CHAPTER V

THE CONCEPT OF DESTINY IN GEORGE ELIOT'S

NOVELS OF THE LAST PHASE

MIDDLEMARCH * DANIEL DERONDA

With the enthusiastic reception accorded to Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life in 1872, George Eliot was indisputably established as the greatest living novelist of her age. A broad portrait of life and manners, Middlemarch undertakes to "show the gradual action of ordinary causes rather than exceptional, and to show this in some directions which have not been from time immemorial the beaten paths -- the Cremorne walks and shows of fiction". The success of her design is manifest not only in its persisting value as an epoch in the history of novel writing but in the writer's own contentment with the result: "I have finished my book, and am thoroughly at peace about it". George Eliot wrote to Alexander Main on November 4, 1872 -- "not because I am convinced of its perfection, but because I have lived to give out what it was in me to give, and have not been hindered by illness or death from making my work as a whole, such as it is".  

2. *GEL* V, 324.
This multi-levelled panorama of society presents a greater fusion of the individual and the social concerns which, along with the thematic patterns in the story, are interwoven with far more complexity than in any of her preceding novels. *Middlemarch* does not project a single story; it aims at bringing into focus an entire community and its social mores and, more significantly, at "unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven" (170). Her deterministic vision which had already perceived that "there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life," expresses itself with a more comprehensive acuity in this work, which stands as a testimony to George Eliot's skill and ability to tackle subjects on a wide canvas and, at the same time, maintain the benignant impulse which serves to exhibit the best in every nature.

The substance of George Eliot's motto for Chapter IV of Book II is echoed through all her writings, but in *Middlemarch* it resounds with an almost compelling intimidation in her repeated employment of the image of the web suggesting the determining effects of the "stealthy convergence of human lots" (122), and the entangling grip of circumstances on the human being. It is in this dual consciousness of the tremendous pressure of social forces and

3. *PP*, 51
4. 1st Gent. Our deeds are fetters that we forge ourselves. 2nd. Gent. Ay, truly; but I think it is the world That brings the iron. (*PP*, 58)
an equally invincible belief in the magnitude of the human potential that George Eliot proves the mettle of her philosophy of life. "The growing good of the world", she asserts in the concluding lines of the Finale, "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" (896). This philosophical ambivalence is noticeable on the one hand in statements such as "Destiny stands by sarcastic with our *dramatis personae* folded in her hands" (122) or that "there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it" (896), and on the other in observations such as "character too is a process and an unfolding" (178) or "It always remains true that if we had been greater, circumstance would have been less strong against us" (632). The apparent contrariety behind the dicta can hardly be attributed to an ambiguity of conception because George Eliot was, after all, a determinist vividly cognizant of the pressures of extraneous forces. It is her faith in the power of the will which not only refuses to accept such pressures as insurmountable but also nourishes her reiterated emphasis on all-embracing charity and complete allegiance to the call of Duty as the "peremptory and absolute" panacea for the materialistic blindness of human morality:

....the inspiring principle which alone gives me courage to write is, 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 ....I see clearly that we ought each of us, not to sit down and wail, but to be heroic and constructive, .... (GEL IV: 472)

In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea Brooke's frank, open nature and heroic ideals impress one with her constant preoccupation with questions such as "what I can do?" (324), "what should I do?" (346), "what could I do?" (399). The tragedy in Dorothea's case, as in the case of almost all of George Eliot's leading figures is, to use Ian Adam's words, "the impossibility of adjusting the world to one's particular fantasy".6 The poignancy of the experience is well universalized in one of George Eliot's contemplations:

In the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them, much in the same way as the tie of their cravats, there is always a good number who *once meant* to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little. (MS., 173-74; Italics mine)

Dorothea's near-scoentric indulgence in the puritan ardour for unworldliness and reform, as also her notion that 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" (32), are pointed out by George Eliot as the sequel to a self-conscious idealism which, in spite of its good intentions, has little to recommend itself to the common savour. Even before Dorothea expresses her

notions against jewellery⁷ or her decision to give up horse-
riding, George Eliot's choric commentary on her yearning
"after some lofty conception of the world" (30) and rashness
in "embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects" (30), prepares the reader for the impending tragic experiences
which strike their ominous note in her decision to marry
"the great soul" (43) in Reverend Edward Casaubon. The
"reverential gratitude" (50) with which she looked upon her
Pascal⁸ is evidently a result of her own thirst for acquiring
knowledge in order to "learn to see the truth by the same
light as great men have seen it by" (51). The theoretically
ardent nature is obviously blind to the larger practical
aspects of the bond in which marriage becomes a state of
mutual understanding between two minds, united in a common
joy and a common sorrow. "She was as blind to his inward
troubles as he to hers; she had not yet learned those hidden
conflicts in her husband which claim our pity. She had
not yet listened patiently to his heart-beats, but only
felt that her own was beating violently" (232).

The shortsightedness which provokes Celia into a
sisterly catechism "You always see what nobody else sees
--- yet you never see what is quite plain" (59), is

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⁷ "A cross is the last thing I would wear as a trinket", Dorothea shuddered slightly" ...If I were to put on such a necklace as that, I should feel as if I had been pirouetting. The world would go round with me, and I should not know how to walk". (Mm., 35)

⁸ "There would be nothing trivial about our lives. Everyday-things with us would mean the greatest things. It would be like marrying Pascal". (Mm., 51)
clearly an outcome of her feeling of superiority over others. "How can one ever do anything nobly Christian, living among people with such petty thoughts?" (60). It was primarily her discontent with the milieu, "a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses, a walked-in maze of small paths that led no whither" (51), which had initially directed her towards planning better cottages. Celia is perhaps not wrong in taking the preoccupation as a "favourite fad" (60), because Dorothea exhibits little understanding of the weaker section. Her disappointment at seeing the prosperous state of the tenants at Lowick is a material proof that she was motivated to indulge in plans for social amelioration largely for the satisfaction it gave to herself rather than for the prospect of seeing the workers properly housed.

