CHAPTER III

GEORGE ELIOT

Charlotte and Emily Brontë were untouched by the scientific ideas of their age. Their romantic vision of life was based upon their faith in Divinity, and to them nature was the world of the mysterious and the non-rational. Their response to nature was deeply interfused with their inner urge to experience life spiritually (in the metaphysical sense). George Eliot was, unlike them, greatly influenced by the scientific ideas of her age, which is evident in her anti-romantic view of nature. She rejected the idea of nature as a moral order guided by a supernatural agency. Nature in her fiction is an organic unity of cause and effect.

Sometimes the critics of George Eliot have dismissed nature as an insignificant element in her work. For example, Leslie Stephen observes:

In George Eliot's writings, there are proofs enough of sensibility to natural beauty, but the scenery is a background to the actors; and there is no indication of such a passion for her native district as Scott felt for his 'honest grey hills'.

But a careful study of her works shows that nature is more than a background to the actors. "We cannot separate the

literary works of George Eliot from the geographical surroundings of her youth."²

In this chapter it is shown that nature is an important theme in George Eliot's novels and time and place exercise their influence on her characters.³ Regarding her passion for her native district, it remained one of the strongest influences on her feelings throughout her life. With her "roots in the pre-railroad, pre-telegraphic period,"⁴ she retained a passionate attachment to the Midlands.⁵ She had a deep sensuous delight in various aspects of nature, which found expression time and again in her letters.⁶

A conflict between the otherworldly Evangelicalism and her love of nature, which was evident in her as early as 1840,⁷

⁶Ibid., I, 71, 73; II, 151-62; III, 85-6, 168-9; IV, 20-1. Cross, op. cit., I, 6, 59, 74, 141 etc.
is indicative of the powerful attraction nature had for her. With her strongly sensuous mind, she was enamoured of this world. But as a Christian she regarded the world of things and human beings as a snare for the soul and strove to denounce their attractions.

George Eliot eventually found a reconciliation between her sensuous and spiritual natures in pantheism. She felt that the spiritual goal of human life could not be attained merely through abstract principles and insisted on the value of emotion in the realisation of the spiritual life. As she felt that the otherworldly Christianity was inadequate to accommodate the emotional nature of man, she broke with it in 1841. In her view the beauty of character was in no sense the product of the creed. On the contrary, she discovered that the dogmas might tend to suppress and trammel the emotional nature. Hence the break with Christianity produced "a feeling of exultation and strong hope". Her soul, she said, was 'liberated from the wretched giant's

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8 ibid., p.5.

9 Haight, op.cit., I, 3; cf., George Eliot's early admiration of Wordsworth (Cross, op.cit., I,49,56) and her desire for "an indication of less satisfaction in terrene objects, a more frequent upturning of the soul's eye" (Haight, op.cit., I,34).

But it did not lead her from a Christian to a meaningless universe. The belief in a spiritual principle governing the universe could be seen in the pantheistic idea of God revealing Himself to man not miraculously but through his own mind contemplating itself and the course of nature. The identification of the material with the spiritual permitted the union of sensuous joy and spiritual passion. The idea of the Creation instinct with conscious being and intelligence enabled George Eliot to feel the speaking soul in the forms of matter and thus experience a sense of fellow-feeling with nature. She perceived in this sympathy the best image of the Great Spirit. The possibility of sympathy with nature as a conscious and living existence offered a moral sanction to her sensuous delight in life and it also satisfied her.

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12 cf., George Eliot's letter to John Sibree: "The ocean and the sky and the everlasting hills are spirit to me, and they will never be robbed of their sublimity." Haight, op.cit., I,248.

13 cf., "There are externals that I could ill part with - the deep, blue, glorious heavens...emblem of a truer omnipotence... the felt desire to be one with the Great Mind that has laid open to us these treasures." ibid., I,133; vide, ibid., pp.243,248 and Cross, op.cit., I,74 and the poem written to Miss Lewes, ibid., p.87.
desire for religious experience. Thus she discovered a balance between "the conflicting claims of soul and society, freedom and duty." 

But George Eliot was sensitive to all the important ideas of her age. Her contact with Comte, J.S. Mill, Spencer, Feurbach and Lewes was instrumental in the rejection of pantheism by 1852. The new scientific and social theories discredited the theological and metaphysical interpretations of life and insisted on the need for what came to be known as the positivistic interpretation. The scientific explanation of the phenomena of nature ignored the existence of a transcendent force actuating the universe. In positive cosmology all phenomena manifest law of causation, and change results from the interaction of the laws of entities involved. This law is not imposed but it is a process of the phenomena, not an agent apart from them; the process is the law. It thus pictured a deterministic order of the universe in which phenomena are governed by the strictest laws of causation.

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14 cf., George Eliot's letter to Sara Hennel in which she acknowledged Rousseau's influence and wrote, "His genius has sent that electric thrill through my intellectual and moral frame which has awakened me to new perceptions, - which has made man and nature a fresh world of thought and feeling to me." ibid., p.150.


