CHAPTER III
THE CONCEPT OF DESTINY IN GEORGE ELIOT’S
NOVELS OF THE EARLY PHASE:
ADAM BEDE * THE MILL ON THE FLOSS * SILAS MARNER

Never to beat and bruise one’s wings against the inevitable but to throw the whole force of one’s soul towards the achievement of some possible better. (GEL, IV, 499)

The fundamental ethics of George Eliot’s novels, enunciated in her letter to Clifford Albutt, corroborates the value placed by her upon the dignity and autonomy of the individual —— the nucleus of her concept of Destiny.

The aim of her fiction is to create sympathy and understanding of others, a capacity to accept change and an awareness of the potentialities of mankind. George Eliot’s man is not man in the abstract, but man as he is, with his endless variability, and extreme complexity of nature.

George Eliot was, basically, interested in the expressive and the social aspect of the human being which, to a large extent, determines behaviour. She sees her characters in terms of their relations to society and in terms of the universal facts of human nature which they personify. Her characters are vivid projections of the social environment which is diffused and reflected in their thoughts and actions due to the minute details that
she strove industriously to produce. The complete description
of dress and habits, views, occupations and actual dealings
with others, helps to create the illusion of reality. The
characters of Thackeray and Dickens, no doubt, are equally
furnished with details of appearance, eccentricities, tastes,
likes and dislikes, but whereas Thackeray paid little
attention to the psychological and the emotional sub-stratum,
Dickens altogether avoided any attempt of tracing the mental
development of his characters. George Eliot, on the other
hand, analyzed the motives of human behaviour, determined,
directly or indirectly, by the individual's own yearnings.
These impulses, she perceived, were conditioned by the milieu,
the society and the class to which the person belonged. Her
characters are, therefore, brought to life through an
exhaustive presentation of the mental make-up which regulates
any activity in a given situation. She conceived her characters
as a dynamic synthesis of moral habits formed by the interplay
of the social order on the inherent human consciousness.
It is the amalgamation of the noble and base, altruistic
and egoistic, which prevents her dramatis personae from
becoming types, and adds to their authenticity, vitality
and completeness.

The suggestion of factors determining the personality
of her personae, apart from justifying and making
tangible those actions and reactions which would otherwise
appear incongruent, give birth to a deeper insight and a
closer fellow-feeling. The characters, in their turn, apprise the reader of the irrevocable law of consequences—"children may be strangled but deeds never"—illustrated again and again impresses one with the futility of an apparently trivial action, and consequently, the need of a puissant will.

With *Scenes of Clerical Life*, George Eliot launched upon her mission of ennobling the human heart by repeated emphasis on the beneficial effects of goodness and nobility:

Blessed influence of one true loving human soul on another! Not calculable by algebra, not deducible by logic, but mysterious, effectual, mighty as the hidden process by which the tiny seed is quickened, and bursts forth into tall stem and broad leaf, and glowing tasseled flower. Ideas are often poor ghosts; our sunfilled eyes cannot discern them; they pass athwart us in thin vapour, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh; they breathe upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft responsive hands, they look at us with sad, sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones; they are clothed in a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame. (SOL; 393-94)

This faith in the power of goodness is, basically, the crux of her melioristic philosophy where virtue reaps its own harvest. Thus while the benign serenity of Milly suggests a possible resuscitation of the dull, callous Amos Barton, the success of the magnanimous efforts of Maynard Gilfil for restoring the mental tranquility of Caterina considerably elucidate her point. George Eliot further widens her canvas in "Janet's Repentance" in order to extend one's sympathy towards the socially disreputable personalities,
Mr. Tryan testifying to the wonders of love and tenderness:

The thought of Mr. Tryan was associated for her with repose from that conflict of emotion, with trust in the unchangeable, with the influx of a power to subdue self. To have his help, all through her life, would have been to her like a heaven already begun — a deliverance from fear and danger; .... the hold he had on her heart was (not) any other than that of the heaven — sent friend who had come to her like the angel in the prison, and loosed her bonds, and led her by the hand till she could look back on the dreadful doors that had once closed her in. (SCL, 447)

The Scenes of Clerical Life, reprinted from Blackwood's Magazine in 1858, established, overnight, George Eliot's reputation as a remarkable writer excelling in a "sobriety which is shown to be compatible with strength, clear and simple descriptions and a combination of humour with pathos in depicting ordinary situations". The number of appreciative reviews following the Scenes was enough to convince her of her ability "to touch every heart .... with nothing but loving humour, with tenderness, with belief in goodness", and gave her sufficient "grounds for hoping that my writing may succeed and so give value to my life".

Apart from offering a reliable sustenance to the novelist's tremulous, diffident nature, these tentative efforts strengthened her conviction in the effectiveness of truthful presentation and the moral values she desired to vindicate:

My artistic bent is directed not at all to the presentation of eminently irreproachable characters, but to the presentation of mixed human beings in such a way as to call forth tolerant judgment, pity and sympathy. And I cannot stir a step aside from what I feel to be true in character. (GEL II, 299)

2. GEL II, 348.
3. GEL II, 416.
George Eliot's philosophy of meliorism, diffused in the two governing principles of life — an all-embracing, indiscriminate sympathy and a will to do — were already planted in grounds whose fertility paved the way for works negligible to posterity. Her Wordsworthian concern for the 'common coarse people, who have no picturesque sentimental wretchedness' and her insistence on the need that "we should remember their existence, else we may happen to leave them quite out of our religion and philosophy, and frame lofty theories which only fit a world of extremes", brought up repeatedly in her essays and reviews, strike afresh with a resonance intensified with each of George Eliot's subsequent novels.

Despite the abundance of certain jarring blemishes such as over-sentimentality and uncalled-for details and digressions, the Scenes conceal within their embryo the entire philosophy of George Eliot's art. The depth of psychological insight, the pervading aura of ethical intimation remarkably analogous to the humanistic principles of Strauss, Comte and Feuerbach and the subjugation of the intellectual to the emotive give an expression to her concept of the artist's responsibility.

The theory of fiction advanced by George Henry Lewes in his essay on "The Lady Novelists", though written before any intimacy with Marian was even thought of, curiously

4. AE, 168.
defines the lines on which George Eliot was to build her own reputation. This essay, printed in the July 1852 issue of the Westminster Review urges that fiction should be true to life if it wishes to evoke the readers' feelings to a profounder realization of human frailty. Peculiarly enough, Marian, while reviewing Riehl's The Natural History of German Life, came up with a similar philosophy:

The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment. 5

Adam Bede, the idealized portraiture of Robert Evans, despite his creator's sympathies and the admiration accorded by his friends, is marked for his lack of "fellow-feeling with weakness that errs in spite of foreseen consequences" (196). He is wrathful (5,6), obstinate (40, 264, 467), over-hasty and proud (229,432), unyielding (201). Adam's self-absorption — the total pursuit of his own private interests which is often at variance with the common interest or the interest of any other individual —

6. "I will not pretend that his was an ordinary character among workmen; and it would not be at all a safe conclusion that the next best man you may happen to see with a basket of tools over his shoulder and a paper cap on his head has the strong conscience and the strong sense, the blunted susceptibility and self command, of our friend Adam. He was not an average man". (AE, 199)
7. "There's no fear but he'll yield well i' the threshing. He's not one o' them as is all straw and no grain". (AE, 133)
satisfies him in the guise of dutiful integrity. The insen­tence with which he turns down Isbeth's entreaties for supper are illustrative of his callousness towards others' feelings. The consuming notion of his own goodness is ob­vious in the self-elevation where even the mother's love loses significance:

"Let be!" said Adam impetuously, shaking her off, and seizing one of the planks that stood against the wall. "It's fine talking about having supper when here's a coffin promised to be ready .... My throat's too full to swallow victuals .... I'd work my right hand off sooner than deceive people with lies i'that way. It makes me mad to think on- 't. I shall overrun these doings before long. I've stood enough of 'em". (AB, 36-37)

"Adam's sin is", to use the words of Ian Gregor and Brian Nicholas, "spiritual pride; he is the good man, con­fident and proud of his goodness. He has to learn, through suffering, the narrowness of his outlook and the arrogance its restrictions imply. He sees life too exclusively in terms of his work - 'I've seen life pretty clear ever since I could cast up a sum'— and anything that cannot be fitted into this frame-work is brushed aside. The sensitivity of his conscience has become blunted with too much self­righteous display". It is this one dominating flaw of an otherwise noble personality which needs to be supplanted by love and sympathy without which we cannot "get enough patience and charity towards our stumbling, falling com­panions in the long and changeful journey —— And there is

but one way in which a strong determined soul can learn it --- by getting his heart-strings bound round the weak and erring, so that he must share not only the outward consequence of their error, but their inward suffering" (196-97).