A similar desire for achieving an exemplary state of being, with nothing 'trivial' about her life, restricted her vision which failed to assess the dry, humourless pedantry of Mr. Casaubon. She is governed wholly by her romantic ideas which saw him not as a man but as a symbol of learning. It is not long, however, that her sensitive nature comes to realise that "the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind" were in reality only "ante-rooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither" (228). The changed outlook is cogently conveyed in her altogether altered response to everything connected with Casaubon. "The very furniture in
the room seemed to have shrunk since she saw it before: .... The clear heights where she expected to walk in full communion had become difficult to see even in her imagination. The delicious repose of the soul on a complete superior had been shaken into uneasy effort and alarmed with dim presentiment (306-7). The "first stirring of a pitying tenderness" (242) at the disclosure of the worthlessness of Casaubon's scholarly pursuits brings forth one of George Eliot's well-known ruminations:

We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity, but yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr. Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling — an idea wrought back to the directness of sense, like the solidity of objects — that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference. (464, 243)

The remarkable trait of Dorothea's noble nature is soundly revealed in her moment of disillusionment when, instead of working upon some frustrated plans of escapism or torture, she sets about to search for "some new form of inspiration" which would "give a new meaning to wifely love" (307). Set against Casaubon's 'jealousy of disposition .... a blight bred in the cloudy, damp despondency of uneasy egoism" (243), Dorothea's 'resolved submission' (464) leaves the impression of an incorruptible morality. The gradual enlightenment which comes after the "meditative struggle"(464) against Casaubon's callow hardness at the end of Book IV.
when she succeeds in conquering her desire to hurt her husband and the subsequent feeling of "thankfulness that might well up in us if we had narrowly escaped hurting a lame creature" (465), is in itself a great proponent of the excellence of sympathetic fellowship which, when duly acquired leads to that sublime happiness which is the ultimate condition of moral perfection and self-realization.

The longing for helping others which had given satisfaction in drawing plans for the improvement of cottages and the theory that "we have no right to come forward and urge wider changes for good, until we have tried to alter the evils which lie under our hands" (424), becomes practically active in Lydgate's catastrophe when he is denounced as having conspired with Bulstrode to bring about Raffles' death. While everybody else chooses to wait for the eventual course of events, Dorothea sets out to vindicate the doctor whose nobility was an object of her indubitable trust. "The idea of some active good within her reach, 'haunted her like a passion', and another's need having once come to her as a distinct image, preoccupied her desire with the yearning to give relief and made her own ease tasteless" (817). In other words, she brings into practice the philosophy which had upto the moment comforted her only theoretically: 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" (427). The journey from egoistic
impulse to altruistic sensibility which had manifested
itself in her pity for her husband's struggle "the lonely
labour, the ambition breathing hardly under the pressure
of self-distrust; the goal receding, and the heavier limbs;
and now at last the sword visibly trembling over him" (520)
—can best be seen in the moment when all her faculties
concentrate on service to another sufferer: "What do we
live for if it is not to make life less difficult to each
other?" (789).

The emancipation of Lydgate from the obligation of
Bulstrode's debt, or more significantly from the suspicious
aloofness of his wife is perhaps the noblest mission her
soul had ever accomplished. One can hardly afford to miss
the analogy between Adam Bede's agony amidst the dull
barrenness of his room prior to the conviction of Hetty
Sorrell and Dorothea's "loud - whispered cries and moans"
on the "cold floor" (845) of her "vacant room" (844).

"Deep unspeakable suffering may well be called a baptism,
regeneration, the initiation into a new state", contem­
plates the author in Adam Bede (p.402). "Doubtless" she
says, "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". The metaphoric semblance of Dorothea's
experience— "she had waked to a new condition; she felt
as if her soul had been liberated from its terrible conflict"
(845) and the consequent determination that her "irremediable
grief .... should make her more helpful, instead of driving her back from effort" (846) to that of Adam's "active resolution" (AB, 406) to give what comfort he could to Hetty relates, persuasively, the urgency of sorrow to human existence.

The "first outleap of jealous indignation and disgust" (846) at the presumed faithlessness of Ladislaw and Rosamond helps not only to disillusion her regarding the true need of her nature — "Oh ! I did love him !" (844) — but also reinforces her to a fresh resolve "towards the perfect Right, that it might make a throne within her, and rule her errant will" (846). The initial "scorn and indignation and jealous offended pride" against what she, at the moment, believed to be Ladislaw's "cheap regard and his lip-born words to her who had nothing paltry to give in exchange" (845), is almost immediately afterwards superseded by her generous desire to "clutch my own pain, and compel it to silence, and think of those three" (846). With the small private sorrow getting drowned in the abyss of common miseries and despair and attaining a humanitarian vision of a macrocosmic whole beyond one's self, the character's Bildungsroman, the ritual of initiation into a higher form of being, is now complete. The mental state which conveys her spontaneous

9. See George Eliot's letter to Charles Bray: "Where thought and love are active, — thought the formative power, love the vitalising, — there can be no sadness. They are in themselves a more intense and extended participation of a divine existence. As they grew, the highest species of faith grows too and all things are possible" (Cross I, 141).
and direct fellow-feeling, bespeaks of not only a psychological transformation but what can be essentially termed as a spiritual transformation. She could now identify herself with "the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labour and endurance. She was a part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining" (846).

The irony of circumstance over-ruling intention, depicted in Casaubon's attempt to stand between Dorothea and Ladislaw and of Mrs. Bulstrode between Rosamond and Lydgate, is repeated in Dorothea's visit to Rosamond with the determined resolution of carrying "clearness and comfort into her beclouded youth" (846). Whereas the maleficence of design completely outwits the agents in the earlier instances by yielding results altogether undesirable to them, the objective of Dorothea's "self-subduing act of fellowship" (861) serves to disillusion her about Will Ladislaw whose versatile knowledge, gaiety and intelligence mark the consummate reward of her moral development as he actually irradiates her life "like the spirit of morning visiting the dim vault where she sat as the bride of a worn-out life" (844).

Of all the persons who occupy the foreground in the writer's vision of this provincial life, Tertius Lydgate definitely stands out as the most tragic figure in the novel.10

10. "Only those who knew the supremacy of the intellectual life — the life which has a seed of ennobling thought and purpose within it — can understand the grief of one who falls from that serene activity into the absorbing soulwasting struggle with worldly annoyances" (793).
and it was probably the sad experiences of his life, above all others, which had prompted G.B. Shaw to declare that the characters in *Middlemarch* "have no more volition than billiard balls; they are moved only by circumstance and heredity".\(^{11}\) George Eliot, as already indicated, had too great a confidence in the human acumen and volition to see man as a mere puppet, and her minute observation of the deterministic factors serve, all the more, to strengthen her faith in the individual's capacity to overcome all temptation provided the character chooses to stick to the path which he clearly sees to be correct. Adorned with the best education afforded at the time by Paris, London and Edinburgh, Lydgate was a young doctor who had set foot in *Middlemarch* full of high hopes and ambitions "to contribute towards enlarging the scientific, rational basis of his profession" (177). Lydgate has, at times, been compared to Dorothea in his desire for the nobler ends, but as Prof. Leavis points out in *The Great Tradition*: "Lydgate's concern with ennobling thought and purpose is very different from Dorothea's. He knows what he means and his aim is specific."\(^{12}\) However, the universality of George Eliot's dictum in *Adam Bede*\(^ {13}\) is fully realized in Lydgate who deludes himself.