17 vide above pp.41 ff.
This scientific picture of the universe very much narrowed the scope for deducing a spiritual scheme from the study of nature. The scientific explanation of the universe clashed with George Eliot's deeply held beliefs. Her rejection of pantheism was a more serious and radical step than the break with Christianity, for there was no ready-made explanation of the universe and man's relation to it to take the place of pantheism as pantheism had earlier taken the place of Christianity. "The new philosophies provided facts about the human condition and methods of discovery and verification; but they were less successful in answering questions of meaning, end and value, in giving man a sense of religious orientation in the cosmos." 18

The scientific philosophers discarded the tendency to discover a common human morality from nature as absurd 19 and pointed out that nature was indifferent, cruel and amoral. 20 The sense of disillusionment from 'the poetry of life', 21 which was already present in George Eliot, was

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18 Paris, op.cit., p.15.
21 Haight, op.cit., I,264.
further confirmed by this scientific picture of nature. In
one of her poems, she describes Cybele, the great earth-
mother, as non-moral, careless of human needs and desires,
and indifferent to good and evil:

Great Cybele ... 
...thou art deaf to human care: 
Thy breasts impartial cherish with their food 
Strength alike of ill and good.22

In the idea of a supernatural agency or a Divine Being
regulating the course of events in life man had found a
home for his spirit. But the deterministic picture of the
world-order postulates a dichotomy between the universe and
human spirit. As the laws of nature are substituted for
the absolute causes and the "notion of a providential
government by an omnipotent Being for the good of his
creatures"23 is rejected, the principle of mediation between
the self and the external world is withdrawn. The human
soul is confronted with an unresponsive, unfeeling alien
cosmos:

The world seems one huge prison house & court 
When men are punished at the slightest cost,

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Studies in Philology, LVI (July, 1959), 548; cf., "Nature
distributes [poison] throughout the organism with the same
impartiality as she distributes the health-giving oxygen."
Lewes, op.cit., p.30.

With lowest rate of colour, warmth & joy.  

At one stage George Eliot accepted the idea of man as 'the chief animal' and of science as the instrument of conquering nature for man. The scientists advocated the need of the objective explanation of the phenomena of nature as against the subjective and the metaphysical. Objectivity - seeing the external world as it is rather than as we wish it to be - is a leading motif of George Eliot's fiction. Objectively perceived, the reality of the physical world is depressing. One of the first lessons that man learns through extensive experience is the fact "of the harsh, non-moral condition of life." The dichotomy between the inner and the outer worlds of man, between the subjective and the objective realities, between the human spirit and


25 cf., ...Science
Will leave no spot on this terraqueous globe
Unfit to be inhabited by man,
The chief of animals.

26 Lewes, op.cit., p.41.


28 Haight, op.cit., I, 264. 29 ibid., IV,365.
the external media of circumstances through which it strives to find fulfilment is directly related to the non-moral order of nature. Nature being indifferent does not necessarily create the objective world to facilitate the fulfilment of human desires and aspirations. The sadness and imperfection of human nature are inherent in the deterministic order of the universe. The consciousness of this condition of life leads the individual to the tragic consciousness of the gap between the subjective and the objective worlds.

George Eliot portrays the tragic consciousness of Latimer in *The Lifted Veil* in terms of the dichotomy between the subjective vision and the objective reality. Latimer is enamoured of his beloved, Bertha, on the one hand, and on the other he is conscious that his inner vision of her beauty is always threatened by the objective reality which turns his idol into a goddess with feet of clay. He is tortured by the consciousness of the human situation in which there is no possibility of reconciliation between the inner vision and the objective reality. Divided by the contradictory awareness of the ideal and the real, he exclaims:

> Are you unable to imagine this double consciousness at work within me, flowing on like two parallel streams which never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue?31

Nature in George Eliot's early fiction is presented as the deterministic order of the universe as well as a background to human activity. But it is also a background which influences man and his life. Human poverty and prosperity are to a great extent the result of the region where one is born. "The chance of birth in a particular region condemns one to it, a life of imprisonment." In *Adam Bede* the comfortable life in Hayslope is related to the rich soil of Loamshire, and the poverty and misery in Snowfield are the results of the intractable land of Stonyshire. The river in *The Mill on the Floss* "forms the eternal background" as well as affects the life of the people who dwell around it.

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33 Bedient, op.cit., p.49.

34 *Adam Bede*, Bk.I, Ch.I, pp.18-9; Ch.III, p.37; Ch.VI, p.77; Ch.VIII, p.87; Ch.XI, p.118.

35 *blind*, op.cit., p.125.

36 *The Mill on the Floss*, Bk.VII, Ch.V.
Rain and weather are inextricably mixed with the happiness and misery of the people. They affect the human life as well as the means of living of humanity.  

The presentation of nature in George Eliot is also functional, besides its being a study of the background. For instance, the seasons in Mr. Gilfil's Love-story reflect corresponding changes in human life. The huge conical masses of the hill, protecting the Loamshire region of corn and grass against the hungry wind of the north in Adam Bede, suggest that "the control over their lives for which men aspire (as Arthur, Adam and Hetty, for example, do) is at best precarious in achievement and always exposed to the ravages of irresistible natural forces." One of the functions of Dinah's frequent references to what George Eliot calls "hungry Stonyshire" is to establish that there is a world of poverty and suffering outside the self-sufficing community of Hayslope, a harsh world set against the paradisal

37 Adam Bede, Bk.I, Ch.IV, pp.52,54; Bk.II, Ch.XVIII, p.201; The Mill on the Floss, Bk.V, Ch.I, p.330.
39 Adam Bede, Bk.I, Ch.II.
40 Auster, op.cit., pp.104-5.
41 Adam Bede, Bk.V, Ch.XXVIII, p.377.
image. 42 The contrast between the Autumn and Spring of Part One and Two respectively in *Silas Marner* suggests the corresponding spiritual barrenness and the rehabilitation of the religious awareness. 43

The law of consequences, which finds more prominent and complex treatment in the later novels of George Eliot, is made to bear upon the meaning of the moral consequences of human actions in these early novels as well. Her use of the darker side of the nature's world emphasises the inevitability of the consequences of both nature's cause and man's action. 44 Her treatment of the 'inexorable law of consequences' is linked with her tragic sense of determinism in life. 45


44 *Adam Bede*, Bk. II, Ch. XVI; Bk. IV, Ch. XXIX, p. 305; Ch. XXI, p. 320; *The Mill on the Floss*, Bk. V, Ch. I, p. 335; Ch. IV, p. 364; Bk. VI, Ch. II, p. 409; Ch. VI, p. 440; Ch. VII, p. 453; *Silas Marner*, Pt. II, Ch. XIX, p. 346; Ch. XIX, p. 355.

