GEORGE ELIOT AND ROMANTICISM

Romantic Elements in George Eliot's Thought and their Relation to the Structure of her Novels

by

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SUMMARY

Romanticism can be seen as a fundamental change in some men's way of looking at the world: meaning was no longer immanent in external reality but derived from the nature of the mind and projected onto the world. As Romanticism developed, this form of thinking received an increasingly radical expression. George Eliot's intellectual development was towards the most radical Romantic thought. Her agreement with Feuerbach's and G. H. Lewes's philosophical positions illustrates this. This way of thinking had possibly nihilistic implications which she did not accept, but Darwinism, which justified in different terms some of these nihilistic ideas, forced her to face them. Though she is commonly thought not to have been seriously affected by Darwin, it can be shown that she was well aware of his ideas and their implications. She accepted Darwin's basic position but resisted the negative interpretations that could be derived from this: most importantly that society like nature was a struggle with the fittest surviving and that the individual should therefore view his situation as one of struggle and adaptation, and also that in a world of chance there was no moral order which could justify moral values. A character like Tito in Romola who bases his life on implicitly Darwinian principles finds no tenable sense of identity. This is related to her concern with egoism. For her, the Romantic egoist who denies all values not derived from the self can only lead an alienated existence. There are two main groups of Romantics: organicist Romantics who seek a new orientation for the individual and for society at large, and egoistic or demonic Romantics who reject any authority superior to the ego and its right to self-realisation. George Eliot belongs to the former and radically
criticises the latter. A major difference between the two groups is over feeling. Though George Eliot had many philosophical ideas in common with a radical Romantic egoist like Nietzsche, she fundamentally disagreed with him over feeling, which she thought could be the basis of a purely human world-view that could express Christian moral values in a new form. But feeling needed control and direction and this was in part provided by her vision of the good society. She believed that society must be organic, that the traditions and values of the past must develop organically so as to create continuity. Society must have a sense of corporate consciousness which would prevent the development of a moral and intellectual relativism that could only lead to sterile forms of egoism or alienation. Related to the organic conception of society, is her view of memory as a means of creating continuity in the individual's life. Without this he is subject to alienation or swept along by feelings and impulses, and this provides no possibility of a secure sense of identity. The Mill on the Floss is concerned with memory both as a form of human transcendence and as a means of creating control and direction for feeling. Both Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda can be seen to be greatly concerned with Romantic ideas and their implications.
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INTRODUCTION

George Eliot is undoubtedly one of the most serious-minded of nineteenth-century novelists. Though she was interested in popular and financial success, it was not absolutely necessary for her to earn her living by writing novels. She told Sara Hennell: "I am under no external pressure to write anything which there is no strong internal reason for me to write ..."¹ This makes the critic's task easier, since almost all the time he can be assured of her artistic seriousness. Writing was also for her an intensely personal activity. "My own books scourge me,"² she wrote after Romola, and confided to a friend: "my books are deeply serious things to me, and come out of all the painful discipline, all the most hardly-learnt lessons of my past life."³ She felt it would have been impossible for her to depart from her original conception; she wrote to John Blackwood that "as an artist I should be utterly powerless if I departed from my own conceptions of life and character," and confessed her "utter inability to write under any cramping influence ..."⁴ She saw her writing as essentially self-expressive: "I do owe no man anything except to write honestly and religiously what comes from my inward promptings ..."⁵ and she claimed the "freedom to write out of one's own varying unfolding self ..."⁶

² Letters, IV, 104.
³ Letters, III, 187.
⁴ Letters, II, 348.
⁶ Letters, IV, 49.
Another important consideration which helps in studying her works, is that she came to writing relatively late in life, when her mind had matured. It is much easier than with most writers to view her work as an entirety, each novel being closely related to the others. She makes the following declaration in a letter to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, written in December, 1876, after she had completed her last novel:

It is perhaps less irrelevant to say, apropos of a distinction you seem to make between my earlier and later works, that though I trust there is some growth in my appreciation of others and in my self-distrust, there has been no change in the point of view from which I regard our life since I wrote my first fiction - the 'Scenes of Clerical Life.' Any apparent change of spirit must be due to something of which I am unconscious. The principles which are at the root of my effort to paint Dinah Morris are equally at the root of my effort to paint Mordecai.

One is then on much safer ground in using, for example, an earlier work to illuminate a later, or drawing a parallel between a theme in a poem and that in a novel. This does not mean that George Eliot was the same in every respect when she wrote *Daniel Deronda* as she was when she wrote *Scenes of Clerical Life*, obviously she had greatly matured as an artist, but her fundamental ideas and opinions underwent no structural change. This makes possible and justifiable a more "synchronic" approach to her work than would be appropriate for a novelist who started at an early age and whose ideas and attitudes changed considerably in the course of his development. Dickens is an obvious example of such a writer. Though I deal at length with individual works in the chapters that follow, my primary concern is to try to understand her work as a whole by relating her

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mind to Romantic thought. The artistic seriousness I have referred to, the strong element of self-expression in her work, and the fact that all her novels were written in her intellectual maturity, make this approach particularly useful.

There is, however, one important difficulty in trying to deal adequately with her work. This is that she was probably the most learned and well-read of all major novelists. She had considerable knowledge in numerous fields and had read widely in almost all the major European languages. It is somewhat daunting to observe the range and scope of her casual reading. She was also "married" to George Henry Lewes, arguably the most impressive of nineteenth-century polymaths. Though her novels can obviously be read and appreciated without trying to match her range of knowledge or taking any special interest in her or Lewes's intellectual concerns, any attempt at a relatively full understanding of her work cannot leave this out of account. There seems no doubt that she applied her whole mind to her works, and embodied in them much of her learning and many of her intellectual interests. This is particularly true of the later novels.8 Gradually critics and scholars have been uncovering some of this, though no critic can hope to do more than illuminate one or two particular aspects. I hope to make some contribution to what will no doubt be a continuing enterprise by

examining her relation to various aspects of Romanticism.

Though it has sometimes been pointed out that George Eliot has links with Romanticism, there has been no attempt to explore this relationship in detail. Most of this study is devoted to considering her connections with subjects generally recognised as being closely related to Romanticism: egoism, feeling, the organic society, memory. I also attempt to discuss her relationship with Romantic thought in a more philosophical sense.

But there were, of course, several forms of Romanticism. George Eliot had little sympathy with the individualistic or demonic side of Romanticism, and I shall try to show that it was one of her important concerns to attack the position of the demonic Romantics. She belongs to a tradition of "organicist" Romanticism which would include such figures as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle, but she rejected the metaphysical assumptions underly the views of earlier organicists and tried to reconstruct their position on a non-metaphysical basis, without introducing any transcendent elements. Several later nineteenth-century writers used advanced Romantic thought to justify a demonic position, notably Max Stirner and Nietzsche, but one of the most interesting aspects of George Eliot is that though

she shared some of their basic ideas, she developed these to an utterly opposite conclusion. I draw several comparisons and contrasts between the thought of George Eliot and Nietzsche to illustrate this conflict.

One of the most serious problems created by Romanticism was the problem of identity. This became a crucial problem with the development of radical Romantic thought and the rejection of any transcendent reality or metaphysical justification for values. If neither morality nor social values could be justified in transcendent terms, it became a problem for the individual to find some stable centre to relate himself to, some ground for his being which would enable him to feel a secure sense of identity. It has been almost universally accepted that George Eliot was one of the most moral of novelists, very much concerned to commend certain moral conduct and to condemn those who suffer moral lapses. But in my view her main concern was not with morality as such but with the problem of identity. To be sure the two are connected, but the latter is the more important. From George Eliot's intellectual standpoint, morality could not be defended on religious or metaphysical grounds, and radical individualists and nihilists found it easy to go on from there to reject society as having any claim to act as an authority for values. Morality could no longer be justified by appealing to an external authority everyone could or should accept. Though she could have defended Christian values in non-metaphysical terms, no conclusive proof was possible. One

notes that in her poem of intellectual and moral debate, "A College Breakfast-Party," her own spokesman fails to convert his antagonists. Since it was no longer possible then to prove conclusively that one must live by moral values, she could only show that anyone who tried to base his life on a rejection of them deprived himself of the possibility of finding any tenable human identity, or that the sense of identity he did create for himself was humanly intolerable. Her novels contain several characters who utterly repudiate all moral values and who try to lead amoral lives. Tito in Romola is the most important example. His intellectual dismissal of all grounds for moral action leads him to an attempt to live solely for himself. George Eliot tries to show that this deprives him of a tenable sense of identity, and suggests that it is an existential necessity for the individual to structure his life on Christian values.

Her most serious criticism of the Romantic egoists was that their advocacy of the primacy of the individual will and impulsive feelings could lead to no secure sense of identity, but instead could only create a divided consciousness. Self-division was another important concern of the Romantics, particularly in Germany in such writers as Hoffmann and Kleist, and George Eliot's interest in this subject is further evidence of her connections with Romantism.11

I have tended to avoid questions of evaluation since these are not strictly relevant to what I am concerned with. Evaluation is in any case particularly problematic with George Eliot, and would require a detailed consideration inappropriate to this kind of study. Though I am not primarily concerned with formal and stylistic matters, I have included, as an appendix, a discussion of the role of the narrator in the novels, since this is a crucial formal element and it is essential to understand its function. A failure to appreciate the artistic and philosophical reasons underlying George Eliot's use of it has led, in my view, to some misconceptions about the novels. I have also included two other appendices of relevance, in different ways, to Romanticism.
The literary theorist Morse Peckham gives the following account of the change which took place in some men's thinking during the Romantic period:

Men have always had world-views, or metaphysics ... But such metaphysics had been unconscious; that is, there had been no language in which to discuss them. There were arguments about this or that view of the world as it affected some aspect of human behavior; but these were arguments about metaphysics as truths which described the character and structure of the world. But the new way of thinking, the Romantic way, looked at itself from right angles; saw itself creating a world-view because the very character of the mind's relation to the world required it to have a metaphysic. At the same time, however, there was a conviction, at first but faint though deeply disturbing, that any world-view told the mind nothing about the world, but merely told it something about the mind. Any metaphysic was seen not as derived from the nature of the world but rather derived from the nature of the mind and projected onto the world. A single step was taken, and all the world was changed. All previous world-views had assumed that the mind had access, whether through revelation from God or from study of the world, to the real nature and character, the true essence, of what was not the mind; and this assumption was unconscious.

In pre-Romantic thinking, in this account, the relationship of mind to external reality was symmetrical: the structures the mind used to order the world were thought to correspond to the structure of the world in itself. But for the Romantics and those influenced by Romantic thought, the relationship of mind to external reality was asymmetrical. The mind could never know what the structure of the world was in itself, but must project order and meaning onto the world, though only the most advanced Romantics believed that all order and meaning was a creation of the mind alone.

In this chapter I want to suggest that George Eliot belongs to a Romantic tradition of thought as defined above and that she should...

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not be seen as a positivist or a rationalist in any orthodox sense. In later chapters I shall discuss in detail her relation to particular aspects of Romanticism.

Her early intellectual life was characterised by an enthusiastic belief in Evangelicalism, a form of religion which took a rigidly symmetrical view of the nature of reality. Nothing was conceived as happening fortuitously: the world is directed by the will of God and events unfold in accordance with a divine plan. Man was part of this divine order and could live in the assurance that life had meaning and purpose. Many of her early letters, especially those to Maria Lewis, express this belief. When she broke with Christianity in the early 1840's she still seems to have believed in God and in an ordered universe, adopting a pantheistic standpoint. Though there were probably Romantic influences which contributed to this pantheism, most obviously Wordsworth, it was not until she gave up religious belief entirely that her intellectual position becomes characterised by asymmetrical thinking in an extreme form and therefore becomes most clearly Romantic. That is to say, she became fully conscious that the mind projects meaning and value onto the world. Though she never ceased to believe in Christian values, these no longer had any transcendent justification through the truth of Christian doctrine: they were rather the projection of valuable human feelings into an objective form.

It seems certain that it was Feuerbach who influenced George Eliot most in the view she took of religion. He was probably the first philosopher to adopt openly an extreme asymmetrical position.

2. See for example Letters, I, 32 and 56.
George Eliot, of course, translated his *Essence of Christianity* and said in a letter to Sara Hennell that she everywhere agreed with him. Other writers have discussed the effect the content of his philosophy may have had on her. I want rather to stress how Romantic Feuerbach's thought is in its form and to suggest that this had an important influence on the form of her own thinking.

For Feuerbach religion should not be seen as a set of beliefs about reality which one believes in as objectively true. In his view religious beliefs are rather the projection of man's own feelings, desires and ideals. Ordinary believers are, of course, unaware of the projective nature of religion, namely, that God, immortality, and the other metaphysical conceptions of religion are subjective projections. Some quotations from George Eliot's translation of *The Essence of Christianity* will illustrate the asymmetrical form of Feuerbach's thought:

Religion is the dream of the human mind. But even in dreams we do not find ourselves in emptiness or in heaven, but on earth, in the realm of reality; we only see real things in the entrancing splendour of imagination and caprice, instead of in the simple daylight of reality and necessity.

Man is nothing without an object.... But the object to which a subject essentially, necessarily relates, is nothing else than this subject's own, but objective, nature.

In the object which he contemplates, therefore, man becomes acquainted with himself; consciousness of the objective is the self-consciousness of man. We know the man by the object, by his conception of what is external to himself; in it his nature becomes evident; this object is his manifested nature, his true objective ego. And this is true not merely of spiritual, but also of sensuous objects.

3. Letters, II, 153

Hence the historical progress of religion consists in this: that what by an earlier religion was regarded as objective, is now recognised as subjective; that is, what was formerly contemplated and worshipped as God is now perceived to be something human.

Man - this is the mystery of religion - projects his being into objectivity, and then again makes himself an object to this projected image of himself thus converted into a subject...

Feuerbach's anti-metaphysical view of Christianity must, of course, logically apply to all transcendent beliefs. If theology is really only psychology, then the same must be true of all metaphysical systems which posited the existence of some transcendent form of reality. They must also be regarded as symbolisations of subjective feelings, projections of human subjectivity into objective form. Feuerbach continued to accept much of the content of Christianity though he thought it must be given a purely human form and divested of the excesses which he thought had entered into it as a result of the wish-fulfilment present in some human feelings.

The influence of Feuerbach's view of religion on George Eliot can be seen from her letters. The antagonism she had earlier felt towards Christianity disappeared, for it was now an irrelevance whether religions were true or not. She wrote to J. W. Cross:

All the great religions of the world historically considered, are rightly the objects of deep reverence and sympathy - they are the record of spiritual struggles which are the types of our own. This is to me pre-eminently true of Hebrewism and Christianity, on which my own youth was nourished. And in this sense I have no antagonism towards any religious belief, but a strong outflow of sympathy.®


She regretted that people were "so incapable of comprehending the state of mind which cares for that which is essentially human in all forms of belief ..." She gave a particularly clear account of her attitude to religion to François D'Albert-Durade:

I have not returned to dogmatic Christianity - to the acceptance of any set of doctrines as a creed, and a superhuman revelation of the Unseen - but I see in it the highest expression of the religious sentiment that has yet found its place in the history of mankind, and I have the profoundest interest in the inward life of sincere Christians in all ages.

And she told Mrs. Ponsonby that "the idea of God, so far as it has been a high spiritual influence, is the idea of a goodness entirely human." Many of the most sympathetically treated characters in the novels are Christians. It is not the objective truth of religion that is important, but its embodiment of valuable human feelings and ideals. She thinks the individual must integrate the essential human content of religion into his life if he is to maintain a human identity. In Daniel Deronda, Deronda feels able to commit himself strongly to his Jewish heritage with its religious background without giving any indication of accepting Judaism as objectively true. For him it is rather a symbolisation which he accepts for its human content.

George Eliot's attitude to philosophical systems is related to her attitude to religion. Though she was sympathetic to much of the content of Comte's and Spencer's philosophies, she was decidedly sceptical about systematic accounts of reality. She makes this very plain in a letter to Sara Hennell about Spencer's philosophy:

7. Letters, III, 111.
9. Letters, VI, 98. She also said: "... I have very little sympathy with Free-thinkers as a class, and have lost all interest in mere antagonism to religious doctrines. I care only to know, if possible, the lasting meaning that lies in all religious doctrine from the beginning till now" (Letters, IV, 65).
I wish you did not find yourself so repelled by Herbert Spencer's writing. He has so much teaching which the world needs, and with all systems one is justified in doing what Goethe mentions satirically in relation to dramatic or other art as the universal practice of audiences — "If you give them a whole they will straightway take it to pieces. Each seeks what is adapted to him." But in spite of this scepticism about the objective truth of religious and philosophical systems, she was still able to value them for their essential human content.

Her point of view is decidedly different from the rationalist-Enlightenment tradition of thought which believed that it was possible to find a purely rational and objective basis for truth and human values. Truth was not regarded as a construction of the mind, but as something discoverable by the mind. But it seems likely that George Eliot agreed with George Henry Lewes's view that it was human truth that mattered and that this was created by the mind: "The human point of view," he says, "is in all respects absolute and final for us." Even if another point of view was conceivable, which is implicit in the quotation, it would be of no interest to man.

The extent of George Eliot's agreement with Lewes's philosophical position is not something previous commentators are agreed on. George Willis Cooke thought that "There was an almost entire


unanimity of intellectual conviction between them, and his books are in many ways the best interpreters of the ethical and philosophical meanings of her novels." But he also remarks that "If she was influenced by him, he was quite as much influenced by her." But P. Bourl'honne thinks Lewes's philosophical ideas had little effect on her mind or her novels. Though there has been an increasing amount of interest among more recent critics of Lewes's influence on George Eliot, little attention has been devoted to his philosophy. It is with this that I shall be mainly concerned, and I shall argue that there is a close relationship between Lewes's philosophical position and George Eliot's. She herself said there was "thorough moral and intellectual sympathy" between them. Apparently she possessed a youthful ambition to reconcile the philosophies of Locke and Kant, which is largely what Lewes tried


15. Letters, III, 186. But in a letter to Sara Hennell (Letters, III, 359) she urges that Lewes's opinions should not be imputed to her or vice versa. Though there may have been some differences between them, it seems very likely that there was close agreement on fundamental issues.

to do in his *Problems of Life and Mind*. But as Cooke remarks, it would be a mistake to assume the influence was all on his side, for George Eliot was interested in philosophy and had discovered Feuerbach before she met Lewes. From her letters it is clear that she read Lewes's manuscripts with great interest, and after his death was capable of organizing his rough notes into the last two volumes of his *Problems*. Though his mature philosophy was not written until the 1870's, many of his most important ideas are already present in his book *Aristotle*, published in 1864. It is, I think, legitimate then to consider his philosophy as relevant to an understanding of almost all her works. But it would be wrong merely to assume complete agreement, and for the most part I shall try to provide supporting evidence from George Eliot's writings to show that she agreed with his position.

Though Lewes is generally considered as an extreme Comtean positivist or a disciple of Spencer, the influence of Romantic thought on his philosophy is very evident. He opens the second volume of his *Problems*, for example, in the following manner:

> The Universe is mystic to man, and must ever remain so; for he cannot transcend the limits of his Consciousness, his knowledge being only knowledge of its changes.

All through his work, Lewes is very much concerned to prove that what we take to be objective reality is in fact an interaction of


19. *Problems*, II, 3. Lewes was a great admirer of Shelley and was interested in his ideas. See Roland A. Duerksen, *Shelleyan Ideas in Victorian Literature* (The Hague, 1966), pp. 139-140.
the mind with otherness. Knowledge of the world does not consist of simple description of an external reality, but is derived from our perceptual and cognitive faculties and projected outwards:

Psychological investigation shows that the objects supposed to have forms, colours, and positions within an external hemisphere, have these only in virtue of the very feelings from which they are supposed to be separated. The visible universe only exists as seen: the objects are Reals conditioned by the laws of Sensibility. The space in which we see them, their geometrical relations, the light and shadows which reveal them, the forms they affect, the lines of their changing directions, the qualities which distinguish them, — all these are but the externally-projected signs of feelings. They are signs which we interpret according to the organised laws of experience; each sign being a feeling connected with other feelings.20

In his History of Philosophy he makes the following assertion which clearly aligns him with Romantic thought:

The radical error of those who believe that we perceive things as they are, consists in mistaking a metaphor for a fact, and believing that a mind is a mirror in which external objects are reflected....

.... Consciousness is no mirror of the world; it gives no faithful reflection of things as they are per se; it only gives a faithful report of its own modification as excited by external things.

He concludes by saying: "As we can only know objects through sensation - i.e. as we can only know our sensations - we can never ascertain the truth respecting objects."21

This philosophical stance had important effects of Lewes's view of science, with which George Eliot can be shown to be in agreement. Science in the orthodox view, at least in the nineteenth century, is thought to discover the truth about the external world. It describes the true structure of the reality which exists

independently of the human mind and finds an order in the world which is prior to perception and language. This view of science brought consolation to many, for even if there was no supernatural order, there was an immanent order in the external world to which one could relate oneself. But though a powerful advocate of science and scientific method, Lewes's view is quite different. Science for him is not a simple description of the structure of the external world. It is, he says, "no transcript of Reality, but an ideal construction framed out of the analysis of the complex phenomena given synthetically in Feeling, and expressed in abstractions" and "its truths are only truths of symbols which approximate to realities ..." Not only that, he sees it as "ideal construction consciously and unconsciously employing fiction as the stop-gap of defective experience." Certain scientific hypotheses, what he calls auxiliary hypotheses, are fictional: "a conscious fiction by which Imagination pictures what would be the effect of a given Agent, or Agency, if present." He goes on to say:

An hypothesis may be false, yet help us to a truth; but no demonstration of the truth of any process proves that the hypothesis which explains the process is true. This caution is the more needful because of our tendency to consider the verification of a result as a proof of the independent truth of the hypothesis.

He regards the nebular and evolution hypotheses as extremely useful, but as neither demonstrable nor final. He admits that the atom

may be an indispensable conception for physicists but this is no proof of its reality: it is "only an artifice, by which we introduce congruity into our symbols, and bring a variety of phenomena under one set of quantitative dynamic symbols. The utility of such hypotheses is not affected by any scepticism as to the reality of atoms."26

One can perhaps see George Eliot's agreement with such ideas in the following quotation, the epigraph from Chapter I of Daniel Deronda:

Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning. Even Science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix on a point in the stars' unceasing journey when his sidereal clock shall pretend that time is at Nought. His less accurate grandmother Poetry has always been understood to start in the middle; but on reflection it appears that her proceeding is not very different from his; since Science, too, reckons backwards as well as forwards, divides his unit into billions, and with his clock-finger at Nought really sets off in medias res. No retrospect will take us to the true beginning; and whether our prologue be in heaven or on earth, it is but a fraction of that all-presupposing fact with which our story sets out.

The reference to the role of "make-believe" in science is very similar to Lewes's idea that science must employ fictions. Science is an imaginative construction of reality as much as poetry and not a mere description of an external order. The only difference for Lewes between science and poetry was that the imaginative constructions in science must submit to empirical tests of verification.

26. Problems, II, 317-318. The view that the atom was not something objectively real is to be found in several philosophers in the later part of the nineteenth century, such as F. A. Lange, Nietzsche, Vaihinger, and Mach. Lewes had much in common with all of these and is, I think, best seen as a Neo-Kantian positivist.
In *Middlemarch* also Lydgate's scientific practice corresponds to Lewes's view of the scientist's procedure. The scientist for him imaginatively creates his hypothesis, his "ideal construction," and then devises rigorous tests for it to pass. We see Lydgate combining and constructing with the clearest eye for probabilities and the fullest obedience to knowledge; and then, in yet more energetic alliance with impartial Nature, standing aloof to invent tests by which to try its own work (I, 249).  

She stresses the role of imagination and invention in Lydgate's scientific work: "he was enamoured of that arduous invention which is the very eye of research, provisionally framing its object and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation ..." (I, 249). Significantly, she uses the phrase "ideal construction" with reference to his scientific practice, so much used by Lewes to define what science consists in, ironically contrasting it with his unscientific approach to women: "The reveries from which it was difficult for him to detach himself were ideal constructions of something else than Rosamond's virtues, and the primitive tissue was still his fair unknown" (I, 415).  

It is interesting also that in *Daniel Deronda*, Mordecai's visionary activity is compared with scientific thought. The narrator asks "Was such a temper of mind likely to accompany that

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27. All volume and page numbers are from The *Works of George Eliot*, 2 vols., Cabinet ed. (Edinburgh and London, n.d. 1878-1885).  

28. See Michael Mason's "*Middlemarch and Science*" for a detailed analysis of George Eliot's interest in science and in Lewes's views in relation to *Middlemarch*.  

wise estimate of consequences which is the only safeguard from fatal error, even to ennobling motive?" but goes on to say that "even strictly-measuring science could hardly have got on without that forecasting ardour which feels the agitations of discovery beforehand, and has a faith in its preconception that surmounts many failures of experiment" (II, 358). The comparison between Mordecai's visions and science is further developed in the following passage:

At least, Deronda argued, Mordecai's visionary excitability was hardly a reason for concluding beforehand that he was not worth listening to except for pity's sake. Suppose he had introduced himself as one of the strictest reasoners: do they form a body of men hitherto free from false conclusions and illusory speculations? The driest argument has its hallucinations, too hastily concluding that its net will now at last be large enough to hold the universe. Men may dream in demonstrations, and cut out an illusory world in the shape of axioms, definitions, and propositions, with a final exclusion of fact signed Q.E.D. No formulas for thinking will save us mortals from mistake in our imperfect apprehension of the matter to be thought about. And since the unemotional intellect may carry us into a mathematical dreamland where nothing is but what is not, perhaps an emotional intellect may have absorbed into its passionate vision of possibilities some truth of what will be - the more comprehensive massive life feeding theory with new material, as the sensibility of the artist seizes combinations which science explains and justifies. At any rate, presumptions to the contrary are not to be trusted. We must be patient with the inevitable makeshift of our human thinking, whether in its sum total or in the separate minds that have made the sum (II, 358-359).

There are several echoes of Lewes in this passage. Particularly interesting is the view that "axioms, definitions, and propositions" can create an "illusory world," and that the activities of the visionary, poet, and scientist are fundamentally similar. There is also a decided scepticism about whether human thinking can ever discover final truth. But Mordecai remains a metaphysician because he believes in his visions as true before they have been tested, while Deronda knows that the empirical test is essential.
There are some other aspects of Lewes's philosophy, closely related to his view of science, which help show the crucial differences between him and those of his English contemporaries who were comparatively unaffected by Romantic thought. The question whether science revealed to man a world of order and law is connected with the belief in universal causality and objective laws of nature, ideas of extreme importance for nineteenth-century English intellectuals. J. W. Burrow has written: "The belief of many nineteenth-century intellectuals in the universality of natural causation is something which any history of ideas of the period has to reckon with." This belief was, for example, an integral part of the thought of Mill and Spencer, and it was central to Mill's influential *System of Logic*. Burrow writes that Spencer "obviously found in the notion of cosmic order some substitute for religion." Some recent writers on George Eliot have argued that she should be grouped with those who believed in the universality of natural causation and was therefore a believer in Mill's version of determinism. But Lewes's position on causation and the laws of nature is different from Mill's, and if George Eliot accepted his view of science it seems likely she would have agreed with him on this also.


This is quite a complex matter and it would be inappropriate to go into it at too great length, but what I want to emphasise is that Lewes introduces a subjective factor which is absent from Mill. He seems closer to Kant on the subject. He says that "what is supposed to be the causal link, the power which establishes the nexus between one event and another, is not anything over and above the action of the co-operating agents. The thing is what it does; its action is its existence. We abstract the action and personify the abstraction."  

He regards cause as the symbol of complex conditions and co-operating factors. It is never singular, always plural. When one refers the cause of something, what one is really doing is selecting one condition which is only effective in combination with others. The effect is then only the sum of the conditions: "Hence the common distinction between a cause and conditions is to be accepted only as a logical artifice, which throws especial emphasis on one out of many co-operants."  

Thus when we refer to the cause of an event we are in effect imposing a human order on reality.

Closely related to the notion that universal causation justified belief in a cosmic order, was the idea that there existed laws of nature which were discoverable by the mind and which presented man with a structured world. Mill's Logic also strongly supported the existence of objective laws of nature.  


33. Problems, II, 388. See 375-403 for Lewes's detailed discussion of this subject and for his criticism of Mill's concept of causation.

34. Bernard J. Faris discusses briefly Lewes's position on the laws of nature, but seems to think his views are the same as Mill's. See Experiments in Life, pp. 28-33. It is one of the main weaknesses of Paris's book that it tries to align Lewes (and George Eliot) with Mill and orthodox positivism, ignoring crucial differences.
brought great consolation, since even if there was no providence
or life after death, there was at least an immanent order in the
world. Burrow quotes Harriet Martineau on Comte:

We find ourselves suddenly living and moving in the midst
of the universe - as a part of it, and not as its aim and
object. We find ourselves living, not under capricious and
arbitrary conditions, unconnected with the constitution and
movements of the whole, but under great general, invariable
laws, which operate on us as part of a whole.35

But if one reads Lewes on the laws of nature, one finds a very
different attitude. He asserts that they do not have any existence
independent of phenomena. A law is either a notation of the
process observed in the phenomena which we mentally detach and
generalise, or else an "Ideal process" which constructs what would
be the course of the process if the actual conditions were different.
He goes on to say:

A Real Law differs from an Ideal Law, or Type, not in
being less of a subjective conception, but in being less of
a construction - not in having an existence independent of
objects and of us, in contradistinction to the Ideal Law
supposed to be entirely our own creation - but in expressing
more rigorously the results of observation, and being thus
reducible to sensible experience.36

He attacks the notion that every process has laws which govern it:

"The law is the process; and there is no other must in the case
than is involved in the identical proposition that the process must
be the process."37 To speak of a comet obeying a law, is merely
metaphorical. He only recognises Mill's "Derivative Laws" as laws
of nature, but his "Ultimate Laws" are "Subjective constructions
having no corresponding objects."38 This way of looking at laws,
he says, "enables us to escape the fallacy of supposing phenomena

35. Burrow, p. 106.
37. Problems, I, 311.
38. Problems, I, 312. See Mill's System of Logic, Book 3,
Chap. 14, Sections 1-2.
to be determined by their own resultants.  Though ideal laws are of great service in research "they wear the paradoxical aspect of assisting Observation by deliberately neglecting it in favour of Ideal Construction." His difference from Mill and his form of determinism becomes most apparent in the following comment:

"We are not to suppose that Law is an objective real acting in phenomena ... The invariability we find in Nature is what we have put there." For him, many of the laws of nature which play an important role in science are, in fact, mental conveniences which are used to order the data of experience, but they do not describe an order immanent in the data.

Lewes, then, occupies a position very different in important respects from contemporaries like Mill, Spencer, and Comte, who perhaps belong essentially in an Enlightenment tradition of thought, though he was influenced by all three. The main difference is

40. Problems, I, 313.
41. Problems, II, 103-104.
42. Bernard J. Paris groups together Mill, Spencer, Comte, and Lewes as positivists. See Experiments in Life, p. 25. But compare Lewes's thought with that of Nietzsche in Beyond Good and Evil, trans. Marianne Cowan (Chicago, 1967), p. 24: "One should make use of 'cause' and 'effect' only as pure concepts, i.e. as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and mutual understanding, not for explanation... there is no 'law' which rules phenomena. It is we, we alone, who have dreamed up the causes, the one-thing-after-anothers ... the numbers, the laws, the freedom, the 'reason why,' the purpose. And when we mix up this world of symbols with the world of things as though the symbols existed 'in themselves,' then we are doing what we have always done: we are creating myths." This is more extreme than Lewes, but fundamentally similar.
that, for him, truth cannot be separated from the human point of view. Absolute knowledge of reality was impossible since "All Knowledge is relative to the Knowing mind." The mind does not have a symmetrical relation to external reality; man's knowledge is conditioned by the perceptual and cognitive structure of the mind: "The forms, colours, movements, &c., are all necessarily modes of Feeling. The object is always object-subject; the thing is always the thing felt." Many of the implications of his philosophy stem from his view that mind as well as body is the product of an evolutionary process. This makes him regard thought as an organic function. He argues repeatedly that mind is a function of the organism. A particularly clear view of his position can be seen in the following quotation:

The Forms of Sense and the Forms of Thought are evolved, as the branches and foliage of an oak are evolved from an acorn.

The individual structural evolution, in its embryonic phases rapidly runs through all the grades of vertebrate development. The individual mental evolution in its early phases likewise runs rapidly through all the general experiences of the race ...

He holds that Kantian categories of thought determine the structure of our thinking but that these have been evolved, just as man's bodily structure has been evolved.

The implications of this view are that those mental forms which were useful for the organism’s adaptation to its environment have survived. This leads to a position somewhat similar to Bergson’s

43. Problems, II, 80.
44. Problems, II, 14.
45. Problems, I, 239.
that perception and cognition’s main function is to facilitate action in the world. Since they are structured to serve human needs and interests, human perception and thought cannot then discover "truth" from anything other than a human perspective. We only perceive as much of reality as the organism can usefully deal with, and thought functions to enable it to exercise some control over external reality. Perception and cognition present us with a world interpreted in the interests of man as a species. But as I have already said, Lewes thought that the human point of view was the only one possible for man and that it was futile to try to discover what like reality was in itself.

iii

In the course of this study I shall try to show that there are close affinities between Lewes’s thought and George Eliot’s. If Feuerbach and Lewes were the two philosophers with whom she was most in agreement then her connections with Romantic thought are clear. For her as for them it is the human perspective that matters. Her declared aim as a novelist was that of so presenting our human life as to help my readers in getting a clearer conception and a more active admiration of those vital elements which bind men together and give a higher worthiness to their existence; and also to help them in gradually dissociating these elements from the more transient forms on which an outworn teaching tends to make them dependent. 47

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46. See Matter and Memory, trans. N. W. Paul and W. S. Palmer (London, 1911), pp. 238-239: "That which is commonly called a fact is not reality as it appears to immediate intuition, but an adaptation of the real to the interests of practice and to the exigencies of social life." But Bergson thought it was possible to grasp reality as it was in itself, which Lewes thought impossible. His position is probably closer to Vaihinger, who rejected any identity between thought and reality. See The Philosophy of 'As if', trans. C. K. Ogden (London, 1924), pp. 63-66.

47. Letters, IV, 472.
Even if man could not discover "truth" independent of the human perspective or transcend the limits of his own consciousness, this was not in itself important. She and Lewes, whose moral and social views are almost identical with hers, thought it was possible to create a purely human world-view which would preserve what was valuable in religion. Religious ideas may not be objectively true, but an individual must integrate their essential human content into his life if he was to be said to possess a human identity. Her novels illustrate this belief both in a positive and in a negative sense.

But though George Eliot thought that religious values could be maintained in a purely human form even if the metaphysical ideas underlying religion were rejected, the main tradition of western thought was founded on symmetrical thinking and believed that man could find "truth" which was not merely a human construction, whether such "truth" was derived from religious revelation or study of the objective world. Even the earlier Romantics, with few exceptions, though aware of the projective nature of the mind's operations, felt they could break through to some transcendent reality, even if this could never be formulated. As Wordsworth puts it in a famous passage in "Tintern Abbey":

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Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. 48
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The need for meaning and value in life seemed to demand some truth outside of man's consciousness, if not the truth of religion then

48. Lines 96-103.
an objective world which was knowable and ordered. But if it became generally believed that there was no transcendent significance or purpose in life, no God, no objective order in the world, no authority beyond the human for morality, all ideas which followed from advanced Romantic thinking and which were, I believe, accepted by George Eliot, then this could constitute a serious challenge to the traditional beliefs of society, based on Christianity and Enlightenment values, and by extension, to the individual's sense of orientation in the world, which sustained his identity and shaped his conduct.

Miriam Allott has argued that in the 1860's there was a considerable darkening of George Eliot's mind because she realised the implications of her own doctrines: "It is not that the views themselves undergo any significant change, but that her emotional and imaginative apprehension of them materially deepens." A statement like the one in her Journal that there was a "horrible scepticism about all things paralyzing my mind" and her Herculean labours to write Romola would seem to indicate that some emotional change had taken place. Possibly she realised that though she herself had a world-view which could be maintained without belief in religion or in an objective, immanent, order in the world, if others became aware of this, they might interpret it as a justification for discarding traditional values and devoting themselves purely to self-interest or to demonism or nihilism, and reject her positive alternative as having no authority.

50. Quoted in Allott, 96.
But the consequences of extreme asymmetrical thinking deriving from Feuerbach and later thinkers only influenced a comparatively few intellectuals. The most serious attack on symmetrically structured world-views came from science, especially from Darwin's theory of evolution. I shall argue in the next chapter that it was the implications of Darwinism that best explains George Eliot's state of mind after 1860. Darwin's revolution was to create a radical change in man's way of looking at the world and looking at himself. He gave scientific justification for believing what George Eliot already knew, though in 1859 she was perhaps not fully aware of all the implications. Religion and the traditional bases of morality, the notion of an ordered universe, were seriously threatened by the possible consequences of Darwinism.

That Darwinism could create a disequilibrium between man and his traditional means of orienting himself in the world, similar to that created by extreme Romantic thought, can be shown in Adam Sedgwick's interesting letter to Darwin in which he accuses him of undermining an essential link:

There is a moral or metaphysical part of nature as well as a physical. A man who denies this is deep in the mire of folly. "Tis the crown and glory of organic science that it does through final cause link material and moral; and yet does not allow us to mingle them in our first conception of laws, and our classification of such laws, whether we consider one side of nature or the other. You have ignored this link; and, if I do not mistake your meaning, you have done your best in one or two pregnant cases to break it. Were it possible (which, thank God, it is not) to break it,

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51. Cf. Frederick Coplestone's summary of the views of German philosopher Jacob Moleschott in his History of Philosophy: Fichte to Nietzsche (London, 1963), VII, 353. "Feuerbach prepared the way for the destruction of all anthropomorphic, teleological interpretations of the world, and it is the task of modern science to continue and complete this work."
humanity, in my mind, would suffer damage that might brutalise it, and sink the human race into a lower grade of degradation than any into which it has fallen since its written records tell us of its history. 52

Orthodox Christianity had, of course, already been considerably undermined by rationalist criticism, but Darwinism was possibly an even more serious threat since it could be used to attack deism and pantheism also. The argument from design had received its severest blow, and it was difficult to see God manifested in Darwinian nature. Though universal causality was not in theory threatened, chance and circumstance played such an important role in Darwin's hypothesis, that the belief that the external world was subject to the control of laws comprehensible to the mind scarcely possessed the same emotional satisfaction.

Darwinism raised many of the same issues which had already been raised in a different form by the most radical Romantic thought. Most of George Eliot's novels were written after the publication of The Origin of Species and this, I think, needs to be taken into account more than it has been by previous writers. Though Darwinism may seem peripheral to the subject of Romanticism, in confronting its implications George Eliot was forced to come to terms with the potentially dangerous consequences of Romantic ideas she herself accepted.

In many respects Darwinism created a picture of the universe very similar to that which the earlier Romantics had rebelled against in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Carlyle in a famous passage in Sartor Resartus described the effect of eighteenth-century "mechanical" philosophy on his own mind:

To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. O, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of death! Why was the Living banished thither companionless, conscious?

This was the response of many to the implications of eighteenth-century thought. The early Romantics created various visionary or transcendentalist alternatives to this which tried to find a new basis for a religious world-view, but gradually intellectual developments in nineteenth century science undermined these, as J. Hermann Randall points out:

The century started with all human interests and values more deeply bound up, in philosophical idealism and the various currents of Romanticism, with a theistic world-view than at any time since the XIIIth century. And then, with the steady advance of science, men came to feel that such a religious philosophy was untenable: "science" just could not be disregarded. The XIXth century started with a Romantic faith in an anthropocentric universe; science went on with steady assurance to undermine that faith.2

As I have suggested in the last chapter, developments in Romantic thought, such as Feuerbach's philosophy, also had the effect of shattering faith in an anthropocentric universe. But undoubtedly the scientific world-view, culminating in Darwin's

theory, had a much greater influence. The alien universe created by eighteenth-century rationalism for the early Romantics had returned with Darwinism, as J. W. Burrow's description of the impact of Darwin illustrates:

The whole earth no longer proclaimed the glory of the Lord... The world was not, apparently, the rational design in every detail of a superintending Being... Nature, according to Darwin, was the product of blind chance and a blind struggle, and man a lonely, intelligent mutation, scrambling with the brutes for his sustenance. To some the loss was irrevocable; it was as if an umbilical cord had been cut, and men found themselves part of 'a cold passionless universe'. Darwinism had reinstated the Godless, purposeless universe which Carlyle had described in Sartor. But this time the effect was even more serious, for the positive alternatives of the early Romantics had already been undermined by science and philosophy.

Romantic reactions against the universe of eighteenth-century rationalism had included defiant egoism (Carlyle's "Everlasting No"), nihilistic scepticism, or else attempts to positively transcend it, as in Wordsworth's pantheism. What makes George Eliot differ from the earlier Romantics was that as well as being influenced by philosophical thought which undermined the assumptions of the visionary and transcendentalist stage of Romanticism, she accepted the validity of the scientific world-view and Darwin's theory. If there was to be a new positive form of Romanticism and if the negative implications of Darwinism and modern philosophy were to be transcended, this was not to be done by embracing a pantheistic or transcendentalist position. But George Eliot's problem was fundamentally similar to that of the earlier Romantics: how to find a positive world-view in a universe

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which was apparently alien to men and purposeless, as Darwin seemed to have demonstrated, and also how to refute those who drew negative conclusions from this? Her task was the more difficult since she believed Darwin was right.

Several critics have suggested, however, that George Eliot was not seriously affected by Darwin. Morse Peckham, for example, sees her as accepting a metaphysical evolutionism: "... there is no indication that the Origin disturbed Tennyson ... or Newman, or George Eliot."¹ W. J. Harvey in what is probably the most recent discussion of this matter thinks Darwin had little effect on her: "If The Origin of Species had by itself any effect on her creative imagination, it cannot have been much greater than that of the recapitulation theory - the effect of sharpening and pointing a few specific images." He thinks Spencer the more important influence: "All the external evidence, in fact, points to Spencer rather than Darwin as the prime intellectual influence concerning ideas on Evolution."⁵ I shall argue that Darwin did have a significant effect on George Eliot, in that she accepted his theory of evolution as scientifically valid but that she disliked its implications.

George Eliot and George Henry Lewes read Darwin's Origin of Species together almost as soon as it appeared in November, 1859.

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Her letter to Barbara Bodichon about it has often been quoted, but it is worth quoting again since it tells one a great deal about her attitude to Darwin's theory:

We have been reading Darwin's book on the "Origin of Species" just now: it makes an epoch, as the expression of his thorough adhesion, after long years of study, to the Doctrine of Development - and not the adhesion of an anonym like the author of the "Vestiges," but of a long-celebrated naturalist. The book is ill-written and sadly wanting in illustrative facts - of which he has collected a vast number, but reserves them for a future book of which this smaller one is the avant-courier. This will prevent the work from becoming popular, as the "Vestiges" did, but it will have a great effect in the scientific world, causing a thorough and open discussion of a question about which people have hitherto felt timid. So the world gets on step by step towards brave clearness and honesty! But to me the Development theory and all other explanations of processes by which things came to be, produce a feeble impression compared with the mystery that lies under the processes.  

The tone of this letter indicates neither surprise nor enthusiasm. George Eliot had obviously read Chambers' Vestiges and was doubtless familiar with Spencer's article of 1852, "The Development Hypothesis," published in The Leader, which had suggested that species were not immutable. She was thus prepared for Darwin. There is no indication that she has any doubts about his theory, clearly she regards it as valid, but her criticism of his style and arrangement of facts as well as her claim not to be impressed by such explanations, suggest a dislike of the Origin.

8. This may be a fairer objection than it appears. In an essay first published in the Westminster Review in 1860, "Darwin on the Origin of Species," Huxley writes: "... notwithstanding the clearness of the style, those who attempt fairly to digest the book find much of it a sort of intellectual pemmican - a mass of facts crushed and pounded into shape, rather than held together by the ordinary medium of an obvious logical bond: due attention will, without doubt, discover this bond, but it is often hard to find." See Man's Place in Nature and Other Essays (London, 1911), p. 301.
There are not a great many references to Darwin and natural selection in her writings, but those there are all suggest acceptance but dislike of the implications of the theory. In a letter to publisher George Smith she remarks that "natural selection is not always good, and depends (see Darwin) on many caprices of very foolish animals." A passage in *Daniel Deronda* ironically applies natural selection to the choice of a marriage partner:

> It was impossible to be jealous of Juliet Penn, a girl as middling as mid-day market in everything but her archery and her plainness, in which last she was noticeably like her father: underhung and with receding brow resembling that of the more intelligent fishes. (Surely, considering the importance which is given to such an accident in female offspring, marriageable men, or what the new English calls "intending bridegrooms," should look at themselves, dispassionately in the glass, since their natural selection of a mate prettier than themselves is not certain to bar the effect of their own ugliness.) (I, 166-167).

This passage relates to Gwendolen's confidence that she has nothing to fear from any competition with Miss Penn. The reference to Miss Penn's plainness being a result of "an accident in female offspring" suggests George Eliot understood Darwin well enough, but her whole tone communicates dislike of natural selection. She is ironical in her treatment of Gwendolen's view that her advantages will aid her in the struggle to find a husband, since she is "selected" by Grandcourt: "It was also agreeable to divine that his exclusive selection of her to dance with, from among all the unmarried ladies present, would attract observation ..." (I, 177).

But probably the clearest example of George Eliot's dislike of natural selection is to be found in a chapter of *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* called "Shadows of the Coming Race." This chapter attacks the view of the narrator's friend Trost, that machines will soon be able to do a great deal of the work of men.

The narrator objects:

"Am I already in the shadow of the Coming Race? and will
the creatures who are to transcend and finally supersede us
be steely organisms, giving out the effluvia of the laboratory,
and performing with infallible exactness more than everything
that we have performed with a slovenly approximativeness and
self-defeating inaccuracy?" (p. 249).

Looking forward to an era of automation, he argues that if machines
can take over some of men's functions, there is no reason why they
should not take over all if they were designed to be without man's
disadvantages. Machines might ultimately become self-reproductive
and thus, by natural selection, supplant man:

"This last stage having been reached, either by
man's contrivance or as an unforeseen result, one sees that
the process of natural selection must drive men altogether
out of the field ..." (p. 253).

Man will have no call to use his energies since machines do everything,
and so

"all but a few of the rare inventors, calculators, and
speculators will have become pale, pulpy, and cretinous from
fatty or other degeneration, and behold around them a scanty
hydrocephalous offspring."

Thus by natural selection man will eventually disappear leaving only
machines:

"Thus the feeble race, whose corporeal adjustments
happened to be accompanied with a maniacal consciousness which
imagined itself moving its mover, will have vanished, as all
less adapted existences do before the fittest - i.e., the
existence composed of the most persistent groups of movements
and the most capable of incorporating new groups in harmonious
relation. Who - if our consciousness is, as I have been
given to understand, a mere stumbling of our organisms on
their way to unconscious perfection - who shall say that those
fittest existences will not be found along the track of what
we call inorganic combinations ... Thus the planet may be
filled with beings who will be blind and deaf as the inmost
rock, yet will execute changes as delicate and complicated
as those of human language and all the intricate web of what
we call its effects, without sensitive impression, without
sensitive impulse: there may be, let us say, mute orations,
mute rhapsodies, mute discussions, and no consciousness there
even to enjoy the silence" (pp. 254-255).

The conception of evolution which underlies this vision, one
perhaps more appreciated by a modern reader than by a Victoria
Victorian, is obviously Darwinian and not metaphysical. George Eliot accepts Darwin's view that there is no purpose or necessary progress in evolution: it is simply a matter of which organisms can adapt best to their environment. She also accepts that the processes of natural selection could eliminate man and his values. The fittest are not the best, but only those which can best adapt. If natural selection was applied to the social environment, might not the "worst" survive and not the best? This is a question posed in George Eliot's novels, and the one which probably disquieted her most about the possible consequences of Darwinism, especially if it became generally accepted that it applied to man in society as well as to nature.

One can probably more fully understand her position on evolution if Lewes's views on the subject are considered. It was a subject in which he had a great interest and his views were respected by Darwin himself. It seems extremely likely that George Eliot would have agreed with his views on the scientific aspect of the subject. Lewes wrote four articles in 1868 for the Fortnightly Review entitled "Mr. Darwin's Hypotheses" which show him to be a strong supporter of Darwin.

10. Of a recent newspaper article reporting developments in computers and in genetics: "Some writers have suggested that robots might take over the earth, bringing human evolution to a stop. The super-intelligent machine - more intelligent than man - would design machines even more intelligent. As man made machines evolve, man himself might degenerate into the form of lower animals." See The Scotsman, October, 11, 1971, p.4. George Eliot's views, then, should be taken seriously and show an awareness of where technology might lead. Samuel Butler had a similar vision of machines taking over from man as early as 1863, as a result of reading the Origin of Species. He wrote a letter entitled "Darwin among the Machines" in which he claimed that with the development of machines "man will have become to the machine what the horse and dog are to man.... Day by day... the machines are gaining ground upon us; day by day we are becoming more subservient to them... the time will come when machines will hold the real supremacy over the world and its inhabitants..." See The Notebooks of Samuel Butler: Author of "Erewhon", ed. H.F. Jones (London, 1912), pp. 45-46.
The great value of Darwin's theory is, he says, that it more than anything else has established the monist world-view of science. He begins his first article with the words "'The Origin of Species' made an epoch," which is exactly what George Eliot had said about it. For him Darwin's theory shattered all previous metaphysical formulations: it "gave a sudden illumination to the old doctrine of Evolution, by substituting a precise and verifiable conception for the vague or metaphysical conceptions which were current." He warns, however, that it is only a hypothesis, to be used provisionally as a means of grouping together previously unexplained facts, and it should not be adopted as a final explanation. He attacks all metaphysical and vitalist interpretations of evolution, and interestingly criticises Spencer for his Lamarckian view that functions can originate structure. Lewes adopts the Darwinian view that the function of any organ is dependent on its structure.

From the point of view of George Eliot's novels, his third essay on Darwin is most important because of its discussion of the relationship between organism and medium:

But we have only one half of the great problem of life, when we have the Organism; and it is to this half that the chief researches have been devoted, the other falling into neglect. What is that other? The Medium in which the Organism lives. Every individual object, organic and inorganic, is the sum of two factors: first, the relation of its constituent molecules to each other; secondly, the relation of its substance to all surrounding objects. Its properties, as an object or an organism, are the resultant of its constituent molecules, and of its adaptation to external conditions. Organisms are the resultants of a peculiar group of forces, exhibiting a peculiar group of phenomena. Viewing these in the abstract, we may say there are three

regulative laws of life:—(1) The Lex Formationis—the so-called nius formativus or "organising force;"
(2) The Lex Adaptionis, or adaptive tendency;
(3) The Lex Hereditatis, or tendency to reproduce both the original form and its acquired modifications. We have always to consider the organising force in relation to all surrounding forces—a relation succinctly expressed in the word Adaptation...the Organism only preserves its individuality by synchronising its forces with the forces which environ it.

Lewes remarks elsewhere: "...a Monad is an organism; a Cell is an organism; a Plant is an organism; a Man is an organism." 

This passage helps one to understand why George Eliot strives to recreate the medium of her characters in such detail: "It is the habit of my imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself," and elucidates her comment in Felix Holt that "there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life..." (I, 72). Lewes defines the medium as "the sum of the relations which the Organism maintains with external agencies..." 

But how far is this evolutionary model applicable to society? Lewes says that "Unless the organism can adapt itself to the new External Medium by the readjustment of its Internal Medium, it perishes." How far is this and the following account he gives of Darwinism true for the human individual in his relation to society?

15. Letters, IV, 97.
We have seen that Life, and all the forms of Life, result from the relation of the Organism and the Medium. Mr. Darwin has shown how this relation can only be maintained through an incessant struggle. First, the Organism has to struggle against all those external forces which are unfavourable to its constitution, when their motions do not synchronise with its motions; in this struggle it succeeds by adapting itself to them, that is, by adjusting its motions to theirs. Next it has to struggle with other organisms, to eat or be eaten by them. Thirdly, it has to struggle with rivals, and surpass them in securing the means for the preservation of its substance and the propagation of its kind. Contending against such manifold and ever-present forces of destruction, it is clear that every slight superiority which the Organism may develop will tend to bring it more and more into synchronism with external forces, cosmical and organic, and thus will be secured the "survival of the fittest," as Mr. Spencer happily phrases it.  

If it was believed that such an account also applied to man in society, then it is plain why George Eliot could have disliked the implications of natural selection. Might it not be that those who devoted themselves entirely to self-interest would adapt better to changes in their environment, while those who adhered to firm moral values would find it more difficult to adjust to change and compete in the struggle for existence? If people came to believe that moral conduct had no transcendent basis and was a purely human code having no ultimate authority, why should they allow it to act as a restraint on their self-interest? Society then might become an arena of competition and struggle between self-interested individuals, a social counterpart to Darwinian nature.

Darwin himself helped to promote such ideas by his view that man was not essentially different from the lower animals, which he did not develop until The Descent of Man in 1871 but which was a clear implication of the Origin, 19 and also by the blow he inflicted

18. *Fortnightly Review*, IV, 74

on traditional views of the universe by his theory. Spencer similarly encouraged the notion that society could be thought of in evolutionary terms. Though applying natural selection and the struggle for existence to human society was obviously an analogy, it was one which was much used, not only by non-scientists but by men who really understood the subject. Ernst Haeckel, for example, writes:

This great competition for the necessities of life goes on everywhere and at all times, among human beings as well as among plants ... among all animal species, all the individuals of one and the same species compete with one another to obtain these indispensable means of life, or the conditions of existence in the wide sense of the word. They are equally indispensable to all, but really fall to the lot of only a few — "Many are called, but few are chosen." The fact of the great competition is quite universal. You need only cast a glance at human society, where this competition exists everywhere, and in all the different branches of human activity. Here, too, a struggle is brought about by the free competition of the different labourers of one and the same class. Here, too, as everywhere, this competition benefits the thing, or the work, which is the object of competition.20

James Sully expresses a similar view: "It is, no doubt, true that even in the most advanced communities natural selection still plays a certain part. Thus all competition between individuals for wealth, public position, fame, &c., illustrates this principle."21

A. R. Wallace's view is particularly interesting:

Among civilised nations at the present day it does not seem possible for natural selection to act in any way so as to secure the permanent advancement of morality and intelligence; for it is indisputably the mediocre, if not the low, both as regards morality and intelligence, who succeed best in life and multiply fastest.

Huxley in his Romanes lecture thought that social progress demanded that efforts should be made to counteract the effects of natural selection, which implies that he thought it could become applicable to society if man's ethical values were undermined and if population growth created competition and conflict. Society could only progress if "ruthless self-assertion" were restrained and if "the gladiatorial theory of existence" were repudiated. He relates "the fanatical individualism of our time attempts to apply the analogy of cosmic nature to society."23

George Eliot and Lewes, however, rejected any close application of the analogy of natural selection and the struggle for existence to man in society, as I shall presently try to show. But the fact that it was almost inevitable that such an analogy would be drawn made it important to show its invalidity. If people came to think of themselves as resembling animals who must adapt to circumstances in their environment and overcome competitors in order to survive the struggle for existence, then Darwinism constituted a serious threat to moral values, and its application to the human realm was dangerous.

Though Darwin avoided almost any mention of the relevance of his theory to man in the Origin, his critics could see the implications.24 An attack on Darwin in 1867 by a "Graduate of the

23. Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays (London, 1894), p. 82. See also his essay in the same volume, "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society."

24. J. W. Burrow writes in his introduction to the Origin, p. 16: "... he omitted explicit discussion of the origin of man, apart from one cryptic sentence, though he dealt with it fully in his later book, The Descent of Man (1871). Even so, the implication of the argument of The Origin was plain enough, and it was quickly seized upon by his critics."
University of Cambridge" notes Darwin's single allusion to man and writes that he "seems to hint that in the great and final palingenesis of his system, animals will have a change of becoming men, or at any rate very like them." He goes on to draw the consequences of such a view:

accidental improvements, preserved in advancing apes, produced the intellect of man, and the whole of his organization corresponding to his intellectual character... as he was not created, but evolved, or developed, he is not a creature accountable to his maker, for, indeed, he has no maker, nor can a sense of right or wrong, or any moral feeling in man, be considered anything but the motions of cerebral impulse, or some yet unexplained action of galvanism or chemical power.

With such an origin of the sense of duty, how can he be certain that his ethical determinations are based on any firm foundation?...

The logical outcome of the theory, he asserts, is that "virtue is the result of blind matter put into certain shapes, positions, and relations by chemical or mechanical action. Moral rectitude is the mere result of a modification of matter, analogous to the growth of mould in a cheese...."

When Darwin published The Descent of Man in 1871, the consequences of his theory for man became more explicit. An interesting review of the book by Frances Powers Cobbe, a Christian writer, but with moral views similar to George Eliot, illustrates the moral issues raised by Darwin. She accepted natural selection as applied to nature but opposed its extension to man and moral questions. She makes the following comments on Darwin's view that conscientious repentance is only the triumph of a permanent over a transient impulse, and that the moral sense

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would vary in accordance with any given set of conditions, in Darwin's famous example that if men lived under the conditions of bees in hives, sisters would consider it a duty to murder their brothers:

It must be admitted that these two doctrines between them effectively revolutionize Morals, as they have been hitherto commonly understood. The first dethrones the moral sense from that place of mysterious supremacy which Butler considered its grand characteristic. Mr. Darwin's Moral Sense is simply an instinct originated, like a dozen others, by the conditions under which we live, but which happens, in the struggle for existence among all our instincts, to resume the upper hand when no others chance to be in the ascendant. And the second theory aims a still more deadly blow at ethics, by affirming that, not only has our moral sense come to us from a source commanding no special respect, but that it answers to no external or durable, not to say universal or eternal, reality, and is merely tentative and provisional, the provincial prejudice, as we may describe it, of this little world and its temporary inhabitants...

Such ideas if accepted as valid "must involve the invalidity of all the sanctions which morality has hitherto received from powers beyond those of penal laws," and "in the hour of their triumph would be sounded the knell of the virtue of mankind." She thinks disastrous consequences will result if there is no absolute sanction for morality and if it is believed that values are only relative to conditions.

Haeckel seems to take special delight in stressing the implications of Darwin:

If we contemplate the common life and the mutual relations between plants and animals (man included), we shall find everywhere, and at all times, the very opposite of that kindly and peaceful social life which the goodness of the Creator ought to have prepared for his creatures - we shall...
rather find everywhere a pitiless, most embittered Struggle of All against All. Nowhere in nature, no matter where we turn our eyes, does that idyllic peace, celebrated by the poets, exist; we find everywhere a struggle and a striving to annihilate neighbours and competitors. Passion and selfishness - conscious or unconscious - is everywhere the motive force of life.27

One notes that he takes care to include man in this. A later writer comments that even if the majority of people cannot understand the detail of Darwin's theory, they "readily appreciate the immoral results to which it leads in the struggle for existence or the stretching after natural advantages."28

One of the most interesting books on the consequences of Darwinism, a book read by Darwin himself and which he recommended to Wallace,29 is The Creed of Science by William Graham, published in 1881. He draws the following implications from the struggle for existence:

Why should we follow disinterested principles against our clear self-interest, the first of obligations, on the evolution theory of life as a ceaseless competitive fight? It is not open to the evolutionists, as it was to the benevolence moralists, to say we follow them because we derive greater pleasure and satisfaction from them. And when a collision arises, such as must constantly happen, between the self-asserting and the self-forgetting impulses, between our supposed interest and conscience, why may we not deny the authority of Conscience, that can only show such questionable credentials of her claims to rule as a mere inherited tendency amounts to? For this fact of inherited tendency is all that Darwin and Spencer give us on which to found the right of conscience to be ruler of our actions.

Some higher origin for the moral feelings seems to be necessary if they are to prevail over selfish impulses. He goes on to say that if virtue is only the result of convention, it is powerless:

For assuredly the selfish man will seek, and justifiably, to evade or perform imperfectly his part of the moral contract, whenever he can with safety, and especially whenever his supposed interests come into collision with those of others. In short, with such an origin, virtue is effectually destroyed; and, indeed, vice not less; for there remains no essential or real distinction between them. The human world that we imagined the only moral world becomes the most completely non-moral world, since man is the only animal that, having a conscience, is able to analyze it away, and thus escape from its authority.

All that remains is for the individual to pursue his own interests as far as possible within the limits of the law, and for society to defend its existence and interests by all means necessary. Duty is "a noble delusion." If evolutionary ethics become generally accepted the result will be "A deluge of immorality, and moral materialism as bad as immorality..." which will eventually destroy society. He concludes his attack on the moral implications of evolutionism in the following manner:

In a word, and to sum up the indictment, when men discover that the only actions in a real sense obligatory on them, are those where the external force of law or opinion can be brought to coerce them, as they will not be slow to gather from the evolution ethics; and when they further learn from our new atomist and materialist philosophers, that even with respect to these few the action that finally takes place will be determined by natural and physical forces in any case, thus absolving them from the consequences of the decision; - should they put this double doctrine together which the men of science are everywhere inculcating, there will not be much space left for that morality or conduct which an influential writer has maintained should cover at least three-fourths of life...

It is plain from this that many felt that natural selection and the struggle for existence, if applied to man in society, could have a serious effect on behaviour and morality. Traditional moral values were, it was thought, seriously threatened. In

addition, Darwinism could be used to justify the demonic anti-moral views of someone like Nietzsche, whose basic views, however, derived rather from radical Romantic thought. But there is something of a Darwinian idiom in the following passage:

To refrain from wounding, violating, and exploiting one another, to acknowledge another’s will as equal to one’s own: this can be proper behavior, in a certain coarse sense, between individuals when the conditions for making it possible obtain... But as soon as one wants to extend this principle, to make it the *basic principle of society*, it shows itself for what it is: the will to negate life, the principle of dissolution and decay... Life itself is essential assimilation, injury, violation of the foreign and the weaker, suppression, hardness, the forcing of one’s own forms upon something else, ingestion and - at least in its mildest form - exploitation.31

Such views would have been hateful to George Eliot, but they were a possible social interpretation of aspects of Darwin’s theory. Since she herself accepted the theory, this made any refutation of its consequences more difficult, and her rejection of religion made it impossible to find some transcendent justification for ethics and morality.

But before considering her views in more detail there is another important consequence of Darwin which needs to be discussed, one which was possibly more disquieting than the view that the struggle for existence could apply to human society. This is the implication that there was no order or purpose in the universe, that everything was the result of chance and circumstances. Darwin’s theory, more than any previous idea, shattered the deep-seated belief in an anthropocentric universe.

Any reader of the *Origin* must be struck by the number of times Darwin refers to chance, circumstances, and accident in his account.

of the evolutionary process. I shall quote just a few examples.

His introduction sets the tone:

As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be naturally selected.

Later we read of "highly favourable circumstances"; "every slight modification, which in the course of ages chanced to arise, and which in any way favoured the individuals of any of the species, by better adapting them to their altered conditions"; "would have a poor chance of leaving offspring"; "under such circumstances.... the swiftest and slimmest wolves would have the best chance of surviving"; "an accidental deviation in the size and form of the body ... and so have a better chance of living and leaving descendants"; "Circumstances favourable to Natural Selection"; "the chance of intercrossing with other varieties is thus lessened"; "the chance of the appearance of favourable variations"; "run a good chance of utter extinction"; "the better will be their chance of succeeding in the battle of life"; "what may be called accidental variations of instincts"; and so on.

This view that the origin of the forms of life, including man, could be accounted for by the selection of chance mutations in the struggle for existence was deeply disturbing to Darwin's contemporaries as any reading of the literature on Darwin will

32. Origin, ed. Burrow, p. 68. This is a reprint of the first edition.

33. See Origin, pp. 122, 131, 136, 138, 141, 147, 148, 150, 153, 170, and 236, respectively.
confirm. The Cambridge Graduate for example asks "is there a design in the existence of plants and animals ... or is their appearance the uninfluenced result of circumstances, and a natural sequence of events without any specific design or particular object?" He suggests that Darwin's theory supports the view that what we take for design is "the unintentional result of blind matter pushing its way in the world at random, without any definite object, and after innumerable and incalculable instances of failure, at last hitting on the arrangement which has turned out to be right." If natural selection applies to our world, then it obviously, he says, must apply to the whole solar system.

Another writer asserts:

That this ordered Cosmos is not from necessity or chance, is almost self-evident.... Is it by chance that light and heat cause plants to carry on their wonderful operations, transmuting the inorganic into the organic, dead matter into living and life-sustaining matter? ... Darwin in denying design is "virtually atheistical." The creator Darwin believes in is one who "then abandoned the universe to itself to be controlled by chance and necessity, without any purpose on his part as to the result, or any intervention or guidance ..." Asa Gray wrote: "To us, a fortuitous Cosmos is simply inconceivable." A later writer complains of Darwin:

34. The Darwinian Theory of the Transmutation of Species, pp. 284 and 286.
36. Quoted in Lodge, p. 176.
He regarded Nature as a blind agent uninformed by any principle of intelligence or design, or rather, as the field of action upon which the individual fought, in agonised endeavour, its fateful struggle for death or life if haply it might be found the fittest to survive.37

Even the joint discoverer of the theory, A. R. Wallace, was unable to accept lack of purpose. He wrote in his The World of Life:

In the present work I have endeavoured to suggest a reason which appeals to me as both a sufficient and an intelligible one: it is that this earth with its infinitude of life and beauty and mystery, and the universe in the midst of which we are placed ... are as they are, firstly, for the development of life culminating in man; secondly, as a vast school-house for the higher education of the human race in preparation for the enduring spiritual life to which it is destined.

He hoped that his doctrine will appeal "to all who accept the view that the universe is not a chance product ..."38

It is with Darwin's denial of purpose and design that Graham is greatly concerned in The Creed of Science: "On the Darwinian hypothesis, man is the child of Chance, as from the Evolution Hypothesis, in its full generality, all life is the result of chance." He compares the appearance of the Origin with Hume's essays in the eighteenth century as marking "the beginning of a new epoch in the history of all philosophical, theological, and moral speculation ..." If Darwin is right, he says, all theism is worthless, and not only that "it was chance that stumbled upon every living thing, as well as that unique thing,

37. George Paulin, No Struggle for Existence No Natural Selection (Edinburgh, 1908), p. vii. He goes on to say that he rejects this because he believes "in a moral basis to the universe ..."

the human consciousness, with all its wonderful content - Art, Science, Morality, and the thoughts that wander through eternity."

But, he goes on, this "the human mind refuses to receive." All belief in a purpose cannot be rejected: it is a need of the mind.

It is Haeckel more than Darwin himself who stresses the consequences of natural selection, since chance, adaptation and circumstances take the place of purpose and design. For him the "moral ordering of the world" is evidently a beautiful poem which is proved false by the actual facts. None but the idealist scholar, who closes his eyes to the real truth, or the priest, who tries to keep his spiritual flock in ecclesiastical leading-strings, can any longer tell the fable of the "moral ordering of the world." It exists neither in nature nor in human life, neither in natural history, nor in the history of civilization. The terrible and ceaseless "Struggle for existence" gives the real impulse to the blind course of the world.

Notions of order and purpose and a creator are dismissed as "childish anthropomorphism." Evolution will have a result similar to the theory of Copernicus: "Just as the geocentric conception of the universe ... was overthrown ... by Copernicus and his followers, so the anthropocentric conception of the universe - the vain delusion that man is the centre of terrestrial nature, and that its whole aim is merely to serve him - is overthrown by the application ... of the theory of descent to Man."

39. See The Creed of Science, pp. 27, 35, and 44.

40. The Evolution of Man (London, 1879), I, 112.

41. The Evolution of Man, II, 234.

42. The History of Creation, II, 264. Lewes praises Haeckel's work in a footnote to the first of his articles on Darwin, See Fortnightly Review, III (1868), 357. He writes of his Generelle Morphologie der Organismen (1866): "It will assuredly give great offence to many by the way it rides rough-shod over dogmas theological and biological, and by its wide-sweeping scorn of systematists and specialists; but it is rich in special knowledge and suggestive ideas. Mr. Darwin has reason to be proud of his disciple."
These two consequences of Darwin's theory: the application of natural selection and the struggle for existence by analogy to man and society, and its assault on the notion of design and purpose in the universe, which had been assumed by all previous religions and moral systems, are the two most serious implications of Darwinism. This is not to say that everyone drew such conclusions. Others merely assimilated Darwin to their world-views. The point is that many intellectuals interpreted Darwin in this way and that it was a logical response. As I have already suggested, George Eliot accepted several of the implications that were drawn from Darwin before the Origin appeared. It seems certain she believed in such basic ideas as the transmutation of species and that man was the product of an evolutionary process, and Feuerbach had already shattered for her anthropocentric world-views. But Darwin made the implications of such ideas much clearer, not just to a few intellectuals, but to everyone who cared to read his book and draw a few logical conclusions, the kind of conclusions drawn by Graham for example:

43. W. E. H. Lecky drew the following conclusion from reading The Descent of Man in 1871: "... I think the book by far the most interesting, and even fascinating, on physical science I have ever read. The notion of perpetual orderly progress from the lowest zoophyte to the highest man appears to me a most noble one and the promise of a great future to the world and (in spite of all Bismarcks and Napoleons) extremely consoling.... I know, unfortunately, very little of physical science, but I know no book which seems to me to go so far towards what Buckle somewhat ambitiously called 'solving the problem of the universe.'" (Quoted in A Memoir of W. E. H. Lecky (by his wife) (London, 1909), p. 78.)
There is also, together with competition, the disastrous life of chance, in part the result of overflowing population, in part of our individual régime; and these facts of competition and chance, pressing more heavily on man in modern times than in the days of feudalism, bring home to the individual in the thick of the competitive and pitiless struggle, the fact and the reminder that life is still, in spite of our moral progress, in a real and most serious sense, a struggle of each for himself, and a struggle not merely against his competing fellows, but also against the threatening chapter of contingencies from within and without.

I hope to show that George Eliot was well aware that such conclusions could be drawn from Darwin and that an important concern in her novels is to demonstrate that the individual's relation to society could not be compared in any direct sense with an animal's relation to its environment, that the human consequences of believing that social life was also a struggle for existence in which one must try to survive was disastrous in every sense. Also, although there may be no immanent moral order in the world, this did not mean that human morality had then no basis. The foundation of morality was not religion or an external order outside man, but human feelings and needs in a social context.

iii

In several of the novels there are characters who can be seen to attempt to live their lives on a basis implicitly derived from Darwinian ideas. Felix Holt provides some good examples, particularly Christian. He is a cold, calculating, isolated individual determined to serve his personal interests at all times. He is clever, "an uncommonly, adroit, useful fellow" (I, 145) to his employer, but all he cares about is how he can exploit any situation for his own advantage. He is prepared to adapt himself
to any set of circumstances to serve his own interests. But this implicitly Darwinian philosophy proves dangerous, for despite all his calculation and willingness to make any adjustment to safeguard his interests, he learns that he cannot always be master of events:

The fact was that Mr. Christian, who had been remarkable through life for that power of adapting himself to circumstances which enables a man to fall safely on all-fours in the most hurried expulsions and escapes, was not exempt from bodily suffering - a circumstance to which there is no known way of adapting one's self so as to be perfectly comfortable under it, or to push it off to other people's shoulders (I, 214).

The Darwinian imagery is quite evident in this passage, especially the phrase "adapting himself to circumstances" which causes him to fall on all-fours like an animal. The somewhat cumbersome plot development by which Christian must take opium for a bodily ailment, falls asleep, and then has his pocket cut off by Scales while carrying an important letter, does have a thematic relevance. Christian thinks he can control circumstances for his own purposes, but discovers that bodily infirmity and the sheer unpredictability of events cannot be calculated on. In its own terms, a life devoted to self-interest is not necessarily successful.

Christian's utter commitment to self-interest not only leads to adapting himself to circumstances, it brings with it a struggle with other individuals who are also devoted to self-interest, namely Jermyn and Johnson. This struggle is compared to a chess game with humans:

Fancy what a game at chess would be if all the chessmen had passions and intellects, more or less small and cunning: if you were not only uncertain about your adversary's men, but a little uncertain also about your own; if your knight could shuffle himself on to a new square by the sly; if your bishop, in disgust at your castling, could wheedle your
pawns out of their places; and if your pawns, hating you because they are pawns, could make away from their appointed posts that you might get checkmate on a sudden. You might be the longest-headed of deductive reasoners, and yet you might be beaten by your own pawns. You would be especially likely to be beaten, if you depended arrogantly on your mathematical imagination, and regarded your passionate pieces with contempt.

Yet this imaginary chess is easy compared with the game a man has to play against his fellow-men with other fellow-men for his instruments. He thinks himself sagacious, perhaps, because he trusts no bond except that of self-interest; but the only self-interest he can safely rely on is what seems to be such to the mind he would use or govern. Can he ever be sure of knowing this? (II, 65-66).

The total commitment to individualism and self-interest by men like Christian and Jermyn makes the social world equivalent to a contest for survival. Jermyn, to whom the above passage refers, is also viewed in Darwinian terms. His animalistic qualities, the "savage side" (I, 175) of his nature is emphasised. He loves gaining power over people. The imagery used of him has clear evolutionary implications. Christian says of him: "He's as sleek as a rat, and has as vicious a tooth. I know the sort of vermin well enough. I've helped to fatten one or two (I, 318). The image is continued in a later passage: "But though a man may be willing to escape through a sewer, a sewer with an outlet into the dry air is not always at hand" (II, 235).

When he is finally near to ruin and prepared to resort to any means to survive, the Darwinian associations become obvious:

A doomed animal, with every issue earthed up except that where its enemy stands, must, if it has teeth and fierceness, try its one chance without delay. And a man may reach a point in his life in which his impulses are not to be distinguished from those of a hunted brute by any capability of scruples. Our selfishness is so robust and many-clutching, that, well encouraged, it easily devours all sustenance away from our poor little scruples (II, 324-325).
Christian also tries to calculate on chance for his own advantage:

Christian, having early exhausted the more impulsive delights of life, had become a sober calculator; and he had made up his mind that, for a man who had long ago run through his own money, servitude in a great family was the best kind of retirement after that of a pensioner; but if a better chance offered, a person of talent must not let it slip through his fingers. He held various ends of threads, but there was danger in pulling at them too impatiently (II, 17).

It is said later he believes "He must look for chance lights ..." (II, 23). He can be masterful or servile depending on which is necessary in the circumstances. To his employer he is servile, but to Mr. Lyon he behaves masterfully. Lyon regards him as "one who has never conceived aught of more sanctity than the lust of the eye and the pride of life" (II, 29). For Christian, the past has no defining influence on the identity he adopts. He believes he can live his life without ties, without acknowledging his past or the consequences of his actions. He has even taken another man's identity for his own advantage. George Eliot believes such a way of life is quite untenable in inward as well as in outward terms. As she says in the epigraph to Chapter 21: "... a man can never separate himself from his past history."