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13. "Even a man fortified with a knowledge of classics might be lured into an imprudent marriage, in spite of the warning given him by the chorus in *Prometheus*", (AB., 159).
into thinking that the "true melodic charm" of Rosamond Vincy would help in the furtherance of his project. The calm determination with which Rosamond declares her egoistic resolution "I never give up anything that I choose to do" (385, Italics mine) should have been enough to warn any rational being of the impending calamities; yet, as George Eliot has shown, not many of us can always succeed in so mastering our emotions as to be in a position to weigh the pros and cons in their proper light. The quality calls for a superhuman mechanistic intellect and Lydgate was every inch a human — fallible with his "spots of commonness" (179), and altogether prone to the "fitful swerving of passion" (180). The kiss with which he endorses the "constancy of purpose" (385), ironically, puts a seal on the future happiness which was so far camouflaged by a vision of ideal happiness.  

The revelation of a character's inner personality and the active role of the social milieu in moulding one's

14. "Lydgate thought that after all his wild mistakes and absurdly credulity, he had found perfect womanhood—felt as if already breathed upon by exquisite wedded affection such as would be bestowed by an accomplished creature who venerated his high musings and momentous labours and would never interfere with them; who would create order in the home and accounts with still magic, yet keep her fingers ready to touch the lute and transform life into romance at any moment; who was instructed to the true womanly limit and not a hair's breadth beyond — docile, therefore, and ready to carry out behests which came from beyond that limit. It was plainer now than ever that his notion of remaining much longer a bachelor and been a mistake: marriage would not be an obstruction but a furtherance" (387).
elemental nature describe the very texture on which the writer's morality is woven. If Lydgate's expectations and lofty ambitions capitulate to the veracities of life, the blame lies not only with the restricted prejudices of a provincial life, but is equally borne by Lydgate's disposition which "cared not only for 'cases', but for John and Elizabeth, especially Elizabeth" (174). Even this would have been of no consequence had he chosen to subdue his passion to the higher vocation. Lydgate failed mainly due to his self-deception in the face of a temptation he chooses not to resist. He sins against his nobler sense of duty to mankind which had earlier instigated him to devote his life to a thorough analysis of the fundamental structure of organic matter:

He wanted to pierce the obscurity of those minute processes which prepare human misery and joy, those invisible thoroughfares which are the first lurking places of anguish, mania, and crime, that delicate poise and transition which determine the growth of happy or unhappy consciousness. (Mm., 194)

George Eliot has deftly conveyed that the fated determinants merely concoct a tendency to a particular effect while action is left to the choice of the protagonist. It is only when a person exercises the will power to transcend all petty inclinations which tend to deter him from his vividly envisioned duty that he can contribute to the happiness which is the ultimate Destiny of the race. Lydgate's engagement to Rosamond in the face of his resolution to forego marital ties till he had acquired stability in life is clearly a matter of his own choice between his impulsive desire and his nobler aspirations. His early lack of resistance for
the "small temptations and sordid cares which made the retarding friction of his course towards final companionship with the immortals" (176) along with the weakness of his resolution not to "have his vanities provoked by contact with the showy worldly successes of the capital" (176) set his destiny at par with the "good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little" (174).

The convetous greed for worldly possession which had been focussed upon in the portrayal of Tito Melema finds its place in the study of provincial life with the human psychology asserting itself in an altogether different aspect. Nicholas Bulstrode who started his life as a banker's clerk with the object of taking up ministry as the vocation closest to his heart, becomes the target of George Eliot's conviction that doctrinal theology is in no way conducive to moral thinking, it rather proves itself a screen which not only shrouds one's nefarious intentions but also projects them in the light most desirable to the subject.

Having met with an opportunity for "directing his prospects of 'instrumentality' towards the uniting of distinguished religious gifts with successful business" (664), Bulstrode's striving for material affluence is more detestable than that of Tito, as it is always justified by metaphors which readily help to establish a compatibility between his religious position and the decidedly questionable business of the pawn-brokers. Tito, though as guilty of violating the trust of Baldassare as Bulstrode is of deceiving Mrs. Dunkirk,
was at least true to himself - "Do I not owe something to myself?" (Rom., 99) he had argued against the risk of being left a penniless destitute. Bulstrode, on the other hand, marks the height of duplicity when he interprets his actions as a selfless service to the Grace of God. "Thou knowest how loose my soul sits from these things", he would plead, "how I view them all as implements for tilling Thy garden rescued here and there from wilderness" (664).

The moral weakness of Bulstrode's character is highlighted in Ladislaw's disdainful rejection of his offer for financial support. The vehement scorn with which Ladislaw rebuffs the proposal at a time when he is known to be "without fortune" (671), advocates George Eliot's belief that no amount of adverse pressure can divest the human will of its right to choose the course most suited to his ethical standards:

"My unblemished honour is important to me. It is important to me to have no stain on my birth and connections. And now I find there is a stain which I can't help. My mother felt it, and tried to keep as clear of it as she could, and so will I. You shall keep your ill-gotten money. If I had any fortune of my own, I would willingly pay it to any one who could disprove what you have told me. What I have to thank you for is that you kept the money till now when I can refuse it. It ought to lie with a man's self that he is a gentleman." (Nv., 672, italics mine)

Oblivious of the ruthless consequences, Bulstrode had evidently believed that his questionable past could be atoned for by his present deeds of charity. Caught, however, in a process beyond his comprehension, he can only long to be "back in that far-off spot with his youthful poverty" where he would now "choose to be a missionary" (665).
The life of prosperous distinction draws its nemesis in the figure of Raffles who becomes almost a symbol of the ineluctable forces of retribution which can be warded off neither by selfish calculation nor by intentionally contrived death.

The prolonged debate in the mind of Bulstrode between the desire to hasten Raffles' death and the aversion to direct action, the liberality towards Lydgate in an attempt to mitigate his own sense of uneasiness, and the final acquiescence to the "murderous impulses" offer a subtle analysis of the triumph of vicious desires over the elemental goodness of human nature. The omniscient commentator spares no pains in evoking a sense of awe and directing the reader's reactions to sentiments other than denunciatory: "He was simply a man whose desires had been stronger than his theoretic beliefs, and who had gradually explained the gratification of his desires into satisfactory agreement with those beliefs. If this be hypocrisy, it is a process which shows itself occasionally in us all" (667). Bulstrode is thus, according to Prof. David Daiches, "not a Hypocrite; he is Everyman", whose self-sustaining morality is repeatedly universalized in the pages of Middlemarch:

"This implicit reasoning is essentially no more peculiar to evangelical belief than the use of wide phrases for narrow motives is peculiar to Englishmen. There is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men" (668).