George Eliot's belief that nature does not necessarily mirror "the human situations" and continues her unrelenting process in the face of human suffering finds expression in the various scenes of contrast between suffering humanity and joyous nature. The consciousness of nature's indifference adds to the suffering of man. For example, the uninterrupted continuation of "the great clockwork of nature" in Mr. Silfil's Love-story is seen "like the throb of pain to sensations made keen by a sickening fear." Here Caterina has been dreading the impending marriage of her lover, Wybrow, to Miss Assher. While Caterina is going through the pangs of fear of separation from her lover, nature's "passage from beauty to beauty...seems hurrying on the moment when the shadow of dread will be followed up by the reality of despair." And when the dread of Wybrow's marriage to Miss Assher becomes a hard reality to Caterina, the joyous course of nature reflects its unconcern to human suffering:

The golden sunlight beamed through the dripping boughs like a Schechinah, or visible divine presence, and the birds were chirping and thrilling their new autumnal songs so sweetly, it seemed as if their throats as well

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46 Hussey, "Structure and Imagery in Adam Bede," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, X (September, 1955), 118.
48 ibid.
as the air, were all the clearer for the rain; but Caterina moved through all this joy and beauty like a poor wounded leveret painfully dragging its little body through the sweet clover tufts — for it sweet in vain. 49

Nature's lack of sympathy is depicted on a larger scale in *Adam Bede*. Much human suffering is caused by the process of "Nature, that great tragic dramatist." 50 George Eliot observes that the feeling that the image of agony is out of place in the midst of joyous nature is based on an imperfect knowledge of the story of man's life on earth. To George Eliot the condition of man's life implies the presence of "a human heart beating heavily with anguish," which one can discover "hidden behind the apple blossoms, or among the golden corn, or under the shrouding boughs of the wood." 51 The picture of the blooming girl "tasting the bitterest of life's bitterness," 52 set in the midst of the glad appearances of the physical world, irresistibly directs our attention to Hetty's months of pregnancy and the consequent suffering. Nature's indifference is evident in the joyousness outside as in the slow, gradual, unrelenting process continuing its blind course inside Hetty. 53

49 *ibid.*, Ch.VII, p.234. 50 *Adam Bede*, Bk.I, Ch.I, p.40.
51 *ibid.*, Bk.IV, Ch.XXXV, p.350. 52 *ibid*.
George Eliot accepted the idea of the inexorable law of consequences, i.e., every cause in nature has its inevitable consequence, and adapted it to the idea that every act of man has its fruit. Fate in George Eliot is this law of consequences, and her protagonists are tragic in the sense that they struggle in vain against this law. Hetty had vainly hoped that something would happen to set her free from her terror. And now when she can wait no longer and takes her journey in despair, the slow pace of her journey underscores her misery in the face of an almost unending space: "She had come only this little way, and yet felt tired and almost hungry again in the keen morning air." While she continues her journey counting miles, nature appears to assume proportions of a living character who is inclined to torture her. Hetty walks on wearily and a new trouble in the form of rain besets her. As the pace of her journey becomes slower and slower, the animal night of time continues its inaudible ticking and drags the whole pace down to that

54. Mansell, Jr., op. cit., p. 155; cf., "Tragedy consists of the terrible difficulty of
The dire strife
Of poor Humanity's afflicted will
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny.
"Notes on the Spanish Gypsy and the Tragedy in General" in Cross, op. cit., 11, 205.

55. Adam Bede, Bk. V, Ch. XXXVI, p. 357.
of Hetty's 'journey in despair'. Nature's indifference to human suffering is also seen in the instinct for survival. Driven to hopelessness, Hetty attempts suicide. But the instinct for survival refuses her this escape. There is no escape from the hidden dread of the inevitable consequences, which grows in magnitude out of the consciousness that life and death are both dreadful. As Hetty finds in the morning light, life "was as full of dread as death; - it was worse; it was a dread to which she felt chained, from which she shrank and shrank as she did from the black pool, and yet could find no refuge from it."  

It may be noted here that George Eliot's concern with the law of consequences and its application to the individual's conduct in society has led her to develop Hetty's tragedy to a point that disturbs her role in the novel. George Eliot adapted Spencer's idea of the moral discipline of the child to that of man's conduct in society. Spencer recommended that the penalty for any transgression of a moral law should be like that of inanimate nature - inevitable. Similarly,

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56 Van Ghent, op.cit., p.179.  
57 Adam Bede, bk.v, Ch.XXXVII, pp.370-1.  
58 ibid., p.373.  
the transgression of a law of society in George Eliot has its inevitable consequence. Hetty's suffering is presented as a result of the operation of this law.

The non-moral order of the cosmic process is presented in *The Mill on the Floss* through the tragic situation in which Maggie and Philip Wakem find themselves placed in relation to the unresponsive social environment. Philip's "sense of a lot irremediably hard" and Maggie's consciousness that "it was part of the hardship of her life that there was laid upon her the burden of larger wants than others seemed to feel" are suggestive of the deterministic order of the universe. The tragic tone of this novel is set by the ironic nostalgia of the first chapter. The contrast between the human situation and nature is the reality to which one has to wake from the illusory subjective dreamworld of harmony between man and nature. Elizabeth Drew seems to have missed the real purpose of the first chapter when she observes: "The opening paragraph of the book evokes a picture of the harmony between nature and the works of man." It is no doubt a picture of harmony but the emphasis is on the fact that the author has been thinking of this harmony

\[\text{\textsuperscript{61}The Mill on the Floss, Bk.II, Ch.VI, p.210; Bk.IV, Ch.III, p.320.}\]

in a dream. When the story of the Tullivers is told, we become conscious of the unreality of the author's dream of harmony, and, instead, we see pictures of "ruined villages which stud the banks of Rhone in certain parts of its course, telling how the swift river once rose like an angry destroying god, sweeping down the feeble generations...and making their dwellings a desolation." 63