Christian and Jermyn are only two characters in whom one can discern the influence of Darwinian ideas shaping George Eliot's conception. There are also several other examples, particularly Tito, whom I shall discuss in detail later. She does not reject the validity of Darwinism in itself but shows that its application to man and society has disastrous results. Darwin's theory should not therefore be extended to include man's relation to society.

It was also her view that human morality was not dependent on the existence of an external order beyond the human. Therefore
Darwin's universe of chance and circumstance was not for her a justification for rejecting moral and religious values. Her view is clearly illustrated in her well-known letter to Mrs. Ponsonby, who had apparently been drawn to a nihilistic stance because she could no longer believe in human immortality and found the world-view of modern science demoralising. In other words, because morality could no longer be justified by being seen in terms of a world-order which transcended the human, it had no basis. George Eliot repudiates Mrs. Ponsonby's position, first of all, by contending that human values are the outcome of human feelings and responses and are unaffected by the untenability of former beliefs in an after-life. She asks whether her lack of such a belief should not rather increase her sympathetic feelings for her fellow-men, and whether her "sense of what is cruel and injurious" to those closest to her is in any way affected by it. George Eliot likewise attacks the view that the deterministic, amoral world revealed by science has any connection with moral action, which depends on purely human considerations. In such areas as molecular physics "you must banish from your field of view what is specifically human," but "pain and relief, love and sorrow, have their peculiar history which make an experience and knowledge over and above the swing of atoms." 45

For George Eliot moral values have no essential connection with whether God exists or not or whether man has eternal life, nor are they affected by scientific descriptions of reality. They are a human construct based on human experience and feelings.

45. Letters, VI, 98, 99.
This view is quite opposed to the symmetrical position that they depend on the existence of a coherent order outside man. Even Spencer's attempt to justify ethics on non-transcendent grounds tried to make them part of his total system. He said in the preface to his *Principles of Ethics* that his "ultimate purpose, lying behind all proximate purposes, has been that of finding for the principle of right and wrong in conduct at large a scientific basis." He goes on to say that "Few things can happen more disastrous than the decay and death of a regulative system no longer fit, before another and fitter regulative system has grown up to replace it." But for George Eliot, morality does not need to depend on any system, religious or secular.

iv

George Eliot's reply to such possibly dangerous Darwinian views as the following: that man is not essentially different from the animals, that the moral sense is only one animal instinct among others, and that human morality would vary under different conditions, can be seen clearly in Lewes's *Study of Psychology*, the fourth volume of his *Problems*, which George Eliot edited. In this work Lewes criticises Darwin's application of the theory of evolution to man. The basis of his criticism is that man is a social animal and this fact makes him utterly different from the natural animals, so that any comparison of man and animals cannot leave it out of account:

Biology furnishes both method and data in the elucidation of the relations of the organism and the external medium; and so far as Animal Psychology is concerned this is enough. But Human Psychology has a wider reach, includes another important factor, the influence of the social medium. This is not simply an addition, like that of a new sense which is the source of new modes of Feeling; it is a factor which permeates the whole composition of the mind. All the problems become complicated by it. In relation to Nature, man is animal; in relation to Culture, he is social. As the ideal world rises above and transforms the sensible world, so Culture transforms Nature physically and morally, fashioning the forest and the swamp into garden and meadow-lands, the selfish savage into the sympathetic citizen. The organism adjusts itself to the external medium; it creates, and is in turn modified by, the social medium, for Society is the product of human feelings, and its existence is pari-passu developed with the feelings which in turn it modifies and enlarges at each stage.47

Thus biology can never be used on its own to understand man; sociology must be taken into account. In Lewes's view Darwin is not sufficiently aware of this.

In a section entitled "Differences of Animal and Human" Lewes takes issue with Darwin. Darwin had said in The Descent of Man that there was no fundamental difference between man and the higher animals in mental faculties, but Lewes thinks Darwin fails to distinguish between "functions" and "evolved faculties." By function he means the native endowment of an organ, by faculty he means "its acquired variation of activity."48 Though man may be similar to animals in his organic functions, in faculties there is scarcely any comparison. The acquirement of the faculty of language by man has totally transformed man's animal functions. Both an ape and a man have hands, "but the ape's faculties are not a fiftieth part of those performed by the hand of man."49

47. Problems, IV, 71-72.
49. Problems, IV, 28.
He goes on to make the following important distinction between man and animals:

Animals have egoistic impulses; they have scarcely any sympathetic altruistic impulses beyond the sexual and the parental. They manifest a certain tenderness towards young and small animals (probably a derivation of the parental instinct), but this tenderness vanishes in the presence of any egoistic impulse.  

He contrasts the behaviour of a baboon and a human mother. In the case of human responses, language allows the human mother to transform a maternal instinct into a maternal sentiment because it can communicate the results of the experience of others to those who have not personally experienced them, whereas the baboon only has its personal experience. Thus a human mother can appreciate the claims of offspring in general, not just her own. She can have an "intellectual appreciation of the claims of the helpless" which is impossible for a baboon. He asserts that

The law of animal action is Individualism; its motto is "Each for himself against all." The ideal of human action is Altruism; its motto is "Each with others, all for each."  

Though animals are incapable of man's most degraded acts, they can also have no virtues:

It is true that animals have no virtues; for Virtue is the suppression of our egoistic impulses to promote the welfare of others; and animals are incapable of this conception. Their instincts lead directly to actions, never to ideas. Hence, while they share with man the sexual instinct, they know nothing of Love.  

While man is similar to the animal in his psychology in that it is the product of "Organism, External Medium, and Heredity,"

51. Problems, IV, 137.
52. Problems, IV, 138. Elsewhere Lewes states that in the social medium "All the animal Impulses become blended with human Emotions. In the process of evolution, starting from the merely animal appetite of sexuality, we arrive at the purest and most far-reaching tenderness ..." (Problems, I, 159). I shall discuss later the notion of sublimation which this implies and which is an important feature of both Lewes's and George Eliot's thought.
when the social medium is added to these, man becomes quite different. He goes on to state more fully his disagreement with Darwin's view that animals are not completely separated from men in their mental faculties:

I hold, indeed, that the mental faculties of man are developed out of mental functions which animals share with man; but these faculties, when developed, constitute as broad a line of demarcation, a barrier as impassable, as that between the vertebrate and invertebrate structure. The moral and higher intellectual faculties of man can no more be explained by reference to the animal functions alone than the flight of birds can be explained by the creeping of reptiles, though both are reducible to mechanical and physiological principles. Just as birds have wings, man has language.... Language enables man's intelligence and passions to acquire their peculiar characters of Intellect and Sentiment. And Language is a social product of a quite peculiar kind.

In animal societies, he says, "there is apparently nothing beyond an aggregation of individuals, with some division of employments ... above all, they have developed nothing like the Family as the social unit, and Tradition as the social experience."53

Discussing the moral differences between man and animals, he states that conscience is also a social product. Our animal emotions may constitute "a rudimentary moral sense" but they must be socially developed to become ideas of what is right and wrong. Though he admits that some human beings are only barely susceptible to the social transformation of their animal moral sense, the development of society and language has nevertheless created a moral consciousness in man which makes him utterly different from the animals. He believes men have "moral intuitions" but takes care to account for them empirically: "We have intuitions of Right and Wrong in so far as we have intuitions of certain

53. Problems, IV, 142-143.
consequences; but these must have been learned in our own experience or transmitted from the experiences of others. 54

Lewes’s discussion is particularly interesting, since he is a man who accepts all of Darwin’s basic ideas yet disagrees with the kind of application of them to man I have already discussed. For him man as a social animal cannot devote himself utterly to egoistic self-interest, viewing society as the equivalent of Darwinian nature in which one must struggle against others to survive. Man may be different in no fundamental way from animals both in his bodily and in his mental attributes, but the fact that man is a social animal who has acquired language and all that it makes possible is a basic distinction. Similarly man’s developed moral sense, his conscience, is a social and linguistic product and consequently does not require justification from religion, itself a social product. Morality, as for George Eliot, is purely human in its basis. In a posthumous review of Lewes’s Problems in Mind in 1881, the reviewer remarked: "On the whole it will perhaps be just to credit Lewes with the doctrine of the dependence of the Human Mind upon the Social Medium as his signal and crowning discovery." 55 In this George Eliot certainly agreed with him.

In her novels, in her treatment of those characters who try to live utterly egoistic lives, who have rejected religious and moral values, who regard themselves as being free to define themselves exactly as they choose or to devote themselves utterly to self-interest, her method is to place such characters in

54. Problems, IV, 151-152.
55. Mind, VI (1881), 498.
situations which test these attitudes against human and social experience. She is, of course, completely opposed to what these characters represent, but as an artist she must create the illusion that she is not merely twisting the plot, or manipulating events to defeat their aims and express her own views. Both character and situation must be rendered as truly as possible so that the outcome seems an integral part of the total experience of the novel. Probably her most interesting and complex study of such a character is Tito in Romola, and I shall try to show that an awareness of Darwinism and its implications helps in understanding both him and the novel as a whole.

George Eliot wrote to Alexander MAIN that Romola was an intense occupation of my feelings as well as thought for three years before it was completed in print. 6 It is the novel, then, which one would expect to illustrate most directly the effect of Darwinism on her mind, since it was not finally completed until 1863, even though all the novels from The Mill on the Floss onwards do, I think, reflect an awareness of Darwin in varying degrees. But it is in Romola that the issues are most clearly apparent.

The setting is that of a city in a state of crisis. George Eliot probably chose it because of its parallels with the disorder and sense of crisis in her own society. 57 The death of Lorenzo de' Medici has ended a period of order and stability in Italy. It creates a society of contending political parties

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and social groups which bears some resemblance to a Darwinian world of competition and struggle for survival. This is suggested by the description of the other Italian states' view of disordered Florence, in which evolutionary imagery is used:

... the Holy League seemed very much like an agreement among certain wolves to drive away all the other wolves, and then to see which among themselves could snatch the largest share of the prey. And there was a general disposition to regard Florence not as a fellow-wolf, but rather as a desirable carcass (II, 120).

Because of the disordered state of this society, individual life becomes something of a problem, since it is necessary to adjust to new and often rapidly changing circumstances, and Darwinian considerations can be seen to come into play. Life becomes characterised by struggle and competition with others, and by the need to adapt in order to survive.

The structure of the novel can be illuminated if we consider the different responses of the major characters to the disorder in Florence. Tito is a rationalist who believes in no divine purpose or moral order in the world. Rejecting all moral claims which interfere with his personal gratification, he views the situation in the city with its conflicts and contending parties in something like Darwinian terms, as a kind of evolutionary environment which he can exploit for his own advantage. He who is best able to adjust himself to the conditions in his environment and profit from the situation will thrive. He himself is a complete individualist who recognises nothing outside himself as limiting his total freedom. In contrast to Tito, there is Savonarola who views the crisis in Florence as a divine event. God is at last interfering in the world to re-impose his moral order. For him, the external world exhibits the order and purpose
of God and this conviction is the basis of his absolute assurance
in the Christian faith. Between these two contrasted world-views
stands Romola, who struggles to find the basis of a meaningful
moral position which will be independent of the assumptions of
both Tito and Savonarola.

For my present purpose, Tito is the most important character
in the novel. He is George Eliot's most extended portrait of a
single-minded adaptor to circumstances. The question she
implicitly raises is whether such a man can be expected to thrive
in his environment and what will be the effect on his inner life.
Tito's world-view is implicitly Darwinian: for him a world of
chance, struggle and adaptation replaces traditional beliefs in
order and purpose. It is notable how often evolutionary imagery
is used in connection with him:

The chances were infinite against Baldassare's having
met again with any of that crew ...

There was but one chance for him now: the chance of
Baldassare's failure in finding his revenge (I, 340).

Once at leisure thoroughly to face and consider his
circumstances, he hoped that he could adjust himself to
them and to all probabilities as to get rid of his childish
fear (I, 365).

As the freshness of young passion faded, life was taking
more and more decidedly for him the aspect of a game in
which there was an agreeable mingling of skill and chance.

And the game that might be played in Florence promised
to be rapid and exciting; it was a game of revolutionary
and party struggle, sure to include plenty of that unavowed
action in which brilliant ingenuity, able to get rid of
all inconvenient beliefs except that 'ginger is hot in the
mouth,' is apt to see the path of superior wisdom (II, 55).

Animal images are also used to describe him. His devotion to
his own interests and denial of his responsibility to Baldassare
is "the proper order of things - the order of nature, which treats
all maturity as a mere nidus for youth" (I, 175). Fearing that a collision with Romola cannot be averted he felt that "no persuasive blandness could cushion him against the shock towards which he was being driven like a timid animal urged to a desperate leap by the terror of the tooth and the claw that are close behind it" (I, 423).

The word "chance" is an important key work in Romola. In a world of chance there can be no design or purpose. For Tito life is a "mixture of skill and chance." If there is no moral order external to the self, why is he not free to exploit chance, fortune, and circumstances for his own advantage? Morality having been based on design and purpose in the universe, Tito can therefore rationalistically dispose of all grounds for moral action. Why should he consider another's interest before his own? "He would rather that Baldassare should not suffer; he liked no one to suffer; but could any philosophy prove to him that he was bound to care for another's suffering more than for his own?" (I, 176).

But Tito's attitudes are not the consequence of pure rationalism. They are also the product of his background, of those factors in his past which have shaped his personality. The word "alien" is repeatedly used of him, and he is an alien in every sense. Religion has not had any serious influence on his life and he has no connection with any country or any set of interests which would make him look beyond himself. As Bernardo comments to Romola: "It seems to me he is one of the demons, who are of no particular country, child ... His mind is a little too nimble to be weighted with all the stuff we men carry about in our hearts" (I, 294). Since they are no restraints
on his natural egoism and desire for self-gratification, he feels free to live a completely egoistic life, exploiting the disorder in Florence for his own purposes. Because he possesses "the unimpassioned feeling of the alien towards names and details that move the deepest passions of the native" (I, 330) he thinks he will be able to calculate on chance and exploit circumstances for his personal ends.

Tito is not an Iago-like villain, but a rationalist. He has no conscious wish to harm others. His decision not to go in search of Baldassare seems to him quite logical, since it would probably be fruitless: "But, after all, why was he bound to go? What, looked at closely, was the end of all life, but to extract the utmost of pleasure? And was not his own blooming life a promise of incomparably more pleasure, not for himself only, but for others, than the withered wintry life of a man who was past the time of keen enjoyment, and whose ideas had stiffened into barren rigidity?" (I, 175). The language used here is very suggestive of Benthamism. He not only adheres to Bentham's view that the main motive of man is to obtain personal gratification, but he even invokes his principle of the greatest pleasure for the greatest number to justify his action. 58 An underlying motive in George Eliot's treatment of Tito was perhaps to show the possible

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consequences of Utilitarian principles. Tito soon however
disposes of the pleasure of the greatest number idea and acts
solely for his own pleasure. In Bentham's system the transition
from the latter to the former had been a notable difficulty.\(^{59}\)

In a stable environment Tito might have led an ordinary life,
for it is only the disordered situation in Florence that makes it
seem profitable to be calculating and to try to exploit circumstances.
His lack of moral scruples or of attachment to any group appear to
give him great advantages in the struggle that takes place. He
can pretend to serve the interests of all while only serving his
own. The means he adopts to satisfy all parties and adapt to
circumstances as they arise is that of role-playing. By playing
a different role on each significant occasion he can exploit every
situation in his own interests. The narrator regards this
strategy as the beginning of his decline: "It was that change
which comes from the final departure of moral youthfulness – from
the distinct self-conscious adoption of a part in life" (I, 329).\(^{60}\)

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59. Of. W. R. Sorley, The Ethics of Naturalism (Edinburgh and
London, 1904), p. 33: "If the individual necessarily
pursues his own pleasure, how can we show that he ought
to subordinate it to the pleasures of the 'greatest number'?" He says of Bentham: "According to Bentham's psychology, a
man is necessitated by his mental and physical nature to
pursue at every moment, not the happiness of the greatest
number, but what seems to him his own greatest happiness" (p. 30).

60. The sense that the self was not identical with the social
roles it had to play has been seen as an important feature
of the Romantic attitude. Tito can be seen as developing
this to nihilistic conclusions. George H. Mead writes in
Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago, 1949),
p. 63: "As a characteristic of the romantic attitude we find
this assumption of rôles. Not only does one go out into
adventure taking now this, that, or other part, living this
exciting poignant experience and that, but one is constantly
coming back upon himself, perhaps reflecting upon the dulness
of his own existence as compared with the adventure at an
earlier time which he is living over in his imagination."
But for Tito this is a perfectly rational response to his situation:

He managed his affairs so cleverly, that all results, he considered, must turn to his advantage. Whichever party came uppermost, he was secure of favour and money. That is an indecorously naked statement: the fact, clothed as Tito habitually clothed it, was that his acute mind, discerning the equal hollowness of all parties, took the only rational course in making them subservient to his own interest (II, 170).

At first he thought this would only allow him to win favour, but he comes to believe that it will enable him to gain power:

... such power as is possible to talent without traditional ties, and without beliefs. Each party that thought of him as a tool might become dependent on him. His position as an alien, his indifference to the ideas or prejudices of the men amongst whom he moved, were suddenly transformed into advantages; he became newly conscious of his own adroitness in the presence of a game that he was called on to play (II, 88).

If a situation becomes threatening he is prepared to resort to any device to survive, as when Baldassare threatens to expose him:

It was a moment of desperation that annihilated all feeling in him, except the determination to risk anything for the chance of escape.... He had never yet done an act of murderous cruelty even to the smallest animal that could utter a cry, but at that moment he would have been capable of treading the breath from a smiling child for the sake of his own safety (II, 91).

Again the imagery is implicitly evolutionary. Survival in the struggle for existence by exploiting chance is all that matters.

He also regards the various roles he plays as having no defining influence on his selfhood. He thinks he can behave like an actor in a play who regards his roles as quite separate from his real self: "Could he not strip himself of the past, as of rehearsal clothing, and throw away the old bundle, to robe himself for the real scene?" (II, 286). It is this attitude that George Eliot is particularly concerned to attack:
Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind at large makes a moral tradition for the race ... But Tito was feeling the effect of an opposite tradition: he had won no memories of self-conquest and perfect faithfulness from which he could have a sense of falling (II, 88).

The way of life which is the product of Tito's attitudes is brought into confrontation with the reality of human and social experience in the novel. George Eliot does not want merely to resort to moral condemnation of Tito. Her own philosophical position makes it difficult for her to do this in simple terms, for she cannot accuse him of offending against moral absolutes. She must rather undermine his position by attacking his basic assumptions from within. She does this by showing that no tenable sense of identity can be created on such principles. It is not a humanly viable way of life, no matter how seemingly rationalistic its basis. Even in Tito's own terms, it has its disadvantages.

In his symbolic role in the novel, Tito can be seen as a type of the modern alienated man, cut off from traditional ties and beliefs to the point of nihilism. He also possesses little of the natural human feelings and sympathies which might restrain the ego's pursuit of its own interests; he is one of those "merely clever, unimpassioned men" (I, 434). The result is that his rationalism becomes the tool of his self-interest, analysing away all religion, morality, or principles:

And what motive could any man really have, except his own interest? Florentines whose passions were engaged in their petty and precarious political schemes might have no self-interest separable from family pride and tenacity in old hatred and attachments; a modern simpleton who swallowed whole one of the old systems of philosophy, and took the indigestion it occasioned for the signs of a divine afflux or the voice of an inward monitor, might see his interest in a form of self-conceit which he called self-rewarding virtue; fanatics who believed in the coming Scourge and Renovation might see their own interest in a
future palm-branch and white robe: but no man of clear intellect allowed his course to be determined by such puerile impulses or questionable inward fumes (II, 284).

In short, if everyone is serving his own interests, even if these are identified with a religion or a political position, none of which has any claims to truth, individual self-interest is the only logical response. There is no truth or moral order outside man in relation to which the ego can define itself, so it is free to create its own identity and live utterly for itself.

And Tito is not wrong to believe that there is no moral order or purpose in the world. In contrast to Tito, there is Savonarola who sees divine providence guiding the development of the world. But this belief is clearly undercut all through the novel and the moral position based on such assumptions becomes caught up in ambiguities.

For Savonarola the invasion of Italy by the French "did not belong to the usual order of Providence, but was in a peculiar sense the work of God" (I, 316). It is part of the purification that he has predicted must come. God, he claims, takes an active interest in the world. He believes that the world was certainly not framed for the lasting convenience of hypocrites, libertines, and oppressors. From the midst of those smiling heavens he had seen a sword hanging - the sword of God's justice - which was speedily to descend with purifying punishment on the Church and the world (I, 319).

While for Tito the development of events in Florence is part of the chaos that constitutes reality, for Savonarola it has transcendent meaning. God is interfering in the world to save the Christian church from corruption: "May, reason itself declared that vengeance was imminent, for what else could suffice
to turn men from their obstinacy in evil? And unless the Church were reclaimed, how could the promises be fulfilled, that the heathens should be converted and the whole world become subject to one true law?" (I, 320). It is inconceivable to him that his moral ordering of the world is, as Haeckel put it, "childish anthropomorphism." He believes in it with such intensity that he sees visions. But it is made clear that his prophetic visions are unconscious projections of his inner certitude of divine purpose:

But the real force of demonstration for Girolama Savonarola lay in his own burning indignation at the sight of wrong; in his fervent belief in an Unseen Justice that would put an end to the wrong, and in an Unseen Purity to which lying and uncleanness were an abomination. To his ardent, power-loving soul, believing in great ends, and longing to achieve those ends by the exertion of its own strong will, the faith in a supreme and righteous Ruler became one with the faith in a speedy divine interposition that would punish and reclaim (I, 320-321).

By expressing his moral vision of the world through prophecies, obvious difficulties arise. His power over the people becomes dependent on these prophecies being true, so that he becomes extremely vulnerable to the disorder of events. For example, during a period of bad weather, gales at sea "seemed to be uniting with all other powers to disprove the Frate's declaration that Heaven took special care of Florence" (II, 119). Fortunately for Savonarola, Florence is finally rescued by the arrival of galleys from France, though ironically the good news is delivered by Tito, the believer in amoral chance, who considers his part in this affair "an unpromised favour of fortune" (II, 151).

The narrator is repeatedly ironic about Savonarola's vision of the French as the instruments of divine purpose: "it was satisfactory to be assured that they would injure nobody but the enemies of God!" (I, 361), and the King of France, considered by
Savonarola to be a modern Charlemagne, would have fitted his role better if he "had looked more like a Charlemagne and less like a hastily modelled grotesque ..." (I, 363). Macchiavelli forecasts that once his prophetic visions fail to fit the facts, his power will crumble (II, 159). And as the reality of the situation becomes more intractable and entangled, so his fanaticism increases and he is forced to rely increasingly on prophecies to enforce his authority, which makes him the more vulnerable if these prophecies conflict with the facts.

His belief that his moral vision is destined to triumph also leads to questionable moral acts. He is tempted into believing not only that immoral means can bring about a moral end, but that such means cease to be evil since they promote the good. He is thus verging on a position which would deny any difference between good and evil. For George Eliot this is always the danger with men who claim to possess absolute knowledge: any means which favours their ends is regarded as valid. Romola cannot accept his identification of the good with the interests of his party. She also realises that in basing his authority on his prophecies, he cannot logically reject the prophetic visions of others of his own party like Camilla: "he was fettered inwardly by the consciousness that such revelations were not, in their basis, distinctly separable from his own visions ..." (II, 234).

Savonarola is presented as a tragic figure: a man with a noble vision but by basing it on the untenable assumption that God is directing the world in accordance with his divine purpose, he is defeated by the complexity and disorder of reality. Though Romola finally breaks with him, she sympathises with the ideal that inspires him. His was
the struggle of a mind possessed by a never-silent hunger after purity and simplicity, yet caught in a tangle of egoistic demands, false ideas, and difficult outward conditions, that made simplicity impossible (II, 306).

The "eyes of theoretic conviction" (II, 322) with which he views the world cannot cope with a reality in which Romola discovers "the sense of a confusion in human things which made all effort a mere dragging at tangled threads ..." (II, 321).

Tito then is right to see chance and disorder as character-ising external reality. There is no evidence of design or purpose in the world. There is no transcendent moral order external to the self. What is to restrain him from devoting himself utterly to self-interest through his life of role-playing, concealing his real self so that he can exploit every situation for his own advantage? The novel shows the results of this both on his outward and on his inward life. Is he less vulnerable to contingency than other men? What are the psychological effects of this?

vi

An important passage describes Romola's feelings when, on the point of leaving Tito for the first time, she takes off her wedding ring:

Romola's mind had been rushing with an impetuous current towards this act, for which she was preparing: the act of quitting a husband who had disappointed all her trust, the act of breaking an outward tie that no longer represented the inward bond of love. But that force of outward symbols by which our active life is knit together so as to make an inexorable external identity for us, not to be shaken by our wavering consciousness, gave a strange effect to this simple movement towards taking off her ring - a movement which was but a small sequence of her energetic resolution. It brought a vague but arresting sense that she was somehow violently rending her life in two: a presentiment that the strong impulse which had seemed to
exclude doubt and make her path clear might after all be blindness, and there was something in human bonds which must prevent them from being broken with the breaking of illusions (II, 46-47).

The phrase "external identity" is important. Romola feels that her external identity must be the product of her inner self and feelings, the shaping memories of her life, and those acts which she feels have had a defining influence on her life. In taking off her ring and thus repudiating her marriage, she feels she is contradicting her sense of who she is by performing an act irreconcilable with her deepest sense of self.

Tito, in contrast, in the parallel case when he sells the ring Baldassare had put on his finger, is eager to be rid of a symbol which created an external identity for him: "The ring had helped towards the recognition of him. Tito had begun to dislike recognition, which was a claim from the past" (I, 216). The significance of the ring is rationalistically dismissed as superstition. The idea that he could possess an external identity which objectifies his inner being is quite alien. For him it is rather a role which he can perform as long as it is in his personal interests, and then give up whenever he likes without feeling that his actions have had any defining influence on his real self. Whereas for Romola a valid identity can only emerge from a sense of continuity between her inner self and the outward form of her life, for Tito, there must always be a disjunction between the two.

When Romola finally does leave Tito, she adopts the role of a nun which, in the manner of Tito, she thinks she can dispense with as soon as it suits her. But she is confronted with Savonarola who denies that one can shape one's life in this way.
She is trying to choose freely who she is, what she will do as if she can quite consciously reject her past: "But can man or woman choose duties? No more than they can choose their birthplace or their father and mother. My daughter, you are fleeing from the presence of God into the wilderness" (II, 102).

But Tito does believe he can choose his outward identity quite self-consciously by an act of will, and the novel shows the effects on both his outward life and inner personality. Instead of possessing one firm external identity which objectifies his inner self and his past actions, he creates a number of roles which vary in relation to those persons or groups he comes in contact with. The Tito Romola knows differs utterly from that known by Baldassare or Tessa. The role he assumes with Savonarola and his supporters has nothing in common with that he adopts with Dolfo Spini. By playing a different role for different situations, he thinks he can exploit each for his advantage while remaining free and uncommitted in his inner self. He will thus be less vulnerable to the disorder of events than those who possess a single external identity which expresses their inner self and with which they confront every situation. How can such people possibly adapt to the chaos of circumstances in the struggle of party and faction in Florence? But such implicit evolutionary reasoning of Tito goes radically wrong in the social medium.

Two important key works in Romola are "dread" and "crisis." The word "dread" is probably the most frequently used key word in all of George Eliot's writings. It expresses more than ordinary physical fear. Rather it denotes an individual's psychological anxiety when outward experience comes into contradiction with his sense of identity. "Crisis" occurs when his identity is seriously
threatened. Few of George Eliot's characters are free from "dread" but few suffer as much as Tito:

The only thing he could regret was his needless dread ... (I, 270).

Tito shrank with shuddering dread from disgrace ... (I, 340-341).

The horrible sense that he must live in continual dread of what Baldassare had said or done pressed upon him like a cold weight (I, 386).

... his heart palpitated with a moral dread, against which no chain-armour could be found (I, 439).

Likewise, no one suffers as many experiences of crisis as Tito:

He felt that a new crisis had come ... (I, 173).

... his intellect was urged into the utmost activity by the danger of the crisis (I, 442-443).

It was a fearful crisis for Tito (II, 94).

Though Romola and Savonarola must also cope with experiences of dread and crisis, neither of them is threatened by external reality as much as Tito, who thinks his way of life is his best means of safeguard. Even in a physical sense the risks he runs are high, but George Eliot is mainly concerned with the psychological tensions arising from his way of life.

The reason for this is obvious. Instead of confronting experience with an unchanging external identity, he changes his role to suit the circumstances. Since each role is in contradiction and conflict with the others, he is continually being met with facts and situations which threaten the credibility of the particular role he is playing. Deception is essential to his style of life, and for anyone to see through his mask would result in his ruin. Thus he continually suffers from "dread" and, when seriously threatened,
from "crisis" For Romola to know of his conduct to Baldassare would destroy her regard for him. In his political life, if any of the parties concerned discovered his double dealing, his status would crumble. To prevent this happening he is prepared to resort to any means necessary. Even in terms of his outward life, the disadvantages of role-playing are manifest.

This is made clearer by reconsidering the subject of chance. It is his central assumption that he can exploit chance and circumstances for his advantage since he has no allegiances, and he succeeds in this. But it can also work both ways. Chance can as easily work against him as otherwise. No amount of calculation can always anticipate chance. Tito is in effect gambling with experience and inevitably finds he must lose sooner or later: "Life was so complicated a game that the devices of skill were liable to be defeated at every turn by air-blown chances, incalculable as the descent of thistle-down" (II, 178). All through the novel, this man who thinks he can exploit chance is threatened by it. The chances seemed against Baldassare ever finding him, but he turns up in Florence. He unfortunately meets Dolfo Spini in the street while walking with Romola and suffers an agonising conflict of roles. He is also unfortunate when the Medicean conspiracy comes to light, though he succeeds in not being completely ruined by being willing to give information. But it is the end of his political influence in Florence. He acknowledges his failure: "... things were not so plastic in the hands of cleverness as could be wished, and events had turned out inconveniently" (II, 283-284).

With all his cleverness and calculation, Tito discovers that he cannot be master of events, and in important respects his role-playing
makes him even more vulnerable than others. And the complexity of external events and unfortunate chance are not the only factors: the feelings which led to his marriage are also part of the complication of experience which calculation cannot cope with: "His brilliant success at Florence had some ugly flaws in it: he had fallen in love with the wrong woman, and Baldassare had come back under incalculable circumstances" (II, 285).

But Tito maintains to the last the belief that he can calculate on chance, and, fittingly, his death is the result of an unlucky chance. When threatened by the mob he thinks he can swim to safety as he had done once before: "It was his chance of salvation; and it was a good chance. His life had been saved once before by his fine swimming ..." (II, 391). Since he is "less afraid of indefinite chances" he swims far so as to be quite sure of escaping. But again chance proves dangerous to calculate on, for Baldassare happens to be on the river bank. At last chance favours him after so many previous attempts to ruin or kill Tito, "the hated favourite of blind fortune" (II, 71), had failed: "Could that be any fortunate chance for him?" (II, 393). Baldassare objectifies his "fortunate chance" into the belief that this is his "justice on earth." But this is a projection: justice does not exist external to human feelings: "Who shall put his finger on the work of justice, and say, 'It is there'? Justice is like the Kingdom of God - it is not without us as a fact, it is within us as a great yearning" (II, 396).

The consequences of Tito's role-playing and calculation on chance are just as disastrous on his inner life, and George Eliot
probably regards this as more important. Though he might have profited and survived in outward terms, the psychological effects of his way of life are disastrous. In his personal life, he becomes increasingly alienated from others, most importantly from Romola. He cannot afford to let anyone, even his wife, see into his inner self since this would be a threat. As he becomes more and more caught up in his life of role-playing and calculation, it is indispensable that he conceal his real self from her. This is not only because she might be a danger to his political life, but because he knows she would despise his hidden actions and secret motives, and he still possesses sufficient inner feeling to regard her judgment as imposing a definition on him which it would be almost impossible for him not to internalise.

The screen between self and role must be maintained at all costs, and the chain-mail he is forced to wear for his physical protection becomes an obvious symbol of his mental alienation from others. This barrier prevents any real tenderness or openness between him and Romola. He becomes more and more isolated with only the doe-like Tessa to fall back on, who even finds his chain-mail attractive. She is his only personal source of satisfaction, and ironically this is because she accepts him completely for himself. He has no need to act out a role with her, though even this relationship is rooted in the deception of a false marriage.

Even when Romola urges openness to break their alienation, he must refuse. Alienation from others is not only the consequence of his way of life, it must be actively chosen, since he cannot allow anyone to penetrate behind the mask he wears. Without this mask he feels vulnerable in both an outward and an inward sense. The more
he becomes committed to role-playing and calculation, the more he must choose alienation and the concealment of his inner self from others.

Tito's mistake is to think that his selfhood owes nothing to others, that his identity is independent of others' judgments of him. But the very fact that he adopts various masks to hide what he feels to be his real self is a tacit admission that he is afraid of the judgments of others, that he can be defined by them. In creating a disjunction between his external identity and his inner self, when the other sees through the mask the inner self stands exposed and vulnerable to the other's judgment of it. This is his ultimate dread, for then he feels judged and defined by others. The fact that he strove to conceal his inner self from them implicitly admits a sense of guilt, a fear that he will be unable to resist their definition. Then he will no longer be free, even to himself. He cannot help but feel guilt and shame when he is exposed; he cannot completely reject these feelings. Thus the psychological effect of Baldassare clutching him outside the Duomo: "He wondered at the power of the passionate fear that possessed him. It was as if he had been smitten with a blighting disease that had suddenly turned the joyous sense of young life into pain" (I, 341). His acts are defining him despite his attempt to deny this. He is always conscious of what the attitudes of others would be to his actions, and though he tries to rationalise his shame and guilt away, his inner self is affected nonetheless. The Dorian Gray-like picture Piero di Cosimo paints of him brings out the traumatic effects of his way of life on his inner self.

Tito thinks that his real self is something which exists apart from his actions, instead of being realised in action. At the time
of his death he is planning to leave Florence and start life elsewhere as if nothing had happened. But in refusing to accept that his actions are self-defining, he both denies himself a self-created identity and allows himself to be completely defined by others' judgments. He cannot prevent their judging him and the guilt and shame he feels in moments of stress show he cannot reason this away. Instead of being totally free as he thinks he is, Tito denies himself freedom. The only identity he possesses is that created for him by others' judgments. The actions he performed were not intended as self-defining; they do not create a personal sense of identity for him but they do allow others to judge him. And even though he tries to deny the defining nature of action, his actions are shaping him: "Tito was experiencing that inexorable law of human souls, that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil which gradually determine character" (I, 340).

Men like Savonarola and Bernardo are destroyed by the disorder of Florence but they wholly committed themselves to actions which realised their individual selves. They are able to feel that their lives have a certain meaning and value even in death. They have affected the world in what they feel is an authentic way and this has altered the course of events. But Tito, never having committed himself to actions which he felt as defining, has never really lived in himself. The judgment of others is all that is left. Tito himself was an emptiness, a vacuum.

In neither an outward nor an inward sense, then, is Tito successful in his attempt to live solely for personal gratification. Though he can reason away all duties and moral values, his conclusion that only his own interests are important leads to a humanly
untenable way of life. His behaviour becomes characterised by animal-like egoism in which gratification and the need to survive predominate over all other considerations. But a man's relation to his social medium is utterly different from an animal's relation to nature because man's consciousness has been transformed by social influences. This makes it impossible for Tito to base his life on purely Darwinian principles. The individual human consciousness is different in kind from the egoistic consciousness of an animal since it is partly a social product: the social world, particularly language, has created its very being. The human self, then, can never think of itself in isolation from others as an animal can. Language and thought are necessarily shared and innumerable behaviour patterns have been absorbed. Tito can only live a completely egoistic life by deceiving others and by refusing to acknowledge that his actions create his identity. Though society might seem to resemble Darwinian nature on the surface, it is fundamentally different. The individual in George Eliot's view, can never wholly separate himself from social life or from the moral considerations that are part of its fabric. His actions and others' judgments of those necessarily build up an individual identity which he cannot reject or deny completely, and the attempt to do so ultimately proves to be disastrous. It leads to a negation of selfhood and involves a degree of isolation that must finally become unbearable.

Tito is one of George Eliot's most notable egoists, and Darwinism can be seen as an important factor in her increasing concern with the problem of egoism, since it could be interpreted as justifying self-interest and also served to undermine the basis of religious and moral beliefs which could control egoism. But the problem of egoism was more far-reaching than this, and I want to go on to consider it in detail.
CHAPTER III

EGOISM

All writers on George Eliot are agreed that one of the most notable features of her work is its concern with egoism. Each of her novels treats the subject in one way or another, and none of her characters is devoid of egoism. But it is often too easily assumed that she is simply opposed to egoism, or that her positive characters are less egoistic than those she disapproves of. ¹ Her position is much more complex. It is arguable that few other nineteenth-century writers were as interested as she was in egoism, and it is perhaps not an exaggeration to say she was obsessed with the subject. It is especially interesting and illuminating to note how preoccupied she was with it even in her earliest letters. A consideration of these helps in understanding her later attitude towards it.

¹

What is immediately striking is the frequency of reference to egoism in the early letters. Usually she only mentions it in order to condemn its manifestation in herself, but it requires no great psychological ingenuity to regard her repeated references as a sign that she was disturbed by her own egoistic tendencies, and felt they

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¹ Bernard J. Paris writes, for example, in *Experiments in Life*, p. 84: "The great division among George Eliot's characters is between egoists and those who approach reality objectively... and the development of the action often hinges upon or produces the education of the protagonist from egoism to objectivity."
threatened to undermine the complete submission of self demanded by her Evangelical religious faith. The following condemnation may seem innocuous, but its repetition in letter after letter illustrates her personal involvement with the subject:

If egotism be at any time excusable it is in writing to a friend, and to the charity of so kind a friend as yourself I dare trust for the pardon of all that is tedious and impertinent in this careless letter.²

And again, also to Maria Lewis, she writes:

I hope the frequent use of the personal pronoun will not lead you to think that I suppose it to confer any weight on what I have said. I used it to prevent circumlocution and waste of time. I am ashamed to send a letter like this as if I thought more highly of myself than I ought to think, which is alas! too true.³

There are numerous other comments in similar terms: "Now I hope I have done with self of which both you and I have reason to be weary;" "I fear that I am going to send you another shabby selfish letter ..." and "I have written an almost unpardonably egotistical letter to say nothing of its other blemishes ..."⁴

It seems certain that it was the possession of a religious faith which demanded complete submission to the will of God which made her own egoism especially apparent and troublesome to her. A sense of this conflict can be seen in another letter to Maria Lewis:

What a curse it would prove for us to have our own way, even in the fruit of our best efforts, those in which we are in a measure seeking the glory of God, still more in the regulation of our worldly circumstances. If I were truly spiritually minded I should rather delight in an occasion of proving to myself the genuineness of my religious experience and of exercising a cheerful submission to the will of the Saviour, instead of acting as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, murmuring at the slightest opposition to my taste, the slightest mortification of my fleshly mind.⁵

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There is also a strong sense that the tension between egoism and submission to God had been accentuated in her by reading Romantic literature. There are many Romantic echoes in the language she uses to describe the conflict between ego and God. She seems to have been especially affected by the Romantic view of Milton's Satan:

"I feel that my besetting sin is the one of all others most destroying, as it is the fruitful parent of them all, Ambition, a desire insatiable for the esteem of my fellow creatures. This seems the centre whence all my actions proceed. This seems the great stumbling block in my path Zion-ward."  

She refers to her "restless ambitious spirit" and claims that "Satan's sentiments 'Evil be thou my good,' is by no means peculiar to the Monarch of iniquity - it is shared in varying degrees by all his subjects." And referring to some person who had apparently attracted her, she trusts she will be "free from rebelling against Him whose I am by right, whose I would be by adoption."  

One is not surprised to learn that she was deep in Byron at this time:

"Byron in his Childe Harold (which I have just begun the second time) checks reflections on individual and personal sorrows by reminding himself of the revolutions and woes beneath which the shores of the Mediterranean have groaned."

She was also reading the other Romantics. There are references to Wordsworth, Shelley, Carlyle, and Madame de Stael, and she had begun to learn German during this period. Her immersion in Romantic literature and its effect on her are well shown in the following letter:

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7. Letters, I, 37, 43, 46.  
My only reason for writing on an evening that finds me with a mindful of the accumulated scum of continued intercourse with the herd (I do not write superciliously) ... is that ... etc.

She goes on:

O how lusciously joyous to have the wind of heaven blow on one after being stivéd in a human atmosphere ...

But it is time I check this Byronic invective, and in doing so I am reminded of Corinne's or rather Oswald's reproof, *La vie est un combat, pas un hymne*. We should aim to be like plants in the chamber of sickness, dispensing purifying air even in a region that turns all pale its verdure and cramps its instinctive propensity to expand.9

Yet in spite of being exposed to and affected by Romantic literature, in much of which the egoist is supported in his rebellion against God and society, she still remains committed to the self-submission demanded by her Evangelicalism. She expresses agreement with a writer who "says that the whole of religion is, simply to submit to God.... The Christian realizes the apparent paradox of glorying in the possession of the summit of honour ... with the lowest self-debasement."10

But the sense of conflict she feels in herself continues to trouble her:

I earnestly desire a spirit of childlike humility that shall make me willing to be lightly esteemed among men; this is the opposite of my besetting sin, which is an ever struggling ambition.

And later she writes:

My chief trouble here ought to be my uselessness for I seem to have nothing to do but seek gratification, but for the willing spirit there is in every situation "room to deny ourselves, a road to bring us daily nearer God." After all this positive egotism, I will pass to what is only comparative ...

Submission to God remains, however, absolutely essential for her, no matter how difficult:

10. Letters, I, 63.
A full reliance on His wisdom and love and a firm faith that if really for our ultimate good such a protector as His laws will permit us to accept will be given is the state of mind I seek to obtain. I am convinced that every desire that relaxes this limitation is an inordinate one and will be an incubus checking the aspirations of the spiritual life.  

Since her religious belief was the main force which controlled her egoistic tendencies, her references to egoism when she breaks with Christianity become particularly interesting. One letter of this period is especially important, since it anticipates her later thought. After quoting a poem of her own she writes:

Beautiful ego-ism! To quote one's own. But where is not this same ego? The martyr at the stake seeks its gratification as much as the court sycophant, the difference lying in the comparative dignity and beauty of the two egos. People absurdly talk of self-denial - why there is none in Virtue to a being of moral excellence - the greatest torture to such a soul would be to run counter to the dictates of conscience, to wallow in the slough of meanness, deception, revenge or sensuality. Gordon S. Haight thinks George Eliot may have been influenced by the Benthamism of Charles Bray's *Philosophy of Necessity* here. But the idea that the goodness of a particular act stems from the quality of the egoism of the performer seems more Romantic than Benthamite. Even though this passage seems to be denying any external justification for moral action, George Eliot still at this time believed in God and a morally ordered universe, though on a pantheistic basis. In a letter written not long previously to that quoted above, she wrote that we "cannot fail if we are true to the indications of His will who has originated and sustains our existence to be harmonizing notes in the great chorus of praise ever ascending

from every part of the universe."¹³

But egoism still remains a problem for her, and obviously it will become an even greater one when she gives up pantheism or any belief in an external moral order:

I can quite appropriate Satan's sentiment, "What matter if I be still the same." Or rather if I be attaining a better autocratship than that of the Emperor of all the Russians - the empire over self.... I would I knew something of any creature beside myself to write of - as it is I can only beg you to reconcile me to my eternal egotism by copying it.¹⁴

An early letter to Sara Hennell suggests she was already troubled by the problem raised by egoism if there was no unquestionable moral authority external to the ego:

Do I not live with myself and tire of myself until I have no need of metaphysics to make me believe that there is nothing certain but that self exists? And you after all your philosophical lectures to me, would keep me on a spot where I have already pirouetted until I am giddy, until I am one of the most egotistical speakers and writers in a world of egotists.¹⁵

References to egoism continue to occur in her letters, though much less frequently in her mature years. It seems likely that one of the main reasons for her preoccupation with it was the encounter of a profoundly religious sensibility with Romantic literature which celebrated the ego and supported its rebellion. Yet she was never in the least drawn to the cult of the ego. Her favourite Romantic poet was always Wordsworth, who, though the "egotistical sublime"

¹³. Letters, I, 121.
¹⁴. Letters, I, 138-139.
¹⁵. Letters, I, 145.
may describe his poetic style, opposed the demonic egoism which can be found in Byron and other Romantics. But as she gave up Christianity and belief in a morally ordered universe, which she had constantly called on to help her resist her own egoistic tendencies, it became less easy to find a basis for rejecting an egoistic or Byronic philosophy. Egoism thus becomes a major concern of the mature George Eliot. I want now to consider the reasons underlying this at a more general level.

ii

I have referred earlier to George Eliot's Evangelicalism as a symmetrically structured world-view, one in which it is believed that the world external to the mind is part of a cosmic or divine order, and that this provides the ground for religion and morality. I have also suggested that Romanticism can be defined as a reversal of this position: order and value must be consciously projected by the mind onto the world. An immanent order in the world which exists independently of the mind is rejected. This reorientation radically altered the relation of the individual to reality. Instead of the self being defined in relation to a structured universe, it was apparently free to create or discover its own reality. Earl R. Wasserman makes particularly clear the difference between the pre-Romantic and post-Romantic outlooks:

Until the end of the eighteenth century there was sufficient intellectual homogeneity for men to share certain assumptions, or universal principles, outside the structure of discursive language, that tended to order their universe for them. In varying degrees, ranging from conviction to faith and to passive submission, man accepted, to name but a few, the Christian interpretation of history, the sacramentalism of nature, the
the Great Chain of Being, the analogy of the various planes of Creation, the conception of man as microcosm, and, in the literary area, the doctrine of the genres. These were cosmic syntaxes in the public domain; and the poet could afford to think of his art as imitative of "nature," since these patterns were what he meant by "nature."

But by the end of the eighteenth century, for some artists and intellectuals at least, this state of affairs was ended:

For during the eighteenth century the disintegration of cosmic orders widely felt as true was finally completed... these communally accepted patterns had almost completely disappeared - each man now rode his own hobby-horse.¹⁶

For the Romantics, this breakdown of "cosmic syntaxes" led to a new relationship between the individual ego and external reality. The self became the focus for values. Instead of authority and value emanating from some unquestionable source beyond the self and which integrated man, society, and the world in one single system, the ego rejected any pre-determined system. Such a basis for authority lacked credibility and the self must create its values anew.

R. A. Poakes writes:

The destruction of an external frame of reference led the Romantics to seek a principle of order within the individual, within themselves, to write of man and the world largely in terms of their own inner life, or their own self-sought, self-created relationship with God.¹⁷

George Eliot's Evangelicalism belonged to those pre-Romantic "cosmic syntaces" which provided the self with an ordered reality in


relation to which it could define itself and experience meaning and value. Thus it is easy to understand the tension that was generated in her in reading the Romantics, especially those who most clearly rejected pre-conceived systems. When she finally did reject dogmatic Christianity, the pantheism she adopted in its place owed much to the influence of Wordsworth.

But as long as she could conceive of God and a divine order as existing beyond the ego in some form, the self possessed an external frame of reference which gave it a sense of moral direction and a stable identity. Though she wondered whether the ego was the only reality, it is clear from the passages already quoted, that she still felt there was a moral order in the universe. In a letter written on 30 April 1842 to Martha Jackson she had remarked: "In the meantime, it is mine to wait patiently, confiding in a higher and stronger law than my own will ..." But as I have tried to show, even when she was convinced of the existence of such "a higher and stronger law," the problem of egoism still concerned her. It is easy to appreciate then that it should become a much greater problem when she ceased to believe in God or in any external moral order in the universe. There was no transcendent realm of order and value which the ego could submit to. There was still of course society and its values, but these were to a large extent based on Christian concepts or on Enlightenment ideas. If Christianity was rejected and if the world-view of the Enlightenment broke down, then the

18. Letters, I, 139.
values of society became problematic and could no longer easily provide a stable definition for the self.  

George Eliot believed that the fundamental urge of the ego was always for self-gratification. This is her basic complaint against her own egoism. She was also aware of the demonic forces present in the self. There is a particularly interesting comment in a letter to the Brays written immediately after the death of her father:

What shall I be without my Father? It will seem as if a part of my moral nature were gone. I had a horrid vision of myself last night becoming earthly sensual and devilish for want of that purifying restraining influence.

The implication is that the self needs to accept some superior authority if there is to be any limitation on the urge for gratification or any control over demonic impulses. But if there was

19. Gaylord C. LeRoy writes in Perplexed Prophets: Six Nineteenth-Century British Authors (Philadelphia, 1953), pp. 111-113: "When one recalls in this way the social role of religion throughout the nineteenth century, one can readily see how men might find it difficult to adjust to the loss of faith because it threatened to deprive them of sanctions for a certain outlook on society. If psychologically loss of faith threatened moral anarchy, socially it threatened a civil anarchy in which man would seek to fulfill his demands upon society without the restraint of moral principle. It is only by referring in this way to the social implications of the loss of faith that one can explain why it was that invariably those who suffered the greatest agony over the breakdown of belief were precisely those who were most attached to the established order."

20. Letters, 1, 284.
no external moral order which could define the self, what was to prevent an individual feeling free to create his own values or living solely for gratification? Bentham's notion of the greatest good of the greatest number was an attempt to provide a justification for altruistic acts on the part of the naturally pleasure-seeking individual, but, as I have already said, it could be objected that he fails to make it clear why the individual should limit his own pleasure for the sake of others. Bentham was also a man of the Enlightenment and so the Romantic problem of how the self could find a means of definition scarcely arose for him. But for the Romantic egoists who rejected the Enlightenment belief that men could discover universally acceptable truths through knowledge and that a coherent pattern would emerge through the exercise of reason, the problem of self-definition was fundamental. Since they rejected the notion of any universal order beyond the self or any authority superior to self, the ego seemed free to define itself by creating its own values or else could give itself up to impulse or gratification.

However, it is important to realise that there were two distinctive responses on the part of the Romantics towards egoism. It is useful to divide them into two groups, though such a division should not be pushed to extremes. In the one group there are those who believe that the individual self must seek a new world-view in which it can reorient itself, what Carlyle in Sartor Resartus called a "new Mythus."21 This will enable the ego to leave off its

21. "Wilt thou help us to embody the divine Spirit of that Religion [Christianity] in a new Mythus, in a new vehicle and vesture, that our Souls, otherwise too like perishing, may live?" (Book II, Chap. ix).
defiance and negative self-assertion and find a new relationship with the universe, and also a social form which will integrate the individual with others in society. This may be defined as organicist Romanticism. But the other Romantic point of view is either unable to discover any "new mythos" or else refuses to accept it since it denies that there is any orientation that the individual ego can accept as a superior authority. If any values are accepted, they must be purely self-created. This may be defined as demonic, or individualist Romanticism.

Both of these Romantic positions took the individual ego as starting point, but the organicists saw the ego as only the first step in the creation of a new orientation which would achieve the organic union of man and society within a meaningful universe. The demonic Romantics continued, however, to assert the supremacy of the ego over any metaphysical or social formulations. But it is important to realise that a new conception of the ego's relation to external reality was central to Romanticism as a whole, as Sir Isaiah Berlin points out:

Since the Greeks, and perhaps long before them, men had believed that to the central questions about the nature and purpose of their lives and of the world in which they lived, true, objective, universal and eternal answers could be found.... Conflicting beliefs were held about the central questions: whether truth was to be found in reason or in faith, in the Church or the laboratory, in the insights of the uniquely privileged individual ... or in the collective consciousness of a body of men ... What was common to all these views ... was the assumption that there existed a reality, a structure of things, a rerum natura, which the qualified inquirer could see, study and, in principle get right....

This was the great foundation of belief which Romanticism attacked and weakened. Whatever the differences between the leading Romantic thinkers - the early Schiller
and the later Fichte, Schelling and Jacobi, Tieck and the Schlegels when they were young, Chateaubriand and Byron, Coleridge and Carlyle, Kierkegaard, Stirner, Nietzsche, Baudelaire – there runs through their writings a common notion, held with varying degrees of consciousness and depth, that truth is not an objective structure, independent of those who seek it, the hidden treasure waiting to be found but is itself in all its guises created by the seeker... the answers to the great questions are not to be discovered so much as to be invented. 22

I have already suggested in my first chapter that George Eliot belongs in a Romantic tradition of thought. But though it can be argued that all of the Romantics were aware in some degree that "truth" must be subjectively created and was not objectively given, the organicist Romantics were convinced of the need to discover a new orientation that could be accepted by society as a whole. It is to this tradition of Romanticism that would include Wordsworth, Coleridge, the later Friedrich Schlegel, Carlyle, for example, that, as I shall argue, George Eliot belongs. And it is an important part of her purpose to attack Romantic individualism, supported in various ways by such figures as Byron, Stirner, Baudelaire, and Nietzsche.

Of the latter figures, George Eliot would obviously have been most aware of Byron. Though the influence of Wordsworth on her has often been pointed out, that of Byron has scarcely been commented on. She had read Byron in her youth and seems to have continued to read him throughout her life. On May 5, 1852 she wrote from London to Mrs. Charles Bray: "I shall be glad to have sent me my Shakspeare, Goethe, Byron and Wordsworth, if you shall take the trouble of packing them." 23 This would seem to indicate that they

were among her favourite authors at this time. She revered Shakespeare, Goethe and Wordsworth all her life, but she seems to have become alienated from Byron as she grew older. She wrote to Mrs. Charles Bray on August 23, 1869: "Byron and his poetry have become more and more repugnant to me of late years (I read a good deal of him a little while ago, in order to form a fresh judgment)." But the effect of Byron, particularly the Byronic hero, on her work is clearly apparent.

It is in her poetry that characters who adopt a "Byronic" stance are most obviously present. In *The Legend of Jubal*, for example, there are several Byronic features, notably in the setting which recalls Cain, and in the figure of Tubal-Cain, who possesses several characteristics of the Byronic hero. The poem is about the efforts of the "tribe of Cain" to recover from the alienation of being made outcasts as a result of Cain's murder. Tubal-Cain belongs to the sons of Lamech, an ambitious group which believes in will and force:

But strength that still on movement must be fed,  
Inspiring thought of change, devices bred,  
And urged his mind through earth and air to rove  
For force that he could conquer if he strove,  
For lurking forms that might near tasks fulfil  
And yield unwilling to his stronger will (p. 10).

He offers the people a power philosophy, by which the world will be subdued by force of will. Like Prometheus, he makes fire obey his will:

But Tubal-Cain had caught and yoked the fire,  
Yoked it with stones that bent the flaming spire  
And made it roar in prisoned servitude  
Within the furnace, till with force subdued  
It changed all forms he willed to work upon,  
Till hard from soft, and soft from hard, he won (pp. 12-13).
By this means he "arms for conquest man's ambitious will ..." (p. 15). He creates industry and gives a sense of life to the people, "filling with its soul the blank of death" (p. 15).

Jubal represents another way of making the people recover from their alienation, opposed to Tubal-Cain's. He seeks a better means of reconciling men to their new life outside Eden. He makes a lyre and out of his feeling for nature he creates music. This draws men together and makes them experience something beyond themselves which can shape their lives:

He made it, and from out its measured frame
Drew the harmonic soul, whose answers came
With guidance sweet and lessons of delight
Teaching to ear and hand the blissful Right,
Where strictest law is gladness to the sense
And all desire bends toward obedience (p. 20).

By this means "The generations of our race shall win / New life, that grows from out the heart of this ..." (p. 19). While Tubal-Cain encourages the will to dominate in men, Jubal creates harmony among them by means of music. He arouses feelings which connect their present life to their past and with the universe at large. They are thus able, by means of his art, to accept their fate and overcome the dread of death and the alienation associated with Cain's sin.

There is more one could say about this poem, but what I want to emphasise is the contrast of two different ways of overcoming alienation. One by means of will and domination, the other through creating a sense of harmony among men in offering them an experience which transcends the self. There is no doubt which George Eliot prefers. The contrast between Tubal-Cain and Jubal can also be seen as representing that between the individualist and organicist Romantic viewpoints.
The influence of the Byronic hero is more clearly apparent in "Armgart," a dramatised poem written in 1870. This work is of interest not only for its own sake but because the heroine has obvious affinities with the Princess Halm-Sberstein in *Daniel Deronda*. Armgart is an opera singer who glories in the power of selfhood she is able to experience through her art. Nothing must stand in the way of this self-realisation. But while Byron was clearly on the side of his demonic egoists in their defiant assertion of individual freedom and their refusal to submit to either human or divine limits, even in the face of death, George Eliot subjects the egoist's defiant self-assertion to criticism by means of a confrontation with experience.

The only value Armgart recognises is self-created. Her art is much more than a musical activity: it is her means of discovering value is pure selfhood and imposing her will on external reality:

> She bears
> Caesar's ambition in her delicate breast,
> And nought to stir it with but quivering song! (p. 73).

She demands complete service from those around her. Her voice is the "channel to her soul" (p. 75), and without it she would have been a maenad capable of revenge and murder. In her devotion to music, she does not consider that she is serving something more important than her individual self: music is her means of self-fulfilment.

It is not she who is singing Gluck, but Gluck who listens to her. She worships herself in the act of singing. The gifts admirers bring her are "Gold, incense, myrrh" (p. 86).

In Byronic fashion she celebrates the will and despises any compromise of it:

> True greatness ever wills -
> It lives in wholesomeness if it live at all,
> And all its strength is knit with constancy (p. 91).
A woman's role of wife and mother is something she contemptuously rejects. The longing for personal power that underlies her attitude is apparent in her need for

That sense transcendent which can taste the joy
Of swaying multitudes, of being adored
For such achievement ... (p. 96).

She regards the self as superior to any limitation, whether this is imposed by nature of society:

I need not crush myself within a mould
Of theory called Nature: I have room
To breathe and grow unstunted (p. 98).

Thus marriage to the Graf would be intolerable since it would mean submitting to "superior claims," and "My love would be accomplice of your will" (p. 104). She determines to live solely for the intensity of selfhood she can realise in her art. It is not merely that she is not in love: she rejects the Graf defiantly in favour of self and will:

Whom I refuse to love!
No; I will live alone and pour my pain
With passion into music, where it turns
To what is best within my better self (p. 102).

She cannot live "Without the bliss of singing to the world, / And feeling all my world respond to me" (p. 106).

Armgart is clearly the embodiment of Byronic or demonic attitudes: self-assertion, defiance, the refusal to recognise any authority superior to self, adherence to her own self-created values. As Peter L. Thorslev has written in The Byronic Hero:

For with Byronic heroes "The mind is its own place" ... he creates his own human values, and the "sins" of which he repents are transgressions of his own peculiar moral codes. For the commandments of religion or for common social morality he has nothing but defiance and contempt.25

George Eliot's aim is to bring Armgart's philosophy into confrontation with experience and reveal its inadequacies. She does this

by making her encounter defeat and misfortune, which must come sooner or later.

In the third scene she has lost her singing voice as the result of an illness. Having staked all her egoism on her voice, when it fails her she is reduced to despair. Life becomes meaningless:

A self accursed with consciousness of change,
A mind that lives in nought but members lopped,
A power turned to pain - as meaningless
As letters fallen asunder that once made
A hymn of rapture (p. 113).

Instead of her former domination she is merely "The millionth woman in superfluous herds." She retains, however, another Byronic attitude in adopting the stance of Romantic revolt in the face of misfortune. She refuses to take drugs prescribed by her doctor since this would make her

abject as the rest
To bear the yoke of life. He shall not cheat me
Of that fresh strength which anguish gives the soul,
The inspiration of revolt, ere rage
Slackens to faltering (p. 116).

But without her voice she feels she has lost her freedom and her purpose in life. She possesses nothing now that can differentiate her from a million other women. But the idea of what she potentially is gives her, she thinks, the right to consider herself a superior being and despise life for the way it has treated her:

An inborn passion gives a rebel's right:
I would rebel and die in twenty worlds
Sooner than beat the yoke of thwarted life,
Each keenest sense turned into keen distaste,
Hunger not satisfied but kept alive
Breathing in languor half a century.
All the world now is but a rack of threads
To twist and dwarf me into pettiness
And basely feigned content, the placid mask
Of woman's misery (p. 127-128).
This demonic statement marks the turn of the poem. For Armgart's servant Walpurga turns against her and begins to assail her position. She condemns Armgart's attitudes as being based on privilege and domination. Her freedom had demanded the service of Walpurga who acted as she did out of love for Armgart. Those royal natures whom Armgart acclaims and among whom she numbers herself live "In mere mock knowledge of their fellows' woe, / Thinking their smiles may heal it" (p. 129). Is Armgart the only one with a right to rebel, what about other sufferers? Her rebellion is mere contempt for others. She is a deserter, not a rebel, since she cares nothing about others in distress but only despises them.

This attack makes Armgart realise the narrowness of her attitude and she discovers that "true vision comes / Only, it seems with sorrow" (p. 131). When she says that it would be only worthwhile to live if someone else suffered as much as she does and needs her comfort, Walpurga responds: "One - near you - why, they throng! You hardly stir / But your act touches them" (p. 131). Walpurga's most sustained attack on Armgart is also George Eliot's own attack on the Byronic egoist:

... you claimed the universe; nought less Than all existence working in sure tracks Towards your supremacy. The wheels might scathe A myriad destinies - may, must perforce; But yours they must keep clear of; just for you The seething atoms through the firmament Must bear a human heart - which you had not! For what is it to you that women, men, Plot, faint, are weary, and espouse despair Of aught but fellowship? Save that you spurn To be among them? Now, then, you are lame - Maimed, as you said, and levelled with the crowd: Call it new birth - birth from that monstrous Self Which, smiling down upon a race oppressed, Says, "All is good, for I am throned at ease" (p. 133).
Ammart is moved to accept renunciation and see beyond herself to other's needs. She vows to take humble work teaching: "We must bury our dead joys / And live above them with a living world" (p. 139).

The moral development of this poem is predictable. But it is of interest because it shows that even as late as 1870, on the verge of *Middlemarch*, George Eliot could create as clear an example of the Byronic egoist as any in nineteenth-century literature. Why should she have been sufficiently interested in Armgart's condition to devote a poem to her? Why did she feel the need to repudiate Armgart's assertion of the primacy of the ego? And Armgart is not an isolated instance. The Princess Halm-Ehlerstein in her last novel shares Armgart's attitudes. I shall now try to suggest why George Eliot might have been so concerned about demonic egoism and why she felt it especially dangerous.

iii

I have already said that the Romantics may be divided into two important groups: the demonic individualists who assert the primacy of the ego, and the organicists who sought a new means of self-definition and a new basis for a social vision. Among the early Romantics, the defiant egoists of the *Sturm und Drang* and later of Byron can be interpreted as symbolising the revolt against the universe which was the consequence of the break-up of the world-view of the Enlightenment. This was the amoral, dead universe Carlyle had referred to in the passage I quoted at the beginning of the previous chapter. This view of the Enlightenment was widely
current among the Romantics, especially in Germany. 26

The most important organicist answer both to the rationalism and scepticism of the Enlightenment and also to Byronic rebellion was the vision of an organic universe, most clearly apparent in Wordsworth and Schelling, in which the world was seen as a divine organism. E. D. Hirsch writes in his book *Wordsworth and Schelling*:

The world is God’s affirmative self-realization. Without the world, God would be incomplete because He would not be real.... All things strive toward God, for God is fulfilling Himself through things. All the world is kin; everything has “fellowship with essence.”

Fellowship with essence is the characteristic religious theme of Wordsworth’s poetry.

He goes on to quote the following passage from Schelling:

26. Alfred G. Pundt in *Arnold and the Nationalist Awakening in Germany* (New York, 1935) summarises Arnold’s attack on the Enlightenment in *Geist der Zeit*: “But in their eagerness to speculate and rationalize, the French applied this method to their investigations into the most serious and profound matters until, finally, they established the delusion that everything could be discovered and comprehended through the instrumentality of speculative reason. In due time this delusion attained a general acceptance throughout Europe and thus reason and "enlightenment" became the mottoes of the eighteenth century. Men sought to know, clarify and grasp everything and believe nothing. There was no God, no immortality, nor any sublime inspiration; all that could not be actually apprehended was hallucination and chimera of the imagination. Under these circumstances, Arnold points out, a spiritual upheaval was inescapable, and as such the French Revolution was both necessary and inevitable” (pp. 84-85).
"In every organism there must rule the highest unity of the life process from the standpoint of the whole, and, at the same time, there must rule the highest individuality of the life process from the point of view of the individual organ. But both of these cannot be combined unless one assumes that there is one and the same life process in every individual being which infinitely individuates itself." 27

Man, nature, and the universe, properly perceived, form one harmonious living whole.

Carlyle in Sartor gives expression to a similar vision. His (or Teufelrückh's) response to the dead, indifferent universe of the Enlightenment had been the defiance of the "Everlasting No." But this is eventually transcended in the experience of a living universe in "The Everlasting Yea." As he puts it in a famous passage:

Or what is Nature? Ha! Why do I not name thee GOD? Art thou not the "Living Garment of God"?

.... The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnal-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's!

The Byronic egoism of the "Everlasting No" can then be renounced:

Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then, that flest through the Universe seeking after somewhat to eat; and shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe. 28

Byron is here identified with the egoism and defiance of the "Everlasting No," the assertion of self in the face of a meaningless universe. Carlyle now feels this has been transcended. The self

has experienced a sense of meaning beyond the ego which can serve
as the basis for a new orientation.

But as I have already suggested in the last chapter, the dead,
indifferent universe which called forth Carlyle's defiance was
present more powerfully than ever in the mid-nineteenth century as
a result of new developments in philosophy and science, culminating
in Darwin. In the light of Darwin it was difficult to regard
nature as "the Living Garment of God." Should one therefore re-open
one's Byron? Would George Eliot not have agreed that Byron was
right to reject such organicist ideas? He had refused to give up
his scepticism and defiance and accept any positive belief.
Several of Byron's recent critics have recognised this aspect of
him and see him as a more modern figure than the other Romantics
in consequence. Peter L. Thorslev, for example, writes that the
modernity of Byron lies in his awareness that man was free in an
amoral universe, and that it was this aspect of him which interested
later writers like Nietzsche:

In this sense Byron is closer to us than any other of
the English Romantics. Wordsworth's vision of an organic
and morally-centered universe suffered from a long
Victorian disillusionment ... Shelley's vision of a divine
"kingdom of love," for all its spiritual nobility, seems
almost pathetically utopian; and we can no longer see with
Coleridge or Carlyle the natural universe as the garment of
God. But Byron's skeptical vision of an alienated universe
which takes no reckoning of man or of his hopes and
infirmities is a universe in which we can, I think, feel quite
uncomfortably at home.29

Another writer, Willis W. Pratt, supports this view:

Again and again in his later satire he expresses the
idea that systems of thought, more especially metaphysical
speculations, are futile and misleading. Byron leveled his

29. The Byronic Hero, p. 123.
skeptical sights at the abstract philosophizing of the leading poets of his age with their "systems to perplex the sages," contending that not one of them, from Platonists to Wordsworthian pantheists, could submit his speculative system to the light of common experience and survive intact. The influence of Byron on the nineteenth century was, of course, immense. But in the later nineteenth century there were many expressions of demonic egoism which went much further than he did. With the increase in scepticism towards Christianity as a result of rationalistic questioning, and the scientific attack on the notion of an organic universe, there was less restraint than ever on the kind of views expressed by Byron's Manfred:

The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts, -
Is its own origin of ill and end
And its own place and time: its innate sense,
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without,
But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.

For him, there was no authority external to the self which could define the individual's identity. The Romantic egoist was then justified in defying all sources of authority which try to assert their superiority over the self, or in creating his own values by an act of will quite independently of all generally recognised moral sanctions. Such attitudes were pushed to greater extremes by later writers.


31. For the influence of Byron in Germany, see Cedric Hentschel, The Byronic Teuton (London, 1940).

32. Manfred, Act III, Scene iv.
George Eliot's own concern with this was perhaps heightened by the fact that the work of Strauss and particularly Feuerbach could be used to justify the views of the most extreme demonic Romantics. According to F. A. Lange it was common to criticise Feuerbach because his work invited such an interpretation, and George Eliot must have been aware of this possibility. Max Stirner, whose book The Ego and His Own Der Einzige und sein Eigentum, first published in 1844, is the most uncompromising expression of egoism, was greatly influenced by Feuerbach. In his recent book on Stirner R. W. K. Paterson writes:

... it may be said that from one point of view Stirner's achievement was to carry Feuerbach's religious critique to its logical conclusion by demonstrating all religion, whether theological or anthropological, to be essentially a disposition of the only reality there is - the reality of the private, unique self, which is indefinable because he is without an essence of any kind. It was ultimately from his study of Feuerbach, therefore, that Stirner was brought to recognize himself as a nihilistic egoist and to state his protest in the grim and exultant language of nihilistic egoism.

George Eliot, who had translated Feuerbach and agreed with his views, would surely have been worried at such a development of ideas she herself accepted, and which could lead to the following position:

As own you are really rid of everything, and what clings to you you have accepted; it is your choice and your pleasure. The own man is the free-born, the man free to begin with ... he does not need to free himself first, because at the start he rejects everything outside himself, because he prizes nothing more than himself, rates nothing higher, because, in short, he starts from himself and "comes to himself."

33. History of Materialism, trans E. C. Thomas (London, 1880), II, 254: "It has always seemed remarkable to us that intelligent opponents have often urged it against Feuerbach that his system must morally lead to pure Egoism." Lange claims that "the consequences of his whole system must necessarily lead to the very opposite," which George Eliot would obviously have agreed with. But he goes on to complain that Feuerbach "relapsed into theoretical Egoism" (p. 256).

Nothing outside the self, asserts Stirner, can limit the freedom of the ego to choose its own values: "I decide whether it is the right thing in me; there is no right outside me. If it is right for me, it is right."\(^{35}\)

Nietzsche also, probably the most important philosophical defender of demonic egoism, seems clearly to have been influenced by Feuerbach in his attack on Christianity,\(^{36}\) and his critique of religion was an important factor in his defence of egoism:

The distinguished type of human being feels himself as value-determining; he does not need to be ratified; he judges that "which is harmful to me is harmful as such"; he knows that he is the something which gives honor to objects; he creates values. This type honors everything he knows about himself; his morality is self-glorification.\(^{37}\)

Such views, derived to a large extent from ideas George Eliot herself supported, together with the world-view created by modern science, particularly Darwin, which she also accepted as scientifically valid but which could be used to justify demonic attitudes, help one to understand her obsessive interest in egoism, and her unremitting assault on the demonic egoist. But in her attack she could not, like Wordsworth and Carlyle in their refutation of egoistic Romanticism, assert that the universe was not amoral or Godless and that one could discover an ultimate metaphysical meaning in life. She recognised however the value of a religious solution. In a


\(^{36}\) See, for example, "Of the Afterworldsmen" in part I of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 58-61.

\(^{37}\) Beyond Good and Evil, p. 203.
letter to J. W. Cross, she praised church assemblies because their very nature expressed "the recognition of a binding belief or spiritual law which is to lift us into willing obedience and save us from the slavery of unregulated passion or impulse." But she herself did not accept the truth of Christianity. What was then to control the "unregulated passion and impulse" of the demonic egoist?

What separates George Eliot from organicists like Wordsworth, Schelling or Carlyle is that she had rejected any metaphysical basis for organicism. If there was a moral order to which the self could submit and thus define itself, it must, first of all, be discovered within. This could then lead to a larger social and moral vision. Even if the universe was amoral and Godless, the self could not simply dismiss all moral and religious sanctions as untenable and adhere to its own self-chosen values. The work in which she asserts this most clearly and which contains her most notable characterisation of the demonic egoist is The Spanish Gypsy. This dramatic poem is her most complex treatment of the whole subject of Romantic egoism. It offers a detailed consideration of its causes and a sustained criticism of it. It therefore deserves careful analysis.

iv

George Eliot regarded this poem highly. She considered it an important statement of her philosophy, as she makes clear in a letter to Frederic Harrison:

38. Letters, V,448.
Now I read it again, I find it impossible to abandon it: the conceptions move me deeply, and they have never been wrought out before. There is not a thought or symbol that I do not long to use...

In the notes on tragedy she left regarding the poem she said the following:

A tragedy has not to expound why the individual must give way to the general: it has to show that it is compelled to give way, the tragedy consisting in the struggle involved, and often in the entirely calamitous issue in spite of a grand submission. Silva represents the tragedy of entire rebellion: Fedalma of a grand submission, which is rendered vain by the effects of Silva's rebellion: Zarca, the struggle for a great end, rendered vain by the surrounding conditions of life.

In the following analysis, I shall concentrate mainly on Don Silva.

Silva is a Spanish knight who is disillusioned with his Spanish heritage, primarily because of the nature of the war against the Moors and the activities of the Inquisition. He is contemptuous of Spanish policies. Because of this he feels that his heritage has no claim on his respect and that he is justified in rebelling against it. Yet he has no alternative plan of action in mind. He still serves the Spanish cause though he regards himself as free to do as he likes. His rebellion only manifests itself as negative defiance. He is opposed and reproached by his uncle, the Prior, the personification of the Spanish aristocrat and an eager Inquisitor. Silva's resolve to marry the non-Spanish Fedalma is seen by the Prior as an implicit rejection of his duty to Spain. Silva replies with defiance, a keyword of the Romantic rebel:

39. Letters, IV, 301.
'Tis you, not I, will gibbet our great name
To rot in infamy. If I am strong
In patience now, trust me, I can be strong
Then in defiance (p. 84).

But the Prior makes the prophetic statement that if he utterly
rejects the claims of the past he will never find a stable identity:
you will walk
For ever with a tortured double self,
A self that will be hungry while you feast,
Will blush with shame while you are glorified,
Will feel the ache and chill of desolation,
Even in the very bosom of your love (p. 84).

Brought up in a tradition he can no longer accept, unable to
feel any allegiance to a Christianity perverted into persecution,
Silva has created his own personal value out of love. 41 He literally
worships Fedalma. She is his substitute for the values he has lost:
in her "Silva found a heaven / Where faith and hope were drowned as
stars in day" (p. 178). And again: "She was my good - what other
men call heaven ..." (p. 315). Even if this blasphemy will damn
him, he will choose her and reject his former God:

Is there no God for me
Save him whose cross I have forsaken? - Well,
I am for ever exiled - but with her! (p. 315).

In the extremes to which Silva takes it, love is largely a projection
of his own needs onto Fedalma. It is an attempt at a purely
subjective creation of value to overcome his alienation.

It is also made clear that this creation of a heaven out of love
is based on a vision of despair. For Silva, the world is meaningless
and valueless. Both the world of nature and man revolts him:

41. This erection of love into an absolute value is another Byronic
feature. Cf. Thorslev, p. 149: "Byron's heroes ... are
all lovers - for most of them it is the ruling passion of
their lives - and they remain faithful, in true romantic
fashion, until death."
Death is the king of this world; 'tis his park
Where he breeds life to feed him. Cries of pain
Are music for his banquet; and the masque -
The last grand masque for his diversion, is
The Holy Inquisition (p. 193).