Weaknesses and errors must be forgiven — alas! they are not alien to us — (AB, 132)

True to her humanist spirit, this conversion is brought about through agencies that are neither divine nor miraculous, but strictly human. The first note towards the "long and hard lesson" (197) of rehabilitation is sounded by the death of Thias Bede, which causes Adam's mind to rush "back over the past in a flood of relenting and pity. When death, the great Reconciler, has come, it is never our tenderness that we repent of but our severity" (49). Without even making Thias live physically on her pages, George Eliot uses his person to expose Adam's rough and hard interior concealed within the diligent and honest exterior. The unforeseen encounter with the dead face of the father who had been the subject of his worst thoughts at the moment, seem to shake him out of his hardness. Adam's feelings of affinity get the better of his passion for rectitude as he looks "with mute awe at the glazed eyes" (48) which "had

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9. To Isbeth's appeals for her husband— "He was a good feyther to thee afore he took to th'drink. He's a clever workman, an' taught thee thy trade, remember, an's niver gen me a blow nor so much as an ill word—no, not even in's drink. Thee wouldn'tha ha 'm go to the workhus - thy own feyther-an' him as was a fine-growed man an' handy at every thin' a most as thee art thysen, five-an'-twenty 'ear ago, when thee wast a baby at the breast", Adam bluntly retorts : "If I wasn't sharp with him, he'd sell every bit o'stuff i' th' yard, and spend it on drink. I know there's a duty to be done by my father, but it isn't my duty to encourage him in running headlong to ruin." (AB, 37-38)
once looked with mild pride on the boys before whom Thiae had lived to hang his head in shame" (49). But, as George Eliot points out:

Adam had at present only learned the alphabet of it in his father's sudden death, which, by annihilating in an instant all that had stimulated his indignation, had sent a sudden rush of thought and memory over what had claimed his pity and tenderness. (AR, 197)

The effect of the shock becomes even more pressing during the church service and "the solemn wail of the funeral psalm was only an influence that brought back the old thoughts with stronger emphasis" (189).

Ah, I was always too hard .... It's a sore fault in me as I'm so hot and out o' patience with people when they do wrong, and my heart gets shut up against 'em, so as I can't bring myself to forgive 'em. I see clear enough there's more pride nor love in my soul, for I could sooner make a thousand strokes with th' hammer for my father than bring myself to say a kind word to him. And there went plenty o' pride and temper to the strokes, as the devil will be having his finger in what we call our duties as well as our sins. Mayhap the best thing I ever did in my life was only doing what was easiest for myself. It's always been easier for me to work nor to sit still, but the real tough job for me 'ud be to master my own will and temper, and go right against my own pride. It seems to me now, if I was to find father at home tonight, I should behave different; but there's no knowing — perhaps nothing 'ud be a lesson to us if it didn't come too late. It's well we should feel as life's a reckoning we can't make twice over; there's no real making amends in this world, any more nor you can mend a wrong subtraction by doing your addition right. (AR, 189)

Since it is only the 'alphabet' that he has learnt, the art of assembling words is still to be mastered through painstaking efforts. The text for the exercise is supplied by his sentiments for Hetty Sorrell, whose "swing-tide"
beauty" (78) was enough "to turn the heads not only of men, but of all intelligent mammals, even of women" (77).

The hour set for his odyssey towards sympathy, ironically, coincides with the eventful dance held to celebrate the young squire's eagerly anticipated coming of age. Entrusted with the management of the Donnithorne Woods, endowed with a status "above a common workman" (243), resolving to make Hetty's life "a happy un, if a strong arm to work for her and a heart to love her, could do it" (263), Adam waits eagerly for the fourth dance when he would enjoy the coveted opportunity of touching Hetty's hand, lost all the while in "delicious thoughts of coming home from work, and drawing Hetty to his side, and feeling her cheek softly pressed against his" (268).

But, the blissfully envisioned moment, when actually crystallises, finds that "the pleasure of the dance with Hetty was gone" (269). Totty had not only broken the locket and scattered the beads, she had dispersed Adam's confidence in Hetty's love for him. However, lacking in the spirit of humble acceptance of the unavoidable, Adam takes recourse to the "ingenious web of probabilities --- the surest screen a wise man can place between himself and the truth" (211), which subsequently forces upon him the necessity of a stronger dose of suffering. The knowledge of Arthur being the accepted lover of Hetty, followed by her desertion in order to, as he could understand, avoid marriage with him are all steps to the same effect. The final lesson, however, lies
in the torment, the anxiety and the anguish he experiences on learning of Hetty's guilt.

The sharp, raving vehemence of his near-demented mind are amicably channelized by the fraternal affection of Mr. Irwine and Bartle Massey, the two personalities who are really interested in leaving the world a little better than they have found it. The blessed influence of these true loving souls, who help George Eliot to be sanguine about the Destiny of the human race, awakens Adam to the sublime value of human love and selflessness. Judging the novel either as a classical tragedy or as an "unorthodox explication of the Christian sacraments" the reader, who has all along been a co-sharer of Adam's vicissitudes feels relieved to witness that "he stood upright again, and looked more like the Adam Bede of former days" (406).

I'll go back with you. I'll go into court. It's cowardly of me to keep away. I'll stand by her — I'll own her — for all she's been deceitful. They oughtn't to cast her off — her own flesh and blood. We hand folks over to God's mercy, and show none ourselves. I used to be hard sometimes: I'll never be hard again. (AB, 405)

One cannot fail to admire the earnestness of his tone, which identifies him at once with George Eliot's Religion of Humanity.

These fellow-mortals, every one, must be accepted as they are: you can neither straighten their noses, nor brighten their wit, nor rectify their dispositions; and it is these people — amongst whom your life is passed — that it is needful you should tolerate, pity,

and love; it is these more or less ugly, stupid, inconsistent people, whose movements of goodness you should be able to admire — for whom you should cherish all possible hopes, all possible patience. (AB, 166)

Conforming, indisputably, to the Feuerbachian message of love, he is able, not only to forgive Arthur and Hetty but also to experience a warm personal attachment to them. "Love does not exist without sympathy", declared Feuerbach, "sympathy does not exist without suffering in common". George Eliot too, acting as it were like Milton in his attempt to justify God's ways to man, explains the phenomenon of suffering and the good that comes out of it:

Deep, unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism, a regeneration, the initiation into a new state. The yearning memories, the bitter regret, the agonised sympathy, the struggling appeals to the Invisible Right — all the intense emotions which had filled the days and nights of the past week, and were compressing themselves again like an eager crowd into the hours of this single morning, made Adam look back on all the previous years as if they had been a dim sleepy existence, and he had only now awakened to full consciousness. It seemed to him as if he had always before thought it a light thing that men should suffer; as if all that he had himself endured and called sorrow before was only a moment's stroke that had never left a bruise. Doubtless, a great anguish may do the work of years and we may come out from that baptism with a soul full of new awe and new pity. (AB, 402-405)

The tormenting misery of the experience serves as the eye-opener for the proud egoist by granting him a new vision of the world around him:

I've always been thinking I knew better than them as belonged to me, and that's a poor sort o' life, when you can't look to them nearest to you t' help you with a bit better thought than what you've got inside you a'ready. (AB, 500)

While Adam has learnt that "there's a deal in a man's inward life as you can't measure by the square" (170), Arthur
Donnithorne is made to bow down before the "terrible coercion in our deeds" (295). He has to realize that "there is no sort of wrong deed of which a man can bear the punishment alone ..... Men's lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the air they breathe: evil spreads as necessarily as disease" (400).