The idea of the hostile and unsympathetic nature is extended to the social organism which performs the task of destroying the individual with utter disregard to his emotional nature. The society of St. Ogg's is placed on the level of nature itself. 64 It is a characteristic of the animal world that the stronger destroys the weaker without any regard to the feeling and suffering of the latter. In this relationship of the weaker and the stronger there is no place for human justice. Tom's indifference to Maggie's feelings is projected in his "hitting a superannuated blue-bottle which was exposing its imbecility in the spring sunshine, clearly against the views of Nature, who had provided Tom and the peas for the speedy destruction of this

63 The Mill on the Floss, Bk.IV, Ch.I, p.301.
64 Ibid., Bk.I, Ch.XII, p.139. This aspect of the novel is discussed later on pp.172-3.
weak individual."  

Nature shows the same lack of sympathy and justice in the distribution of her bounties. The old Christmas lights up a smile in the already comfortable homes but he lays a cruel-seeming spell on the outdoor world. His kindness beams on the happy homes "but hardly on the homes where the hearth was not very warm, and where the food had little fragrance, where the human faces had little sunshine on them... ."  

The fine old season may mean well, but it has not learnt the secret of human justice. It is rather more cruel to those who are already miserable. Under the pressure of his unbearable misfortune, Mr. Tulliver has lost his memory. His recovery has been very slow. All the articles of his household had been auctioned while he had been laid an invalid in the upper room of his house. After his recovery he decides to come down on a clear January day thinking that he will feel more cheerful under the sunshine. But when he comes down, the flood of sunshine shows him "the empty places and the marks where well-known objects once had been." It seems as if nature has an "unfeeling pleasure" in forcing the reality on him.  

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66 *ibid.*, Bk.II, Ch.II, p.178.  
67 *ibid.*, Bk.III, Ch.VIII, p.285.
The non-moral order of nature is reflected in the "deficiency in the scheme of things."\textsuperscript{58} There is no provision in nature's scheme by which the consequences of an act can be so regulated as to make the doer share the burden of his action in proportion to his responsibility for the consequences of the act.\textsuperscript{69} In Adam Bede Arthur Donnithorne has a tendency towards "getting myself into a hobble," which leads Hetty, Adam and the Poyters into a crisis. Here there is no proportional relation between Arthur's offence and his suffering. Although he is the prime offender, the consequent load of suffering falls much more on the shoulders of Hetty, Adam and the Poyters than on Arthur's.

George Eliot adopted Mill's position that it is absurd to expect common human morality from nature. The difference between one's physical appearance and his moral sensibility shows that there is no necessary connection between nature and human morals. The perception of moral qualities in the 'physiognomy' of an individual may be the result of the limited subjective vision of the perceiver. It can be deceptive and may lead to wrong conclusions. Two individuals can have physical resemblance but there need not necessarily be a resemblance in their moral character. One can inherit the physical qualities of the parents without inheriting

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Adam Bede}, bk. \textit{i}, ch. \textit{xii}, p. 121. \textsuperscript{69} \textit{ibid.}, ch. \textit{v}, p. 94.
their moral character. That there is no evidence of a moral order in the appearances of nature is emphasised in *Adam Bede* by the presentation of the fact that there is no correlation between eyelashes and morals.\(^70\) Nature has no doubt a language of her own; but our reading of the intricacies of her syntax can be misleading, if we try to impose on it a meaning from our own subjective perception, that is, if we do not see things objectively.\(^71\) *Adam Bede* falls in love with Hetty because he thinks that her character is as much beautiful as her physical appearance. He feels that by knowing about her external beauty, he can as well find a corresponding beauty in her character. To him his bride's character is written out in "those exquisite lines of cheek and lip and chin, in those eyelids delicate as petals, in those long lashes curled like the stamen of a flower, in the dark liquid depths of those wonderful eyes" of Hetty.\(^72\) How illusory and false has been his image of Hetty's character can be seen in the comments of the author and in the observations of other characters. George Eliot writes that "it would be the easiest folly to fall in love with Hetty."\(^73\) Seth Bede is anxious about Adam's infatuation

\(^70\) *ibid.*, Ch.XV., p.149.  \(^71\) *ibid.*, pp.149-50.  
\(^72\) *ibid.*  \(^73\) *ibid.*, p.148.
and is unable to make out as to how Adam has fallen in love
with Hetty. The vain, selfish, hard and superficial
aspects of her character are easily seen by those who have
an objective perception of her 'airs'. Dinah's sympathy for
Hetty is a result of the knowledge of the emptiness of Hetty's
soul. Mr. Irvine wants Arthur not to puff Hetty's heart
with vain hopes and remarks that "the little puss seems
already to have airs enough to make a husband as miserable
as it's law of nature for a quiet man to be when he marries
a beauty." Lisbeth Bade complains to Seth against Adam's
having "set's heart on that bit of a wench as is o' no more
use nor the gillyflower on the wall." 