15. "I have shuddered at the dissection of a guilty conscience". (O.H. Lewes to John Blackwood) OHL V, 333.
A similar effect is achieved in the detailed projection of the almost mesmerised state which finally succumbs to the temptation of seeing Raffles dead. The decision lying absolutely within his own latitude of power, the retribution is quick to claim its prey. Consequently, the malicious aspersions of Raffles, which might have remained confined to a momentary gossip or even rejected as a piece of slander, get confirmed by the sudden death in which the implication of Bulstrode is just a matter of question. The inability of Bulstrode to rise above the requirements of selfish repose and the subsequent disgrace and public humiliation, however, bring to light the noble nature of Harriet Bulstrode which helps to quell the chaos of life with an unanticipated example of 'direct fellow-feeling'.

The small scene between Bulstrode and his wife when she quietly comes to her husband with the sympathy expected of a co-sharer in the ebb and flow of life, serves to expose the shortcomings of both Dorothea and Rosamond, whose sole contribution to the lives of their respective husbands can be seen in the latter's desultory alienation and painful dissatisfaction with life. What Dorothea had failed to acquire through learning was part of the natural design

17. "How you do paint and dissect Bulstrode's feelings. It is a terrible picture of the attempt to love God and Mammon, for you throw in a touch of reality in the wretch's religion which removes him from the ordinary hypocrite of his school. In the struggle that night he, as it were, hardly knew himself that he was committing murder when he gave the brandy". (John Blackwood to George Eliot), GEL V, 306.
of Mrs. Bulstrode: it was only after subjugating the voice of selfish interest (preceded by an intense struggle) that Dorothea realises the greatness of sacrificial love. The magnanimity of Mrs. Bulstrode’s unchecked affection can be fully gauged by a comparison of her reaction to the suspicion of some misdoing on the part of her husband with that of Rosamond’s grudging antagonism towards Lydgate—-

Without that memory of Raffles she might still have thought only of monetary ruin, but now along with her brother’s look and words, there darted into her mind the idea of some guilt in her husband—then, under the working of terror came the image of her husband exposed to disgrace—and then, after an instant of scorching shame in which she felt only the eyes of the world, with one leap of her heart she was at his side in mournful but unreproaching fellowship with shame and isolation. (N. 805-6; Italics mine)

The analogy of situation accentuates the heterogeneousness of individual counteractions: "The shock to Rosamond was terrible. It seemed to her that no lot could be so cruelly hard as hers—to have married a man who had become the centre of infamous suspicions" (813). Apart from Rosamond, who is too preoccupied with her own sense of dishonour to spare a single thought for the mental agony of her husband, the spontaneous compassion and tenderness of Harriet Bulstrode reveals the narrowness of other important characters as well. Dorothea had also failed to assess the tragic depth of Casaubon’s diseased constitution, and when she did try to comfort him, it was more out of charity and her desire to

18. "Whatever misery I have to put up with, it will be easier away from here". (N. 815; Italics mine)
conform to her notion of an ideal wife rather than any passionate stirring of the heart. Similarly Lydgate, who is full of sympathetic thought for the physically ill, is unable to measure the tragedy of Casaubon's egoism which is, basically, a victim of a jealous distrust of all affection. It is notable, however, that while Rosamond and Casaubon remain repulsive in their resistance to moral development, Dorothea and Lydgate gain much out of their encounter with sorrow that gives them a far discerning insight into the pathetic suffering of the inner life.

The matronly figure of Mrs. Garth, who possesses "that rare sense which discerns what is unalterable, and submits to it without murmuring" (274), further deepens, by contrast, the incompetence of Rosamond as a wife. While the near-chronic state of unhappiness brought on by financial difficulties arising out of Rosamond's blind desire for maintaining a standard above her means and her complete oblivion to her husband's innate decency, give a tragic turn to Lydgate's aspirations, it is Mrs. Garth's pride in her husband's virtue and her ungrudging frugality which lends the vital spark to the strength of Caleb's integrity. In fact, the entire family illustrates George Eliot's conception of a desirable family where the inmates are remarkably free from peculiar "notions" and whose lives are designed on their faith in an honest and dutiful living. Caleb Garth, a close delineation of Robert Evans, is a man of great inner strength, devoted to his craft and imbued with a profound
instinctive feeling for justice. Though an orthodox Christian, his religiousness found utterance not in paying lip-homage to the Almighty but sought expression in "practical schemes, accurate work, and the faithful completion of undertakings" (284). His disregard for monetary gain, his mature comprehension of human frailty accompanied by a wide fellow-feeling, places him on a pedestal high above Bulstrode who, despite his wealth and position, cringes low under the weight of his self-caused affliction. "If you led a harmful life for gain, and kept others out of their rights by deceit, to get the more for yourself, I dare say you repent — you would like to go back and can't: that must be a bitter thing", says Caleb, "it is not for me to make your life harder to you" (749). 19

The least tragic episodes of life are encountered by Fred Vincy and Mary Garth, where the youthful irres-

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19. "The delineation of Caleb Garth embodies the very ideal of George Eliot's "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". And, he fully lives up to her belief that the "heart knoweth its own, whether bitterness or joy: let us ....... beware how we, even with good intentions, press a finger's weight on the already bruised". (Cross I, 81-82).
ponsibility of the one is duly restrained by the unillusioned probity\textsuperscript{20} of the other. The redeeming power of love is most directly illustrated in the tender playfulness of Mary who has foresight enough to save Fred from giving in to the wrong choice of vocation, and suffering the fate of "a curate in debt for horse-hire and cambric pocket - handkerchiefs" (892).

The authority of the past which had been a disciplining force in the lives of Maggie Tulliver, Eppie, Romola and Esther Lyon, forms the basic philosophy of Mary's life. Her mind is significantly free from any doubt regarding the goodness of the sentiments grounded firmly in her memories, and her choice of Fred, in the presence of the much superior personality of Farebrother, is prompted solely by her loyalty to the childhood days when Fred "had espoused her with the umbrella ring, when she wore socks and little - strapped shoes" (561). Allegiance to the past is almost a religion with her!

