CONCLUSION

The novels of George Eliot, in the light of her own remarks, stand out as a "mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellowmen beyond the bounds of our personal lot", seeking their end in "the development of beauty — not merely sensuous beauty but moral and spiritual beauty". Adam Bede, Dinah Morris, Maggie Tulliver, Lucy Deane, Eppie, Romola, Felix Holt, Dorothea Brooke, Mr. Farebrother and Daniel Deronda or the lesser important figures of Bartle Massey, Dolly Winthrop, Piero di Cosimo, Savonarola, the Meyricks etc. live in our memory not for the delicacy of their voice or the beauty of their visage, but for their noble actions and natural allegiance to the all-embracing ethics of life. The "highest aim in education", she maintains in her essay on Carlyle, is "to obtain not results but powers, not particular solutions, but the means by which endless solutions may be wrought". Just as the "most effective educator ... does not seek to make his pupils moral by enjoining particular courses of action, but by bringing into activity the feelings and sympathies that must issue in noble action ... the

most effective writer .... rouses in others the activities that must issue in discovery, who awakes men from their indifference to the right and the wrong, who nerves their energies to seek for the truth and live up to it at whatever cost". Believing, thus, in 'aesthetic' teaching as the highest of all teachings, George Eliot discovered a successful medium in the form of the novel for the dispersion of her thoughts among the populace.

George Eliot, who could never share the deterministic ideology that man is a helpless plaything of heredity, environment and fate, illustrated the redemptive counteraction of the human volition and understanding in the higher vision which emerges out of the unflagging sense of duty towards one's fellowmen. She firmly believed that ethical ideas and actions, as expressions of inward ethical sentiments, ought not to be discussed outside of concrete situations, because, if ethics consists in particular actions and takes its life from particular emotions, it can only be so demonstrated. If ethics has an emotional basis, then the most effective and specific arguments, she feels, will be those which evoke an emotional response; and so she tries to describe real

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38. "My function is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher — the rousing of the nobler emotions, which make mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures, concerning which the artistic mind, however strongly moved by social sympathy, is often not the best judge. It is one thing to feel keenly for one's fellow-beings; another to say, "This step, and this alone, will be the best to take for the removal of particular calamities". (GEM VII, 44)
virtue and true morality in ways she thinks her readers will be forced to recognise. In the essay on Young, she had described true morality as "a delicate sense of our neighbour's rights, an active participation in the joys and sorrows of our fellow-men, a magnanimous acceptance of privation or suffering for ourselves when it is the condition of good to others", in short "the extension and intensification of our sympathetic nature". The words may perish but the sublimity of the axiom, eternalized in the long train of George Eliot's dramatis personae will be a source of interminable solace to the despondent souls who look forward to the realisation of the perfect happiness which has its origins in the details of ordinary life in which are found, as she puts it in The Mill on the Floss, "the infinite issues belonging to everyday duties" (TMF, 189).

George Eliot could never conceive of the individual and the society as two polar opposites. The bifurcation, she felt, would inevitably lead to an indistinct vision of the two forces which are intrinsically related. For her, the individual is a social product, neither separate nor separable from society, which is itself subject to the historical laws of change resulting from the thought and actions of the individuals who mould it either by affirming or by attacking its values and sanctions. Her novels are thus organised to present, with insidious persuasiveness,

the necessity of making responsible decisions. Her reiterated emphasis on the 'terrible vitality of deeds', and the consequences that are ruthlessly un pitying, explains the entire phenomenon of suffering and hardship with the clear implication that man by his own ego-centric myopia has been the cause of the painful experiences of life. The retribution too has no reference to the avenging gods of the Greek.

Tragedy: it is an impersonal, almost mechanical process that is inexorable, inescapable and inevitable. The presence of sorrow having been recognized, George Eliot, with her characteristic repulsion of the Naturalist pessimism, undertakes to dilate upon the spiritual utility of the "deep, unspeakable sorrow", which contributes to the enlargement of the individual's sympathy towards a better understanding of the fellow mortal. It is in this logical and consistent urging for a philanthropic code of ethics that she prescribes for the realization of the Destiny of utmost happiness and contentment, that her novels stand out against the sentimental and innocuous Naturalist humanitarianism which had nothing substantial to offer.

Human history is seen from the determinist's point of view with the result that the lives of individuals are reduced in scope and importance. But the suggestion that fatal consequences are merely a sequel to a defective warp or twist in the character of an individual which could have been straightened with the exertion of the Will, prevent her from giving in to the devastating effects of the ironies of
fortune. Thus, despite her commitment to determinism, her works remain clear of the pessimism and that sense of the meaningless of existence that permeates through the novels of writers like Thomas Hardy and Frans Kafka. Though Hardy could never reconcile himself to being labelled as a pessimist and repeatedly professed that he was a meliorist, yet his habit of seeing mankind as a set of puppets in the hands of Fate, and his passionate indulgence in the severity of coincidence, leave one with little option but to see man as the helpless victim of a grim and capricious power, over which he can have no control. Characters like Gabriel Oak in *Far From the Madding Crowd*, Elizabeth-Jane in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* or Venn and Olym in *The Return of the Native*, it is true, preach the message of dutiful patience, yet the over-all effect of Hardy's novels, like those of Kafka, is one of wasted lives. George Eliot, on the other hand, succeeds in impressing upon the reader the magnitude of selfless duty, incorruptible morality and uninhibited charity which would help not only in lightening the burden of a fellow-being but also make the world a better place to live in:

> The presence of a noble nature, generous in its wishes, ardent in its charity, changes the lights for us: we begin to see things again in their larger quieter masses, and to believe that we too can be seen and judged in the wholeness of our character. (Mss., 819)

Most writers of fiction have looked at life and have presented the hazardous journey of their persons with a pitying commiseration for the trials and tribulations which they suffer in the struggle with the inexorable. George Eliot,
by taking a sterner view of responsibilities and consequences, makes no efforts to screen the culpability of her characters, while a synchronous undercurrent of the compelling determinants exhibited in the various phases of the conflict between desire and duty, furnishes her novels with a shade altogether new to the English fiction. And it is from the triumph of the individual's sense of duty and the consequent feeling of solace in contrast to the distracting chaos of the preceding state that she strengthens and preaches her melioristic conviction in the ultimate Destiny of man.

George Eliot's novels, emanating from her concept of Destiny, asseverate that invigorating message of dutiful fellowship which could provide a spiritual anchor to the forces of humanity against the disruptive advance of the forces of science and agnosticism. "It is my function as an artist", she writes, "to act (if possible) for good on the emotions and conceptions of my fellow-men" (GEL VI, 289). Consequently, her characters, by dint of their will power and conscientious charity leave one with a deeper faith in man's free-will which can assert itself to altruistic ends by transcending the bondage of the deterministic meshes of the fatal web of circumstances. Her later novels, therefore, become emphatically explicit as regards the nature of Duty and its well-defined entails that are eloquently personified in all leading figures, especially that of Daniel Deronda. Felix Holt was also imbued with an intuitive comprehensiveness of human obligations, but his blunt impatience required to
be greatly attenuated to the enduring tolerance on which is founded the particular appeal of Daniel Deronda's character, and which can, alone, guarantee success to an individual's larger aims, enabling him to be at the helm of Destiny, not only his own but also the Destiny of the entire race.

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