It is Adam alone who is deceived about Hetty's
character by his limited subjective vision. We know that,
while Adam has been creating bright visions of Hetty's
character in terms of her physical beauty, she has been
meeting Arthur in the woods. Her false air of innocence
has further deceived Adam in making him see her guileless.
Hetty is in fact conscious of the effect of her beauty on
her admirers. When Arthur visits the Poyser dairy, "Hetty
tossed and patted her pound of butter with quite a self-
possessed coquettish air, slily [sic] conscious that no turn

74 ibid., Ch.III, p.35. 75 ibid., Ch.IX, p.100.
75 ibid., Ch.IV, p.45.
of her head was lost." 77  Whenever Adam stayed away from the Hall farm because of other engagements or because of resistance to his passion, "Hetty took care to entice him back into the net by little airs of meekness and timidity..." 78 She is egoistic by nature and, without the least regard for the feelings of others, goes on deceiving them. Adam is beguiled by her charm and looks even at her ill humour with "a sort of amused pity." 79 Even after he has known of her meetings with Arthur, Adam refuses to see things objectively and be undeceived, and continues to attribute "all her weakness to the loving sweetness of her nature." 80

There is a wide gap between the subjective image of Hetty as conjured up by Adam and the objective image that comes up at the successive stages of the novel. Through the characters of Arthur and Hetty, George Eliot has expressed her belief that the appearances of nature are deceptive so far as moral values are concerned, and that there is no correspondence between the physical world of nature and the moral values of man. It led her to the sense of fear that the tragedy of human life is likely to continue as the appearances of nature tend to darken the moral vision of man and "the noblest nature is often the most blinded to

77 ibid., Ch.VII, p.82. 78 ibid., Ch.IX, p.97. 79 ibid., Bk.III, Ch.XXIII, p.254. 80 ibid., Bk.IV, Ch.XXY, p.312.
the character of the one woman's soul that the beauty clothes."\(^1\)

The non-moral order of nature is again reflected in her creations which show that the phenomena of nature are not governed by a particular end in view. For instance, we cannot read an invariable intention of nature in the physiognomy of an individual. It seems that nature is guided by her whims in creating the individuals. Sometimes it appears that an individual is created without a definite intention. For example, Tom in *The Mill on the Floss* "has a physiognomy in which it seems impossible to discern anything but the generic character of boyhood."\(^2\) At other times it may appear that nature creates an individual with a fixed end in view. For example, she seems "to have moulded and coloured Maggie's appearance with the most decided intention."\(^3\) One of the reasons for Mr. Tulliver's affection for Maggie is that she has taken after her father's family. The attachment between the Floss's and Maggie is due to her Tulliver appearance. Her relationship with her mother's sisters, who are Dodsons, is determined by the fact that she has not taken after the Dodsons. Her physical

\(^1\) *ibid.*, Bk.IV, Ch.XXXIII, p.341.


\(^3\) *ibid.*
appearance is a perpetual topic of criticism by them. They are always apprehensive that she would come to harm because she has no Dodson likeness. It may appear that a part of Maggie's destiny is related to her Tulliver appearance and the Dodson reaction to it. But it should be remembered that the Dodsons are satirically presented in the novel, and that their attitude is limited by their subjective vision. The Dodson attitude no doubt influences the destiny of Maggie, but it is all the same based on a false imposition of an intention on nature.

The appearances of nature are possibly more deceptive than we are ever conscious of. Nature does not care either for the good or for the evil of the individual:

"Nature herself occasionally quarters an inconvenient parasite on an animal towards whom she has otherwise no ill will." She raises expectations in the individual which can never be fulfilled. Maggie had seen a vision of a promising future in her early affection for Philip. But the "promise was void, like so many sweet, illusory promises made in Eden before the seasons were divided and when the starry blossoms grew side by side with the ripening peach - impossible to be fulfilled when the golden gates had been passed."

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George Eliot was influenced by the unromantic view of feelings as held by Spencer and Mill. Her distrust of impulse and its rejection as immoral is a conscious and logical extension of her scientific attitude to nature. Before discussing the treatment of impulse in her fiction it is necessary to note that George Eliot's use of the word 'feeling' is not very discriminate. Sometimes it is used in the sense of the noble and the virtuous as in Silas Marner, and sometimes it is condemned as immoral as in The Mill on the Floss. In Adam Bede the feelings of Arthur and Hetty are presented as immoral and those of Adam and Dinah as moral. It is not so because of an apparent contradiction but because of the shifting relation of the feelings to the morals. The feelings which George Eliot denounces are actually the selfish impulses and passions of the individuals, which do not have their root in the good of the society. The feelings and impulses at the animal level of humanity, arising from egoism, are immoral and destructive. But the feelings arising out of a sense of sympathy with human suffering have a moral sanction, for such feelings are the proper source of social goals. The fundamental difference in the two feelings is that one is self-centred and the other

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87 Mill, op.cit., p.46; Spencer, op.cit., p.33.
88 Maignt, op.cit., IV,364-5.
An assessment of the value of emotion and feeling in George Eliot can be misleading if the above distinction is not kept in mind. For instance, the following observation by Lerner calls for such a discrimination: "George Eliot values emotional surrender; yet there are times when she seems to condemn it." There is obviously a difference in the natures of Maggie's feelings for Philip and Stephen. Her feelings for the former are never felt to be wrong whereas her conscience is never at ease with her feelings for the latter.

Selfish feelings are immoral whether in personal or social relations. An impulsive act in George Eliot's view

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90 In the following observation feeling means sympathy: "At the heart of each of George Eliot's novels lies the conviction that the basis of morality, and hence the vital principle of all that is good in life, is strength of feeling." Thomas Pinney, "The Authority of the Past in George Eliot's Novels," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XXI (September, 1966), 134-5.

91 George Eliot held the view that a truly moral marriage should be "the free bond of love," "the voluntary, contented self-restriction of love" (Haight, op. cit., I, xlv). The same emphasis on the need of the moral basis of feelings is found in her letter to Mrs. Stowe (ibid., V, 31). George Eliot pleaded for the control of the selfish nature by moral consciousness: "The passion and the senses decompose... . The intellect by its analytic power restrains the fury with which they run their own destruction; the moral nature purifies, beautifies and at length transmutes them" (Cross, op. cit., I, 143).
is an expression of the primitive, animal nature of man. When we are driven by our impulses, we are often indifferent to the impact our actions produce on others. In our self-gratification we cease to see ourselves in relation to others.