\textsuperscript{20} "Mary was fond of her own thoughts, and could amuse herself well sitting in twilight with her hands in her lap; for 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. And she had already come to take life very much as a comedy in which she had a proud, nay, a generous resolution not to act the mean or treacherous part. Mary might have become cynical if she had not had parents whom she honoured, and a well of affectionate gratitude within her, which was all the fuller because she had learned to make no unreasonable claims" (M., 349).
I have too strong a feeling for Fred to give him up for any one else. I should never be quite happy if I thought he was unhappy for the loss of me. It has taken such deep root in me — my gratitude to him for always loving me best, and minding so much if I hurt myself, from the time when we were very little. I cannot imagine any new feeling coming to make that weaker.

The self-imposed restraint over "fleeting visions of another kind — new dignities and an acknowledged value of which she had often felt the absence" (625), is greatly reinforced by the love for Fred and the greatness of her moral stature: when a tender affection has been storing itself in us through many of our years, the idea that we could accept any exchange for it seems to be a cheapening of our lives. And we can set a watch over our affection and our constancy as we can over other treasures" (625).

The recurring images of a "solid mutual happiness" (892) wherein the souls of Mary and Fred, Dorothea and Ladislaw are "bound to each other by a love stronger than any impulses which could have marred it" (894) bring us to George Eliot's strong belief that "sorrow must be sorrow, ill must be ill, till duty and love towards all .... recover their rightful predominace" (GEE, V, 107). Divested of her lofty ideals and conscious of her own shortcomings, feeling "that there was always something better which she might have done, if she had only been better and known better" (893, italics mine) Dorothea settles down to a love-illumined life with Will Ladislaw and her son. Even Lydgate, who has to content himself with a life far beneath his idealised vision, appears to have
reached a compromise. In short, the mellow atmosphere of the 

Finale records a sense of order and harmony in contrast to 
one of chaos and dissatisfaction, webs and entanglements 
of the early chapters. George Eliot's philosophy that "the 
evolution of the abstraction 'society' is dependent on the 
modified action of the units;" (CHL VI, 124) once again 
asserts itself: universal happiness can be achieved only when 
individuals, the units, build up healthy families, which in 
turn lead to the amelioration of the society in general. The 
cycle goes on till the entire human race is attuned to the 
voice of humane morality.

Middlemarch is centrally concerned with love, that 
'love might help a man more than .... money" (826). George 
Eliot's depiction of the consolidating effects of love in 
the lives of Fred and Mary, Dorothea and Ladislaw, Harriet 
and Nicholas Bulstrode set against Rosamond's obtuse 
narcissism, and her insistence on the beneficial impact of 
the family ties as the initial steps towards the higher 
Destiny finds a more direct enunciation in Daniel Deronda, 
the last of George Eliot's novels:

"....what is it to be rational — what is it to feel 
the light of the divine reason growing stronger 
within and without? It is to see more and more of 
the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change 
as a dependent growth — yea, consecrate it with 
kinship: the past becomes my parent, and the future 
stretches towards me the appealing arms of children". 

(DD., 582-83)

The irrationality arising out of a person's oblivion 
to the "hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change as a 
dependent growth" is best evidenced in the strong-headed 
waywardness of Gwendolen Harleth, the enigmatic spoiled 
child
of Mrs. Davilow's first marriage. Her "implicit confidence that her destiny must be one of luxurious ease" (8), the feeling of a superiority over others, the self-love which makes her judge herself as "exceptional" — a supreme deity worthy of general devotion, are all attributed by George Eliot to the want of the innocuous effects of attachments which form the deep-embedded roots of one's morality:

Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, ....should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge; a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and kindly acquaintance with all neighbours, even the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort, and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood.

(DR., 12)

A similar picture of rootlessness was characterized in the delineation of Hetty Sorrell in Adam Bede, but Gwendolen is decidedly a richer and a more complex individual than the passive dairy-maid, who fails to capture the reader's sympathy till she is practically reduced to a homeless wanderer having neither person nor place to call her own. Gwendolen is introduced as one full of dynamism, ignorant of all inward struggles, a queen among vassals, shrewd, witty, and drenched in the adulation of her own beauty. Sharing her mother's feeling that she could not have been meant for poverty.

21. "the variation of having passed two years at a showy school, where on all occasions of display she had been put foremost, had only deepened her sense that no exceptional a person as herself could hardly remain in ordinary circumstances or in a social position less than advantageous". (DR., 13)
Gwendolen had a great confidence in her own potentialities to overcome every unpleasantness which posed a threat to her happiness: "How could she believe in sorrow? If it attacked her, she felt the force to crush it, to run away from it... Anything seemed more possible than that she could go on bearing miseries, great or small" (10).

Gwendolen is significantly shown to have passed twenty-one years of life and arrived at the stage which marks the subtle metamorphosis of the juvenile romanticism into the crude realism of maturity. The transition which usually expresses itself in a sobered view of the larger responsibilities comes to the self-centred after a strain of agonizing experience which forces them out of their shell. Moreover, by inculcating the daylight breadth of perception, it induces elasticity to the vision fixed hitherto on one's own merits. The lofty criticism of Herr Klesmer at the Arrowpoint's party regarding the choice as well as the rendering of her song, underlined further by the faultless performance of Miss Arrowpoint and the master himself, have the startling effect of a revelation as Gwendolen, accustomed to "unmingled applause" (32), for the first time, becomes conscious of an inferiority in herself.

The self-assurance which made her feel "well equipped for the mastery of life" (26), and the youthful credulity with which she "felt ready to manage her own destiny" (26), are brought to a severe test when Gwendolen finds herself in the baffling quandary of financial bankruptcy. Feeling herself
equal to the situation she actively resolves to do something "befitting our rank and education" (167). Of course, the scheme that she can ever work upon rests with her self-exalting notions of personal charm: she plans to become a stage artist. Once again it is the edifying appraisal of Herr Klesmer that intrudes upon her egocentric narcissism as a manifestation of "that unmanageable world which was independent of her feelings" (181). Disillusioned by the direct intimation of his words which had "really bitten into her self-confidence and turned it into the pain of a bleeding wound" (188), the shattered dreams fix their eyes resignedly on the dull and socially humiliating position of becoming a governess. "To be a queen disenthroned is not so hard as some other down-stepping: imagine one who had been made to believe in his own divinity finding all homage withdrawn, and himself unable to perform a miracle that would recall the homage and restore his own confidence. Something akin to this illusion and this helplessness had befallen the poor spoiled child, with lovely lips and eyes and the majestic figure — which seemed now to have no magic in them" (208).