Love for him is a desperate effort to choose consciously his own value in order that the self can transcend the amorality of life.

A later speech makes particularly clear the despair which underlies it:

I meant, all life is but poor mockery:
Action, place, power, the visible wide world
Are tattered masquerading of this self,
This pulse of conscious mystery: all change,
Whether to high or low, is change of rags.
But for her love, I would not take a good
Save to burn out in battle, in a flame
Of madness that would feel no mangled limbs,
And die not knowing death, but passing straight
- Well, well, to other flames - in purgatory (pp. 309-310).

Given this vision of life, with love the only protection against despair, Silva cannot give up Fedalma when she decides to honour her Gypsy heritage. He thinks that his chosen value of love is superior to the claims of his past and all his former allegiances. It justifies the breaking of all bonds or duties, and he is prepared to commit any action, no matter how immoral in traditional terms to retain it: "I will sin, / If sin I must, to win my life again" (p. 197). Losing Fedalma is to lose the basis of his self-created identity: "that lost self my life is aching with" (p. 198). He declares that his love for her, his means of realising his selfhood, "Makes highest law, must be the voice of God" (p. 212).

Silva's rejection of his Spanish past and his adoption of the Gypsy cause in order to marry her is an assertion that he can choose his own identity by an act of will. He dismisses any authority superior to the self:
I will elect my deeds, and be the liege
Not of my birth, but of that good alone
I have discerned and chosen (p. 299).

Anything that threatens to deprive him of Fedalma or places itself
above his own will "Is what I last will bend to - most defy" (p. 301).

This is an extreme expression of demonic egoism. Anything that
stands in the way of his chosen selfhood is rejected or defied.

There is nothing external to the self that can define it, and all
past claims or present obstacles must be crushed by the will.

Since the mind can recognise no values beyond the self as valid,
then it must create its own value. George Eliot tests this
philosophy against experience in the poem.

But though Silva has rebelled against his Spanish past, he
has not liberated himself from it. His identity is still basically
defined by the fact that he is a Spanish knight. The way of life
and attitudes of the latter are an inherent part of him which he does
not even think of rejecting. It is an important part of George
Eliot's treatment of demonic egoism to show that social factors are
among its most important causes. Byron and demonic Romantics in
general tend to treat the egoist's defiance and creation of his own
values at the level of a purely personal choice. But George Eliot,
with her knowledge of sociology and psychology, places the egoist
in a social situation. Like everyone else he is subject to social
influences. His attitudes and behaviour cannot be considered in
isolation, but only in relation to the particular society of which
he is a product. For example, Silva unquestioningly adopts the
attitudes of one who has been brought up as an aristocrat. When
he learns of Fedalma's flight and Gypsy birth, he regards these as
"momentary crosses, hindrances / A Spanish noble might despise"
(p. 175). He is quite confident he can regain her:

What could a Spanish noble not command?
He only helped the Queen, because he chose;
Could war on Spaniards, and could spare the Moor;
Buy justice, or defeat it - if he would:
Was loyal, not from weakness but from strength
Of high resolve to use his birthright well (p. 175).

The will which he celebrates is the product of the aristocratic
background which he professes to despise. Thus his assertion of
personal will to defy the demands of the tradition he has been brought
up in is only a negative expression of the social domination inherent
in that tradition, as the following passage illustrates:

Don Silva had been suckled in that creed
(A high-taught speculative noble else),
Held it absurd as foolish argument
If any failed in deference, was too proud
Not to be courteous to so poor a knave
As one who knew not necessary truths
Of birth and dues of rank; but cross his will,
The miracle-working will, his rage leapt out
As by a right divine to rage more fatal
Than a mere mortal man's (p. 176).

His claim then that one can create one's own value by the power of
the will is fatally flawed. Instead of discovering a new identity,
he is merely exploiting Spanish aristocratic values in his personal
interests. The following assertion of his will-philosophy is thus
undermined by its implicit assumptions:

I have no help
Save reptile secrecy, and no revenge
Save that I will do what he schemes to hinder.
Ay, secrecy, and disobedience - these
No tyranny can master. Disobey!
You may divide the universe with God,
Keeping your will unbent, and hold a world
Where He is not supreme (p. 177).

George Eliot attacks this demonic philosophy by showing that it
is not a freely chosen position, the only possible response to a
world without acceptable values. In Silva's case, it is rather the
product of his alienation from his social background and the negative assertion of the social attitudes in which he has been brought up. He is another variation on the comment in *Felix Holt* that "there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life ..." The narrator also acknowledges that underlying his outward will-assertion and defiance, he felt "Murmurs of doubt, the weakness of a self / That is not one ..." (p. 178). But this insecurity only makes him rebel the more against the Prior, who possesses an absolutely stable identity:

> With all his outflung rage
> Silva half shrank before the steadfast man
> Whose life was one compacted whole, a realm
> Where the rule changed not, and the law was strong.
> Then that reluctant homage stirred new hate,
> And gave rebellion an intenser will (p. 178).

Even his rebellion then is not freely chosen but is the outcome of the psychological strain which results from his social alienation.

One of the most important debates in the poem, in which George Eliot's alternative to Silva's demonic egoism becomes plain, is that between Silva and his Jewish servant Sephardo, clearly the representative of the author's point of view. To Silva's assertion that "Death is the King of this world," Sephardo replies that even if this were so, the good would still exist as human feeling in the hearts of men. A physician would know that mercy existed within himself even if all the angels in heaven denied it. Sephardo's reply to Silva is a statement of George Eliot's own view that even if God does not exist and the world is as Silva describes it, which Sephardo makes no attempt to deny, the good would still exist as a purely human construct based on human feeling. Human values are not then dependent on metaphysical assumptions, nor is the
individual justified in creating his own purely personal value by
an act of will. Stirner regarded the individual as no less
alienated from himself in feeling bound to serve his fellow-men
as in devotion to a transcendent God. But for George Eliot
the individual was inextricably a part of mankind. He could never
achieve complete cultural transcendence. Even if the individual was
inherently egoistic, social and cultural factors, especially
language, completely transformed man's consciousness. The ego was
in a large degree a cultural product. It was an illusion then to
believe that the egoist could completely separate himself from his
fellow-men and society and feel totally self-sufficient.

Silva goes on to proclaim the need for "naked manhood" (p. 195),
for men who are unattached to any beliefs or systems and can stand
alone. Sephardo replies that there is no such thing. We all owe
allegiance to something larger than ourselves, in his case his
Jewish heritage. It is monstrous to consider all things without
preferences; we are constrained to have certain priorities:
"My father is first father and then man." But Silva is prepared
to cast aside all claims in choosing to marry Fedalma:

That I'm a Christian knight and Spanish duke!
The consequence? Why, that I know. It lies
In my own hands and not on raven tongues (p. 201).

But the hollowness of his view that these characteristics are mere
accidental features has already been made apparent. Sephardo, in
contrast, refers "to the brand / of brotherhood that limits every

42. "Man with the great M is only an ideal, the species only
something thought of. To be a man is not to realize the
ideal of Man, but to present oneself, the individual"
(The Ego and His Own, p. 238).
pledge" (p. 202). We need some law that is superior to the will in order to define the self:

Our law must be without us or within,
The Highest speaks through all our people's voice,
Custom, tradition, and old sanctities;
Or he reveals himself by new decrees
Of inward certitude (p. 211).

For George Eliot, the self's inner need for a sense of meaning and value is projected outwardly in customs and traditions, but if these become outdated or moribund, their essential content, which corresponds to this need within the self, must be reformulated. Silva makes no attempt to do this. The Spanish society he is a part of has become decadent since it strives to maintain itself through dominance and persecution of other races and religious groups. Silva therefore finds it valueless and thinks he can reject it. Instead of trying to find a new form for the valuable content of his heritage or acting against corrupt forces within it, he constructs a self-created philosophy of the will. George Eliot tests this philosophy against experience and shows that it offers no possibility of a stable identity. One cannot choose to reject one's past completely without fragmenting the self.

Silva soon discovers this. The town of Bedmar is taken by the Gypsies, and many of his former friends are killed and the Prior is executed. This crushingly brings home to him how deep-rooted is his connection with the heritage he thinks he can reject: his own acts against his former stronghold are felt as self-inflicted wounds. In this crisis, he realises that his Spanish past is a fundamental part of his being, and his inner life becomes "cancerous":

Silva had but rebelled - he was not free;
And all the subtle cords that bound his soul
Were tightened by the strain of one rash leap
Made in defiance (p. 340).
He cannot escape from "his past-created, unchanged self." The self cannot totally deny continuity of being, and any rejection of the defining elements in his past by an act of will must inflict terrible psychological wounds. He even realises that the Prior embodied certain values which are an integral part of his identity. He repudiates the role he has chosen: "I am a Catholic knight, / A Spaniard who will die a Spaniard's death!" (p. 345) and kills Zarca.

The consequence of rejecting his past is of necessity a divided self. This results in a severe crisis of identity which leads him to murder. The valuable content of the past life which has made him what he is must be the basis for a unified sense of selfhood. He must remain true to these "organic" roots. Even in a Spain ruled by the Inquisition this is so: he cannot simply reject Christianity and the Spanish tradition and worship a God of his own. At the end of the poem he commits himself to serving that Spain

Who nourished me on her expectant breast,
The heir of highest gifts (p. 371).

It is the misfortune of both Silva and Fedalma that neither of them can wholeheartedly accept the tradition they belong to. Fedalma, though she adopts the opposite position to Silva, and chooses to obey her father and accept her Gypsy origin, derives no happiness from this choice. It is probably George Eliot's intention to suggest that their dissociation from their respective traditions represents the alienated response of the modern consciousness to the claims of the past. In contrast, both the Prior and Zarca, in different ways, possess utterly stable identities. The Prior
believes totally in the objective truth of his religion, and Zarca has committed himself completely to the Gypsy ideal. But Silva is naturally alienated from a Spain dominated by the Inquisition, and Fedalma has been brought up outside the Gypsy tradition and thus can only make a conscious, intellectual decision to accept it. She cannot respond to it with an undivided consciousness.

The Prior and Zarca, being completely certain of their commitments, are free from the self-division created by excess of self-consciousness. Even the prospect of death cannot undermine the Prior's absolutely secure sense of identity. He possessed "The strength of resolute undivided souls / Who, owning law, obey it" (p. 340). For Fedalma and Silva such certainty is impossible: their situations have necessarily created self-division in them. Silva is "Doom-gifted with long resonant consciousness / And perilous heightening of the sentient soul" (p. 74), and after his desertion this leads to the "tortured double self" the Prior had prophesied.

Fedalma's self-division is also evident, though she does not suffer the same crisis of identity as Silva. Her acceptance of her Gypsy role and rejection of love means she must choose sorrow, the "sublimer pain," for her choice "cut her heart with smiles beneath the knife, / Like a sweet babe foredoomed by prophecy" (p. 292). Though she makes a conscious decision to adopt the Gypsy way of life, she feels emotionally detached from it. She contrasts her own condition with that of her Gypsy servant, Hinda:

She knows no struggles, sees no double path:
Her fate is freedom, for her will is one
With her own people's law, the only law
She ever knew. For me - I have fire within,
But on my will there falls the chilling snow
Of thoughts that come as subtly as soft flakes,
Yet press at last with hard and icy weight (p. 278).
Fedalma's situation, and surely George Eliot regards it as symbolic of the modern one, has deprived her of the stability and certainty of her servant. She is cut off from such a sense of tribal consciousness. She is an example of the isolated, self-conscious ego, aware of the mind's projections, and thus detached from those traditional beliefs, those "cosmic syntaxes," which could integrate the self within a single world-view that was accepted as true.

Fedalma's adoption of Gypsy life only makes her the more aware of her divided consciousness. When she feels the power of Zarca's vision, she thinks she can "walk erect, hiding my life-long wound." At such times she feels strong in her resolve. But this feeling is only temporary: self-consciousness returns and the sense that "There's nought but chill grey silence, or the hum / And fitful discord of a vulgar world" (p. 279). Love for both Silva and Fedalma had been an attempt to heal the division they felt in themselves. It was a substitute for the lack of a heritage or a belief with which they could identify completely.

Silva's position is the more difficult since the tradition he is a part of has clearly become corrupt and decadent. Fedalma can at least assent intellectually and with part of her feelings to the Gypsy purpose. Silva's demonic rebellion is a logical response to his situation. He employs self-conscious thought to try to create freely an identity for himself which will give him a sense of meaning in what he regards as a meaningless world:

Thus he called on Thought,  
On dexterous Thought, with its swift alchemy  
To change all forms, dissolve all prejudice  
Of man's long heritage, and yield him up  
A crude fused world to fashion as he would (pp. 311-312).
But he discovers that there are deeper forces in the self that cannot be rejected by the will. He yearns for the memories and associations of the past, for human contact. The alienation and isolation involved in rejecting his roots and confronting the indifferent universe alone proves too much:

He could not grasp Night's black blank mystery
And wear it for a spiritual garb
Creed-proof: he shuddered at its passionless touch.

The strain his rebellion places on his inner self is intolerable. Though among his people "he had played / In sceptic ease with saints and litanies" (p. 313), he now comes to realise their symbolic value. The religious and ancestral symbols connected with Spanish life are forms which express a meaning that is inextricably a part of himself: they even supported him while he scorned them:

Sustaining him even when he idly played
With rules, beliefs, charges, and ceremonies
As arbitrary fooling (p. 314).

For George Eliot such symbols express an essentially human meaning which possesses a human truth. By means of self-conscious thought, Silva can consider these symbols as "arbitrary fooling," but in his moment of crisis he comes to realise how much the essential human content manifested in them means to him. The religious and social forms he has tried to reject are not mere outward symbols of an evil system: they express the fundamental human values of the way of life he has been brought up in, and more than that, they symbolise the human truths created by feeling in its encounter with external reality. Silva's ordeal makes him accept this. The essential identity of Spain still exists even if it has been corrupted by the Inquisition, and it is this he must serve. He
discovers by experience that the philosophy of the ego and the will is an intolerable violation of his inner self which cannot be borne. Any valid identity must be rooted in his past experience. To try to reject this utterly at best leads to alienation and at worst to a psychological crisis in which the self seems to become infected by disease,

Forcing each pulse to feed its anguish, turning
All sweetest residues of healthy life
To fibrous clutches of slow misery (p. 340).

But George Eliot's position is not simply to attack egoism. Despite his rebellion, Silva is clearly a man of heroic qualities and it is his egoism and strength of will that are central to these. She does not believe that these should be suppressed, an impossibility, but only that the energies generated by the ego be properly directed. This is apparent in her characterisation of Zarca, in many ways as supreme an egoist as Silva. But Zarca commits all his egoistic energies to furthering the best interests of his people, in creating for them a valid nationhood.

His vision resembles that of a religious prophet. Fedalma implicitly compares him to Moses, Christ, and Mahomet. He is treated in the poem like a Carlylean hero who creates history by the force of his vision. For him it is a value-creating act. He knows that there is nothing beyond it, no providence, that guarantees its success:

No good is certain, but the steadfast mind,
The undivided will to seek the good:
'Tis that compels the elements, and wrings
A human music from the indifferent air.
The greatest gift the hero leaves his race
Is to have been a hero (p. 162).

The good does not exist external to man, it must be created by him.
But it might appear that Zarca's vision is questionable because it seems characterised by the same dangerous idealism that underlies the Prior's beliefs. Both men are prepared to commit acts of evil to achieve what they regard as the good. This is a recurrent problem in George Eliot's works, notably in the cases of Savonarola and Bulstrode. The Prior's belief in absolute truth convinces him that acts of evil cease to be evil if they favour what he regards as God's purpose: "'Tis so God governs, using wicked men - / Nay, scheming fiends, to work his purposes" (p. 131). In this way he can justify the Inquisition.

This kind of reasoning is the consequence of identifying his beliefs with an objective truth beyond the human realm. If the good is seen as something external to man, whatever helps to achieve it is regarded as right. Good and evil are not defined in relation to humanity but in terms of a rigid doctrine which is more important than the human, and has become separated from it. But for Zarca, evil is always evil. It cannot be redeemed even if it furthers his concept of the good. No good that will be achieved will ever lift the burden of evil. It may serve as grounds to defend an act of evil but it can never, as the Prior believes, change its nature.

Since the Zincali have no philosophy or religion which will allow them to deal with such contradictions of experience, Zarca must heroically elect to bear this burden for them. In this he again greatly resembles the Carlylean transcendentalist hero who identifies his deepest insight with the divine, and uses his possession of it to justify his authority over his people. Cruel acts are necessary if the Gypsies are to survive:
they shall be justified
By my high purpose, by the clear-seen good
That grew into my vision as I grew,
And makes my nature's function, the full pulse
Of inbred kingship....

The Zingali have no god
Who speaks to them and calls them his, unless
I, Zarca, carry living in my frame
The power divine that chooses them and saves (pp. 324-325).

He knows that killing the Spaniards is evil, but there is no
alternative. Yet his essential humanity is shown in his sympathy
with the dead of Bedmar. This act had been initiated before Silva
joined the Gypsies. Even the execution of the Prior shows humanity.
He decrees that he should not be burned as an act of vengeance,
though the Prior is one of those "human fiends / Who carry hell for
pattern in their souls" (p. 332). Instead he is executed with due
ceremony.

But though George Eliot sympathises with Zarca's aim, external
reality is indifferent to human aspirations. Moral good must be
projected onto a valueless world, but the amoral development of
events can frustrate this. With Zarca's death, the only force
that could hold the Gypsies together disintegrates and results in a
kind of Gypsy diaspora.

Zarca is an exemplification of Carlyle's view that the Romantic
egoist must convert his rebellion and will-assertion into devotion
to the best interests of his society. This was one means of
socially transforming demonic egoism. But it seems likely that
George Eliot regarded the transcendentalism underlying Zarca's
certainty in his vision as a less modern position than the divided
consciousness of Silva and Fedalma. Both the world-views of
Zarca and the Prior belong to earlier stages in the development of
the European consciousness, neither of which can be fully recaptured. Though both Silva and Fedalma are finally true to their respective traditions, this does not heal their self-division, and it also deprives them of love. Their commitment is a tragic one. In Daniel Deronda, George Eliot returns to these problems.

vi

But George Eliot's concern with egoism is much broader than an interest in demonic egoism. This is only one manifestation. Her treatment of egoism as a whole is extremely complex. Demonic egoism was especially dangerous if all unquestioned sources of authority beyond the self disintegrated, but this also made all forms of egoism much more significant, especially if it was believed that man was naturally egoistic.

This view is found in many nineteenth century writers, in Bentham, Comte, Spencer and Lewes for example. It is also central in George Eliot and underlies her deep concern with this subject. It is apparent in her well-known assertion in Middlemarch: "We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves ..." (I, 323). A more extended statement is found at the beginning of Chapter 27:

Your pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel made to be rubbed by a housemaid, will be minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions; but place now against it a lighted candle as a centre of illumination, and lo! the scratches will seem to arrange themselves in a fine series of concentric circles round that little sun. It is demonstrable that the scratches are going everywhere impartially, and it is only your candle which produces the flattering illusion of a concentric arrangement, its light falling with an exclusive optical selection. These things
are a parable. The scratches are events, and the candle
is the egoism of any person now absent - of Miss Vincy,
for example (I, 403).

George Eliot is here making a philosophical statement about how
the ego operates. She is saying that it is in the nature of the
eo to interpret the world in its own interests. Events are in
fact unstructured, but the ego has an inherent tendency to structure
them in relation to its own needs. The scratches on the pier-glass
is an analogy intended to make this philosophical point of view
clear. It is not, of course, an argument. She does not present
any abstract proof, but demonstrates it concretely in the novel,
for all of the characters illustrate this principle without exception,
though in varying degrees.

Even though Dorothea is able to go beyond the total egoism
which can only see from a single perspective and realises
Casaubon's "equivalent centre of self," it is apparent that egoism
cannot be completely transcended. In fact to be without egoism
would mean to be without any self whatever, since the ego must be
able to create relationships and structure experience to have any
individual identity at all. Lewes asserted that the view that the
mind interpreted the world in its own interests was a psychological
law:

The psychological law that we only see what interests us,
and only assimilate what is adapted to our condition, causes
the mind to select its evidence.\textsuperscript{43}

... the important law, already stated, that we only see what
interests us, points to the theoretic importance of Emotion
in the construction of knowledge, since it shows how
phenomena not selected and verified by Interest (which is
virtual Pleasure or Pain) remain blank and insignificant to
the mind, and are not even perceived.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Problems}, I, 467.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Problems}, II, 248.
Middlemarch is particularly rich in illustrations of how egoistic desires and needs condition one's interpretation of reality. The different points of view of Featherstone's relatives about how he is likely to dispose of his property should be seen in relation to this:

Probabilities are as various as the faces to be seen at will in fretwork or paper-hangings: every form is there, from Jupiter to Judy, if you only look with creative inclination. To the poorer and least favoured it seemed likely that since Peter had done nothing for them in his life, he would remember them at the last. Jonah argued that men like to make a surprise of their wills, while Martha said that nobody need be surprised if he left the best part of his money to those who least expected it (II, 47).

Numerous other comments illustrate the same idea:

Fred fancied that he saw to the bottom of his uncle Featherstone's soul, though in reality half what he saw there was no more than the reflex of his own inclinations (I, 179).

It is wonderful how much uglier things will look when we only suspect that we are blamed for them. Even our own persons in the glass are apt to change their aspect for us after we have heard some frank remark on their less admirable points; and on the other hand it is astonishing how pleasantly conscience takes our encroachments on those who never complain or have nobody to complain for them (II, 182).

Casaubon's egoism poisons his relationship with Dorothea, since he cannot help feeling she is judging and criticising him: "Will not a tiny speck very close to our vision blot out the glory of the world, and leave only a margin by which we see the blot? I know no speck so troublesome as self" (II, 221). This makes him suspicious of her relationship with Ladislaw and leads to a gross misinterpretation of the situation:

... what had occurred since then in Ladislaw's return had brought Mr Casaubon's power of suspicious construction into exasperated activity. To all the facts which he knew, he
added imaginary facts both present and future which became more real to him than those, because they called up a stronger dislike, a more predominating bitterness (II, 221).

Bulstrode tends to see any working out of events which benefits him as providential:

We are concerned with looking at Joshua Rigg's sale of his land from Mr Bulstrode's point of view, and he interpreted it as a cheering dispensation conveying perhaps a sanction to a purpose which he had for some time entertained without external encouragement ... (II, 377).

But the narrator interestingly comments on his interpretation:

it was as genuinely his mode of explaining events as any theory of yours may be, if you happen to disagree with him. For the egoism which enters into our theories does not affect their sincerity; rather, the more our egoism is satisfied, the more robust is our belief (II, 378).

Despite the egoism at the basis of his theory, if Bulstrode accepted the working out of all events, those which conflicted with his interests as well as those which favoured them, his theory about the world might have given him a valid basis for confronting experience. But when he encounters a situation that threatens him, his egoistic tendencies come into conflict with his providential world-view. He cannot submit to what, by his providential theory, should be the will of God: "He knew he ought to say, 'Thy will be done;' and he said it often. But the intense desire remained that the will of God might be the death of that hated man" (III, 252). The egoistic will gradually erodes his determination to submit to providence. It causes him to wonder about the validity of Lydgate's orders for the treatment of Raffles:

Why should he have got into any argument about the validity of these orders? It was only the common trick of desire - which avails itself of any irrelevant scepticism, finding larger room for itself in all uncertainty about
effects, in every obscurity that looks like the absence of law (III, 263).

And it tempts him into actions which effectively kill Raffles.

Egoism cannot be eliminated, but as long as it was believed that there was some authority external to the self, it could be controlled and directed. If an individual ceased to accept or believe in any such authority, there was a danger that the pleasure-seeking or assertive tendencies of the ego would gain mastery of the self. This happened with Tito and Don Silva, for example.

Obviously George Eliot disapproves of such manifestations of egoism, and it is perhaps useful to term such characters negative egoists.

There are numerous negative egoists in her works. Many of them, like Tito, can rationalise away all reasons for obeying any external authority, but there are also those who apparently submit to authority but this only serves to disguise and transfer their egoism. It is particularly noticeable that the negative egoists tend to be lacking in feeling. For George Eliot, human feeling is the most important means of making the individual transcend or sublimate his egoistic tendencies, but the negative egoists are usually dominated by will and the need for gratification. Any feelings which conflict with these are disregarded or crushed.

Rather than categorise types of negative egoist, it is better to categorise negative egoistic tendencies, for many characters have more than one of these. It is to George Eliot's credit as an artist that few of her characters can be reduced to type. But in general one tendency predominates over the others, so that one thinks of a character as manifesting demonic egoism or being guided solely by the need for self-gratification. One can discern, I think, five main categories of negative egoism.
I have already discussed Romantic individualism or demonic egoism in detail. Aragart and Silva are obvious examples in the poetry, but in the novels the need for psychological realism requires a less openly Byronic treatment. In these characters will and impulse tend to predominate, and feeling is either lacking or suppressed. The Princess Halm-Eberstein is probably the most Byronic character in the novels, and Mrs. Transome also possesses many such features. Individualistic and demonic qualities are clearly present in Gwendolen, and Harold Transome and Lydgate possess several of the characteristics of Romantic individualists.

A second category is the need for personal gratification. This is present in almost all of the characters in some degree. It is most clearly apparent, of course, in Tito. Lapidoth in Daniel Deronda is probably, however, the ultimate development of a seeker after gratification. This tendency predominates in Christian and in David Faux in the short story "Brother Jacob." It is present in a large degree in Hetty and Rosamond, "a young creature who had known nothing but indulgence, and whose dreams had all been of new indulgence, more exactly to her taste" (III, 94).

Another very important egoistic tendency is the drive towards mastery and domination over others. The character who exhibits this most clearly is Grandcourt in Daniel Deronda, a burnt-out Romantic whose only pleasure is in subjugating and dominating others. Jermyn also illustrates this tendency, though the gratification urge is more evident in him than in Grandcourt. In Middlemarch Featherstone is an important example of this type of character: "He loved money, but he also loved to spend it in gratifying his
peculiar tastes, and perhaps he loved it best of all as a means of making others feel his power more or less uncomfortably" (II, 76). But his will is frustrated twice: first when, "wanting to do as he liked at the last" (II, 70), Mary Garth refuses to burn his will; and second when, after his death, his natural son Rigg sells his property. Raffles is another in whom the desire for power over others, "the delight in tormenting" (II, 386), is dominant.

But the urge to predominate affects all the negative egoists to some degree. Tito is in general quite willing to behave benignly to others so long as they do not interfere with his pleasures, but even he feels the attraction of dominating:

The husband's determination to mastery, which lay deep below all blandness and beseechingness, had risen permanently to the surface now, and seemed to alter his face, as a face is altered by a hidden muscular tension with which a man is secretly throttling or stamping out the life from something feeble, yet dangerous (II, 184).

The means used for domination is not necessarily strength of will in any obvious sense, as for example in Rosamond's mastery of Lydgate:

The fourth tendency of negative egoism seems on the surface to involve suppression of self. It is the complete devotion of the ego to an ideal which is accepted absolutely. This is best illustrated by the Prior in The Spanish Gypsy who serves his religion with total commitment and believes any action is justified that will help it triumph. He would destroy the world in the interests of the ideal:
Evil that good may come? Measure the good
Before you say what's evil. Perjury?
I scorn the perjurer, but I will use him
To serve the holy truth. There is no lie
Save in his soul, and let his soul be judged.
I know the truth, and act upon the truth (p. 131).

He asks God to forgive his sin in showing mercy, for
to save is greatly to destroy.
'Tis so the Holy Inquisition sees: its wrath
Is fed from the strong heart of wisest love (p. 132).

All his egoism is committed to the service of this ideal. This is
probably the most dangerous of all forms of egoism because his
absolute belief in the truth of what he serves cuts him off from
the ashamed and guilty. An individual could not normally help but feel
at committing anti-human or demonic acts. The danger for the
idealist is to believe that since his ideal is identifiable with the
truth, any act which furthers that end becomes good, no matter how
evil it seems from the human point of view. Both Savonarola and
Bulstrode are attracted to this kind of reasoning. But though
aware of the dangers of idealism, George Eliot also realises its
value, if aligned with a humanist philosophy, as I shall try to
show presently.

The fifth tendency is, like idealism, less evident than the
other three but nevertheless important. It is the development of
a debilitating self-consciousness which paralyses action in the world
or communication with others. The ego becomes trapped in a
dialogue with itself, either afraid or too proud to risk breaking out
of an almost solipsistic isolation. The character who illustrates
this most clearly is the narrator of "The Lifted Veil." In the
novels, it is probably most apparent in Casaubon, who "had an
intense consciousness within him ..." (II, 9) which results in his
being "present at this great spectacle of life and never liberated from a small hungry shivering self ..." (II, 12). Another passage analyses well the self-absorption this creates in him:

... his soul was sensitive without being enthusiastic: it was too languid to thrill out of self-consciousness into passionate delight; it went on fluttering in the swampy ground where it was hatched, thinking of its wings and never flying. His experience was of that pitiable kind which shrinks from pity, and fears most of all that it should be known: it was that proud narrow sensitiveness which has not mass enough to spare for transformation into sympathy, and quivers thread-like in small currents of self-preoccupation or at best of an egoistic scrupulosity (II, 11).

His pride, the fear that others will judge him adversely if he reveals too much of himself, makes him shrink from any human contact that could overcome his isolation. Mrs. Transome, for different reasons, also becomes increasingly self-conscious and alienated from others as her will is crushed and she feels it is impossible for her to confess to or confide in others.

What distinguishes characters like Romola, Felix Holt, Dorothea, or Deronda from the negative egoists is not that they possess less basic egoism. They are able to find a form for their lives which allows them, to a great extent, to transcend negative egoistic tendencies. Though they have as much egoistic energy as the negative egoists, they devote this energy to the achievement of some aim beyond personal gratification or demonic self-assertion. They either possess a greater capacity for feeling or accept that they must serve something beyond themselves, both of which control and direct their natural egoism. Often they are drawn towards a negative tendency before being able to transcend it. Both Esther Lyon and Ladislaw have strong individualistic tendencies. Sometimes the differences seem slight. The idealism of Zarco and Mordecai
appears similar to the Prior's though there are crucial differences, and in a character like Savonarola this difference is blurred.

Like the negative egoists, they also have to learn that external reality remains indifferent to the human will and its aspirations. Characters like Felix Holt and Dorothea feel a strong desire to impose their moral will on the world, and, like the negative egoists, they must be disciplined by reality. But unlike the latter, they are eventually able to recognise the otherness of people and the otherness of the world, and accept that the power of the will is limited, although this is no reason for inaction.

One should also note that those characters who are comparatively lacking in egoism, though they may be worthy and moral, tend to be ineffectual. They do not possess a sufficiently powerful egoistic drive to make any significant impression on the world. One of the characters who is most notably lacking in assertive egoism in the novels is the unfortunate Seth in Adam Bede, who lives an utterly moral life, but whose lack of egoistic drive makes him ineffectual. Significantly Dinah prefers the strongly egoistic Adam. To be sure, Adam's egoism leads him into difficulties which Seth can easily avoid, but all of Adam's most superior qualities derive from the energy generated by the ego and the will. He is able to make some impression on the world and triumph over obstacles. I shall discuss this more fully in relation to Felix Holt.

Mr. Farebrother in Middlemarch is another character who possesses comparatively little egoistic energy. He is undoubtedly one of the most pleasant characters in the novel, nevertheless it is clear that his lack of assertive egoism has limited his
potentialities. Circumstances have been allowed to dominate him and force him into an uncoenial vocation. His renunciation is perhaps made too easily, with insufficient struggle:

"The world has been too strong for me, I know," he said one day to Lydgate. "But then I am not a mighty man - I shall never be a man of renown. The choice of Hercules is a pretty fable; but Prodicus makes it easy work for the hero ..."

The Vicar's talk was not always inspiring: he had escaped being a Pharisee, but he had not escaped that low estimate of possibilities which we rather hastily arrive at as an inference from our own failure. Lydgate thought that there was a piteable infirmity of will in Mr Farebrother (I, 285-286).

There is irony directed against Lydgate here, a Hercules who will soon have to wear his shirt of Nessus, but Lydgate's judgment seems not wholly mistaken. Dorothea also becomes critical of Farebrother, over his attitude to the suspicions about Lydgate:

... for the first time she felt rather discontented with Mr Farebrother. She disliked this cautious weighing of consequences, instead of an ardent faith in efforts of justice and mercy, which would conquer by their emotional force (III, 308).

Of course this is not wholly to the disadvantage of Farebrother. But though he is protected from the risks run by Lydgate's confidence in the power of his will and Dorothea's excess of ardour, he is also limited by his lack of such attributes. This is perhaps a factor in Mary Garth's choice of Fred. With all his faults and with her help, she can help him to find a valid social role, whereas Farebrother has adopted a vocation which he finds unsatisfying and which it is too late to change.

It is also important that Dorothea is the heroine of Middlemarch and not Mary Garth. It is obvious that they are both among George Eliot's most positive figures. But though they are
to some extent parallel characters in *Middlemarch*, they are also dissimilar. Dorothea is impulsive, headstrong, impetuous, full of egoistic energy, while Mary is a much more ordinary type of girl. Dorothea is compared to Saint Theresa and Antigone, and Casaubon "sees a certain greatness in her ..." (II, 176). The energy generated by egoism is an inseparable part of her heroic qualities. It also makes her much more vulnerable than Mary, who possesses strength of character and qualities of moral feeling but is altogether more sensible and down to earth than Dorothea. Perhaps George Eliot needed Mary Garth as well as Dorothea in the novel because her qualities can be imitated. She exists at an ordinary human level. Dorothea on the other hand possesses quite special qualities which belong to her alone. Given suitable social circumstances, she could have made a great mark on society. For this reason she is the heroine, though the creation of Mary Garth is necessary to show that a woman need not necessarily be a Dorothea to play a valid role in society.

**vii**

A novel which illustrates particularly well George Eliot's concern with egoism is *Felix Holt*. It has been criticised as an incoherent novel, but looked at in relation to egoism it can be shown to be one of the most highly structured of her works. As in *Romola* and *Middlemarch* the setting is one of political crisis, the

45. Arnold Kettle asks "Is this to be a novel about Radicalism or a novel about Mrs. Transome? The logic and structure of the book point in one direction, the emotional engagement of the author in the other." See "'Felix Holt the Radical'," in *Critical Essays on George Eliot*, ed. Barbara Hardy, p. 106.
unrest created by the 1832 Reform Bill. Politics is not outside the novel's concern with egoism, for political attitudes are partly an outgrowth of individual character. Though the narrator states that there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life, since men are inherently egoistic what this means is that an individual's social situation and the influences brought to bear on him determine the form his egoism will take. Egoism as such is prior to the determining social life a person is born into. Since individuals must in turn act on and shape their social world, their personal, political, and social attitudes cannot be separated from the egoism that is an integral part of their selfhood.

As in all her novels from Silas Marner onwards, George Eliot uses a double plot with numerous parallels and thematic links between each part. The main parallel is between the two dominant characters in each part, Harold Transome and Felix Holt. Each has just returned to Treby Magna after several years absence, and they have both become Radicals. They each possess masterful natures and dominate their mothers. They also have a low opinion of women at the outset and are determined not to marry, but they both fall in love with Esther and compete for her love. Though they think they will be able to impose their masterful wills on events, each is disappointed.

There are numerous other parallels and contrasts. Both Mrs. Transome and Mr. Lyon have had Romantic love affairs in their past and conceal the true parentage of their children. Harold and Esther are thus ignorant of their true parentage and must come to terms with this. But these comparisons only highlight contrasts. Esther and Mrs. Transome share certain Byronic attitudes, Esther
resembling the young Mrs. Transome, but again there is a crucial
difference underlying the similarity. Esther's structural role is
especially important since she links both parts by moving from the
sphere of Felix Holt and her dissenting background to Transome Court.
The election and the political upheaval are also important as
unifying elements since all characters and sections of the community
are affected by them.

Egoism can be seen as the basic element which unifies this
highly patterned structure and links the personal, political, and
social aspects of the novel. George Eliot has created a world of
egoists of almost every type and has placed them in an external
world of crisis and social change, one in which traditional values,
both religious and social, are ceasing to provide a firm frame for
the ego, so that egoism becomes a problem.

Dominating the novel, though she has a relatively small part
to play, is Mrs. Transome, a clear example of a Romantic egoist.
Like Don Silva, she belongs to a tradition of aristocratic decadence.
Convinced of a natural right to predominance and mastery over others,
she has allowed will and impulse to govern her life. Her presence
would have fitted an empress in her own right, who had had to
rule in spite of faction, to dare the violation of treaties
and dread retributive invasions, to grasp after new territories,
to be defiant in desperate circumstances, and to feel a
woman's hunger of the heart for ever unsatisfied (I, 40).

All her life has been devoted to trying to satisfy her will
at the expense of other claims and duties. Her affair with Jermyn
had been a surrender to a demonic impulse and a rejection of all
other restraints. They believed they could erect their love into
an absolute value, but it failed because for each of them love was synonymous with mastery of the other. Love degenerated into a contest of wills which Mrs. Transome lost. She herself has quite crushed the spirit of her husband, whom she despises. Whether she dominates or is dominated, there seems to be no satisfaction for the masterful will.

Having failed to gratify her will in love for Jermy, she devotes herself wholly to Harold, the child of her passion. Her most demonic tendencies are brought out in her desire that her first child die: "... a hungry desire, like a black poisonous plant feeding in the sunlight, - the desire that her first, rickety, ugly, imbecile child should die ..." (I, 31). Harold for her is a means of vicariously obtaining gratification for her will. She cannot give up her will philosophy and admit the futility of her previous life. Harold is her last hope, and when he disappoints her she is only left with the "dread" of her past sins.

Mrs. Transome is an almost Schopenhauer-like study of the futility of basing a life on gratification of the will. Each gratification eventually ceases to satisfy creating a new desire, or else reality resists the will, causing frustration. Having succumbed to demonic impulses, she is also a victim of "dread" since she knows how others will judge her, especially Harold, if these come to light, and giving way to such impulses has also had serious psychological effects. She grows more and more isolated, since there is no one in whom she can confide. Her frustrated will becomes trapped within, making her inner life a misery.

Her personal life cannot be separated from its social context.

The fact that she belongs to an upper-class tradition which has

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become socially anachronistic is an essential factor underlying her devotion to will and ego. Social developments in Treby Magna have deprived the Transomes of an authentic role in the community. Their way of life no longer serves a social function. For this reason Harold has chosen to become a radical: "... the Radical sticks are growing, mother, and half the Tory oaks are rotting ..." (I, 29). Mrs. Transome's determination to find gratification for her will can be seen as a response to this social alienation, and her belief in the power of the will is merely a negative transformation of the social superiority she has been brought up to accept. Her exercise of her superior social position is no longer naturally accepted by the community, so that her behaviour seems tyrannical. Her social attitudes have become reactionary and irrelevant. She is not interested in the good of society but only in maintaining a position of power in the community. Since she can find little satisfaction for her "hungry much-exacting self" she compensates by "the exertion of her will about smaller things" (I, 42-43). The social superiority which had once served a social function in the past and been accepted by the community degenerates into a personal love of power: "... she liked every little sign of power her lot had left her. She liked that a tenant should stand bareheaded below her as she sat on horseback. She liked to insist that work done without her orders should be undone from beginning to end" (I, 43).

Thus even when ostensibly rejecting the values she has been brought up in to create her own value, she is only, like Don Silva, transforming them in her egoistic interests. She is quite unaware of how her philosophy of the will has been socially determined.
For her, the superior social status she enjoys is something fixed and immutable; it implies no community acceptance or responsibility, and so she feels no sense of contradiction in being proud of her genealogy yet committing acts which offend against its basic values. She feels that she is free to do as she likes and that her superior social position is something she has been destined for. The only remedy for her condition and that of the upper class she represents is to recognize the need to play an authentic role in the changing society of nineteenth-century England. If this does not take place, the upper class will gradually become obsolete as a result of social and economic change, and also become corrupted from within, as life in Transome Court has become corrupted.

Jermyn is also an interesting example of the egoist. Mrs. Transome had possessed some heroic qualities. The narrator comments: "There is heroism even in the circles of hell for fellow-sinners who cling to each other in the fiery whirlwind and never recriminate" (II, 246). But Jermyn who was "beneath her in feeling" (I, 173), after his brief Romantic phase, has lived only for domination and personal gratification. He possesses a combination of the qualities of Tito and Grandcourt. Like Tito he adapts

47. Cf. George Eliot's reference to Riehl's view of the German aristocracy in "The Natural History of German Life," in Essays of George Eliot, ed. Thomas Pinney (London, 1963), p. 296: "... and his admonition to the German aristocracy of the present day, that the vitality of their class is not to be sustained by romantic attempts to revive mediaeval forms and sentiments, but only by the exercise of functions as real and salutary for actual society as those of the mediaeval aristocracy were for the feudal age." Carlyle also attacks the "Unworking Aristocracy" in Book III, Chap. viii of Past and Present.
himself to any set of circumstances that he thinks will favour
him: "New conditions might always turn up to give him new chances;
and if affairs threatened to come to an extremity between Harold and
himself, he trusted to finding some sure resource" (I, 285). He is
confident he can "prepare for any crisis" (I, 177). He sees no
moral order in the world, and so regards himself as free to use all
means to serve his interests. His failure "would be bad luck, not
justice; for is there any justice where ninety-nine out of a
hundred escape?" (I, 328). He is also fond of gaining power over
people. He has mastered Mrs. Transome and is never happier than
when he has acquired information "that gave him new power over
Harold" (I, 287), and at the same time seems to have Johnson and
Christian under his control.

I have already mentioned the animal imagery used to characterise
him. Egoism is very much part of man's animal nature, but
characters like Jermyn and Christian, who only use society for their
own egoistic purposes, take no account of the social conditioning
which is also an integral part of the self and which can act as a
control on animal-like egoism. The relation of egoism to man's
animal nature is well brought out in the most single-minded egoist
in the novel, young Harry. His upbringing has virtually denied
him any social influences which could transform his animal nature.
In consequence, his egoism is quite uncontrolled. How close he
is to being an animal is shown in the following passage:

This creature, with the soft brown cheeks, low forehead,
great black eyes, tiny well-defined nose, fierce biting
tricks towards every person and thing he disliked, and
insistence on entirely occupying those he liked, was a human specimen such as Esther had never seen before ... he threw himself backward against his "Gappa," as he called old Mr Transome, and stared at this new-comer with the gravity of a wild animal.... But what old Mr Transome thought the most wonderful proof of an almost preternatural cleverness was, that Harry would hardly ever talk, but preferred making inarticulate noises, or combining syllables after a method of his own (II, 206-208).

His animality is quite apparent in the rejection of the defining human attribute of language. It is to this condition that the most negative egoists, like Jermyn and Christian, tend, in their animal-like individualism and rejection of shared human or social values.

As with Mrs. Transome, Jermyn's personal egoism is integrally related to his social situation. The Reverend Lingon calls him "one of your educated low-bred fellows ... one of your middle-class upstarts who want to rank with gentlemen ..." (I, 46). He has been responsible for attempting to turn Treby Magna into a fashionable watering place, something alien to the character of the town, but this speculation failed though it caused some disruption. In social terms, he is the representative of a materialistic middle class, prepared to use dubious means to make money and ascend the social scale, without taking any interest in the social good. Only what can profit himself matters; he had "no glimpse of an endurable standing-ground except where he could domineer and be prosperous according to the ambitions of pushing middle-class gentility ..." (II, 234-235).

Jermyn's middle-class ambition and calculation are as socially harmful as Mrs. Transome's outmoded upper-class domination. Their self-interested social attitudes threaten to disrupt the social structure by inviting reaction from other sections of society.
Instead of social co-operation, class conflict develops. *Felix Holt* presents a society splintering into factions determined only to think of their own interests and not the good of society as a whole. Industrialism, which operates mainly in middle-class interests, has provoked a reaction from the working-class and this leads to the riot that takes place in the novel. As the personal attitudes of Mrs. Transome and Jermyn leads to struggle with other egoists, so their irresponsible social attitudes can bring about class conflict which can threaten any sense of social unity.

As one would expect Harold Transome has inherited several of the characteristic tendencies of his parents, though he is neither as committed a worshipper of the will as his mother nor as calculating and self-interested as his father. Harold is interesting not only for himself but because he can be seen as an earlier version of Lydgate. Both are men of good birth who have risen above certain limitations of their background and are determined to make their mark on society. Each is confident in his power of will and certain he can triumph over all obstacles, but a combination of inner weaknesses and the complexity of conditions in their social world defeat them. Though both are apparently working for the good of society in their devotion to politics and medicine, they are primarily interested in the self-realisation this will make possible. The social good as such is secondary, though Lydgate is more socially conscious and less negative in his attitudes than Harold.

Harold is to some extent able to transcend the most negative aspects of his parents' egoism. The narrator refers to "The real dignity and honesty there was in him ..." (I, 275). But like Lydgate he has his "spots of commonness," particularly in his
attitude to women: "Harold preferred a slow-witted large-eyed woman, silent and affectionate, with a load of black hair weighing much more heavily than her brains" (II, 159–160). Though he is capable of falling in love with Esther, even here he cannot help judging her in the light of his opinion of women in general, and thus misinterprets her attitude to Felix. He is not as great a worshipper of the will as his mother and he realises that the will is limited in its powers, but he still wishes to dominate, "to assert his own independence and power without throwing himself into that tabooed condition which robs power of its triumph" (I, 165). He also takes little notice of the feelings of others, having "indifference to any impressions in others which did not further or impede his own purposes ..." (I, 36). He is prepared to use people he despises, like Jermyn, for his own ends, and he tends to identify the good with his own interest.

Like all of George Eliot's egoists who have confidence in the power of the will, he must learn that external reality is indifferent to his egoistic expectations and that there are events in the past which impose limitations he cannot ignore. The revelation about his parenthood finally brings this home to him and he feels "the yoke of that mighty resistless destiny laid upon us by the acts of other men as well as our own" (II, 335). His life in Treby Magna is a series of frustrations and disappointments: he loses the election, he loses his inheritance, his attempt to crush Jermyn backfires, and he fails to win Esther.

Harold's egoism also affects his political attitudes. Though he rejects his mother's upper-class Toryism as out of date, his
being brought up in her notions of class dominance colours his radicalism: "underneath all the tendencies which had made him a Liberal, had intense personal pride ..." (I, 57). His intention is to dominate the radical movement by the force of his personality, and those who oppose him are "blockheads": "not caring greatly to know other people's thoughts, and ready to despise them as blockheads if their thoughts differed from his, and yet solicitous that they should have no colourable reason for slight thoughts about him. The blockheads must be forced to respect him" (I, 49).

His view is not far from his uncle's that "If the mob can't be turned back, a man of family must try and head the mob ..." (I, 48).

His radicalism is in many respects only a transformation of the desire for dominance present in his mother's Toryism: "I remove the rotten timbers ... and substitute fresh oak, that's all" (I, 62) he says to his uncle, half in jest. But there is an implication that if he can no longer satisfy his desire for power in an upper-class role, he is prepared to seek other means.

Esther's criticism of him shows how closely connected his political attitudes are with egoism:

had a way of virtually measuring the value of everything by the contribution it made to his own pleasure. His very good-nature was unsympathetic: it never came from any thorough understanding or deep respect for what was in the mind of the person he obliged or indulged; it was like his kindness to his mother - an arrangement of his for the happiness of others, which, if they were sensible, ought to succeed. And an inevitable comparison which haunted her, showed her the same quality in his political views: the utmost enjoyment of his own advantages was the solvent that blinded pride in his family and position, with the adhesion to changes that were to obliterate tradition and melt down enchased gold heirlooms into plating for the egg-spoons of "the people" (II, 257).
His radicalism has its roots in his desire to order and control the lives of others. To be sure he thinks this is for their own good, but this is only his interpretation of what is good for them. In political terms this would make him a dictator or a demagogue. He has no interest in continuity and is prepared to destroy the social structure of the past in the interests of offering "the people" only trivial benefits. It is the gaining of personal power that motivates his radicalism rather than, like Felix, a larger social vision.

What links Mrs. Transome, Jermy, and Harold and separates them from Felix Holt and Mr. Lyon is not that they are more innately egoistic, but that their egoistic energy is almost solely directed to gaining personal power. Other people are treated as instruments or must be mastered. Harold, for example, "had a padded yoke ready for the neck of every man, woman, and child that depended on him" (II, 270). None of them also has an authentic relationship to society. The social good is secondary to personal or narrow class interests.

It is important to understand George Eliot's social perspective in order to appreciate why she feels these characters are especially dangerous. Treby Magna is being radically altered because of industrial and political change, and thus had begun "to know the higher pains of a dim political consciousness ..." (I, 70). These changes create "unusual perturbations in organic existence ..." (I, 73). George Eliot conceives of society as possessing a developing corporate consciousness, something I shall discuss in detail later. The industrial, political, and social changes occurring in
Treby Magna and in England at large bring the corporate consciousness of society under stress. There is a danger of fragmentation and relativism. Instead of everyone feeling himself as sharing in one unified social life, there is a danger of identification with only one's personal or class interests. This is what happens with Mrs. Transome, Jermyn, and Harold. They are not interested in the need for unity and continuity in the community consciousness, but only in personal or class dominance. Their attitudes, instead of promoting social unity, are instrumental in creating division and conflict. An underlying current in the novel is fear of the mob. In the violence of the mob during the riot, one has an image of the egoism of the Transomes operating on a large social scale, threatening to topple the social structure and disintegrating the continuity on which George Eliot believes social unity must be based. The riot was an event "in which the multitudinous small wickednesses of small selfish ends, really undirected towards any larger result, had issued in widely-shared mischief that might yet be hideous" (II, 128).

Felix and Mr. Lyon in contrast believe in the need for a new sense of shared social consciousness which will make individuals and social groups see beyond their own interests to the good of society as a whole. Only when this is achieved will genuine social progress be possible. Attempts to root out abuses by violence only create division and in the long run hold back progress, which can only come about through the emergence of a unified social consciousness. This is what Felix tries to tell the miners:

"I'll tell you what's the greatest power under heaven," said Felix, "and that is public opinion - the ruling belief in society about what is right and what is wrong, what is
honourable and what is shameful. That's the steam that is to work the engines" (II, 90).

The egoism of Mrs. Transome, Jermyn, and Harold, in both its personal and social aspect, hinders the ideal of a unified social consciousness while both Felix and Mr. Lyon are, in different ways, working for its achievement.

They do not however possess less egoistic energy than the Transomes, but this is sublimated rather than expressed in a negative egoistic form, though they have to struggle hard to prevent this happening. But to lack egoism is just as bad as to be completely dominated by it. Mr. Transome's spirit has been crushed because he lacks the egoism to resist his wife's stronger will: "To Esther the sight of this feeble-minded, timid, paralytic man, who had long abdicated all mastery over the things that were his, was something piteous" (II, 209). Though Felix is usually seen as one of George Eliot's ideal characters, he is much more complex than this. He possesses just as much egoism as Harold or Jermyn, but his social vision enables him to transcend most of the negative aspects of egoism while utilising the energy egoism generates. He is contemptuous of the will-dominated, negative egoists of Byron and Chateaubriand, admired by Esther. But the same tendencies are present in him, and only the moral vision that directs his life enables him to control them:

"It is just because I'm a very ambitious fellow, with very hungry passions, wanting a great deal to satisfy me, that I have chosen to give up what people call worldly good.... It all depends on what a man gets into his consciousness - what life thrusts into his mind, so that it becomes present to him as remorse is present to the guilty, or a mechanical problem to an inventive genius" (II, 37).

He admits that he would be capable of the actions of a Jermyn or a Christian if he decided to seek success: "I should become
everything that I see now beforehand to be detestable." If his
directing social vision breaks down, he would be capable of the
demonic outbursts of a Mrs. Transome:

When once exasperated, the passionateness of his nature threw off the yoke of a long-trained consciousness in which thought and emotion had been more and more completely mingled, and concentrated itself in a rage as ungovernable as that of boyhood.... Felix had a terrible arm: he knew he was dangerous; and he avoided the conditions that might cause him exasperation, as he would have avoided intoxicating drinks if he had been in danger of intemperance (II, 76-77).

But even though he has devoted all his egoistic energy to serve an ideal that transcends the self, he must learn that external reality is as indifferent and resistant to him as it is to Harold. His moral aim partially blinds him to this, and there is egoism in his belief that he can impose his moral will on the world. The riot painfully corrects this notion. Though he is confident he can direct "the mass of wild chaotic desires and impulses around him" (II, 122) out of harm's way, his intervention only worsens the situation: "While Felix was entertaining his ardent purpose, these other sons of Adam were entertaining another ardent purpose of their peculiar sort, and the moment was come when they were to have their triumph" (II, 126-127). He is swept along by the mob. His efforts to take control of it have only created a more serious situation: an attack on Treby Manor.

Like Harold, Felix fails politically. But he learns renunciation through his failure, without being crushed or reduced to despair. His social vision acts as a means of self-definition even when reality contradicts his hopes, in contrast to the
Transomese who languish in frustration when their wills are defeated:

"But I'm proof against that word failure. I've seen behind it. The only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose he sees to be best. As to just the amount of result he may see from his particular work - that's a tremendous uncertainty: the universe has not been arranged for the gratification of his feelings. As long as a man sees and believes in some great good, he'll prefer working towards that in the way he's best fit for, come what may" (II, 293).

He fully recognises the asymmetrical relation between the mind and the structures it creates and events in the external world. It is the influence of Esther that does much to modify the masterful side of Felix's nature and makes him accept that it is the vision itself and the feeling underlying it that matters, not whether he can be successful in imposing his moral will on the world. 48

Like Harold, he too had been determined not to marry because this would limit and restrict the power of his will. But he realises that women with their greater capacity for feeling can complement the power of the masculine will.

Likewise, Felix's influence is important in enabling Esther to reject her negative egoistic tendencies. She is at first like a youthful Mrs. Transome, reading Romantics like Byron and Chateaubriand who proclaim the primacy of the individual ego, and longing for an elevated social position in which she can assert what she feels is her natural right to superiority. Before meeting Felix "Her life was a heap of fragments ..." (I, 256), but Felix's personality and vision offer her something beyond her

48. See also on this aspect of the novel, David R. Carroll, "Felix Holt: Society as Protagonist," NEF, xvii (1962-63), especially 239-240.
own self to identify with. Her greatest test is when the inheritance offers her what she had formerly most desired: high social status and the prospect of marrying a man who resembles the Romantic heroes she once admired, Harold Transome. But Felix has so altered her consciousness that these have now lost most of their attraction. She also gradually becomes aware that she would have to reject the defining elements of her own past. This makes life in Transome Court stifling for her, and in recognising the emptiness of Mrs. Transome's life, she has a new insight into the quality of her former ambitions. It is Felix's social vision which saves her, for it offers her an alternative way of life in relation to which she can see the inadequacies of Transome Court and choose something better. She has a concept of personal relationships and a social ideal which allows her to transcend her former negative egoism.

Even Mr. Lyon, at first sight an unlikely demonic egoist, has had to struggle to overcome negative egoistic tendencies. But there are important parallels between him and Mrs. Transome. Early in the novel it is said of him: "The good Rufus had his ire and his egoism; but they existed only as the red heat which gave force to his belief and his teaching" (I, 76). He has succeeded in sublimating his egoism. But he has also felt the temptation of the demonic in his passion for Annette, just as Mrs. Transome did in her passion for Jermyn: "... he had been blinded, deafened, hurried along by rebellious impulse; he had gone astray after his own desires ..." (I, 248). Such desires tempt him to reject his position as a Christian minister, to cast aside with
defiance the beliefs that have defined his life and to live only
for passion: "He was as one who raved, and knew that he raved.
These mad wishes were irreconcilable with what he was ... they were
irreconcilable with that conception of the world which made his
faith" (I, 121-122). To give way to these demonic forces would
be to contradict his sense of identity, to act in a way alien to
the kind of person he feels himself to be. The result would be,
as with Silva, a divided self.

But unlike Mrs. Transome, he struggles to keep some control
over this passion. He does not, like her, accord it absolute
value, but sees it as antagonistic to what he feels to be his
true self. Through refusing to surrender to it and through the
remuniciation of selflessly tending Annette during a long illness,
he is eventually able to achieve a feeling for her as an independent
person and discovers in turn a more authentic relation to his
vocation. By overcoming the desire to regard her only as a
means of satisfying his passion, he finds a love for her based
on a respect for her "equivalent centre of self." This experience
gives him a new self-understanding which allows him to re-assume
his role as a minister with greater security. Previously he had
suppressed the egoistic forces in his nature in a mechanical
devotion to duty. But he becomes aware of these forces in himself
and is able to use his genuine religious faith as a means of giving
direction to his egoistic energies. He can thus resist the
egoistic desire to master others and avoids the evil psychological
effects of repression. Unlike Mrs. Transome, he is able to
prevent himself becoming absorbed in self by acting for the good
of society at large:
What if he were inwardly torn by doubt and anxiety concerning his own private relations and the facts of his past life? That danger of absorption within the narrow bounds of self only urged him the more towards action which had a wider bearing, and might tell on the welfare of England at large (I, 251).

Mrs. Transome has no such outlet and consequently must suffer an unbearable psychological strain.

The world of Felix Holt is one then permeated by egoism. It affects all the characters and is present in personal, political, and social attitudes. Egoism cannot be avoided but its negative aspects can be resisted and its energies channelled for purposes beyond selfish gratification. The ideal to be aspired to is proclaimed in the episode concerning the rebellious choir, which is symbolically related to the problems arising from egoism in the novel. Even a church choir can have its demonic impulses: it "had declined to change the tunes in accordance with a change in the selection of hymns, and had stretched short metre into long out of pure wilfulness and defiance ..." (I, 224). When Felix humorously defends the choir, Mr. Lyon reproves him and makes the following important speech:

"You yourself are a lover of freedom, and a bold rebel against usurping authority. But the right to rebellion is the right to seek a higher rule, and not wander in mere lawlessness... I apprehend that there is a law in music, disobedience whereunto would bring us in our singing to the level of shrieking maniacs or howling beasts: so that herein we are well instructed how true liberty can be sought but the transfer of obedience from the will of one or of a few men to that will which is the norm or rule for all men. And though the transfer may sometimes be but an erroneous direction of search, yet is the search good and necessary to the ultimate finding. And even as in music,
where all obey and concur to one end, so that each has the joy of contributing to a whole whereby he is ravished and lifted up to the courts of heaven, so will it be in that crowning time of millennial reign, when our daily prayer will be fulfilled, and one law shall be written on all hearts, and be the very structure of all thought, and be the principle of all action" (I, 226-227).

This is, of course, an ideal and unattainable in real terms as the word "millennial" suggests. Nevertheless it is important for such an ideal to be present in one's consciousness. It helps order an individual's existence: it shapes his egoism and gives his life direction. If such an ideal is not present, there is a danger of social breakdown and turmoil since individuals or social groups will not be restrained from seeking their own interests at the expense of the social good as a whole. There would then be no harmony, no continuity with the past, no aim to work towards in the future. It may be an illusion to believe in the truth of such ideals, but this is no criticism of their value, as the narrator argues: "For what we call illusions are often, in truth, a wider vision of past and present realities - a willing movement of a man's soul with the larger sweep of the world's forces - a movement towards a more assured end than the chances of a single life" (I, 273-274). This view is very similar to that of Lewes on the value of ideals:

They are not the laws by which we live, or can live, but the types by which we measure all deviations from a perfect life. The mind which has once placed before it an ideal of life has a pole-star by which to steer, although his actual course will be determined by the winds and waves.... Our passions and our ignorance constantly make us swerve from the path to which the pole-star points; and thus the ideal of a Christian life, or the ideal of Marriage, are never wholly to be realised, yet who denies that such ideals are very potent influences in every soul that has clearly conceived them?49

49. Problems, I, 305.
One of the great values of Christianity was its power to make men live their lives in relation to an ideal standard which helped to control and direct their natural egoistic energies. It had been the creator of social harmony because it supplied the "one law" which was "the very structure of all thought." It supported both the individual's sense of identity and the social structure. In its breakdown, then, lay great dangers both to the self and to society. The ego no longer possessed an unquestioned source of authority which provided it with a stable and secure sense of being, and social values become problematic. If Christianity was seen as a symbolisation expressing essentially human content but was no longer capable of providing a tenable form for this content, then a new, non-theological, non-metaphysical form must emerge to replace it. It is George Eliot's preoccupation with this problem which must be the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER IV

FEELING

One of the most interesting judgments on George Eliot is to be found in Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*. He scathingly attacks her view that Christian ethics can be maintained even if belief in God and the metaphysical assumptions of Christianity are rejected:

G. Eliot. - They have got rid of the Christian God, and now feel obliged to cling all the more firmly to Christian morality: that is English consistency, let us not blame it on little bluestockings *à la* Eliot. In England in response to every little emancipation from theology one has to reassert one's position in a fear-inspiring manner as a moral fanatic. That is the *penance one pays there*. - With us it is different. When one gives up Christian belief one thereby deprives oneself of the right to Christian morality. For the latter is absolutely *not* self-evident: one must make this point clear again and again, in spite of English shallowpates. Christianity is a system, a consistently thought out and complete view of things. If one breaks out of it a fundamental idea, the belief in God, one thereby breaks the whole thing to pieces: one has nothing of any consequence left in one's hand....

George Eliot was well aware, I think, that such an attack could be levelled against her, and was very capable of formulating a reply to it. I shall try to reconstruct her position on this matter and to *show* that it owes much to an important aspect of Romantic thought.

The attack by Nietzsche is particularly interesting because it represents the judgment of someone who was probably the ultimate development of the tradition of individualist or demonic Romanticism on a contemporary who was perhaps the most important

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heir of the organicist Romantics. Though on the surface George Eliot and Nietzsche seem diametrically opposite in their beliefs and temperaments it can be argued that there is a good deal of common ground between them, and that in the light of this agreement their differences are much more significant and interesting.

I have already suggested that the situation created by Darwinism and the implications of the scientific world-view for George Eliot corresponded in important respects to that created for the earlier Romantics by the breakdown of Enlightenment values at the end of the eighteenth century. Some new orientation was needed to overcome the possibly nihilistic implications of Darwinism. It can be argued that, Darwin had a similar effect on Nietzsche. Walter Kaufmann has written:

Nietzsche was aroused from his dogmatic slumber by Darwin, as Kant had been by Hume a century earlier; and again it was a question of creating a new picture of man in reply to the "true but deadly" nihilism from beyond the Channel....

... The problem is whether it is possible to give man a new picture of himself without introducing supernatural assumptions which experience does not warrant and which we cannot, with integrity, fail to question.

Since George Eliot can be shown to be concerned with the same problem, this is an important connection, even if their positive alternatives to the nihilistic implications of Darwinism were utterly opposed. George Eliot was also well aware that it was possible to formulate a philosophy based on Romantic egoism in reaction to the amoral universe Darwinism had created, though she

had no knowledge of the particular form of Nietzsche's attempt to transcend nihilism and would have been as much opposed to this as to any philosophy of nihilism itself. But it is useful to investigate the extent of her agreement with elements in Nietzsche's radical Romantic standpoint, and where and on what grounds she would have parted company with him.

Both George Eliot and Nietzsche were among those who were most clearly aware that the breakdown of Christian belief, even if it extended at that time to a comparatively small number of intellectuals, constituted a serious crisis which must be faced. They attempted in radically different ways to provide the basis of a new world-view which could take the place of religion. Though Nietzsche thought Christian values had had a ruinous effect on European culture, he still recognised that the "death" of God was a catastrophe. Moral and social values could no longer

3. Lewes clearly thought this was necessary: "The great desire of this age is for a Doctrine which may serve to condense our knowledge, guide our researches, and shape our lives, so that Conduct may really be the consequence of Belief." He hopes for an end to the conflict between religion and science and the emergence of "a Doctrine which will respect the claims of both, and satisfy the needs of both" (Problems, I, 2, 4). But since Lewes had no religious belief, this doctrine could only preserve the content of religion by creating a new form for it, which Lewes endeavours to do in his Problems.
find an absolute justification, and it became a problem for the individual to support and sustain his sense of identity without God. 4 George Eliot was also well aware of the dangerous consequences which could take place as a result of the breakdown of religious faith:

Pray don't ever ask me again not to rob a man of his religious belief, as if you thought my mind tended towards such robbery. I have too profound a conviction of the efficacy that lies in all sincere faith, and the spiritual blight that comes with no-faith, to have any negative propagandism in me. 5

One also thinks of the meaning and value created in Mr. Tryan's life by his acceptance of Christianity, and the identity crisis and alienation suffered by Silas Marner as a result of his loss of faith. Christianity also made possible a unified set of social and moral values, since it had been able to provide the "one law" which was "the very structure of all thought."

It is more interesting perhaps and on the surface more unusual to suggest that certain fundamental Nietzschean ideas are very similar to those which underlie George Eliot's and Lewes's

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4. This is most clearly seen in the well-known section 125 of The Gay Science, "The Madman": "Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing?" See The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, 1959), p. 95.

5. Letters, IV, 64-65.
thinking. This is not so surprising if one bears in mind that they were all powerfully affected by advanced Romantic thought. I have already argued that for Lewes and George Eliot, man's basic needs and interests lead him instinctively to impose his will on reality and it is fundamental to the ego to do this; in fact, without this ability the ego could not exist. Nietzsche's seminal doctrine of the "will to power" is based on similar assumptions. He sees the desire for knowledge as derived from this: "the measure of the desire for knowledge depends upon the measure to which the will to power grows in a species: a species grasps a certain amount of reality in order to become master of it, in order to press it into service." Arthur Danto defines it as "an impulse and a drive to impose upon an essentially chaotic reality a form and a structure, to shape it into a world congenial to human understanding while habitable by human intelligence." For Nietzsche, external reality had no structure in itself in relation to which man could define himself, but it was an instinctive tendency of the human mind to seek order and meaning in the external world. Arthur Danto goes on:

It is a general tendency of the human mind, which, to Nietzsche, is ultimately a disastrous disposition, to imagine, and to seek to identify a purposive armature, a basis for significance, in the world itself, something objective to which men may submit and in which they may find a meaning for themselves. The Nihilism of Emptiness, as a mood of thought and as a psychological condition, arises

in direct consequence of the realization, or suspicion, that really there is no such thing to be found, no world order in which we ourselves are integral parts, and such that our entire value derives from being related to it in determined ways.... But once man attains a realization that the alleged real or true world is of human provenance, created in response to certain unfulfilled human needs, a fabrication which is philosophically unjustified if psychologically comprehensible, then he achieves the final form of Nihilism: a disbelief in any world alternative and metaphysically preferable to this one. At the same time, he regards this world as the only one, however unstructured and purposeless it may be, and however valueless.

I have already suggested that for George Eliot also the world in itself was unstructured and purposeless: events, as in the scratches on the pier-glass analogy, have no structure in themselves or no necessary connection with the human realm even though the mind may impose its human structure for its own purposes. A quotation from Lewes is also relevant in this connection:

When we now look upon the pleasant landscape of nodding corn, trimmed hedgerows, farmyards, parks, canals, bridges, and railways, and picture to ourselves the uncleared forests peopled by savages and wild beasts, we become aware that "Nature" represents man's transfigured Desire. His lower wants and higher wants, his nutritive and emotive needs, have been the agents of this transformation, subduing the stubborn forces to his pleasure. The Nature reflected in his world of Thought is also the representative of his Desire; and what are now cognitions were primarily emotions; the very objects of speculative contemplation being selected and created under the directive influences of some deep-seated want. The curiosity to know what is the real order in things, and what was the process of their evolution, - this passion of Philosophy which now bears so little traces of its utilitarian origin, - is but a higher stage of our primitive wants. We only see what interests us; and the primitive interests are physical.


8. Probleme, II, 137.
There is a striking similarity to Nietzsche's position: "It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm." 9

The "will to power" is closely related to Nietzsche's concept of sublimation: that our "good" actions are sublimations of egoistic drives, and therefore that "good" and "evil" derive from the same source:

9. The Will To Power, p. 267. It might seem that I go too far in this comparison of George Eliot and Lewes with Nietzsche, that though they might have agreed that the world was "unstructured and purposeless" and exhibited no order which could assure men of meaning and value, they would nevertheless not have accepted the view that reality was "essentially chaotic." This is a difficult question but Lewes is, I think, close to Nietzsche. He writes: "The external world must be at first simply a confused chaos, without shape or order, reflected in a Sentience which has not acquired shaping reactions. But as the sentient Organism develops, the external Order emerges; not because this Order is the creation of the Organism, stamped upon the chaos, but because this Order is assimilated by the Organism, - selected, according to its shaping reactions, from the larger Order of the Real" (Problems, I, 184). Lewes rejects idealism and thinks that the order of our perceptions corresponds to an external order, but the order we perceive is only one of many possible orderings: "... the external world exists, and among the modes of its existence is the one we perceive" (Problems, I, 183). But he clearly regards all thought as having a symbolic function: "... whatever is thought, conceived, is necessarily symbolical, since conceptions are not perceptions but symbols ..." (Problems, I, 191). Thus he can support atomic theory while doubting the existence of atoms. The concept of the atom is a useful symbolic means of explaining and predicting certain phenomenal occurrences, but one could conceivably frame an alternative symbolic explanation which could perform the same function and this would be just as good.
All these motives \{those which account for our actions\} ... whatever fine names we give them, have all grown out of the same root, in which we believe the evil poisons to be situated; between good and evil actions there is no difference of species, but at most of degree. Good actions are sublimated evil ones; evil actions are vulgarised and stupified good ones. 10

I have said something in the last chapter about how the moral qualities of Felix Holt or Mr. Lyon are not to be separated from their egoism, and I have quoted Lewes on how aggressive, egoistic impulses can be transformed into altruistic ones. Another interesting example of this is Mirah in Daniel Deronda, often considered an ideal character. But her "ideal" qualities are sublimations of egoistic emotions. This is made apparent in her jealousy of Gwendolen, and how it affects her gratitude to Deronda:

... a discovery that what should have been pure gratitude and reverence had sunk into selfish pain, that the feeling she had hitherto delighted to pour out in words was degraded into something she was ashamed to betray ... an angry feeling towards another woman who possessed the good she wanted. But what notion, what vain reliance could it be that had lain darkly within her and was now burning itself into sight as disappointment and jealousy? It was as if her soul had been steeped in poisonous passion by forgotten dreams of deep sleep, and now flamed out in this unaccountable misery (III, 287-288).

Her love, gratitude, and reverence for Deronda are sublimations of basic egoistic drives, of her "will to power." When the sublimation breaks down, her egoistic energy becomes demonically transformed. For George Eliot as for Nietzsche, the most "moral" of feelings are not a denial of egoism but sublimations of it.

She would probably have agreed with him that "The value of egoism depends on the physiological value of him who possesses it: it can

be very valuable, it can be worthless and contemptible," though they would doubtless have disagreed over what was valuable.

But a basic disagreement was that for Nietzsche altruism was bad because it denied egoism: "An 'altruistic' morality, a morality under which egoism languishes - is under all circumstances a bad sign.... The best are lacking when egoism begins to be lacking ...." But for George Eliot altruism is also a sublimation; egoism is not denied but sublimated and controlled, structured by human and social influences. Human community and language compel the individual to think of the needs of others. A longish quotation from Lewes shows how far he and George Eliot went with Nietzsche and demonic Romanticism, and how they departed radically from Nietzsche's conclusions. He clearly sees altruism as a sublimation of egoism:

All emotions in the beginning are egoistic, and their root-manifestation is probably a form of Fear, which in the reaction of its relief is the initiation of that emotional ease called gladness and joy. In the collision of appetites, whether of hunger or sexuality, arise the aggressive and defensive impulses, which would remain fiercely and solely egoistic but for that sense of dependence on individual beings or other-selves which lies implicitly in the sexual and parental relations. With the enlargement of the mental range in the human being, and under that influence of the social medium which raises emotions into sentiments, the consciousness of dependence is the continual check on the egoistic desires, and the continual source of that interest in the experience of others which is the wakener of sympathy; till we finally see in many highly wrought natures a complete submergence (or, if you will, a transference) of egoistic desire, and an habitual outrush of the emotional force in sympathetic channels. True, the same enlargement of perception and imagination brings with it more elaborate forms of egoism, and civilised man is still a beast of prey directing murderous artillary for the satisfaction of his


more highly differentiated greed. Appetite is the ancestor of tyranny, but it is also the ancestor of love. The Nutritive instinct, which urged the search for prey, has ended in producing an industry and ingenuity of device which is its own delight, a converseance with the external universe which is sublimely, disinterestedly speculative; the Reproductive instinct has ended in producing the joys and heroism of devoted love, the sacred instinct of duty towards offspring; and both instincts have been at work together in the creation of the sentiments which constitute our moral, religious, and aesthetic life.\(^\text{13}\)

Though George Eliot and Lewes can be seen to agree with Nietzsche that the world is unstructured, that man possesses a "will to power" which necessarily leads him to impose structure on reality for his own purposes, and that morality, religion, and art have their basis in egoism, ideas which form the basis of Nietzsche's nihilism, they never adopted a nihilistic stance and were antagonistic to anything like the Nietzschean attempt to overcome nihilism. They believed it was possible to create a new orientation which would be purely human and would incorporate Christian morality and values. For them it was of little importance that "truth" did not exist external to man and that the world was interpreted in human interests. What was in the interests of humanity as a whole, of the species, was "truth" so far as man was concerned. The danger as they saw it was that such ideas might lead to a complete moral relativism in which everyone could have his own idea of the good. This could result in the breakdown of culture and society. What was required was a set of beliefs which would serve a similar function to religion, which could act as "the structure of all thought," and they believed this could be created in purely human terms. Even though they accepted several of the most basic

\(^{13}\) Problems, V, 386-387.
Nietzschean assumptions, they thought these could be incorporated in their perspective. What allowed them to believe this was possible was their attitude to feeling, an essential element in George Eliot's thinking, and at the root of her fundamental difference from demonic Romanticism.

The emphasis on feeling in George Eliot is one of her most English characteristics. Feeling, especially in the form of sympathy, played a central role in the moral thought of such eighteenth-century figures as Hume and Adam Smith,\(^\text{14}\) and probably because of this it seems to be more strongly present in the English Romantics than in their continental counterparts. In many of George Eliot's contemporaries, most obviously Dickens, feeling is also a major preoccupation. George Eliot's concern with it should be seen then in this English setting, though her treatment of it is much more philosophical than that of most of her contemporaries, and she is well aware of its complexities and the difficulties of using it as the basis of ethics and morality.

Feeling is a subject integrally related to Romanticism but among Romantic individualists it tended to be seen as less important.