George Eliot observes in Janet's Repentance:

There are moments when by some strange impulse we contradict our past selves - fatal moments, when a fit of passion, like a lava-stream, lays low the work of half our lives.92

It is in such a moment of anger against her husband's indifference and cruelty that Janet takes to drinking which blunts her moral feelings and leads her to indifference.93

Similarly, Arthur in Adam Bede fails to exercise control over his desire for pleasure. It makes him unconscious of the moral issues involved in his relationship with Hetty. He also becomes insensitive to the feelings and sufferings of others. In his perverted logic he finds justification for his act:

Hetty might have had trouble in some other way if not in this. And perhaps hereafter he might be able to do a great deal for her, and make up to her for all the tears she would shed about him. She would owe the advantage of his care for her in future years to the sorrows she had incurred now. So good comes out of evil. Such is the beautilful arrangement of things.94

93 ibid., Ch.XVIII.
94 Adam Bede, Bk.IV, Ch.XXIX, p.302.
The light in which George Eliot wants us to see these 'benevolent' sentiments of Arthur is explicit in the ironic tone of the last sentence. Arthur is in fact insensitive to Hetty's feelings. While returning from Ireland, he remembers his 'sweet' Hetty and exults over the favours he would be doing to her husband. But as to her feelings of separation from him, he thinks, "she would not have felt much." 95

The relationship of Hetty and Arthur is presented as immoral because it is impulsive in nature, and the animal nature of Hetty underscores this aspect of their relationship. In order to emphasise the vanity and selfishness in Hetty's nature, George Eliot describes her as resembling an animal or a bird - lamb, kitten, deer, butterfly, pigeon, peacock etc. 96 George Eliot's attitude towards the sexual relationship of Arthur and Hetty on the one hand, and of Adam and Dinah on the other is one of an awareness of contrast between the immoral and the moral. The relationship of Arthur and Hetty is based on the senses that decompose and that of Adam and Dinah on sympathy which purifies and beautifies the soul. Before the marriage bells of Adam and Dinah ring,

95 ibid., Bk.V, Ch.XLIV, p.422.

96 ibid., Bk.I, Ch.III, p.35; Ch.XV, pp.149,152; Ch.XIII, pp.132,134.
they have known the value of human suffering. It has rid Adam of his pride and made him recognise the value of humility. Dinah too has realised the importance of human feeling in relation to the religious life. She is purged of her passionate indulgence in suffering, which resembled Hetty's passion for pleasure. George Eliot observes, Adam's "love for Dinah was better and more precious than his love for Hetty to him; for it was the outgrowth of that fuller life which had come to him from his acquaintance with deep sorrow." Dinah appropriately feels that her marriage with Adam will be the fulfilment of the Divine Will. She has in a way discovered God out of human love.

If the contrast between the love of Arthur and Hetty and that of Adam and Dinah is kept in mind, it will not be difficult to see the superficiality of the following observation by Millar:

Two passages in George Eliot's Adam Bede, one for the bad lovers and one for the good, use the same image to express the ambiguity of the relation to nature of human sexual desire. Arthur and Hetty Sorrel 'mingle

97 ibid., bk. VI, Ch. LIV, p. 508. 98 ibid.

99 cf., "As God has renounced himself out of love, so we, out of love, should renounce God; for if we do not sacrifice God to love, we sacrifice love to God, and in spite of the predicate of love we have God - the evil being - of religious fanaticism." George Eliot's translation of Feuerbach's The Essence of Christianity (London, 1854), p. 52.
as easily as two brooklets that ask for nothing but to entwine themselves and ripple with ever-interlacing curves in the leafiest hiding places'. Adam Bede and Dinah Morris 'approach each other gradually like two little quivering rain streams, before they mingle into one'.

The images used by George Eliot are no doubt apparently the same; but the two different adverbs, 'easily' and 'gradually', that modify the verbs associated with the images suggest a distinction in their quality. There is a suggestion of spontaneity and lack of self-control in the image related to Arthur and Hetty. The other pair is associated with an image implying hesitation as suggested by 'quivering'. Hesitation results from consciousness which implies control. The first image therefore suggests the immoral nature of the sexual relationship of Arthur and Hetty, which is also implied in the 'leafiest hiding places'. The images are moreover respectively governed by the reference to Arthur and Hetty as 'unfurrowed souls' and to Adam and Dinah as 'human souls'.

The images are in fact essentially different and there is no ambiguity in the relation of human sexual desire to nature. The sexual desire in its natural primitive form is seen as

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100 J.H. Miller, Thomas Hardy (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), n.1, p.81. The quotations by Miller are from Adam Bede, Bk.I, Ch.XII, pp.129-30 and Bk.VI, Ch.L, p.473 respectively.

101 Adam Bede, Bk.I, Ch.XII, p.129; Bk.VI, Ch.L, p.473.
immoral, but it is moral when based on self-control and fellow-feeling.

In George Eliot's view the moral nature of man is the product of his consciousness of being related to the past and the society. This consciousness results from the gradual realisation that one's acts and thoughts can add to the misery or happiness of others. It is acquired by the individual in society and it is not an innate attribute of human nature. When the instincts find expression unaided by the moral consciousness, they often become selfish and egotistical. It is in this sense that George Eliot distrusted natural impulses. It is quite another matter that impulses can be moulded and shaped so that they can be used in the service of humanity. But in that case they no more remain natural impulses.

Egotism is a state of mind in which impulses find expression. In *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot has presented the impulse as immoral and egotistical mainly through Maggie. The animal aspect of her nature is underlined early in the novel. She is likened to a wild thing and a 'bedlam creature', and her hair 'won't curl'. She is 'a small mistake of nature' with 'the air of a small
pony'. Her behaviour approximates 'the mere impulsiveness of the lower animals'. Her 'unsatisfied intelligence and unsatisfied beseeching affection' are the consequences of her craving to create a self-reflexive picture of the world, which cuts her off from the reality. Although very early she realises the value of self-denial, her egotistic nature goes on raising its head. She bows to the will of Tom for the sake of her father in desisting to communicate with Philip. But she knows that she is not absolutely reconciled to the situation of self-denial: "There was more struggle for her - perhaps more falling."