It is at this momentous juncture that Grandcourt's renewed offer of marriage forces upon her the choice between the moral and the worldly good. The absence of the proud firmness with which she had decided to break all ties after Mrs. Glasher's disclosure of her previous connections with Grandcourt, claiming her son as the rightful heir to his father's property, illustrates the enthralling coercion
of circumstances on a mind that lacks the courage to face social stigma. "On that day and after it, she had not reasoned and balanced: she had acted with a force of impulse against which all questioning was no more than a voice against a torrent. The impulse had come -- not only from her maidenly pride and jealousy, not only from the shock of another woman's calamity thrust close on her vision, but -- 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. Whatever was accepted as consistent with being a lady she had no scruple about; but from the dim region of what was called disgraceful, wrong, guilty, she shrank with mingled pride and terror; and even apart from shame, her feeling would have made her place any deliberate injury of another in the region of guilt" (213). The exhaustion of the unwavering resoluteness that had assured her of her capacity "to manage her own destiny" is in itself symbolic of the counter balancing desires which subsequently became the stronghold of irrepressible temptations putting a seal on all possibilities of perfect happiness, the coveted Destiny of an individual's life.

Economic determinism, which George Eliot held to be a peremptory factor in human Destiny was presumably too strong for Gwendolen to resist. "Other people allowed themselves to be made slaves of, and to have their lives blown hither and thither like empty ships in which no will was present: it was not to be so with her" (25), she had
always argued, yet her resolve and her pledge all give way as she finds it impossible to reconcile herself to the repelling image of her mother residing at Sawyer's Cottage and of herself waiting on the Mompert's.

This torturous state of Gwendolen's mind underlines, by a sharp contrast, a "certain inflexibility of judgement, and independence of opinion" (230) in Daniel Deronda. Instead of the disturbing unpredictableness experienced by Gwendolen, Deronda, admired by Sir Hugo for possessing "notions of his own" (230), is very clear on the questions of right and wrong. The world which is "all confusion" (327) to her has no puzzles for Deronda. Consequently he has no difficulty in seeing through the determining factors of Gwendolen's marriage and developing a rapport of sympathy for the misery of the enigmatic beauty whose defiant behaviour had captivated every eye in the Casino at Leubronn: "It was probably the transition from that fevered worldliness into poverty which had urged her acceptance where she must in some way have felt repulsion. All this implied a nature liable to difficulty and struggle — elements of life which had a predominant attraction for his sympathy" (232).

The enlarged affections which attuned his affinity to people "in proportion to the possibility of his defending them, rescuing them, telling upon their lives with some sort of redeeming influence" (232) is determined, as the flashback to his childhood reveals, by his uncertain, yet painful, conjectures regarding his parentage. The uncertainty of his
position does hinder him from launching upon a positive voca-
tion for life, yet the moments of early anguish bequeath
to him the higher vocation about which he had no doubts --
and this was to offer fellowship wherever needed. His self-
sacrificing labours for Hans Neyrick, his instinctive rescue
of Mirah and the moral guidance to Gwendolen are merely a
series of links which together form one chain, and that
chain is Daniel Deronda -- an advocate of George Eliot's be-
lief in the beneficial effects of one good soul over others.
It is, therefore, understandable why George Eliot reacted
against the "laudation of readers who cut the book into
scraps and talk of nothing in it but Gwendolen". Moreover,
the thematic centre of the book, notably, is not a revelation
of the Jewish religion or a propaganda in favour of Judaism
but the conscious purpose of enumerating the universality
of human values and thereby lessening the general antipathy
towards the Jews as a sect.

Dispensing with the controversial mystic transcendance
of Mordecai's visions or the sudden appearance of the

22. GEL VI, 290.
25. Joseph Jacobs, in his enthusiastic protest against the
    critics who find fault with the Jewish element in the
    novel, has successfully endeavoured to correlate Mordecai
    with "the great leaders of spiritual Judaism" such as
    Saul of Tarsus, Jehuda Halevi, Ibn Ezra, Spinoza and many
    others who 'were all men like Mordecai: rich in inward
    wealth, yet content to earn a scanty livelihood by some
    handicraft; ardent spiritual, yet keenly alive to the
    claims of home affection; widely erudite, yet profoundly
    acquainted with human nature...." Following his deduc-
    tions that "Mordecai is no inert seer, crow of abstrac-
    tions, but a warm living reality", the prophetic visions
    become vital to the realistic conception of the Jew.
    See William Baker (ed.) Critica on George Eliot, (George
    Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1912) pp. 34-42
mother — Princess Halm-Bberstein — on the scene which have often been assailed as George Eliot's crude inventions for thrusting the higher Destiny upon Deronda who "does not choose, but becomes one of the chosen"\(^{24}\), one can still assert that Deronda's ultimate vocation is not the least incompatible with the philanthropic beneficence of his nature. In a wider perspective, the rescue of Mirah marks the turning point of his life not because Mirah is a helpless destitute but because the fact of her being a Jewess opens new vistas of thought before him: "Deronda, like his neighbours, had regarded Judaism as a sort of eccentric fossilised form — — — But Mirah, with her terrified flight from one parent, and her yearning after the other had flashed on him the hitherto neglected reality that Judaism was something still throbbing in human lives, still making for them the only conceivable vesture of the world" (260). Even without the revelation of his Jewish ancestry, the gravity attributed to hereditary forces — always a formidable determinant in George Eliot's conception of the innate tendencies of man — coupled with the benignity of Daniel who was naturally prone to "loving too well the losing causes of the world" (262) and who most keenly "longed for .... some external event, or some inward light that would urge him into a definite line of action and compress his wandering energy" (262) would positively have launched him upon a quest of this unexplored and newly recognised truth. His visit to the synagogue, his curiosity in the temporal experiences of a

Jew which he tried to satisfy from the autobiography of Solomon Maimon and his interest in the Hebrew language are all born out of the same source — the desire for a better acquaintance with the revoltingly detested and hatefully persecuted community which had always occupied the hind-chambers of his mind as a set of fanatic hoarders that were devoid of all human affections. And having once apprised himself of the chaotic lack of organisation in the nation which could, with a little effort, be marshalled into stability, it would not be presuming too much that the sincere altruism of Daniel Deronda would unhesitatingly offer its services to the East and thereby solve its problem of choosing a meaningful vocation of which he would ever be proud.