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\(^{14}\) See Walter Jackson Bate, *From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, Mass., 1946), pp. 133-135. Feeling and sympathy are, of course, closely related for George Eliot. Thomas A. Noble goes too far, I think, when he states: "For her the basis of sympathy, the foundation of true benevolence, is not feeling as such but understanding." George Eliot's "Scenes of Clerical Life" (New Haven and London, 1965), p. 63. This interpretation seems to overlook numerous statements by George Eliot on the subject as this chapter will, I think, show.
than will and ego. In Byron, these tend to be emphasised more than feeling. In Fichte's early philosophy also, feeling played little part compared to ego and will. Robert W. Wernaer contrasts him with Schleiermacher:

Intuition! Feeling! Not Intelect nor Will! This is the kernel of Schleiermacher's philosophy ... In the idealism of Fichte, as set forth in his Science of Knowledge, feeling plays no part. The individual ego could attain to the Absolute Ego (Fichte's God) only through moral conduct, that is, through the power of the will. 15

Later individualists like Stirner or Nietzsche had little interest in moral or sympathetic feelings. Nietzsche is contemptuous of any attempt to make feeling a guide to moral action:

Behind the principle of the present moral fashion: "Moral actions are actions performed out of sympathy for others," I see the social instinct of fear, which thus assumes an intellectual disguise: this instinct sets forth as its supreme, most important, and most immediate principle that life shall be relieved of all the dangerous characteristics which it possessed in former times ... Are we not, then, with this gigantic intention of ours of smoothing down every sharp edge and corner in life, utilising the best means of turning mankind into sand! ... Is that your ideal, ye harbingers of the "sympathetic affections"? 16

The feelings which tended to be highly valued by Romantic individualists were the most impulsive feelings. Some of Nietzsche's most demonic statements are those urging the liberation of impulsive and aggressive forces in the self. The repression of such feelings created what he called "ressentiment": bottled up resentment and rancour which develops in those who habitually repress strong feeling. For him, the oppression, violence, or

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destructiveness that might be created by the liberation of such feelings was the price to be paid for the existence of men who were free of "resentment."\textsuperscript{17}

It is interesting that George Eliot is also well aware of the importance of resentment. For her also the repression of strong feeling was an evil but she rejected the view that the liberation of pure impulse was necessary if the evil effects of this were to be avoided. She sought rather a means of controlling and disciplining strong feeling which would not create resentment. But the greatest danger for her in resentment was that it could often lead to a demonic outburst. Bottled-up feeling could generate an uncontrollable demonic impulse over which an individual had little control. In Daniel Deronda this is particularly evident. Grandcourt's masterful domination of people of strong feeling creates sufficient intensity of resentment to arouse a murderous impulse. Of Lydia Glasher it is said:

\begin{quote}
In her, as in every one else who wanted anything of him, his incalculable turns, and his tendency to harden under beseeching, had created a reasonable dread— a slow discovery, of which no presentiment had been given in the bearing of a youthful lover with a fine line of face and the softest manners. But reticence had necessarily cost something to this impassioned woman, and she was the bitterer for it. There is no quailing— even that forced on the helpless and injured— which has not an ugly obverse: the withheld sting was gathering venom (II, 96).
\end{quote}

Gwendolen is like Lydia in her forceful egoism, and the resentment aroused by being crushed by Grandcourt creates a "pent-up impulse" (III, 195) in her; she fears she will be overcome by the demonic: "her vision of what she had to dread took more decidedly than ever

\textsuperscript{17} See The Genealogy of Morals, especially section 10, for this.
the form of some fiercely impulsive deed ..." (III, 196). To commit such a deed would not give her freedom, but "the palsy of a new terror - a white dead face from which she was for ever trying to flee and for ever held back." Eventually such an impulse makes "its demon-visit" (III, 197).

George Eliot is also very eager to show that Deronda, whose repressed state would seem to make it inevitable that he suffer from resentment, succeeds in overcoming this. The narrator states: "For in what related to himself his resentful impulses had been early checked by a mastering affectionateness" (I, 266). Later it is said: "He saw a very easy descent into mean unreasoning rancour and triumph in others' frustration; and being determined not to go down that ugly pit, he turned his back on it, clinging to the kindlier affections within him as a possession" (II, 5).

Despite his objections to Sir Hugo's conduct towards him, "His lifelong affection for Sir Hugo was stronger than all his resentment ..." (II, 361).

For Nietzsche, what he called the domestication of man's savage instincts was a cultural disaster, but for George Eliot it was a cultural necessity. In her view, it was bad for the individual as well as for society, for the ego was in a large degree a cultural product and succumbing to an animal impulse must split the self.

In Adam Bede, Adam gives way to a violent impulse when he and Arthur fight "with the instinctive fierceness of panthers ..." (II, 18). But he later reflects:

What had he done by fighting? Only satisfied his own passion, only wreaked his own vengeance. He had not rescued Hetty, nor changed the past - there it was just as it had been, and he sickened at the vanity of his own rage (II, 18-19).
In fact, his feeling of horror when he realises Arthur might be
dead creates a moral response that is an important stage in his
development. For George Eliot, such violent or destructive
impulses must either be sublimated or, if this is not possible,
consciously renounced so as to avoid being unconsciously repressed.

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But her main interest in feeling was as a form of knowledge,
a direct means of insight that was prior to reason as a guide to
action. Though feeling was of great importance to many pre-
Romantic figures, it was only with the Romantics that feeling was
seen as initiating knowledge instead of supporting reason.

Walter Jackson Bate writes:

The evolution of the romantic stress on feeling as a
means of effective insight may be characteristically illustrated
by the increasing role assigned to sympathy in both moral and
aesthetic theory. It is one of the common tenets of
English romantic criticism that the imagination is capable,
through an effort of sympathetic intuition, of identifying
itself with its object; and, by means of this identification,
the sympathetic imagination grasps, through a kind of direct
experience and feeling, the distinctive nature, identity, or
"truth" of the object of its contemplation. The critical
opinions of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and several minor critics
frequently reveal this assumption. Hazlitt, as Mr. Bullitt
has shown, made it the basis not only of his conception of
the imagination but of his ethics, and there is reason to
believe that Keats did likewise.18

And Lilian R. Furst has written:

On the whole, however, the Romantics envisaged the
heart not only, or even primarily, as the fountainhead of
happiness and sorrow, but particularly as an organ of
knowledge. As a corollary to the rejection of rationalism,
the mind was demoted from its controlling position and
replaced by the heart as the means of perception: "The
feelings will set up their standard against the understanding,

whenever the understanding has renounced the reason', to use Coleridge's words. 'Only what we feel, we know' could well have been the motto of the Romantics; the heart must be believed before the reason because here lies that essential part of man wherein he is linked to the universal spirit.

It is interesting to compare this with a dialogue between Ladislaw and Dorothea in Middlemarch:

"... To be a poet is to have a soul so quick to discern that no shade of quality escapes it, and so quick to feel, that discernment is but a hand playing with finely-ordered variety on the chords of emotion - a soul in which knowledge passes instantaneously into feeling, and feeling flashes back as a new organ of knowledge. One may have that condition by fits only."

"But you leave out the poems," said Dorothea. "I think they are wanted to complete the poet. I understand what you mean about knowledge passing into feeling, for that seems to be just what I experience ..." (I, 341-342).

This idea of feeling being an "organ of knowledge" is an important one in George Eliot and one which is fundamental to her thought. It is essential to her conviction that Christian morality could survive even if one ceased to believe in God. For Nietzsche, Christianity was a system which collapsed if God was no longer part of it, and the morality based on it then had no foundation. But for George Eliot, Christianity consisted essentially of human content which man had projected outside himself. God was the projection into objectivity of certain human feelings, desires, and longings. Even though God was rejected as an objective existent, these feelings remained. A new form was needed for those which were an authentic human response to reality.

theology had projected them outwards from the human, just as Silas Warne projected his feelings on finding Eppie into the belief that this was a reward from a divine source. This re-established his belief in a beneficent deity. Though the existence of a divine being might be considered the basis of Christian morality, in reality it was the human feeling underlying the concept of God which was the real basis. This view of religion is, of course, based on Feuerbach’s philosophy.

There are numerous passages in The Essence of Christianity emphasising the importance of human feeling:

God suffers, means in truth nothing else than: God is a heart. The heart is the source, the centre of all suffering. A being without suffering is a being without a heart. The mystery of the suffering God is therefore the mystery of feeling, sensibility. A suffering God is a feeling, sensitive God. But the proposition: God is a feeling Being, is only the religious periphrase of the proposition: feeling is absolute, divine in its nature.

And he writes in a particularly powerful passage:

"God is love:" this, the supreme dictum of Christianity, only expresses the certainty which human feeling has of itself, as the alone essential, i.e., absolute divine power, the certainty that the inmost wishes of the heart have objective validity and reality, that there are no limits, no positive obstacles to human feeling, that the whole world, with all its pomp and glory, is nothing weighed against human feeling. God is love; that is, feeling is the God of man, may, God absolutely, the Absolute Being. God is the nature of human feeling, unlimited, pure feeling, made objective. God is the optative of the human heart transformed into the tempus finitum, the certain, blissful "IS," - the unrestricted omnipotence of feeling, prayer bearing itself, feeling perceiving itself, the echo of our cry of anguish.20

Though Feuerbach was well aware of the dangers of this feeling operating without objective restraints, it did possess great value for him and could serve as the basis of a humanism which could replace religion. This was also George Eliot's view. The moral content of Christianity could then be expressed in a purely human form. In Feuerbach she found a philosophical framework which could incorporate and systematically develop the interest in feeling she derived from the English tradition and from the Romantics.

There are numerous passages in her works which stress the importance she attached to feeling as a direct means of human knowledge. As Adam Bede says to Dinah: "The more knowledge a man has, the better he'll do's work; and feeling's a sort o' knowledge" (II, 336), and the narrator comments in the same novel:

The growth of higher feeling within us is like the growth of faculty, bringing with it a sense of added strength. We can no more wish to return to a narrower sympathy, than a painter or a musician can wish to return to his cruder manner, or a philosopher to his less complete formula (II, 365).

In her essay on Dr. Cumming she attacks his concept of religion for leaving feeling out of account. Moral actions are the product of feeling for her, not of mechanical religious principles as she claims is the case for Cumming:

A man is not to be just from a feeling of justice; he is not to help his fellow-men out of good-will to his fellow-men; he is not to be a tender husband and father out of affection: all of these natural muscles and fibres are to be torn away and replaced by a patent steel-spring—_anxiety_ for the 'glory of God.'

In the following passage the influence of Feuerbach is strongly felt, and her view that Christianity as a system is not necessary to justify morality is particularly clear:

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Happily, the constitution of human nature forbids the complete prevalence of such a theory. Fatally powerful as religious systems have been, human nature is stronger and wider than religious systems ... But next to that hatred of the enemies of God which is the principle of persecution, there perhaps has been no perversion more obstructive of true moral development than this substitution of a reference to the glory of God for the direct promptings of the sympathetic feelings.... If then, as Dr. Cumming inculcates, the glory of God is to be 'the absorbing and influential aim' in our thoughts and actions, this must tend to neutralize the human sympathies: the stream of feeling will be diverted from its natural current in order to feed an artificial canal. The idea of God is really moral in its influence ... only when God is contemplated as sympathizing with the pure elements of human feeling, as possessing infinitely all those attributes which we recognize to be moral in humanity. In this light, the idea of God and the sense of His presence intensify all noble feeling, and encourage all noble effort, on the same principle that human sympathy is found a source of strength ...

She conceives of direct moral feeling as an instinctive part of human nature and as the basis of religious systems. The danger of religion is that it becomes a rigid system and prevents feeling finding its proper outlet. Its value is in giving form to feeling: "The idea of a God who not only sympathizes with all we feel and endure for our fellow-men, but who will pour life into our too languid love, and give firmness to our vacillating purpose, is an extension and multiplication of the effects produced by human sympathy ..."  

The essay "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness: the Poet Young" is also important for its stress on feeling and its attack on the view that only religion can justify morality. For Young, whose "utter want of moral emotion" George Eliot attacks, it is only

23. Essays, p. 188.
Christianity as a system that makes men moral. Morality is the product of belief in God and the hope of eternal life and not the outcome of moral feelings. This view is hateful to George Eliot since it implies that if men ceased to believe in God, then there would be no logical reason why they should behave quite amorally and only serve their personal interests. She imagines a possible reply to Young:

The fact is, I do not love myself alone, whatever logical necessity there may be for that in your mind. I have a tender love for my wife, and children, and friends, and through that love I sympathize with like affections in other men.... Through my union and fellowship with the men and women I have seen, I feel a like, though a fainter, sympathy with those I have not seen.... Fear of consequences is only one form of egoism, which will hardly stand up against half-a-dozen other forms of egoism bearing down upon it. And in opposition to your theory that a belief in immortality is the only source of virtue, I maintain that, so far as moral action is dependent on that belief, so far the emotion which prompts it is not truly moral - is still in the stage of egoism, and has not yet attained the higher development of sympathy.

Our natural moral feelings make it possible to sympathise with others and transcend egoism. Justice and benevolence are not conceived as the products of a moral system but as direct feelings: a man who would act against the rights of his fellow-men if he disbelieved in a future life would be "wanting in the genuine feelings of justice and benevolence ..."25

In this essay also George Eliot puts forward a theory of art influenced strongly, as is her moral theories, by Romantic thought:

Now, the products of Art are great in proportion as they result from the immediate prompting of innate power which we call Genius, and not from laboured obedience to a theory or rule; and the presence of genius or innate prompting is directly opposed to the perpetual consciousness of a rule. The action of faculty is imperious, and excludes the reflection why it should act. In the same way, in proportion as morality is emotional, i.e., has affinity with Art, it will exhibit itself in direct sympathetic feeling and action, and not as the recognition of a rule. Love does not say, 'I ought to love' - it loves. Pity does not say, 'It is right to be pitiful' - it pities. Justice does not say, 'I am bound to be just' - it feels justly. It is only where moral emotion is comparatively weak that the contemplation of a rule or theory habitually mingles with its action ...  

As art is the product of the higher nature of the individual genius, so morality is the product of spontaneous moral feelings. It is not a given set of rules dictated by any moral or religious system, but emerges naturally through the confrontation of feeling with experience. Only those who are comparatively lacking in feeling need to rely on rules. This contempt for rules and support for individual emotional responses, both in relation to art and morality, aligns George Eliot clearly with the Romantics. She believes, like them, that there are people of superior sensibility who possess noble feelings and who do not need moral rules or a pre-conceived system to act as a moral support. The higher the nature of the individual, the greater will be his power and quality of feeling.  

Characters like Felix Holt or Dorothea possess the higher nature and both act nobly and can call forth powerful feelings in others.


27. Similar ideas can be found in Feuerbach: "To a man of noble feeling, the noble action is natural: he does not hesitate whether he should do it or not, he does not place it in the scale of choice; he must do it" (The Essence of Christianity, p. 321).
In "Leaves from a Notebook," in a section entitled "'A Fine Excess,'" she enlarges on the role of these persons who possess the higher sensibility. "One can hardly insist too much," she writes, "in the present stage of thinking, on the efficacy of feeling in stimulating to ardent co-operation ..."

Quoting Pedalma's "The grandest death: to die in vain - for Love / Greater than sways the forces of the world," she goes on to say:

I really believe and mean this, - not as a rule of general action, but as a possible grand instance of determining energy in human sympathy, which even in particular cases, where it has only a magnificent futility, is more adorable, or as we say divine, than unpitying force, or than a prudent calculation of results.... But the generous leap of impulse is needed too to swell the flood of sympathy in us beholders, that we may not fail completely under the mastery of calculation, which in its turn may fail of ends for want of energy got from ardour.

The use of the word "ardour" suggests a parallel with Dorothea, whose key word in Middlemarch is "ardour." One is reminded of how her ardent feeling liberates Rosamond, even if only temporarily, from her calculating egoism.

Another recently discovered section of "Leaves from a Notebook" is entitled "Feeling is a sort of knowledge," in which George Eliot states:

What seems eminently wanted is a closer comparison between the knowledge which we call rational & the experience which we call emotional. The sequences which are forced upon us by perception, which establish fundamental associations, & are classed as knowledge are accompanied in varying degrees by satisfaction, & denial or suffering, to the organism in proportion as the established sequences are affirmed or disturbed. What is the difference with the sequences which are the subject matter of ethics? Only that the satisfaction or suffering is something more deeply organic, dependent on the primary vital movements, the first seeds of dread &

desire, which in some cases grow to a convulsive force, & are ready to fasten their companionship on ideas & acts which are usually regarded as impersonal & indifferent. 29

Here she seems to be suggesting that the feelings which are the basis of ethics should be subject to scientific analysis.

The danger to morality comes from those, like Tito, who are lacking in moral feeling and who have rejected Christianity or any form of religious belief. If Christianity ceases to function as a system, such people have no inner or outer restraint on their natural egoism. They can rationalise away all forms of moral action and devote themselves to lives of self-gratification. But no person, George Eliot believes, is totally lacking in human feeling; the lack is only comparative. Hetty in Adam Bede is a character comparatively lacking in feeling. Her narcissistic self-absorption prevents her feelings being morally shaped by experience. They remain subjective and egoistic. She finds pleasure in feeling that Adam is in her power:

She liked to feel that this strong, skilful, keen-eyed man was in her power ... she felt nothing, when his eyes rested on her, but the cold triumph of knowing that he loved her, and would not care to look at Mary Burge ... (I, 145).

Neither children nor animals arouse anything other than irritation in her. Mrs. Poyser knows what to expect from her "in the way of feeling": "there's nothing seems to give her a turn i' th' inside, not even when we thought Totty had tumbled into the pit.... It's my belief her heart's as hard as a pebble" (I, 232-233). She is compared to Bessy Cranage but "The advantage,

perhaps, would have been on Bessy's side in the matter of feeling" (I, 415). Feeling is "the healthy eye of the soul" (II, 37) but Hetty possesses "the lower nature" (I, 240) which is comparatively lacking in it. It is only with "The shattering of all her little dream-world ..." (II, 67) that her pleasure-loving nature is forced to encounter real experience, which makes it possible for her egoistic emotion to be transformed into moral and sympathetic feeling. The most powerful instance of this is when she kills her child. This creates feelings of guilt in her which she cannot suppress and which break down her self-absorption.

While Hetty possesses the lower nature which is comparatively cut off from feeling, Dinah possesses "the higher nature" (I, 240) in which egoism is transformed or sublimated into intense sympathetic feeling for others. As Hetty looks within and constructs a dream-world to gratify her "pleasure-seeking nature" (I, 240), Dinah looks outwards and responds to the needs of others.

Dinah, however, possesses religious belief as a support for feeling and a means of controlling and directing its more impulsive and egoistic manifestations. Nevertheless George Eliot thought that religion could also have its dangers. Both she and Feuerbach felt that a serious weakness of religion was that it could encourage certain kinds of over-subjective feeling, wish-fulfilments that detached feeling from the objective world. He wrote:

God is the affirmation of human feeling; prayer is the unconditional confidence of human feeling in the absolute identity of the subjective and objective, the certainty that the power of the heart is greater than the power of Nature, that the heart's need is absolute necessity, the fate of the world.30

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30. The Essence of Christianity, p. 123.
For him the "objective spirit" is necessary to control the excesses of purely subjective feeling which he sees manifested in Christianity. Similarly, George Eliot criticises religious sects which separate feeling and intellect:

... in proportion as religious sects exalt feeling above intellect, and believe themselves to be guided by direct inspiration rather than by spontaneous exertion of their faculties - that is, in proportion as they are removed from rationalism - their sense of truthfulness is misty and confused. 31

But though she criticised the excesses of feeling, it is apparent from previous quotations that she thought that in moral terms feeling is prior to the intellect. Rational thought supported feeling rather than feeling supporting rational thought. It is probably here that one can see her most serious difference from Mill who also stressed the importance of the feelings, particularly in his essay "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties" and his Autobiography. But Mill would never have admitted, as George Eliot would have done, that feeling could be a direct means of knowledge. For him feeling supported thought, but could not be a means of knowledge prior to the intellect. A recent commentator on Mill writes:

Wordsworth's poems did indeed offer Mill the "culture of the feelings" he had desired; but nowhere does he suggest that they offered any kind of imaginative truth, or make possible any grasp of reality not available to the ordinary, logical intellect. 32

But that both Mill and George Eliot could lay such stress on feeling, despite this difference between them, emphasises its

great importance in English moral thought.  

iv

Yet there are some obvious difficulties in her view that feeling could be a direct means of moral knowledge, even if she believed it must be shaped by objective experience and subjected to criticism by the intellect. One may experience, spontaneously, "moral" feelings of pity, justice, or benevolence, but what about the direct prompting of impulsive, violent, or rebellious feelings? To decide that certain feelings are moral and to reject others would seem to necessitate moving beyond feeling to some standpoint outside it, in order to avoid the demonic position that one should give oneself up to whatever feeling happened to dominate at the moment. Christianity was able to provide an external authority which could direct and control feeling, but if it were rejected where was a new authority to be found? It might seem that she was covertly clinging to Christianity as a system to support morality, as Nietzsche suggested. Another problem is how it was possible for feelings of love, pity and so on to be spontaneously generated when human beings encounter experience? Is she suggesting that morality is an innate part of the organism? Some of these difficulties can be resolved by comparing her views with those of Spencer and Lewes on feeling. But a philosophical poem which

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33. Huxley was another influenced by this English stress on feeling: "I have termed this evolution of the feelings out of which the primitive bonds of human society are so largely forged, into the organized and personified sympathy we call conscience, the ethical process" (Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays, p. 30). He says this idea was chiefly worked out by Hartley and Adam Smith.
shows that George Eliot was aware of the problems involved and appreciated and tried to reply to alternative moral positions in "A College Breakfast-Party." It shows how central feeling is in her ethical thought and how she thought it could provide the basis for a justification of morality even if religion could no longer do so in metaphysical terms. It was written in 1874 and originally entitled "A Symposium," and was, said George Eliot, "a poetic dialogue embodying or rather shadowing very imperfectly the actual contest of ideas."34

It is a debate which uses the characters of Hamlet plus a priest to argue about where the individual can find a source of authority external to the self which can serve as a means of moral orientation for man and society. The priest is a representative of a rigid theological standpoint, and he is opposed by four alternative views: Guildenstern, who is the spokesman of George Eliot's position, Laertes, a radical individualist, Rosencrantz, an extreme sceptic, and Osrio, an art for art's sake aesthete, plus Hamlet.

Questioning all things and yet half convinced Credulity were better; held inert 'Twixt fascination of all opposites ... (p. 221).

Hamlet asks the priest the basic question:

"I crave direction, Father, how to know The sign of that imperative whose right To sway my act in face of thronging doubts Were an oracular gem in price beyond Urim and Thummim lost to Israel" (p. 228).

The priest's answer to Hamlet's "hunger for authoritative right" (p. 228) is to advocate complete obedience to the Church, the only

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34. Letters, VI, 388.
traditional source of moral authority. He does not attempt to argue why the Church should command obedience. It is the only body that makes an absolute claim and so only it can ask for complete obedience:

"And so I say, the body of the Church
Carries a Presence, promises and gifts
Never disproved - whose argument is found
In lasting failure of the search elsewhere
For what it holds to satisfy man's need" (p. 230).

After Hamlet has sympathised with the priest's view:

"How base your self-resistance save on faith
In some invisible Order, higher Right
Than changing impulse" (p. 231),

and attacked science for being hostile to mystery and for dissolving "the Forms that made the other half / Of all our love ..."

Guildenstern replies to the priest's arguments. He proclaims that the Church's doctrine can only survive if evidential reasoning is disregarded and conflicting facts ignored, and on the principle of blind obedience

"I could justify
Each superstition and each tyranny
That ever rode upon the back of man ..." (p. 233).

The trouble with any closed system is that it must try to crush all forces that conflict with it, thus the need for the Inquisition:

"The flames are nothing: only smaller pain
To hinder greater, or the pain of one
To save the many, such as throbs at heart
Of every system born into the world" (p. 234).

The religious doctrine of the Church is rigid and mechanical and cannot satisfy man's "utmost reason and his utmost love" (p. 235).

Guildenstern's most important opponent in the poem is Rosencrantz, the sceptic. He asks how any single standard can be applied to all men in a relativistic world in which everyone has a different idea of the good:
"Your human good, which you would make supreme,
How do you know it? Has it shown its face
In adamantine type, with features clear ..." (pp. 238-239).

How can the good be defined in such a way as to be acceptable to
the majority? And how can any fixed idea of the good be preserved
in a world of change? Any set of values can only be a relativistic
idea of the good imposed by force:

"What will you work for, then, and call it good
With full and certain vision - good for aught
Save partial ends which happen to be yours?" (p. 239).

The "social good" is like other deities which are supreme for a
while but prove transient in the flux of time. It is a mere
prejudice "To suit the mood of fanatics who lead / The mood of
tribes or nations" (p. 240). Only force could establish a single
idea of the good and until then there is only "custom":

"You chant your hymns
To Evolution, on your altar lay
A sacred egg called Progress; have you proved
A Beast unique where all is relative,
And where each change is loss as well as gain?" (p. 241).

Rosencrantz concludes with the statement that only a life of
hedonism is justified given a human situation in which none of
man's beliefs or skills can avert "rigid doom."

George Eliot squarely faces up to such nihilism in the poem.
She is aware that such a view of life is possible and it calls
forth from Guildenstern a particularly clear statement of her
position:

"I meet your deadliest challenge, Rosencrantz: -
Where get, you say, a binding law, a rule
Enforced by sanction, an Ideal throned
With thunder in its hand? I answer, there
Whence every faith and rule has drawn its force
Since human consciousness awaking owned
An Outward, whose unconquerable sway
Resisted first and then subdued desire
By pressure of the dire Impossible
Urging to possible ends the active soul
And shaping so its terror and its love.
Why, you have said it - threats and promises
Depend on each man's sentence for their force:
All sacred rules, imagined or revealed,
Can have no form or potency apart
From the percipient or emotive mind.
God, duty, love, submission, fellowship,
Must first be framed in man, as music is,
Before they live outside him as a law" (pp. 245-246).

The "good" is not something which exists outside of man. Certain
tendencies of feeling have become instinctive in man as a result
of the encounter of human consciousness with otherness. Human
nature has been shaped by this confrontation of the ego with
reality, and moral feelings have therefore become an integral part
of man's life. The authority man seeks cannot be derived from
any external source: it must have its basis in these tendencies
of moral feeling. It is possible to create a human community with
a morality based on these feelings as an integral part of its
structure:

"... the tide
Of needs reciprocal, toil, trust, and love -
The surging multitude of human claims
Which make "a presence not to be put by"
Above the horizon of the general soul" (p. 246).

Even if the world is as bad as Rosencrantz says it is, it is still
possible for men to

take their common sorrows as a rock,
On it erect religion and a church,
A worship, rites, and passionate piety... (p. 248).

But this fails to convince the others. Osiic, for instance,
"a delicate insect creeping over life ..." (p. 222) agrees with
Rosencrantz's interpretation of the world, but this only justifies
the erection of art into a realm of beauty that creates its own
value. Art, he claims, is above all questions of morality, and
the catastrophes and evils of the world are only important because they "Feed art with contrast, give the grander touch / To the master's pencil and the poet's song ..." (p. 253). It is interesting that George Eliot interpreted aestheticism as being based on nihilism. Guildenstern asks where the "beautiful" has originated from? In Osric's formulation, it is separate from human life, not something that has emerged from "human struggle, order, knowledge," but would seem to be able to "live apart from thought, creeds, states, / Which mean life's structure" (p. 256).

The poem ends without any resolution, the college setting merging

With undulating ether, time, the soul,  
The will supreme, the individual claim,  
The social Ought, the lyrist's liberty,  
Democritus, Pythagoras, in talk  
With Anselm, Darwin, Comte, and Schopenhauer ... (p. 260).

Earlier there had been reference to "the fibrous spreading roots / Of character that feed men's theories ..." (p. 222). If the same characters had been dramatised in a novel, their intellectual views would not have existed in the abstract, but would have been shown as the product of personal and social experience acting on their basic natures. But the poem is interesting in illustrating George Eliot's awareness of the intellectual issues of her time and her understanding of views that were different from her own. The fact that she could take the trouble to write such a poem also shows that she regarded the problems she was dealing with as extremely important.

George Eliot's belief that feeling could act as the basis for a general human perspective which preserved Christian values can
be understood better if one considers the ideas of Spencer and Lewes on this subject. Their views could be used to give philosophical and perhaps scientific support to the Romantic idea that feeling was a direct means of knowledge and to resolve some of the difficulties involved. There is no doubt that there was a large measure of intellectual agreement among them, particularly on ethical matters, and the importance of feeling for both Spencer and Lewes helps elucidate her views.35

Spencer's *Principles of Psychology* is probably the most helpful in understanding some of George Eliot's ideas about feeling, especially in regard to the origin of moral feelings. She had many discussions with Spencer on this subject and it seems likely that her views had some influence on him and were reflected in his book.36 Spencer adopts an empiricist position in his theory of knowledge, but his empiricism is somewhat different from the Locke-Hume-Mill tradition:

But Mind is not wholly, or even mainly, Intelligence. We have seen that it consists largely, and in one sense entirely, of Feelings. Not only do Feelings constitute the inferior tracts of consciousness, but Feelings are in all cases the materials out of which, in the superior tracts of consciousness, Intellect is evolved by structural combination. Everywhere Feeling is the substance of which, where it is present, Intellect is the form. And where intellect is not present, or but little present, Mind consists of feelings that are unformed or but little formed. Intellect comprehends only the relational elements of the Mind; and to omit Feelings is to omit the terms between which the relations exist.37

35. Bernard J. Paris also relates George Eliot to Spencer and Lewes in *Experiments in Life*, chap. iii, though his discussion is not primarily concerned with feeling.


What Spencer calls "feelings" would now be referred to as "sense-data" and would differ from "feelings" as used by George Eliot. But Spencer goes on to say that all feelings cannot be entirely separated from the emotions: "... it may be well to remark that even in our ordinary experiences, the impossibility of dissociating the psychical states classed as intellectual from those seemingly most unlike psychical states classed as emotional, may be discerned." 38 Since all sensations or representations are either agreeable or disagreeable, it is, he says, rare for any act of cognition to be entirely free from emotion. It is in the adjustment of the organism to the environment that all feelings have their origin, and in the course of evolution, feelings become more and more complex so that sentiment is created.

Spencer goes on to give an account of how feelings evolve in man which is of relevance to George Eliot's view expressed by Guildenstern, that we inherit tendencies of feeling which are the basis of moral sentiments and which can create for us a purely human source of authority:

... I need hardly say that this evolution of composite feelings through the progressive integration of psychical states that are connected in experience, is effected by the inheritance of continually-accumulating modifications.

The law of development of the mental activities considered under their cognitive aspect, equally applies to them considered under their emotional aspect. That gradual organization of forms of thought which we saw results from the experience of uniform external relations, is accompanied by the organization of forms of feeling similarly resulting. Given a race of organisms habitually placed in contact with

any complex set of circumstances ... there will slowly be established in them a co-ordination of these compound impressions corresponding to this set of circumstances. The constant experiences of successive generations will gradually strengthen the tendency of all the component clusters of psychical states to make one another nascent. And when ultimately the union of them, expressed in the inherited organic structure, becomes innate, it will constitute what we call an emotion or sentiment, having this set of circumstances for its object.\textsuperscript{39}

What Spencer is saying is that certain emotional tendencies are programmed, as it were, into man. The adjustment between organism and medium through countless generations has made these tendencies an inherent part of human nature, so that certain feelings are spontaneously generated when men encounter any suitable set of circumstances. We cannot help but respond, for example, to another's suffering or to injustice. This is essentially George Eliot's view also. Spencer's theory then provided an intellectual justification for the Romantic view that feeling could spontaneously create moral knowledge.

In another important passage Spencer gives an account of how human experience gives form to inherited tendencies of feeling, so that they become an integral part of human responses to experience. Moral ideas do not need then to be derived from any religious or moral system: they are spontaneously generated in the encounter of human tendencies of feeling with experience:

As the forms of thought, or the accumulated and transmitted modifications of structure produced by experience, lie latent in each newly-born individual, are vaguely disclosed along with the first individual experiences, and are gradually made definite by multiplication of such...

\textsuperscript{39} The Principles of Psychology, I, 491.
individual experiences; so the forms of feeling likewise lying latent, are feebly awakened by the first presentations of the external circumstances to which they refer, and gradually gain that degree of distinctness which they are capable of, through oft-repeated presentations of these circumstances. Thus the infant, as soon as its perceptions are developed enough to allow of even an imperfect discrimination of faces and of sounds, is made to smile automatically by the laughing face and tender tones of its mother or its nurse. An organized relation has been established in the race between the perception of this natural language of kind feeling and the subsequent experience of benefits from those who manifest it. This natural language being impressed on the infant's senses, a dim feeling of pleasure is awakened while it is still incapable of knowing what the natural language means. But in course of time personal experiences teach it the connexion that exists between these appearances assumed by other persons and the receipt of gratifications from them, and then the vague body of the emotion which it has inherited assumes a more intelligible form.\(^4\)

Although Spencer adheres to an empiricist epistemology, he is in disagreement with pure empiricists that knowledge is derived solely from individual sense experience:

The doctrine that all the desires, all the sentiments, are generated by the experiences of the individual, is so glaringly at variance with facts, that I cannot but wonder how any one should ever have entertained it.\(^4\)

Spencer like Lewes adopts a qualified Kantian position in believing that the innate structure of the organism conditions its knowledge of experience. As I have already said, Lewes in his Problems is greatly concerned to account for those Kantian categories which condition our knowledge in evolutionary and biological terms, thus effecting a reconciliation of Kantian thought with empiricism. It seems certain that George Eliot agreed with Spencer and Lewes's position and rejected Mill's purely empiricist view.

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41. The Principles of Psychology, I, 494.
Lewes's concept of feeling also helps in gaining a greater understanding of George Eliot's position. Like Spencer, he believes that "feelings" make up all of our knowledge, though the forms of feeling have been inherited and so are innate:

**Experience is the registration of Feeling.** Through their registered modifications, feelings once produced are capable of reproduction; and must always be reproduced, more or less completely, whenever the new excitation is discharged along the old channels.\(^{42}\)

He also thinks, like Spencer, that emotion is a factor in all our experiences: "All cognition is primarily emotion. We can only see what interests us. No phenomenon is interesting until it is illuminated by emotion, and we see, or foresee, its connection with our feelings.\(^{43}\) The mental forms which condition how the mind interprets the world have a natural origin: they "are parts of the Experience of ancestors - the feelings registered in modifications of structure which have been transmitted from parent to child ... \(^{44}\)

George Eliot's agreement with Lewes's concept of mind is suggested by Lewes himself. He makes the following assertion:

The reactions of Feeling are determined by the general laws of Sensibility and the special modes of the individual. The Mind is built up out of assimilated experiences, its perceptions being shaped by its pre-perceptions, its conceptions by its pre-conceptions. Like the body, the Mind is shaped through its history.\(^{45}\)

\(^{42}\) Problems, I, 121.

\(^{43}\) Problems, IV, 42.

\(^{44}\) Problems, I, 211.

\(^{45}\) Problems, I, 219.
In a footnote referring to this passage he remarks:

George Eliot in *The Spanish Gypsy* expresses a profound truth in saying:

"What! Shall the trick of nostrils and of lips
Descend through generations, and the soul,
That moves within our frame like God in worlds,
Imprint no record, leave no documents
Of her great history? Shall men bequeath
The fancies of their palates to their sons,
And shall the shudder of restraining awe,
The slow wept tears of contrite memory,
Faith's prayerful labour, and the food divine
Of fasts ecstatic—shall these pass away
Like wind upon the waters tracklessly?"

This is from a speech of the Prior referring to Fedalma. It also has an obvious relevance to *Deronda*. But it would be a mistake to see *Deronda* or Fedalma as inheriting specific Jewish or Gypsy feelings. Deronda says that he believes that his longing to serve the Jewish cause his grandfather devoted his life to is "an inherited yearning" (III, 315). But this yearning in itself has no form. What he inherits is a tendency of feeling for which he must find a form, and he does so by accepting his Jewish heritage and committing himself to the Zionist ideal. George Eliot believes we can inherit such tendencies of feeling, but we cannot inherit any specific form. This will be supplied by one's social and cultural situation. Lewes uses an analogy from music which illustrates this. We can, he says, inherit a musical aptitude, but we cannot inherit particular musical knowledge. Our moral sense is similar to this; we have certain moral predispositions

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46. Bernard J. Paris seems to believe that *Deronda* and *Fedalma* have inherited particular racial feelings and characteristics. He refers, for example, to the individual's "inheritance of the acquired social characteristics of his progenitors" (*Experiments in Life*, p. 193).

47. *Deronda* compares his "inherited yearning" to "an inherited genius for painting ..." (III, 315).
but we have no specific ideas of what is right or wrong. These are supplied by the society one is born into:

But if we take the term Moral Sense to mean the power of discerning right and wrong, this is as impossible to an animal as the power of discerning arithmetical proportions ... Even in man this moral sense cannot properly be said to be connate otherwise than as a musical sense is connate: it no more brings with it conceptions of what is right, what wrong, than the musical aptitude brings with it a symphony of Beethoven. What it carries are certain organised predispositions that spontaneously or docilely issue in the beneficent forms of action which the experience of society has classified as right.48

Lewes is more cautious than Spencer, who implied that man is innately moral in his feelings, and so inherently distinct from the lower animals. Doubtless he is aware of the dangers if such an assertion proves scientifically unsound. Instead he says:

If we admit the intelligence of animals to be a rudimentary intellect, we may admit the emotions of animals to be a rudimentary moral sense. In the self-repressing effort induced by the sexual and parental instincts in birds and intelligent mammals, and in their capability of attachment apart from direct physical link, we may recognise the same germs as those which in man the social life has developed into devoted affection, passionate sympathy, and self-denying forethought.49

One of the most modern aspects of Lewes's thought is the way he stresses the role of language in man's development to oppose some of Darwin's conclusions: "Just as birds have wings, man has Language.... Language enables man's intelligence and passions to acquire their peculiar characters of Intellect and Sentiment. And Language is a social product of a quite peculiar kind."50 George Eliot's characterisation of Harold Transome's young son Harry would

49. Problems, IV, 144-145.
50. Problems, IV, 143.
seem to indicate that she also believed that without social influences and language acting on man's basic animal nature, he was little better than an animal.

The strongest emphasis in both George Eliot and Lewes is on social influences, not on innate moral feelings. Though men do possess tendencies of moral feeling as instincts, these must take on a specifically human form in society, so that they become almost instinctive in men as social animals. Social influences completely transform man's animal nature so that his animal feelings are capable of being sublimated, and this makes it impossible for him to act with the single-minded egoism of an animal.

One of the most important sections of The Problems of Life and Mind is entitled "The Place of Sentiment in Philosophy." In this Lewes declares his hope that it will be possible to create a "Moral Science" based on man's developed moral feelings. He regards one's feelings "of awe, tenderness, and sympathy" as "ultimate facts of Feeling which we simply accept." We possess moral and aesthetic instincts which are "facts of the human organism" and which are as unaccountable as the fact that sugar is sweet to the taste. It is, he says, impossible to convince anyone purely by rational argument that he ought to feel morally:

If a man is insensible to the welfare of others, we can no more convince him that he ought to feel for them, than we can convince the blind man that he ought to see the glories of colour. If a man is insensible to the mystery of the universe; if his soul, like that of an animal, is unvisited by any suggestions of a life larger than his own, and of any existence where his feelings have no home; if he is blind to the visible facts of evolution manifest in

51. See Problems, I, 455-472.
the history of the world and the progress of his race, deaf
to the cries of pain and struggle which deeply move his
fellows, dead to the stirring impulses of pity which move
others to remedy the sorrows and enlarge the pleasures of
mankind, - by what array of argument could we hope to make
him feel what his nature does not feel?

Happily there is no such man. There are only men who
feel less vividly than others; none are wholly without the
feelings. And it is on this foundation that a Moral
Science is possible ... 52

This moral science would be based like physical science, he says,
on the classification and co-ordination of observed facts, though
these will necessarily be more complex and more difficult to
interpret.

Lewes appreciates that feelings are diverse and unstable and
often have no relation to anything outside themselves. Purely
impulsive feelings of the moment, or feelings perverted, for example,
by theology, or feelings which are quite irrational must be rejected.
The validity of a feeling must be investigated. For example if
one feels a sense of repulsion to social change, one should ask
"what are the experiences organised in that repulsion?" The
feeling of repulsion in itself is not conclusive:

... unless it spring from one of the deep-seated instincts
which express the moral experiences of the community, it is
no more than an indication; and even then, we must bear in
mind that our moral experiences widen with advancing civilisation,
the deep-seated instinct of the community of today will not
correspond with the enlarged social experiences of to-morrow,
for there is evolution of the Moral Instincts no less than of
the Rational Judgments ... The boast of one age may become
the infamy of another. 53

Also the mind's tendency to interpret the world in its own interests
means that our feelings may be distorted unconsciously to coincide
with these interests. Feelings must be capable of being shared
before they can have any objective validity:

52. Problems, I, 457.
53. Problems, I, 466.
Hence it is that Sentiment only passes into Science when it is capable of being translated into objective signs....

.... It is necessary and admirable as an inspiration when duly controlled by verification. It is admirable, and its jurisdiction is final, when feelings form the subject-matter of the debate. It is disastrous when it takes the place of verification and substitutes personal for impersonal relations. 54

One can see Lewes struggling here to bring feelings under the control of a scientific method. They must be tested against the evidence in any particular case, for "Who has not observed, even in himself, the eagerness with which some argument is snatched at, and some statement credited, when these seem to confirm his own view of the case?" 55 He ends his first volume by saying that he must devote his second volume to the question of the "tests of certitude" by which one will be able scientifically to verify feelings.

What is interesting here is Lewes's attempt to discover which feelings are valid and which are not by means of something very close to a scientific method. He believes it is possible to create an objective sign system which will, in a scientific manner, classify, co-ordinate, and test moral feelings and emotions in a way similar to that in which our perceptions and sensations are organised into scientific knowledge. He is trying to reconcile Romantic and scientific thought. In Romantic thought, human subjectivity as manifested in feeling and imagination is central in any knowledge we have of the world, while scientific knowledge

54. Problems, I, 471.
55. Problems, I, 472.
demands that all ideas and theories must be submitted to empirical verification. Lewes believes that in science itself the greatest subjectivity is manifested but that this is controlled by the necessity of testing and verification. It seems logical to him that a moral science could be based on similar principles. For example he argues that, in science, the imagination is free to invent and create whatever fictions it pleases, but these must be subject to scientific tests of verification: "... I venture to affirm that the wildest flights of Imagination consciously sweeping round the circle of Experience, and alighting where it pleases, are legitimate tentatives of scientific Research, if these only submit to the one indispensable condition (unhappily too often neglected) of ultimate verification." He admits that science, like magic, creates fictions and inferences by a purely imaginative process, "But the fictions and inferences of the one are, what those of the other are not, unverified suggestions, and are offered in lieu of observations instead of aids to further observations. The power of Science lies in this, that its inferences and fictions

56. **Problems, I, 317.** There is a similar view of the imagination in *Theophrastus Such*: "... it is worth repeating that powerful imagination is not false outward vision, but intense inward representation ... The illusion to which it is liable is not that of habitually taking duck-ponds for lilled pools, but of being more or less transiently and in varying degrees so absorbed in ideal vision as to lose the consciousness of surrounding objects or occurrences; and when that rapt condition is past, the same genius discriminates clearly between what has been given in this parenthetic state of excitement, and what he has known, and may count on, in the ordinary world of experience" (p. 197).
are always either reproductions of Experience, and submitted to its control, or else are treated simply as provisional explanations awaiting verification." 57

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Lewes's fusion of Romantic thought with a scientific method helps one appreciate how George Eliot could adhere to the Romantic view that feeling was an organ of knowledge which could directly form moral ideas, and reconcile this with the scientific world-view which on the surface seems to be concerned with objective descriptions of the external world. For her, as with Lewes, though feeling forms the basis of moral knowledge, it was not to be divorced from the intellect or from experience. If feeling was allowed to operate freely, it led either to the excesses of Christianity which Feuerbach had referred to, or to the excesses of egoistic Romanticism. It needed then to be subject to objective control, which Feuerbach had also urged. But where was this objective control to come from? The object which scientific ideas could submit themselves to for empirical verification was the external world. If a scientific construction or theory failed to account for the facts of experience it must be modified or rejected. If feelings are to be tested for validity by a scientific method, as Lewes had

57. Problems, II, 116-117. Lewes rejects Bacon's criticism of Copernicus for introducing fictions into his calculations: "The answer to this sneer is the triumphant achievements which are effected by the introduction of avowed fictions among the artifices of Research" (Problems, I, 317).
argued was essential, where was one to find an object to test them against? Is there an objective world of moral feelings similar to the objective physical world assumed by science? It is clear that Lewes is assuming that this must exist, or else his hope for a moral science can have no basis, and it is equally clear that only the values and traditions of society can provide this objectivity against which feeling must be tested. In extracts quoted earlier Lewes had referred to "the beneficent forms of action which the experience of society has classified as right," and had stated that repulsion to social change was only valid if it sprang "from one of the deep-seated instincts which express the moral experiences of the community." In George Eliot also, the view that the values and traditions of society can provide some form of objectivity against which feelings could be tested is strongly present: "All human beings who can be said to be in any degree moral have their impulses guided, not indeed always by their own intellect, but by the intellect of human beings who have gone before them, and created traditions and associations which have taken the rank of laws."58

A social vision underlies both George Eliot's and Lewes's view of feeling. For feeling to become moral and valid, it must be justified in terms of their vision of the good society. Feeling could only be morally controlled by an authority beyond feeling, and this authority could only be the objectification of the valuable feelings of the past preserved in the values and traditions of

society. Not that the latter need be taken as absolutes, but
they do provide some sort of basis. As George Eliot said: "... a
mind at all rich in sensibilities must always have had an indefinite
uneasiness in an undistinguishing attack on the coercive influence
of tradition." 59 This of course raises the question what kind of
social vision George Eliot and Lewes had in mind when they thought
of the experience of society as providing an authority which could
control and guide feeling. This must be treated in detail in the
next chapter.

What is then most important in George Eliot's view of feeling,
if one can reconstruct her position from her own writings, the
influence of Romantic thought, and Spencer's and Lewes's philosophy,
is that she believed that feeling could act as a direct means of
moral knowledge, that moral tendencies of feeling existed in man
as part of his animal nature, that these were given form by social
influences, and that the traditions and values of society provided
some form of authority and guidance for feeling. The demonic
Romantic exaltation of impulsive feelings would have been
condemned by her because this justified feelings derived solely
from animal egoism. But such feelings came into conflict with
the ego as a cultural product. Yet the word "impulse" is often
used positively to describe the feelings of her characters. 60
For example, Dorothea's "effort, nay, her strongest impulsive

60. Laurence Lerner has some comments on impulse in relation
to George Eliot in The Truth Tellers, pp. 235-243, but he
tends to think she has no coherent position on the subject,
which is the opposite of my view.
prompting, had been towards the vindication of Will from any sullying surmises ..." (III, 365). Impulsive feelings for George Eliot are only valid if they express an individual's whole personality, so that any impulse is integrated with the self as a social and cultural creation. The power generated by animal egoism can thus be sublimated, and it is possible to discipline the demonic side of impulse without suppressing its energy altogether. I shall discuss this point in more detail in relation to Romola and, later, The Mill on the Floss.

George Eliot also thought it was possible to create a social morality based on feeling. Feeling could be regarded as a kind of language that all members of the community have in common. Spencer's use of such phrases as the "language of the emotions" or "the natural language of the feelings" shows that he considered feeling to develop in a similar way to language. It is something we learn as children. We possess its basic principles, its grammar as it were, as human instincts, but we must learn its vocabulary and certain rules from social experience. Everyone who is part of a social community and is brought up in its values naturally learns the language of feeling, and thus everyone comes to share a common morality. This morality does not then need to rely on a religious system for support, as Nietzsche thought, but was the product of tendencies of feeling taking on moral form in social experience. As our social experience becomes more complex, so the language of moral feeling becomes more developed. Moral communication, based on the acceptance of a common morality, will be
possible because everyone in the community will have learned this language of moral feeling. It serves both to unify the community and create continuity with the past.

Such a view of feeling as leading to the development of a moral language is, I suggest, implicit in George Eliot. Like the spoken language, the language of moral feeling is a social product. It is also like spoken language in that it is capable of being infinitely various in relation to circumstances, but it cannot violate its basic principles, since this would make it either incomprehensible or unacceptable. Instead of morality existing external to man as a set of rules validated by a religious or moral system, it becomes a part of his human personality. Moral feeling is spontaneously generated in the encounter of the human organism with social experience. Ethics and morality need not collapse if one rejects Christianity as a system. If morality springs from our socially developed moral feelings, then, on this linguistic model, someone who rejects the morality of society, or thinks he can create his own, is acting in an utterly contradictory manner. It would be as if he decided to invent his own spoken language and reject that of society. Also, performing actions which take no account of our tendencies of moral feeling, necessarily present in us as social animals, is tantamount to violating a deep instinct, with disastrous psychological results.

This means that human adaptation to external reality must be limited. There are certain human limits created in us by our instinctive moral feelings. Characters like Tito, Jerayn, or Christian, who are prepared to go to any length of adaptation for their own advantage, risk losing truly human status, like men who
reject the principles of language. They come to resemble completely egocentric animals in a Darwinian environment, for whom survival is all important and any action is justified for their own interests. Similarly those demonic characters who deny moral feeling and substitute a purely personal set of values based on personal will and impulses are like people who think they can invent their own individual language. Since language is a social product, this is a contradiction in terms. For George Eliot morality is a social product, so to create one's own morality is also contradictory. The consequence is isolation from others, and the suffering of the traumatic effects that result from the violation of one's own inner moral feelings by an act of will. Mrs. Transome is the obvious example here.

vii

It is George Eliot's heroines who most clearly illustrate the importance she attached to feeling. Romola is probably the clearest example of this and through her character George Eliot created her most complex treatment of the problem of feeling.

Romola's strength of feeling is repeatedly stressed, but the nature of her upbringing with her father has only allowed it a narrow outlet. She has also had little contact with anything in the outside world which could guide her feelings. The most serious consequence of this is her marriage to Tito; her repressed feelings immediately succumb to his surface attractiveness. Clearly, feeling can have its dangers and needs objective control. But where is this to come from?
Romola also possesses many of the defiant, rebellious qualities of her father. Bardo is a man who has sought self-realisation through scholarship. He believes completely in the power of the will and praises Romola's expression of "Promethean" sentiments (1, 85). Like her father, she has a strong tendency to rebel against any authority that sets itself up in opposition to the personal will, as is apparent in her first meeting with Savonarola. This devotion to the will is another difficulty in the way of finding some control over feeling, since it tends to make her defiant and rebellious. She has been brought up to be contemptuous of the Church or any external authority.

When her father dies and she loses her love for Tito, a dangerous situation arises; she now no longer possesses the authority love had created for her, and this leaves her at the mercy of impulsive and rebellious feelings. Her life no longer has any direction, and her feelings of love for Tito are changed into hate. She can only respond to this crisis in the manner of her father by an assertion of will, lacking any external authority beyond feeling, and chooses to reject her marriage and leave Florence. This leads to her encounter with Savonarola in which he repudiates her claim to have no authority but her own will. He overcomes her resistance to him and makes her feel guilt about repudiating her marriage and disguising herself. Through him she finds the external authority she had previously lacked and accepts a religious position. He believes religion must be the basis of moral conduct and Romola, otherwise subject to extreme oscillations in feeling, accepts this point of view. But it is clear that the
theology of religion is not wholeheartedly accepted: it is Savonarola's presence which is her main support.

All her energies are directed into moral actions, but she avoids thinking about theology. She only submits to religion because without it she might again be swept away by impulsive personal feelings. But she is uneasy in her submission and unhappy. Her whole self cannot as yet fully identify with her charitable work, since the Church and religion seem to her its main justification and neither of these can command her deepest assent, though she needs them to provide an external authority. In contrast, in her devotion to her father her mind and feelings were at one, but in her new situation a sense of self-division is the price she must pay for a means of disciplining her feelings and directing her life. If the authority created for her breaks down, she fears she will again be led into rebellion and impulsive acts. Feeling is present in her moral actions for the community but impulsive and rebellious feelings could easily overcome these. Thus the need for an external authority to provide control for her impulsive tendencies.

Her greatest crisis occurs when she loses her faith in Savonarola. This occurs not because of an intellectual rejection but because her feelings recoil from him. She had been prepared mentally to submit to him, "But now a sudden resurrection of feeling had brought about that collision" (II, 236). Feeling is her ultimate source of knowledge and she cannot ignore her feeling that he is wrong in his belief that five Mediceans, including Bernardo, should be executed. This shows that the authority he and religion provided for her was too separate from feeling to be

stable. She needs an authority in feeling itself, yet if she rejects any external authority she has no means of resisting impulse and rebellion. Thus the undermining of Savonarola's authority "was an illumination that made all life ghastly to her" (II, 236).

At the same time as being forced to reject Savonarola because of his belief that evil ceases to be evil if it promotes what he regards as the good, she is once again led into rebellion against Tito in learning the truth about him. As before, her personal feelings lead her into rejecting Florence and her marriage. Romola's feelings are right in these two instances, but Thomas Pinney over-simplifies when he says "Romola is right to rebel against Tito and Savonarola. . ." Her rebellion is as mistaken as it was when she left Florence before and asserted that her personal will was her only authority. Rebellion is an important theme in the novel and concerns both Romola and Savonarola, who is in revolt against the Church. But both these rebellions do more harm than good: Romola is in despair and Savonarola threatens to undermine religion itself, a greater evil than corruption in the Church. What they both forget is Mr. Lyon's lesson in Felix Holt that "the right to rebellion is the right to seek a higher rule . . ."

Romola has again adopted a disguise and flees from Florence. Religion has not solved her problem of where she is to find an authority which her feelings can accept and which can guide her life.

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Without this she has again been overcome by rebellious feelings which only leads her to despair: "What force was there to create for her that supremely hallowed motive which men call duty, but which can have no inward constraining existence save through some form of believing love?" (II, 320). Deprived of any sustaining force in her life, she feels she has no secure sense of identity. This crisis is more dangerous than her last because, with the breakdown of her belief in Savonarola, she now seems to have no possibility of any external support. Her commitment to the knowledge communicated by her feelings seems to have led only to despair.

What the novel is about, on one level, is how Romola can find a moral frame or authority which can interact with feeling, make use of its power and energy, but not be utterly swept away by its intensity or impulsiveness. Savonarola's religious world-view had been able to provide a form of authority for her, but it had been too separate from feeling to be stable. With her rejection of him, however, her life seems to have lost all shape, and what is worse, there seems no possibility of finding another moral form for her existence. There are only the oscillations of personal feeling which can offer her no security.

But it is made clear that her reaction against Savonarola is too extreme: "And if such energetic belief ... is often in danger of becoming a demon-worship ... tender fellow-feeling for the nearest has its danger too, and is apt to be timid and sceptical towards the larger aims without which life cannot rise into religion. In this way poor Romola was blinded by her tears"
(II, 322-323). Her feelings are too personal, too little controlled by a larger vision. But where is she to find the authority for such a vision? If she cannot accept any religion or any prophetic vision as an authority superior to the self where is one to be found? And if none does exist there is only feeling and will, which in her experience can offer no secure support for the self. It is this which makes her despair: "She read no message of love for her in the far-off symbolic writing of the heavens, and with a great sob she wished that she might be gliding into death" (II, 326).

It is only after Tito's death and Savonarola's fall that the novel again focuses on Romola. All of the three major characters have failed. But from this point she emerges as the character who succeeds in discovering a tenable identity. She finds the authority she has been looking for which gives her life meaning and purpose and which can interact with feeling. Instead of submitting feeling to a rigid system, which had been a main difficulty in her Christian period, she discovers that in feeling itself one can find the basis for the larger moral vision of Savonarola.

She has drifted into a village where she thinks "she might rest and resolve on nothing." A crucial passage follows:

She had not been in this attitude of contemplation more than a few minutes when across the stillness there came a piercing cry; not a brief cry, but continuous and more and more intense. Romola felt sure it was the cry of a little child in distress that no one came to help.... But it went on, and drew Romola so irresistibly, seeming the more piteous to her for the sense of peace which had preceded it, that she jumped on to the beach and walked many paces before she knew what direction she would take (II, 399-400).
Hearing this cry makes Romola's feelings immediately and spontaneously project themselves morally outwards. Moral feeling for others is instantly created by this direct confrontation with external suffering. No external authority, whether from religion or from Savonarola, is necessary to make her shape her feelings into action to help others. Experience itself, she discovers, transforms feeling into a moral response and creates moral knowledge. She has found the basis of creating her own moral language, based on personally generated feelings. She thus needs no external authority to act as a support for her in her social action for others, as she had done in Florence. Then she felt it was a religious duty, now it strikes her that feeling itself calls on her to perform such actions. Confronting the needs and sufferings of the world with natural human potentialities of feeling creates moral knowledge. It gives a form to individual existence, but one which emerges from within the self. Theological support or belief in an extra-human order in the universe are no longer necessary for her.

In a letter to Sara Hennell, George Eliot described Romola's drifting and the plague-ridden village chapters as "romantic and symbolical elements." The village is symbolic of an imperfect world in its suffering and need. The whole world is plague-ridden in that human effort is required to alleviate suffering and make life better. Plague, in this symbolic sense, would have existed no matter where she had landed. It existed in Florence, only the

65. Letters, IV, 104.
confusion of her mind as a result of over-personal feeling, the need she felt to force herself to submit to religion, and her tendency to defiance and rebellion prevented her from experiencing it with such sudden clarity and with sufficient intensity to make her realise that no external justification of her duty to help in alleviating such suffering was required. Her experience in the village creates the wider perspective which is based on feeling but which can also serve to control its over-personal manifestations. She rediscovers the human content of Savonarola's vision, but can discard its theological trappings. By becoming the "Holy Mother" for the villagers, she becomes the embodiment of the human content of religion: "The suspicion that Romola was a supernatural form was dissipated, but their minds were filled instead with the more effective sense that she was a human being whom God had sent over the sea to command them" (II, 409-410).

After this experience, she becomes able to create a moral structure for herself which does not require validation outside itself. The larger moral vision she derives from this will enable her both to use the energy of impulsive feeling and also to control impulses of the moment and her egoistic tendencies, for she can now see beyond the personal. Like Guildenstern in "A College Breakfast-Party," she realises that the only "binding law" required emerges from the encounter of human feeling with outward reality and experience. Feeling then takes on moral substance and shape. Her despair in the boat she now regards as mere egoistic complaint:
but from the moment after her waking when the cry had drawn her, she had not even reflected, as she used to do in Florence, that she was glad to live because she could lighten sorrow - she had simply lived, with so energetic an impulse to share the life around her, to answer the call of need and do the work which cried aloud to be done, that the reasons for living, enduring, labouring, never took the form of argument (II, 412).

What made her unhappy and insecure in Florence was that moral action was the outcome of reflection, of religious justification. Feeling itself was of secondary importance. When religion and Savonarola failed her, she seemed then to have no motive for moral action, and personal feelings took possession of her and blinded her to an objective view of others' needs or to the valuable content of Savonarola's vision. But in the village, the necessity for moral action comes in the form of an energetic impulse, a feeling which is just as strong as her impulsive rebellion. And this feeling is for others, not for herself. This creates the basis for the larger vision she has been searching for, one fundamentally based on feeling but now able to control its varying manifestations. It enables her to see that Savonarola's larger vision was really an outward projection of his feeling. She thus finds a point outside herself from which she can subject her previous attitudes to criticism and scrutiny. Her work in the village being over, "the emotions that were disengaged from the people immediately around her rushed back into the old deep channels of use and affection" (II, 413). She can return then to Florence, having successfully restructured her life.

How to come to terms with the question of Tito is a difficulty. She has no thought of going back to him as she did before, but
neither can she utterly repudiate him as she had intended doing. Her marriage to him and her connection with him are aspects of her past which cannot be eradicated. She is prepared to take responsibility for the children he had by Tessa. But with regard to Florence she has no doubts. This is the centre of her life which must have the strongest claim on her feelings: "Florence, and all her life there, had come back to her like hunger; her feelings could not go wandering after the possible and the vague: their living fibre was fed with the memory of familiar things" (II, 414-415).

It is the community in which her life has grown and developed which provides the real basis for the larger vision which can interact with the energy of personal feeling and also prevent such feeling becoming over-impulsive. Savonarola's vision is fundamentally a social vision though for him it had a religious basis. Romola's experience in the village has enabled her to discover the human truth underlying this. Though still conscious of his errors, she realises how much she is indebted to him. And unlike Savonarola, she is able to maintain such a social vision even in the face of disorder. For her, his ideal of Florence is something to be worked towards, not something providentially guaranteed. The fact that disorder continues to characterise life in Florence is not then any cause for despair, nor is she tempted into believing, as Savonarola was, that all means are justified to achieve the ideal.

ix

In contrast to Romola, all of Tito's attitudes derive from his want of feeling. He does feel "inward shame" at his decision
not to search for Baldassare, but his "unimpassioned" mind soon reasons such feelings away. Tito's comparative lack of feeling, together with the fact that he is cut off from religion or any firm social connections, make him attempt to conduct his life on purely rational terms. He knows society would disapprove of his seeking his own pleasure at Baldassare's expense, but it is easy for him to logically dismiss such considerations:

That, he was conscious, was not the sentiment which the complicated play of human feelings had engendered in society.... But what was the sentiment of society? - a mere tangle of anomalous traditions and opinions, which no wise man would take as a guide, except in so far as his own comfort was concerned....

Having once begun to explain away Baldassare's claim, Tito's thought showed itself as active as a virulent acid, eating its rapid way through all the tissues of sentiment (I, 176-177).

The natural fear of wrong-doing which exists in people is also something he can rationalistically dismiss, but for George Eliot, undermining such feelings by sceptical rationalism is of the utmost danger:

Such terror of the unseen is so far above mere sensual cowardice that it will annihilate that cowardice; it is the initial recognition of a moral law restraining desire, and checks the hard bold scrutiny of imperfect thought into obligations which can never be proved to have any sanctity in the absence of feeling (I, 177).

It is apparent from this that George Eliot rejects any purely rational ground for ethics. I have already mentioned earlier that Tito's attitudes seem in part to follow from Benthamite assumptions. It is his surrender of feeling to rationalism that leads him to his life of calculation and role-playing in the interests of pleasure: "... arranging life to his mind had been the source of all his misdoing" (I, 425). The more he becomes caught up in this way of
life, the more moral and sympathetic feeling must be suppressed. The threat to expose him by Baldassare "was a moment of desperation that annihilated all feeling in him, except the determination to risk anything for the chance of escape" (II, 91).

This suppression of feeling has a disastrous effect on his personal life in that it leads to extreme isolation. He must keep his inner self hidden from everyone. His only real relationship is with Tessa, but even here he cannot afford to expose his real self. And his suppression of feeling is most disastrous in his relationship with Romola, the only person whose respect he really values.

When Tito's son Lillo shows some propensity for a life of pleasure, Romola makes the following speech to him, after praising the lives of her father and Savonarola:

"And so, my Lillo, if you mean to act nobly and seek to know the best things God has put within reach of men, you must learn to fix your mind on that end, and not on what will happen to you because of it. And remember, if you were to choose something lower, and make it the rule of your life to seek your own pleasure and escape from what is disagreeable, calamity might come just the same; and it would be calamity falling on a base mind, which is the one form of sorrow that has no balm in it, and that may well make a man say, 'It would have been better for me if I had never been born'" (II, 445-446).

Tito's rationalism allows him to dismiss intellectually any feelings which would have enabled him to transcend his devotion to pleasure. He thus becomes incapable of committing himself to anything other than his own gratification. Men like Savonarola and Bernardo die, but the principles for which they lived give their lives a value both to themselves and to others even in
death. But Tito's life was quite empty. He refused to create an identity for himself by revealing his real self to others or by identifying himself with anything but personal gratification. At his death then nothing remains but fragments of a life which he refused to give form. Any meaning his life possesses is one supplied by others' judgments not by actions which realised his selfhood. In George Eliot's opinion, he refused the opportunity to be truly human.

It is also useful to look briefly at Esther Lyon in relation to feeling, since this brings out clearly the Romantic strain in George Eliot's thought. It is Esther's potentiality for strong feeling that preserves her from the Byronic excesses to which she is attracted. Though Esther resembles Mrs. Transome in several respects, she differs from her in her openness to moral feelings: "... she hated all meanness, would empty her purse impulsively on some sudden appeal to her pity, and if she found out that her father had a want, she would supply it with some pretty device of a surprise" (I, 114). And "Even in her times of most untroubled egoism Esther shrank from anything ungenerous ..." (II, 134).

Her development is related to the growth of feeling in her, partly owing to Felix's influence and his criticism of her egoism, and partly to experiences that call forth her sympathy, like her father's confession. Esther has strong Romantic tendencies of feeling and these eventually overcome her attraction to Romantic egoism. The best life, she declares, is "that where one bears and does everything because of some great and strong feeling -
so that this and that in one's circumstances don't signify" (II, 28). When she has the opportunity to live the same kind of life as Mrs. Transome, she rejects it because it is not Romantic enough: it offers too little scope for her feelings or for her imagination. Accepting Harold Transome, who resembles the Byronic heroes she formerly admired, in marriage and the life of a lady in Transome Court would be to settle for a "middle lot."

What she had formerly considered as the most Romantic existence possible completely fails to satisfy her Romantic aspirations:

She herself, in her Utopia, had never been what she was now - a woman whose heart was divided and oppressed. The first spontaneous offering of her woman's devotion, the first great inspiration of her life, was a sort of vanished ecstasy which had left its wounds. It seemed to her a cruel misfortune of her young life that her best feeling, her most precious dependence, had been called forth just where the conditions were hardest, and that all the easy invitations of circumstance were towards something which that previous consecration of her longing had made a moral descent for her (II, 285).

Her feelings in Transome Court are those of "dread," but the similarity with Mrs. Transome is only ironic. For Esther's dread was "what the dread of the pilgrim might be who has it whispered to him that the holy places are a delusion, or that he will see them with a soul unstirred and unbelieving" (II, 291). It is the dread of one who fears that the world has cut her off from her greatest potentialities of feeling and imagination.

It is only uniting herself to Felix and his vision that can give her an outlet for the depth of Romantic feeling in her nature. The life of the ego and the will, exemplified by Mrs. Transome, Harold, and the values of Transome Court, is for Esther the denial of Romantic aspiration. It offers
nothing to feeling and imagination, whereas Felix calls forth all
her powers of feeling, as her experience at his trial makes clear:

When a woman feels purely and nobly, that ardour of hers
which breaks through formulas too rigorously urged on men by
daily practical needs, makes one of her most precious
influences: she is the added impulse that shatters the
stiffening crust of cautious experience. Her inspired
ignorance gives a sublimity to actions so incongruously
simply, that otherwise they would make men smile. Some
of that ardour which has flashed out and illuminated all
poetry and history was burning to-day in the bosom of sweet
Esther Lyon. In this, at least, her woman's lot was
perfect: that the man she loved was her hero; that her
woman's passion and her reverence for rarest goodness rushed
together in an undivided current. And to-day they were
making one danger, one terror, one irresistible impulse for
her heart. Her feelings were growing into a necessity for
action, rather than a resolve to act (II, 343).

This passage is very reminiscent of Dorothea. A woman's great
role can be to bring forth the higher feelings in others. Even
if circumstances prevent her playing a great personal role, she can
influence others to see things with her intensity. Esther has
undergone "an inward revolution" (II, 340). The influence of
Felix and her experience of life at Transome Court have overturned
her former ideas. And the greatest loss she would suffer if she
chose life with the Transomes would be "the fatal absence of those
feelings which, now she had once known them, it seemed nothing less
than a fall and a degradation to do without" (II, 341).

The Romantic quality of Esther is then very powerfully
present. But feeling and imagination are not their own justification
as they were for some of the demonic Romantics. The Romantic ego
must reject rebellion and pure impulse and socially direct its
energies. What both Romola and Felix Holt show with regard to
feeling is that it must be supported by a vision or an ideal aim
if it is not to become harnessed to the individual ego and lead to either rebellion or despair. For George Eliot the best expression of such a vision is the ideal of the organic society. This is able to call forth the best qualities of human feeling and also prevent that feeling from finding too personal an expression. Characters like Romola and Esther not only discover great intensity of feeling in themselves but also, in committing themselves to a social ideal, possess a vision that can morally direct feeling. Without this moral aim, feeling can find an unhealthy outlet in rebellion or despair, or can result in the sick subjectivity of the protagonist of "The Lifted Veil." The need to provide man with an organic social vision to which both the energies of the ego and the power of feeling can submit was one of George Eliot's greatest concerns, and it is one that must be examined in the next chapter.
Almost all commentators on Romanticism have considered organismic to be one of its salient features. Though the use of the organism as an analogy had its origin much earlier, it became especially prominent among the Romantics, as Peter Thorslev points out:

Of course individualism is not the sole defining characteristic of Romanticism. Organicism is certainly another: it appears in expressionism as opposed to imitative or "empirical" esthetic theory; in organic as opposed to atomist or associationist psychologies ... in organic philosophies of bylozoism, panspsychism, animism, and pantheism; and especially in organic theories of world or national history (originating with Herder in Germany, or in England with Burke), and in visions of organic societies - of the past, especially in the reinterpreted Middle Ages, or in future Utopias. Moreover, organismic may seem at odds with the Romantic emphasis on the individual ... Perhaps more reasonably, organismic is often taken to imply a view of man as too integral, indeed too organic a part of society or of the universe for him to remain an alienated outsider.

Thorslev goes on to say that certain Romantics tried to combine individualism and organismic. It can also be argued that those Romantics who adopted an organicist position did so because they were aware of the dangers of an individualism that operated free of any religious or moral restraints, whether this individualism was embodied in Romantic egoism or in the notion of individual liberty derived from the Enlightenment. I hope to show that George Eliot is most usefully seen in this tradition of Romantic organicist thought.

No reader of her fiction or non-fiction can fail to notice how strongly organicism is present in her thought. David R. Carroll has commented in a review of her essays: "A reading of the essays assembled here emphasizes afresh the pervasively organic nature of George Eliot's view of life." But it would be a mistake to see her as a metaphysical organicist. The notion of an organic universe, probably the most important idea of the Romantic organicists and which is especially prominent in Wordsworth and Schelling, as I have already mentioned, is not to be found in the writings of George Eliot's maturity. But the idea of an organic society, shared by so many of the Romantics, especially in Germany, is retained by her and is one of the central organicist features of her thought. It is this that I want to consider in this chapter.

It is important, first of all, to distinguish George Eliot's concept of the organic society from metaphysical organicists. A metaphysical justification for the organic society can be found in Burke, though his position is not easily defined on this subject. But in the following passage he uses the analogy from nature to describe society:

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By a constitutional policy, working after the pattern of nature, we receive, we hold, we transmit our government and our privileges, in the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property and our lives. Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state, in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete.

Burke in this passage seems to believe that society and nature form part of a single organism, and therefore that men should not interfere with the natural order of things. The use of the analogy from nature was also found in post-Romantic thinkers. In Fichte for example, in explaining his concept of the state:

The most suitable image to explain this concept is that of an organized product of nature which has been frequently used in order to describe the various branches of public power as an entity, but which has not been used, to the best of my knowledge, to explain the whole civil relationship. Just as in the product of nature every part, whatever it is, can exist only in this one union and outside of this union just would not exist — indeed, outside any organic union it would not exist — similarly man obtains only in the union of the state a definite place in the chain of things, a point of rest in nature; and everyone obtains this definite place in face of others and of nature by being a part of this definite association. In the organic body every part continuously preserves the whole and by preserving it the part is itself preserved; the citizen's relationship to the state is precisely the same.

But in George Eliot the organic analogy is not derived from nature or the human body so much as from human consciousness. It is this form of the analogy that is most important in Romantic thought, and it is to be found especially in Herder and the German Romantics: For example, H. S. Reiss writes of Schleiermacher and Savigny:


Schleiermacher's ideal was, in the last resort, the Volksstaat (the nation-state) in which man's awareness of his political relations, or as he termed it, his political 'consciousness' (Bewusstein) was expressed in a coherent framework. One of the foremost nineteenth-century German jurists, Friedrich Carl von Savigny, also believed that the outward forms of a nation's political life reflect its collective 'consciousness', i.e. the ideas necessarily common to a nation as an embodiment of its national character. In his view, political and legal arrangements ought to grow spontaneously out of the collective 'consciousness' of a nation.... For law is an organic part of a nation's life seen from a special point of view.... Law can never be static; it should never be considered outside the context of the history of a nation. It should be steeped in the Volksgeist (national genius).... For the Volksgeist alone is able to express the will of that spiritual community, the nation, which possesses a natural unity, for it is bound together by the cohesive bond of a common language and also by a common legal tradition.6

In George Eliot's view, human consciousness existed as a continuity in which one's past experience remained an integral part of one's present self. In fact, she uses an analogy from nature to illustrate her organic view of consciousness in The Spanish Gypsy, in describing how Don Silva discovers that he cannot reject his past life, those influences which have defined his sensibility:

Now the former life
Of close-linked fellowship, the life that made
His full-formed self, as the impregnate sap
Of years successive frames the full-branched tree
Was present in one whole ... (p. 313).

Consciousness is here conceived as a continuum in which one's experience of the past is an essential part of one's present identity. Using this concept of mind as an analogy, George Eliot

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looks on society as a developing community consciousness. As the individual must maintain a sense of continuity with his past experience to possess a tenable identity, an idea I shall discuss in detail in the next chapter, so society must possess a sense of unity and continuity in its social consciousness if it is to be healthy. This makes her social thought very close to that of Herder and the German Romantics.

The comparison between individual and social consciousness is a prominent feature of Lewes's thought. He writes: "If it is evident that the individual mind has been in constant evolution, still more evident is the fact that the general mind, or what we call the 'culture of the age,' is an historical growth." Mind, he says, is not only individual: its "great instrument" is language and like the latter it is both individual and social. Ideas, doctrines, customs, in becoming assimilated by society become incorporated into the general mind, and any individual born at a certain time is necessarily affected by the state of the general mind at this time: "A nation, a tribe, a sect is the medium of the individual mind, as a sea, a river, a pond is the medium of a fish ... Not that the individual is passive, he is only directed; he, too, reacts on the sect and nation, helping to create the social life of which he partakes." He goes on to say that "Conceptions once assimilated by the General Mind become 'necessities of thought' for the individual, just as Railways, once established, become necessities of transport." But Lewes is careful to point out that this notion of the general mind is not a metaphysical concept, what he calls a "res completa":
While calling attention to the General Mind, it may not be superfluous to warn some readers against a metaphysical fallacy. The abstraction Mind, once extricated from the concrete facts of Sentience, is by logical necessity immaterial, simple, one; for it is a symbol like Virtue, Cause, Number, &c. 7

Though not as worked out as this, his notion that society possesses a developing consciousness, a "General Mind," is similar to the organicist social views of the Romantics. They regarded the healthy society as a spiritual organism, even though the analogy from nature was much used. Though commoner among the German Romantics, it is also present in some English Romantics. Basil Willey writes of Coleridge for example:

In place of the Utilitarian laissez-faire, the free competition of all individuals for worldly wealth, he puts forward a conception of the State as the condition in which all can realize the good life, and their own best selves. The State is indeed a spiritual organism, or - in the phrase of Burke, who had already seen it in the same light - a partnership in perfection, a community of the noble living and the noble dead. 8

Though George Eliot discarded the metaphysical organicist view which conceived of both nature and society as part of one system under divine control, she preserved the idea that society should be spiritually organic and this forms an essential part of her social thought.