The greatest challenge to Maggie's moral consciousness comes in the form of Stephen Guest. As she is suddenly attracted towards him, her desire for self-gratification is revived. Her resolution of self-renunciation is threatened by her selfish nature. Her conscience recoils from the mingled images of the self-created dreamworld, which appear desirable as the fulfilment of the self and also as evil because this fulfilment is in conflict with her duty. She thinks of Philip as a sort of outward conscience for rescue from her passion. She looks at her passion as wrong but

\[\text{References:}\]
finally fails to resist the temptation and succumbs to the impulse of the moment. She is thus borne along by the tide of her passion.

The river in this scene symbolises the immoral nature of the impulse which follows the path of least resistance. Although George Eliot did not believe that man has free will (in the sense of absolute uncaused volition), she did believe that the individual has the ability to choose the better over the worse. Maggie’s passivity is of the order of moral turpitude because in following the course of her impulse she fails to exercise her power to choose. It makes her unconscious of her duty to others. She brings sorrow "into the lives that were knit up with her by trust and love." In following the dictates of her passion she has violated a moral law, the law that arises from, and defines the individual’s duty to the community.

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106 ibid., Ch.XIII.

107 Paris, Experiments in Life, p.122; cf., "We are certain that, in case of our volitions, there is not [a] mysterious constraint. We know that we are not compelled, as by a magical spell, to obey any particular motive. We feel that if we wished to prove that we have the power of resisting the motive, we could do so... ." J.S. Mill, A System of Logic (London,1974), p.838.

108 The Mill on the Floss, Bk.VI, Ch.XIV, p.516.

109 cf., "She [Maggie] is aware that she has broken all the ties that had given meaning to duty, and had made herself an outlawed soul, having lost the relation to the community,
This moral law is not to be confused with the St. Ogg's and Dodson morality. Maggie's passion is presented as immoral not in relation to their sense of morality, for they are "guided in their moral judgement solely by general rules, thinking that these will lead them to justice by a ready-made patent method without the trouble of exerting patience, discrimination, impartiality." Their moral judgement is false and unenlightened. St. Ogg's has to learn the value of feelings that arise from growing insight and sympathy. Its conventions and views are narrow and rigidified. Like its inhabitants, this society is in a natural state, below the level of humanity. It "is one of those old old towns which impress one as a continuation and outgrowth of nature." The life of the Tullivers and Dodsons is "irradiated by no sublime principles, ...their moral notions, though held with strong tenacity, seem to have no standard which, as in Comte, provides moral guidance, she was left with no guide, but the wayward choice of her own soul." George Levine, "Intelligence as Deception: The Mill on the Floss," *PMLA*, LXXX (September, 1965), 406.

111 Auster, op.cit., p.177.
112 *The Mill on the Floss*, Bk.I, Ch.XII, p.139.
beyond hereditary custom." They fail to perceive the moral value of Maggie's struggle and renunciation. The ladies of St. Ugg's are blind to the value of sympathy:

They had their favourite attraction, called society, which served to make their consciences perfectly easy in doing what satisfied their own egoism.114

The moral law that George Eliot upholds is in fact not limited to the rigid social conventions. Morality to her is the evolution of the moral consciousness in which both the social goal and the individual's emotional aspirations are satisfied. Although she accepted the scientific view of the age, she did not ignore the needs of the spirit. She "tried to bring together two different views of life - scientific and emotional, one from outside and the other from within." The tension between the subjective and the objective, the sensuous and the moral, the emotional and the rational, the natural and the social claims on the individual, apparent in Adam Bede and The Mill on the Floss, finds a resolution in the discovery of 'religious humanism' of Silas Warner, without compromising the scientific view with the theological and metaphysical. The story of this novel reveals a different state of the author's mind from

113 ibid., Sk.IV, Ch.I, p.302. 114 ibid., Sk.VII, Ch.IV, p.553.
that of the earlier writings. The change is perceptible in George Eliot's treatment of nature as well. It is not because the idea of nature in the earlier writings has become invalid; it is because the physical world is now looked at from a different angle. It is the discovery of an order in nature over and above the law of consequences. The determinism of the scientific view of nature remains valid, but there is scope enough in it for the establishment of human values through 'willing to will strongly'.

There are some glimpses of the friendly and human aspects of the physical world in the earlier writings, which stand fully revealed in Silas Marner. For instance, in Janet's Repentance Mrs. Raynor has a feeling that there is no escape from the law of consequences; but in spite of the deterministic law life can be made meaningful through human love and suffering: "We reap what we sow, but Nature has love over and above that justice, and gives us shadow and blossom and fruit that spring from no planting of ours." In Mr. Gilfil's Love-story Caterina's new soul-awakening to Gilfil's love coalesces with the new life in nature.

116 cf., George Eliot's letter to John Blackwood (1861), "My reason for wishing to publish the story [Silas Marner] now, is, that I like my writings to appear in the order in which they are written, because they belong to successive mental phases." Cross, op.cit., II,35.