Diametrically opposed to Adam's love of self-perfection is Arthur's admiration of his personal weaknesses:

No young man could confess his faults more candidly; candour was one of his favourite virtues; and how can a man's candour be seen in all its lustre unless he has a few failings to talk of? But he had an agreeable confidence that his faults were all of a generous kind — impetuous, warm-blooded, leonine; never crawling, crafty, reptilian. It was not possible for Arthur Donnithorne to do anything mean, dastardly, or cruel. (AP, 114-115)

Mingled with this pride in 'candour' there exists in him an insatiable desire to win general acclaim and veneration:

I should like to know all the labourers, and see them touching their hats to me with a look of goodwill. (AP, 158)

Together, the two dominating traits of his character spell his ruination. Despite all his struggles against temptation, the tussle against urges and longings which he knows to be wrong, he cannot bring himself on to "tell Irwine — tell him everything" (129). All determination brought "to the brink of confession" (160), fails him —- he cannot bear to have his image blackened before the eyes which read nothing but honesty and uprightness in his demeanour.

George Eliot employs Arthur's wavering character to express another aspect of her philosophical code —- the
pros and cons of the problem of responsibility and the belief in the irrevocableness of the "law of consequence"
concluding ultimately with weight on the power of the will, as a shilly-shally person can never conform to her conception of Man, the agent of perfect happiness for the human race. What comes naturally to Adam is for Arthur an insurmountable task. To the young Squire's superficially convincing argument, "we may determine not to gather any cherries, and keep our hands sturdily in our pockets, but we can't prevent our mouths from watering" (155), Adam promptly replies:

That's true, sir; but there's nothing like settling with ourselves as there's a deal we must do without i' this life. It's no use looking on life as if it was Treddles'on fair, where folks only go to see shows and get fairings. (AB, 155)

Egoism must renounce itself in the interest of other folks as "it's a poor look-out to come into the world to make your fellow-creatures worse off instead o' better" (155). Arthur's Destiny is clearly manifest in Adam's stress on the danger of unconscionable behaviour. His inability to grasp the right moment for decision in consort with a weakness of volition needed for the timely execution of his well-intended plans presage a future that is grim, obscure and forlorn. The analysis of Arthur Donnithorne's temptation and fall, his inner sufferings and fleeting resolutions epitomise the pressurising effect of forces which determine action. Therefore, in the face of her homilies on the need of a strong, unwavering determination and her ominous appraisal
of the devastating fruit of indulgence, she takes every step to check the tendency of condemnation and criticism with which the weak and erring may be judged. The fallibility of human nature is fully acknowledged in Irwine's observation:

... even a man fortified with a knowledge of the classics might be lured into an imprudent marriage, in spite of the warning given him by the chorus in the Prometheus. (AB, 159)

With cogent strokes, George Eliot paints the "disastrous combination of circumstances" (116) on the homosapien who was, she believed, determined almost entirely by hereditary influences, social circumstances and economic conditions. Although George Eliot recognised character in terms of man's inborn traits dominated by a specific emotion, she did not draw a parallel between character and passion; for her, the two were closely related but not identical. However, since passion was the guiding force of human behaviour, the consequent action was often discrepant to the person's intellectually inferred calculations. Arthur's tragedy lies in his passion for popularity and the consciousness of being 'a good fellow', who could not bear to see anyone uncomfortable, and whose beneficence was always ready to make amends. Arthur Donnithorne's is the main character of Adam Bede in whom George Eliot epitomises her notion of economic determinism. All roots of the overall merits and demerits of his personality are firmly embedded in his awareness of being "a handsome, generous young fellow,
who will have property enough to support numerous peccadilloes—who, if he should unfortunately break a man's legs in his rash driving will be able to pension him handsomely; or if he should happen to spoil a woman's existence for her, will make it up to her with expensive bon-bons, packed up and directed by his own hands" (115, italics mine). His incapability to anticipate the severity of consequences is also grounded in his class-consciousness and, in his ability to compensate:

Deeds of kindness were as easy to him as a bad habit; they were the common issue of his weakness and good qualities, of his egotism and his sympathy. He didn't like to witness pain, and he liked to have grateful eyes beaming on him as the giver of pleasure. When he was a lad of seven, he one day kicked down an old gardener's pitcher of broth, from no motive but a kicking impulse, not reflecting that it was the old man's dinner; but on learning that sad fact, he took his favourite pencil-case and a silver hafted knife out of his pocket and offered them as compensation. He had been the same Arthur ever since, trying to make all offences forgotten in benefits. (AB, 293)

Eventually he repudiates the moral code by "feeding her (Hetty's) vanity; and filling her little noodle with the notion that she's a great beauty, attractive to fine gentlemen"(94) despite his comprehension of the hierarchical law that "No gentleman, out of a ballad, could marry a farmer's niece"(128). It is only after experiencing and causing irretractable suffering that he comes to realise that 'there's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for' (507). Drawing upon the Aristotelian and Shakespearean concepts of tragedy, George Eliot solemnly universalizes her theme of retribution:

Consequences are unpitying. Our deeds carry their terrible consequences....consequences that are hardly ever confined to ourselves. (AB, 160)
With Hetty Sorrell, the evil of egoism takes up the garb of vanity. The distractingly beautiful girl of seventeen, bedecked with her "deep rose-colour blush....inwreathed with smiles and dimples and with sparkles from under long curled dark eye-lashes" (76-77) is meaningfully introduced in her "self-possessed, coquettish air, slyly conscious that no turn of her head was lost" (77). Hetty is the female counterpart of Arthur, elucidating the havoc wrought about by the all too powerful element — the economic status. The prime factor responsible for the undoing of Martin Poyser's niece was not so much Arthur as her thirst for enrichment.

They are but dim ill-defined pictures that her narrow bit of an imagination can make of the future; but of every picture she is the central figure in fine clothes; everybody ..... is admiring and envying her — especially Mary Burge, whose new print dress looks very contemptible by the side of Hetty's resplendent toilette.

The characterization of Hetty, which Henry James pronounced as 'most successful', arrests the reader's attention not only for its bewitching beauty but for the Dinah-like concern with which he watches "the dusky sylvan path along which poor Hetty is tripping, light footed to her ruin". Hypnotized by her own dreams, her desire for appreciation is precisely analogous to Arthur's love of approbation. Like him, "she would have borne anything rather than be laughed at, or pointed at with any other feeling than admiration". Hetty thus exemplifies in her character what George

Eliot interpreted as economic determinism, wherein the individual's thoughts and actions are conditioned, basically, by his aspirations for a higher monetary position. George Eliot's purpose behind the creation of Hetty's character lies evidently in her bid to denude and thwart the existence of golden snares, which coerce even the most conscientious of individuals in making a wrong choice and becoming destined to a life-long misery, a theme which she was to elaborate further in the Lydgate - Rosamond partnership in *Middlemarch*. George Eliot's belief in the unifying effects of healthy family ties and past associations is strengthened by the ethical lapses that reveal themselves in the adventitious fruits of the rootlessness which eventually emancipates the individual from the bonds of responsibility.

There are some plants that have hardly any roots: you may tear them from their native nook of rock or wall, and just lay them over your ornamental flower-pot, and they blossom none the worse. Hetty could have cast all her past life behind her, and never cared to be reminded of it again. . . . (AB, 143)

Mrs. Poyser is unequivocally factual in her frank judgement of her husband's niece:

She's no better than a peacock, as 'ud strut about on the wall, and spread its tail when the sun shone if all the folk i' the parish was dying; there's nothing seems to give her a turn i' the inside.... It's my belief her heart's as hard as a pebble. (AB, 144)

Ironically, Hetty's realization - "my heart is hard" (424) comes at a point when she is intricately caught within the web of consequences. The reader's sympathy, becoming fully alive to her helpless ordeal, describes the unexpected
dimension which the novelist achieves by unveiling a sudden aperture in an otherwise impervious surface:

I did do it, Dinah....I buried it in the wood....the little baby.....and it cried.....I heard it cry.....even such a way off.....all night.....and I went back because it cried. (AB, 426)

Her confession shows that she is, after all, not a stranger to the region of softer feelings or even to the sentiments of the community:

I didn't go back home again — I couldn't bear it. I couldn't have bare to look at anybody for they'd have scorned me.... I thought I could tell you. But then the other folks 'ud come to know it at last and I couldn't bear that. (AB, 426)