Bernard J. Paris has suggested that George Eliot's organic view of society was derived from Comte, 9 but it seems certain that

she would have come across the idea in the Romantics and Carlyle long before she had read Comte. Thomas Pinney is more justified in stressing her links with Romantic social thought: "In the tradition of Burke, Scott, and Wordsworth, George Eliot believed that the organic nature of society forbade sudden and violent changes, and her 'radicalism' consisted in her keen sense of the determining function played in human affairs by the root of history." Possibly an attraction of Comte was that his thought could be assimilated to this tradition. But one should try to relate George Eliot's organicism to her thought as a whole and not merely consign her to a conservative tradition.

It is in her two essays "The Natural History of German Life" and "Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt" that her organic concept of society is made most apparent. The former is especially important since it contains the clearest statement of her social views. It is a review of the first two parts of W. H. Riehl's Naturgeschichte des Volks, and since George Eliot seems in close agreement with Riehl's views, it may be helpful to say something about him and the tradition of thought within which he wrote.

The relation of Riehl's work to that of the social thought of the German Romantics seems to be generally accepted:

Riehl sought the historicallyphilological discoveries of the Romantics in the study of German origins and folklore and to create out of this a sociology of the body-politic. This made him one of the founders of an independent social science and scientific folklore in Germany.

His devotion to what he called Kulturgeschichte was the product of his period at the University of Bonn, where he came under the influence of three important figures in German nationalism: Ernst Moritz Arndt, Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann, and Gottfried Kinkel. Arndt was one of the most important figures in German nationalism, as Hans Kohn points out: "Arndt was the most important pamphleteer of the first explosion of German nationalism, the first Aufbruch, the setting-out and bursting forth of the German people, the Volk, on the new dynamic pursuit of its destiny." 12

Riehl describes the impact Arndt made on him at the University of Bonn:

Positives gelernt habe ich bei ihm nicht viel, aber entscheidende Anregungen für meine Zukunft gewonnen, und die wichtigsten nicht aus dem, was er gesagt, sondern was ich mir über das Gesagte gedacht hatte. Er verglich die Nationen Europas und zeichnete ihre Charaktere in Geschichtshildern, die er am liebsten aus der grossen

11. From the entry on Riehl in Der Grosse Brockhaus (Wiesbaden, 1956), IX, 748. Translation: "Riehl sought to continue realistically the historical-philological discoveries of the Romantics in the study of German origins and folklore and to create out of this a sociology of the body-politic. This made him one of the founders of an independent social science and scientific folklore in Germany."

It was the influence of Arndt that in great part influenced Riehl to devote his life to Kulturgeschichte. The aim of his work, according to Viktor von Geramb was "das deutsche Volk als einen Kosmos des Volkslebens zu erforschen und darzustellen."  

The theory of the organic 'Volk'-state which is so prominent in the thought of Arndt and German Romantics and which affected Riehl, derives to a large extent from the cultural nationalism of Herder. Arndt took Herder's ideas further by developing them in political terms but the influence of Herder's purely cultural nationalism was important as Alfred G. Pundt points out: "In his insistence upon the protection and encouragement of indigenous national cultures, in his conception of national character and Volksgeist, and in his advocacy of national self-determination, Arndt was following closely in the footsteps of Herder, and, as

13. Victor von Geramb, Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl: Leben und Wirken (1823-1897) (Salzburg, 1954), p. 124. Translation: "I learnt nothing very substantial under him, but gained crucial suggestions for my future, and the most important not from what he said but from my thoughts about it. He compared the nations of Europe and drew their characters in historical pictures, which he preferred to take from the great time of the liberation of our people which he had experienced himself... I was seized with the desire to investigate the whole German nation and to paint them from life..."

14. Geramb, p. 135. Translation: "to investigate and depict the German people as a cosmos of the people's life."
such, may be classified as a cultural nationalist."\textsuperscript{15} F. M.

Barnard writes of Herder:

\begin{quote}
Herder's central political idea lies in the assertion that the proper foundation for a sense of collective political identity is not the acceptance of a common sovereign power, but the sharing of a common culture. For the former is imposed from outside, whilst the latter is the expression of an inner consciousness, in terms of which each individual recognizes himself as an integral part of a social whole. To the possession of such a common culture Herder applies the term nation or, more precisely, Volk or nationality.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

From Herder's ideas developed the demand for the Volksstaat urged by such men as Schleiermacher and Arndt.\textsuperscript{17}

Riehl's and George Eliot's links with this tradition of organicist social and cultural thought is apparent in the following quotation from "The Natural History of German Life":

\begin{quote}
This conception of European society as incarnate history, is the fundamental idea of Riehl's books. After the notable failure of revolutionary attempts conducted from the point of view of abstract democratic and socialistic theories, after the practical demonstration of the evils resulting from a bureaucratic system which governs by an undiscriminating, dead mechanism, Riehl wishes to urge on the consideration of his countrymen, a social policy founded on the special study
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{15} Arndt and the Nationalist Awakening in Germany, p. 158.
\textsuperscript{16} J. G. Herder on Social and Political Culture, trans. and ed. with introduction by F. M. Barnard (Cambridge, 1969), p. 7. Though admitting that Herder influenced the political ideas of the Romantics, Barnard also thinks there are important differences in their organicist views. See pp. 53-57.
\textsuperscript{17} Burke was also a significant influence on the social thought of the German Romantics. See Reinhold Aris, History of Political Thought in Germany from 1789 to 1815 (London, 1936), pp. 251-265.
\end{flushleft}
of the people as they are - on the natural history of the various social ranks.... For, says Riehl, the more deeply we penetrate into the knowledge of society in its details, the more thoroughly we shall be convinced that a universal social policy has no validity except on paper, and can never be carried into successful practice. The conditions of German society are altogether different from those of French, of English, or of Italian society; and to apply the same social theory to these nations indiscriminately, is about as wise a procedure as Triptolemus Yellowley's application of the agricultural directions in Virgil's 'Georgics' to his farm in the Shetland Isles.\(^1\)

It is this acceptance of cultural relativism that links George Eliot with the ideas of Herder rather than with those of an English organicist like Coleridge, who thought that a single standard could be applied to all states and that the English state was the nearest to the ideal.\(^2\) In contrast, for Herder "Myths, beliefs, idiosyncrasies in language ... diverse achievements in art and the sciences, are all seen as functions of diverse social cultures without the slightest hint of superiority or inferiority being attributed to one or the other."\(^3\) That George Eliot agreed with this will emerge more strongly in the course of this chapter, though like Herder she believed that loyalty to one's own culture came first.

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19. "Unlike the nationalist Herder, Coleridge was in no sense a relativist.... Unlike Herder, he did have a standard that applied in the last analysis to all states.... Herder argued that nations should be understood not judged. Coleridge had no such notion." David P. Calleo, Coleridge and the Idea of the Modern State (New Haven and London, 1966), pp. 131-132.

20. Barnard, p. 27.
Her organicist sympathies are apparent all through the essay on Riehl. She makes the following comment on governmental interference with the peasant way of life:

A system which disregards the traditions and hereditary attachments of the peasant, and appeals only to a logical understanding which is not yet developed in him, is simply disintegrating and ruinous to the peasant character.... Instead of endeavouring to promote to the utmost the healthy life of the Commune, as an organism the conditions of which are bound up with the historical characteristics of the peasant, the bureaucratic plan of government is bent on improvement by its patent machinery of state-appointed functionaries and off-hand regulations in accordance with modern enlightenment. She attacks the views of liberals who try to apply a single social concept to all manner of societies, and regrets the reduction of the peasant to proletarian status: "The coarse nature of the peasant has here been corrupted into bestiality by the disturbance of his instincts, while he is as yet incapable of principles; and in this type of the degenerate peasant is seen the worst example of ignorance intoxicated by theory." She is clearly in sympathy with Riehl's view that cutting a society off from its historical roots destroys social vitality. Social development, like the development of language, can never be made entirely logical without becoming devitalised: "The nature of European men has its roots intertwined with the past, and can only be developed by allowing those roots to remain undisturbed while the process of development is going on, until that perfect ripeness of the seed which carries with it a life independent of the root." 

Significantly however, George Eliot qualifies this view with regard to England: "This vivid connexion with the past is much more vividly felt on the continent than in England, where we have to recall it by an effort of memory and reflection; for though our English life is in its core intensely traditional, Protestantism and commerce have modernized the face of the land and the aspects of society in a far greater degree than in any continental country ..." This is an important qualification. In England George Eliot felt that an organic sense of community had to some extent broken down and social developments were worsening the situation. The need to recreate this sense of community is one of the deepest motives informing her work. Like Riehl she is clearly opposed to social change which promotes "the decomposition which is commencing in the organic constitution of society."24

It is important to distinguish between the organicism of George Eliot as expressed in an essay like "The Natural History Of German Life" and the organicism of Herbert Spencer as expressed in his essay "The Social Organism." In Spencer the analogy is a biological one, and though the biological metaphor also appears in a less developed form in the writings of the Romantics, it is much less important than the analogy with consciousness. In the social thought of the Romantics the organic community is created by a common language, by the sharing of certain values, traditions and customs which give the community an identity which has evolved historically. This created a sense of spiritual unity among the

people in the community, what might be called a tribal consciousness. It is this conception that underlies the organicist thought of Herder and which greatly influenced the German Romantics. F. M. Barnard writes of Herder's idea of the Volk:

The Volk is an organic whole by virtue of the peculiar interrelationship of its members which alone confers upon it a Gestalt of its own, a unity sui generis.... In the case of a Volk, the decisive interconnecting link is the consciousness of a shared culture and historical tradition.

A Volk, accordingly, is not a substantive entity in any biological sense, a thing with a corporate existence of its own over and above, or separate from, the individuals who compose it, but a relational event, a historical and cultural continuum. An individual's consciousness of belonging to a distinct community, likewise, is not a biological fact, but a derivative social and cultural process, the result of continuous interaction - in both a temporal and spatial sense - between the self and the socio-cultural setting of its environment. The individual, far from being enclosed within himself or genetically constituted to be a German, or Italian, or Greek a priori, derives an awareness of himself as a member of a particular national community from the social milieu into which he is born, from his contact with the world around him.\(^25\)

When George Eliot uses such phrases as "the organic constitution of society" and "the organic structure of society,"\(^26\) she is using "organic" in the sense derived from Herder. This is evident in the essay "Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt."

Here she refers to "the common estate of society" which is a wealth over and above buildings, machinery, produce, shipping, and so on, though closely connected with these; a wealth of a more delicate kind, that we more unconsciously bring into danger, doing harm and not knowing that we do it. I mean the treasure of knowledge, science, poetry, refinement

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of thought, feeling, and manners, great memories and the interpretation of great records, which is carried on from the minds of one generation to the minds of another.27

The organic society is created by this sense of general consciousness developing historically, making possible shared meanings and values, a common culture. The danger she feels from working-class agitation is that over-rapid social change will effect a breakdown of spiritual continuity between past and present. Only this can create a unified social consciousness which is able to develop without fragmenting or becoming relativistic. This makes her a conservative despite her awareness of the need to combat social injustice.

iii

But though she uses the words "organic" and "organism" primarily in the spiritual or Romantic sense, there is good reason to believe that the Spencerian concept of the social organism was also influential with her. The biological metaphor appears in the "Address to Working Men" essay when she says that "society stands before us like that wonderful piece of life, the human body, with all its various parts depending on one another, and with a terrible liability to get wrong because of that delicate dependence."28

Even here she may be thinking of the spiritual organism, since Spencer's social organism was scarcely delicate. But drawing an analogy between society and the human body was probably derived.

from Spencer. More importantly, several of the societies she portrays in her novels resemble Spencer's social organisms in many respects. This is particularly true of the more complex societies like Treby Magna, Middlemarch, and English society in Daniel Deronda. An image in Felix Holt equates English society with a biological organism:

In this way it happened that Treby Magna gradually passed from being simply a respectable market-town - the heart of a great rural district, where the trade was only such as had close relations with the local landed district - and took on the more complex life brought by mines and manufactures, which belong more directly to the great circulating system of the nation than to the local system to which they have been superadded ... (I, 68).

If a society is seen as resembling a living organism, the various classes and interest groups resemble organs of this total organism, and each organ is forced to adjust and adapt to changes within the other organs or to changes affecting the total organism from without. The individual can be seen as a kind of cell which must relate itself to the rest of the organism and play its part. A character like Lydgate is confident he can dominate the social medium of Middlemarch, but he little realises that it can crush him. While he is expecting to use Middlemarch for his purposes, the reversal of this situation will take place:

"Middlemarch ... counted on swallowing Lydgate and assimilating him very comfortably" (I, 233). His social medium becomes more and more antagonistic to him, as a clearly evolutionary image illustrates: "Lydgate was much worried, and conscious of new elements in his life as noxious to him as an inlet of mud to a creature that has been used to breathe and dart after its
illuminated prey in the clearest of waters" (III, 80-81).

The most crucial difference between Spencer's concept of organicism and that of the Romantics is that though he believed strongly in the necessity for society to have stable moral values, it is not essential for a social organism in his sense to have a spiritual unity. In fact, he uses a discrepancy in his organic analogy to justify by implication his belief in individualism and laissez-faire. He asserts that the difference between "bodies-politic" and "individual bodies" must be kept in mind:

For it reminds us that while, in individual bodies, the welfare of all other parts is rightly subservient to the welfare of the nervous system ... in bodies-politic the same thing does not hold, or holds to but a very slight extent. It is well that the lives of all parts of an animal should be merged in the life of the whole, because the whole has a corporate consciousness capable of happiness or misery. But it is not so with a society; since its living units do not and cannot lose individual consciousness, and since the community as a whole has no corporate consciousness. This is an everlasting reason why the welfare of citizens cannot rightly be sacrificed to some supposed benefit of the State, and why, on the other hand, the State is to be maintained solely for the benefit of citizens. The corporate life must here be subservient to the lives of the parts, instead of the parts being subservient to the corporate life. 29

But George Eliot (and Romantic organicists) would have argued that for society to be truly "organic" it must possess this sense of corporate consciousness which Spencer says it lacks. It is the distinctive language, culture, and traditions of a society which help create this. For Herder and the Romantics a society

deprived of corporate consciousness would be a mechanism not an organism: a conjunction of parts with none of the spiritual unity necessary to make it really organic.  

When George Eliot says in the "Prelude" to Middlemarch that there was "no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul," it seems very likely that what she means is that society is not organic in any spiritual sense. It may be a social organism in Spencer's sense but this is something different. Clearly in Lewes's concept of the general mind, for society to exist at all there cannot be complete fragmentation. In the world of Middlemarch however, the spiritual homogeneity which characterised organic societies of the past has to a large extent broken down. The way gossip and rumour can sweep through the town shows that there still exists some sense of general consciousness, but there is no longer a strong sense of a unified community consciousness based on shared assumptions and values. There is thus little of the spiritual harmony which Romantic organicists valued. Middlemarch society is more like a Spencerian social organism in which corporate life is subservient to individual interests or the interests

30. F. W. Barnard writes of Herder: "It was these essentially spiritual elements [deeds of forefathers, tribal customs and rituals, and especially a distinctive language] which constituted for Herder the organic forces (Kr"afte) of social and political cohesion, since they united men from within. He saw therefore in most of the contemporary dynastic states mere artefacts, lifeless assemblies of aggregates whose parts, though they were functionally related like those of an organism, nevertheless depended in their operation on an external source of power.... A state can perish, but the Volk remains intact provided it retains the consciousness of its distinctive cultural traditions" (Barnard, pp. 29-30).
of social groups. Clearly the less spiritually organic society became, the more social classes or individuals served their own particular ends instead of feeling a larger commitment to the good of society as a whole. As I have said earlier, if this created conflict and disorder, society could possess surface similarities to Darwinian nature, characterised by struggle and the survival of the fittest. James in his well-known criticism of the novel said it was "too often an echo of Messrs. Darwin and Huxley." Though the Darwinian aspect is important, perhaps Spencer's view of social evolution is most helpful in understanding the reasons for the sense of pessimism about social progress that is present in the novel.

Donald MacRae has argued that Spencer's concept of social evolution led to a somewhat pessimistic social vision:

Social evolution to Spencer is the evolution of functions meeting needs. The diversity of functions to be performed differentiates, separates and specializes 'the parts performing them'. The organization of structures and functions has its own needs: as it becomes more complex social structure is compounded and re-compounded. This process is inevitable if we take a broad over-view of all human society, but it is not simple, 'not linear but divergent and redivergent'. And here his pessimism is very visible: Spencer did not think that the progressive development of any given society was at all likely. The evolution of the totality of human society is the record of the failure of the vast majority of specific human societies. To Spencer human history is a charnel house, heaped with the cadavers of evolutionary failure. Only the fittest survive. It is a picture lacking neither grandeur, tragedy nor a great measure of truth. Where one might most disagree is in finding it edifying or pointing a moral ...


32. Introduction to "The Man versus the State," p. 29.
This helps explain the almost tragic ending of *Middlemarch* in which the two most gifted characters are defeated in different degrees and in which the progress of society as a whole is left problematic. Lydgate's ambitions come to nothing and Dorothea has to settle for a limited role that scarcely utilises all her potentialities. Since the society they are a part of lacks spiritual harmony, strictly evolutionary pressures govern its development and everyone is subject to these. How Dorothea is affected is particularly important. There is little possibility of a person of great spiritual qualities exerting a powerful influence on men's minds because the lack of a social faith necessarily atomises society. There is comparatively little sense of general consciousness based on shared assumptions, values and traditions which would make spiritual communion possible. The traditional Saint Theresa was part of an organic community which did possess these shared values and traditions, based on a religion which penetrated every area of life. This made it possible for her to enter into spiritual communion with all the people in her society and use her natural gifts to influence their minds and feelings. But the world of a Saint Theresa or an Antigone, one of complete spiritual harmony, no longer exists: "the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is for ever gone" (III, 465). In a Spencer-like social organism of competing interests and relativism of values, such spiritual communion can no longer be achieved. The modern Theresa can operate only as one cell in a complex organism made up of separate centres of consciousness deprived of a "coherent social faith and order." She must therefore accept a less heroic role than might have been
That Lewes's attitude to Comte was largely shared by George Eliot, and indeed that she had some influence on his view, is surely shown by the following passage:

Antagonism to the Method and certain conclusions of the Politique Positive led me for many years to regard that work as a deviation from the Positive Philosophy in every way unfortunate. My attitude has changed now that I have learned (from the remark of one very dear to me) to regard it as an Utopia, presenting hypotheses rather than doctrines, suggestions for future inquirers rather than dogmas for adepts - hypotheses carrying more or less of truth, and serviceable as a provisional mode of colligating facts, to be confirmed or contradicted by experience.36

It seems certain that George Eliot is referred to here. Though Lewes and George Eliot recognised the need for a unifying doctrine which could make society homogeneous, they were unwilling to surrender easily their intellectual scepticism to attempts, like Comte's, to provide such a doctrine. This was the difficulty: though it might be indispensable for society to have a faith that performed a function similar to that of religion in the past, and still performed for believers, was it possible to believe in any such faith? Was it not as liable to be disbelieved as Christianity?

George Eliot clearly had great sympathy for Comte's "Religion of Humanity" but she seems to have hesitated about believing as Comte did in its objective truth. Judging by Lewes's statement, it seems likely she saw it rather as a symbolic form, or, in Carlyle's terms, a "new Mythus" which was valuable as providing a set of symbols which gave form to what she regarded as human truths. But this created the further problem of how one could hold strongly to a belief if one was aware of its symbolic function, and preserve

hers in different circumstances and hope that any influence she can exert may ultimately have some effect.

iv

A major concern in George Eliot's work is how the spiritual homogeneity that characterised certain societies in the past, like that of Saint Theresa, can be recreated in a new form in industrialised societies in which economic change was breaking up traditional social groupings, and the power of religion seemed in decline. It was Carlyle who urged the necessity for this most strongly. For him the consequence of a purely economic relation among men was spiritual bankruptcy and intolerable isolation for the individual. As he writes in *Past and Present*:

One thing I do know: Never, on this Earth, was the relation of man to man long carried on by Cash-payment alone. If, at any time, a philosophy of Laissez-faire, Competition and Supply-and-demand, start up as the exponent of human relations, expect that it will soon end.

Isolation is the sum-total of wretchedness to man. To be cut off, to be left solitary: to have a world alien, not your world; all a hostile camp for you; not a home at all, of hearts and faces who are yours, whose you are! It is the frightfullest enchantment; too truly a work of the Evil One. To have neither superior, nor inferior, nor equal, united manlike to you. Without father, without child, without brother. Man knows no sadder destiny.33

Perhaps the most important aspect of Comte's thought for George Eliot was that he attempted to create a spiritual homogeneity comparable to that of organic societies of the past for industrial societies and by the use of a scientific method. In his *History Of Philosophy* Lewes writes: "If the past points to the necessity

for a homogeneous and all-embracing Doctrine, what indications are there in the present of a speedy realisation of that aim?"

In his view positivism "is the only system which can embrace all tendencies and furnish a homogeneous Doctrine of the world, society, and man." Comte's great achievement has been to make this a possibility at a time when intellectual and spiritual unity seemed to be disintegrating and also to base his system on science:

A new era has dawned. For the first time in history an Explanation of the world, society, and man, is presented which is thoroughly homogeneous, and at the same time thoroughly in accordance with accurate knowledge: having the reach of an all-embracing System, it condenses human knowledge into a Doctrine, and co-ordinates all the methods by which that knowledge has been reached, and will in future be extended. Its aim is the renovation of Society. Its basis is Science ...

Comte's system will thus make it possible to treat knowledge as an organic whole and use it to achieve the spiritual homogeneity society requires. But despite Lewes's enthusiasm for Comte's aim, he is unable to accept his final completed system, his attempt to create a new religion out of positivism. Lewes agrees that such a religion is required but admits that "intellectual anarchy" still reigns:

So much is clear: that whenever the present intellectual anarchy is replaced by a common Faith, whenever men have a system of belief's respecting the universe and their relation to it, which resting on demonstration admits of no dispute, then - alas: the prospect seems far distant - will arise a Polity which also will admit of no dissent. Then will Philosophy be transformed into Religion.

Meanwhile anarchy continues, and the Faith is slow in spreading. 35

34. The History of Philosophy, II, 641, 651, 590.
35. The History of Philosophy, II, 659.
it against the kind of rationalist questioning and scepticism which had undermined Christianity? Carlyle and George Eliot were alike in regarding the forms of religious and moral beliefs as relatively unimportant, it was the human content which was symbolically expressed which mattered. She could regard all religious forms as, in theory, equally valuable if they succeeded in giving expression to essential human truths, necessary to man and society. For Carlyle, as a transcendentalist, the basic content underlying any symbolic form like a religion was divine in its nature, but for George Eliot it was purely human, and this perhaps created more difficulties for her in her effort to establish a positive position.

But nevertheless, Carlyle's influence on George Eliot was possibly greater than previous commentators have been inclined to think. He and Ruskin were certainly the most important contemporary organicists in England, and both were men she admired. She wrote of Carlyle in 1855 that "there is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle's writings; there has hardly been an English book written for the last ten or twelve years that would not have been different if Carlyle had not lived." 37

When James Thomson sent George Eliot a copy of his "City of Dreadful Night" she replied:

... I trust that an intellect informed by so much passionate energy as yours will soon give us more heroic strains with a

wider embrace of human fellowship in them - such as will be
to the labourers of the world what the odes of Tyrtaeus
were to the Spartans, thrilling them with the sublimity of
the social order and the courage of resistance to all that
would dissolve it.38

One can imagine Carlyle (to whom Thomson also sent a copy of his
poem) replying in the same vein. For one of the main ideas in
Carlyle is that the Romantic egoist, the man who has discovered a
sense of self that cannot be defined or denied by rationalism or
scepticism, should throw off his defiance and negative self-
assertion and work for the best interests of society. Though
Carlyle claimed to believe in an organic universe similar to
Wordsworth's, the main emphasis in his work is on the redemption
of society. The individual must surrender the claims of self to
work for the achievement of the organic society. This is also the
case with several of George Eliot's characters, as I have already
tried to show. The egoistic stage of Romanticism had discovered
a sense of subjectivity which could maintain itself even in an
alien universe, but in Carlyle this egoism must itself be overcome
if the self was not to be trapped by its negative qualities. The
ego must next learn to accept renunciation, a key idea in Carlyle,
before it could move on to a positive position. Renunciation
also figures strongly in George Eliot and it seems likely that she
was strongly influenced by Carlyle's interpretation or transformation
of Goethe's Entsagen. This can be seen in C. F. Harrold's
discussion of what Carlyle means by it:

38. Letters, VI, 53.
It means the complete acceptance of suffering, i.e. the crushing of the self's deep hunger for happiness, and yet an identification of the self, the higher self, with all that is good and creative. This was Carlyle's answer to the problem of evil: the renunciation of the struggling self, the acceptance of suffering and wrong, and the worship of sorrow as the path to reality.\textsuperscript{39}

One thinks of the ending of "Armgart" in which, through suffering and sorrow, Armgart learns renunciation and is able to transcend the assertive tendencies of her ego.

But it is Carlyle's recognition of the need for an organic society that most suggests his influence on George Eliot. He was aware that in the middle-ages the Christian world-view had created the basis for an organic society. The problem for him as for George Eliot was how to achieve a similar spiritually unified society in the industrial age: "We will now quit this of the hard, organic, but limited Feudal Ages; and glance timidly into the immense Industrial Ages, as yet all inorganic, and in a quite pulpy condition, requiring desperately to harden themselves into some organism!" He goes on to say:

One wide and widest 'outline' ought really, in all ways, to be becoming clear to us; this namely: That a 'Splendour of God,' in one form or other, will have to unfold itself from the heart of these our Industrial Ages too; or they will never get themselves 'organised,' but continue chaotic, distressed, distracted evermore, and have to perish in frantic suicidal dissolution.\textsuperscript{40}

A new set of symbols was required, Teufelsdröckh's clothes philosophy, which could provide a new form to replace Christianity.

\textsuperscript{39} Carlyle and German Thought: 1819-1834. (New Haven, 1934), p. 220.

\textsuperscript{40} Past and Present, pp. 213-214, 214-215 (Book IV, Chap. 1).
if modern society was to become as organic as Feudal society.

Though George Eliot would not have accepted everything in Carlyle's own attempt to provide this, it seems certain that she was in essential agreement with him about the need to make modern industrial society organic, even if she was rather pessimistic about the prospects. To achieve this it was necessary to create a new symbolic form which would provide a new means of expression for the essential human truths of Christianity. Carlyle's position has important similarities with Feuerbach's: for both, religions like Christianity were symbolisations, but for Carlyle the essential content underlying any religion expressed divine truth, while for Feuerbach and George Eliot it expressed truths of human feeling; all symbolic forms in their view were human creations without any transcendent content.

But for both Carlyle and George Eliot, the problem was essentially the same: how to find a "new Mythus" that could command the almost universal assent and intellectual support Christianity had done in the past. Carlyle rejected Coleridge's view that since the Christian religion expressed truths of the "reason," this was sufficient to make anyone believe it. For him religious forms must be renewed if they were adequately to express religious truths. Christianity was a dead form and could do little to create the basis of an organic society in the nineteenth century. If this were not achieved, society in his

41. See Life of John Sterling, Chap. viii. Carlyle's position on this subject is difficult. If one becomes aware of the relativity of belief systems, how can one hold strongly to any one of them, even if one regards the "belief" to which the belief system gives form as true? This problem also interested George Eliot, especially in Deronda. Carlyle's solution was perhaps Romantic Irony, by which one can adhere to a particular set of beliefs because it provides form for what could otherwise only be glimpsed, yet at the same time be sceptical about the form.
view would become increasingly alien and there would be traumatic consequences for the individual self in being exposed to such a situation. George Eliot seems to have felt that Christianity or any religion had great value as long as the individual could believe in it. Many of her most positive characters, Mr. Tryan, Mr. Lyon, Dinah, are convinced Christians. But for those who had rejected Christianity, the values religion had formerly supported must be expressed in a new form. In Middlemarch she seems sceptical about the possibility of achieving anything like the spiritually organic society of a Saint Theresa or Antigone, but in her last works, Daniel Deronda and Impressions of Theophrastus Such, a more prophetic tone emerges which indicates that like Carlyle she felt that some new faith which could perform a similar function to religion and which could provide the basis for the organic society was indispensable.

Carlyle was more highly regarded by her as an artist than as a philosopher. 42 Probably she thought that by the power of his art he could make people aware of problems and receptive to some solution even if the one he suggested was not entirely acceptable. In any case, one can see her using her novels to make an artistic contribution to the problem of the organic society. She does this in several ways. For example she creates images of past organic communities and implicitly points a contrast with modern society;

42. "It is the fashion to speak of Carlyle almost exclusively as a philosopher; but to our way of thinking, he is yet more of an artist than a philosopher" (Essays, p. 215).
or she creates an image, as in *Middlemarch*, of a society becoming less spiritually organic than the society of the past and explores the consequences of this; or, as in *Daniel Deronda*, she expresses her positive organicist vision in a prophetic form. I want now to try to show how her organicist ideas are concretely expressed in some of her works.

The clearest example of an organic society is to be found in Raveloe in *Silas Marner*. It is really the community of Raveloe that is the hero of the novel since it is the acceptance of its way of life, values, and traditions that cures Silas Marner of his alienation. Here we have an example of a pre-industrial organic community. It has preserved close links with the past which means that mystery and superstition form part of its tradition. It is not George Eliot's aim to attack such beliefs. They are an inseparable part of such communities, though the reader is made aware that they are not factually true. In the case of the theft of Silas's gold, the reader is told all the facts though most of the villagers interpret it as a supernatural occurrence. In a village like Raveloe, "where many of the old echoes lingered, undrowned by new voices" (p. 6), this is inevitable. Myths and superstitions are means by which the mind tries to cope with the disorder of experience. Certain past events also become dramatisations of the community's values. The story of the Lammeter's wedding, for example, performs something of the function of a myth for the villagers. Everyone has heard it many times, but listening to it again creates in them a feeling which re-affirms their community values. This story about a union joins all the people
in the Rainbow Inn together in one experience. It performs a ceremonial function in maintaining the unity and values of the community just as going to church and the New Year dance do likewise. Such ceremonies help in giving the people of the community a sense of corporate identity. Certain moral and social values become an integral part of the life of the society. The individual is able to communicate with others at a deeper level than the merely verbal and feel a sense of fellowship because of the existence of shared symbols and values, derived from the past and maintained by such ceremonies. Silas Marner eventually becomes integrated into this society and recovers from his former alienation. The unified community consciousness, based on shared symbols and values, is able to provide protection against the amoral otherness of non-human reality which is a potential threat to both the individual and society.

In Raveloe religious values are part of the social fabric and are not expressed in a rigid theology. A major contrast in the novel is created between Raveloe and Lantern Yard in which Christianity has taken the most rigid doctrinal form in the extreme providential beliefs of Silas's sect. In contrast to Lantern Yard, Raveloe is suspicious of the notion of a beneficent providence. Its connection with more gloomy pre-Christian beliefs prevents this idea being accepted, for the narrator tells us that "the rude mind with difficulty associates the ideas of power and benignity" (p. 6). The villagers' traditions and way of life do not encourage the rigid forms religion has acquired in industrial towns. The community can thus absorb good and bad fortune. It can accept
the coming of Maggie as providential but its more gloomy traditions allow it to absorb bad fortune also, which Silas's original religious orientation is unable to do.

Raveloe can also accommodate the alternative rational explanation of reality as exemplified by Mr. Dowlas in his difference with Mr. Macey over whether a ghost or a tramp took Silas's gold. Both of them are wrong, but transcending their differences is the awareness of the whole company of Silas's plight. Even though Silas has kept apart from the community for fifteen years, they are eager to help him, and this is more important than their differing interpretations of the nature of reality.

George Eliot takes care to portray the atmosphere and feeling of life in Raveloe in the style of the novel, by creating something of the mythic, mysterious atmosphere of a fairy-tale. But the legendary material in the novel is used in the interests of realism. It is the human meaning underlying myth and legend that George Eliot emphasises. It is possible that she gave the work so many mythic features because she intended that life in Raveloe should serve as something of a myth for her own society; the myth of the organic community. Her creation of the unified social life of Raveloe presents the reader with an image that embodies his own need for a similar relationship to his own society.

Raveloe is an example of a valuable social form which belongs to the past. George Eliot is not setting it up as a model to be

43. See Joseph Wiesenfarth, "Demythologizing Silas Marner," MLH, XXXVII (June, 1970), 226-244 for a detailed argument for this view.
imitated but as an example of the organic community as it had existed in the past. Carlyle employed a similar tactic in *Past and Present* in his description of an organic feudal society. Raveloe cannot be imitated, but the kind of experience it made possible must be given a new form in the present. But despite the value of the community life of Raveloe it is nevertheless clear that it belongs to a time which is passing; the future belongs to the industrial societies like Lantern Yard. There is no going back to that particular form of rural community, but it is perhaps implied that modern industrial society needs to be organic in a similar way.

*Adam Bede* is another novel concerned with a rural community in which life is still in a large degree organic, though it is written in a more obviously realistic style with character and situation analysed in greater depth. Again there is a contrast between the pre-industrial and the industrialised: Hayslope has been comparatively unaffected by industrialism, in contrast to the industrialised Stonyshire. But Hayslope has been more influenced by these new external forces than Raveloe. The products of the way of life of industrial towns are having their effect, Methodism being the most obvious example of this. George Eliot regarded the development of enthusiastic religious sects as a

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44. Ian Gregor has argued, with some justice, that there is a conflict of modes in the novel because the "pastoral" is not adequately fused with the realistic presentation. See Ian Gregor and Brian Nicholas, *The Moral and the Story* (London, 1962), pp. 15-32.
response to industrialism and the kind of social life it generated, as can be seen in a comment in *Felix Holt* on the consequences of the industrialisation of Treby Magna:

But when stone-pits and coal-pits made new hamlets that threatened to spread up to the very town, when the tape-weavers came with their news-reading inspectors and book-keepers, the Independent chapel began to be filled with eager men and women, to whom the exceptional possession of religious truth was the condition which reconciled them to a meagre existence, and made them feel in secure alliance with the unseen but supreme rule of a world in which their own visible part was small (I, 68-69).

This helps to explain the failure of Dinah's fervent sermon to rouse the villagers of Hayslope. Having been unaffected by industrial conditions, they lack the social conditioning necessary to respond adequately to enthusiastic religion.

But though there is little enthusiasm for religious doctrine in Hayslope, the content of life there is essentially religious. As in Raveloe, going to church is a community ceremony in which everyone joins together to share certain values. Mr. Irwine is a good clergyman because he encourages this aspect of religion: "He thought the custom of baptism more important than its doctrine ..." (I, 99). His eventual replacement by a clergyman who emphasises doctrine is regarded as an unfortunate community development. The novel is clearly on the side of Adam Bede's opinion that "religion's something else besides notions. It isn't notions sets people doing the right thing - it's feelings" (I, 272).

There is surely irony against Dinah in her preference of Leeds over pre-industrial villages: "But I've noticed, that in
these villages where the people lead a quiet life among the green pastures and the still waters, tilling the ground and tending the cattle, there's a strange deadness to the Word, as different as can be from the great towns, like Leeds ... It's wonderful how rich is the harvest of souls up those high-walled streets, where you seemed to walk as in a prison-yard, and the ear is deafened by the sounds of worldly toil" (I, 134). The religious quality of life in these villages is present in the image of "green pastures and still waters," but as yet Dinah cannot see it. The content of religious values being integrally part of community life, religious enthusiasm is not needed. Snowfield, where Dinah comes from, "a dreary bleak place" with a cotton-mill, is the type of town in which Methodism would flourish.

Another aspect of organic life in Hayslope is the acceptance by everyone of the historically evolved social structure. There is little sense of class struggle or economic conflict. Adam's attitude to the squire is an important example of this:

Adam, I confess, was very susceptible to the influence of rank, and quite ready to give an extra amount of respect to every one who had more advantages than himself, not being a philosopher, or a proletaire with democratic ideas, but simply a stout-limbed clever carpenter with a large fund of reverence in his nature, which inclined him to admit all established claims unless he saw very clear grounds for questioning them (I, 245).

Unfortunately, Adam's betters are little worthy of his respect, and are becoming increasingly detached from the life of the rest of the community. The upper class of Raveloe in Silas Warner had also begun to feel itself as separate. This can be regarded,
like Methodism, as another sign that the social structure of Hayslope is changing.

The most important manifestations of the sense of organic community life in Hayslope are the rituals and ceremonies which take place in the novel. It is significant that George Eliot does not offer any rationalist criticism of such community beliefs as the wickedness of working on Good Friday. Such traditions give meaning and value to social life. A good example of the whole community joining ceremonially together is the church service before the burial of Thias Bede. This both consoles the bereaved and helps everyone accept the fact of death. Even Adam's completely selfish mother is moved:

Lisbeth had a vague belief that the psalm was doing her husband good; it was part of that decent burial which she would have thought it a greater wrong to withhold from him than to have caused him unhappy days while he was living. The more there was said about her husband, the more there was done for him, surely the safer he would be. It was poor Lisbeth's way of feeling that human love and pity are a ground of faith in some other love (I, 302).

It is during this ceremony that Adam himself feels most powerfully that he was too hard on his father in life.

Another important community ceremony is Arthur's birthday feast which is conducted in an extremely formal manner. The arrangement of the dinner tables, for example, is highly orderly so that everyone feels he occupies his rightful place. Adam is worried in case Arthur's wish that he dine upstairs will prove unacceptable to other members of the community. The dinner is followed by games and a dance. Every member of the community has some part to play which reflects his status and reconciles him to the order of the society and its values. The whole ceremony can be seen as a form of community ritual.
The greatest offence in Arthur and Hetty's clandestine affair is that against the community. It is conducted in secret, ignoring the traditions and customs of courtship in Hayslope. Adam's attack on Arthur's motives expresses this view: "You know it couldn't be made public as you've behaved to Hetty as y' have done without her losing her character and bringing shame and trouble on her and her relations" (II, 14). That Arthur could thoughtlessly take part in such an affair illustrates his detachment from the values of Hayslope, in which life is corporate and shared, and all important transactions, personal and otherwise, are open. The fact that Arthur and Hetty's love can only be secret is in itself an offence. And the consequences threaten to break up the community. Both Adam and the Poyaers are on the point of leaving. It can only be preserved by the casting out of the two offenders. Significantly the novel ends, like Silas Marner, with a marriage ceremony which draws all the people of the community together again. Adam and Dinah's marriage, though George Eliot re-states her view that evil can never be expiated, to a large extent repairs the damage done to Hayslope by the consequences of Arthur and Hetty's actions.

But though pre-industrial organic communities can serve as an example, how could a similar corporate social identity be recreated in the present? It is worth exploring in more detail why George Eliot felt this was necessary. What did she fear would happen to
a society which no longer possessed any unified social consciousness? Why did she think the individual could not live an ordered, moral life in a society which did not have the sense of a shared community spirit of organic societies of the past? What values were seriously threatened if the organic ideal was lost?

Some comments by Lewes on society help to illuminate her social position. He repeatedly stresses that what distinguishes men from the lower animals is that their consciousness is transformed by being part of the social organism. His concept of the social organism is much more "organic" in the Romantic sense than Spencer's:

The Organism is not made, not put together, but evolved; its parts are not juxtaposed, but differentiated; its organs are groups of minor organisms, all sharing in a common life ... precisely as the great Social Organism is a group of societies, each of which is a group of families, all sharing in a common life - every family having at once its individual independence and its social dependence through connection with every other. In a machine the parts are all different, and have mechanical significance only in relation to the whole.45

It is from the social medium that man draws his most distinctively human life; it is "the collective accumulations of centuries, condensed in knowledge, beliefs, prejudices, institutions, and tendencies; and forming another kind of Psychoplasm to which the animal is a stranger."46 The origin and sustainer of all human culture and values is society, as Lewes argues in a particularly eloquent passage:

45. Problems, I, 113-114.
46. Problems, I, 124.
We there find the impersonal experiences of Tradition accumulating for each individual a fund of Knowledge, an instrument of Power which magnifies his existence. The experiences of many become the guide of each; they do not all perish with the individual; much survives, takes form in opinion, precept and law, in prejudice and superstition. The feelings of each are blended into a general consciousness, which in turn reacts upon the individual consciousness. And this mighty impersonality is at once the product and the factor of social evolution. It rests on the evolution of Language, as a means of symbolical expression rising out of the animal function of individual expression by the stimulus of collective needs. Without Language, no Society having intellectual and moral life; without Society, no need of Language. Without Language, no Tradition; without Tradition no elaboration of the common arts and skill which cherish and extend the simplest products of the community; and without Tradition, no Religion, no Science, no Art.\(^7\)

This makes particularly clear the importance of society and the dangers which would result from its breakdown. It makes it easy to understand George Eliot's letter to Thomson, a man utterly disillusioned with society. The emphasis on tradition is especially important. In Lewes's concept of society, it is tradition which is the most significant factor in creating its general consciousness. His disagreement with Spencer's denial of corporate consciousness to society is plain. It is tradition which creates continuity with the past and which makes it possible for all members of a community to share in a common culture. This creates the possibility of shared values and assumptions among the members of society and makes them feel part of a unit which transcends their own particular interests.

If tradition breaks down or is rejected, society becomes fragmented into interest groups. Social classes or individuals feel little allegiance to society as a whole but only serve their

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47. *Problems*, IV, 80.
own ends. Tradition is regarded, on the analogy with human consciousness, as the memory of society, and to lose touch with this creates something like a social schizophrenia, a fragmentation of the community and a relativism of values. The importance of tradition for George Eliot can be seen in her statement that "Our sentiments may be called organised traditions; and a large part of our actions gather all their justification, all their attraction and aroma, from the memory of the life lived, of the actions done, before we were born."^48

Lewes regarded the maintenance of the general consciousness of society as essential, for without this all values were threatened. He said that "There cannot be moral relations apart from Society."^49 If then there was no spiritual homogeneity in society, why should one accept morality or common values at all? Human behaviour would tend to display more of the characteristics of animal individualism, since the individual who felt no social allegiances would feel no restraint on his natural egoism. Society would still exist as an organism in Spencer's sense, but it would be a vast network which was alien to the individual in which he felt he had to struggle to survive, or saw himself as isolated and disconnected from others. George Eliot's clearest picture of an alienated society is significantly her most modern novel, her view of the England of the 1860's in Daniel Deronda.

49. Problems, I, 173.
But though one may readily understand George Eliot's interest in maintaining society and protecting it against those forces which threatened to undermine the spiritual organism, it might nevertheless be objected that her social fears resulted in what has been called her "frightened conservatism." \(^{50}\) Some commentators have tended to be critical of her later political leanings because of their anti-democratic bias. \(^{51}\) But in trying to understand her position, one should try to relate her political ideas to the other aspects of her thought. Her belief in organicism necessarily led to a conservative stance, though in George Eliot's case this was dynamic conservatism. She believed in the possibility of progress and was not against social change, but such change must be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. The structure of society as a spiritual organism: its traditions, its fundamental institutions, its cultural values, must be preserved during change. If change moved too fast, then this structure was threatened; social classes entered into conflict and competed with each other for advantages instead of working for the best interests of society as a whole.

Relativism is implicitly the great social danger for George Eliot, since it must lead to individual or group egoism which could not be controlled by any values which were generally accepted. This perhaps explains why she was interested in the most powerful

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social force which opposed the relativism that was implied both by demonic Romanticism and by such Enlightenment-derived doctrines as Utilitarianism. This force was, of course, nationalism. But before discussing this aspect of her thought, it is, I think, helpful to consider a recent plea for the ideal of a structured society and a warning of the dangers of moral relativism by Mary Douglas. This is useful in promoting greater understanding of the organicism of George Eliot which led to her distrust of liberal and socialist doctrines. It is too easy to brand her as a political reactionary in her later life. Her political thought is an interesting development of her overall intellectual position.

Mary Douglas is discussing present-day fears of pollution as a threat to the environment, and thus to man, in relation to tribal communities. She argues that tribal communities protect themselves against their environment and the environment against human pollution (the two are inter-connected) by the community's holding certain moral beliefs in common. If society breaks up and different views are heard, then both society and the environment become threatened. She thinks that science alone will never be able to create complete objectivity regarding pollution problems: only moral imperatives which are not necessarily "true" can bring about the social unity necessary to enforce the restraints which must protect the environment from man and man from the polluted environment. Belief in a "rule-obeying universe" is the most powerful of these moral restraints, and the greatest danger arises when this is attacked at its intellectual base:

This is the threat of intellectual chaos and blind panic. Pollution is the black side of Plato's good lie in which society must rest: it is the other half of the necessary confidence-trick. We should be able to see that we can never ask for a future society in which we only believe in real, scientifically proved pollution dangers. We must talk threateningly about time, money, God and nature if we hope to get anything done. We must believe in the limitations and boundaries of nature which our community projects.

She goes on to argue that the lack of any moral consensus in society presents the greatest of dangers since this destroys the community consciousness necessary to give credibility to dangers to the environment. Certain "discriminating principles" are needed both to create and protect society:

The discriminating principles come from the social structure. An unstructured society leaves us prey to every dread. As all the veils are successively ripped away, there is no right or wrong. Relativism is the order of the day.

She goes on to say that the price to be paid for such relativism will be a degree of individual self-consciousness in which no discriminations or shared meanings are possible: "The day when everyone can see exactly what is on the end of everyone's fork, on that day there is no pollution and no purity and nothing edible or inedible, credible or incredible, because the classifications of social life are gone. There is no more meaning." What Mary Douglas is really urging is a spiritually organic society. 53

It is for reasons similar to those that George Eliot strongly supports the preservation of traditions which maintain contact with

53. Mary Douglas's book *Natural Symbols* (London, 1970) is also interesting as a modern defence of the need for an ordered society with shared assumptions and values, and is helpful in enabling one to understand better George Eliot's social thought.
the past. These have evolved historically in the interaction of man and social medium and they help to create the "discriminating principles" necessary to maintain a social structure. They can of course be rationally attacked in the name of reason or liberty, but if they are rejected because of this, instead of being allowed to evolve with the developing community consciousness, then society will inevitably become fragmented, with all the consequent dangers that will follow. In the mid-nineteenth century, when religion with difficulty stood up to rational scrutiny, together with the rapid social changes being brought about by industrialism and technology, society was in danger of becoming increasingly relativist. This was especially so in England. The increase and diversification of knowledge had also created an intellectual relativism which brought about further disharmony. For George Eliot this situation is a grave threat to culture and moral values, since the sense of a general consciousness is necessary to sustain these. There was also the threat to the individual. Mary Douglas's account of the increased self-consciousness which results from moral relativism and the lack of any social faith to link the individual with others in the community through shared values would have been well understood by George Eliot. I have already discussed the self-consciousness that afflicts Don Silva and Fedalma because they feel cut off from any social consciousness. This is a theme that is further explored in Daniel Deronda. It is in the light of these ideas that one can better understand George Eliot's interest in nationalism.
Nationalism was undoubtedly the most powerful political expression of organicist thinking in the nineteenth century and the one which most seriously countered those forces which undermined the traditions, values, and customs of specific societies. This was because it could make the individual feel emotionally and spiritually part of an entity that transcended his individual self, one which had evolved and must be defended against destructive forces. This was its attraction for the organicist Romantics in Germany, and also, I believe, for George Eliot. Hans Kohn writes of Arndt:

To Arndt nationalism was not primarily a practical political program or the basis for the broadening of government, but a religious experience, the immersion of the individual into the security and ecstasy of mass-comradeship. In 1813 he wrote: "I have known misfortune; I have suffered; it has scarcely moved me to tears. But when I have thought of the Volk I have always had to weep in the depth of my soul.... Like other men I am egoistic and sinful but in my exaltation I am freed at once from all my sins, I am no longer a single suffering individual, I am one with the Volk and God. In such a moment any doubts about my life and work vanish."

Arndt believed that once the German was united with the Volk, he would overcome his egoism, feel his way into the infinite and the sublime, into God himself. The eighteenth century, Arndt complained, had made too much of the individual; the new nationalism outgrew egoism and thus became an ethical force.

In identifying himself with the Volk, the individual discovered a tribal identity. He was united with others by being part of a historically evolved tradition and culture. Hans Kohn,

54. The Mind of Germany, pp. 78-79.
unsympathetic to Arndt and nationalism, goes on to complain that group-egoism is much more dangerous than individual egoism, but the nationalism of most of the Romantics was compatible with universalism. As Ernst Cassirer has written, their nationalism was designed "to preserve not to conquer":

They had a deep respect for all the innumerable, subtle differences that characterize the life of individuals and nations. To feel and to enjoy these differences, to sympathize with all forms of national life, was to them the real scope and the greatest charm of historical knowledge. The nationalism of the romantics was, therefore, no mere particularism. It was the very contrary. It was not only compatible with a real universalism but presupposed it.55

Some German nationalists who were influenced by Romanticism did however stress German superiority, Adam Müller and Fichte, for example. But even as fervent a German nationalist as Arndt admitted that other nationalities had the same right to separate nationhood as Germany.56 George Eliot's position was certainly not in the least particularist. When Deronda accepts a Jewish role it is the idea of "separateness with communication" (III, 275) that attracts him. Mordecai enlarges on this:


56. Alfred G. Gundt writes in Arndt and the Nationalist Awakening in Germany, p. 130: "Moreover, Arndt continues, the rights which the German claims for himself must also be granted to others, as, for instance, the Italians and the Poles. It should be made a fundamental and inviolable axiom that it is unethical to desire to rule alien peoples, who by virtue of their numerical strength and geographical position are able to exist as separate and independent nations."
"See, then - the nation which has been scoffed at for its separateness, has given a binding theory to the human race. Now in complete unity a part possesses the whole as the whole possesses every part: and in this way human life is tending toward the image of the Supreme Unity . . ." (III, 289).

Races and nationalities in maintaining their separate identities paradoxically foster the unity of mankind as a whole, an idea also found in Herder. As R. R. Ergang writes:

In summary, Herder regarded the development of humanity ... as the purpose of human existence. In order, however, to attain the fullest development the individual must be an integral part of a national group, for the nationality, not the individual, is the unit in the development of humanity. In the development of humanity each nationality functions as an organic unit, and each branch of culture is the organic part of the larger unit.

Herder's nationalism was in its essence humanitarian; it was built around the principle of the essential unity of mankind as a whole.57

George Eliot's support for nationalism is clearly seen in The Spanish Gypsy and Daniel Deronda. In these works her sympathy with the Gypsies and the Jews in their struggle to both develop and preserve their cultural and racial heritage by building a nation is quite plain. The Gypsies and the Jews are examples of the people as Volk, a race which has preserved its organic links with its traditions and is seeking a political identity to stabilise these. Though George Eliot had a particular interest in Jewish culture, the Jews and the Gypsies are best seen as her most important images of organic social groups which maintain their unity through shared traditions and values. In fully accepting

his part in such a community, the individual possesses a tribal identity which preserves him from isolation or alienation and rejects what George Eliot regarded as the untenable positions of demonic and nihilistic egoism. The value she attached to the "Volk-community can be clearly seen in The Spanish Gypsy.

It is interesting that both the Volk-communities George Eliot represented are alienated races, as if it is necessary to experience alienation before recovery is possible. The Gypsies are "wanderers whom no God took knowledge of/ To give them laws ..." (p. 142). Unlike the Jews, they have no great cultural tradition to build on. They have only the power and vision of Zarca: "Because our race has no great memories,/ I will so live it shall remember me ..." (p. 143). Nevertheless they are united by a strong fellow-feeling which is part of their historical heritage:

the fidelity
Of men whose pulses leap with kindred fire,
Who in the flash of eyes, the clasp of hands,
The speech that even in lying tells the truth
Of heritage inevitable as birth,
Nay, in the silent bodily presence feel
The mystic stirring of a common life
Which makes the many one ...

(p. 145).

It is the power of Zarca's organic vision that persuades Fedalma to forego her love for Silva and devote herself to this ideal. But, as I have already said, she is unable to feel a total emotional commitment, though she cannot resist his plea:

To be the angel of a homeless tribe:
To help me bless a race taught by no prophet
And make their name, now but a badge of scorn,
A glorious banner floating in their midst,
Stirring the air they breathe with impulses
Of generous pride, exalting fellowship
Until it soars to magnanimity.
I'll guide my brethren forth to their new land,
Where they shall plant and sow and reap their own,
Serving each other's needs, and so be spurred
To skill in all the arts that succour life;
Where we may knead our first altar-fire
From settled hearths, and call our Holy Place
The hearth that binds us in one family (p. 147).

This is a clear statement of George Eliot's organic ideal. The use of her most important positive key word, "fellowship," indicates her sympathy with Zarca's aim. Fedalma's misfortune is that having been cut off from the Gypsies since early childhood, and her feelings divided because of love for Silva, she can feel few emotional links with them. But she cannot resist the claim Zarca makes on her, which is

a compulsion of a higher sort,
Whose fetters are the net invisible
That hold all life together (p. 156).

The vision of the nation is a means of providing symbolic form for human truths. It is this which Zarca calls on Fedalma to assist in creating. With her help he can lead the Zíncali to a new home where they can experience the community life which nationhood will create for them:

They have a promised land beyond the sea:
There I may lead them, raise my standard, call
The wandering Zíncali to that new home,
And make a nation - bring light, order, law,
Instead of chaos (p. 160).

The imagery George Eliot uses for the Gypsies, the search for the promised land and wandering in the wilderness, is very suggestive of the Jewish theme that is to emerge in *Deronda*. It is this vision of Zarca's and her fear that she may hinder its execution that makes Fedalma renounce her love of Silva. George Eliot's
sympathy with Zarca's aim is again plain when he says: "No curse has fallen on us till we cease / To help each other" (p. 163). He is creating the basis for his people's future identity:

Give it a country, homes, and monuments
Held sacred through the lofty memories
That we shall leave behind us (p. 165).

The ideal of the organic society is also presented by Silva's Jewish servant Sephardo who feels he is defined by his Jewish heritage and its traditions. The importance George Eliot attaches to tradition as the basis of man's best existence is revealed in the following speech by Sephardo:

Two angels guide
The path of man, both aged and yet young,
As angels are, ripening through endless years.
On one he leans: some call her Memory,
And some Tradition; and her voice is sweet,
With deep mysterious accords: the other,
Floating above, holds down a lamp which streams
A light divine and searching on the earth,
Compelling eyes and footsteps. Memory yields,
Yet clings with loving check, and shines anew
Reflecting all the rays of that bright lamp
Our angel Reason holds. We had not walked
But for Tradition; we walk evermore
To higher paths, by brightening Reason's lamp.
Still we are purblind, tottering (p. 215-216).

Silva's fault has been in rejecting his Spanish tradition utterly instead of trying to preserve what is valuable in his past and acting to redirect a Spain in the grip of the Inquisition.

The contrast between the Spaniards' attempt to impose their will by force on other peoples and the Gypsies struggle for self-determination is expressed by Zarca:

Our people's faith
Is faithfulness; not the rote-learned belief
That we are heaven's highest favourites,
But the resolve that being most forsaken
Among the sons of men, we will be true
Each to the other, and our common lot.
You Christians burn men for their heresy:
Our vilest heretic is that Zincala
Who choosing ease, forsakes her people's woes (pp. 288-289).

The Spaniards, believing in the objective truth of their religion,
are convinced it must be forced on everyone and those who resist must be destroyed. But this is a poem which celebrates cultural relativism. The value of the Spanish form of Christianity and the traditions based on it is admitted but it does not express an objective truth that is appropriate for the Gypsies, the Moors, the Jews. No one religion or set of beliefs is objectively true but they may symbolise "truths" that are necessary to man. Each people or race should be allowed to maintain its separate identity and the religion or tradition it has developed. Possibly in her depiction of the Spaniards, George Eliot is attacking nineteenth-century imperialism from an organicist standpoint. But though the poem celebrates the organic ideal, George Eliot's pessimism or realism is evident in the tragic ending. Even the ending of the prophetic Daniel Deronda is ambiguous, for it is far from certain that Deronda will be successful.

In the case of Deronda, the ideal of organic nationhood is most clearly expressed in Chapter 42, in which Mordecai enters into a debate on the subject of nationalism. "Unless nationality is a feeling," he says, "what force can it have as an idea?" (II, 376). He makes the following declaration:

"The life of a people grows, it is knit together and yet expanded, in joy and sorrow, in thought and action: it absorbs the thought of other nations into its own forms, and gives back the thought as new wealth to the world;"

57a. Though George Eliot supports cultural relativism, she is very much against moral relativism in particular societies, but she realised, I think, that an awareness of the one could lead to the other. Her answer to this seems to be that those who have reached self-consciousness and become aware of relativism should nevertheless try to identify with the tradition of a particular society since it will give symbolic expression to truths of human feeling. I shall say more on this in my chapter on Deronda.
it is a power and an organ in the great body of the nations. But there may come a check, an arrest; memories may be stifled, and love may be faint for the lack of them; or memories may shrink into withered relics - the soul of a people, whereby they know themselves to be one, may seem to be dying for want of common actions” (II, 378).

If the latter state of affairs prevails, then the individual should resist it. He opposes the view of another of the speakers that there are inevitable laws of progress which are making societies develop away from nationality. Deronda also objects that change and development cannot be considered apart from men's will and acts. Tendencies in the development of society should not be erected into inevitable laws. Mordecai states that to reject "the prophetic consciousness of our nationality" (II, 382) is to acquiesce in the rejection of all the valuable traditions of Jewish culture. These can only be preserved if Jews identify with this Jewish consciousness which is a product of the past experience of their race and its traditions.

But for this to survive a nation must be created: "Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the growth and form of its religion be an outward reality" (II, 387). Then the specific traditions of the Jews can be preserved and stabilised and they can contribute to the national life of other peoples. The effect of Jewish separateness "will not be completed and have its highest transformation unless our race takes on again the character of nationality."

It is clear from the chapter that it is not only Jewish nationalism that is being urged, but nationalism as an idea. It is the powerful feeling which can create a social faith based on the valuable past traditions of particular peoples. It can create
the sense of corporate consciousness which can make individuals or the social class transcend their own interests for the good of the whole, and realise the value of their tradition and the necessity of maintaining continuity between present and past. Jewish nationalism is used as a symbol of this idea, for

"... Israel is the heart of mankind, if we mean by heart the core of affection which binds a race and its families in dutiful love, and the reverence for the human body which lifts the needs of our animal life into religion, and the tenderness which is merciful to the poor and the weak and to the dumb creature that wears the yoke for us" (II, 384-385).

The alienated condition of the Jews and the forces threatening a separate Jewish identity also suggest that this ideal vision is something that needs to be worked towards despite the social forces which are antagonistic to it.

Mordecai draws parallels between his aims and those of other nations, particularly the achievement of Italian unification and the importance of the vision of Mazzini in creating the sense of national consciousness which made people fight for it. He also refers to the creation of a national consciousness in North America and how the purification of religion in Persia revitalised that country. Deronda also looks forward to a resurgence of nationalism among the Arabs. There is no particularism in Mordecai's nationalism: "I cherish nothing for the Jewish nation, I seek nothing for them, but the good which promises good to all the nations" (II, 394-395). Tradition is not however to be blindly accepted. It acts as the basis, but it must be purified and incorporated with "the experience our greatest sons have gathered from the life of the ages." The Jewish religion is seen less as a body of objective beliefs than as an expression of the spirit of Jewish national life.
It is this vision of Mordecai's that Deronda is drawn to. He has always felt the desire to be "an organic part of social life, instead of roaming in it like a yearning disembodied spirit, stirred with a vague social passion, but without fixed local habitation to render fellowship real" (II, 133). This passage reveals a parallel between Deronda and Ladislaw who also chooses to define himself by taking an active part in social life. As Mordecai's passionate vision is the greatest influence on Deronda's decision, so Dorothea's ardent idealism has a similar effect on Ladislaw. Both these men suffered from alienation and isolation, Deronda's being the greater, and both recover by finding a social role through the influence of enthusiastic, ardent, exceptional people who yearn for the organic ideal.

viii

As the pre-industrial organic communities in George Eliot's novels can be considered as images of the type of social experience modern industrial England should try to achieve in a different form, so the Volk-communities of Gypsies and Jews can also be taken to be examples to England; that is, intended to awaken a similar sense of national consciousness in people and make them feel the need to be "an organic part of social life."

She was aware that English society was less organic than that of other European countries, but it seems probable that part of her aim in encouraging sympathy with nationalism was to suggest that a similar national feeling should be generated in England. She saw for example a special affinity between the Jews and the English.
This can be seen in Theophrastus Such in the chapter called "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!" which deals at length with nationalism and the Jewish question. There she writes:

The European world has long been used to consider the Jews as altogether exceptional... But to consider a people whose ideas have determined the religion of half the world, and that the more cultivated half... as a purely exceptional race, is a demoralising offence against rational knowledge, a stultifying inconsistency in historical interpretation. Every nation of forcible character - i.e., of strongly marked characteristics, is so far exceptional. The distinctive note of each bird-species is in this sense exceptional, but the necessary ground of such distinction is a deeper likeness. The superlative peculiarity in the Jews admitted, our affinity with them is only the more apparent when the elements of their peculiarity are discerned. (pp. 267-268).

All that is really special about the Jews is that they possess "a feeling of race, a sense of corporate existence, unique in its intensity" (p. 270). The narrator goes on to say, making an important comparison: "But not, before the dispersion, unique in essential qualities. There is more likeness than contrast between the way we English got our island and the way the Israelites got Canaan." In particular she sees similarities between the Jews and the Puritans:

Again it has been held that we have a peculiar destiny as a Protestant people... The Puritans, asserting their liberty to restrain tyrants, found the Hebrew history closely symbolical of their feelings and purpose... We must rather refer the passionate use of the Hebrew writings to affinities of disposition between our own race and the Jewish. Is it true that the arrogance of a Jew was so immeasurably beyond that of a Calvinist...? At any rate, seeing that the Jews were more specifically than any other nation educated into a sense of their supreme moral value,

58. It is significant that a comparison is made between Mordecai and the Covenanters in Chapter 46 of Daniel Deronda, Deronda himself comparing him to Scott's Habbakuk Muoklewrath (III, 35).
the chief matter of surprise is that any other nation is found to rival them in this form of self-confidence (pp. 270-271).

She also compared Englishmen alienated from their own country with alienated Jews. In both cases the sense of national heritage gives the individual a sense of identity and value:

... the consciousness of having a native country, the birthplace of common memories and habits of mind, existing like a parental hearth quitted but beloved; the dignity of being included in a people which has a part in the comity of nations and the growing federation of the world; that sense of special belonging which is the root of human virtues, both public and private, - all these spiritual links may preserve migratory Englishmen from the worst consequences of their voluntary dispersion (p. 279).

This both defines what George Eliot means by the organic society and suggests why she thinks nationalism can most effectively preserve it.

Theophrastus Such is worth more consideration because it is the most powerful expression of George Eliot's own English nationalism. Though the work is severely critical of English characteristics and attitudes, this criticism is only the outcome of her concern with her native country and her strong desire to protect it against those forces which, she thought, were undermining the spiritual basis of English life. The opening chapter, "Looking Backward," shows a strong attachment to the traditions of English life: "Altogether, my father's England seemed to me lovable, laudable, full of good men, and having good rulers ..." (p. 38). Both tradition and change are an integral part of the English spirit: "Is there any country which shows at once as much
stability and as much susceptibility to change as ours?" (p. 39).

National life is compared to scenery we have learned to love in childhood, and though the scenery is always gradually changing the original feeling is preserved. A personal note is present in the statement that "our midland plains have never lost their familiar expression and conservative spirit for me ..." (p. 39). It is important that the narrator recognises that this vision of the past may be an illusion, yet nevertheless believes it reflects an inner truth:

... the illusions that began for us when we were less acquainted with evil have not lost their value when we discern them to be illusions. They feed the Ideal Better, and in loving them still, we strengthen the precious habit of loving something not visibly, tangibly existent, but a spiritual product of our visible tangible selves (p. 42).

George Eliot is still well aware of the dangerous energies in the self: "There are fierce beasts within; chain them, chain them, and let them learn to cower before the creature with wider reason" (p. 123). This can only be done effectively if men are part of a moral community in which fellowship based on shared values and traditions is possible. In Theophrastus Such she is trying to convince her readers that a sense of nationality can accomplish this. The narrator argues that we must be true to those deep-seated feelings formed early in life. Someone who possesses these feelings but denies them "has his character hopelessly jangled and out of tune" (p. 132). In a chapter called "Debasing The Moral Currency" there is a strong attack on destructive mockery of a nation's culture or traditions, burlesquing Shakespeare being cited as an example. This spirit of mockery sees "no reason ... why it
should not appropriate every sacred, heroic, and pathetic theme which serves to make up the treasure of human admiration, hope, and love" (p. 148). This results in "the robbery of our mental wealth," degrades "healthy appetites and affections," and "turns the hard-won order of life into a second chaos hideous enough to make one wail that the first was ever thrilled with light" (p. 149).

The cultural traditions of the past are objectifications of valuable human feelings, symbolic forms which relate man and society to something which transcends self-interest and controls moral relativism: "... let that moral currency be emptied of its value - let a greedy buffoonery debase all historic beauty, majesty, and pathos, and the more you heap up the desecrated symbols the greater will be the lack of the ennobling emotions which subdue the tyranny of suffering, and make ambition one with social virtue" (p. 150). If images which symbolise reverence are undermined, individual moral feelings will lack sustenance and "our too easily perishable civilisation" will suffer. Sainte-Beuve is quoted to the effect that civilisation is a construct invented by man to support certain feelings and values: "La civilisation, la vie est une chose apprise et inventée, qu'on le sache bien ... Les hommes après quelques années de paix oublient trop cette vérité: ils arrivent à croire que la culture est une chose innée, qu'elle est la même chose que la nature. La sauvagerie est toujours là à deux pas, et, dès qu'on lâche pied, elle recommence" (p. 152). Civilisation needs "the spiritual police of sentiments or ideal feelings" to support it. And for George Eliot a sense of nationality is
regarded as the most powerful emotional means of preventing rationalistic or mocking undercutting of images of reverence.

In "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!" this nationalism is strongly stated. The narrator claims that "the preservation of national memories is an element and a means of national greatness ... every heroic defender, every patriotic restorer has been inspired by such memories and made them his watchword ..." (p. 260).

Reference is made to the example of Italy which had been held in low esteem by all Europe until Mazzini had inspired a sense of nationality. The English should respect and honour their true ancestry and the ideas and traditions the founders of the nation revered. It is "patriotic affection and every other affection which lifts us above emigrating rats and free-loving baboons ..." (p. 263). In the following passage the connection between nationalism and the organic society is clearly stated:

The eminence, the nobleness of a people, depends on its capability of being stirred by memories, and of striving for what we call spiritual ends - ends which consist not in immediate material possession, but in the satisfaction of a great feeling that animates the collective body as with one soul. A people having the seed of worthiness in it must feel an answering thrill when it is adjured by the deaths of its heroes who died to preserve its national existence ... It is this living force of sentiment in common which makes a national consciousness... An individual man to be harmoniously great, must belong to a nation of this order, if not in actual existence yet existing in the past, in memory, as a departed, invisible, beloved ideal, once a reality, and perhaps to be restored. A common humanity is not yet enough to feed the rich blood of various activity which makes a complete man... I am not bound to feel for a Chinaman as I feel for my fellow-countryman ... (pp. 265-266).

The last part of this quotation recalls Sephardo's remark in The Spanish Gypsy that it is monstrous to have no special
preferences or allegiances. The narrator goes on to say that an interest in one’s own native poetry is more important than an interest in, for example, Chinese poetry: “Affection, intelligence, duty, radiate from a centre, and nature has decided that for us English folk that centre can be neither China nor Peru.” But cultural relativism is evident in the warning that “we should recognise a corresponding attachment to nationality as legitimate in every other people, and understand that its absence is a privation of the greatest good.”

It is apparent that George Eliot is not the kind of nationalist who believes that nationality and race are part of the nature of things, and so must be preserved. She is much more interested in nationalism as a means of binding a society, creating the common beliefs and symbols necessary to make it organic. It offers the individual something beyond his own ego and personal interests to relate to. It can thus help create the “new Mythus” Carlyle thought indispensable to give new form to the essential content of religion. It is what results from nationalism which is repeatedly stressed: “The pride which identifies us with a great historic body is a humanising, elevating habit of mind, inspiring sacrifices of individual comfort, gain, or other selfish ambition, for the sake of that ideal whole; and no man swayed by such a sentiment can become completely abject” (p. 280). The individual needs to identify himself with a national consciousness if he is to find what George Eliot regards as a valid identity: “... not only the nobleness of a nation depends on this national consciousness, but also the nobleness of each individual citizen” (p. 266). This relationship to something beyond oneself but which one feels
emotionally a part of inspires a transcendence of egoism and self-interest. It is because of this that we should sympathise with those, like the Jews, who are trying to achieve national self-determination.

George Eliot is aware that nationalism can lead to xenophobia, but she hopes that the nationalism she urges will lead to greater understanding of foreign nations and peoples. Nevertheless she fears that a distinctive English nationality may be threatened by fusion with foreign peoples, "that [the English people's] distinctive national characteristics should be in danger of obliteration by the predominating quality of foreign settlers" (p. 283). She would like to keep the English language "undefiled by foreign accent ..." and is afraid of the influence of "wealth-acquiring immigrants," who have no feeling for English political and social life. However she is aware that the English are also infiltrating foreign countries. Fusion of races is accepted as an unavoidable, if regrettable, development: "all we can do is to moderate its course so as to hinder it from degrading the

59. Cf. Arndt's view: "For the greatest evil, according to Arndt, is to have states within states and nations within a nation, nations which constitute alien, unassimilated and even superior groups" (Pundt, p. 133). It is interesting, in the light of George Eliot's support for the Jews, that Arndt considers them an alien element in Germany, though respecting the Jewish people as such. Herder's views were also similar to George Eliot's. He wrote: "Nothing ... is more manifestly contrary to the purpose of political government than the unnatural enlargement of states, the wild mixing of various races and nationalities under one sceptre.... Such states are but patched-up contraptions, fragile machines, appropriately called state-machines, for they are wholly devoid of inner life, and their component parts are connected through mechanical contrivances instead of bonds of sentiment" (J. G. Hürder on Social and Political Culture, ed. Barnard, p. 324).
moral status of societies by a too rapid effacement of those national traditions and customs which are the language of the national genius - the deep suckers of healthy sentiment" (p. 285). Again the emphasis is on the value of nationalism and on the "idea" underlying it.

Though George Eliot's English cultural nationalism may seem rather odd taken by itself in the age of British Imperialism, if it is related to other elements in her thought it becomes comprehensible. Her fears of the consequences of disbelief in Christianity, the dangers of an individualism cut off from moral restraints, the cultural disaster that would occur if society became merely agglomerative or rigidly hierarchical like some animal societies, these made her look to nationalism as the most powerful means of counteracting such forces and providing the basis for the "coherent social faith and order" which would again make society organic. Her own strong feeling of being English, the sense this gave her of being different from people brought up under different conditions and united with English people through a shared language and common traditions, suggested to her, as it did to the German Romantics, that cultural nationalism could provide the basis for a social faith which could preserve society and the content of religious values even if the forms of religion were rejected.

In the past religion had been the most powerful support of the organic society because it provided a set of common symbols which helped create the sense of corporate consciousness necessary
in such a society. If it could no longer do this, then an alternative was required which could give symbolic form to those human "truths" which were needed to provide men with a sense of meaning and value. For George Eliot, nationalism seemed best able to accomplish this. It was something people could feel to be true because it answered human yearnings for a tribal identity, and it necessarily supported traditions which had valuable human content. The individual need no longer feel isolated and cut off from the past, but could belong to a community in which he could overcome such alienation. The corporate consciousness possible in such a community made spiritual communion and common values possible.

But George Eliot was aware that the organic society was an ideal. Quite possibly it might never be possible to realise the vision of a Zorba or a Mordcai. But their vision was an ideal

60. George Eliot's social views have interesting similarities to Durkheim's, as Sir Isaiah Berlin's account illustrates: "Durkheim ... taught that no society could remain stable without a high degree of social solidarity between its members; this in its turn depended on the prevalence in it of dominant social myths bound up with appropriate ritual and ceremonial; religion had in the past been by far the most powerful of those forms of social cement. Myths are not for Durkheim false beliefs about reality. They are not beliefs about anything, but beliefs in something - in descent from a common ancestor, in transforming events in a common past, in common traditions, in shared symbols enshrined in a common language, above all, in symbols sanctified by religion and history. The function of myths is to bind a society, create a structure governed by rules and habits, without which the individual may suffer from a sense of isolation and solitude, may experience anxiety, feel lost, which in its turn leads to lawlessness and social chaos" ("Georges Sorel," TLS, 31/12/71, 1620).
which could give form to action. Even if contemporary England was a severely fragmented society with no social faith to make it organic, and this seems to be George Eliot's view in both Deronda and Theophrastus Such, it was possible to possess an ideal vision of what society could be like and to work for this ideal. The endings of the last four novels illustrate this. Romola, Felix and Esther, Dorothea and Ladislaw, and Deronda all commit themselves in various ways to a social ideal.

Even if the individual, then, does exist in an alien environment, this ideal vision of what society could become provides him with a stable sense of identity in relation to such a vision, similar to that possessed by a character fortunate enough to inhabit an organic community, like the later Silas Marner. Without such a vision, he had no resistance against the fragmentation and disorder of the social world. For George Eliot alienation is an adaptive response of man to his environment, the response of the mind to an intolerable situation. An unpublished poem, "In a London Drawing Room," illustrates the development of such alienation as a reaction to a spiritually dead environment:

No figure lingering
Pauses to feed the hunger of the eye
Or rest a little on the lap of life.
All hurry on a look upon the ground,
Or glance unmarking at the passers by.
The wheels are hurrying too, cabs, carriages
All closed in multiplied identity.
The world seems one huge prison-house & court
Where men are punished at the slightest cost,
With lowest rate of colour, warmth & joy. 51

Her positive characters are able to avoid this state of mind by finding a social role, even if this role is based only on an ideal vision of a spiritually organic society. Society is also to some extent protected from subversive forces by people who possess such a vision. This is the significance of the ending of Middlemarch in which it is said that though a character like Dorothea can expect to have little effect on her social world, her influence may play an important part in its development:

But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs (III, 465).
CHAPTER VI

MEMORY AND "THE MILL ON THE FLOSS"

Another crucial aspect of George Eliot's organicism is her conception of memory. As tradition creates continuity in the life of a nation, providing it with a secure cultural identity, so memory performs a similar function in the individual life. Any valid sense of selfhood must be organic: there must be continuity between the formative experiences of one's past and one's present self. If this sense of continuity is broken, an individual will suffer from alienation or a feeling of emotional deprivation.

