburg, 1970.

[2]The novels examined in the thesis, and described more fully in the "Works Cited" section are:

(i) The Early Fiction: The Pickwick Papers
Oliver Twist
Martin Chuzzlewit
Dombey and Son

(ii) The Later Fiction: David Copperfield
Bleak House
Little Dorrit
A Tale of Two Cities
Great Expectations

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