Though redeemed in the eyes of the reader who experiences a new sense of awe and pity at the vanity which had forced Hetty to move helplessly towards the diabolical spider's web, she has yet to pay the penalty for her blind lustful aspirations: Nemesis has carried her over a precipice — deep, dark and dreadful — where even the strong arms of Adam cannot reach her.12

The excessively mild and gentle Dinah Morris, whom the critical misogynist Bartle Massey too could not view without admiration, presents an egoism of a different sort. She is at ease only in a world of hardship and tribulation where she can act the role of the good, comforting angel, emulating, as it were, the picture of the Saviour, looking down benignantly at the erring humanity, with arms wide

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12. "Adam started to his feet and stretched out his arm towards her; but the arm could not reach her; she had fallen down in a fainting fit — and was carried out of court". (AB, 412)
open to hold the lost sheep to his bosom. She is always ready to offer solace and consolation but somehow, the spectacle of human suffering does not appear to be actually moving her. Mrs. Poyser rightly discerns her indulgence towards dolefulness. "She'll never marry anybody, if he isn't a Methodist and a cripple" (483). Further, Mrs. Poyser exposes the flimsiness of Dinah's celestial magnitude:

But as for Dinah, poor child, she's never likely to be buxom as long as shall make her dinner o'cake and water, for the sake o'giving to them as want. She provoked me past bearing sometimes; and, as I told her, went clear again' the Scriptur', for that says, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'; 'but', I said 'if you loved your neighbour no better nor you do yourself, Dinah, it's little enough you'd do for him. You'd be thinking he might do well enough, on a half-empty stomach. (AB, 178)

Concealed within the apparent complaisance, there exists an amount of self-willed stubbornness which often exasperates her aunt:

I never saw the like to you, Dinah....when you've once took anything into your head: there's no more moving you than the rooted tree. (AB, 448)

The vanity of Hetty Sorrell not only disentangles Adam from a relationship which, at no stage, would have been palatable, it also uncovers the inappropriateness of Dinah's overactive love of exhortation. George Eliot's treatment of Dinah is more complicated than her treatment of either Adam, Arthur or Hetty. She is almost like Maggie Tulliver in her yearning after service and sacrifice, fortunately, however, lacking the stress of uncontrollable emotions which are forever trapping Maggie in unpleasant situations. Dinah too, in spite of all her nobility, lacks
perception and is therefore not spared moments of pain when her passionate craving for sermonizing miscalculates the receptiveness of her target — the fault, according to George Eliot, lies in the myopic vision of "the higher nature":

It is our habit to say that while the lower nature can never understand the higher, the higher nature commands a complete view of the lower. But I think the higher nature has to learn its comprehension, as we learn the art of vision, by a good deal of hard experience, often with bruises and gashes incurred in taking things up by the wrong end, and fancying our space wider than it is. (AE, 149)

George Eliot, who had made passionate asceticism a target of bitter attack in her review of the poet Young, regarded family ties as the fundamental roots of social morality. By drawing Dinah out of her restricted vision of the service of the Lord, and allowing her to find consummation in the noble joys of domestic responsibilities, George Eliot gives an eloquent expression to her Religion of Humanity as the sole guarantee to the Destiny of peaceful and harmonious living in a world that has lost the binding grip of traditional faith.

It would, nevertheless, be fallacious to assume that Adam Bede is merely a record of human imperfections. Mr. Irvine, the "pluralist at whom the severest Church reformer would have found it difficult to look sour" (49), enjoys the respect of the entire community. Nature has not been deceptive as in the case of Hetty Sorrel and in Rev. Adolphus Irvine, Rector of Broxton, Vicar of Hayslope,
and Vicar of Blythe, we find the same traits as are expected of his countenance. He is a 'handsome, generous-blooded clergyman' (62) with one of those 'large-hearted, sweet-blooded natures that never know a narrow or a grudging thought; epicurean, if you will, with no enthusiasm, no self-scourging sense of duty; but yet...of a sufficiently subtle moral fibre to have an unwearying tenderness for obscure and monotonous suffering....he held it no virtue to frown at irremediable faults' (62).

His mature outlook and compassionate understanding is affirmed by his tenderness to other men's failings, and unwillingness "to impute evil" (64). This self-effacing individual has seen life too closely to indulge in disdainful scorn. His self-mastery is brought to a test in the laxity of Arthur's behaviour, yet a friend of everybody, he cannot desert Arthur who is severed from every tie by his irredeemable sin. He, alone, is able to preserve his trust in his young companion — "He may be weak, but he is not callous, not coldly selfish. I am persuaded that this will be a shock of which he will feel the effects all his life" (399). It is the Rector's faith in goodness and his timely and pertinent advice which not only saves the Poyzers and the Bedes from further hardships but also helps to re-establish and harmonize the old and sundered relations.

13. "You're everybody's friend in this business — everybody's friend. It's a heavy weight you've got on your shoulders" (EB, 396).
Scrupulously devoted to the tenets of realism, George Eliot makes no attempt to ignore the existence of suffering. Instead, she makes it the very ground for urging a closer understanding of one another:

.....there is no hour that has not its birth of gladness and despair, no morning brightness that does not bring new sickness to desolation as well as new forces to genius and love.....We are children of a large family and must learn, as such children do, not to expect that our hurts will be made much of — to be content with little nurture and caressing, and help each other the more. (AB, 275-76)

Goodness, according to George Eliot's concept knows neither rank nor station. If Bob Jakin, the pedlar in The Mill on the Floss and Dolly Winthrop in Silas Marner are spared the torture of conflicting emotions, Bartle Massey, the uncontradictable school master at Hayslope, knows how to befriend a disconsolate soul. Both Mr. Irwine and Bartle Massey have known sorrow and are not unfamiliar to suffering. Bartle Massey who has been, what he calls, a 'fool' (396) in his time, is lame, and Mr. Irwine, for the sake of supporting, in style, his mother and the two sickly sisters, has to stake the pleasures of a conjugal life. The mature balance of their personality is impressively outlined in their ability 'to stand by a neighbour and uphold him in...trouble' (405).

Like Mrs. Poyser, the sharpness of the schoolmaster's tongue knows no limits. Yet in matters of affection or fraternity, he is at par with the Rector; and it is partly due to his efforts that Adam Bede is converted to that 'new pity and new awe' that form the basic essentials of George Eliot's concept of Destiny. It is in the blessed
influence of such stable and undistracted intellects that George Eliot conceives of her trust in the human being — the highest Destiny possible for the homo-sapien on this earth.

A convincing pattern of the "coercive morality of the community",¹⁴ is presented in George Eliot's second novel, The Mill on the Floss, published in 1860. Surpassing Adam Bede in point of dramatic interest, the work undertakes to examine the scientific approaches of the day, particularly the theory of Development, enunciated by Charles Darwin and the determining effects of heredity and environment. Unlike the tragedy of the classical tradition, where the mortal being came in direct collision with a moral order founded on the wilful pleasure of an immortal authority, the nineteenth century identified an impenetrable historical process as the real source of tragic experience.¹⁵ The elaborate concentration on the family in the first half, censured repeatedly for leaving little room for the final

¹⁵. "Classical tragedy sees man isolated and describes him as an independent, autonomous intellectual entity, in merely external contact with the material world and never influenced by it in his innermost self. The bourgeoisie drama, on the other hand, thinks of him as a part and function of his environment and depicts him as a being who, instead of controlling concrete reality, as in classical tragedy, is himself controlled and absorbed by it. The milieu ceases to be simply the background and external framework and now takes an active part in the shaping of human destiny", John P. Farrell: "Matthew Arnold's Tragic Vision" (MLA, Vol. 85, 1970) p. 102.
catastrophe, offers not only an exceedingly poignant and accurate picture of childhood, but also supports George Eliot's view, endorsed also by Auguste Comte, of whom she said:

No one has more clearly seen and expressed the truth, that the past rules the present, lives in it, and that we are but the growth and outcome of the past. (GEL III, 320)

The development of Tom and Maggie is set within the structure of a family and society, which draws its strength from the innumerable pressures of the inherited and the imposed phenomena. The components of the society of St. Ogg's, depicted "on a lower level generally" in an "environment less romantic" are, to use the Feuerbachian terminology, in a 'natural' state having much to learn in order to touch the plane of human magnanimity:

Their theory of life had its core of soundness, as all theories must have on which decent and prosperous families have been reared and have flourished; but it had the very slightest tincture of theology .... The religion of the Dodsons consisted in revering whatever was customary and respectable .... The Dodsons were a very proud race and their pride lay in the utter frustration of all desire to tax them with a breach of traditional duty or propriety — A wholesome pride in many respects, since it identified honour with perfect integrity, thoroughness of work and faithfulness to admitted rules .... To be honest and poor was never a Dodson motto, still less to seem rich though being poor: rather, the family badge was to be honest and rich; and not only rich, but richer than was supposed .... The right thing must always be done towards kindred. The right thing was to correct them severely if they were other than a credit to the family, but still not to alienate from them the smallest rightful share in the family shoe-buckles and other property.