The organic nature of memory is seen clearly in Theophrastus. Such in a reference to "the divine gift of a memory which inspires the moments with a past, a present, and a future, and gives the sense of corporate existence that raises man above the otherwise more respectable and innocent brute ..." (pp. 261-262). This continuity is necessary both for the individual consciousness and for the general consciousness of society. It is important to notice that the reference is to "the sense of corporate existence." It is the psychological reality that is stressed, not something

objectively real. It is possible for society to lack continuity with the past or for an individual to reject his past. But if this occurs, George Eliot believes that neither society nor the individual will possess a tenable identity.

It is particularly memories of childhood which are fundamental to a person's being. The influence of Wordsworth's view of the child is obvious in the "Wisdom of the Child" section of "Poetry and Prose, from the Notebook of an Eccentric." Wordsworthian features are also evident in *The Mill on the Floss* and in the poem "Brother and Sister":

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Long years have left their writing on my brow,
But yet the freshness and the dew-fed beam
Of those young mornings are about me now...

The firmaments of daisies since to me
Have had those mornings in their opening eyes,
The bunched cowslip's pale transparency
Carries that sunshine of sweet memories,

And wild-rose branches take their finest scent
From those blest hours of infantine content (p. 198).
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These experiences created "The fear, the love, the primal passionate store, / Whose shaping impulses make manhood whole" (p. 201). The self is seen as growing and developing in time, not as empty consciousness. Memories of the past are felt as an integral part of the narrator's present identity:

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The wide-arched bridge, the scented elder-flowers,
The wondrous watery rings that died too soon,
The echoes of the quarry, the still hours
With white robe sweeping-on the shadeless noon,

Were but my growing self, are part of me,
My present past, my root of piety (p. 202).
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Though the passing of the years, "whose awful name is Change ..." (p. 207), necessarily cuts the brother and sister off from their childhood oneness, memory nevertheless allows them to remain in touch with the feelings of that time, and their experiences cannot be separated from their present selves: "His years with others must the sweeter be / For those brief days he spent in loving me" (p. 205).

Another interesting reference to childhood memory is to be found in a speech of Fedalma to her father in The Spanish Gypsy:

> Look at these hands! You say when they were little They played about the gold upon your neck. I do believe it, for their tiny pulse Made record of it in the inmost coil Of growing memory (p. 153).

Even though she has no conscious recollection of it, she feels that such early experiences have created the fabric of her being. She cannot bring herself to repudiate them even for love, though this places a tremendous strain on her life, since her love for Silva is also part of her past, of memory. In the case of Don Silva, he cannot cease longing for those memories that are inextricably a part of his being despite the efforts of his will to free himself from them:

He yearned towards images that had breath in them, That sprang warm palpitant with memories From streets and altars, from ancestral homes Banners and trophies and the cherishing rays Of shame and honour in the eyes of man. These made the speech articulate of his soul, That could not move to utterance of scorn Save in words bred by fellowship; could not feel Resolve of hardest constancy to love The firmer for the sorrows of the loved, Save by concurrent energies high-wrought To sensibilities transcending sense Through close community, and long-shared pains Of far-off generations (p. 312-313).
And it is their commitment to irreconcilable memories that must separate Silva and Fedalma:

Yet their steps slackened as they paused apart,
Pressed backward by the force of memories
Which reigned supreme as death above desire (p. 366).

In the novels there are many illustrations of George Eliot's organic conception of memory. A passage in *Adam Bede* has important implications:

So much of our early gladness vanishes utterly from our memory: we can never recall the joy, with which we laid our heads on our mother's bosom or rode on our father's back in childhood; doubtless that joy is wrought up into our nature, as the sunlight of long-past mornings is wrought up in the soft mellowness of the apricot, but is gone for ever from our imagination, and we can only believe in the joy of childhood (I, 331).

But though childhood amnesia necessarily cuts us off from most of the experiences that have shaped our selfhood, they nevertheless remain part of us. George Eliot also believes it is possible to have experiences similar to Proust's involuntary memory which can put one in touch again with childhood in all its felt intensity, and though a person may be for the most part unconscious of how his past has shaped his present life, if he is cut off from objects or places which embody valuable feelings and experiences of his past life, he will suffer a sense of self-alienation. *The Mill on the Floss* contains examples of both these forms of memory experience, as I shall try to show presently.

The influence of Wordsworth is strongly present in the importance attached to particular objects, places or situations which take on a special emotional significance in relation to the memories of the individual concerned. Subjectivity is thus part
of all objective experience, making the world, my world, as the following passage from Adam Bede shows:

The secret of our emotions never lies in the bare object, but in its subtle relations to our own past: no wonder the secret escapes the unsympathising observer, who might as well put on his spectacles to discern odours (I, 300).

The scene in which Adam in examining a beach tree before seeing Hetty and Arthur together is a good example of a powerful subjective experience which is preserved by memory and becomes an inseparable part of one's future self: "For the rest of his life he remembered that moment when he was calmly examining the beech, as a man remembers his last glimpse of the home where his youth was passed, before the road turned, and he saw it no more" (II, 10). It is not so much jealousy that makes this such a shattering experience for Adam, but the fact that it alters his past relationship to Arthur, something deeply felt in his life. Arthur's conduct threatens to nullify these feelings which are preserved by memory: "a terrible scorching light showed him the hidden letters that changed the meaning of the past" (II, 12). Adam feels threatened by an event which undermines the sense of continuity he feels between his present and past life.

The importance of preserving continuity with one's past is particularly evident in Silas Marner. With his loss of religious faith, he becomes alienated from valuable memories:

Minds that have been unhinged from their old faith and love, have perhaps sought this influence of exile, in which the past becomes dreamy because its symbols have all vanished, and the present too is dreamy because it is linked with no memories (p. 20).
It is this as much as his separation from the people of Raveloe that is responsible for his alienation:

He hated the thought of the past; there was nothing that called out his love and fellowship toward the strangers he had come amongst; and the future was all dark, for there was no Unseen Love that cared for him. Thought was arrested by utter bewilderment, now its old pathway was closed, and affection seemed to have died under the bruise that had fallen on its keenest nerves (p. 23).

Lacking "organic" continuity between his present and past he constructs a "mechanical" way of life for himself:

Strangely Warner's face and figure shrank and bent themselves into a constant mechanical relation to the objects of his life, so that he produced the same sort of impression as a handle or a crooked tube, which has no meaning standing apart (p. 29).

He must relate himself again to his past before he can become securely a part of the community life of Raveloe.

The coming of Eppie and his closer involvement with Raveloe life which is a result of this help him integrate his memories with his present life and thus recover an authentic identity:

"As the child's mind was growing into knowledge, his mind was growing into memory: as her life unfolded, his soul, long stupified in a cold narrow prison, was unfolding too, and trembling into full consciousness" (p. 194). And later:

By seeking what was needful for Eppie, by sharing the effect that everything produced on her, he had himself come to appropriate the forms of custom and belief which were the mould of Raveloe life; and as, with reawakening sensibilities, memory also reawakened, he had begun to ponder over the elements of his old faith, and blend them with his new impressions, till he recovered a consciousness of unity between his past and present (p. 213).

Far from his past life and beliefs being rejected, they are essential to his new way of life. In living with Eppie in Raveloe
he finds a form of life which can accommodate the valuable content of his earlier Christianity. The sense of identity he achieves in Raveloe with Eppie is organic: there is a continuity with those past experiences which are basic to his selfhood.

It is interesting that Silas has some experiences akin to Proust's involuntary memory. The first is early in his life in Raveloe. Though nothing comes of it, it suggests the importance memory will have in his recovery from alienation:

One day, taking a pair of shoes to be mended, he saw the cobbler's wife seated by the fire, suffering from the terrible symptoms of heart-disease and dropsy, which he had witnessed as the precursors of his mother's death. He felt a rush of pity at the mingled sight and remembrance, and, recalling the relief his mother had found from a simple preparation of foxglove, he promised Sally Gates to bring her something that would ease her, since the doctor did her no good. In this office of charity, Silas felt, for the first time since he had come to Raveloe, a sense of unity between his past and present life, which might have been the beginning of his rescue from the insect-like existence into which his nature had shrunk (pp. 24-25).

Silas needs to make this momentary sense of continuity a stable factor in his life. It is Eppie who enables him to achieve this, and her coming also triggers off an involuntary memory which connects him with a valuable part of his past he has almost forgotten:

Could this be his little sister come back to him in a dream - his little sister whom he had carried about in his arms for a year before she died, when he was a small boy without shoes and stockings? (p. 170).

This experience is the beginning of a new sense of connection with his past.

In Eppie's final decision to stay with Silas and to reject her natural father memory is also important. Her relationship
to Godfrey is a purely formal or "mechanical" one. It has no roots in the past and since she has never known him as a father, she can have no special feelings for him. In "organic" terms Silas is her father because they have always lived as father and daughter, as Silas points out: "Your coming now and saying 'I'm her father' doesn't alter the feelings inside us. It’s me she's been calling her father ever since she could say the word" (p. 255). And it is more than Silas she chooses: it is life in the community of Raveloe in which she has been brought up and which she feels is inextricably part of her. To take her place in the class-conscious world of the Cusses would cut her off from this. Eppie instinctively realises it: "I wasn't brought up to be a lady, and I can't turn my mind to it. I like the working-folks, and their victuals, and their ways" (p. 259).

A similar situation is created when Esther Lyon, upper-class by birth, inherits Transome Court. Though Esther had dreamed of such a life, the fact that it would involve rejecting her past roots makes her uneasy:

"You would always live with me, father?" Esther spoke under a strong impulse - partly affection, partly the need to grasp at some moral help. But she had no sooner uttered the words than they raised a vision, showing, as by a flash of lightning, the incongruity of that past which had created the sanctities and affections of her life with that future which was coming to her (II, 186).

Her stay at Transome Court only heightens this feeling:

Every day she was getting more clearly into her imagination what it would be to abandon her own past, and what she would enter into in exchange for it; what it would be to disturb a long possession, and how difficult it was to fix a point at which the disturbance might begin, so as to be contemplated without pain (pp. 213-214).
She finally rejects her inheritance. For her, unlike her father, it was not providential but the result of bizarre circumstances. It would cut her off from her own past which her feelings of loss and Felix's example have made her see the value of, and it would deprive Harold of an inheritance rightfully his despite legal technicalities.

With Adam Bede also, there is the necessity to establish a sense of continuity between his love for Hetty and his love for Dinah. Though his relationship with Hetty is so ill-fated, it cannot be separated from his future being. Love itself, the narrator states, stirs "the long-winding fibres of your memory, and enriches your present with your most precious past" (II, 311). Adam's first experience of love is one that remains with him always:

But the first glad moment of first love is a vision which returns to us to the last, and brings with it a thrill of feeling intense and special as a recurrent sensation of a sweet odour breathed in a far-off hour of happiness. It is a memory that gives a more exquisite touch to tenderness, that feeds the madness of jealousy, and adds the last keenness to the agony of despair (I, 331-332).

In Adam's love for Dinah, his memories of his first love are central:

And Dinah was so bound up with the sad memories of his first passion, that he was not forsaking them, but rather giving them a new sacredness by loving her. Nay, his love had grown out of that past: it was the noon of that morning (II, 325).

Even though he feels his love for Dinah is purer, that for Hetty is not rejected:

Tender and deep as his love for Hetty had been - so deep that the roots of it would never be torn away - his love for Dinah was better and more precious to him; for it was the
outgrowth of that fuller life which had come to him from his acquaintance with deep sorrow (II, 365).

His marriage with Dinah creates a continuity between his present and past life, one which does not deny but includes past heartaches and sorrows. But though this is what George Eliot intends, she perhaps fails to make it artistically convincing. The marriage of Adam and Dinah was not part of her original intention and one feels she is struggling to make it artistically justifiable.

If an individual is cut off from valuable memories, his sense of identity may be threatened. He feels a sense of inner emptiness; potentialities of feeling lack objects which could provide them with a means of expression. Life can seem to be devoid of meaning. This experience is most clearly dramatised in Silas Marner. But it is also the experience of Mirah in Daniel Deronda. Believing herself to be irrecoverably alienated from her past, life loses meaning and she wants to die: "I could not hear memories any more: I could only feel what was present in me - it was all one longing to cease from my weary life, which seemed only a pain outside the great peace I might enter into" (I, 333). Her father had earlier done his best to make her forget the past but she had "clung with all her affection to the memory of her mother and the fellowship of her people" (III, 183).

When she seems irretrievably cut off from her memories, she suffers an identity crisis which makes her attempt suicide.

Even the prophet Vordecai in Daniel Deronda is greatly concerned with memory. He is not trying to create for the Jews a new future, but rather a future which will make it possible for Jewish traditions and values to have a stable existence and make
their influence felt in future life. It was "that conception of a blended past and future which was the mistress of his soul ..." (II, 303). He refers to those "who laboured with their hands for scant bread, but preserved and enlarged for us the heritage of memory, and saved the soul of Israel alive as a seed among the tombs" (II, 370). The heritage of Israel "is the inborn half of memory, moving as in a dream among writings on the walls, which it sees dimly but cannot divide into speech" (II, 393). The United States, he says, was formed by those with "memories of Europe, corrected by the vision of a better" (II, 395).

In Middlemarch also, a novel, in which memory is of comparatively minor importance, there are several significant references to it. With Dorothea, memory does not relate so much to early experience as to vividly felt moments which become part of her being, as on the first occasion on which she really becomes aware of the otherness of Mr. Casaubon, when he rejects her warmth of feeling:

But Dorothea remembered it to the last with the vividness with which we all remember epochs in our experience when some dear expectation dies, or some new motive is born (I, 323).

Her experiences in Rome and witnessing Featherstone's funeral have a similar effect on her consciousness:

But for her visitors Dorothea too might have been shut up in the library, and would not have witnessed this scene of old Featherstone's funeral, which, aloof as it seemed to be from the tenor of her life, always afterwards came back to her at the touch of certain sensitive points in memory, just as the vision of St. Peter's at Rome was inwoven with moods of despondency. Scenes which make vital changes in our neighbours' lot are but the background of our own, yet, like a particular aspect of the fields and trees, they become associated for us with the epochs of our own history, and make a part of that unity which lies in the selection of our keenest consciousness (II, 79-80).
Memory can put an individual in touch with those moments of most heightened consciousness which have combined to create his or her distinctive selfhood. Nor is it only moments of happiness one must remain in contact with, as the above examples show.

It is not only the most important characters who experience the power of memory. Mrs. Vincy has a significant memory experience when Fred is dangerously ill:

All the deepest fibres of the mother's memory were stirred, and the young man whose voice took a gentler tone when he spoke to her, was one with the babe she had loved, with a love new to her, before he was born (I, 404-405).

But memory figures most significantly in Middlemarch in relation to Bulstrode. He has tried to suppress his past life and create an image for himself as a virtuous Christian, superior in religion and good acts to his neighbours. But he knows his past life conflicts with this image. Though without the self-awareness of Tito who consciously tries to separate his self from his roles, Bulstrode is in effect playing a role which depends on the concealment of his past life for the sake of creating his own image in the eyes of others, and is in fact allowing others to define his identity, for the role he plays is only completely real to them, not to himself. When this role is shattered by the discovery of facts which conflict with it, he has no defence against the judgments of others and feels himself defined by such judgments and forced to accept them. He has tacitly admitted his guilt and shame in concealing his past, both to them and to himself. This is why he suffers such agonies when Raffles threatens to expose
him and goes to such lengths to preserve his reputation in the eyes of others. In refusing to acknowledge his past acts he has denied himself a sense of unified selfhood rooted in the past, which can resist unfortunate circumstances and can face being judged by others quite openly. When threatened with exposure, he also discovers in his emotional crisis that it was an illusion to believe that he could reject his past. It is a part of his memory and cannot be wholly suppressed. His crisis reveals to him that it is still an integral part of his consciousness:

It was not that he was in danger of legal punishment or of begging: he was in danger only of seeing disclosed to the judgment of his neighbours and the mournful perception of his wife certain facts of his past life which would render him an object of scorn and an opprobrium of the religion with which he had diligently associated himself. The terror of being judged sharpens the memory: it sends an inevitable glare over that long-unvisited past which has been habitually recalled only in general phases. Even without memory, the life is bound into one by a zone of dependence in growth and decay; but intense memory forces a man to own his blameworthy past. With memory set smarting like a reopened wound, a man’s past is not simply a dead history, an outworn preparation of the present: it is not a repeated error, shaken loose from the life: it is a still quivering part of himself, bringing shudders and bitter flavours and the tinglings of a merited shame.

....The successive events inward and outward were there in one view: though each might be dwelt on in turn, the rest still kept their hold in the consciousness (III, 125–126).

Bulstrode discovers the unity of his life and of his consciousness. His past acts are a part of himself, not only because their consequences create a chain of events which affects his subsequent life. It is sheer chance that this is so: Raffles discovery of a letter with his name on it. Most important is that memory and feeling make him directly experience how inseparable his past and present lives are. As the epigraph from Chapter 70
states: "Our deeds still travel with us from afar, / And what we have been makes us what we are." It is also true that the opinion of others is a central part of one's identity: "Who can know how much of his most inward life is made up of the thoughts he believes other men to have about him, until that fabric of opinion is threatened with ruin?" (III, 238). But in Bulstrode's case, the judgment of others becomes so important that he is forced to base his life on a lie. This denies him the possibility of a firmly based identity which takes his past into account. This man who has dominated others by the force of his will and sense of superiority feels himself powerless to resist their judgments of him. Dorothea and Ladislaw also have to contend with the judgments of others, but in being true to themselves and acting in accordance with what they feel to be their whole selves, they are able to prevent the opinions of others becoming a tyranny. They have sufficient assurance in their own selfhood to feel free to be themselves despite the often adverse judgments of others.

George Eliot's concept of memory is an integral part of her thought. One can see links not only with Wordsworth but with later writers on memory like Bergson and Proust. She believes like Bergson for example that our lives have a wholeness, that the past is interfused with the present and that memory is crucial if one is to possess a valid sense of identity. This is because it allows

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3. Possibly Spencer's view of memory in his Principles of Psychology, I, 444-452, had some influence on her.
us to act in accordance with our entire experience. An action based on a conscious act of will which takes no account of the past, or an action which is the product of a momentary impulse is inauthentic: it is not an act which gives expression to our complete sense of self. Such acts may result in self-alienation. A comment in "Janet's Repentance" illustrates her attitude: "There are moments when by some strange impulse we contradict our past selves - fatal moments, when a fit of passion, like a lava stream, lays low the work of half our lives" (II, 197). She is aware that it is possible to lead this impulsive mode of life, that the continuity of selfhood she believes desirable is not something given in itself, but must be chosen. This is a prime element in George Eliot's solution to the problem of identity in a world devoid of transcendent values, one strikingly different from the demonic position of Nietzsche. He was aware, like George Eliot, that continuity of selfhood was not in itself a reality, but in contrast to her he advocated the rejection of the entire concept. Selfhood must be perpetually renewed since there was no absolute value beyond the self to provide a basis for stability and continuity.

4. It is interesting that this demonic impulse is a product of Janet Dempster's resentment: "... for the first time in her life her resentment overcame the long-cherished pride that made her hide her griefs from the world." This is another illustration of the relation George Eliot sees between the demonic and resentment.
But for George Eliot one must discover or invent such stability and continuity, and for her this can be achieved through memory and through the possession of a social ideal which gives the self something to work towards.

There is another interesting passage in "Janet's Repentence":

The drowning man, urged by the supreme agony, lives in an instant through all his unhappy past: when the dark flood has fallen like a curtain, memory, in a single moment, sees the drama acted over again. And even in those earlier crises, which are but types of death - when we are cut off abruptly from the life we have known, when we can no longer expect to-morrow to resemble yesterday, and find ourselves by some sudden shock on the confines of the unknown - there is often the same sort of lightning-flash through the dark and unfrequented chambers of memory (II, 201).

Here she conceives of the sense of continuity in one's life as a psychic need which one becomes especially aware of in times of crisis. When this sense is lost a breakdown of identity takes place which is compared to drowning and resembles death. The demonic advocacy of will and impulse for her leads to such an identity breakdown, a kind of death for the self. Janet Dempster has allowed herself to succumb to this with traumatic effects: "It seemed as if there was a demon in me always making me rush to do what I longed not to do.... I feel sure that demon will be always urging me to satisfy the craving that comes upon me, and the days will go on as they have done through all these miserable years" (II, 223-224). Her alienation is the product of obeying this impulse rather than choosing to be true to her sense of continuity of selfhood which she also feels is present in her urging her to resist her demon.

The relation of memory to identity links George Eliot closely to Proust. Though the experience of involuntary memory is,
of course, less powerfully present in her works, there are
experiences of a similar nature, and for her as for Proust and
Bergson, memory is a faculty on its own and not merely a weak form
of perception. For Proust also, it is the experience of unified
selfhood that is important. Involuntary memory both preserves
those most intense and valuable experiences of the past and
supports a sense of identity that is necessarily fragile because
it must relate to a time-bound world. As Adele King writes of
Proust:

Involuntary memory brings a sense of personal identity.
It is the same self that remembers two disparate but
similar sensations and has an identity throughout the
span of time between them. The dejected middle-aged
narrator and the child of Combray are the same person....
Marcel's proof of his identity might be stated, "I have
involuntary memories, therefore I am".

She goes on to say of the madeleine experience: "A forgotten part
of his past is resurrected and he is no longer alienated from his
true self.... By joining past and present sensations it allows
Marcel to recapture the same kind of unity of vision that he had as
a child." Memory performs a similar function for the characters
of George Eliot, in both providing the individual with an organic
sense of identity and maintaining contact with the time of
childhood, when the potentialities for experience were at their
greatest.

It is in The Mill on the Floss that memory is most important,
and it is perhaps central to any full understanding of the novel.

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Proust greatly admired it and possibly his *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* was directly influenced by it. As in Proust's novel, *The Mill* comes into being as the result of something like an experience of involuntary memory, of Dorlcote Mill and the Floss, by the narrator. The influence of Wordsworth on the treatment of Maggie's early years has also often been noted. But such Wordsworthian parallels should not blind one to the fact that the world of the novel is very far removed from Wordsworth's and has a great many similarities to the world of Hardy's novels. This has important consequences for George Eliot's treatment of memory and the experience of the past in the lives of her characters.

The Hardy-like features of the novel are apparent in the importance of chance and accident in affecting the development of character and events. George Eliot, like Hardy, is constantly forcing on the reader the realisation that external reality is unstructured, that events occur without having any connection with man's interests, and that there is no providence at work which will make everything turn out right in the end. Mr. Tulliver's assertion that it is "a puzzling world" is much emphasised. There are numerous examples of this disorder in experience. There is Mr. Tulliver's disastrous decision about Tom's schooling in which no one is really to blame, but which nevertheless has serious effects on Tom's later development and cannot be undone.

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The narrator takes the opportunity of satirising the "whatever is, is right" philosophy over this incident:

Nature herself occasionally quarters an inconvenient parasite on an animal towards whom she has otherwise no ill-will. What then? We admire her care for the parasite. If Mr Riley had shrunk from giving a recommendation that was not based on valid evidence, he would not have helped Mr Stelling to a paying pupil, and that would not have been so well for the reverend gentleman (1, 35).

Other examples of the disorder of events are Mrs. Tulliver's warnings to her husband not to go to law which have precisely the opposite effect, her equally unfortunate attempt to dissuade Waken from buying the mill and putting the idea in his head, a particularly Hardy-like touch, and Tom's repaying of his father's debts which paradoxically leads to Mr. Tulliver's attack on Waken and his subsequent death.

Maggie and the other characters are caught up in a world of tangled circumstance and this is an important part of the novel's meaning. George Eliot modifies Novalis's "Character is destiny" by adding that circumstances cannot be left out of account. Maggie's flight with Stephen Guest and what developed out of this would never have taken place if Lucy had not schemed to bring about a meeting between Philip and Maggie which Philip could not fulfil, thus making possible the boating trip. The fact that Maggie's elopement, the most dramatic event in the novel, might never have happened without these chance circumstances is part of the point.

There is also no fate or providence in this novel. Certain events like the flood simply happen. They are neither good nor bad in themselves. Other events are the product of the acts of others, over which the individuals affected have no control, the effect of
the lawsuit on Tom and Maggie for example, or else circumstances create unexpected turns of event which no one could have anticipated, but which nevertheless have serious consequences. Mr. Tulliver has an obsession with imposing his idea of the right on this "puzzling world" like a transcendentalist hero, but his efforts to achieve this and the results are regarded ironically. The Wordsworthian element in the novel then must come to terms with an unstructured world. There is no transcendent reality to be recaptured through the child's vision or memory, though George Eliot believes that they can achieve a more limited, a more human sense of transcendence.

Memory can best be considered in the novel from two points of view, though they are interconnected. From one viewpoint it can act as a human means of transcending the amoral, unstructured world of the novel, which I have already referred to. The other important aspect is memory as a source of authority for feeling. This is the dominant theme of the novel during the years after Maggie's childhood. I shall discuss the former aspect of memory first.

iii

Memory as a means of limited transcendence in The Mill is an experience of heightened feeling or awareness in an individual

7. It is not bizarre, I think, to see similarities between Mr. Tulliver's desire to redeem a confused world and the redemptive vision of a transcendentalist hero like Melville's Captain Ahab.
which gives him a sense of unified being, one in which he seems to transcend the human limitations imposed by having to live in a world of time and change and confront the needs of the present. Memory can put one in touch with the felt experience of the past or arouse feelings in relation to objects or places because of their past associations which would otherwise be lost to the self. If one loses contact with these feelings, with the sense of continuity of selfhood they make possible, one may feel an unstable or fragile sense of identity or a spiritual lack which may lead to a sense of alienation or despair.

There are several important passages which express the idea that certain experiences are part of the fabric of our life and selfhood. In the following passage, which is similar to the extract from Adam Bede quoted earlier, the narrator stresses the importance of childhood experience:

"Every one of those keen moments has left its trace and lives in us still, but such traces have blended themselves irrecoverably with the firmer texture of our youth and manhood ... Is there any one who can recover the experience of his childhood, not merely with a memory of what he did and what happened to him, of what he liked and disliked when he was in frock and trousers, but with an intimate penetration, a revived consciousness of what he felt then - when it was so long from one Midsummer to another? ... (I, 98).

But at certain times one can recapture a felt experience of childhood through memory. This happens several times in The Mill, notably at the end. Or else certain objects or places keep one in emotional touch with these experiences even if one remains for the most part unconscious of it. It is often only with the awareness of a lack that one feels a sense of deprivation. This
is Maggie and Tom's experience of the loss of the mill. Mrs. Tulliver's loss of her crockery and linen is of a similar nature. Those memories which remain of childhood experience make possible a sense of continuity of being which George Eliot thinks essential for a secure sense of identity. The self does not exist in a perpetual present, but includes its past, and memory is capable of making one experience this sense of unified, continuing selfhood. And one's actions should take account of it. It is Maggie's feeling for the continuity of her life which makes her fear she may commit an impulsive action in contradiction with the past self she feels is still present in her and which will alienate her from it.

The power of objects interacting with memory and affecting the individual consciousness is one of the most important type of memory experiences in the novel. This is illustrated when Tom comes home after his dreary time at Mr. Stelling's. He experiences again the warmth and the kisses and the smiles of that familiar hearth, where the pattern of the rug and the grate and the fire-irons were "first ideas" that it was no more possible to criticise than the solidity and extension of matter. There is no sense of ease like the ease we felt in those scenes where we were born, where objects became dear to us before we had known the labour of choice, and where the outer world seemed only an extension of our own personality ...

Striving after something better in his surroundings distinguishes man from the animal,

"But heaven knows where that striving might lead us, if our affections had not a trick of twining round those old inferior things - if the loves and sanctities of our life had no deep immovable roots in memory. One's delight in an elderberry bush ... is an entirely unjustifiable
preference to a landscape-gardener ... And there is no better reason for preferring this elderberry bush than that it stirs an early memory ... that wove itself into my joys when joys were vivid (I, 234-235).

Here objects associated with childhood experience take on something of the aura of Wordsworth's "forms" and "images":

Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul ... 8

In George Eliot, as in Wordsworth, feelings become part of objects, and in the interaction of mind with objects or places or particular experiences our selfhood is built up. Memory serves to keep us in touch in these feelings and allows us to experience a sense of transcendence of passing time which constantly changes our lives and requires that consciousness confront the needs of the present. A too sudden uprooting from those objects which embody past feelings and associations can lead to a sense of spiritual impoverishment, as happens with the Tullivers.

The early part of the novel has several scenes in which Maggie and Tom have experiences which become an integral part of their lives, which arouse such intense feelings that time can never eradicate their effects from their consciousness. The scene in which Tom gives Maggie a piece of cake in the attic and forgives her for letting his rabbits die is an obvious example, and also when they go fishing together:

They trotted along and sat down together, with no thought that life would ever change much for them: they would only get bigger and not go to school, and it would always be like the holidays; they would always live together and be fond of each other (I, 57).

Here the sense of timelessness Maggie and Tom experience during the best moments of their childhood is particularly stressed. Though their lives are drastically altered, these experiences always remain a part of them:

Life did change for Tom and Maggie; and yet they were not wrong in believing that the thought and loves of these first years would always make part of their lives. We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it ... What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known and loved because it is known?

... what grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns or splendid broad petalled blossoms, could ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home-scene? These familiar flowers, these well-remembered bird-notes, this sky with its fitful brightness, these furrowed and grassy fields ... such things as these are the mother tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle inextricable associations the fleeting hours of childhood left behind them. Our delight in the sunshine on the deep-bladed grass to-day, might be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls, if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far-off years which still live in us, and transform our perception into love (I, 58-59).

The relationship with Wordsworth and with Proust is particularly strong in this passage. If we lose touch with these earliest experiences, the psychological price to be paid is high. But it is clear that memory is valuable not for simple recollection of early experience, but for enabling one to recapture one's subjective response to that experience. The narrator's memory operates in this way in the passage.
Not that Maggie's and Tom's childhood is completely idyllic. The frustrations of Maggie are as much dwelt upon as the timeless moments. She is as often at odds with Tom as at one with him. Her impulsive, passionate feelings are as much in evidence in childhood as later. But when "the small demons" take possession of her and lead her to push Lucy in the mud and run off to the Gypsies, the situation can be rectified fairly easily, unlike later events.

With the failure of Mr. Tulliver's lawsuit, Maggie and Tom are cut off from their childhood at one stroke: "the golden gates of their childhood had for ever closed behind them" (I, 301). It is the suddenness of the change which creates a breach between Maggie and Tom and their past. All of the Tullivers are adversely affected. Mr. Tulliver has lost the basis of his self-respect, Mrs. Tulliver her beloved linen and crockery, and Tom is forced to try to make his way in the world and earn money quickly equipped with an inadequate education. They become obsessed with their present situation and detached from their past. Maggie particularly feels isolated and deprived of the feelings she had experienced before the crisis.

The dissociation of Tom from his past life and the loss of a sense of continuity with his early experience is especially important. Like Maggie, he is the victim of unfortunate circumstances. These stunt his development and make him the inflexible, rigid person he later becomes. Tom would have been quite happy to inherit the mill and continue his father's work,
but Mr. Tulliver is determined, because of his obsession with the law, to impose a different pattern on his life. His education, far from helping him, hinders his development. George Eliot subtly shows how Tom is made to distrust his right to be the kind of person he is. We are told that his experience with the Stellings gave him "a general sense that his theory of life was undermined" (I, 207), and that "for the first time in his life he had a painful sense that he was all wrong somehow" (I, 210). His pride meeting "with nothing but bruising and crushings" (I, 217), he becomes distrustful of himself and subject to self-consciousness. Then, forced suddenly to make his way quickly after the bankruptcy, itself a crushing blow to expectations he had entertained since childhood, and with all the disadvantages of an unsuitable education, it is no wonder that the most rigid side of his personality becomes dominant and that he devotes himself entirely to the needs of the present. Tom is not the only victim here, for this alienates him from Maggie and leaves her feeling deprived. He is compared with men so devoted to action that they are forced into "quenching memory in the stronger light of purpose ..." (I, 64). Feeling and memory are suppressed in favour of duty. This makes him able to act single-mindedly and purposefully to make his way in the world but only at the cost of an empty inner life.

Maggie's danger is that she may be swept away by powerful feeling. Tom's is that he will suppress it altogether, and the events which separate them from their childhood experience threaten to bring about both these developments. The serious effects on
Tom's personality are made clear later. As Bob Jakin comments: "An' it worrets me as Mr Tom'11 sit by himself so glumpish, a-knittin' his brow, an' a-lookin' at the fire of a night" (II, 192). He suffers from being cut off from the mill and its "dear familiar objects" (II, 190). He confesses to his uncle that all he cares about is work, which, the narrator comments, is "rather sad" in a young man of twenty-three. It is important to notice that Tom suffers as great a spiritual loss as Maggie through being suddenly uprooted from his past life.

The importance of memory is also seen in the life of Mr. Tulliver when he is ruined by the failure of his lawsuit. After having suffered a mental collapse "a new wave of memory seemed to have come and swept the other away ..." (I, 311). His troubled mind, seeking some image of value in an effort to transcend his present state of disorientation, reaches towards "the little wench," his image of Maggie as a child. Another important incident is that of the banging of the lid of a chest which has been in his family for generations, when he is in a coma. The memories associated with this sound create a temporary recovery: "All long-known objects, even a mere window fastening or a particular door-latch, have sounds which are a sort of unrecognised voice to us - a voice that will thrill and awaken, when it has been used to touch deep-lying fibres" (I, 347). This is a very clear example of Proust's involuntary memory which is powerful enough to arouse Mr. Tulliver from his mental breakdown.

But it is the mill that possesses the most fundamental of memories for Mr. Tulliver, as it does for the whole family. It
is the dominating symbol in the novel, expressing the power of memory and the past in all the Tullivers' lives, that which they cannot uproot themselves from without feeling spiritually deprived. It embodies that sense of continuity with the past and transcendence of the flux of time which the novel celebrates:

It was when he got able to walk about and look at all the old objects, that he felt the strain of this clinging affection for the old home as part of his life, part of himself... Our instructed vagrancy... can hardly get a dim notion of what an old-fashioned man like Tulliver felt for this spot, where all his memories centred...

(1, 413-414).

He goes on to say: "I should go off my head in a new place."

Tom has similar feelings about the mill which he looks at "with the old deep-rooted affection" (II, 128) when he is on the point of telling his father he can repay his debts. Getting it back is his ultimate aim after his father's death, the only real motive of his devotion to work.

In the ending of the novel George Eliot brings together in a single image memory as transcendence and her recognition of the lack of human order or meaning in external reality. The death of Maggie and Tom in the flood is like so many other events in the novel, an unfortunate accident. The flood has always been a threat, but when it comes there is no reward or punishment, it is quite indifferent to the affairs of men. While in Hardy there is a powerful sense of protest against God for not existing and against the world for refusing to exhibit an order that takes account of humanity, in George Eliot there is rather a recognition and acceptance that this is how things are. This realisation creates the motive in men for striving to build a
purely human world, one which can impose human value on the amoral otherness of external reality.

Though Maggie and Tom are destroyed, they have a human vision which affirms the value of their existence even in the midst of destruction. They re-assert the value of human life though they themselves die. Maggie's earliest memory of standing with Tom at the side of the Floss is basic to her being: "... the first thing I ever remember in my life is standing with Tom by the side of the Floss, while he held my hand; everything before that is dark to me" (II, 61). This memory is the most important symbol of value in her life and one which she feels she cannot be false to without betraying her deepest self. Thus Tom "had his terrible clutch on her conscience and deepest dread" (II, 120).

The division that develops between them is one which seems to rend her in two: "To have no cloud between herself and Tom was still a perpetual yearning in her, that had its root deeper than all change" (II, 296). During the flood when she becomes aware of the dangers to Tom and the mill, past resentment against him and fears for herself fall away "and left only the deep, underlying, unshakable memories of early union" (II, 395). Her action in rescuing him despite all the dangers to herself is a revelation which makes him at last break down the barriers between them and relive their childhood sense of unity. The word "Magsie" immediately links them both in memory with their best childhood experiences. Past and present become one in their transcendence of their time-bound situation. They both experience and affirm the continuity of being which can only be achieved by their union,
in spite of all the circumstances which have divided them. It is a return to that earliest memory of standing together by the side of the Floss. This experience of transcendence is possible even in an unstructured world. But this time they are in the middle of the Floss. Their experience of transcendence possesses a purely human significance, for the world without is indifferent. It cannot prevent them being crushed by the forces of amoral otherness "hurrying on in hideous triumph" (II, 400). But though Maggie and Tom are destroyed, by re-affirming "in one supreme moment" the deepest memories of their lives, they have experienced human value which, George Eliot seems to be saying, overcomes the indifference of external reality and outweighs their sufferings.

iv

But of course there is another side to the novel, one which on the surface seems to bear only a marginal relation to the memory aspect already discussed. Maggie's life after her childhood and her struggles during this period are, however, integrally related to the importance of memory and the influence of the past on her life. The above discussion of the significance of memory helps, I think, to appreciate more this other aspect and to understand the novel as a single structure. Not only can memory arouse feelings of transcendence, but it also makes it possible for the individual to have a basis for responding morally to experience even if there is no external moral authority.

Maggie's development in the later part of the novel shows strong similarities to that of Romola, which I have already
discussed in detail. Like Romola she is a girl who possesses great strength of feeling, and her problem is how this feeling is to be controlled and directed. As in Romola the difficulty is that if there is no unquestionable moral authority apart from moral feelings, how is the self to find direction. Though George Eliot denied that Christianity as a system was necessary to act as a support for moral actions and argued that we have feelings of love, of pity, of justice and so on, she was also well aware that we have other feelings, of hate, of violence, of lust. How are we to control feelings or choose between them if there is no moral authority external to feeling? This was the problem in Romola. In The Mill it is considered from a different point of view.

When Maggie is a child the problem of controlling her feelings is not so serious. Though they are subject to violent changes, from feelings of intense affection towards Tom to acts of wilful egoism like cutting her hair or pushing Lucy in the mud, the stability of her family life, the love and protection of her father, her good times with Tom, all these provide a stable, secure existence that keeps her more violent outbursts of "over-mastering impulse" (I, 164) in check. She is part of a family with strong roots, and though her childhood has as many, if not more, frustrations and disappointments as idyllic moments, she is always able to be reconciled with her parents or Tom without feeling the need to exert any conscious formal control over feeling. The structure of family life serves as sufficient control.

When she grows up, things are different. The disastrous outcome of the lawsuit breaks up this valuable family life. Tom
and her father are so concerned with the need to pay off their debts that they have little time to devote to her. Though she draws closer to her mother, the sense of a stable, secure family which took a compassionate, loving interest in her breaks down. She feels isolated. Feeling is as dominant a part of her personality as before, but there seems little outlet for it other than in rebellion. Cut off from her family and with little opportunity for expressing her most powerful feelings, she suffers from a "sense of loneliness, and utter privation of joy ... Every affection, every delight the poor child had had, was like an aching nerve to her. There was no music for her any more - no piano, no harmonised voices, no delicious stringed instruments, with their passionate cries of imprisoned spirits sending a strange vibration through her frame" (II, 27). She does not wish to escape to a dream world to compensate for the loss of her childhood happiness, but to understand what has happened to her family so as to "endure ... the heavy weight that had fallen on her young heart" (II, 28). For without this understanding she knows her impulsive feelings will urge her to rebel. She feels fits of anger and hatred towards her parents and Tom which "would flow out over her affections and conscience like a lava stream, and frighten her with a sense that it was not difficult for her to become a demon" (II, 30). The demonic Romantic temptation to give herself up completely to her dominant impulses is very real for her.

She is experiencing the lack of any authority external to feeling which can control her more impulsive tendencies. Without this she is vulnerable to the kind of rebellious impulses she was
subject to in childhood, and which in adulthood might have irreversibility consequences. Out of the great need she feels for direction and self-control, she creates her philosophy of resignation derived from Thomas à Kempis.

Maggie's period under the influence of à Kempis corresponds somewhat to Romola's period under the influence of Savonarola and Catholicism. Both are unsatisfactory because they are adopted as rigid moral frames to suppress all strong feeling in the interests of moral action, and also to escape the inner turmoil created by conflicting feelings. But this can be no lasting solution for girls of such passionate nature. Not that there is anything wrong with à Kempis's philosophy of renunciation or with the human essence of Savonarola's religion, but accepting them as controlling systems to be mechanically obeyed, instead of experiencing their truth through feeling itself violates both Romola's and Maggie's natures. Though Maggie is now reconciled to the limitations of her lot, she still experiences "some volcanic upheavings of imprisoned passions ..." (II, 40). Such repression of strong feeling can only inflict psychological harm, as Philip later points out to her: "You want to find out a mode of renunciation that will be an escape from pain. I tell you there is no such escape possible except by perverting or mutilating one's nature" (II, 229).

Repression of the passions is no solution for Maggie and may even be more dangerous, since the bottling-up of feeling might lead to its breaking out all the more powerfully, overcoming her
conscious resistance. The narrator clearly suggests this: "Yet one has a sense of uneasiness in looking at her - a sense of opposing elements, of which a fierce collision is imminent ..." (II, 49). Since she lacks a sense of control built into feeling itself, blind obedience to a rigid doctrine of resignation only makes her more vulnerable to a demonic impulse. The impending conflict becomes inevitable with the development of her sexual nature, which puts the greatest strain on her. All her most impulsive feelings urge a passionate relationship with Stephen Guest, and her philosophy of resignation, already undermined, is quite inadequate in this situation.

Her meeting with Philip is the first occasion on which her resignation is seriously tested. He urges on her complete emancipation of feeling and awakens discontent in her. He sets off a conflict between resignation, which demands that she reconcile herself to her present life and the denial of feeling it involves, and her latent yearnings to give herself up to immediate feeling. But this is really a pseudo-conflict. For renunciation in the form she adheres to it at this time is an escape from feeling for the purpose of reconciling her to her lot; it frees her from the pain of frustration and from a sense of self-conflict. It is thus in a large degree an inverted form of gratification: "... renunciation seemed to her the entrance into that satisfaction which she had so long been craving in vain. She had not perceived ... the inmost truth of the old monk's outpourings, that renunciation remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly.

Maggie was still panting for happiness, and was in ecstasy because
she had found the key to it" (II, 35). There is then a serious
danger when she is tempted by a more effective gratification.

But this first of her temptations leads to the discovery of
her authentic moral authority, though she is not as yet fully able
to recognize it for what it is. This is the feelings created in
her by her past experience and which are an integral part of her
life, preserved by memory. Philip urges that they have secret
meetings but she feels 'the warning that such interviews implied
secrecy - implied doing something she would dread being discovered
in - something that, if discovered, must cause anger and pain;
and that the admission of anything so near doubleness would act as
a spiritual blight" (II, 56). To meet Philip secretly would
contradict claims and duties created by the past, present in her
as feelings through the power of memory. To act against these
promptings would conflict with her sense of identity; she would
'dread' discovery. It would be choosing consciously to inflict
pain on others. It is these considerations which restrain her,
not mechanical renunciation. Her choice is not to agree to
Philip's proposal, but she lets herself drift into acceptance though
she never feels she has made a conscious choice. She is confused
both because she thinks it is a conflict between "resigned
imprisonment" (II, 90) and the feelings meeting Philip arouses in
her, and because she also feels a commitment through her childhood
memories to Philip and it would cause him pain to be rejected.
His argument that "It is mere cowardice to seek safety in
negations" (II, 96-97) is a true attack on her doctrine of
resignation, but it only clouds the real issue that such meetings
could only take place secretly, would offend both families, and that Maggie could never freely choose to commit such an act. She also fears "that, by forsaking the simple rule of renunciation, she was throwing herself under the seductive guidance of illimitable wants" (II, 91). If she responds to this impulse which contradicts other claims, what is to prevent her succumbing to her strongest impulsive feelings on all occasions?

She never consciously chooses to offend her family. She allows her feelings to have it seemingly both ways when Philip says they may meet by chance. The narrator comments: "And it was in this way that Philip justified his subtle efforts to overcome Maggie's true prompting against a concealment that would introduce doubleness into her own mind, and might cause new misery to those who had the primary natural claim on her" (II, 98). This is the first sign that the means of moral control over passionate feeling which Maggie requires lies in feeling itself, in those memories and claims created in her life by the past and which she feels are fundamental to her sense of identity. Though she profits from her meetings with Philip, she confesses to him that they have made her restless, and weary of her home and her parents. She still feels she made a mistake not to hold fast to her original choice, and when the meetings are ended she feels great relief at this "deliverance from concealment ..." (II, 127).

This failure to be true to her choice of those feelings which are central to her past and to resist a contrary impulse is important. It has the unfortunate result of creating the basis of her personal relationship with Philip. The novel tries to
show that Philip's belief in the liberation of feeling, partly the product of his longing for passionate love, can only lead to frustration in his own life, since his bodily appearance does not make him physically attractive to women, or at least to Maggie. He is also lacking in any special talent in which he could find an alternative outlet for his feelings, and he cannot at first reconcile himself to renunciation, the conscious acceptance of pain and limitation. His love for Maggie is plainly physical but it is just as plain that Maggie cannot return this. But with her inexperience and feelings of pity for him she allows herself to believe she loves him, though her love has no sexual content: "Even to Maggie he was an exception: it was clear that the thought of his being her lover had never entered her mind" (II, 99). It is ironic that Philip is always urging her to give herself up to her spontaneous feelings in an effort to make her respond to his love, but if she did so she would reject him. It is only her pity and a lingering attachment to resignation that lead her to accept his love. This can be seen in the form of her happiness after she first lets him kiss her: "She had a moment of real happiness then - a moment of belief that, if there were sacrifice in this love, it was all the richer and more satisfying" (II, 109). This is certainly not what Philip wants, and he himself fears she loves him out of pity. It is also ironic that his attack on her resignation which makes him predict that "You will be thrown into the world some day, and then every rational satisfaction of your nature that you deny now, will assault you like a savage appetite" (II, 97) should rebound on his own hopes of marrying her.
In her relationship with Philip, Maggie had felt that the claims of the past, preserved by memory, constituted a body of feelings she could choose to obey and so control the more impulsive feelings which are also part of her nature. But by confusing these claims with her doctrine of resignation and allowing herself to be taken in by Philip's casuistry, her choice is negated. This creates a sense of confusion, enjoying the meetings but still feeling she is acting wrongly. When she is discovered by Tom, this confusion is augmented, for though she feels in the wrong, the absoluteness of Tom's condemnation and the manner of his attack on Philip make her rebel against his judgment and feel the more attached to Philip: "So I will submit to what I acknowledge and feel to be right" (II, 126). She is thus further away than ever from being fully conscious that her memory of the claims of the past constitutes the authority she has been seeking which can provide the basis for direction and control over the diversity of her feelings. This leaves her vulnerable to a powerful impulse.

When she encounters Stephen Guest her situation has become especially dangerous: "her future, she thought, was likely to be worse than her past, for after her years of contented renunciation, she had slipped back into desire and longing ... she found the image of the intense and varied life she yearned for, and despaired of, becoming more and more importunate" (II, 167). Her resignation has broken down; she has also claimed the right to go her own way, breaking with Tom who is inseparably a part of her feelings for the past; and she feels herself committed to Philip without being
able to love him in the fullest sense. This confusion in her mind and feelings makes her extremely vulnerable in her relationship with Stephen Guest, the first physically attractive man she has met, and who arouses all the potentialities of her sexual nature, which George Eliot has taken care to stress. In making Maggie's conflict a sexual one, George Eliot is setting the strongest natural feelings against those other feelings which call on her to resist. For the demonic Romantics, one would discover one's true self in obeying the former, but for George Eliot personal identity demands that the latter prevail.

Stephen's attempt to persuade Maggie to marry him is her second "temptation," that which most critics of the novel think she should have succumbed to, even if Maggie finally resists. But I shall argue that attacks on the novel are unjustified and based on misunderstandings of its structure. Stephen repeatedly tells her that her resistance to their love is "unnatural": "It is unnatural - it is horrible" (II, 285); "It is come upon us without our seeking: it is natural ..." (II, 286); "See how the tide is carrying us out - away from all those unnatural bonds that we have been trying to make faster round us, and trying in vain" (II, 313); and finally, "We have proved that the feeling which draws us towards each other is too strong to be overcome: that natural law surmounts every other; we can't help what it clashes with" (II, 329). Like Philip, though with much greater force,

Stephen is calling on Maggie to follow her natural impulses. Any restraint on these feelings is unnatural, a denial of one's basic nature. But for Maggie there are also other feelings which are a part of human nature. It is the conflict between her sexual impulses and those other feelings based on her "long deep memories of early discipline and effort, of early claims on her love and pity ..." (II, 266) which dominates her relationship with Stephen. She tells Philip that "I desire no future that will break the ties of the past" (II, 278), and to submit to Stephen's argument from nature would do this.

But because of the confusion in her mind and feelings she is not fully aware of the nature of the conflict in herself and so able to exert a firm control. The desire to give way to her natural impulses and the feelings of the present is almost irresistible when she dances with Stephen: "... for life at this moment seemed a keen vibrating consciousness poised above pleasure and pain. This one, this last night, she might expand unrestrainedly in the warmth of the present, without those chill eating thoughts of the past and the future" (II, 273).

But she does succeed in resisting him, for she is intuitively aware that to give way would cut her off from the continuity she needs to feel with her past and the claims it has created in her life. She later becomes conscious of the nature of the conflict in herself:

"It seems right to me sometimes that we should follow our strongest feeling; - but such feelings continually come across the ties that all our former life has made for us - the ties that made others dependent on us - and would cut them in two... I must not, cannot seek my
own happiness by sacrificing others. Love is natural; but surely pity and faithfulness and memory are natural too. And they would live in me still, and punish me if I did not obey them.... Our love would be poisoned" (II, 287-288).

It is a conflict between feelings. The temptation of Stephen creates "a feeling that clashed with her truth, affection, and gratitude ..." (II, 302-303). In the lower animals, the strongest feeling of the moment would always dominate, but for George Eliot human consciousness is quite different, which is why Stephen's argument from nature would have been rejected by her. The need for a human identity requires that one's memory of the claims of the past be taken into account. To argue that one should obey one's strongest impulsive feeling on all occasions fails to take account of the fact that the ego is in a large degree a social and cultural creation; it knows itself as a continuity and feels the need to restrain impulse in the interest of preserving this sense of continuity. Maggie experiences an identity crisis when she feels her sense of continuity has been broken: "she had rent the ties that had given meaning to duty, and had made herself an outlawed soul, with no guide but the wayward choice of her own passion... she must for ever sink and wander vaguely, driven by uncertain impulse ..." (II, 322-323). She never deliberately consented to this, but circumstances brought it about. In her decision to reject Stephen at her Aunt Moss's, she had called on her memory to find an authority in feeling itself to resist his view that natural love must have sway over everything else. She repeats the same argument to him later when she decides to go back: "it would rend me away from all that my past life has made dear and holy to me... I must go back to it, and cling to it, else I shall feel as
if there were nothing firm beneath my feet" (II, 334). She could never feel a tenable sense of identity if she married him. In a Bergsonian sense her decision is an authentic one because she is true to what she feels is her whole self, which is not merely the person she is at the moment, but the continuing self that has developed since childhood and which memory makes her aware of.

Nevertheless, an accident of circumstances and the strain she is under led her to acquiesce passively in Stephen's plan. In her childhood she pushed Lucy in the mud and ran off to the Gypsies, and despite her moral resolve she has, metaphorically, repeated this action. The main guilt she suffers from later is that her resistance was not sufficiently strong. This was because her sense of the past temporarily left her. In her dream-like drift down river, "Memory was excluded" (II, 311). It is only memory which can keep her in touch with those other feelings which resist her natural passion. But it cannot be denied for long: she feels "the terrible shadow of past thoughts ..." (II, 313), and when she fully recovers herself next day "she was alone with her own memory and her own dread" (II, 322). Her whole self could never have acquiesced in this action.

Stephen's great offence has been to deprive her of her choice. She repeats this again and again: "You have wanted to deprive me of any choice" (II, 313); "I couldn't choose yesterday" (II, 327); "I will not begin any future, even for you ... with a deliberate consent to what ought not to have been" (II, 328); "If I could wake back again into the time before yesterday, I would choose to be true to my calmer affections, and live without the joy of love"
Stephen himself "had the uneasy consciousness that he had robbed her of perfect freedom yesterday ..." (II, 324). Though he argues that "We must accept our own actions and start afresh from them" (II, 333), Maggie does not feel she has performed, chosen, an action: "I have caused sorrow already - I know - I feel it; but I have never deliberately consented to it ... It has never been my will to marry you: if you were to win consent from the momentary triumph of my feeling for you, you would not have my whole soul" (II, 331). Impulse is only valid for George Eliot if it expresses an individual's whole self, but Maggie's "whole soul has never consented - it does not consent now" (II, 335).

This emphasis on choice is important. In George Eliot's view, a human being differs from the lower animals in being able to choose between his feelings. Stephen in urging the natural is not allowing a choice of the unnatural, a rejection of the most powerful impulses in favour of other considerations. Against Stephen's natural law argument Maggie asserts that it could "justify breaking the most sacred ties that can ever be formed on earth. If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment" (II, 329). 10

Stephen's position is close to that of the demonic Romantics, but for George Eliot it reduces the human to the animal. If memory does not act as an authority for feeling by which one can choose to be unnatural, to deny one's strongest impulses, and so be human,

10. This emphasis on the need to resist natural impulses is similar to Kant's argument in The Critique of Practical Reason that natural inclinations must always be resisted. But, as I have already said, impulse is justified for George Eliot if it expresses one's whole self and not merely the most powerful feelings of the moment.
then man is no more than an animal. In spite of the strength of her natural impulses, the desire for continuity of being is ultimately stronger: "There are memories, and affections, and longings after perfect goodness, that have such a strong hold on me; they would never quit me for long ..." (II, 331). Maggie has not rejected love for duty, but has chosen to be true to what she feels is her whole self.

She is now most fully aware that memory can provide the basis of a moral authority for her which is built into feeling itself. It is not a rigid moral frame which requires the denial of feeling, like her previous renunciation. It embodies powerful feelings integrally part of her past life, which she can choose to be faithful to and so exercise control over her passionate impulses of the moment and her demonic tendencies, which otherwise threaten to gain the upper hand. She always subconsciously knew this, but her confusions prevented her fully realizing it. Memory puts her in touch with the feelings which for her are fundamental to her whole life. If she committed an act that contradicted these feelings she would feel a loss of personal identity, since she was acting contrary to her deepest sense of self. All through her relationship with Stephen she feels fearful of committing such an act or allowing her desire for personal happiness to triumph. The duty she feels to Lucy and Philip is not something separate from herself which she must obey selflessly; it is part of the duty she feels to herself. This is apparent in her feelings when Stephen, possessed by "A mad impulse," kisses her arm: "A horrible punishment was come upon her for the sin of allowing a moment's
happiness that was treachery to Lucy, to Philip - to her own better soul. That momentary happiness had been smitten with a blight, a leprosy ..." (II, 497). Stephen also feels this conflict between passion and the need for identity. When Maggie has repulsed him after this incident he suffers "the conflict of passions, - love, rage, and confused despair: despair at his want of self-mastery, and despair that he had offended Maggie." The thought of being guilty of offending Maggie is finally more important to him than satisfying his desire. Similarly when Maggie accuses him of depriving her of her choice, the fear of deserving such reproach is more important than the fear of losing her: "the one thing worse than parting with her was, that she should feel he had acted unworthily towards her" (II, 314). In a different way from Maggie, he also cannot tolerate the thought of having committed an act alien to his sense of the kind of person he is, and this is more important than the call of natural feeling.

It is interesting to compare Maggie's choice of the claims of the past with Catherine Arrowpoint's apparently contrary choice in Daniel Deronda. She rejects what her parents feel is her duty to her family in deciding to marry Klesmer: "I am sorry to hurt you, mamma. But I will not give up the happiness of my life to ideas that I don't believe in and customs I have no respect for" (I, 369). She chooses to be true to love rather than to her parents' wish that she marry in the interests of money and class status. But Catherine's choice is based on similar principles to that of Maggie: to act as her parents wish would be to be false to herself. She is not saying love must triumph in any circumstances:
"I feel at liberty to marry the man I love and think worthy, unless some higher duty forbids" (I, 370). Both make a choice which takes into account their whole selves. Any significant action must take the self as a continuity into account.

It is often said that George Eliot is a determinist, and this emphasis on choice might seem to contradict determinism. But she seems very close to Bergson's concept of freedom: one is free when one chooses to be true to one's whole self, which necessarily includes one's past:

For the action which has been performed does not then express some superficial idea, almost external to ourselves, distinct and easy to account for: it agrees with the whole of our most intimate feelings, thoughts and aspirations, with that particular conception of life which is the equivalent of all our past experience, in a word, with our personal idea of happiness and honour.

He goes on to say that "we are free when our acts spring from our whole personality ... every act is free which springs from the self and from the self alone ..." The self for Bergson and George Eliot is not the impulsive self or the self responding to the pressures of the moment, but the self as a continuity. In terms of this conception of the self, both Maggie and Catherine perform free acts, actions which they feel express their whole selves, though on the surface they seem to have made opposed choices.

The comparison between Maggie and Catherine also shows that it is not the past as such that should act as an authority for

the self. It is certain feelings one has for the past, feelings which are central to an individual's sense of who he is. These feelings are preserved by memory. The duty to the past which the Arrowpoints urge on Catherine does not arouse these feelings and so it is not central to her selfhood. It is a purely "mechanical" consideration which she feels no hesitation in rejecting. But the duty Maggie is faithful to has a power over her feelings which she cannot reject without alienating her from herself. Memory keeps her in touch with these feelings, despite the passage of time. Thus it is memory and the feelings it makes possible rather than the authority of the past as such which acts on Maggie.12

Obviously the form of morality one derives from this is a very subjective one. The conventional view that George Eliot is a rigid moralist in the orthodox sense needs to be considerably qualified.13

Like Romola, Maggie has found a means of moral orientation which does not require that she suppress feeling. By recognising

12. Thomas Pinney in "The Authority of the Past in George Eliot's Novels" does not, I think, emphasise this sufficiently.

13. She has, as I have already said, little sympathy for moral rules. In "Poetry and Prose, from the Notebook of an Eccentric" she writes: "I have little more respect for those who have reached the stage of enlightenment in which virtue is another name for prudence, who give their sanctions to a system of morals as they do to a system of Police ..." (Essays, p. 20).
that she must act in accordance with her whole self as experienced through her memory of past feelings and claims, she is able to control the excesses of purely impulsive or passionate feelings. When a conflict of feeling arises, she has a basis in feeling itself for knowing how to choose. No authority external to the self is necessary. But this requires that she be able to renounce those feelings which may be the most powerful. Renunciation is a central theme in the novel and an idea basic to George Eliot's thought. It is her answer to those demonic Romantics who advocated complete liberty of feeling, which she thought would lead to the domination of man by impulse and offer no security of identity. A discipline on feeling is needed which does not result in its repression and so lead to dangerous psychological consequences, and this is provided by renunciation. Renunciation is especially important for Maggie, for unlike Romola, Esther, or Dorothea, she has no ideal social vision which she can serve and devote her energies to.

In her early "Kempis period, as I have already said, renunciation was a form of gratification in that she escaped from pain, frustration, and self-conflict. But she realises later that it "remains sorrow, though a sorrow borne willingly" (II, 35). Since the pain of renouncing her strongest impulses is fully accepted, it is not repressed and so liable to be transformed into neurosis. It is when she experiences her greatest temptation in receiving Stephen's letter that she accepts the full implications of renunciation. Reading it "she felt as if her real temptation had only just begun" (II, 389). In her situation at St. Ogg's,
condemned by almost everyone, urged by Dr. Kenn to leave and so become "like a lonely wanderer - cut off from the past" (II, 360), and feeling "unspeakably, sickeningly weary" (II, 387), the pressure on her is greater than ever. In addition to this, she has strong feelings of pity for Stephen. These are especially dangerous since they seem to indicate that her choice was a selfish one. It was the thought of causing him pain that had been an important factor in preventing her leaving him when they were in the boat: "This yielding to the idea of Stephen's suffering was more fatal than the other yielding, because it was less distinguishable from that sense of others' claims which was the moral basis of her resistance" (II, 315). But this problem cannot be shirked and Stephen's letter forces her to face it again.

One reason she had given for leaving him was that she could not accept personal happiness if it meant "sacrificing" others. Since she is now sacrificing Stephen she feels confused. The most dangerous of temptations is always one which exploits a seeming contradiction of this kind. But Maggie had earlier realised that this problem could only be solved by choosing what she feels to be right in herself, rather than acting for what she thinks is the good of others, irrespective of her own feelings:

"We can't choose happiness either for ourselves or for another: we can't tell where that will lie. We can only choose whether we will indulge ourselves in the present moment, or whether we will renounce that, for the sake of"

14. Milton's Paradise Regained and T. S. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral also have heroes who are most seriously threatened by an apparent contradiction in the basis of their resistance to temptation.
obeying the divine voice within us - for the sake of being true to all the motives that sanctify our lives. I know this belief is hard: it has slipped away from me again and again; but I have felt that if I let it go for ever, I should have no light through the darkness of this life” (II, 332).

Ultimately she can only choose what she feels to be right even if it does mean "sacrificing" Stephen and if her action cannot rectify matters. The alternatives are defining herself in relation to the needs of others which can never be fully known and which also creates the problem of what one does if, like Maggie, one's feelings and sympathies are in conflict, or else she can submit to "the wayward choice of her own passion" which she feels must leave her ever "driven by uncertain impulse." She feels then that her only valid course of action lies in a choice which takes account of her whole subjective life. Though on the surface her renunciation of Stephen may seem like a self-sacrifice, it is really the most complete realisation of her selfhood, the self being conceived as a continuity.

The situation then is essentially unchanged though Maggie's temptation is greater, and as before it is memory which allows her to be true to her renunciation: "... the sense of contradiction with her past life in her moments of strength and clearness, came upon her like a pang of conscious degradation" (II, 390). She waits for guidance from her feelings to tell her what to do, and again memory is primary: "It came with the memories that no passion could long quench; the long past came back to her, and with it the fountains of self-renouncing pity and affection of faithfulness and resolve." She remembers the words of The Imitation of Christ but this time she fully appreciates what renunciation involves.
In choosing to be faithful to what she feels is her true selfhood, in spite of the greatest of pressures, Maggie does something few would be capable of and thus takes on almost saint-like status, as is suggested by the religious imagery at the end of the novel. Her choice demanded resistance to a combination of the most natural of feelings: passionate love, the longing for gratification, the need for protection and support, and pity. Through being able to resist all of these, she in a sense dies to the flesh and is able to achieve the sense of transcendence possible in certain religious states of mind. She resembles a mystic or ascetic who cuts himself off from the world and all the longings of the flesh so as to be able to transcend the body and have a vision of God. George Eliot secularises this idea in the experience of Maggie. Her resistance to all temptations makes her capable of becoming the new saint of St. Ogg's and thus to re-enact the legendary deed of the town's patron saint when the flood comes: "In the first moments Maggie felt nothing, thought of nothing, but that she had suddenly passed away from that life which she had been dreading: it was the transition of death, without its agony - and she was alone in the darkness with God" (II, 393). She has attained a sense of spiritual presence which raises her above the fears of ordinary mortals, and she performs an act which renews the life of her native town. One should notice that the powerful impulse she then experiences that she must rescue her mother and Tom stems from her whole self: "Her whole soul was strained now on that thought; and she saw the long-loved faces looking for help into the darkness, and finding none" (II, 394). In contrast also to her previous drifting down river,
this time she is rowing against the current. Though Maggie is destroyed by a world without moral order, her action has a human meaning that lives on, re-enacting the meaning of the town's central myth, and showing that though the legend had no outward truth, it contained an inner human truth which Maggie gives new expression to.
CHAPTER VII
MIDDLEMARCH (I)

Dorothea, Ladislaw, Lydgate, and Romanticism

In this chapter I shall discuss the main characters of Middlemarch in relation to some of the aspects of Romanticism considered in previous chapters. Dorothea, Ladislaw, and Lydgate can all be seen to have strong Romantic connections, and an awareness of this not only helps one understand their characters and their inter-relationship, but it also, I think, throws light on some other features of the novel.

Dorothea's most Romantic quality is her power of ardent feeling which links her with George Eliot's earlier heroines: Maggie Tulliver, Romola, and Esther Lyon. The word "ardour" is constantly associated with her, and this is a characteristic Romantic quality. It denotes an enthusiasm, a sense of idealism probably most associated with Shelley among the English Romantics. She is seen in a Romantic light by some of the other characters. Ladislaw thinks of the Aeolian harp in connection with her, a key Romantic image,1 and Naumann, a Romantic painter, sees her as "a sort of Christian Antigone - sensuous force controlled by spiritual passion" (I, 290), a juxtaposition which again calls to mind Shelley.

The prime characteristic of Romantic feeling is that it operates as a means of spontaneous knowledge, prior to rational

thought, and I have already quoted the important passage in which she says that for her knowledge passes directly into feeling. Feeling and thought are inseparable for her, making her respond to experience with a unified consciousness: "But in Dorothea's mind there was a current into which all thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow - the reaching forward of the whole consciousness towards the fullest truth, the least partial good" (I, 311). The word "current," which is also often used in connection with her, suggests, like ardour, a Romantic sensibility.

But while the danger of feeling for Maggie or Romola was that it could lead to over-impulsive acts which contradicted their past lives and past selves, Dorothea is faced at first with a different danger. Her most serious temptation is that form of idealism which longs for a belief in an external order and meaning which one can serve with all one's devotion and energy because one believes utterly in its truth and value. Though Dorothea possesses such powerful feelings, she at first distrusts what they tell her. She desires a form of knowledge and sense of truth which will be superior to feeling. This is why she is so upset when Casaubon refuses to take her seriously because he regards her as only a creature of feeling: "She was humiliated to find herself a mere victim of feeling, as if she could know nothing except through that medium ..." (I, 304). She also fears that what her feelings communicate to her may be wrong, that she needs a standpoint based on objective knowledge:

how could she be confident that one-roomed cottages were not for the glory of God, when men who knew the classics appeared to conciliate indifference to the cottages with zeal for the
glory? Perhaps even Hebrew might be necessary - at least the alphabet and a few roots - in order to arrive at the core of things, and judge soundly on the social duties of the Christian (I, 93).

Though this passage satirises her belief that objective knowledge is required to support feeling in this instance, nevertheless feeling can be over-subjective and unstable, and, as I have already argued, one of George Eliot's main concerns in her characterisation of Maggie and Romola was how over-impulsive and egoistic feelings could be controlled without accepting some moral frame external to feeling. Dorothea believes that the value of religion is that it provides such a moral framework, one which the self can submit to.

Her desire to devote herself utterly to the service of a religious ideal which gives meaning and value to reality is repeatedly stressed:

Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then to incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it (I, 9).

The use of the word "theoretic" to characterise her idealism suggests a link with Savonarola in Romola who viewed the world with "eyes of theoretic conviction" (II, 322). Both passionately desire to believe in a total religious explanation of reality. She longs "for a binding theory which could bring her own life and doctrine into strict connection with that amazing past, and give the remotest sources of knowledge some bearing on her actions" (I, 128). This longing is not necessarily bad in itself; it is the form in which
she hopes for its realisation that is untenable. Guildenstern in "A College Breakfast-Party" believed in the possibility of finding a "binding law" on a purely human basis, and Mordecai in Deronda thinks the idea of nationalism can provide "a binding theory" for mankind. But Dorothea's early idealism desires a theory which will prove that there is a religious meaning in reality itself, and that knowledge will reveal this.

It is this idealistic longing that is the basis of her attraction to Casaubon. It is his intellectual aim to provide the "lofty conception of the world" and "binding theory" which could recreate a unified Christian world-view similar to that which existed in the time of Saint Theresa, and which Dorothea could serve with the certainty that it established the absolute truth of Christianity. He says of himself: "My mind is something like the ghost of an ancient, wandering about the world and trying mentally to construct it as it used to be, in spite of ruin and confusing changes" (I, 23). This grandiose aim immediately appeals to Dorothea's idealism: "To reconstruct a past world, doubtless with a view to the highest purposes of truth - what a work to be in any way present at, to assist in, though only as a lamp-holder!" (I, 23). The theoretic side of her nature longs for an explanation of the world which will establish the existence of a religious meaning and order external to the mind, and which would provide an absolutely firm basis for social and moral values. In other words, she looks backwards to a pre-Romantic, symmetrically structured world-view, and it seems to her that only knowledge could create this:
... something she yearned for by which her life might be filled with action at once rational and ardent; and since the time was gone by for guiding visions and spiritual directors, since prayer heightened yearning but not instruction, what lamp was there but knowledge? (I, 129).

It is knowledge which will re-establish the age of faith, "the times of primitive zeal" (II, 337), she hopes will return.

It is natural then that she should be attracted by Casaubon. The aim of his "Key to All Mythologies" is to counteract the fragmentation of man's knowledge of the world and to create the basis of "the coherent social faith and order" the new Saint Theresa requires. He will do this by revealing that all mythologies are really only transformations or corruptions of the divinely authenticated events in the Bible:

... all the mythical systems or erratic mythical fragments in the world were corruptions of a tradition originally revealed. Having once mastered the true position and taken a firm footing there, the vast field of mythical constructions became intelligible, nay, luminous with the reflected light of correspondences (I, 33).

It is perhaps not over-ingenious to see a parallel between the image of light arranging mythologies in a meaningful pattern and the image of the candle patterning the, in fact, unstructured scratches on the pier-glass. Casaubon's endeavour makes him for Dorothea "a living Bossuet, whose work would reconcile complete knowledge with devoted piety; here was a modern Augustine who united the glories of doctor and saint" (I, 33-34).

Of course the reasons why Dorothea marries Casaubon are more complex than this, for George Eliot is very much interested in creating a rounded psychological portrait and not merely in using Dorothea for her larger intellectual purposes. She is an orphan who has never known a father's influence and so is naturally drawn
to an older man: "The really delightful marriage must be that where your husband was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it" (1, 12). There is also the important problem of what role a woman could play in society. Here she feels restricted by the social limitations placed on women, who are expected to marry and play a purely passive role as wife and mother, allowing their husbands to manage all important affairs, while they devote themselves to domestic matters and trivial accomplishments. This is the kind of life that would be offered her by marrying a man like Sir James Chettam, and it is one which she shrinks from because it would give her little scope to influence actively the course of the world. Marrying Casaubon will, she thinks, allow her to transcend these limitations on women. She can help him in his great aim of reconstructing the faith society needs. Casaubon also proposes on a day in which she had suffered several frustrations and this has some effect on her decision to accept him without taking further thought. But these motivations are secondary to her longing for a complete religious explanation of the world and the fact that it is Casaubon's aim to create the basis for this. Otherwise Casaubon could have had little attraction for her. To understand more fully Dorothea's relationship with him and the consequences of her disillusion, it is necessary to say a little more about the nature of his work.

The title of Casaubon's great work of reconstruction, "Key to All Mythologies," is very suggestive. In the nineteenth century there was an unprecedented increase in knowledge which led to its
becoming more and more fragmented. There were numerous attempts to create systems which could discover a meaningful order underlying the apparent diversity and fragmentation which had resulted from this rapid expansion of knowledge. Without any such synthesis established religious and social values seemed in danger. George Eliot's friend Herbert Spencer's synthetic philosophy was probably the most ambitious of these nineteenth-century systems, and he saw his most important concern as providing the basis for a world-view which performed a function similar to that of religion in the past. Casaubon is compared to numerous past thinkers who had been able to provide a synthesis which reconciled knowledge and faith. The most important comparison is with the greatest of synthesisers, Aquinas. He poses as Aquinas for the painter Naumann, he defends him when Brooke says nobody reads him any more, and Mrs. Cadwallader refers to him openly as Thomas Aquinas.

But it would be impossible in the nineteenth century to create a synthesis of faith and knowledge on a similar scale to that of Aquinas. Knowledge had become so vast and diverse that any such undertaking was impossible. Casaubon can only attempt to show that in one particular field, the study of myth, there is a unity underlying the apparent diversity. All mythologies are structurally

2. H. V. Routh, however, thinks this was Spencer's aim: "But only the most self-confident representative of a self-confident age could imagine that the time had come to repeat the achievement of Thomas Aquinas. Yet such was the dream of Herbert Spencer's constructive imagination." See Towards the Twentieth Century: Essays in the Spiritual History of the Nineteenth (Cambridge, 1937), pp. 252-253.
related by reason of being descended from the historically true events in the Bible. He thus regards all mythic systems as codes which can be interpreted by one universal key, and since this key is supplied by Christianity, he will effect a reconciliation of knowledge and faith if he can prove his theory. The fragmentation of our knowledge of the world is only apparent; there is a deeper order underlying it, a Christian order. This is the belief on which his work is founded. It is tempting to believe that the word "Mythologies" has symbolic connotations in the novel; that it refers not merely to myths in the ordinary meaning of the word, but to any field of knowledge in a wider sense which tries to be systematic, to order our understanding of reality, in the sense that religions, philosophical systems, psychoanalysis, even science, can be said to be mythologies.

I have already argued that George Eliot rejected the idea that reality possessed a meaningful order and structure in itself.


4. It is not an exaggeration, I think, to say that Lewes regarded science as a mythology: “Although admitting the utility of the word Cause ... Science disclaims all attempts to penetrate the secrets of causation. It seeks only the phenomenal and relative,... So readily does it restrict itself within the relative and phenomenal that it accepts hypotheses which are themselves unverifiable and which even seem absurd if in any way they facilitate the more accurate co-ordination of facts.... Nay it even adopts contradictory hypotheses when they suit convenience.... So indifferent is Science to the absolute truth of ideas; so anxious about their relative truth!” See Aristotle: A Chapter from the History of Science (London, 1864), pp. 91-93.
that the view that, in the words of Sir Isaiah Berlin, "there existed a reality, a structure of things, a rerum natura, which the qualified inquirer could see, study and, in principle get right" could no longer be accepted. There was no immanent order in the world symmetrical with the structure of the mind. Probably she believed that the key to all mythologies, if it existed, was to be found not by trying to find a unified structure underlying the diversity of knowledge but by investigating the mind. The key which would unlock all mythologies and systems was to be discovered in psychology. This belief is implicit in the philosophies of Feuerbach and Lewes. Even if Casaubon succeeded in making his work systematic, which he is unable to do, it would only be a closed system, incapable of being either proved or disproved, and so able only to appeal to the converted. This seems to be the point of the narrator's comment that his theory was based on "a method of interpretation which was not tested by the necessity of forming anything which had sharper collisions than an elaborate notion of Gog and Magog: it was as free from interruption as a plan for threading the stars together" (II, 312-313). George Eliot's point seems to be that such a theory could never provide an objective proof of Christianity, and therefore that religion can never be "scientifically" proved. Dorothea's hope, that knowledge could establish the basis of a new religious order which everyone could accept is misconceived, and she is eventually forced to recognise this.