The calm tranquility of Deronda, juxtaposed with the agitated turbulence of Gwendolen, illustrates the placid serenity which arises out of a generous humanitarianism where a person "thought so much of others" that he "hardly wanted anything for himself" (377). The imprecation of making one's self the centre of every desire is deftly brought out in the delirious psychology of Gwendolen after she had given her consent to marry Grandcourt:

"...she was appalled by the idea that she was going to do what she had once started away from with repugnance. It was new to her that a question of right or wrong in her conduct should rouse her terror;.... She seemed on the edge of adopting deliberately, as a notion for all the rest of her life, what she had rashly said in her bitterness, when her discovery had driven her away to Leubronn:— 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; it came to her with the shadowy array of possible calamity behind it — calamity which had ceased to be a mere name for her, and all the infiltrated influences of disregarded religious teaching, as well as the deeper impressions of something awful and inexorable enveloping her, seemed to concentrate themselves in the vague conception of avenging power (PP., 222)

Circumstance, it is true, has caused many a nature to drift towards the path obviously iniquitous but, as George Eliot argues, the "drifting depends on something besides the current, when the sails have been set beforehand" (217). Macbeth's murder of King Duncan, despite the penetrating arguments of his conscience that Duncan is "here in double trust: / First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, / Strong both against the deed; then, as his host, / Who should against his murderer shut the door, / Not bear the knife myself", stands denounced and reprehended even today. Would the seductive pressure constrained by the "three weird sisters" and Lady Macbeth have the slightest impact on a nature disabused of selfish intent? Shakespeare's Macbeth is immortalised for antiquity as a tragedy of over-reaching ambition. Gwendolen, like Buztacia Vye in Hardy's The Return of the Native is punished with the ill-consequences which she is

condemned to suffer alone as her choice of marrying Grandcourt and the detractive yearning to dominate comes of her own free-will.

The dreams had materialised -- but the sense of wrong-doing and of broken promise was fast burying its fangs as deep into her system as Mrs. Glasher could have intended while putting her curse on the diamonds that were once worn by her. It is primarily in this acute sensi-

26. "The brilliant position she had longed for, the imagined freedom she would create for herself in marriage, the deliverance from the dull insignificance of her girl-hood—all were immediately before her; and yet they had come to her hunger like food with the taint of sacrilege upon it, which she must snatch with terror. In the darkness and loneliness of her little bed, her more resistant self could not act against the first onslaught of dread after her irrevocable decision. That unhappy-faced woman and her children—Grandcourt and his relations with her—kept repeating themselves in her imagination like the clinging memory of a disgrace, and gradually obliterated all other thought leaving only the consciousness that she had taken these scenes into her life." (MD., 222)

27. "...having everything at my beck — and enjoying everything gloriously — splendid houses — and horses — and diamonds, I shall have diamonds — and going to court — and being Lady Certainly — and Lady Perhaps — and grand here — and tattily there ..." (MD., 255)

28. "These diamonds, which were once given with ardent love to Lydia Glasher, she passes on to you. You have broken your word to her, that you might possess what was hers. Perhaps you think of being happy, as she once was, and of having beautiful children such as hers, who will thrust hers aside. God is too just for that. The man you have married has a withered heart. His best young love was mine; you could not take that from me when you took the rest. It is dead; but I am the grave in which your chance of happiness is buried as well as mine. You had your warning. You have chosen to injure me and my children .... You will have your punishment. I desire it with all my soul .... Shall you like to stand before your husband with these diamonds on you, and these words of mine in his thoughts and yours? Will he think you have any right to complain when he has made you miserable? You took him with your eyes open. The willing wrong you have done me will be your curse" (MD., 257-58)
bility of guilt, ... "the element of nervous terror" — which even her resolve to see the Glashers well-provided-for leaves undeterred, that Gwendolen rises above the all-consuming egoism of Hetty Sorrell or Rosamond Lydgate.

The character of Gwendolen is clearly not devoid of its elemental goodness, and it is in these elements that the true appeal of her personality abides. Instead of experiencing repugnance at the mercenary, self-centred approach to marriage, one cannot help feeling for the nature which, instead of enjoying the heights of status, wrenches miserably under the "spikes of that unwilling penance which conscience imposed" (234) on her. From the very moment of engagement the feeling that "she had consented to mount a chariot where another held the reins" (234) and the afflictive sensibility on the wedding day that "the cord which united her with this lover and which she had hitherto held by the hand, was now being flung over her neck" (254), throws a tragic colour on her previous assertions that "she would....be able to manage him thoroughly" (97), and adds to the pathos of the situation where "Grandcourt had become a blank uncertainty to her in everything but this, that he would do just what he willed, and that she had neither devices at her command to determine his will, nor any rational means of escaping it" (307-308).

30. "She had accepted Grandcourt solely as the man whom it was convenient for her to marry, not in the least as one to whom she would be binding herself in duty", (BD, 239).
The reaction of her youthful ego against the "evil eye" (295) that had deprived her of her luck at the gaming table; her sense of guilt which included Deronda among those that her marriage with Grandcourt had precluded; and the eventual self-subjugation to the moral superiority of Deronda are all indicative of the redemptive qualities that answer to the broad values of Daniel's perspicacity. The pernicious effects of the dim-witted obtuseness of her mother and sisters are visibly conspicuous in the imperious arrogance which Gwendolen is forced to adopt in order to escape from the suffocating dullness of her domestic circle. "I am always bored" (5), she complains to Mr. Vandernoodt and then in response to Madame von Langen's rejoinder that she had "always seemed eager about something from morning till night", she explains -- "That is just because I am bored to death ... I must make something happen" (7). Daniel Deronda's compassionate understanding, his ability to seek out a ray of hope in the most dismal of circumstances -- "Lives are enlarged in different ways. I daresay some would never get their eyes opened if it were not for a violent shock from the consequences of their own actions" (318) -- serve to embalm the wounds inflicted by her thoughts, the "wilful tormentors" (319) of her soul. Shorn of all ideals of self-excellence, Gwendolen's shattered personality seeks asylum in the sensitivity which penetrates through her sorrow and offers an invigorating message of forbearance:
"Look on other lives besides your own. See what their troubles are, and how they are borne. Try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires. Try to care for what is best in thought and action—something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot". (III, 325)

The substitution of Gwendolen's concentration on her own reflection with the recurring image of Deronda, and its effectiveness in dispelling her evil thoughts, together with her sustained efforts at concealing the actual state of her married life from her mother and uncle, throw a light on the broadening of her vision towards moral excellence. Affection, while moving from oneself to another is bound together force as the focal point shifts from the ideal self to the family, from the family to the immediate society and from thence to envelop the entire humanity. The confessional narrative after Grandcourt's death removes much weight of suppressed thought and Deronda, who had ever been the good mentor, finally gives her food for her future life:

31. For George Eliot's belief that family is the source of morality, which she, like Comte, looked upon as the link between egoism and altruism see the following comments by Cross: "In her view, the family life holds the roots of all that is best in our moral lot" (II, 428-429); and "She often thought it wisest not to raise too ambitious an ideal, especially for young people, but to impress on ordinary natures the immense possibilities of making a small home circle brighter and better. Few are born to do the great work of the world but all are born to this. And to natures capable of the larger effort the field of usefulness will constantly widen" (III, 450). For Comte's views see Bridges, J.R. - A General View of Positivism (1865) e.g. "The love of his family leads Man out of his original state of self-love and enables him to attain finally a sufficient measure of social love". Ch. II, p.100.
This sorrow which has cut down to the root, has come to you while you are so young — try to think of it, not as a spoiling of your life, but as a preparation for it. Let it be a preparation — ... See! you have been saved from the worst evils that might have come from your marriage, which you feel was wrong. You have had a vision of injurious, selfish action — a vision of possible degradation; think that a severe angel, seeing you along the road of error, grasped you by the wrist, and showed you the horror of the life you must avoid. ....You can, you will, be among the best of women such as make others glad that they were born" (DD., 558).

The complexity of Gwendolen's character matched with the greatness of the perversity of her selfish choice, the torturous frustration and the impossibility of escaping from the "hated vantage ground" place her above all others in her claim to the reader's sympathy. Sir James Chettam's complaint against the sorrows of Dorothea's life arising out of her blindness in marriage was fundamentally aimed at Mr. Brooke who did not exercise the veto power of the guardian - uncle to prevent the match with Casaubon. The intricacy of Gwendolen's position is underlined, on the other hand, by the well-meaning uncle who held it "futile, even if it had been becoming, to show any curiosity as to

32. The thought that his death was the only possible deliverance for her was one with the thought that deliverance would never come — the double deliverance from the injury with which other beings might reproach her and from the yoke she had brought on her own neck.... The thought of his dying would not subside; it turned as with a dream-change into the terror that she should die with his throttling fingers on her neck avenging that thought. Fantasies moved within her like ghosts, making no break in her more acknowledged consciousness and finding no obstruction in it ; dark rays doing their work invisibly in the broad daylight". (DD., 440)

33. "How could she run away to her own family — carry distress among them, and render herself an object of scandal in the society she had left behind her". (DD., 457)
the past of a young man whose birth, wealth, and consequent leisure made many habits venial which under other circumstances would have been inexcusable" (65). Removed from the unforeseen economic bankruptcy and the pressure of her own kith and kin, especially Mr. Gascoigne, who applied himself to highlighting the urgency of her "duty" both to herself and her family, insisting, in other words, upon the acceptance of Grandcourt's offer in spite of "the gossip he had heard" (101), one could be led to speculate as to the possibility of Gwendolen taking the plunge merely for the sake of parks, carriages or titles. The contributory effects of her milieu, which are too glaring to be ignored, are further accentuated by the beneficial outcome of the plain-spoken and sincere criticism of Herr Klesmer and Daniel Deronda that leave one in no doubt that the responsibility for the obstreperous intransigence of Gwendolen rested greatly with her mother and sisters whose attitude of all-submission and no-objection deprived her of the guidance and the discipline that one receives at home.

However, the last streak of the delusive notion that "whatever surrounded her was somehow specially for her" (583) is finally destroyed as she feels herself "reduced to a mere speck" beside the magnitude of Deronda's mission of life. The revelation of Deronda's lofty purpose, which George Eliot describes as a "crisis in Gwendolen's small life" (583) and the resulting perception of her own inconspicuity mark the inception of that renouncing spirit which
forms the basis of George Eliot's concept of Destiny. The comfort arising out of a sense of belongingness to the family reveals her acquirement of the higher Destiny where the selfless love of life becomes a blessing to mankind. Having attained the self-realization which is purged of all selfishness she can now, one may safely assume, "live to be one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were born" (588):

She was experiencing some of that peaceful melancholy which comes from the renunciation of demands for self, and from taking the ordinary good of existence, and especially kindness, even from a dog, as a gift above expectation....There is a way of looking at our life daily as an escape, and taking the quiet return of morn and evening — still more the star-like outgrowing of some pure fellow-feeling, some generous impulse breaking our inward darkness — as a salvation that reconciles us to hardship. Those who have a self-knowledge prompting such self-accusation as Hamlet's, can understand this habitual feeling of rescue. And it was felt by Gwendolen as she lived through and through again the terrible history of her temptations, from their first form of illusory self-pleasing when she struggled away from the hold of conscience, to their latest form of an urgent hatred dragging her towards its satisfaction, while she prayed and cried for the help of that conscience which she had once forsaken. She was now dwelling on every word of Deronda's that pointed to her past deliverance from the worst evil in herself, and the worst infliction of it on others, and on every word that carried a force to resist self-despair. (DD., 577)

Whereas the tragedy of Gwendolen Harleth and its association with the lizard-like glance of Grandcourt is suggestive of darkness, the plot dealing with Deronda and his quest for his lost heritage bespeaks of noble ideals and moral growth. Deronda's character marks a consummation of George Eliot's faith in the possibilities of the future higher worthiness which arises out of the individual's realization
of his duty to his family, his community and his creed. The unwavering and prompt decision of Deronda to serve his race reminds one of Fedelma's instantaneous resolution on the eve of her marriage to give up her lover, forget all ties and "wed/The curse that blights my people" in respect to the revelation made by her father that she is a gypsy and should consequently devote her life to the cause of her people. Echoes of a similar fixity of purpose can be heard in Deronda's divulgence of his own obsessions:

The idea that I am possessed with is that of restoring a political existence to my people, making them a nation again, giving them a national centre, such as the English have, though they too are scattered over the face of the globe. That is a task which presents itself to me as a duty: I am resolved to begin it, however feebly. I am resolved to devote my life to it. At the least, I may awaken a movement in other minds, such as has been awakened in my own.

(DD., 583).

The impassioned zeal with which Deronda sets out to render political stability and consolidation to the disjointed existence of the Jewish nation embodies in itself the vision of George Eliot's melioristic philosophy which cherished its belief not on the advent of a superhuman redeemer but on the human being equipped with a sympathetic cognisance of human travail and a selfless, indefatigable devotion to the cause of humanity. Having procured the higher perspective where considerations of material comfort and social status are reduced to a cypher, and developed a puissant will to master the baser instinct, the human potential can restore to mankind its lost equilibrium.