16. GEL III, 133.
The same sort of traditional belief ran in the Tulliver veins, but it was carried in richer blood having elements of generous imprudence, warm affection, and hot-tempered rashness. (TME, 303-305)

The minutely studied idiosyncrasies enable the reader to enter into a close relation with the illiberal materialistic culture of the group which leaves its indelible marks on the personalities of Tom and Maggie. Having taken to his mother's side, Tom has no hesitation in upbraiding Maggie for her faults, the Tulliver impetuosity causing him to surpass even the severity of the eldest Aunt—Mrs. Glegg, and pledging his revenge on Wakem simply because the name had always been associated, not with an individual but with the agency responsible for the financial calamities of his life. His aversion to Philip is also due to the latter's association with the name 'Wakem'. Maggie, on the other hand, is dominated by the 'generous imprudence, warm affection and hot-tempered rashness' (305) of the Tulliver's which, becoming more pronounced, result in her rebellion not only against the Dodson and the Tulliver traditions but also against the conventions of the St. Ogg's society. It is in these central figures that George Eliot brings out the pessimism inherent in the theory of evolution. Conversely, the same gives her hope for the higher Destiny because if bad leads to worse, the good would certainly lead to the better.

George Eliot, with her unceasing interest in Greek drama, looked upon Aeschylus and Sophocles as the masters who had contributed to her understanding of man's elemental
nature, "The dramatic motive of the Antigone", according to George Eliot, is "only superficially" opposed to "modern sympathies". Throwing light on the crux of the tragedy, she comments in her essay on 'Antigone and its Moral:

Here lies the dramatic collision: the impulse of sisterly piety which allies itself with reverence for the Gods, clashes with the duties of citizenship; two principles, both having their validity, are at war with each .... It is a very superficial criticism which interprets the character of Creon as that of a hypocritical tyrant, and regards Antigone as a blameless victim. Coarse contrasts like this are not the materials handled by great dramatists.... Creon, as well as Antigone, is contending for what he believes to be the right, while both are also conscious that, in following out one principle, they are laying themselves open to just blame for transgressing another, and it is this consciousness which secretly heightens the exasperation of Creon and the defiant hardness of Antigone. 17

The extensive analogy between the Creon-Antigone and the Tom-Maggie theme is evident in "the exhibition of the right on both sides (as) the very soul of (George Eliot's) intention in the story". 18

"At the centre of The Mill on the Floss", writes David Moldstad, "lies the human dilemma from Sophocles' Antigone that George Eliot believed to be permanent: the conflict between the conventions of society and individual judgment". 19 While Tom Tulliver represents the narrow ethics of St. Ogg's which "consisted in revering whatever was customary and respectable", (303) Maggie Tulliver is an ardent worshipper of the values of love and charity. Hence, while

18. GNL III, 397.
Tom "never did the same sort of foolish things as Maggie having a wonderful instinctive discernment of what would turn to his advantage or disadvantage" (69), Maggie is caught always in the quagmire of her blind impulses.

Akin to the community of George Eliot's tragic figures, Maggie, like her father, lacks the foresight of accurate calculation. Mr. Tulliver reminds one of the plans of Amos Barton which were "something like his moves in chess .... admirably well-calculated, supposing the state of the case were otherwise". Maggie, like the 'shortsighted' Silas Marner, is "stepping always, by a peculiar gift, in the muddiest places" (39). Feeling and never reasoning, she cuts off her hair, runs away to the gipsies, pushes Lucy in the mud, holds clandestine meetings with Philip, lashes out at her aunts and uncles, forgets herself with Stephen — the miseries of Maggie are all embedded in the blind tempestuousness of her emotions.

"Character is destiny", George Eliot quotes Novelis, but her love of the "magnificent futility" which she finds "more adorable, or as we say divine, than .... a prudent calculation of results", leads her to add hastily:

"'character is destiny'. But not the whole of our destiny" (450).

20. "Maggie rushed to her deeds with passionate impulses and then saw not only their consequences, but what would have happened if they had not been done, with all the details and exaggerated circumstances of an active imagination". (GIL, 69)

21. GIL, 57

Thus awakening her reader’s consciousness to the deterministic effects of the social environment, innate heredity, and the irrevocable element of chance — the consequential chain of effects that defy human calculations — she entitles the unconventionality of the blundering individual for a more benign adjudication.

Even as a little girl, Maggie Tulliver possessed "that superior power of misery which distinguishes the human being and places him at a proud distance from the most melancholy chimpanzee" (48). This competence for suffering, heightened by the misfortunes of her father, leave her totally perplexed at the phenomenal hardness of her life:

She wanted some key that would enable her to understand, and, in understanding, endure the heavy weight that had fallen on her young heart. (TMF, 319)

It was in the midst of poignant sorrowfulness that Maggie is introduced to the transcending value of duty by the unknown "quiet hand" that "had made at certain passages strong pen-and-ink marks" (322).

Maggie drew a long breath and pushed her heavy hair back, as if to see a sudden vision more clearly. Here, then, was a secret of life that would enable her to renounce all other secrets.....It flashed through her, like the suddenly apprehended solution of a problem, that all the miseries of her young life had come from fixing her heart on her own pleasure, as if that were the central necessity of the universe; and for the first time she saw the possibility of shifting the position from which she looked at the gratification of her own desires, of taking her stand out of herself, and looking at her own life as an insignificant part of a divinely-guided whole. (TMF, 323-324)
The "unquestioned message" however, serves no other purpose than that of the nullifying effect of opium, in which the active propensities of nature are merely benumbed—not sublimated. Maggie does not experience renunciation, she enacts it:

With all the hurry of an imagination that could never rest in the present, she sat in the deepening twilight forming plans of self-humiliation and entire devotedness. (TMP, 324, my italics)

As already suggested, the pathway to the zenith of happiness to which, according to George Eliot, mankind is destined, lies through the feelings of altruism and sympathy, the realization of which depends solely on the individual's capacity for making a correct decision acceptable to the self, the family and the society. It is the futility of a questionable, though trivial decision that sets the irrefragable laws of effect in motion. Maggie, in spite of her deep compunctions is, from her very childhood, engrossed thoroughly in her own longings. Her passion for admiration and yearning for love is seen, on the one hand, in her dreams of becoming the queen of gypsies and on the other, in her intense preoccupation with her own thoughts which make her oblivious of her surroundings and situations, even of Tom, whose love in her remained untarnished throughout her life. Consequently her childhood is little more than a tale of mental anguish.