5. See Michael Mason's discussion of this in "Middlemarch and Science."
Her disillusion with Casaubon and his work ultimately leads to a reluctant acceptance that there is no immanent order in the world which could be revealed by knowledge and which could support religious values. Her religious idealism seemed to her to justify moral action in the world, to create the basis of a larger social faith, and also gave direction and purpose to her own life. Its breakdown is then a crisis for her. She must come to terms with the fact that pre-Romantic orientations are no longer tenable. It is her experience in Rome which does most to make her aware of a disorder in the world that cannot be resolved by any set of religious principles. There she discovers a complexity and sense of the contradictory in her experience which shatters the excess of order in her theories about the world, and she feels a strong sense of disorientation:

the gigantic broken revelations of that Imperial and Papal city thrust abruptly on the notions of a girl who had been brought up in English and Swiss Puritanism, fed on meagre Protestant histories and on art chiefly of the hand-screen sort; a girl whose ardent nature turned all her small allowance of knowledge into principles, fusing her actions into their mould, and whose quick emotions gave the most abstract things the quality of a pleasure or a pain ...

(1, 296).

The ideas with which she has been used to order experience cannot cope with "The weight of unintelligible Rome ..." in which grandeur and squalor, religion and superstition seem inextricably mixed: "all this vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensuous and spiritual, mixed confusedly with the signs of breathing forgetfulness and degradation ..." The narrow principles which supported her identity "are tumbled out among incongruities ..." and she is faced with a
disorder in her experience of the world which will not be resolved easily by any theory of immanent order.

It is implied that personal disillusion with Casaubon is in part responsible for creating the frame of mind which makes her respond to Rome in this way. After the real experience of being his wife in contrast to what she had expected she "found herself plunged in tumultuous preoccupation with her personal lot." The crisis she suffers in Rome in turn produces a state of mind in which she can see Casaubon's work critically instead of, as formerly, in the light of her religious idealism. She realises that the fragments he is trying to put together disintegrate again in his hands and can only support "a theory which was already withered in the bud like an elfin child" (II, 312). Her disillusion with Casaubon and his work further undermines her religious world-view. If her belief in him could have been sustained and he had been one of the wisest of men, "In that case her tottering faith would have become firm again" (I, 329). With the breakdown of her hope that he could effect a reconciliation of knowledge and faith, the basis of her Christian idealism is completely undermined. After his death his notebooks resemble "the mute memorial of a forgotten faith" (III, 8) and she must reject his request to carry on his work: it would be "working hopelessly at what I had no belief in" (III, 9). Though it is not stated openly that she has lost her Christian faith, these passages suggest that her belief that knowledge would reveal a Christian world-order has gone. She does, however, preserve a religious world-view, even though she says she hardly ever prays. The following declaration to Ladislaw
seems to indicate that George Eliot sees her as becoming a
transcendentalist:

"That by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we
don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we
are part of the divine power against evil - widening the
skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower"
(II, 179).

But her main problem now is how to confront life without the
"binding theory" she had hoped for. This creates for her the
difficulty, faced also by George Eliot's previous heroines, of
supporting her identity solely from her inner resources, without
succumbing to negative egoistic forces in herself or to over-
impulsive feelings. There are two important scenes in which this
struggle comes to the surface and in which she feels the temptation
of both a demonic impulse and despair.

The first of these is when Casaubon sums her after he has
learned from Lydgate that he might not live long. All through her
relationship with Casaubon, Dorothea has repressed the strong
feeling which is natural to her and in this situation, repressed
feeling is transformed into revolt against her lot: "She was in
the reaction of a rebellious anger stronger than any she had felt
since her marriage" (II, 232). Rebellious impulse threatens to
overcome her sympathetic emotions:

In the jar of her whole being, Pity was overthrown.
Was it her fault that she had believed in him - had believed
in his worthiness? - And what, exactly, was he? - She was
able enough to estimate him - she who waited on his glances
with trembling, and shut her best soul in prison, paying it
only hidden visits, that she might be petty enough to please
him. In such a crisis as this, some women begin to hate
(II, 233).
Dorothea is at this point close to a demonic outburst, to a pure assertion of resentful feeling. She wants to tell him "the truth about her feeling" and to hurt him.

But she has allowed "her resentment to govern her ..." and she gradually becomes aware of this. Her continual repression of strong feeling has created a resentment false to her truest sense of self. As I have already said George Eliot believes resentment is often an important part of demonic impulses. Dorothea has to struggle hard to find an opposing feeling which is truer to her whole self and not the expression of a temporary state of mind:

But the struggle changed continually, as that of a man who begins with a movement towards striking and ends with conquering his desire to strike. The energy that would animate a crime is not more than is wanted to inspire a resolved submission, when the noble habit of the soul reasserts itself (II, 234).

If she had succumbed to this impulse, she would have suffered an identity crisis through committing an act which is false to what she feels to be her true self. But despite the loss of her religious idealism, in a moment of crisis in which she can only rely on her own resources, she is able to overcome her resentful impulse. She feels the sense of contradiction with her past self and at the same time has a renewed awareness of Casaubon as an independent person and realises what he must have felt about learning the truth about his health.

The second crisis is, of course, when she sees Ladislaw with Rosamond and concludes that she has lost her hope of personal happiness through love. The experience she suffers after this is similar to that of Romola when she despair after having lost her
faith in Savonarola and her love for Tito. Dorothea also has lost the support she derived from her Christian idealism. Her personal relationship with Ladislaw, which had developed into love, had to a large extent sustained her during this crisis, but now this too, apparently, fails her. This is her most serious crisis for she now has nothing beyond the resources of her own self to support her identity, since both her religious faith and personal happiness through love seem no longer possible. Like Romola she experiences despair, but like Romola also she finds the basis for reconstituting her life through feeling. She must come to terms with the fact that the world is indifferent to her own hopes and desires just as she has already had to admit that reality was not structured to coincide with her religious ideas. But the feelings that underlay her religious idealism were not the less valid, though she must not expect external reality to conform with human ideals or gratify her desires. Her inner feelings remain valuable even if they must be projected onto an indifferent, unstructured reality. This realisation comes to her when she recovers, after a night of conflict, the original sympathetic feelings which motivated her to visit Rosamond in the first place. These are still valid despite what she saw at Lydgate's house, and in her new self-knowledge she can use them to overcome the feelings of anger, resentment, and despair aroused by the disappointment of her hopes and expectations:

But that base prompting which makes a woman more cruel to a rival than to a faithless lover, could have no strength of recurrence in Dorothea when the dominant spirit of justice within her had once overcome the tumult and had once shown her the truer measure of things. All the active thought with which she had before been representing to herself the trials of Lydgate's lot, and this young marriage union which, like her own, seemed to have its hidden as well as evident
troubles - all this vivid sympathetic experience returned to her now as a power: it asserted itself as acquired knowledge asserts itself and will not let us see as we saw in the day of our ignorance (III, 391).

Feeling fuses with thought to become a source of knowledge.

Even if there is no external moral order, even if reality has frustrated her own hopes of happiness, this feeling remains to direct her action and discipline her egoism. It can be the basis of an ideal value which can "rule her errant will" (III, 392). Though this ideal, her yearning "towards the perfect Right," is a purely human creation, it has great value as a means of shaping human action in the world. As with Romola, Dorothea's inner feeling, her ideal longing, leads to the emergence of a larger social vision which she projects onto the external world in looking out of the window: "Far off in the belling sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance." With her religious idealism she had formerly looked for a religious meaning in reality itself, in objective knowledge of the world, but now she discovers this religious meaning in her intense human feeling and vision. She now possesses an orientation which can sustain her identity and direct her life even though both religious idealism and her hope of personal happiness have, at this moment, failed her. This makes it possible for her to bring all her strength of feeling into play, while the possession of the larger ideal can direct this feeling and control its more impulsive manifestations. It is important to realise that the new ideal created for her by her social vision, which made her "a part of that involuntary, palpitating life," is not, as in her former religious idealism, an objective belief about the world, but is a creation of feeling and thought working
in unison. It is an inner vision which she chooses to serve. She needs no external authority, whether derived from religious doctrine or knowledge, to justify her. Her world-view is one which can sustain itself even if there is no divine meaning or immanent order in the world, and which can resist the temptations of the demonic and of despair.

iii

The relationship between Dorothea and Ladislaw has generally been regarded as one of the artistic weaknesses of Middlemarch. Nevertheless this relationship does deserve close attention, and Ladislaw is, in my view, of much greater importance than most critics have admitted. He is the character who is most obviously associated with Romanticism. He has been educated at Heidelberg, one of the most important centres of German Romanticism; he is twice compared to Shelley by Mr. Brooke: "... he has the same sort of enthusiasm for liberty, freedom, emancipation ..." (II, 131); and he is described by Mrs. Cadwallader as "A sort of Byronic hero ..." (II, 162). His flamboyant appearance, his experiments with opium, and his general attitudes all contribute to building up a picture of a Romantic, and this is obviously George Eliot's intention.

But it is the development of Ladislaw's Romanticism that is important. For unlike Dorothea, at the beginning of the novel, his attraction is towards the individualistic side of Romanticism. He sees himself as "Pegasus" and he regards "every form of prescribed work" as "harness" (I, 121). The words "pride," "defiance," and "rebellion" are repeatedly associated with him, all of which have
a Byronic connotation. He tells Dorothea that he comes "of rebellious blood on both sides ..." (II, 142). Casaubon's opinion of him is "that he was capable of any design which could fascinate a rebellious temper and an undisciplined impulsiveness" (II, 222). He is also Byronic in being an outsider and an alien, a position he takes some pleasure in: "he was a sort of gypsy, rather enjoying the sense of belonging to no class; he had a feeling of romance in his position, and a pleasant consciousness of creating a little surprise wherever he went" (II, 286). He feels little connection with any country or social group, nor at the beginning of the novel does he wish to have any. He is a rootless wanderer, frequently compared with alienated races, like Gypsies and Jews.

His Romantic individualism tends to find its expression in extreme aestheticism, as in his rebuke of Dorothea's ardour to improve the world:

"The best piety is to enjoy - when you can. You are doing the most then to save the earth's character as an agreeable planet. And enjoyment radiates. It is of no use to try and take care of all the world; that is being taken care of when you feel delight - in art or in anything else" (I, 336).

Of course, Dorothea is not entirely right or he entirely wrong in their exchanges. At this stage, each occupies an extreme position which is modified by coming into contact with the other. But there are clear signs that Ladislaw's early attitudes are tending to alienate him from society or any chosen vocation. When Dorothea asks him later what his religion is, he replies: "To love what is good and beautiful when I see it ... But I am a rebel: I don't feel bound, as you do, to submit to what I don't like" (II, 180).
There is a strong sense that left on his own, he would maintain his "Pegasus"-like stance, refuse to adopt any social role, and remain a rootless aesthete.

The influence of Dorothea on the change that takes place in his attitudes is an important element in the novel. It is his strong feelings for her which make him reject those of his former views which tended to lead to complete aestheticism and rejection of society. Instead, her influence makes him direct his Romantic rebellion and impulsive energy into social channels. It is the thought of her that makes him accept the "harness" he had formerly rejected, "having settled in Middlemarch and harnessed himself with Mr. Brooke" (II, 296). The same image is present in the following passage:

Ladislaw had now accepted his bit of work, though it was not that indeterminate loftiest thing which he had once dreamed of as alone worthy of continuous effort. His nature warmed easily in the presence of subjects which were visibly mixed with life and action, and the easily stirred rebellion in him helped the glow of public spirit (II, 285).

The last part of this quotation shows how his former rebellious energy is being socially directed. He no longer rejects society as being antithetic to his artist's consciousness. Now he devotes energies once solely taken up by the study of art as a kind of escape from society, to the social good: "... he studied the political situation with as ardent an interest as he had ever given to poetic metres or mediaevalism" (II, 285). Romantic ardour, he learns from Dorothea, must be socially directed. The change that has taken place in him is made apparent by Dorothea in her conversation with him when he is on the point of leaving Middlemarch:
"And you care that justice should be done to every one. I am so glad. When we were in Rome, I thought you only cared for poetry and art, and the things that adorn life for us who are well off. But now I know you think about the rest of the world" (III, 14).

It is significant that at the end of the novel he has become "an ardent public man" (III, 461).

It is Dorothea's ardent desire to do some good in the world and her implied criticism of his style of life that are most important in making Ladislaw give up his rootless existence and adopt a social role. He has no particular hope of marrying her when he returns to Middlemarch, despite Casaubon's suspicion on this score. It is her conception of him that has such a great effect. To do something he knows she disapproved of would undermine what he feels to be his better self. Her belief in him brings out tendencies in himself that might otherwise be overwhelmed by his attraction to Romantic individualism. It is because he idealises her that she can have this effect on him. He sees her as someone superior to himself in her power of feeling and sympathetic response, and her judgment of him is something he feels he cannot afford to lose. He acts therefore to justify it, both to himself and to her. This power of Dorothea is her great quality:

... that simplicity of hers, holding up an ideal for others in her believing conception of them, was one of the great powers of her womanhood. And it had from the first acted strongly on Will Ladislaw... he felt that in her mind he had found his highest estimate (III, 366).

Though Ladislaw is attracted by egoistic attitudes, like Dorothea he also possesses great resources of feeling, and it is this which enables him to be drawn so strongly to her idealistic qualities and to resist his rebellious tendencies. The words
"ardent" and "ardour" are also used frequently of him: "... he meant always to take the side of reason and justice, on which he would carry all his ardour" (II, 357). Even his rebellious actions show qualities of feeling absent from egoistic Romantic figures like the Princess Halm-Eberstein. This is apparent in his response to Bulstrode's offer of money: "He was too strongly possessed with passionate rebellion against this inherited blot which had been thrust on his knowledge to reflect at present whether he had not been too hard on Bulstrode..." (III, 140). His feeling immediately rebels from any connection which would taint his character, and though in need of money, he immediately rejects taking anything from such a source. Dorothea's idealistic temperament, the simplicity and directness of her feeling, are able to create a response in Ladislaw's ardent tendencies of feeling which makes him also desire to devote his energies to a social aim even if this will only have a limited effect and will restrict his earlier aspirations.

The influence of women on men is an important theme in several of George Eliot's novels. Its importance is emphasised in Middlemarch by its restatement in the relationship of Mary Garth and Fred Vincy. Like Ladislaw, Fred is drawn towards irresponsible attitudes and shows little interest in society, but the influence Mary exerts on his consciousness prevents him succumbing to a life of self-gratification. She eventually succeeds in making him, again like Ladislaw, involve himself in society and give up most of his vices. Both Fred and Ladislaw possess some good qualities, but without the support of the women in their lives, it seems clear that their egoistic tendencies would have predominated. Even if women are then greatly restricted in the roles they can play in
society, it is possible for them to use their great power of feeling to influence men to devote themselves to the social good.

Lydgate, like Ladislaw, has several links with Romanticism, and it is important to understand the differences between him and Ladislaw and Dorothea. Like Ladislaw, he is repeatedly described in Byronic imagery, which associates him with Romantic individualism. He is a strong believer in the will and in self-realisation. Though he claims that he desires to serve society, and this is partly true, he is rather like Harold Transome in desiring to redeem society single-handed in his search for the "fundamental knowledge of structure" which would "help to define men's thoughts more accurately after the true order" (I, 223, 225). Casaubon "had risked all his egoism" (II, 312) to create his "Key to All Mythologies" and Lydgate is prepared to do something similar in his quest for the "primitive tissue": this will be his means of self-realisation. It is this rather than a social ideal as such that motivates him, and this is a prime distinction between him and Dorothea and, ultimately, Ladislaw.

He is also like Harold Transome in his confidence that his will can triumph over obstacles: "About his ordinary bearing there was a certain fling, a fearless expectation of success, a confidence in his own powers and integrity much fortified by contempt for petty obstacles or seductions of which he had no experience" (I, 187). His pride is repeatedly emphasised, and his conceit is "massive in its claims and benevolently contemptuous. He would do a great deal for noodles, being sorry for them, and feeling quite sure they could have no power over him ..." (I, 226-227). He reacts to
the circumstances that are gradually overcoming him "with a renewed outburst of rebellion against the oppression of his lot" (III, 317).

Similar imagery is used of him after he has become implicated in Bulstrode's disgrace: "It belonged to the generosity as well as defiant force of his nature that he resolved not to shrink from showing to the full his sense of obligation to Bulstrode ... (for, remember, he was one of the proudest among the sons of men) ..." (III, 318). When he is slowly being crushed by his circumstances, imagery of being yoked, galled, and fettered is repeatedly used, suggesting a Promethean figure in chains.

But despite having a certain Romantic grandeur, he lacks one quality which Ladislaw and especially Dorothea possess: ardent feeling. He does possess "intellectual ardour" but this is accompanied by "vulgarity of feeling" (I, 227). It is this which is responsible for his total failure. Though Dorothea is also to a large extent defeated in that her social situation greatly restricts the effect she can have in society, she does play some part in working for social progress. It is Lydgate's low quality of feeling which is responsible for alienating people by his arrogance, for allowing him to think he can use Bulstrode for his own purposes, and, most important, for leading to his fatal marriage with Rosamond.

Lydgate and Ladislaw have a debate over personal independence which reveals important differences between them. Ladislaw hates the thought of having expectations from Brooke or from Casaubon or being dependent on them. Not to stand on his own feet would, he feels, be a taint on his better self. Also when Bulstrode
offers him money, his immediate response is to reject it: "The impulse within him was to reject the disclosed connection" (III, 137). To accept would be an act alien to what he feels to be his true self: "My unblemished honour is important to me. It is important to me to have no stain on my birth and connections" (III, 140). Significantly his awareness of how Dorothea would judge him if he did accept plays some part in his response. But Lydgate's reasons for personal independence are somewhat different. His determination to remain free from obligations to Bulstrode and the pride that makes him hate asking for help when in financial difficulties derive rather from a fear that he will no longer be completely his own master. To incur obligations to others will restrict his own power of will. His original decision not to marry is based on similar considerations. To become entangled with women would impose too many limitations on him. He has little appreciation of the special qualities of women, as his initial dismissal of Dorothea indicates. He thinks marriage to Rosamond will make little alteration to his life; she will only provide some relaxation after the serious labours of the day. The influence of women is important in redirecting the lives of Ladislaw and Fred, but Lydgate considers them extraneous to his life, and his "vulgarity of feeling" entangles him with a woman who destroys him.

Harness imagery is repeatedly used of both Ladislaw and Lydgate. Lydgate is determined to avoid having to "wear the harness and draw a good deal where your yoke-fellows pull you" (I, 265). But he becomes "a man galled with his harness" (III, 88) and he "writhed
under the idea of getting his neck beneath this vile yoke ..." (III, 175). This kind of imagery is used again and again as he becomes mastered by debt and by Rosamond's stronger will. Ladislaw is also "harnessed" and forced to accept "his bit of work." But while Lydgate is yoked against his will, Ladislaw chooses to be harnessed and to give up his former Pegasus-like freedom. He does this in order to devote himself to social action. His harnessing then is positive: an authentic commitment to society, while Lydgate's is negative: the outcome of his belief that the will can triumph over all external obstacles. He is inevitably crushed.

Lydgate's domination by the will and his vulgarity of feeling are also responsible for creating self-division in him. Unlike Ladislaw or Dorothea he lacks a sufficiently powerful sense of continuity of self to resist demonic impulses that are self-dividing. His passion for Laure is the obvious example:

He knew this was like the sudden impulse of a madman - incongruous even with his habitual foibles. No matter! It was the one thing which he was resolved to do. He had two selves within him apparently, and they must learn to accommodate each other and bear reciprocal impediments. Strange, that some of us, with quick alternate vision, see beyond our infatuations, and even while we rave on the heights, behold the wide plain where our persistent self pauses and awaits us (I, 231).

Lydgate's devotion to the will has deprived him of a sufficiently strong sense of "persistent self" to control such impulses. He is overcome by a similar impulse when he proposes to Rosamond, despite his conscious intention to avoid her. But being accustomed to having his will, his strongest impulse inevitably triumphs. His contempt for the notion of continuity of self further reduces his ability to control impulses.
Lydgate can then be seen to possess several of the characteristics of the Romantic egoist. Though he desires to serve society, this service takes the form of redeeming it by the power of his own mind and will. He also lacks the qualities of feeling that Dorothea and Ladislaw possess, and he is vulnerable to demonic impulses which create self-division. Dorothea and Ladislaw in contrast become organicist Romantics. They are dominated by ardent feeling; they have a strong sense of continuity of selfhood which prevents them succumbing to over-impulsive feelings; and they are eager to work towards the achievement of a larger social ideal which will be the basis of a new social unity. In the novel also are two obviously pre-Romantic figures: Casaubon with his aim of using knowledge to discover an immanent order in the world which will provide the basis for a reconstituted Christian world-view, and Bulstrode who tries to base his life on a belief that reality is governed by a divine, providential order. Both of their world-views fail to survive a confrontation with reality. The tenability of a character's world-view is necessary if he is to possess a secure sense of identity. Only Dorothea's and Ladislaw's organicist position, one which accepts an asymmetrical relationship between self and external reality, which recognises the need for continuity of selfhood and for a social ideal to provide the basis for action, only this proves tenable and can provide a secure sense of identity.

Though Middlemarch can be seen as a novel which urges the Romantics to devote their energies to the service of society, it is also clear that no large-scale redemption is possible for their world. Dorothea retains something of the idealism of a
Saint Theresa or an Antigone without being able to accept their metaphysical assumptions, and since "the medium in which their ardent deeds took shape is for ever gone" (III, 465), any influence she can have on a partially fragmented social world is limited. She must work for their social ideal without any expectation of complete success, though her efforts may be "incalculably diffusive" in their effect.
CHAPTER VIII
MIDDLEMARCH (II)

Some Key Words in Middlemarch: "Signs," "Interpretations," "Expectations"

Middlemarch is without doubt the most linguistically complex of George Eliot's novels. Much work has been done on recurrent imagery in the novel, but less attention has been devoted to key words. Three of the most important of these from a philosophical and psychological point of view are "signs," "interpretations," and "expectations," and it is these I shall examine. Such an examination illuminates, I think, an important aspect of the novel related to Romantic thought.

One of Nietzsche's better-known statements is that "There are no facts, only interpretations." This view is strikingly similar to that expressed by the narrator of Felix Holt: "Even the bare discernment of facts, much more their arrangement with a view to inferences, must carry a bias: human impartiality, whether judicial or not, can hardly escape being more or less loaded" (II, 317). George Eliot had perhaps been affected by Lewes on this question:

Man is intrepres Naturae. Whether he be a metaphysician or man of science, his starting-point is the same; and they are in error who say that the metaphysician differs from the man of science in drawing his explanation from the recesses of his own mind in lieu of drawing it from the observation of facts. Both observe facts, and both draw their interpretations from their own minds. Nay, as we have seen, there is necessarily, even in the most familiar fact, the annexation of mental inference - some formal element added by the mind, suggested by, but not given in, the immediate
observation. Facts are the registration of direct observation and direct inference, congeries of particulars partly sensational, partly ideal.¹

If interpretation by the mind is present even in the discernment of facts, then a fact may be defined as an interpretation of certain signs which it seems impossible to interpret otherwise. For this reason it is possible for "facts" to cease to be "facts." For example at one time it seemed a certain fact that the sun circled the earth. All the signs seemed to point to this. This "fact" was reversed though the signs remained unchanged: it was only their interpretation which altered. The taking into account of additional signs created a new interpretation of the original signs and a new "fact." Reality then, in relation to consciousness, may be seen as a vast accumulation of signs which the human mind must try to make sense of. This problem greatly concerns George Eliot in Middlemarch.²

There are numerous references in the novel to "signs" and "interpretation." One of the most interesting illustrates the problem involved:

Signs are small measurable things, but interpretations are illimitable, and in girls of sweet, ardent nature, every sign is apt to conjure up wonder, hope, belief, vast as a sky, and coloured by a diffused thimbleful of matter in the shape of knowledge (I, 34).

1. The History of Philosophy, I, xlvi-xlvii

2. The word "signs" occurs numerous times in Lewes's Problems. See for example the passage I quoted in the first chapter: "The visible universe only exists as seen: the objects are Reals conditioned by the laws of Sensibility.... They are signs which we interpret according to the organised laws of experience ..." (Problems, III, 339). The aspect of the novel I am going to discuss was probably influenced by Lewes's philosophical concerns.
Not only can signs be interpreted in numerous ways, but the preconceptions of their perceiver affects his interpretation. One never perceives signs neutrally: some interest is always at work shaping our point of view. Bulstrode's interpretation of Rigg's selling of Featherstone's property is a clear example: "We are concerned with looking at Joshua Rigg's sale of his land from Mr Bulstrode's point of view, and he interpreted it as a cheering dispensation conveying perhaps a sanction to a purpose which he had for some time entertained without external encouragement ..." (II, 377). There is also the variety of points of view held about Featherstone's probable intentions, which are shaped by the hopes and expectations of the people involved: "But Brother Jonah, Sister Martha, and all the needy exiles, held a different point of view. Probabilities are as various as the faces to be seen at will in fretwork or paper-hangings: every form is there, from Jupiter to Judy, if you only look with creative inclination" (II, 47). Points of view, it seems, can be infinitely various.

Some signs are also equivocal in their meaning, which creates further difficulties of interpretation, though this seldom restrains self-interested conclusions being drawn. Featherstone's relations have difficulty in interpreting his behaviour: "She and Jane would have been altogether cheered (in a tearful manner) by this sign that a brother who disliked seeing them while he was living had been prospectively fond of their presence when he should have become a testator, if the sign had not been made equivocal by being extended to Mrs Vinoy ..." (II, 76). The equivocal nature of
signs is an important theme in the novel. In order to read them correctly one must have a key, a point made in *Felix Holt*: "But we interpret signs of emotion as we interpret other signs—often quite erroneously, unless we have the right key to what they signify" (II, 339). Both Dorothea and Lydgate eventually acquire something of this ability at the expense of painful experience: "Dorothea had learned to read the signs of her husband's mood ..." (II, 14); "Rosamond was keenly offended, but the signs she made of this were such as only Lydgate was used to interpret" (III, 375). But Lydgate misinterprets the reasons for Rosamond's agitation after Ladislaw's outburst, thinking it the result of Dorothea's visit. It is never easy to interpret signs in *Middlemarch*.

But the most important factor in the misinterpretation of signs is the interests at work in the perceiver whose underlying desires may lead to imaginative distortion: "We are all of us imaginative in some form or other, for images are the brood of desire ..." (II, 77). An obvious example of such misinterpretation is Lydgate's view of Rosamond, the product of his own particular tastes in women interacting with the equivocal signs she projects. He must eventually admit that he completely misinterpreted her: "For the moment he lost the sense of his wound in a sudden speculation about this new form of feminine impassibility revealing itself in the sylph-like frame which he had once interpreted as the sign of a ready intelligent sensitiveness" (III, 90). Though Rosamond's efforts to make herself as appealing as possible to him did not help, it is Lydgate who is most to blame for this mistake, since his preconceptions about women made him interpret her as an ideal
specimen and overlook signs of less attractive qualities. Dorothea likewise allows her religious idealism to shape her interpretation of Casaubon, ignoring those signs which contradict it: "She filled up all blanks with unmanifested perfections, interpreting him as she interpreted the works of Providence, and accounting for seeming discords by her own deafness to the higher harmonies" (I, 110). This leads her to an imaginative construction of a Casaubon who only exists in her own mind: "Dorothea's faith supplied all that Mr Casaubon's words seemed to leave unsaid: what believer sees a disturbing omission or infelicity? The text, whether of prophet or of poet, expands for whatever we can put into it, and even his bad grammar is sublime" (I, 72). She saw reflected in his mind "every quality she herself brought ..." (I, 32). Bulstrode's self-interested view of providence similarly results in a dubious reading of signs: "He believed without effort in the peculiar work of grace within him, and in the signs that God intended him for special instrumentality" (III, 127). His view that reality is shaped to serve his own interests is eventually forced to confront signs hostile to this interpretation, especially the appearance of Raffles.

Interpretation of signs is most difficult in the attempt to know another person, for it is here that signs are most equivocal and the interests at work in the perceiver especially liable to lead to a distorted interpretation. There is an interesting passage which refers to Lydgate's neighbours' judgments of him:

For surely all must admit that a man may be puffed and belauded, envied, ridiculed, counted upon as a tool and fallen in love with, or at least selected as a future
husband, and yet remain virtually unknown — known merely as a cluster of signs for his neighbours false suppositions (I, 214).

The phrase "cluster of signs" is particularly suggestive. It is not only Lydgate who is "a cluster of signs" which his neighbours interpret in various ways depending on the interests that underlie their perception. In almost all the relationships among the characters, each perceives the other as a cluster of signs, more or less equivocal, which he or she tries to interpret, and their preconceptions affect their interpretation. The most obvious examples have already been mentioned: Dorothea's view of Casaubon and Lydgate's view of Rosamond. But the same applies to Casaubon's and Rosamond's interpretations also. Dorothea and Lydgate are clusters of signs for them as well as the reverse, and their hopes and desires lead to a misinterpretation of these signs and consequent disappointment. There are several other examples. Sir James Chettam's desire to marry Dorothea makes him overlook obvious signs of her lack of interest and interpret other equivocal signs in his own favour: "He thought it probable that Miss Brooke liked him, and manners must be very marked indeed before they cease to be interpreted by preconceptions either confident or distrustful" (I, 28). And again: "Sir James interpreted the heightened colour in the way most gratifying to himself ..." (I, 41). There is also Casaubon's suspicious interpretation of Ladislaw's motives in coming to Middlemarch, conditioned by his jealousy and his doubts about Dorothea's feelings.

The relationship between Dorothea and Ladislaw is particularly problematic because each has great difficulty in interpreting
equivocal signs. The fact that she is rich and he is poor makes matters especially difficult; "It should never be true of him that in this meeting to which he had come with bitter resolution he had ended by a confession which might be interpreted into asking for her fortune" (III, 16). Neither is really sure what the other feels and the situation of each makes it almost impossible to reveal unmistakable signs of love. Even when Ladislaw gives what he regards as a particularly clear sign of his love in his parting words, Dorothea is unsure whether he is referring to Rosamond or herself. Mrs. Cadwallader has already told her of scandalous gossip connecting Ladislaw and Rosamond. Her doubts prevent an unequivocal response on her part and he, thinking it impossible for her to misunderstand him, sees this as a sign that she does not love him. It is only just after he has parted that his very last words convince her that it is she he loves and "her past was come back to her with larger interpretation" (III, 156). But even then she thinks they are inevitably divided by circumstances: "She could no more make any sign that would seem to say, 'Need we part?' than she could stop the carriage to wait for him." Ladislaw retains his misinterpretation of her attitude.

But though she is convinced that he was not referring to Rosamond, the fact that "she had at first interpreted his words as a probable allusion to a feeling towards Mrs Lydgate which he was determined to cut himself off from indulging ..." (III, 365) is an important factor in her later misinterpretation of the scene
between him and Rosamond in which all the signs seem to her to point to his expressing love for Rosamond. But ironically this turn of events which might have seemed to have divided them more than ever is the means of bringing them together, since Rosamond later tells Dorothea of Ladislaw's love for her, and Ladislaw himself feels bound to see her once again to explain his conduct. Even at this last meeting there is still the difficulty of interpreting signs: "It did not occur to her to sit down, and Will did not give a cheerful interpretation to this queenly way of receiving him ..." (III, 420), though they finally reach an understanding.

When one thinks about the novel from this point of view, much of it can be seen to revolve around the problem of interpreting signs. Many interpretations prove to be wrong. One of the most important of these is the belief that Lydgate is implicated in the death of Raffles. Here, "in spite of the negative as to any direct sign of guilt ..." (III, 287), almost everyone is prepared to interpret the circumstantial evidence as proving Lydgate's guilt. There is also the fear among certain of the characters of how signs may be interpreted. Ladislaw for example is especially sensitive to the possibility that his relationship with Dorothea may be interpreted as fortune hunting. A serious psychological situation can be created when an interpretation is broken down by new facts. Almost all the main characters must confront this experience: "We are all humiliated by the sudden discovery of a fact which has existed very comfortably and perhaps been staring at us in private while we have been making up our world entirely without it" (II, 89).
Signs and interpretations are also linked to the novel's concern with science and the nature of theories in the work of Lydgate and Casaubon. Casaubon's "Key to All Mythologies" can be seen as a search for a single perspective which will show that there is a pattern underlying the apparent diversity and disorder of mythological data. But it will be remembered that his manner of procedure involved "a method of interpretation which was not tested by the necessity of forming anything which had sharper collisions than an elaborate notion of Gog and Magog ..."

Lydgate, in contrast, submits his scientific interpretations of reality to rigorous tests. He has great contempt for alternative explanations though he has to put up with the fact that some of his cures are seen as near-miracles: "But even his proud outspokenness was checked by the discernment that it was as useless to fight against the interpretations of ignorance as to whip the fog ..." (II, 267). The irony is that Lydgate's strictly scientific interpretation of signs in his intellectual life scarcely operates in his human relations. There he is guided by subjective feelings alone, and since his feelings with regard to women are particularly suspect, he is led into his fatal misinterpretation of Rosamond despite his resolve to "take a strictly scientific view of woman ..." (I, 232).

The novel is very much on the side of the scientific approach to signs and their interpretation. But of course this can only be fully operated under certain narrow conditions. In everyday experience it is impossible and sometimes even undesirable to try

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3. Michael Mason also points this out in "Middlemarch and Science," 163.
to apply anything like scientific tests of verification to every situation. Feeling and intellect must try to deal with forms of experience in which complex and confused data have to be confronted immediately. After his first meeting with Dorothea, Lydgate decides that such women "usually fall back on their moral sense to settle things after their own taste" (I, 139). Though this quality can be dangerous and plays a part in her disastrous misinterpretation of Casaubon, in some situations it can be of great value, even when it seems to fly in the face of the scientific approach. It is in these situations that Dorothea's superior qualities of feeling can triumph over a too-narrowly scientific attitude. When Lydgate is almost universally felt to be guilty in the Raffles affair because this would seem to be the best interpretation of the signs, even Farebrother, who is something of a scientist, is inclined to think him guilty, Dorothea's intuitive feeling, based also on her experience of Lydgate, makes her immediately set out to prove his innocence. She must eventually confront the facts of the situation, and on another occasion she might have been wrong, but if she had refused to act before she could verify her intuition that he is not guilty, she would have been unable to help him by the strength of her conviction of his innocence. It is also only her complete belief in his integrity that makes him tell her the whole story.

Another of Dorothea's important achievements is her success in breaking down Rosamond's egoism in their famous encounter. Her action in the case of Lydgate was based on a subjective feeling which made her reject the interpretation of signs which seemed
most likely and act on her belief without first submitting it to tests. But on this occasion her action derives from a complete misinterpretation of a situation: she interpreted Ladislaw's behaviour to Rosamond as a sign that they are in love and that this is a threat to Lydgate's and Rosamond's marriage. Dorothea also acts out of an intensity of feeling that is the product of her own particular crisis. But it is this power of subjective feeling, even if it is wrongly applied in this situation that makes a great impression on Rosamond. She at first interprets Dorothea's motives in the light of her own resentment, believing she comes out of a desire to predominate over her, and is therefore completely surprised by Dorothea's intense feeling and personal involvement:

Dorothea, completely swayed by the feeling that she was uttering, forgot everything but that she was speaking from out the heart of her own trial to Rosamond's. The emotion had wrought itself more and more into her utterance, till the tones might have gone to one's very marrow, like a low cry from some suffering creature in the darkness (III, 402).

It is not so much what Dorothea says, or whether she has interpreted the situation rightly, that moves Rosamond as "this strange unexpected manifestation of feeling in a woman whom she had approached with a shrinking aversion and dread ..." which undermines Rosamond's egoistic defences. Dorothea is also unaware that Rosamond's preconceptions and expectations are making her interpret and respond to her words quite differently to what she herself expects. Nor does she know that Rosamond is well aware of her involvement with Ladislaw, so that she is more interested in Dorothea's own feelings than in the content of what she says: "... she had no conception that the way in which her own feelings were involved was fully known to Mrs Lydgate."
Even if it is difficult or perhaps impossible to have complete knowledge of any situation and if one's interests necessarily influence one's interpretation, which means one must misinterpret it to a greater or lesser degree, this should not necessarily deter anyone from trusting his intuitive emotional reaction. It is this which creates bonds between people and which can break down even the most apparently impenetrable egoistic barriers.

George Eliot recognises however that Dorothea's impulsiveness and impetuosity do have their dangers: "her own passionate faults lay along the easily-counted open channels of her ardent character; and while she was full of pity for the visible mistakes of others, she had not yet any material within her experience for subtle constructions and suspicions of hidden wrong" (III, 366). But her ardour is also responsible for all her most positive qualities.

The word "expectations" is related to "signs" and "interpretations." The mind must create structures to order the data received by the senses from external reality; it must interpret signs for man to live in the world. These structures do not exist independently of the interpreting mind; even "facts" are not immanent in reality but are interpretations. The most common means of humanly ordering reality, one which springs from man's basic egoism, is to have certain expectations. These derive in part from one's preconceptions and in part from one's interpretation of signs which will itself be conditioned by these preconceptions. Almost all the characters confront their world with expectations, and almost all of them are "disappointed" (another important word
in the novel) in some degree. The particular interests of individuals encourage them often to see reality as shaped in a way which gratifies their desires and hopes, but reality resists such constructions. It remains quite indifferent to human desires. Those who are most frustrated by this are characters like Fred Vincy whose "irrepressible hopefulness" (I, 154) leads him to see reality shaped by a providence working for his personal benefit: "What can the fitness of things mean, if not their fitness to a man's expectations?" (I, 203). However reality frustrates his expectations on numerous occasions, notably in regard to Featherstone's money which he had anticipated "with a too definite expectation" and must suffer "a proportionate disappointment" (I, 356).

But Fred is not the only one who has expectations and who is disappointed. It is virtually impossible to lead any kind of ordered existence without structuring experience through having certain expectations. But as a result of man's natural egoism, expectations tend to incorporate an individual's desires and hopes and these become identified with reality. Almost all of the main characters are affected by this in some respect, and in consequence their expectations are often founded on gross misinterpretations of reality. They are thus bound to be disappointed. Dorothea's view of Casaubon at first supports her expectations: "Thus in these brief weeks Dorothea's joyous grateful expectation was unbroken ..." (I, 129). But after her marriage, her expectation must confront day-to-day experience: "But the door-sill of marriage once crossed, expectation is concentrated on the present" (I, 300), and soon "she was gradually ceasing to expect with her
former delightful confidence that she should see any wide opening
where she followed him" (I, 302). The breakdown of such an
expectation can be a crucial event in anyone's life, in some cases
bringing about a serious crisis. Dorothea's experience, however,
has the effect of making her feel she really sees Casaubon in
himself for the first time and this radically alters her attitude
to him. She has had her first serious difference of opinion with
him over his work and been made aware of his egoism and want of
feeling:

But Dorothea remembered it to the last with the vividness
with which we all remember epochs in our experience when some
dear expectation dies, or some new motive is born. To-day
she had begun to see that she had been under a wild
illusion in expecting a response to her feeling from
Mr Casaubon, and she had felt the waking of a presentiment
that there might be a sad consciousness in his life which
made as great a need on his side as on her own (I, 323).

Though it can be disorienting when reality breaks down an expectation,
it can also liberate one from egoistic distortion of experience.

Rosamond's false interpretation of the reason for Dorothea's visit
is another example of a breakdown in expectations which is
liberating.

Lydgate as a scientist ought to have his expectations under
proper control. The scientific view of women he is determined on
necessitates "entertaining no expectations but such as were
justified beforehand" (I, 232), and he is also "impatient of the
foolish expectations amidst which all work must be carried on ..."
(I, 401). But his confidence in the power of his will and his
"vulgarity of feeling" lead him to entertain all sorts of
expectations which are anything but scientific. I have already
referred to his "fearless expectation of success" (I, 187) which
takes no account of the antagonistic forces he could encounter in Middlemarch or the possibility that the ambitions of others might interfere with his own. His expectations of Rosamond were similarly ill-conceived, as he later admits: "The first great disappointment had been borne: the tender devotedness and docile adoration of the ideal wife must be renounced, and life must be taken up on a lower stage of expectation ..." (III, 181). Possessing such expectations about Rosamond in the first place is scarcely to his credit. His earlier determination to be without "personal expectations from Bulstrode" (II, 294), as Ladislaw puts it, rings rather hollow in the light of his later request and eager acceptance of money from him.

Bulstrode himself receives some shattering blows to his expectations. Raffles says to him: "you didn't expect to see me here" (II, 380), and goes on to claim that it is "what you may call a providential thing." Bulstrode's belief in providence had led him to base his life on the expectation that his conduct had divine justification which the arrival of Raffles makes problematic. His own idea of himself also suffers a severe shock when the reasons he offers Ladislaw for accepting his money are rejected: "Mr Bulstrode had gone on to particulars in the expectation that these would work strongly on Ladislaw, and merge other feelings in grateful acceptance" (III, 139). Ladislaw's scornful refusal constitutes a serious crisis for Bulstrode: his confidence that events will work out for his personal benefit and his belief that he need feel no guilt about the past, which would help keep his world-view intact, are shattered and for the first time he feels himself defined by another's judgment of him.
In the case of many of the other characters expectations are central in their transactions with reality. There is a particularly interesting sentence which refers to Celia's suspicions about Dorothea's relationship with Mr. Casaubon: "She was seldom taken by surprise in this way, her marvellous quickness in observing a certain order of signs generally preparing her to expect such outward events as she had an interest in" (I, 67-68). This sentence clearly reveals the relationship between the interpretation of signs and expectations and shows how the interests of the perceiver affect the whole process. We are told that Ladislaw's mind, after his encounter with Raffles, "with its natural quickness in construction stimulated by the expectation of discoveries which he would have been glad to conjure back into darkness" (III, 138). It is Ladislaw's fears which are the main influence on the expectations he cannot help forming from his meeting with Raffles, but with most of the other characters it is their hopes which are the prime influence on their expectations. They tend to project these onto reality and are shattered when it shows itself to be indifferent. The most single-minded egoists feel especially frustrated when this happens. Rosamond, for example, is disappointed when Lydgate is a less suitable husband for her than she had expected. More directly shattering is her disappointment in Sir Godwin Lydgate's response to her letter: Lydgate was "in total ignorance of her expectations" (III, 198). But even such a frustration cannot make much impression on her egoism, and she succeeds in making herself out the aggrieved party. Her most intense disappointment is when Ladislaw shatters the expectation she has
always possessed about her ability to dominate others and have her own way: "She knew that Will had received a severe blow, but she had been little used to imagining other people's states of mind except as a material to cut into shape by her own wishes; and she believed in her own power to soothe or subdue" (III, 374).

Ladislaw's "Don't touch me!" completely undermines her expectancy that she could easily exercise power over him, and this leaves her seriously exposed for the first time to the reproaches of another, which upsets her own idea of herself, and also makes her see with great immediacy another's pain, which proves almost as shattering to her little egoistic universe. She suffers a crisis of identity: "Rosamond, while these poisoned weapons were being hurled at her, was almost losing the sense of her identity, and seemed to be waking into some new terrible existence" (III, 377). There is some parallel between this scene and that in which Ladislaw rejects Bulstrode's offer of money. Bulstrode and Rosamond, two of the most self-centred of egoists, each have their most basic expectations about themselves undermined by Ladislaw and feel themselves defined by his judgment of them. They are exposed to a reality that they cannot shape or construct in their egoistic interests.

The entire novel is very much concerned with this theme of expectations, both as it affects people generally and society itself. Featherstone's will creates a situation which raises expectations in almost everyone:

... Jane, the elder sister, held that Martha's children ought not to expect so much as the young Waules; and Martha, more lax on the subject of primogeniture, was sorry to think that Jane was so "having." These nearest of kin were naturally impressed with the unreasomableness of expectations in cousins and second cousins ... (II, 88).
In the event all of them must suffer the disappointment which results from unconsciously projecting one's desires and hopes onto reality and expecting the two to be identical. Featherstone has purposely kept Rigg out of the picture so that he might "frustrate other people's expectations" (II, 211). But Featherstone's own expectations are posthumously upset when Rigg sells Stone Court: "... every one had expected that Mr Rigg Featherstone would have clung to it as the Garden of Eden. That was what poor old Peter himself had expected ..." (II, 376). Reality cannot be calculated on even by people like Featherstone. The role of expectations in people's points of view is seen in the following comment: "... tacit expectations of what would be done for him by uncle Featherstone determined the angle at which most people viewed Fred Vincy in Middlemarch ..." (I, 357). It is implied that if he had not been thought heir to a fortune, most people's judgment of him would have been quite different. The spirit of the time is one in which expectations tend to dominate realities: reform is apt to generate "millenial expectations" (III, 32).

Three characters succeed, however, in resisting the human tendency to let egoistic hopes and desires create foolish or selfish expectations: Mr. Farebrother, Mr. Garth, and Mary Garth. Mr. Farebrother has expectations that Mary Garth may be willing to marry him, but when he learns these hopes are unfounded, he is able to resist the temptation to harm Fred's chances and even acts to bring the two together. Of Caleb Garth we are told that he has "little expectation and little cupidity," but this only means that he tries not to allow his egoism to affect his expectations; his approach is close to being scientific, since
he "was interested in the verification of his own guesses ..." 

(II, 90). Mary Garth, of all the characters, is the one who confronts experience with the least egoistic expectations, and consequently she is the most realistic and sensible character in the novel. She is able to see the world as independent of her own will and desires and arranges her life accordingly:

The red fire with its gentle audible movement seemed like a solemn existence calmly independent of the petty passions, the imbecile desires, the straining after worthless uncertainties, which were daily moving her contempt... having early had strong reason to believe that things were not likely to be arranged for her peculiar satisfaction, she wasted no time in astonishment and annoyance at that fact (II, 64).

But this does not mean she possesses no expectations at all, only that she is suspicious of those which would seem to be personally gratifying. Ironically it perhaps makes her over-sceptical about Farebrother's feelings for her, though she must eventually recognise the signs of his regard: "inevitably her attention had taken a new attitude, and she saw the possibility of new interpretations" (III, 70).

But there may be possible danger in Mary's kind of realism. The narrator comments that without her love for her parents she might have become cynical. To be aware that expectations are human constructions and that reality is indifferent and neutral to the human interests that inevitably become a part of them is a form of knowledge that could lead to cynicism or even nihilism, just as the knowledge of the narrator of "The Lifted Veil" paralyses all effort and feeling. There are indications that George Eliot was aware of the dangers of such knowledge. After the passage I quoted earlier: "What can the fitness of things
mean, if not their fitness to a man's expectations?" the narrator goes on: "Failing this absurdity and atheism gape behind him." Though this is primarily designed to satirise Fred's hopefulness, there is a suggestion that a breakdown of the anthropomorphic view that reality possesses a structure meaningful to man and his hopes could have such an effect. There is also an earlier passage relating to the belief of Featherstone's relations that he must leave his money to his family: "The human mind has at no period accepted a moral chaos; and so preposterous a result was not strictly conceivable" (I, 162). There is again irony in equating the term "moral chaos" with such a situation, but there is also the implication that to recognise that reality remains quite indifferent to human hopes and desires could produce the feeling that life was a moral chaos. And the event the family feel is inconceivable is all too conceivable.

There may be as much danger, then, in knowing too much if one's mind cannot come to terms with such knowledge as there is in falsely believing the world will respond to one's egoistic or expectant hopes. But Mary Garth's background and upbringing have given her a firm sense of selfhood with which she faces life, without either expecting it to gratify her desires or becoming pessimistic or cynical as a result. This enables her to feel secure enough to act in the world even if she knows it to be indifferent and neutral. For example, she feels that to burn Featherstone's will would be to perform an act which contradicted her sense of what was right which she has derived from her past. It is this sense of order she feels underlying her own life and self which provides a means of moral orientation and not the
assurance of a humanly meaningful order in the external world.

There is perhaps a parallel with Maggie Tulliver whose rejection of Stephen is also based on the need to be true to her personal identity. Even when Mary realises later that Fred may have lost ten thousand pounds because of this action, she does not feel she made the wrong decision. But perhaps this is another factor in her reasons for marrying Fred: "Fred has lost all his other expectations; he must keep this" (III, 71).

It would be a mistake to believe that George Eliot was opposed to all forms of human expectation. It would not only be impossible but undesirable to eliminate them. Nor does she think that human hopes and feelings should be separated from them. Even at a late stage in the novel Dorothea's ardent feeling creates expectations, subjective in their basis, but clearly valuable. Her belief in Lydgate's innocence is an obvious example. It is this which motivates him to confess to her: "He hesitated a little while, looking vaguely towards the window; and she sat in silent expectation" (III, 356). Though George Eliot is very much concerned to expose the egoism that underlies most expectations and to show how "the irony of events" (II, 289) defeats them, and of course events could only be interpreted as ironical if one has certain expectations about how they should turn out, she is not urging that expectations should only be held in a completely detached and neutral state of mind. Dorothea's early religious idealism was misconceived because she believed that reality was structured to correspond with her beliefs. Her expectations and hopes were inevitably disappointed, but this does not mean that
the feeling underlying her idealism, her longing for "a binding theory," was invalid. In fact, her theories were only a formulation of feelings: "... Dorothea's ideas and resolves seemed like melting ice floating and lost in the warm flood of which they had been but another form" (I, 304). She is eventually able to preserve the feelings while discarding the theoretic frame. She still possesses expectations based on powerful subjective feelings though she is aware that reality may frustrate her. But the knowledge that this may occur does not neutralise feeling or expectation. She might have been wrong about Lydgate but this would not necessarily have devalued her original feeling. Similarly her social idealism may be contradicted by events but this does not invalidate it. In science also, it is impossible to proceed without expectations, which are not held in a neutral and detached manner with the bare minimum of subjectivity, but, as Lydgate's approach indicates, are expressive of great imaginative power and subjective construction. But the essential thing in science is to submit the theories based on them to the most rigorous tests of verification and ruthlessly discard those which fail the tests, no matter how great the disappointment involved. Properly controlled, then, expectations are both necessary and valuable. The theme of expectations is taken up again in Daniel Deronda

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This discussion of the significance of "signs," "interpretations," and "expectations," is very relevant to questions raised by Romantic thought, and shows, I think, that Middlemarch is written from a philosophical perspective that takes these into account. Though
the world external to the mind is unstructured, as the pier-glass analogy indicates, man needs to create a structure and order out of this to live in the world. This order is a creation of the mind and is projected onto the world. Out of the accumulation of data, of signs, received by the senses, the mind interprets the world, creates order. And as I have said, even "facts" do not exist independently of the interpreting mind. The perceptual and cognitive order created by the mind in its interaction with the world leads to all sorts of expectations being held which are brought into confrontation with reality. These give structure and form to our experience. But since these expectations are human constructions, reality is continually undermining them, for the structure of our thinking about the world can never be isomorphic with the world itself. Thought is metaphoric or symbolic in its nature, as Lewes repeatedly pointed out. Even scientific thinking is not excluded from this, as the epigraph to the first chapter of Deronda, which I quoted earlier, shows. The order created by science in its view of the universe is compared to the order created by a poem or novel: both need to invent a beginning though there is no beginning in reality.

But since the mind creates metaphorical constructs which are projected onto reality and men act on the strength of them, there is always the danger of forgetting the metaphorical nature of thought and identifying the metaphor and the reality. This can have serious consequences:

Poor Mr Casaubon had imagined that his long studious bachelorhood had stored up for him a compound interest of enjoyment, and that large drafts on his affections would
not fail to be honoured; for we all of us, grave or light, get our thoughts entangled in metaphors, and act fatally on the strength of them... there was nothing external by which he could account for a certain blankness of sensibility which came over him just when his expectant gladness should have been most lively... (I, 127).

Casaubon, of course, is not the only victim of this in Middlemarch. It not only affects people at the most ordinary level of action but influences their most deeply-held beliefs. 4

It is especially interesting that one can see that the form of the narration itself is affected by these considerations. For if underlying interests, preconceptions, and expectations influence one's interpretation of the world, then the narration must also be an interpretation reflecting the interests of an interpreter. The order created by the narration was only one possible ordering. Reality was capable of being interpreted from an infinite variety of points of view, and the narration must acknowledge this. George Eliot must have been well aware that the pier-glass analogy could be read reflexively to apply to the narrator, and the narrative form of the novel indicates, I think, that she took account of this.

This question has a double aspect: there is the larger philosophical problem of writing a novel which professes to give a picture of reality, and there is the problem of how one justifies the particular view which the narrative will reflect. The obvious philosophical difficulty raised by the realistic novel is that it

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4. Cf. Lewes: "So great is the tendency of Speculation to replace Observation, and so seductive are its constructions, that even ordinary men are usually unable to resist the tendency to accept the conceptions which have been extricated from perceptions, and the theories constructed out of sensible data as more truly real than the very data themselves" (Problems, II, 33-34).
must have a beginning and an ending, that is form, while reality itself is formless. Narration will necessarily impose a form on the reality it professes to describe and how is this to be justified? In her short essay, "Notes on Form in Art," George Eliot said that form in art referred to structure or composition and went on: "And what is structure but a set of relations selected & combined in accordance with the sequence of mental states in the constructor, or with the preconception of a whole which he has inwardly evolved?" George Eliot's awareness of the problem of how the form created by the narration is to be justified perhaps explains the peculiar use she makes of the narrator.

J. Hillis Miller thinks George Eliot's form of narration is fundamentally contradictory since she cannot "avoid alternating between speaking of the novel as if it were history and recognizing that it is a fiction." But this apparent paradox can be resolved

5. Cf. Susan Sontag in Against Interpretation and Other Essays (London, 1967), p. 198: "... some works of art are more directed toward proof, more based on considerations of form, than others. But still, I should argue, all art tends toward the formal, toward a completeness that must be formal rather than substantive ... It is form that allows one to terminate."


7. The Form of Victorian Fiction (Notre Dame and London, 1968), p. 81. He says this of Adam Bede but the same applies to Middlemarch. The narrator both speaks directly to the reader of the novel and also refers to himself as an historian. There are also some references to the characters as if the narrator had known them as real people: "(pardon these details for once - you would have learned to love them if you had known Caleb Garth)" (1, 355).
if the narrator is seen not as George Eliot herself, but as a persona, writing what for him is an historical novel about real people and real events, looking back on the past from the standpoint of the present. There is strong evidence that George Eliot thought of the narrator as male. He refers to himself as an historian, talks about the characters as if he had known them personally, yet also directly addresses the reader. Using the narrator in this way allows George Eliot to overcome some of the philosophical problems that faced her as a realistic novelist. The form of the novel, its shaping of the reality it is dealing with, giving it a beginning and end, does not mirror an order which is immanent in the world, but is rather the narrator's own ordering of a reality which is real for him, which he is looking back on, and interpreting from his own point of view. It is this narrator who is part of the fiction who chooses to begin at a certain point and end at a certain point. He knows the end before he begins, that is, his interpretation of the people and events he describes has created his own particular perspective which he uses to structure the novel. The sense of rigid determinism some readers feel underlying comments like "Destiny stands by sarcastic with our dramatis personae folded in her hand" (I, 142) are made in the light of the narrator's knowledge of what actually happened and this cannot be altered. This use of a fictional narrator who is writing what for him is an historical novel about real people is an extremely

8. See Appendix I for a discussion of this and for some further comments on narration.
logical solution to the problem of how form is to be justified in a realistic novel, though one could still argue about its artistic effectiveness.

In Middlemarch also the narrator is constantly present before the reader. The reason for this is again connected, I think, with George Eliot's concern with how the mind constructs and interprets reality in the light of its own interests. Since all the characters do this it would obviously be bad faith on her part if the narrator was shown as a neutral observer, quite objectively describing his world. He too must be seen to be interpreting from his own point of view. This is made apparent again and again: "I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevances called the universe" (I, 214). She could obviously have used a much more neutral form of narration, as in Silas Marner for example, but the narrator's point of view and his construction of the narrative for his own purposes is repeatedly stressed: "... whatever has been or is to be narrated by me about low people, may be ennobled by being considered a parable ... Thus while I tell the truth about loobies my reader's imagination need not be entirely excluded from an occupation with lords ..." (II, 102-103). The reader should be aware that the narrator's view is not the only one possible. The reality created by the novel is an interpretation of the world from a particular point of view.
J. Hillis Miller thinks that the narrator in *Middlemarch* is "an all-embracing consciousness which surrounds the minds of the characters ..." and also "a divine knowledge, sympathy, and power of judgment ..."9 This is misleading, for it is the presence of the narrator in the first person that is particularly prominent in the novel:

But at present this caution against a too hasty judgment interests me more in relation to Mr Casaubon than to his young cousin... I protest against any absolute conclusion, any prejudice derived from Mrs Cadwallader's contempt for a neighbouring clergyman's alleged greatness of soul, of Sir James Chettam's poor opinion of his rival's legs ... I am not sure that the greatest man of his age, if ever that solitary superlative existed, could escape these unfavourable reflections of himself in various small mirrors ... (I, 125).

Here the narrator is presented in a strikingly personal way, clearly interpreting the characters from his own point of view, and is convinced that his view will conflict with the reader's. Occasionally he confesses his knowledge is less than complete, as the following passage about Dorothea shows: "It is difficult to say whether there was or was not a little wilfulness in her continuing blind to the possibility that another sort of choice was in question in relation to her" (I, 48). His point of view is repeated shown to be personal: "For my part I have some fellow-feeling with Dr Sprague ..." (I, 237). It is plainly George Eliot's intention to give the narrator a strong sense of personal identity.

This increases our sense of the narrator's presence as the interpreter of the world he is writing about, a world that is real

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for him. It also makes it possible for George Eliot to deal with one of the most important epistemological problems raised by her form of narration: how the narrator knows what is going on in the minds of a whole series of characters. The narrator's "omniscience" should not be regarded as a metaphysical penetration of the minds of the characters but should rather be seen as a function of his role as a novelist writing what is for him an historical novel, and so being free to shape and interpret his narrative and construct the inner lives of his characters. But his presence before the reader in the first person, the overtly personal judgments he makes, imply that his interpretation and judgment are not the only ones possible but reflect his own interests and attitudes.

Using the narrator in this way thus has several advantages for George Eliot. She can create a strong sense of reality since the narrator believes in the reality of the characters and events he is describing. Although it is made clear that he is interpreting this reality from his own point of view, this is acceptable as long as we feel that this does not lead to obvious distortion. And any narrative must reflect the views of its narrator, so it could be argued that it is necessary for the reader to know the narrator's standpoint. To conceal the narrator from the reader might suggest that the order of the narrative describes an order immanent in the world rather than reflecting a particular interpretation. Since the illusion created is that the narrator is writing a novel about real people and events we need feel no contradiction because the narrative is structured in the form of a
novel. The reader then is able to feel a strong relation between the novel and the real world, is also aware that the narrative does not describe objectively but is an interpretation though this is acceptable, and can respond to the novel as an artistic structure. George Eliot finds a form of narration in which the novel satisfies the reader in each of these three respects without any logical contradiction arising between them.

One can perhaps go further and see the narrator as even more integrally involved in what the novel is about. He realises the limitations and distortions of his characters' points of view but is equally aware that one needs to be able to hold strongly to a point of view to make any commitment or judgment, or find sufficient motive for action. He says ironically with reference to Mr. Brooke that "it is a narrow mind which cannot look at a subject from various points of view" (I, 97). Brooke drifts aimlessly from one point of view to another and is unable to make any serious commitment or act decisively. The danger of knowing the relativity of points of view is that it can lead either to the aimlessness of Brooke or to total scepticism. But there is the contrary danger of identifying one's point of view with reality and seeing no difference between the two. The narrator must steer a path between these dangers. His interpretations and judgments are based on his point of view, but he clearly recognises this. Even if the result is a reality constructed in the light of the interests which underlie his point of view, this cannot be avoided. But the narrator must be aware of this himself and make the reader aware of it. His own example shows the reader that a realisation of the relativity of points of view need not lead to scepticism, but to a maturity of judgment which is the more valid for being held with self-consciousness and self-criticism.
CHAPTER IX

DANIEL DERONDA

Introductory

It is in Daniel Deronda that George Eliot's concern with Romanticism is seen most clearly. It is her most thorough treatment of several of the most important problems created by Romanticism and it contains the clearest expression of her own positive Romantic position.

The novel owes a good deal to The Spanish Gypsy. Several of the most important elements in the poem are treated anew in Deronda: the problem of Romantic egoism re-emerges in the characterisation of Gwendolen and the Princess, Fedalma's situation in relation to the Gypsies is similar to Deronda's Jewish situation, and Zarca's prophetic vision of Gypsy nationhood is obviously similar to Mordecai's vision of Jewish nationhood. But The Spanish Gypsy had been tragic in its outcome. All of the main characters, Silva, the Romantic egoist, Fedalma, who chose to devote her life to Zarca's ideal, and Zarca himself, the transcendalist hero who attempted to impose his vision on an antagonistic reality, had been defeated. Daniel Deronda attempts to overcome this tragic view without falsification.

The novel can also be seen as George Eliot's most thoroughgoing consideration of the prime Romantic problem, the problem of identity. Fedalma, though intellectually sympathetic to Zarca's vision, had felt unable to identify completely with the Gypsies. She had suffered from alienating self-consciousness. George Eliot returns to this problem in her study of Deronda. Is a tenable sense of
identity possible for an individual who has been brought up deprived of a tribal situation and is quite self-consciously aware of the asymmetrical relation between human thought and feeling and the world? Can such an individual transcend his alienation and how is this to be achieved? George Eliot's concern with the demonic is also particularly clear in this novel, as its epigraph indicates:

Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul:  
There, 'mid the throng of hurrying desires  
That trample on the dead and seize their spoil,  
Lurks vengeance, footless, irresistible  
As exhalations laden with slow death,  
And o'er the fairest troop of captured joys  
Breathes pallid pestilence.

If the individual fails to find a secure sense of identity, then these dangerous forces which are present even in a character like Mirah can gain control of the personality.

A consideration of the Romantic elements in *Deronda* shows, I think, that it is one of the most highly organised and elaborately structured of her novels, though it can of course be argued that it is vitiated by a failure to reconcile its two "halves" in stylistic terms. But this is not something I shall be concerned with here.

The structure of the novel can be shown to be based on a conflict within Romanticism which I have already discussed: the conflict between Romantic egoism and organicist Romanticism. Almost all the most important characters in the novel are attracted to one or other of these positions. The most extreme Romantic egoist is the Princess Halm-Eberstein who refuses to recognise anything as superior to her ego: "I wanted to live out the life
that was in me, and not be hampered with other lives" (III, 123). Her Jewish background and the situation her father forced her to accept are regarded as "bondage" against which it is her right to rebel. Even love is rejected as a limitation of the ego: "... it is subjection. It takes another for a larger self, enclosing this one ..." (III, 185). Like Armgart she is a great opera singer, but music for her is only valuable as a vehicle for self-realisation, and like Armgart, when her will is being crushed by external forces, she maintains a defiant stance. She refuses to give way to the reality which is overcoming her or even to acknowledge as valuable the feeling which made her reveal to Deronda his true identity: "... events come upon us like evil enchantments: and thoughts, feelings, apparitions in the darkness are events — are they not? I don't consent. We only consent to what we love. I obey something tyrannic ..." (III, 130-131). This resistance to all external forces and claims she sees as the defining quality of her nature: "It was my nature to resist and say, 'I have a right to resist'" (III, 139). Resistance allows her to feel that she can deny all prior definition and create a purely personal identity. The Princess is probably George Eliot's most objective portrait of a Romantic egoist, since she is not shown repudiating her egoism, unlike Armgart or Don Silva. The novel is content to reveal the sufferings and frustrations of her life, how she is deprived of love and left isolated.

The complete contrast to the Princess and Romantic egoism is Mordecai. He is no less a Romantic figure than the Princess but
is a clear example of the Romantic as messianic visionary. His prophetic vision of a Jewish nation is obviously based on Romantic organicist principles. The novel however stresses the projective nature of Mordecai's visions, for example his belief that another will come to carry on his work:

... his imagination had constructed another man who would be something more ample than the second soul bestowed, according to the notion of the Cabbalists, to help out the insufficient first ... His inward need for the conception of this expanded, prolonged self was reflected as an outward necessity. The thoughts of his heart ... seemed to him too precious, too closely inwoven with the growth of things not to have a further destiny (II, 298-299).

Mordecai is an example of the earlier stage of Romanticism, before it advanced to extreme asymmetrical thinking. He expects external reality to respond to his innermost intuitions. For him there is a divine principle present in both the self and the world, but he is aware that it is the subjective imaginative vision which is necessary to create divine value in the world:

"They said, 'He feeds himself on visions,' and I denied not; for visions are the creators and feeders of the world. I see, I measure the world as it is, which the vision will create anew. You are not listening to one who raves aloof from the lives of his fellows" (II, 335).

His enthusiasm for nationalism reminds one of such fervant Romantic nationalists as Arndt or the Pole Mickiewicz.

In contrast to the Romantic egoists' celebration of the self, Mordecai urges the individual to identify himself with his race or nationality. The only way for the individual to discover a tenable sense of identity and overcome alienation is to feel himself an organic part of his social world, united with others in shared values and common roots:
What is the citizenship of him who walks among a people he has no hearty kindred and fellowship with, and lost the sense of brotherhood with his own race? It is a charter of selfish ambition and rivalry in low greed. He is an alien in spirit, whatever he may be in form; he sucks the blood of mankind, he is not a man. "Sharing in no love, sharing in no subjection of the soul, he mocks at all" (II, 380-381).

This is the condition of the Princess and Lapidoth, Jews who reject and despise their racial and cultural traditions. It is clear that Mordecai's Zionist vision which will enable the Jews to recover a sense of organic nationhood has more than a purely Jewish significance. The relationship he urges that the Jew should feel to his race and heritage applies by implication to people of all nationalities and races.

Almost all of the main characters are drawn either to some form of assertive egoism or to Mordecai's organicist goal of a tribal identity. The conflict is exemplified in the two major characters, Gwendolen and Deronda. In their opposition and relationship the almost dialectical structure of the novel is worked out, and in the resolution which takes place at the end George Eliot is perhaps trying to create her own Romantic synthesis out of the conflict between egoistic and organicist Romanticism.

Gwendolen as Romantic Egoist

Gwendolen is George Eliot's most complex and interesting study of the Romantic egoist. The character was suggested to George Eliot by seeing Byron's grand-niece gambling at the Kursaal in Hamburg, which suggests a clear link with Romantic egoism.

The language used to describe her has also obvious Byronic connotations. For example in her response to losing at roulette: "she was in that mood of defiance in which the mind loses sight of any end beyond the satisfaction of enraged resistance; and with the puerile stupidity of a dominant impulse includes luck among its objects of defiance" (I, 9). She possesses the "inborn energy of egoistic desire" (I, 57), feels "the hunger of the inner self for supremacy ..." (I, 73), and believes that she has a "right to the Prometheus tone" (I, 415) when she is suffering. She is also determined that her will shall triumph over all circumstances, including her own feelings, as in her resistance to her guilt feelings in accepting Grandcourt's proposal: "No: it was surmounted and thrust down with a sort of exulting defiance as she felt herself standing at the game of life with many eyes upon her, daring everything to win much - or if to lose, still with éclat and a sense of importance" (II, 117).

The demonic elements in her personality are repeatedly stressed. We are told that observers see in her "a trace of demon ancestry" (I, 96); Deronda thinks that roulette at Leubronn "brought out something of the demon" (II, 125) in her, and later he observes that "there seemed to be at work within her the same demonic force that had possessed her when she took him in her resolute glance and turned away a loser from the gambling table" (II, 197). But these forces in her become repressed, particularly as a result of Grandcourt's mastery of her, and this leaves her vulnerable to an uncontrollable demonic impulse. The demonic then seems to take command of her whole personality and she longs
for rescue: "It was sometimes after a white-lipped, fierce-eyed temptation with murdering fingers had made its demon-visit that these best moments of inward crying and clinging for rescue would come to her ..." (III, 197).

A major difference between Gwendolen and the Princess is that the latter was able to find expression, like Armgart, through her art for the demonic elements in her personality. A speech of Armgart has particular application to Gwendolen:

"Poor wretch!" she says, of any murderess -
"The world was cruel, and she could not sing:
I carry my revenges in my throat;
I love in singing, and am loved again" (p. 75).

But Gwendolen has no such form of sublimation. It is suggested that she may have had sufficient talents to be a great singer or actress but her social situation has deprived her of the proper training to develop them and she has also been shaped by the low artistic standards of her class. Even though "She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional ..." she was "nevertheless held captive by the ordinary wirework of social forms ..." (I, 74). The demonic in her nature can thus only find expression in such activities as gambling or else turn murderous through frustration when she is mastered by Grandcourt.

Gwendolen's difference from the Princess in this important aspect is the more significant because of the numerous other parallels between them. The phrase "princess in exile" is used of Gwendolen, suggesting an obvious parallel (I, 30, 55). Her resistance is much emphasised: we hear of "her resistant temper" (I, 208), "her resistant spirit" (I, 342), and her "haughty resistant speeches" (I, 351). Mirah compares her to Schiller's
Princess of Eboli in Don Carlos, the kind of demonic role that would have suited the Princess. Like the Princess also, Gwendolen is determined to have her own will and let nothing stand in her way: "My plan is to do what pleases me" (I, 98). Grandcourt is so disturbing to her because she does not know whether or not she wants him and this conflicts with the basis on which she has built her life: "This subjection to a possible self, a self not to be absolutely predicted about, caused her some astonishment and terror: her favourite key of life - doing as she liked - seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what at a given moment she might like to do" (I, 201).

Her constant exertion of will not only to overcome external circumstances but also to master important elements in her own nature necessarily creates a sense of self-division. In allowing her life to be ruled by will and impulse, she contradicts other feelings which are part of her personality. This creates a sense of insecurity and makes her feel vulnerable to the judgments of others, and to resist such judgments she must exert her will even more strongly, which worsens her self-division. She is caught up in a process that can only lead to self-alienation. She possesses no stable centre in her life which can direct her impulses and feelings; only what she wants at any particular time or a sudden impulse operate on her as motivations. She has no notion of continuity of selfhood which could help her to direct her life.

2. See also Jean Sudrann's article, "Daniel Deronda and the Landscape of Exile," ELH, XXXVII (1970), 433-455, for a discussion of Gwendolen's alienation.
The reason for this lies partly in her childhood and upbringing. Maggie Tulliver also possessed strong impulsive feelings, but she was fortunate in having a valuable relationship with her family in her early life at the mill. This provided a stable centre for her feelings and memories and prevented the demonic side of her nature having the same scope for development as Gwendolen's. But Gwendiolen lacked "a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all neighbours, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood" (I, 26). She has been spoiled by her mother, deprived of the influence of a father or any settled life which would allow her feelings and memories to become attached to a particular place and particular objects. There is thus nothing objective to her ego which feeling and memory can relate to and which can help shape her egoistic nature. Her natural egoism is allowed an almost free expression, and being spoiled and brought up in a protected situation, she has no need to face a resistant reality.

Two events in her childhood are particularly interesting from a psychological point of view: her refusal to get out of bed and fetch her mother's medicine when her mother is in pain, and her strangling of her sister's canary when it interrupts her singing. Gwendiolen is not lacking in feeling. These are impulsive acts of egoism which gain mastery over her other feelings. Being spoiled and undisciplined, her sympathetic feelings have not been sufficiently developed to counteract her wilful egoism. Though she later feels she acted wrongly, her easy penances are
insufficient expiation. Such acts are the beginning of her self-alienation; they are offences against her basic forms of feeling, in Spencer's terms, which being repressed become the foundation of her later experiences of dread and terror. In allowing will and impulse to direct her life, she violates feelings and affections which are also part of her self. When she sees the dead face in the panel, this becomes a sign for her of her own ravaged inner self which she has repressed but cannot escape. This incident is reminiscent of Piero di Cosimo's painting of Tito in his dread at seeing Baldassare. He also cannot escape from the effects of violating his most basic feelings. Both Gwendolen and Tito experience the sense of self-division to which their ways of life are necessarily leading.

But Gwendolen continues to allow her egoistic will to rule her life. This leads to one of her most self-alienating acts, accepting Grandcourt when she had quite spontaneously felt it would be wrong to injure another deliberately. She has to struggle hard against her feelings of dread:

"It was new to her that a question of right or wrong in her conduct should rouse her terror ... But here had come a moment when something like a new consciousness was awaked. She seemed on the edge of adopting deliberately ... that it did not signify what she did; she had only to amuse herself as best she could. That lawlessness, that casting away of all care for justification, suddenly frightened her ... (II, 51)."

She senses a moral knowledge which is an integral part of feeling itself. In choosing to ignore this, she creates the basis for the "avenging powers" which later become present in her consciousness. The Furies which attack her after Mrs. Glasher's curse are the objectification of her ravaged feelings which break
free when her conscious self cannot remain in control any longer.

Another important aspect in her self-alienation is Grandcourt's domination of her. Her egoistic energies are repressed and become perverted by her hate and fear into an intense resentment which creates a murderous demonic impulse in her. If she gives way to this, her self-division will become complete:

And the intensest form of hatred is that rooted in fear, which compels to silence and drives vehemence into a constructive vindictiveness, an imaginary annihilation of the detested object, something like the hidden rites of vengeance with which the prosecuted have made a dark vent for their rage, and soothed their suffering into dumbness. Such hidden rites went on in the secrecy of Gwendolen's mind, but not with soothing effect — rather with the effect of a struggling terror. Side by side with the dread of her husband had grown the self-dread which urged her to flee from the pursuing images wrought by her pent-up impulse (III, 195).

When this "pent-up impulse" finds expression in her desire that Grandcourt die during the boating trip, she suffers afterwards the crisis of identity that has been building up for her all through the novel. Her life of will assertion and impulsive egoism have only led to this. Gwendolen is George Eliot's most complex psychological study of the Romantic egoist and she again shows that Romantic egoism cannot lead to a tenable sense of identity, but only to an identity breakdown. Gwendolen discovered in herself "that murderous will" (III, 235) over which she had no conscious control and which made her experience "that new terrible life lying on the other side of the deed which fulfils a criminal desire" (III, 237). Instead of achieving the egoistic Romantic ideal of self-realisation, she had nearly created a monstrous second self which ruled her. Her demonic energy had transformed
her into a demon. She is glad of "a restful escape"

after following a lure through a long Satanic masquerade, which she had entered on with an intoxicated belief in its disguises, and had seen the end of in shrieking fear lest she herself had become one of the evil spirits who were dropping their human mummery and hissing around her with serpent tongues (III, 333).