Childhood past, Maggie becomes a responsible adolescent circumscribed by the family codes of conduct. But unfortunately, neither time nor age succeeds in subjecting her
self-absorbing erroneousness to discipline. The state of juvenile rebelliousness, suppressed into ascetic negations, is called upon to test itself in her interview with Philip Wakem in the Red Deeps. Philip, with his mature understanding (tintured seriously with an undeniable selfishness) cannot help in shredding her sense of resignation which was, for her, contained in "bearing what is laid upon us, and doing what is given us to do" (332):

......resignation is the willing endurance of a pain that is not allayed — that you don't expect to be allayed. Stupefaction is not resignation; and it is stupefaction to remain in ignorance, to shut up all the avenues by which the life of your fellow-men might become known to you...... You are not resigned; you are only trying to stupefy yourself. (TNP, 366)

The conflict between the "voice that ...... made sweet music to Maggie" and the "urgent, monotonous warning from another voice which she had been learning to obey, — the warning that such interviews implied secrecy — implied doing something she would dread to be 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"(338), expose the mental diversity and the shallowness of her self-denial that are immeasurably fatal to the moral integrity. Philip is right in condemning her "monomania" (375) and in accentuating the futility of her self-righteousness:

23. "Maggie's life-struggles had lain almost entirely within her own soul, one shadowy army fighting another and the slain shadows for ever rising again". (TNP, 344)
You will be thrown into the world someday and then every rational satisfaction of your nature that you deny now will assault you like a savage appetite. (TME, 368)

Maggie, all the time aware that though "it is other people's wrong feelings that made concealment necessary, but concealment is bad however it may be caused" (364), nevertheless succumbs to the "new interest to vary the days" (338), and, in doing so, transgresses the paternal prerogative to dutiful submission. The moment of decision allowed to "adjourn", and thereby placing self-indulgence above loyalty to family, marks her out for the sorrowful Destiny that dogs the steps of the unstable and weak-willed persons. The choice, as George Eliot deftly shows, lay wholly within Maggie's own volition, where nothing but the character's own weaknesses, could hinder her from upholding the sanctity of right conduct. George Eliot is at pains to impress upon her reader the anomaly of human existence: the attainment of perfect individuality calls for suffering and sometimes self-effacing sacrifices. Ideals, though essentially destructive, are indispensable to a person whose identity rests conversely on the nature of his involvement with society.

An unappeased intellectual potentiality vacillating between her desperate need for admiration and selfless devotion to a higher calling, characterizes Maggie's mental faculty when she is on her long holiday with Lucy Deane. Though

24. "Maggie felt a great relief in adjourning the decision". (TME, 339)
a self-sufficient young maiden who has chosen to stay independent of her brother, she is completely defeated by what Philip termed as the "savage appetite" (368). Consequently, as foreseen by Tom that she could be "led away to do anything" (438), "volcanic upheaving of (her) imprisoned passions" (328) let out with unprecedented fury, result in her being borne along the tide. Once again, her need of the flesh overrules the demands made by the familial and the social order. However, the heart-rending consciousness of the evil behind this erroneous action, in marked contrast to her previous condemnation of Tom "that he was narrow and unjust, that he was below feeling those mental needs which were often the source of the wrong-doing or absurdity that made her life a planless riddle to him" (440), augurs the arrival of her character at the threshold of the highest level of consciousness.

Significantly, the contact with water, quite in line with the Feuerbachian concept of baptism and a step towards regeneration, helps Maggie to achieve the moral unity by opening her eyes to "the terrible truth" (531), leading her to accept that the "irrevocable" wrongness of her deed must blot her life" (531), and bring immeasurable unhappiness in the lives of them that were "knit up with hers by trust and love" (531)

25. See also TWF, 440: "I never feel certain about anything with you. At one time you take pleasure in a sort of perverse self-denial, and at another you have not resolution to resist a thing that you know to be wrong".
"Oh, I can't do it!" She said, in a voice almost of agony. "Stephen, don't ask me .... don't urge me.... I don't know what is wise; but my heart will not let me do it. I see — I feel their trouble now; it is as if it were branded on my mind. I have suffered, and had no one to pity me; and now I have made others suffer .... I cannot take a good for myself that has been wrung out of their misery. It is not the force that ought to rule us .... it would rend me away from all that my past life has made dear and holy to me .... I shall feel as if there were nothing firm beneath my feet". (TM, 539-40)

The intense suffering of her sensitive mind at last helps Maggie to see, more clearly than ever before, the iniquity of her uncalculating impetuosity. A strictly conscientious adherence to correct decision, and unswerving determination in the face of temptation, help her to rise above the opinionated conservatism of her generation.

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 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. (TM, 538-39)

26. "Faithfulness and constancy mean something else besides doing what is easiest and pleasantest to ourselves. They mean renouncing whatever is opposed to the reliance others have in us— whatever would cause misery to those whom the course of our lives has made dependent on us. If we — if I had been better, nobler, those claims would have been so strongly present with me — I should have felt them pressing on my heart so continually, just as they do now in the moments when my conscience is awake — that the opposite feeling would never have grown in me as it has done; it would have been quenched at once.... I feel no excuse for myself — none. I should never have failed towards Lucy and Philip as I have done if I had not been weak, selfish and hard...." (TM, 536-37)
In conquering the "inclination of the moment", Maggie becomes associated with the third Positive, Duty, extolled by George Eliot in the Garden of Trinity, Cambridge, and is thereby identified with the theories appertained to the universal deliverance of man:

If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment.

(TMF, 536)

The passions of a wilful personality eclipsed totally by a sense of duty towards fellow-men capacitate the character to surrender its primitive desires to the interests of the larger units. Maggie's submissive acceptance of herself as an outlawed soul, that leaves no possibility of a single grudge against any creature is recorded in one of her most pathetic outbursts:

O God, if my life is to be long, let me live to bless and comfort ——"  (TMF, 581)

The awe-inspiring nobility once achieved, Maggie's will is strictly disciplined and tuned to moral behaviour which is only to be found in the spontaneous exercise of moral emotion. Moral action is not the result of a decision.

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27. "I remember how at Cambridge I walked with her once in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity.....and she stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words..... God, Immortality, Duty. — pronounced with terrible earnestness how inconceivable was the first, how unbelievable the second, and yet how peremptory and absolute the third. Never, perhaps, have sterner accents affirmed the sovereignty of impersonal and un-recompensing Law.....it was as though she withdrew from my grasp, one by one, the two scrolls of promise and left me the third scroll only, awful with inevitable fates". F.W.H. Myers, quoted in Gerald Bullett: George Eliot, pp. 146-47.
to act morally; it is the result of moral feeling, forcing itself into practice. Consequently, in her maiden instinctive rush of feelings, she rushes to Tom's rescue. The "mighty emotion" ignited by the fierce calamity of the flood "swept away all the later impressions of hard, cruel offence and misunderstanding, and left only the deep, underlying, unshakable memories of early union" (584).

The leading figure in the epic of Maggie's soul is Tom Tulliver, whose practical turn of mind and unrelenting disdain for inexplicable imperfectness, is diametrically opposed to his sister's unbridled impulsiveness and her inarticulate aspirations for freedom. However, Tom too is a victim of the short-sightedness which confines his vision to the small circle centred round his self and his family, and forces him to enter blindly into his father's prejudices. Having imbibed the egocentric conceit of Mr. Tulliver, Tom "was imprisoned within the limits of his own nature" (563). He suffers from a similar "family pride" (545) in his monetary status and the overweening egoism which annihilates all possibilities of humble resignation to the stark realities of life. Charged "with an eager purpose and an unsatisfied vindictiveness" (329), he is coerced into complete "abstinence

28. In her review entitled "Worldliness and other Worldliness: The Poet Young" George Eliot had remarked that true morality will exhibit itself in direct sympathetic feeling and action, and not as the recognition of 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". Thomas Pinney (ed.), Essays of George Eliot, p. 379.
and self-denial" (345) in order to shake off the degradation of his father's debt. Fortunately though, the dominance of the Dodson blood endows him with a "character at unity with itself — that performs what it intends, and subdues every counteracting impulse" (346). This Dodson strength of individuality equips him with a pragmatic worldly wisdom, and a persevering foresight in his dealings of fiscal matters which save him from the destiny of Mr. Tulliver who had died lamenting that "this world's been too many" (401).

Spiritual pride, which defined the severity of Adam Bede's nature, is all the more conspicuous in the make-up of Tom's character. Even in his childhood, he was "rather a Rhadamanthine personage, having more than the usual share of boy's justice in him — the justice that desires to hurt culprits as much as they deserve to be hurt, and is troubled with no doubts concerning the exact amount of their deserts" (55). Like Adam, his restricted vision prevents him from entering into the feelings of the unsteady and inefficacious mortals, who are indiscriminately subjected to his uncompromising sense of rightness. Tom obviously stands in need of Mr. Irvine's solemn intimidation:

29. "..... the responsibility of tolerance lies with those who have a wider vision". (TNP, 563)
30. "Poor Tom! he judged by what he had been able to see, ..... He thought he had the demonstration of facts observed through years by his own eyes which gave no warning of their imperfection, that Maggie's nature was utterly untrustworthy, and too strongly marked with evil tendencies to be safely treated with leniency. He would act on that demonstration at any cost". (TNP, 562)
we sometimes form our judgment on what seems to us strong evidence, and yet, for want of knowing some small fact, our judgment is wrong. It is not for us men to apportion the shares of moral guilt and retribution... the problem how far a man is to be held responsible for the unforeseen consequences of his own deed, is one that might well make us tremble to look into it. The evil consequences that may lie folded in a single act of selfish indulgence is a thought so awful that it ought surely to awaken some feeling less presumptuous than a rash desire to punish. (AB, 399)

George Eliot’s belief in suffering and the contributive impact of untainted human affections as auxiliary factors for the fulfilment of personality, are simultaneously brought into play with Maggie’s heroic endeavour to save Tom’s life. Paradoxically, it is again the Feuerbachian baptism by immersion in water which, awakening him to the higher sensibility, enables him to survey and evaluate his entire life and brings him face to face with the consciousness of “a certain awe and humiliation” (587) at his own brutal intolerance. “It came with so overpowering a force — it was such a new revelation to his spirit of the depths in life that had lain beyond his vision, which he had fancied so keen and clear — that he was unable to ask a question” (587), and Floss, so far “a symbol of love defeated and renounced” becomes a “symbol of love fulfilled, for never on this earth would Tom and Maggie have loved each other to the measure of their mutual need.”

The wrath of destiny, which for George Eliot is just another expression for the fearful onslaught of consequences, is served on those that ask for it. It is true

that "the tragedy of our lives is not created entirely from within" (449), yet the greater responsibility rests with the protagonists' regard for the ethical absolutes. Her narratives focus on characters who are called upon to test their self-gratifying impulses against social convention and public morality. Whereas Philip is a victim of his own selfishness and Mr. Tulliver of his imprudent rashness and inability to "be reconciled with his lot" (309), the hardships of Mrs. Tulliver, Lucy and Stephen are basically prompted by their attempts to tamper with the normal course of events. It is only in the overall goodness of the unorthodox and unpretentious sagacity of characters like Bob Jacin, and the promise held out in the moral redemption of Tom and Maggie, that one comes to realise the beatitude of living for others, and the contentment of having done one's duty towards one's stumbling compatriots.

Silas Marner, George Eliot's shortest novel, was published on April 2, 1861. In keeping with the legendary conception of the novel, which "sprang from her childish recollections of a man with a stoop and expression of face that led her to think that he was an alien from his fellows," the story is denied all unnecessary digressions which could hamper the compactness of its presentation. "Intended to set — in a strong light the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations," the story

32. GEL III, 427.
33. GEL III, 382.
centres round the experiences of a near-demented linen-weaver and a sensitive, shilly-shally country squire, resembling Arthur Donnithorne, 'the young squire' of Hayslope in more respects than one. Yet the "Nemesis (being) a very mild one", the characters, after a brief spasm of mental agony, are allowed to make the best of their fortunes.

The painful Destiny of Silas Marner, a "young man of exemplary life and ardent faith" (7) is underlined by his incorrect judgments and decisions. Possessing an "impressible, self-doubting nature" he is able to see through neither the chicanery of his friend William Dane, nor the affectations of the young servant woman, Sarah. Consequently, excommunication is the toll that he is called upon to pay.

Moving out of Lantern Yard, Silas settles down at a deserted spot in Raveloe, away from the haunts of all human beings. The shaken trust in God and man forces upon him the desire of absolute seclusion,34 which completely severs him from the social life around. His shortsightedness, in consort with his embittered prejudice, prevents him from realizing the possibility of any good in the changed perspective of "the rich, central plain" (4),

34. "he invited no comer to step across his door-sill, and he never strolled into the village to drink a pint at the Rainbow, or to gossip at the wheelwrights' : he sought no man or woman, save for the purposes of his calling, or in order to supply himself with necessities". (SM, 4-5)
and instead of trying to reconstruct his lost faith, he decides to stay clear of any, but the essential dealings with the denizens of Raveloe. The total extinction of the gregarious instinct and affection, which had "died under the bruise that had fallen on its keenest nerves" (16), serve naturally "to reduce his life to the unquestioning activity of a spinning insect" (16):

His life had reduced itself to the mere functions of weaving and hoarding, without any contemplation or an end towards which the functions tended. The same sort of process has perhaps been undergone by wiser men, when they have been cut off from faith and love --- only, instead of a loom and heap of guineas, they have had some erudite research, some ingenious project, or some well-knit theory. (SJK, 20-21)

The gold that he earned out of his labours became, for him, an "element of life" (17) which provided his lonely life with the sole pleasure of its bright company. This abnormal infatuation and the "absorbing passion" (19) for the "heaps of ten to grow into a square, and then into a larger square" (19) which impel him to draw "less and less for his own wants, trying to solve the problem of keeping himself strong enough to work sixteen hours a day on as small an outlay as possible" (19), subject him to a greater affliction than his susceptible nature had ever dreamed of. But, as a paradox of human existence, the loss of his treasured gold pieces offers an opportunity of bringing him closer to the simple and kind inhabitants of Raveloe. Unfortunately, Silas' wits, as blunted as his blurred vision, were unable to measure the "fair proportion of kindness in Raveloe" (89)
that had directed its benevolence at the "poor mushed creature" (88) ever since his misfortune:

The fountains of human love and divine faith had not yet been unlocked and his soul was still the shrunked rivulet, with only this difference that its little groove of sand was blocked up, and it wandered confusedly against dark obstruction.

(EM, 99-100)

However, "a faint consciousness of their goodwill" (93) did succeed in dispelling his aversion to mankind in general. He showed no impatience to drive away his visitors though his relief at their exit revealed his persisting love of solitude. A change of habits, the obvious corollary to the change of heart, is conspicuous in his behaviour and Silas, who could not tolerate the approach of even the friendliest footstep near his premises and kept his doors tightly closed for fear of inquisitive company, could now afford to leave the door unfastened for long periods. "Formerly his heart had been as a locked casket with its treasure inside; but now the casket was empty and the lock was broken" (93). It was during one of these moments that Eppie was attracted by the glow of Silas' warm hearth. The fit of catalepsy, which had at one time been the blight of his life, proves a blessing by keeping the door wide open for the little toddler to enter his hut with all the good luck expected of the New Year.

The blessing which Warner clasps to his bosom, is turned down by Godfrey Cass, giving a striking thematic and dramatic coherence to the novelette. The violation of the natural ties of love — a father choosing not to own
his daughter for reasons which are purely rapacious, would have been a favourite subject for a Greek tragedy; but due to the "very mild" Nemesis, Godfrey is spared the draconian consequences which ultimately drive the helpless classical hero and his progeny to maddening despair and death.

Arthur Donnithorne and Godfrey Cass are the two facets of the same coin, both conscientiously cognizant of what is right yet unable to pursue the course due to their own temptation of the flesh and not due to any external or insurmountable pressure. But Godfrey, undoubtedly an approbrious heir, lacks the courage to face the music and stakes all his potentials, fiscal and ethical, for drawing a curtain over his misconduct. "Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our deeds" \(^{35}\), writes George Eliot in *Adam Bede* and Godfrey's "arguments for confession" quietened by his "old disposition to rely on chances which might be favourable to him and save him from betrayal" (76), eventually coerce him to live in gloomy vexation with his "importunate companion, Anxiety" (102).

The duplicity of his life which has affected him only in divesting his pocket of money and his mind of contentment, pulls him further downhill as he frantically hopes for Molly's death. But the grossest crime that he commits is that of concealing his relation to the little girl. George Eliot, the soft determinist, leaves the choice entirely with him. Duty, brushed aside by selfish interest, passes its irrevo-
able verdict and Godfrey having acquired Nancy, "good home and everything else" (196) has to pay the penalty of lineal discontinuity and annihilation — children, the symbol of progress, rebirth and salvation are not to adorn his "childless hearth" (186).

The gradual development of Godfrey from the contriving young man, shutting off threatening tongues by means that are far from respectable; rejoicing at the death of his wife; denying his own offspring the comforts and security of his parenthood; to the cozily settled yet unsatisfied individual who sees in the barrenness of his life "the aspect of a retribution" (186), ["I wanted to pass for childless once, Nancy .... I shall pass for childless now against my wish" (204)] throws considerable light on the deterministic universe of George Eliot where every action is to be accounted for.