**Acting, Gambling, and Selfhood**

The acting imagery in the last passage is important. Gwendolen in her devotion to the ego had been acting in a "Satanic masquerade." Almost all the characters who are drawn towards one form or another of assertive egoism are represented as actors and role-players. Acting is one of the main symbols in the novel of the ego's desire for power and dominance. It enables the individual to be what he wants by assuming a role which is not conditioned by his past and frees him from all responsibilities and claims. One can also leave off a role when one is tired of it and assume another. Acting then is primarily used as a metaphor for the ego's desire to transcend the limitations imposed by the past or the restrictions of the present and freely realise itself in any way in which it chooses. By playing a role, the egoist can by an act of will create his own selfhood.³

As might be expected, acting is of crucial importance in the life of the Princess. The narrator comments on her speech to Deronda proclaiming her need for freedom:

³. It is tempting to think that George Eliot may have been influenced by such a work as Jonson's *Volpone* in her treatment of acting and role-playing in the novel. Other writers like Fielding and Thackeray were also concerned with acting and George Eliot is perhaps using this English tradition for her own purposes. As I mentioned previously, the separation of self and role has been seen as a prime characteristic of Romanticism.
The speech was in fact a piece of what may be called sincere acting: this woman's nature was one in which all feeling - and all the more when it was tragic as well as real - immediately became a matter of conscious representation: experience immediately passed into drama, and she acted her own emotions... It would not be true to say that she felt less because of this double consciousness: she felt - that is, her mind went through - all the more, but with a difference: each nucleus of pain or pleasure had a deep atmosphere of the excitement or spiritual intoxication which at once exalts and deadens (III, 127-128).

Though acting is a means of exaltation for the self, because it is only a role which is being represented and which can be assumed or discarded by an act of will, there is no depth in the Princess's feeling. It has no connection with her past, with any felt memories, but remains purely on the surface. It is thus ultimately deadening, creating a "double consciousness" in which part of her self stands aside and observes her role-playing self. She is really living in a world of make-believe. She says later of her decision to re-marry: "I made believe that I preferred being the wife of a Russian noble to being the greatest lyric actress of Europe; I made believe - I acted that part" (III, 144). But this is what she always does:

It seemed as if she had exhausted her emotion in their former interview. The fact was, she had said to herself, "I have done it all. I have confessed all. I will not go through it again. I will save myself from agitation." And she was acting out that theme (III, 175-176).

In choosing also to make herself what she wills by acting, she must deny herself any emotional commitment which might set up claims superior to the self: "I am not a loving woman. That is the truth. It is a talent to love - I lacked it. Others have loved me - and I have acted their love" (III, 185).
Gwendolen also has great love for acting. She looks forward to "future occasions of acting in charades or theatrical pieces ..." (I, 75). She loves playing a part before others so as to win their admiration or homage, for example when gambling: "Since she was not winning strikingly, the next best thing was to lose strikingly" (I, 9). She enjoys her relationship with Grandcourt as long as she can play a queenly role:

... Gwendolen ... found her spirits rising continually as she played at reigning. Perhaps if Klesmer had seen more of her in this unconscious kind of acting, instead of when she was trying to be theatrical, he might have rated her chance higher (II, 58-59).

But she discovers numerous disadvantages in role-playing. In moments of stress the role can break down and reveal that part of the self she has repressed but cannot deny. When she sees the picture of the dead face when acting the part of Hermione, the role is quite unable to prevent her repressed self completely undermining her performance. Also, if she cannot find a suitable role to confront experience with, as when Rex makes love to her, she is extremely vulnerable and powerless. The opposite of this is to find oneself trapped by an intolerable role. She cannot let it be known that she has made a disastrous mistake in marrying Grandcourt. Her whole existence being based on choosing to do as she likes, she can neither repudiate her choice nor submit. She had freely chosen this role, and to let Grandcourt or anyone else know she wished to go back on her choice and thus had been defeated by him would undermine her philosophy of life. She cannot give him or anyone else the satisfaction of knowing her will has been crushed, and so she must act out this pretence. But the price
she pays is to be trapped in a hateful role, a situation Grandcourt relishes. Acting imagery is evident in the following passage:

Constantly she had to be on the scene as Mrs Grandcourt, and to feel herself watched in that part by the exacting eyes of a husband who had found a motive to exercise his tenacity ... And she herself, whatever rebellion might be going on within her, could not have made her mind up to failure in her representation. No feeling had yet reconciled her for a moment to any act, word, or look that would be a confession to the world ... (III, 5).

She cannot risk anyone seeing her real feelings about the marriage and knowing Grandcourt has the upper hand, so she constantly plays the role of being satisfied, even to her mother, the person closest to her: "To her mother most of all Gwendolen was bent on acting complete satisfaction ..." (III, 5). Her identity is so vulnerable that she cannot risk any serious confrontation with judgments of others: "In spite of remorse, it still seemed the worst result of her marriage that she should in any way make a spectacle of herself ..." (III, 15-16). Having committed herself to impressing other people by acting, she now becomes the slave of her audience, forced to play a hateful part to prevent them seeing through her role to that vulnerable, fragile self she tries to deny. Her greatest humiliation would be to feel herself judged by others and to know that this judgment is true. Then she would be defined by others and lose the freedom to define herself. Even the pity of others is hateful to her as this is also a judgment and definition imposed from outside.

But it is not only this particular situation that brings out the weakness of acting as a means of self-definition and self-realisation. Gwendolen's experience shows that in acting one is
necessarily defined by others no matter what one does. If the role breaks down, she is vulnerable to the judgment of others when they see behind the mask. Or else she is forced to maintain a role she hates to prevent this happening. But even when she is fully in command of her role, she is still acting for the benefit of others. Acting implies an audience; she is not defining her own life as she thinks she is, but in reality allowing other people’s judgment of her performances to define her. Paradoxically, acting as a means of self-realisation leads to the loss of a self-created, autonomous identity. One does not create one’s identity for oneself but only in the eyes of others. In the actor himself, there exists a double consciousness in which he is aware he is playing a role which is not an expression of what he feels to be his real self but exists apart from it. It is played for its effect on others. Eventually this can lead to extreme self-division. Again George Eliot is implying that only by cultivating continuity of selfhood can one avoid this divided consciousness and feel sufficient inner security to be oneself despite the adverse judgments of others.

Even Grandcourt, contemptuous of almost everyone and apparently indifferent to the world acts for the benefit of others:

It is true that Grandcourt went about with the sense that he did not care a languid curse for any one's admiration; but this state of not-caring, just as much as desire, required its related object—namely, a world of admiring or envying spectators... (III, 61-62).

The passionate Lydia Glasher also: "There was a strange mixture of acting and reality in this passion" (II, 111). Mirah’s father Lapidoth, is an actor, a man of the theatre, a Tito-like role
player who plays any part likely to suit his interests. Eventually this constant acting has made him incapable of any of the most natural responses to experience. Every response lacks the reality of felt experience and seems as if it is being performed on a stage. For example, when he weeps after Mordecai's criticism of him:

As Ezra ended, Lapidoth threw himself into a chair and cried like a woman, burying his face against the table - and yet, strangely, while this hysterical crying was an inevitable reaction in him under the stress of his son's words, it was also a conscious resource in a difficulty ... (III, 356).

Though Mordecai's attack had completely surprised him and undermined his prepared defence, he is at the stage where he acts to serve his interests at all times and is always detached from his emotional responses.

One of the most interesting actors is Hans Meyrick, an impulsive and capricious artist, who is inclined to see the world as a stage designed for him to play roles on. Mirah says of him:

"He passes from one figure to another as if he were a bit of flame where you fancied the figures without seeing them ... all in one minute Mr Hans makes himself a blind bard, and then Rienzi addressing the Romans, and then an opera-dancer, and then a desponding young gentleman ..." (II, 286).

Nothing is really serious to him, everything is a game. Even art and love, his two greatest concerns, are treated as games. His playful attitude to art is apparent in his discussion with Deronda of his Berenice paintings (II, 274-276). In relation to love, Deronda thinks that his nature was not one in which love could strike deep roots that turn disappointment into sorrow; it was too restless, too readily excitable by novelty, too ready to turn itself into imaginative material, and wear its grief as a fantastic
costume. "Already he is beginning to play at love; he is taking the whole affair as a comedy"... (III, 155).

Deronda goes on to say that he is not without affection or sympathy for others, but he constructs their inner lives "to fit his own inclination" (III, 156). Even when he offends Mirah and apologises profusely, self-dramatisation and refusal to take any situation seriously are present: "Even in Hans sorrowful moments, his improvised words had inevitably some drollery" (III, 279).

But when Deronda thinks he has no serious designs on Mirah at all because of his tone, Hans protests that he does have real intentions.

His refusal, however, to take anything seriously, his treatment of life as a game in which he is imaginatively free to construct himself and his interpretations of others in any way he pleases is part of a larger strategy for confronting experience. He is an interesting development of the Romantic egoist. He does not believe in the kind of self-realisation that the Princess strives for, nor is any external commitment worth making. There is nothing in the world that can define the self, but neither can he take his own ego seriously enough to make it the centre of all values. The mockery that can be applied to the world and all its values can equally be applied to the self and its pretensions. Since he cannot create an identity for himself by identifying with any external set of values or ideas or adopt a philosophy of self-realisation, he confronts the world by creating all sorts of self-mocking roles and prevents himself (unlike Tito) from being perpetually subject to dread and crisis when reality shatters a role by taking neither his role nor the situation he is in
seriously: "Hans was wont to make merry with his own arguments, to call himself a Giaour, and antithesis the sole clue to events; but he believed a little in what he laughed at. And thus his bird-like hope, constructed on the lightest principles, soared again in spite of heavy circumstance" (III, 284).

There is an underlying nihilism present in Hans' attitudes, one which is also present in Grandcourt's desire for domination, Lapidoth's amoral pursuit of gratification, and Gwendolen's occasional feeling that since nothing matters one might as well obey any impulse. He obviously has no belief in or respect for any values or philosophy. He takes nothing seriously because he thinks nothing is worth taking seriously. Since he cannot identify himself with any set of beliefs or values or even create his own values, his solution to the problem of identity is to allow his imagination the maximum scope in constructing roles for himself and situations for himself to realise his roles in. But he is well aware that it is his own imaginative construction that is most in evidence here and therefore there is no truth or objectivity in either the role he is playing or the situation he is acting in. The only reality is the one he himself is conscious of creating. In its own terms this is a tenable solution to the problem of identity, but George Eliot shows the price to be paid in this solution: the lack of any substantiality in his life, the failure to form any deep relationships with people since he constructs their inner lives for his own imaginative purposes, and the impossibility of being able to take anything seriously. All of this leads to a sense of pointlessness. Despite his determination to
be light-hearted no matter what the circumstances, he is also more vulnerable to disappointment than he thinks, as in the realisation that Mirah loves Deronda. For once he was "out of humour with his lot, and yet bent on making no fuss about it" (III, 367). But he does not take long to recover from this set back. He is last seen reflecting light-heartedly that if Mirah had loved him she need not have feared the rivalry of Gwendolen.

In contrast to those characters who are enthusiastic role-players, Deronda and Mirah significantly have an intense dislike of acting. When Sir Hugo asks Deronda if he would "like to be adored by the world and take the house by storm ..." (I, 251), he replies that he would hate it. He had "set himself bitterly against the notion of being dressed up to sing before all those fine people who would not care about him except as a wonderful toy" (I, 253). Mirah's father had forced her to sing and act on the stage, which she also hated. He says of her: "She will never be an artist: she has no notion of being anybody but herself" (I, 318), but he nevertheless made her "rehearse parts and act continually" (I, 322). Her father's use of his actor's skill in his mimicry and mockery of Jewish life made the world seem like a hell to her: "Is this world and all the life upon it only like a farce or a vaudeville, where you find no great meanings?" (I, 323). Clearly some of the characters, Lapidoth, Grandcourt, and Hans, are of this opinion, but Mirah thinks the greatest art contradicts this. Significantly she "knew that my acting was not good except when it was not really acting, but the part was one that I could be myself in, and some feeling within me carried me along" (I, 325).
This view of what is proper and improper acting is related to two different views of art in the novel. There is the kind of art, exemplified by the Princess, in which self-display is the dominant feature. Art is used as a vehicle for the ego in its desire to be, as Sir Hugo says, "adored by the world and take the house by storm ..." Gwendolen aspires to be this kind of artist. But contrast Mirah's singing: "She sang Beethoven's 'Per pietà non dirmi addio,' with a subdued but searching pathos which had that essential of perfect singing, the making oblivious of art or manner, and only possessing one with the song" (II, 144). Here the artist only serves art, instead of using it as a means of dominating an audience by force of ego. In an exchange between Gwendolen and Deronda, she states that since she cannot be a singer of the highest standard she has given up singing. In her view being unable to imitate excellence "only makes our own life seem the tamer," but he replies that "We should have a poor life of it if we were reduced for all our pleasure to our own performances" (II, 243).

The apologist for art as something which the self should serve, and not use for egoistic purposes, is Klesmer. Art for him is superior to the individual ego and can help to define the self. Thus one can see a parallel between Klesmer's concept of art and Mordecai's vision of the organic nation. Both offer the ego a means of definition in devoting itself to a higher ideal. Klesmer tells Gwendolen that if she decides to commit herself to art "I will ask leave to shake hands with you on the strength of
our freemasonry, where we are all vowed to the service of Art, and to serve her by helping every fellow-servant" (I, 391). The Princess was a great artist, but art as such was not important to her, only the self-realisation that was possible through art. When she thought another singer was gaining precedence over her she gave up singing and sought a new role in which she could realise herself.

Acting is not the only activity symbolising the egoist's attempt to dominate his world, gambling and, to a lesser extent, hunting are also important images of this. Significantly Deronda objects to both activities (II, 82). His main objection to gambling is that it is a means of gaining from another's loss. But for the egoist gambling represents the longing of the self to triumph over a recalcitrant reality and to succeed even against the odds, to place one's 'foot on the neck of chance" (I, 6). All of Gwendolen's most demonic tendencies are brought out in gambling. When she is winning she feels herself becoming a kind of goddess: "She had begun to believe in her luck, others had begun to believe in it: she had visions of being followed by a cortège who would worship her as a goddess of luck and watch her play as a directing augury" (I, 8). The excitement she feels in gambling reflects her confidence that the sheer force of her ego must triumph over chance and circumstance: she "would make the very best of the chances that life offered her, and conquer circumstance by her exceptional cleverness.... She felt well equipped for the mastery of life" (I, 54). There is, however, another aspect of gambling which comes out when Gwendolen is disillusioned with life
after her marriage. Then it becomes a refuge from boredom and ennui, a means of distraction in the midst of despair. She says to Deronda: "I am going to justify gambling in spite of you. It is a refuge from dulness" (II, 204). The need to gamble like the need to act springs from a basic alienation and sense of despair which the self seeks to overcome. The larger implications of this are presented in the variety of European nationalities caught up in "the passion of gambling" (I, 5) at Leubronn, as if this condition is threatening not just Gwendolen but the whole of European civilisation.

Gwendolen is not the only character fond of gambling. The Princess's whole life can be seen as one great gamble with herself at the price of sacrificing others. Her gamble in marrying the Russian noble was not, however, successful, and like all gamblers she finds she must lose eventually, for the world finally crushes the ego. Lush is also something of a gambler: "I will take odds that the marriage will never happen" (I, 213), is his view of Grandcourt's prospects of marrying Gwendolen. He also tries "gambling in argument" (II, 14) with Grandcourt. Hans Meyrick gambles on winning Mirah's love: "I would rather run my chance there and lose, than be sure of winning anywhere else" (II, 284), though he claims no one but himself can be hurt by this and that he does not intend to despair if he loses. But the most extreme gambler in the novel is Lapidoth whose passion exemplifies the dangers inherent in this activity. The narrator analyses his mania for it:

The gambling appetite is more absolutely dominant than bodily hunger, which can be neutralised by an emotional or intellectual excitation; but the passion for watching chances -
the habitual suspensive poise of the mind in actual or imaginary play - nullifies the susceptibility to other excitation. In its final, imperious stage, it seems the unjoyous dissipation of demons, seeking diversion on the burning marl of perdition (III, 350-351).

Here the demonic element in gambling is brought out.

Gambling, like acting, can create self-division because the self feels guilt at profiting from the losses of others.

Gwendolen finally finds the psychological strain of this guilt intolerable, as she confesses to Deronda regarding her feelings about breaking her promise to Lydia Glasher:

"I wanted to make my gain out of another's loss - you remember? - it was like roulette - and the money burnt into me. And I could not complain. It was as if I had prayed that another should lose and I should win. And I had won. I knew it all - I knew I was guilty" (III, 225).

Gambling finally leads to self-alienation. Even if one profits from it, one feels a sense of guilt because it is undeserved and at the expense of others. Even though chance and disorder may characterise events in external reality, there is a need within the self to feel a sense of equilibrius between one's actions and one's deserts. Unless one is, like Lapidoth, almost completely devoid of feeling, one feels guilt at gambling with events and profiting if they work out in one's favour. Gwendolen feels that marrying Grandcourt and ignoring what she feels is Mrs. Glasher's superior claim is like gambling because she profited from Mrs. Glasher's loss. This wilful act alienates her from those feelings which tell her such an action is wrong and increases her self-division.

It is Gwendolen's capability of having such strong guilt feelings that prevents her becoming like Grandcourt or Lapidoth, probably the two most negative characters in George Eliot's works.
Grandcourt like Don Silva and Mrs. Transome had sought complete self-realisation in love, but when his passion for Lydia had passed, all his most Romantic qualities found only a negative expression. Only the pleasure of mastering others, "his delight in dominating" (II, 99), can dispel the "languor and ennui" of his life. Being "without the luxury of sympathetic feeling" (II, 225) he suffers no guilt at making others submit to his will. Though Gwendolen resembles him in her desire to have her own will, she differs from him crucially in her capacity to feel.

She also resembles Lapidoth in several respects. Like him, she loves acting, gambling, and longs for personal gratification. She thinks she can exploit chance for her own purposes and, when events seem to be going against her, is prepared, as Mr. Gascoigne puts it, "to adapt herself to circumstances like a girl of good sense" (I, 405). All this ultimately leads to Lapidoth. He is the kind of person all committed egoists risk becoming. He has gambled away all feelings: "Among the things we may gamble away

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4. Lewes makes an interesting comment on animal behaviour that illuminates Grandcourt's love of dominating: "The animal must destroy, or it could not feed. A rival threatening to take some of this food rouses Anger, the emotion of a thwarted impulse. The thwarted sexual impulse calls out the same feeling. Derived from this will be in the higher imaginative animals the love of Domination: the desire to make others afraid of, or subservient to us" (Problems, I, 175). This is useful in understanding Grandcourt's relationship with Gwendolen and the fact that it is not love that he wants but mastery and domination of her. Whether she loves him or not is a matter of indifference to him. He derives greatest satisfaction from making her submit even in the midst of her loathing for him and mental resistance. This, of course, has its sexual aspect.
in a lazy selfish life is the capacity for ruth, compunction, or any selfish regret..." (III, 302). Self-interest has reached such a pitch as to cut him off almost entirely from feeling or from any susceptibility to the judgments of others. In a sense he has solved the problem of identity by refusing to possess a human identity at all. Only impulses and desires for gratification motivate him and all other considerations are ignored. He is the ultimate egoist, the man who has emancipated himself from almost all human values and feelings and is utterly self-oriented. These have been almost completely eroded by habitual gambling and acting. He refuses to recognize his past self as having any connection with his present self. He can look on the most personal memories with complete neutrality, as in reading the inscription on Mirah's purse: "Lapidoth had travelled a long way from that young self, and thought of all that this inscription signified with an unemotional memory..." (III, 302). He has really destroyed all human identity and become instead a kind of animal, adapting and adjusting to all circumstances in the gamble for gratification or survival. Perhaps significantly he survives.

What saves Gwendolen from becoming a Grandcourt or Lapidoth are the very feelings of dread and remorse which threaten to create in her a personality crisis. These are evidence that part of her self is fighting to maintain her human identity. In Deronda's view her remorse was the precious sign of a recoverable nature, it was the culmination of that self-disapproval which had been the awakening of a new life within her; it marked her off from the criminals whose only regret is failure in securing their evil wish (III, 232-233).
But the price of maintaining some form of human identity might be irrecoverable self-division and alienation. Someone like Lapidoth who has virtually cut himself off from all feelings is immune from this danger.

Though Gwendolen leads a life dominated by ego and will, her susceptibility to feeling is apparent throughout. In her first response to Mrs. Glasher’s claim on Grandcourt, moral feeling strikes her with an immediacy almost as strong as her most demonic impulses:

she acted with a force of impulse against which all questioning was no more than a voice against a torrent. The impulse had come ... from her dread of wrong-doing, which was vague, it is true, and aloof from the daily details of her life, but not the less strong... and even apart from shame, her feeling would have made her place any deliberate injury of another in the region of guilt (II, 32).

This is a very clear example of what George Eliot regards as a valid impulse, one which is an expression of Gwendolen's whole self and not merely the product of the moment or an animal impulse. To act then in wilful contradiction of such a feeling puts great strain on her consciousness. Her partial awareness of the danger explains why "a question of right or wrong in her conduct should arouse her terror ..." (II, 51). She cannot easily dismiss "the most permanent layers of feeling" (II, 86), and she confesses to Deronda that she "can't help feeling remorse for having injured others" (II, 263). This potential for feeling prevents her going the way of Lapidoth and preserving a human identity. This is true for the Princess also. She finally could not resist the feeling which urged her to tell Deronda of his parentage. For George Eliot the rejection of such feelings is a betrayal of one's
human identity: one becomes, like Lapidoth, virtually beyond the pale of humanity. This is why Deronda can assert that his grandfather's vision, which has its basis in such human feeling, is stronger than the egoistic will, for to reject it is to deny one's human status. Even the most wilful of egoists could not finally resist fulfilling her father's wish: it was "the expression of something stronger, with deeper, farther-spreadmg roots, knit into the foundation of sacredness for all men" (III, 180).

Deronda: From Alienation to Identity

George Eliot is not only concerned to attack the various forms of egoistic Romanticism in Daniel Deronda, but expresses her own positive organicist Romantic position, one which does not rest on metaphysical assumptions and takes account of advanced Romantic thought. She does this through her study of Deronda himself, who, though few critics have found him satisfactory in aesthetic terms, is one of her most ambitious characterisations, and she tries to confront all the difficulties of the problem.

Though completely opposed to all forms of Romantic egoism, despite having an extreme Romantic egoist as a mother and having accepted an amoral nihilist as a father, Deronda is himself clearly associated with Romanticism:

To say that Deronda was romantic would be to misrepresent him; but under his calm and somewhat self-repressed exterior there was a fervour which made him easily find poetry and romance among the events of everyday life (I, 305).

And again later:

And, if you like, he was romantic. That young energy and spirit of adventure which have helped to create the worldwide legends of youthful heroes going to seek the hidden tokens of their birth and its inheritance of tasks, gave him a certain quivering interest in the bare possibility that he was entering on a like track ... (II, 361).
He is also compared to Shelley at one point (I, 267), and the sense of inner grief which is a result of his doubts about his parentage is likened to "Byron's susceptibility about his deformed foot" (I, 259). It is Shelley he most resembles in his idealistic longings, but Deronda is a Romantic who has gone beyond any form of transcendentalism or any belief in a divine principle either in the self or in the universe. He is a Romantic who has reached the most advanced stage of asymmetrical thinking and the most extreme degree of self-consciousness.

As with Gwendolen, George Eliot goes into detail about his childhood experiences to help account for his later development. The most important of his early experiences is the sense of alienation he suffers from because he believes he is illegitimate. This makes him feel disconnected from Sir Hugo and the life he has been brought up in. His awareness that he does not fully belong is compared to "the threatened downfall of habitual beliefs which makes the world seem to totter for us in maturer life" (I, 256). The disorienting effects of this knowledge, and the corresponding intensification of self-consciousness because of his doubts about his identity which leads him to repress his passionate nature, have serious consequences for his development. But an implicit contrast with Grandcourt and Gwendolen is drawn in the following passage: "his disposition was one in which everyday scenes and habits beget not ennui or rebellion, but delight, affection, aptitudes ..." (I, 252-253). His nature is one in which feeling predominates over the egoistic will. Instead, then, of reacting egoistically to his alienation like Gwendolen and others in the
novel by trying to realise himself by sheer force of ego, his intense feelings and sympathies become allied to his repression and self-consciousness and help create a different form of self-alienation. For Gwendolen, exertion of will and liberation of impulse cut her off from her basic forms of feeling, but Deronda's intensity of self-consciousness makes it seem to him that his feelings and sympathies do not centre around any self at all. Instead of acting to impress his personality on the world and to make himself what he wants to be by an act of will, he reacts to experience and shrinks from any kind of contact that threatens to call for a definite commitment of himself. The word "shrink" is used repeatedly for his reactions and responses. Perhaps it is George Eliot's comparative failure to dramatise convincingly the effects of Deronda's self-repression and self-consciousness on his personality, probably because her main interest was not in exploring his condition but in enabling him to transcend it, that in some measure accounts for his being less artistically successful than Gwendolen though he is much more interesting than most critics admit.

His basic condition resembles Gwendolen's. Like her he is rootless, cut off from his past, "a yearning disembodied spirit" (II, 133). This makes it extremely difficult for him to communicate with people and he fears forming friendships. While Gwendolen responds to her isolation by continually seeking to dominate and master reality, Deronda represses his personality and fears contact with the world. Yet it is repeatedly made apparent that he is not at all without basic egoism, though he has
no desire to project himself into a role designed to impress other people. But he also lacks the self-confidence to make any commitment at all. His identity seems to him fragile and vulnerable and this prevents him being able to risk energetically confronting experience: "... all the fervour of his nature was engaged on the side of precaution" (II, 152). Though he strongly desires to commit himself to action in the world, he feels no deep emotional attachment to any single belief or idea, or to any particular social group. He responds with "reflective hesitation" and lingers "in a state of social neutrality" (I, 269). Reality itself seems to him a confusion, and this leads him to question "whether it was worth while to take part in the battle of the world ..." (I, 277) and to contemplate "the hopelessly-entangled scheme of things" (I, 281); and, says the narrator, he "could not ... continuously escape, suffering from the pressure of that hard unaccommodating Actual, which has never consulted our taste and is entirely unselect" (II, 157).

The effects of Deronda's past experience, his sense of rootlessness, his view of the world as without order or immanent meaning, all these serve to accentuate his self-consciousness to such an extent that he often feels no real sense of personal identity at all. His experience in the boat before he finds Virah exemplifies this: "He was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape ..." (I, 283). This state
of mind and its consequences are enlarged on later:

His early-wakened sensibility and reflectiveness had developed into a many-sided sympathy, which threatened to hinder any persistent course of action ... His imagination had so wrought itself to the habit of seeing things as they probably appeared to others, that a strong partisanship, unless it were against an immediate oppression, had become an insincerity for him. His plenteous, flexible sympathy had ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralise sympathy (II, 131).

Though naturally a man of strong feelings and sympathies, self-consciousness has developed in him an analytic frame of mind which threatens to cut him off from commitment to any particular course of action and even from feeling itself. He longs for a commitment which could "compress his wandering energy" (II, 132) and dreads the consequences of his reflective self-consciousness:

"He wanted some way of keeping emotion and its progeny of sentiments - which make the savours of life - substantial and strong in the face of a reflectiveness that threatened to nullify all differences" (II, 133).

Deronda's habitual self-awareness and reflective analysis threaten to drain him of any particular sense of selfhood and to lead to the ultimate alienation of consciousness from concrete reality:

... he dreaded, as if it were a dwelling-place of lost souls, that dead anatomy of culture which turns the universe into a mere ceaseless answer to queries, and knows not everything, but everything else about everything - as if one should be ignorant of nothing concerning the scent of violets except the scent itself for which one had no nostril (II, 132-133).

He understands what is happening to him and strongly desires to achieve a sense of emotional connection with external reality which would cure his condition. The attainment of a tribal identity, to be "an organic part of social life," is his greatest desire,
but with his degree of self-consciousness and intensity of analysis
which can see the value in all forms of belief yet still feels
detached from them, he cannot bring himself to believe in any as
true. All strong partisanship repels him. It is possible to see
Deronda as George Eliot's representation of what could result from
the extreme development of self-consciousness and asymmetrical
thinking, even in a man of naturally strong feelings who rejects
Romantic egoism. In the level of awareness Deronda has achieved,
his own self seems to exist separately from his consciousness. He
also sees all forms of religious or ideological belief as human
constructions, mythologies which have no objective truth, but only
symbolic forms which express human content and so he is unable to
give himself a strong sense of selfhood by identifying with any
one of them.

If one can only achieve a secure sense of identity by embracing
a belief one feels and accepts as true, then there is apparently no
solution to Deronda's problem. He is destined to remain a
"yearning disembodied spirit." The thought of making a commitment
in the face of reason disturbs him as much as the consequences of
his alienation: he "shrank from having his course determined by
mere contagion, without consent of reason; or from allowing a
reverential pity for spiritual struggle to hurry him along a dimly-
seen path" (II, 352). Despite his attraction to Mordecai's
prophetic vision he still must struggle with "the oppressive
scepticism which represented his particular lot ..." (III, 118).

In The Spanish Gypsy Fedalma had embraced the Gypsy cause,
but this commitment only created sorrow and anguish for her. She
could not fully identify with the Gypsies despite her desire to do so. She had lost her tribal consciousness and could not recover it by an act of will. But Deronda from what seems an even more unredemptable position does recover from the alienation of his extreme self-consciousness and can joyfully identify himself with the Jews. How does he accomplish this? How does he succeed in doing something which was apparently emotionally impossible for Fedalma? It is Deronda's development from possessing the sensibility of a modern alienated man to the achievement of a strong sense of tribal identity which George Eliot is especially concerned with in the novel.

One great difficulty Fedalma had to face in wholeheartedly accepting Gypsy life was that she must give up her passionate love for Don Silva. Though there are important parallels between The Spanish Gypsy and Daniel Deronda, significantly the Fedalma-Silva relation of passionate love is not paralleled by a similar relation between Deronda and Gwendolen. In Deronda's state of mind, passionate love would have been a natural response to alienation as it was with Fedalma and Silva, and one would have expected Deronda to fall in love with Gwendolen. It is stated several times that he is capable of this:

a man ... hardly represents to himself this shade of feeling towards a woman more nearly than in the words, "I should have loved her if --: "... he had never throughout his relations with Gwendolen been free from the nervous consciousness that there was something to guard against not only on her account but on his own ... (III, 115).

George Eliot could obviously have developed the novel in this way if she had wanted to. But it seems probable that her larger aim of enabling Deronda to recover from his alienation and find a
tribal identity made her wish to avoid this. The reason he does not fall in love with Gwendolen is, of course, that he has already met Mirah and fallen in love with her though it is some time before he admits this to himself.

Mirah can also be seen as a development of a character in *The Spanish Gypsy*, of Hinda, Fedalma's servant. Like Hinda, she is a person who feels wholly at one with her racial and cultural background. In other words she possesses a tribal identity which she maintains despite her father's attempt to uproot her and create a new life for her. This preserves her from the self-consciousness which afflicts Deronda:

Perhaps her ease of manner was due to something more than the simplicity of her nature. The circumstances of her life had made her think of everything she did as work demanded from her, in which affectation had nothing to do; and she had begun her work before self-consciousness was born (II, 143).

She feels utterly at one with her people: "I will always be a Jewess. I will love Christians when they are good, like you. But I will always cling to my people. I will always worship with them" (II, 150) she tells Mrs. Meyrick. She is thus able to submit to what she feels is her duty without rebellion or self-conscious reflection. It is observing this state of consciousness in her which has such a great effect on Deronda and magnifies his own tribal longings: "... she seemed to Deronda a personification of that spirit which impelled men after a long inheritance of professed Catholicism, to leave wealth and high place, and risk their lives in flight, that they might join their own people and say, 'I am a Jew'" (II, 150). Deronda's love for her is as if Fedalma had
fallen in love with a male equivalent of Hinda before meeting Silva. The tension Fedalma feels between passionate love and duty to her heritage, which leads to her tragic situation, is thus absent from Deronda's experience.

Despite the artistic difficulties presented by such a character as Mirah, George Eliot is not merely content to symbolise a tribal consciousness. In making her feel intense jealousy because she thinks Deronda loves Gwendolen, she shows that Mirah is not devoid of egoism, that her most moral qualities are a sublimation of this egoism, and that she is therefore not invulnerable. In her difference with Mordecai over the interpretation of the story of the Jewish maiden and the Gentile king, it is suggested she has come to a self-knowledge which has changed her, though not necessarily made her the happier. Negative egoistic tendencies are present even in the most apparently pure character. Mordecai says she has read too many plays which represent "the human passions as indwelling demons ..." (III, 291), but as the novel's epigraph indicates, the demonic is potentially present in everyone and can threaten to undermine even the most strongly-based identity.

Deronda's love for a Jewish girl who feels wholly defined by her heritage and the fact that this prevents him feeling passionate love for Gwendolen is one factor in Deronda's recovery of a tribal identity. Another essential factor is his relationship with Mordecai. Both Mirah and Mordecai help renew Deronda's spirit even though he cannot intellectually accept their beliefs. Mirah tends to see some larger meaning in his rescue of her, but for him it was chance: "It was my good chance to find you" (II, 140), and
he regards his meeting with Mordecai and his involvement with the Jews as springing from this chance and its consequences despite Mordecai's metaphysical interpretation: "To me the way seems made up of plainly discernible links. If I had not found Mirah, it is probable that I should not have begun to be especially interested in the Jews ..." (II, 360), while he thinks Mordecai is possessed of "illusory notions" on the subject. Even though Mordecai's belief that Deronda is Jewish is compared to a scientific hypothesis: "His exultation was not widely different from that of the experimenter, bending over the first stirrings of change that correspond to what in the fervour of concentrated prevision his thought has foreshadowed" (II, 328), only Deronda preserves the proper scientific scepticism towards the hypothesis until it has been tested: "We must not lose sight of the fact that the outward event has not always been a fulfilment of the firmest faith ..." (II, 342).

But though Deronda cannot believe in the objective truth of Mordecai's prophetic ideas, he is able to draw on Mordecai's enthusiasm and emotional power to renew his inner self, to receive "the complete ideal shape of that personal duty and citizenship which lay in his own thought like sculptured fragments certifying some beauty yearned after but not traceable by divination" (II, 356). His meeting with Mirah and his experience in the synagogue in Frankfurt had aroused his interest in Jewish life, and contact with Mordecai greatly develops this. He is able to feel an emotional attachment to one particular religion and cultural
tradition instead of looking on all in a detached frame of mind and without preference. It is still suggested, however, that he views religions, like Feuerbach, as symbolisations of human feelings:

"Our religion is chiefly a Hebrew religion; and since Jews are men, their religious feelings must have much in common with those of other men ... Still it is to be expected that a Jew would feel the forms of his people's religion more than one of another race ..." (II, 148).

But being exposed to the power of Mordecai's personality and undertaking serious study of Judaism enables Deronda to find a perspective to which he can devote his energies, a centre which can prevent his subjectivity becoming diffused, and around which he can build a firm sense of his own selfhood.

Without Mordecai and the deep interest which he develops in Jewish culture, his own Jewishness would have meant comparatively little to him, as he himself is aware. Like Fedalma in her experience with the Gypsies he would also have felt detached from his heritage. Though refusing to accept Mordecai's ideas in a literal form, he allows himself to empathise with the emotions underlying these ideas, the feelings which the ideas represent in symbolic form: "He felt nothing that could be called belief in the validity of Mordecai's impressions concerning him or in the probability of any greatly effective issue: what he felt was a profound sensibility to a cry from the depths of another soul; and accompanying that, the summons to be receptive instead of superciliously prejudging" (II, 332-333). He gradually outgrows his self-consciousness and reserve in the presence of Mordecai and lets him define a form for his tribal yearnings.

Deronda's paradoxical relation to Mordecai is especially apparent in the theme of expectations, which is an important part
of this novel as it is of *Middlemarch*. Before he forms any close relationship with Mordecai, Deronda had been longing for a confidant and imagines someone who would ideally fit this role: "But he had no expectation of meeting the friend he imagined" (II, 294). Earlier in going in search of Mirah's family, he was "without expectation of a more pregnant result than a little preparation of his own mind, perhaps for future theorising as well as practice ..." (II, 158). He is a man who is clearly aware that expectations are human constructs, and that reality remains quite indifferent to the expectations and hopes which necessarily enter into our confrontations with the world and which we tend to identify with it. But as I said in the last chapter, too great an awareness of this can paralyse action and lead to a sense of pointlessness about life. The value of expectations as a means of shaping action, even though they may prove mistaken, was proclaimed in *Middlemarch*, and this subject is resumed in *Daniel Deronda*.

Mordecai is a man whose life is dominated by expectations, and this tendency has been strengthened by his knowledge that he cannot live long. In spite of "overwhelming discouragements," his yearning and hope are not diminished but "took rather the intensity of expectant faith in a prophecy which has only brief space to get fulfilled in" (II, 297). When he meets Deronda "the ever-recurrent vision had the force of an outward call to disregard counter-evidence, and keep expectation awake" (II, 308). At first Deronda disappoints Mordecai's expectation by saying he is not a Jew but when they meet on the river, this confirms Mordecai's expectant vision. But the projective nature of this is stressed:
"Obstacles, incongruities, all melted into the sense of completion with which his soul was flooded by this outward satisfaction of his longing" (II, 328). All sorts of contrary data are ignored in the interests of his expectation: ". . . I expected you to come down the river. I have been waiting for you these five years" (II, 328–329). For Deronda, this belief is obviously based on an illusion, but he is extremely reluctant to dismiss it with rational scepticism. He realises the value of the feeling underlying the expectation and is determined to do nothing to disappoint it unless this proves unavoidable:

"I suppose I am in a state of complete superstition, just as if I were awaiting the destiny that could interpret the oracle. But some strong relation there must be between me and this man, since he feels it strongly. Great heaven! what relation has proved itself more potent in the world than faith even when mistaken - than expectation even when disappointed? Is my side of the relation to be disappointing or fulfilling? - well, if it is possible for me to fulfil, I will not disappoint" (II, 331).

Though Deronda cannot believe in Mordecai's expectations, he makes use of the intensity of feeling they create in Mordecai, something which his own sceptical intellect has dissociated him from. It is impossible for him to make the absolute commitment to Mordecai's vision which only complete belief in it could generate, but he allows Mordecai's fervent enthusiasm to sustain him. The same longing is present in both men, but in Deronda the longing is not projected into objectivity. Deronda's conscious awareness of projective thinking had in the past detached him from all beliefs or strong commitments and only made him feel separate and self-conscious; but Mordecai's projection of his longing into objectivity leaves him vulnerable when reality frustrates his
human structuring of it. Deronda suffers a double dread:
"... a compassionate dread of discouraging this fellow-man who urged a prayer as of one in the last agony, but also the opposing dread of fatally feeding an illusion, and being hurried on to a self-committal which might turn into a falsity" (II, 339). On their own then, both Mordecai and Deronda suffer greatly from the weaknesses of their forms of thinking, but together each complements the weakness of the other. Mordecai's enthusiasm makes Deronda "feel his imagination moving without repugnance in the direction of Mordecai's desires" (II, 407), and Deronda's care in preparing Mordecai to survive disappointment if he is wrong and his willingness to do all he can not to disappoint him, bring about a happy conclusion for both. When Deronda finds he can fulfil Mordecai's expectations he is overjoyed: "It was his nature to delight in satisfying to the utmost the eagerly-expectant soul ..." (III, 314).

In a sense Deronda had gambled that Mordecai's prediction that he is a Jew would turn out to be true just as Gwendolen and the Princess gambled that they would triumph over the otherness of reality. Perhaps Deronda has more than his fair share of luck in the novel. But his gamble is somewhat different. He is well aware that he can lose and is fully prepared for all consequences of this. Also, any hypothesis or expectation that precedes empirical testing is to some extent a gamble in that it may be wrong. One cannot therefore avoid gambling with experience in some form. The only people who could possibly be hurt in Deronda's case would be Deronda himself and Mordecai, and Deronda
does everything in his power to try to avoid hurting Mordecai. The gambles of Gwendolen and the assertive egoists in the novel are only designed to serve their own ends and necessitate profiting from others. The egoists also tend to take little account of the possibility of failure, egoistically believing that reality ought to favour them. Thus when their expectations are not fulfilled they are shattered. Deronda is prepared for this disappointment.

But in fulfilling Mordecai’s expectations, he paradoxically finds that he must disappoint Gwendolen’s. He had been almost as concerned to protect Gwendolen as he had been Mordecai, but this proves impossible. Her expectations have been repeatedly disappointed throughout the novel; she has been forced to recognise “how quickly might life turn from expectancy to a bitter sense of the irremediable!” (II, 193). But she feels little danger when Deronda is on the point of disclosing to her that he is a Jew: ”she felt the more assured that her expectations of what was coming were right” (III, 395). But the revelation that he is going away and will marry Mirah is a crushing blow. She must also come to terms with the separateness of Deronda.

But the relationship with Gwendolen is also an important stage in the evolution of Deronda towards a tribal identity. In his efforts to help her overcome her sense of alienation and to prevent her from being engulfed by her inner demons, he also becomes more aware of his own need for what he prescribes for her: “Try to care for what is best in thought and action - something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot” (II, 258). Critics tend to see this as priggish moralising, but Deronda
himself, though in a different way, has as much trouble as Gwendolen in concentrating his sympathies. When he tells her that "what we call the dulness of things is a disease in ourselves. Else how could any one find an intense interest in life? And many do" (II, 204), he is surely rebuking himself as much as Gwendolen. The boredom she feels with her life is something he also is extremely vulnerable to because of his over-reflective, detached way of contemplating the world. His lectures to her are also lectures to himself: "Is there any single occupation of mind that you care about with passionate delight or even independent interest?" (II, 266). Before his interest in the Jews he could have asked himself the same question. When he tells her that "The refuge you are needing from personal trouble is the higher, the religious life ..." (II, 266), he is diagnosing his own condition. The narrator comments that the heat of his remonstrance "came ... from the habit of inward argument with himself rather than from severity towards Gwendolen ..." (II, 266-267). In seeing another's need of a larger aim in life and in his efforts to make this clear to her, Deronda discovers a deeper emotional awareness of his own similar need and this is another important factor in his willingness to make a full commitment to his Jewish heritage and Mordecai's ideal.

It is interesting also that Deronda has in effect to choose between Gwendolen and Mordecai: "There was a foreshadowing of some painful collision: on the one side the grasp of Mordecai's dying hand on him, with all the ideals and prospects it aroused;
on the other this fair creature in silk and gems, with her hidden wound and self-dread, making a trustful effort to lean and find herself sustained" (III, 29-30). Though it can be argued that his rejection of Gwendolen has a good effect in that it is necessary for her to be able to live without him, this is not the reason for Deronda's choice, for the break with Gwendolen was necessary for him no matter what the consequences for her. He himself thinks it could have dangerous consequences. He is in fact choosing a form of self-realisation in favour of a concrete sympathy with conflicts with it. Daniel Deronda is a novel in which it is dangerous to come to simple conclusions. To say that George Eliot is against self-realisation, gambling, and role-playing would be a crude over-simplification, since all of these are manifested in some form by Deronda. One has a duty to oneself as well as to others and this must be taken into account even if it means rejecting someone in need. Deronda is thus prepared to sacrifice Gwendolen, though it is not an easy choice for him. But the opposite decision was taken by Mordecai who decided to remain with his mother and sacrifice his own dreams of serving the Zionist ideal. There are no easy moral decisions and there are no rules to act as guidelines. The individual can only make the choice which he thinks is truest to what he feels to be his whole self.

In choosing to be true to his racial heritage not merely with his intellect but with his deepest feelings, Deronda achieves what had seemed beyond him previously, a sense of tribal identity. He says to his mother:

"But I consider it my duty - it is the impulse of my feeling - to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people, and if I can see any work to be done for them that I can give my soul and hand to I shall choose to do it" (III, 177).

The phrase "identify myself" is, I think, crucially important. Deronda feels the desire to identify totally with the Jews. But he has identified himself, made a choice. The Romantic self cannot do otherwise than choose its own identity, since for the Romantic no role could be completely identified with the self. Nevertheless Deronda feels he has found a tribal identity: even though he suffered from extreme self-consciousness and was aware of the discontinuity between human thought and feeling and unstructured reality, he feels able to identify joyfully with his race and its religion and culture. His relationships with Mirah, Mordecai, and Gwendolen have in various ways prepared his emotions and consciousness for this. There is also no indication that he is going to accept any metaphysical belief to sustain him. Though adopting a Jewish role he says that he will not profess to believe in the same way as his ancestors (III, 275). It is implied that he regards the Jewish religion and Zionism as symbolisations which express valuable human content and not as objective truths.

Deronda's tribal identity is then fundamentally different from Mirah's. Being a Jew is not for him an objective reality which completely defines him but a role he has chosen to play. But his role, unlike those of the assertive egoists of the novel, is not chosen by the will alone, but is the expression or realisation of what he feels to be his deepest self, which includes all his most important past experience, memories, and intimate feelings. It even expresses feelings which transcend his personal existence,
for he sees his desire to carry on the work of his grandfather as "an inherited yearning" (III, 315). Nor are the Christian ideas in which he has been brought up to be rejected; they are part of himself and must find expression in this role he has chosen to play. He has discovered a situation which he can choose to serve with what he feels to be his whole self, and this provides him with an authentic form of self-realisation. It is possible, then, for him to recover from his alienating self-consciousness without adopting any metaphysical beliefs or rejecting Romantic thought. He both remains one of the most developed Romantics and succeeds in solving the problem of identity Romantic thought had created.

Gwendolen's development is left problematic, but her letter to Deronda suggests she has finally rejected her assertive egoism and is going to try to find a role equivalent to his. The egoistic Romantic is at least going to try to embrace an organicist position and perhaps in this one can see an attempt to achieve a synthesis out of the Romantic conflict, a synthesis also achieved by Deronda's being able to hold authentically an organicist position without rejecting the basic assumptions of advanced Romantic thought.

Perhaps Deronda is the character closest intellectually to George Eliot herself, and in his solution to the problems of Romanticism one can see her own personal solution. Like Deronda, she identified with her own nation and culture and through her work tried to confront the culture crisis that existed in England and to further the ideal of organic nationhood. Deronda's relation to Mordecai resembles her own relation to earlier organicist Romantics. Her task was to find a non-metaphysical form for their ideals and in her final novel we have her most important attempt to show how this could be done.
APPENDIX I

THE ROLE OF THE NARRATOR IN GEORGE ELIOT'S NOVELS

In discussing Middlemarch I argued that the narrator of George Eliot's novels should not be identified with the author. Since this is an important question I wish to discuss it further, not just in relation to Middlemarch but also with regard to the other novels. It is still a common attitude among students and some critics to say that "George Eliot" interferes too much with the reader's response. It is felt that she is reluctant to let the novel speak for itself or that the author's intrusions are signs of her excessive moralism. The use of the term "omniscient narrator" has encouraged the identification of the narrator with George Eliot since the only person who could possess omniscient knowledge is the author herself. But in my view the narrator is not to be identified with the real self of George Eliot and is a fundamental part of her novels' artistic structure.

Possibly the most important critical statement she ever made regarding her artistic aims and one which deserves frequent quotation is to be found in a letter to John Blackwood. It expresses her fear that Alexander Main's book of extracts from her work might make it appear that her novels were not artistic wholes:

If it were true, I should be quite stultified as an artist. Unless my readers are moved towards the ends I seek by my works as wholes than by an assemblage of extracts, my writings are a mistake. I have always exercised a severe watch against anything that could be called preaching, and if I have ever allowed myself in dissertation or in dialogue /anything/ which is not part of the structure of my books, I have sinned against my own laws.¹

¹. Letters, V, 458-459.
It seems clear from this that she considered the narrator's comments and intrusions to be part of her overall artistic structure. If everything is carefully designed to be part of the structure of her novels, it would also seem to follow that the narrator was separable from George Eliot though there need not necessarily be disagreement between their views.

I said earlier that there is strong evidence that George Eliot thought of the narrator as male. In itself this is not an important point, but clearly if she did regard the narrator as male, she must wish him to be seen as a persona and separate from her real self. In those of her works in which the sex of the narrator is specified, it is male. In *Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Adam Bede* this is the case. ² In the later novels, though the narrator appears in the first person, there is no reference to sex. But references to him as an historian and the tone of certain passages suggest a male persona. Also, in her last work, *Theophrastus Such*, the narrator, whose views all through are clearly identical with George Eliot's, is characterised as "a bachelor, without domestic distractions of any sort ..." (p. 3).

It is not only in *Middlemarch* that the narrator is characterised as an historical novelist writing about what for him are real

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² Barbara Hardy in *The Novels of George Eliot* also discusses this but she does not take the fictional narrator seriously. She is right to say the narrator does not have "the status of a dramatically conceived personality like a Pendennis or a Marlowe/sig" (p. 155), but it seems to me that George Eliot does wish to create some distance between herself and the narrator. Barbara Hardy also seems to see no good reason why George Eliot treats the narrator in this way other than convention.
people and events. This is so in all the novels, even in the notorious seventeenth chapter of Adam Bede. Though at first the narrator seems to be addressing the reader as if they both know the novel is a fiction, we read later in the same chapter: "But I gathered from Adam Bede, to whom I talked of these matters in his old age ..." (I, 272). Unless one regards George Eliot as untypically confused, the narrator must be writing a novel about people he has known or been told about. In The Mill on the Floss, the first chapter consists of the narrator remembering an historically real scene:

Ah, my arms are really benumbed. I have been pressing my elbows on the arms of my chair, and dreaming that I was standing on the bridge in front of Dorlcote Mill, as it looked one February afternoon many years ago (I, 6).

In Silas Marner, Felix Holt, Middlemarch, and Daniel Deronda, the narrator refers to the novel as a history.

Romola is especially interesting because obviously the narrator cannot pretend to have known the characters as real people if he is contemporary with the modern reader. If the narrator is merely the omniscient author this should present no problems, because if George Eliot regards her real self as narrator, then it is of no importance which period is concerned. She is omniscient because she is the author. But if the narrator is conceived of as part of the fiction it does raise problems, for how could he have gained this knowledge if he is contemporary with the reader? The way George Eliot deals with this suggests she did see it as a problem. In "The Proem" the narrator is treated as contemporary with the modern reader, but in order to tell the story, he conjures up the spirit of a dead Florentine who returns to visit scenes
and people he had known and acts as a focus of consciousness for the novel. The narrator follows his gaze and interprets what the Florentine sees from his own modern point of view. But it is significant that the narrator does not refer to himself in the first person, although there is a great deal of comment and judgment by him. Obviously the intrusion of the first person in the manner of *Middlemarch* would be inappropriate if the narrator is only narrating at second hand, as it were.

George Eliot was probably influenced by Thackeray in this use of the narrator. In *Vanity Fair* the narrator claims he was told the whole story by Dobbin, and in *The Newcomes* the following statement is made: "All this story is told by one, who, if he was not actually present at the circumstances here narrated, yet had the information concerning them, and could supply such a narrative of facts and conversations as is, indeed, not less authentic than the details of other histories," I have already suggested that George Eliot, and possibly Thackeray also, may have chosen to use the narrator in this way because she was concerned about how form could be justified in a realistic novel and also because she was aware of the logical and epistemological problems raised by so-called "omniscient" narration. Another way round these problems was first person narration, as in *Jane Eyre* or *Great Expectations*, but though George Eliot uses this in "The Lifted Veil," she probably would have felt it too limiting for her purposes.

I argued earlier that she might have felt it philosophically objectionable to use a completely neutral form of narration since the narrative would seem to be describing an objective order in the reality it was dealing with, and it would seem that the interests of the creator of the narrative did not affect the structure created. Even in Silas Marner, the most neutrally narrated of George Eliot's novels, the narrator as historian is present: "This is the history of Silas Marner, until the fifteenth year after he came to Raveloe" (p. 30). But what was the objection to clearly identifying herself with the narrator and treating the situations and characters as openly fictional, instead of trying to make the reader accept the illusion that the narrator was interpreting an historical reality? If the "reality" of the novel was acknowledged as fictional, this would have something of the effect of anti-art. This might suit some author's purposes, Trollope's for example, but it would tend to hinder George Eliot's. The reader might feel that the realistic material was not to be taken over-seriously if the narrator intruded to tell him that it was, of course, purely imaginary, and this was certainly not the kind of effect George Eliot wished to create. If the novel was openly presented as a pure fiction, it would also necessarily seem

4. James in "The Art of Fiction" thinks that Trollope committed "a terrible crime" in having the narrator admit that he is only "making believe" and can direct the narrative in any way he likes. See Partial Portraits (London and New York, 1894), p. 379. But James fails to understand that Trollope could have had both literary and philosophical motives for doing this and it may not have been mere carelessness.
to reflect the author’s own views in a very explicit form. It would be clear to the reader that the author was not interested in creating the illusion that there was a reality which the narrative related to; everything would be clearly identified as a construction of the author’s mind. For the kind of novels George Eliot wished to write there would have seemed to be considerable disadvantages in author-narrator identification.

I mentioned in relation to *Middlemarch* the problem of justifying form in a realistic novel. Barbara Hardy in her book has a chapter entitled "Plot and Form" in which she discusses George Eliot’s use of coincidence as a formal device. This throws into relief the problem of reconciling realism and form. Barbara Hardy praises George Eliot’s artful use of coincidence to create parallels and inter-relationships between character and situation. But calling these "coincidences" suggests she feels George Eliot has to sacrifice "realism" to achieve her formal purposes, for numerous coincidences will obviously undermine the reader’s sense of the novel being true to life. Though Barbara Hardy does not discuss this point, it would be easy to object that George Eliot’s concern with form and pattern means she must sacrifice a strong sense of reality.5

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5. This is the basis of John Bayley’s criticism of George Eliot when he accuses her of abolishing history as a fact since ideas about the world condition the form of her novels. Her fiction, he says, cannot allow for contingent reality. See "The Pastoral of Intellect," in *Critical Essays on George Eliot*, ed. Barbara Hardy, pp. 199-213. But it could be argued that it is impossible to experience history as pure fact independently of ideas, and that a writer who believes he has no ideas about the world which are organising his narrative is merely unconscious of them. One could perhaps go further and argue that such a writer would in fact deprive the reader of reality since he believed there was no separation between the reality created by his novel and reality as such. George Eliot, on the other hand, in making the reader conscious of a narrator interpreting and constructing reality for his own purposes forces the reader to recognise that the reality created by the words is only the reality created by the narrator’s mind and that there are as many realities as there are minds.
An extreme formalist could easily deny that a narrative has any connection at all with reality since the fact that any narrative must have form meant that it could have no relation to a formless reality. In fact, those writers who believed they were describing the real world were the victims of a dangerous illusion, for as soon as the writer created artistic form, the external world disappeared and was replaced by a structure of linguistic signs. But George Eliot would certainly not have wished to justify form in the novel in such terms. She clearly wished to preserve the connection between the novel and reality, though she was well aware, I think, that this created problems of form, especially in writing highly structured narratives. I suggested earlier that she tried to solve the problem by making the narrator an historical novelist. He is describing a world that is real for him but since he is writing a novel about it there is no sense of contradiction in using the form of a novel to interpret this world. It is misleading to refer to the parallels and inter-relationships as coincidences because this suggests that chance and accident have created them.

6. The weakness of this argument is that any piece of writing must create form and if one can regard a newspaper article, for example, as having some reference to the real world, why not a novel? The formalist could reply that since a novel creates purely imaginary characters and situations which have no existence beyond the words, there is no reality to which one can refer, as one can with a newspaper article, and that even in an historical novel one is not interested in the events beyond the words but only in the novel as a structure of linguistic signs.
when in fact it is the narrator arranging reality, structuring his narrative, so that certain incidents and situations take on a particular significance. It is the narrator, for example, who is juxtaposing the deaths of Featherstone and Casaubon, what Barbara Hardy calls "the most interesting coincidence in Middlemarch ...".

There is no reason why these events, considered as historical events, should have any relation to each other or significance, other than that the narrator sees parallels between them and structures the narrative to bring these out.

In addition to the reasons I have outlined above that may have influenced George Eliot's treatment of the narrator, it seems very likely that she was attracted by the aesthetic possibilities that it offered. Many readers have felt that the narrator's intrusions...

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7. The Novels of George Eliot, p. 120.

8. There is a discussion of some of these matters in Gabriel Josipovici's book, The World and the Book: A Study of Modern Fiction (London, 1971), which I have only just come across. He writes: "It is not ... that art imposes form on the content of reality and so distorts it, but the act of perception or the act of consciousness itself is never a neutral one. Proust and Homer and Virginia Woolf are all aware of this, but the traditional novel appears to ignore it. As a result it implicitly assumes that the world and the world as we are made conscious of it are one. Proust and Virginia Woolf, on the other hand, by emphasising the will to form that is characteristic of consciousness, allow us to sense both history and flux, and the gap that there will always be between them" (p. 139). Interestingly enough, Josipovici associates George Eliot with Tolstoy as being the purest type of traditional novelist, one who is quite unaware that there is any separation between the forms created by the mind and the world itself. Needless to say, I think this is a simplistic view of George Eliot, and probably of the so-called "traditional" novel in general.
are artistically indefensible, the product of George Eliot's moralism or of her reluctance to let the reader form his own conclusions. In the earlier works like the *Scenes* and *Adam Bede* it can be convincingly argued that the use of the narrator is cumbersome, but in a work like *Middlemarch*, though the narrator is as much if not more in evidence, she achieves much greater aesthetic success, in my view, despite adverse criticism. George Steiner has written of *Middlemarch*: "By interfering constantly in the narration George Eliot attempts to persuade us of what should be artistically evident." Even a defender of her, W. J. Harvey, "take[s] it as axiomatic" that the narrator "becomes objectionable when the author intrudes directly into her fiction either by way of stage-directions or of moral commentary." Both these views identify the narrator with George Eliot. In some of the novels the narrator is less intrusive than in others; in *Silas Marner* his presence is much less in evidence than in *Middlemarch*, and in *Deronda* there is at first little intrusion, but gradually he becomes more clearly present. This would suggest that George Eliot was aware of artistic considerations in her use of the narrator. She only made him intrude when she felt it served some artistic purpose.

What those who object to the narrator's interferences overlook, I think, is the aesthetic purpose that can be served by such an

anti-dramatic device. It can help create a more active involvement on the part of the reader. He is detached from the dramatic action, held back from emotional identification, made to participate actively. In other words, these intrusions by the narrator can act as a form of alienation effect: they are designed to perform the anti-dramatic function of detaching and distancing. It is probably in *Middlemarch* that this is put into practice most thoroughly and works with the greatest artistic success:

One morning, some weeks after her arrival at Lowick, Dorothea - but why always Dorothea? Was her point of view the only possible one with regard to this marriage? I protest against all our interest, all our effort at understanding being given to young skins that look blooming in spite of trouble ... (II, 9).

This is presumably the kind of passage W. J. Harvey would have found objectionable since the "author" intrudes by way of moral commentary. But it is surely obvious that it is carefully constructed to pull the reader up sharp in his easy identification with Dorothea. It is very much George Eliot’s aim to undermine the reader's stock responses, to cause him to examine himself at the same time as responding to the narrative. The increasing use of epigraphs is another sign that she wanted to detach the reader from the dramatic action and encourage a more critically aware attitude to the narrative.

Perhaps if readers could be persuaded to look on the narrator as a persona and not as George Eliot herself this would create greater appreciation of her novels as works of art and lead to more understanding of them as carefully organised structures. There is considerable justification for the view that she was more aware of formal questions and their philosophical implications than most critics have admitted up to now.
APPENDIX II

ROMANTIC PROTOTYPES IN "MIDDLEMARCH"

I suggested in my discussion of *Middlemarch* that Dorothea and Ladislaw are both very Romantic characters. I now want to argue that some features of the characters themselves and the nature of their relationship in which Dorothea has an important influence in changing the direction of Ladislaw's life, give some reason to believe that George Eliot partly based them on real-life Romantic figures, namely Dorothea Mendelssohn, later Schlegel, and Friedrich Schlegel.

It was a common practice for George Eliot to base her characters on real-life people, mainly on those she had known personally. Adam Bede, for example, was based on her father during his early life, and Dinah on one of her aunts. In *Scenes of Clerical Life*, Amos Barton was suggested by the Reverend John Gwyther, whose sermons she had heard, and Mr. Tryan was an idealized portrait of an Evangelical curate. Mordecai in *Deronda* was based on a Jew Lewes had known when he was young. Of course, this does not prevent George Eliot making these characters serve her own artistic purposes.


Not only did she frequently use real-life models, but the names she chose for her characters were often significant. This is particularly true of Middlemarch, as other critics have pointed out. It is easy to be over-ingenious on this subject, but even the most sceptical would admit that the names of places, Middlemarch itself, Stone Court, Lowick are suggestive, and that surnames like Farebrother, Wrench, the irascible doctor, Featherstone and Raffles tell one something about these characters. There is also perhaps a more subtly symbolic use of names. Farebrother's Christian name Camden, suggesting the great antiquary and pioneer of historical method, perhaps says something about what should have been the direction of this clergyman in the wrong vocation.

Bulstrode is a good name for a puritan since there was a seventeenth-century Puritan called Edward Bulstrode, a leading member of the Long Parliament and a friend of Cromwell. Casaubon obviously suggests Isaac Casaubon, the classical philologist, not a wholly ironical comparison for in some respects the two men were similar. All this suggests that the name Dorothea may have more significance than just the meaning of its Greek derivation. It is probable that


4. In Isaac Casaubon 1559-1614 (London, 1875), Mark Pattison writes: "It is almost a paradox that this most successful and most thorough interpreter of the classics, should have been a man who was totally destitute of sympathy for their human and naturalistic element" (p. 496). Casaubon also left unfinished a huge work entitled Exercitiones Contra Baronium: "Of this monster criticism the volume which we have is only the first half of the first volume - a mere fragment:" (p. 373). Pattison's book was published after Middlemarch but he had written a long account of him in the Quarterly Review of 1853 and George Eliot knew Pattison before she started on the novel.
George Eliot herself or women she knew may have contributed to Dorothea's personal character, but taking into account the novel's use of significant names, there is perhaps another model who should be considered.

The name Dorothea is found in literature, obviously in Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* and also in Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham*, but Dorothea Schlegel has not been mentioned as a possible prototype. She was a leading figure in the German Romantic movement, the model for Schlegel's *Lucinde*, a writer herself and translator of Madame de Stael's *Corinne*. She was Jewish, the daughter of the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn.

Before meeting Schlegel she had married at nineteen a German banker, Simon Veit, a man unworthy of her. Robert M. Wernaer writes: "Dorothea was a woman of rare intellectual gifts, in every respect the worthy offspring of her father ... whereas her husband was a plainbusiness man, with a plain, everyday mind." There is a certain broad similarity to George Eliot's Dorothea, also married when nineteen to a man unworthy of her. Dorothea Mendelssohn was also like her in temperament. H. E. Jacob writes that "her father's patient gentleness had been transformed into a passionate and combative vein. She did a great deal to keep the spirit of Romanticism militant ..." The *Biographie Universelle* states that she was not beautiful, but

expressive, passionnée, reine d'un petit cercle sur lequel elle exerçait une véritable fascination, elle était belle pour les privilèges peu nombreux devant lesquels se déployait dans son exubérance l'âme éminemment impressionable

et chaleureuse dont l'avait doué la nature.  

Later, in her relationship with Schlegel, she was, according to R. Haym, "capable of the utmost devotion, the most self-sacrificing loyalty."  

Wernaer says that

She left the house of a well-to-do banker, and joined herself, for love's sake only, to a penniless literary man.... She gave him financial support by her own literary work, she comforted him in troubles, she entered to the fullest extent into his varied intellectual life, she guarded him against the selfishness of the world, she assisted him in practical advice, she loved him with an ever-increasing love as years went by, she gave him strength and courage and hope, without which he would not have been enabled to do the work he did.

It will be admitted, I think, that in her personal qualities, Dorothea Schlegel could have served as an appropriate model for Dorothea. The fact that she also made an unfortunate first marriage, then fell in love with "a penniless literary man" whom she had to support financially and for whom she had to give up a great deal, causing some scandal in Berlin Society by this liaison, and was a great help to her second husband in his life and work, perhaps suggests that she did serve as George Eliot's model and that this is acknowledged by the use of the Christian name.

In addition to this, Ladislaw is also quite like Schlegel in some respects. In his early years Friedrich Schlegel was an extreme aesthete, one who advocated complete autonomy for the individual artist. I have already said that Ladislaw was associated with German Romanticism through being educated at

8. Quoted from *Die Romantische Schule* in Jacob, p. 24.
Heidelberg. If Ladislaw was suggested by Schlegel the name "Will" would not have been inappropriate, since Schlegel in his early career was a strong supporter of Fichte's subjectivist philosophy, translating it into aesthetic terms. He also claimed that "Willkür" (caprice) was the "supreme, indeed only law governing the poet. ..." This advocacy of the capricious will of the artist formed an important part of his early philosophy. The capricious nature of Ladislaw's will is an important feature of his character. Mr. Casaubon thinks, for example, that he is "a man with no other principle than transient caprice ..." (II, 224).

There are other personal similarities between them. Two of Ladislaw's most striking characteristics are the unsettled nature of his activities and interests, and his cosmopolitan associations. Naumann says of him: "His walk must be belles-lettres. That is wide" (I, 328). This was also eminently true of Schlegel who had an almost unlimited range of interests. Ladislaw is restless and can never give himself up to any one activity for any length of time. This was also characteristic of Schlegel, who could never devote himself to one activity for long.

Lilian R. Furst writes that his "unpredictability is that of a weather-vane, blown hither and thither by the wind of his whims ..." Ladislaw is half-Polish and much associated with foreign cultures. Sir James Chettam says of him: "There are stories going about him as a quill-driving alien, a foreign emissary, and what not" (II, 161). Schlegel spent much of his life wandering about Europe, eventually became an Austrian citizen and acted as an emissary for that country.


Ladislaw becomes a journalist, a supporter of political reform and enters Parliament. Schlegel was for many years a journalist, editing Europa while he lived in Paris, and from 1820-1823, he edited a Catholic review, Concordia. He also became involved in the anti-Napoleonic liberation movement in Germany, and took part in the Congress of Vienna. He later took an active role in politics, being part of the ministry of Metternich, and was appointed adviser to the parliamentary delegation at Frankfurt.

In all these respects, there are similarities between Ladislaw and Schlegel. But what may have interested George Eliot in Schlegel was that this most egoistic of Romantics, in his early phase, repudiated his most extreme views, and accepted a role in society. He rejected his belief in the supremacy of the individual ego, recognised Christian values and the importance of social action. And what is more important and particularly suggestive of the Dorothea-Ladislaw relationship, his wife Dorothea played a significant part in this change of views. Wernaer writes of her influence over him: "Through this harmonious union she exerted a direct influence on him, a gentle influence, which she tried to hide even from herself." Some critics, who prefer the early Schlegel, think her influence had a bad effect. Ricarda Huch, for example, wrote: "Sie hätte ihn beflügeln und zog ihn, in der Meinung, sein Wohl zu befördern, mit starkem Gewicht zur Erde."
It seems likely that she had a good deal of influence on his decision to accept Catholicism. She was also eager that he should take up a political career instead of devoting himself entirely to literature and aesthetics. According to Wernaer she had occasional visions that Friedrich would, at some time in the future, give up his literary career and take up another occupation. "Should Providence give us a country," she wrote to Schleiermacher, "I am sure he... will then be a citizen." Her visions turned out to be true.\(^\text{14}\)

And Haym states that "She became really fond of him only when he began to prove his worth as a competent citizen in a genuine state."\(^\text{15}\)

There seem, then, good reasons for believing that George Eliot may have partly based Dorothea and Ladislaw on Dorothea and Friedrich Schlegel. It seems very likely that George Eliot, with her wide knowledge of German literature, would have been familiar with their lives. The fact that Dorothea Schlegel was one of the most important women of the nineteenth century and like George Eliot herself in some respects, are further grounds for thinking that she would have been familiar with her. Shortly before she started the Miss Brooke story, between June 17 and July 2, 1870, she had been reading aloud to Lewes the letters of Felix Mendelssohn. Mendelssohn was the nephew of Dorothea Schlegel. Perhaps this may have suggested to her that it would be a good idea to use her life with Schlegel as the basis of a novel.

\(^{14}\) Wernaer, pp. 75-76.

\(^{15}\) Quoted in Jacob, p. 24.
Several previous critics have seen George Eliot's belief in determinism as a problem, for if men are not free how can they be responsible for their actions and how can she praise or blame them for their conduct. Attempts have been made, notably by George Levine,¹ to reconcile this apparent contradiction. His view is that her resolution of the problem was fundamentally similar to Mill's. I shall argue that her position on this question seems close to being Kantian.

There seems little doubt that George Eliot believed in the validity of determinism and regarded the notion of free will as untenable. She doubtless was influenced by Mill's defence of determinism in his System of Logic, as George Levine argues, but Lewes's position of this question,² not mentioned by Levine, is probable a safer guide to her views. He adopts an extreme determinist standpoint:

"All the massive evidence to be derived from human conduct, and from our practical interpretation of such conduct, points to the conclusion that actions, sensations, emotions, and thoughts are subject to causal determination no less rigorously than the movements of the planets or the fluctuations of the waves."³

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² See Problems, IV, Chapter VII, "The Freedom of the Will."
³ Problems, IV, 102.
Our freedom consists in the power of choice among conflicting motives, but of course this choice is also determined, and though one might feel one could have chosen differently, "this 'might have been' is the imaginary displacement of the actual conditions in favour of others." He takes an anti-metaphysical view of the will and regards volition as a function of the organism. He rejects the view that the will is an abstract entity which controls our volitions; it is rather "the generalised expression of all volitional impulses." It is not something which exists apart from all our volitional impulses and is therefore free from subjection to conditions. But he holds that the will as "the abstract expression of the product of Experience ..." is educable and therefore subject to moral control. Volition, he states, is "Desire realised" and though our desires are not free, the one which prevails out of the conflict of desires is not determined only by the power of the desire but also by our awareness of the probable consequences. If a desire is connected with painful consequences we are educated to resist it. In this way the will becomes capable of being disciplined. It is significant that there is considerable emphasis on willing strongly in George Eliot,

especially in her letter to Mrs. Ponsonby. 7 Lewes does not discuss the moral problems which result if determinism is true.

George Eliot's most important consideration of the free will-determinism problem is to be found in one of the entries of her "Leaves from a Notebook," recently discovered by Thomas Pinney, and entitled "Moral Freedom." Her view seems to me to be clearly Kantian. She writes that in asking the question whether we are free agents or not we meet the fact that to see "human action as a chain of necessary sequences must neutralize practice." It is absurd, she says, to let a fatalistic point of view "affect practice;" could a man be an artist if he knew that everything he did was predetermined? She concludes with the following paragraph:

Life and action are prior to theorizing, & have a prior logic in the conditions necessary to maintain them. To regard any theory which supplants that logic as having supreme intellectual authority is a contradiction, unless it could be ruled that the human race should commit a slow suicide by the gradual extinction of motive - the poisoning of feeling by inference. When once we have satisfied ourselves that any one point of view is hostile to practice, which means life, it is not the dominance of intellect, but poverty of judgment, that determines us to allow its interference in guiding our conduct, either the implicit conduct which goes on within us, or the explicit which is its completion. It is rational to accept two apparent irreconcileables, rather than to reject tested processes in favour of reasoning which tends to nullify all processes. 8

7. "But every fresh morning is an opportunity that one can look forward to for exerting one's will. I shall not be satisfied with your philosophy till you have conciliated necessitarianism - I hate the ugly word - with the practice of willing strongly, of willing to will strongly, and so on, that being what you certainly can do and have done about a great many things in life, whence it is clear that there is nothing in truth to hinder you from it - except you will say the absence of a motive. But the absence I don't believe in, in your case - only in the case of empty barren souls" (Letters, VI, 166).

George Eliot does not say that determinism is false; the last sentence clearly implies that she believes it is valid, but nevertheless we must act as if we possessed free will, since this is a regulative necessity for the continuance of human life. One notes her repeated use of the word "practice" which, in this connection, brings to mind Kant's argument in favour of free will in *The Critique of Practical Reason*. For him, as for George Eliot, belief in free will is a "practical" necessity. Kant, of course, in this work claimed that free will was a "constitutive" idea, one which we know as true, as real in itself. It has often been argued that if Kant was to be consistent with *The Critique of Pure Reason*, he ought to have said that free will was only "regulative": it is an idea we must regulate our lives by whether it is true or not. But Hans Vaihinger has quoted a passage by Kant on free will in a work earlier than *The Critique of Practical Reason*, his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysic der Sitten*, which shows some similarity to George Eliot:

"Every being who can act only under the notion that he is free is, for that very reason, also in practice free, i.e. all the laws that hold for him that are inextricably bound up with freedom as if his will should be declared free, both in itself and in a sense valid in theoretical philosophy. I therefore claim that every rational being possessing a will must necessarily also be endowed with the idea of freedom, in virtue of which alone he acts. For to such a being our thought assigns a reason which is practical, i.e. which possesses a causal force in relation to its objects ... (Such a reason) must regard itself as the originator of its principles ... and in consequence it must ... be regarded as free, i.e. its will can only be its own will, in virtue of the Idea of freedom, and must therefore in practical respects be ascribed to all rational beings." 9

In Vaihinger's view "here Kant clearly and unambiguously declares freedom to be but a mere idea without reality." If this

9. The Philosophy of 'As if', p. 289.
interpretation is accepted, the similarity with George Eliot is plain: even though free will may not be true, Kant is saying, the individual must in practice regulate his life as if it were true.

George Eliot's position on free will, then, has close affinities with Kant, or more exactly with Neo-Kantian interpretations of Kant. Though determinism may be valid and indispensable if we are to have any understanding of reality, it should not be applied to the human and moral realm. She recognises that this leads to a contradiction, to the acceptance of "two apparent irreconcileables," but human survival is more important than logical coherence. We must act and think about our actions as if we possess free will because, as Vaihinger puts it, "... in practice it is an exceedingly necessary fiction."10

There is the further point, which I have already mentioned in the chapter on "Memory and The Mill on the Floss," that George Eliot seems also to be close to Bergson's view that we are most free when we are most ourselves, when our actions are the product of our whole selves and not of mere pressure of circumstances or temporary impulse. The will again becomes important here, for we must choose to be ourselves despite these other pressures. This view shows similarities to Kierkegaard as well as Bergson: "Proper human life is not found in tranquil insight or bliss, but in the responsible and strenuous choice of values, above all in the choice of one's proper self regardless of the buffetings and allurements of experience."11 It is clear, then, why she should

10. The Philosophy of 'As if', p. 43.

have been particularly opposed to determinism if it could eradicate the will to choose to be oneself. If one believed that as the will was subject to causal factors, it was pointless to choose since one had no free choice, then conceivably one could let one's actions be dictated purely by response to circumstances or by succumbing to desires or impulses without attempting to exercise control over them. In effect, then, one would be depriving oneself of any personal identity, for one would be completely a creature of circumstance or impulse who made no attempt to choose or be responsible for his actions and conduct. It seems probable that she saw a prime distinction between humans and animals in the ability of men to resist circumstances and impulses in order to choose to be true to an idea they had of themselves. Since the will was educable, it was possible to pattern one's choices so that a distinct, utterly personal identity was created, something inconceivable for an animal.
I. PRIMARY WORKS


II. SECONDARY WORKS

(I have not thought it necessary to list every book and article written on George Eliot, but only those mentioned in the text and some others which are relevant to this study.)


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III. OTHER WORKS


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