The juxtaposed fates of the dull-witted, poor linen weaver and the handsome, rich son of the Squire, along with the complex sequence of her novel, give the impression of a unity where every atom is linked with the larger whole. While sharing a common adversary in the figure of Dunstan Cass, they differ in their fortunes with Eppie. To Silas, she is the saviour whose radiant, pristine naivété succeeds in drawing him out of his impassive isolation. She not only

36. "Dissatisfaction seated musingly on a childless hearth, thinks with envy of the father whose return is greeted by young voices — seated at the meal where the little heads rise one above another like nursery plants". (SM, 186)
revives his lost speech and "longer vision" but stirs "fibres that had never been moved in Raveloe — old quiverings and tenderness — old impressions of awe at the presentiment of some Power presiding over his life" (130):

With reawakening sensibilities memory also reawakened... ... till he recovered a consciousness of unity between his past and present. (SM, 166)

The revelation of Dunstan's crime which restored Silas' lost treasure, moved Godfrey for the first time to take the positive step of unburdening his mind to his wife.

Everything comes to light, Nancy, sooner or later.... I've lived with a secret on my mind .... It's been "I will" and "I won't" with me all my life — I'll make sure of myself now. (SM, 190)

Emancipation from the obnoxious duplicity, which had been a bane to his very existence, is contained in his one moment of confession and Godfrey makes no fault in apprehending it. Godfrey's tragedy is also due to his shortsightedness, which is now subjected to the severest remorse as he feels the sting of his incompetence to assess the goodness of "this wife with whom he had lived so long" (191):

At that moment Godfrey felt all the bitterness of an error that was not simply futile, but had defeated its own purpose. (SM, 191)

Setting out on the road to sublimity with the weighty cognition that nothing in this world is "worth doing wrong for" (191), he has yet to learn the necessity of resigning

37. "His large brown eyes seem to have gathered a longer vision .... and they have a less vague, a mere answering look". (SM, 160)
himself "to the lot that's been given us" (205). The painful lesson comes from Eppie, whose "repulsion towards the offered lot and the new revealed father" (200), frustrates the "purpose towards which he had set out under the exalted consciousness that he was about to compensate in some degree for the greatest demerit of his life" (202-03). He has to realize, like Arthur Donnithorne, that it is not always possible to make amends:

"...there's debts we can't pay like money debts, by paying extra for the years that have slipped by. While I've been putting off, and putting off, the trees have been growing ... it's too late now. Marner was in the right in what he said about a man's turning away a blessing from his door: it falls to somebody else." (EM, 204)

The most endearing character of the novel is that of Dolly Winthrop "a woman of scrupulous conscience ..... eager for duties ..... whose nature it was to seek out all the sadder and more serious elements of life, and pasture her mind upon them" (92). Recognising the ethical imperatives of love and sympathetic involvement in the lives of others, she is drawn to Silas in his hour of affliction. Her inbred, "simple Raveloe theology" (97) reduced to the ethical components of love and duty, accelerates the pace of Silas' return to "the sense of presiding goodness and human trust" (166):

there's trouble i' this world, and there's things as we can never make out the rights en. And all as we've got to do is to trusten, Master Marner .... to do the right thing as fur as we know, and to trusten. For if

38. "if we've done our part, it isn't to be believed as Them as are above us, 'all be worse nor we are, and come short o' theirs'". (EM, 97, italics mine)
us as knows so little can see a bit o' good and
eights, we may be sure as there's a good and a
ights bigger nor what we can know—I feel it
my own inside as it must be so. And if you
could but ha' gone on trustening, Master Marner,
you wouldn't ha' run away from your fellow-creatures
and been so lone. (SM, 169-170)

Dolly's pertinent chastisement of Silas' error in
opting for refuge in isolation instead of cultivating a
manly courage to face the situation, marshals him to realize
his own blindness: his refusal to overlook his prejudices
and his inability to discern what lay beyond his limitations:

...... you're i' the right, Mrs. Winthrop — you're
i' the right. There's good i' this world — I've
a feeling o' that now; and it makes a man feel as
there's a good more nor he can see, i' spite o' the
trouble and the wickedness .... there's dealings
with us — there's dealings. (SM, 170)

George Eliot's fundamental belief in free will, her
certitude that life is even-handed, her trust in the
"remedial influences of pure, natural human relations",
leading to her unfaltering faith that moral awareness is the
key to social development finds expression in the experiences
of the principal personalities of her setting. Thus while
Molly and Dunstan, representing the vicious elements of
society, meet their horrifying and intimidating end, Silas
and Godfrey successfully transcend to the acceptance of the
ethical absolutes.

Having briefly considered George Eliot's purpose
behind her characterization in her early novels, it would be
worthwhile to recapitulate the philosophy which has been
drawn up in the previous chapter. As already stated, George
Eliot belonged to the group of soft determinists who believed
that man, though conditioned by a number of factors, is yet free to choose his course of life, and is therefore deemed by her as responsible for his actions, and subsequently, for his mundane experiences. Life, as envisioned by George Eliot, is a complex of innumerable interconnected sequence of moments, each inviting the person to take decisions in favour of a self or a not-self—the self advocating for selfish interests and the not-self for the interests of others. The importance of discreet and vigilant behaviour, engendered in her by the Calvinist creed, and sustained firmly by Mill's historical determinism, Bray's *Philosophy of Necessity* and Huxley's "great and fundamental truths of Nature and the laws of her operation" subjecting to an indiscriminate penalty "the great evils of disobedience to natural laws," become the governing principles of her persona's destinies. Destiny is malignant—destiny is ruthless—destiny is unrelenting because "consequences are unpitying". Every decision, conscious or unconscious, activates an endless chain of consequences whose effects are confined not only to the protagonist but to all connected to him by the remotest possibility. The tragedy of the Peysers, Nancy Lammeter, and to some extent Tom Tulliver, is not due to any fault of their own but due to the passionate irrationality of those with whose vicissitudes they are inextricably woven.

39. T.H. Huxley : *A Liberal Education; and where to Find It* in *Science and Education: Essays* (New York, 1894) p. 86.
The prerequisite for the cultivation of altruistic amiability entails a sound understanding, a strength of volition and a high degree of stoicism bent on considering the feelings of other individuals, even, if required, at the cost of personal inclinations. Arthur suffers because he gives in to his own desire of carrying on clandestine relations with Hetty despite his consciousness of the injury it would inflict on the entire Hayslope community, let alone Mr. Irvine, Adam or the Poysers. Similarly, the destinies of Maggie, Silas, Godfrey and other tragic characters, who echo the perniciousness of egocentricism, is defined by their inability to comprehend the finer shades of being, which deprives them of the power to surmount the crisis of arriving at the right decision and causes them, inadvertently, to defy the enigmatic force that seeks to subjugate the individual to the collective social order. Adam, though in possession of a strong will to follow, with unwavering sincerity, the ideal of duty, falls short of his capacity to assess the feelings of his parents, his colleagues and also his friends. It is only when he sees the selfless pains taken by the Rector and the school-master, and the absence of grumbling or biting criticism in their genuine concern, that he undergoes the regeneration essential for a balanced personality. The significance of love and sympathy is further elaborated in Tom's and Silas's metamorphosis to the broader vision which helps them to feel the necessity of tolerance.
George Eliot's entire philosophy of meliorism, and her faith in a morally disciplined state as the Destiny of the human race, rests on the few products of fraternal kindness whose example can redeem and uplift the erratic person and steer him to righteousness. For George Eliot, these guiding angels are not superhuman beings, embodying the quintessence of perfection:

In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's. (SM, 155)

Bartle Massey, Mr. Irwine, Bob Jakin, Dolly Winthrop, are all angelic mortals whose weaknesses are negligible to their exemplary balance of head and heart.

Efforts have been made, repeatedly, to bring out the essence of Christianity in George Eliot, to trace the magnetism and the predominance of the religious impulse in her, and to equate her idea of the perfectly balanced man to the Christ-image that was the result of her indelible Evangelical upbringing. All things considered, George Eliot is left in the end with a status hardly above that of a conservative reformer, whereas the present study, with its endeavour to analyse her humanistic concept of Destiny, divorced of all implications of spiritual mysticism, aims to endorse her place with the greatest interpreters of the human experience.