Music and nature's promising spring make her conscious of a meaning in life in the love of a fellow being. In *Adam Bede* Hetty, while going in search of Arthur, notices a small spaniel in front of a wagon. Although she cares little for animals, "now the new susceptibility that suffering had awakened in her caused this object to impress her strongly...she felt as if the helpless timid creature had some fellowship with her." Adam's suffering has been a kind of baptism in sympathy. The growth of the higher feeling in his love for Dinah has made him realise the value of dependence and trust in fellow beings. He has come to feel the need of somebody else than himself to make him see things right. He is now conscious of the poverty of his former life of pride and egotism. When in this state of mind he comes to see Dinah at Snowfield, "the scene looked less harsh in the soft October sunshine...it filled you with a new consciousness of the overarching sky...it had a milder, more soothing influence than usual, on this almost cloudless day. Adam's doubts and fears melted under this influence." In *The Mill on the Floss* Maggie has been thinking of the hard conditions of her life and realises that her miseries

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118 *ibid.* Ch.XX, p.29.
119 *Adam Bede*, Bk.I, Ch.XXXVI, p.353.
120 *ibid.*, Bk.VI, Ch.LIV, p.508.
were a result of her selfish desire for pleasure. It leads her to the vision of happiness "in taking her stand out of herself, and looking at her own life as an insignificant part of a divinely guided whole." At the end of the book we find her seeing and thinking more clearly by learning a new secret of human tenderness and suffering. This consciousness makes her see the purposefulness of life in its use for others. While the water in the Floss has been rising, she reflects, "O God, if my life is to be long, let me live to bless and comfort." In this discovery of meaning in life she has a new vision of nature. While "her whole soul was strained on that thought [of her mother, and her brother, alone there, beyond reach of help]," she welcomes "the widening gap of that dismal watery level - the gradual uplifting of the cloudy firmament - the slowly defining blackness of objects above that glassy dark," because it forces her thoughts away from herself to the others. The concluding remarks of the author suggest the role of human love and labour in co-operating with nature to

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121 *The Mill on the Floss*, Bk.IV, Ch.III, p.323.
122 *ibid.*, Bk.VII, Ch.V, p.564.
123 *cf.*, "[Maggie] is forced to these reflections by the power of Nature over the merely 'artificial'." Levine, op.cit., p.407.
ameliorate the harsh conditions of life: "Nature repairs her ravages — repairs them with her sunshine and human labour." 125

The vision of the renewed relationship between the individual and the cosmos, the self and the life, 126 man and nature appears only in flashes in the earlier fiction of George Eliot; but it becomes a continuing living experience in Silas Marner. The idea of a hostile non-moral external world is still accepted and presented through the sub-plot concerning Godfrey Cass, and the village society of Raveloe, and the early part of Silas' life. But the final picture is one of harmony between the individual soul and the cosmos through 'the human fellowship divine'. 127

Silas Marner is the story of alienation and reorientation. During his Lantern Yard days Silas was in perfect accord with the world and God. But his trust in man was weakened by the treachery of his friend. Silas is falsely

125 ibid., Conclusion, p.571 (my emphasis).

126 cf., "...I embrace thee, changeful Life, Far-sent, unchosen mate! Self and thou, no more at strife, Shall wed in hallowed state. Willing spousals now shall prove Life is justified by love.

Self and Life in The Legend of Jubal and Other Poems, p.275.

127 cf., "His [Silas Marner's] new religion...is a symbol of his sense of integration, of his oneness with himself, with nature, and with his fellow men." Thale, The Novels of George Eliot, p.62.
accused of committing theft, and when the lots declare him guilty, his faith in the justice of God is shaken. With the loss of trust in man and faith in God he loses the sense of value and meaning in life. With that despair in his soul Silas learns that his engagement with Sara is at an end. With this shock the last source of faith in life and in its meaning is cut off from him and his alienation is complete. He leaves the town both physically and symbolically.

Silas comes to the village of Raveloe where his life narrows "itself into a mere pulsation of desire and satisfaction that had no relation to any other thing." He withdraws from acts of charity "which might have been the beginning of his rescue from the insect-like existence into which his nature had shrunk." The spiritual paralysis of Silas is analogous to the spiritual barrenness and slothful life of the Raveloe community, which is emphasised by the naturalistic details of the village life. In Raveloe religion is confined to paying tithe and going to church. The rich, natural background suggests the ease and passivity in the spirit of the community:

Raveloe lay in the rich central plain of what we are pleased to call Merry England, and held farms which,
speaking from a spiritual point of view, paid highly desirable tithes... .130

The shabby interior of Squire Cass' home reflects the corresponding laxness in the way of the village life. The spiritual vacuum in the Raveloe life is further suggested by the want of integration between the Red House and Raveloe village.131

The contrast between the Raveloe way of life and the past life of Silas, "which had been filled with the movement, the mental activity and the close fellowship,"132 highlights his alienation from the community. The traditional suspicion of the weavers, who were regarded aliens by their neighbours, further contributes to his alienation. There is nothing in the Raveloe community that could draw Silas to the human fold.

The spiritual void created by the loss of faith and the alienness of the Raveloe community makes Silas withdraw further from the external world both of humanity and nature. He loses the sense of feeling a relationship with anything 'beyond' either in social or in spiritual terms. Thus, with all the purpose of life gone, he "clung with all the force

130 Silas Marner, Pt.I, Ch.1, p.8.
131 Auster, op.cit., p.182.
of his nature to his work and to his money; and like all objects to which a man devotes himself, they had fashioned him into correspondence with themselves." \[^{133}\]

The first signs of Silas' awakening to a sense of community come under the distress resulting out of the disappearance of his 'gold' when he tells the story of the robbery to the villagers and seeks their help. All previous communications between Silas and his Ravloe neighbours had been strictly confined to his trade. This is the first time that he seeks his neighbours' help beyond the needs of his trade; his thoughts have thus moved beyond his 'gold'. There is a corresponding change in the feelings of the villagers towards Silas. When he first tells his story to the inmates at the Rainbow, they take him to be a ghost. But as he completes the account of the theft, "the slight suspicion with which his hearers at first listened to him, gradually melted away before the convincing simplicity of his distress." \[^{134}\]

Significantly, Silas is now listened to as one belonging to the community, which suggests the beginning of his integration.

Silas' distress has awakened him to the need of neighbourly help and also to the sense of some mysterious

\[^{133}\text{ibid., Ch.V, p.84.}\]
\[^{134}\text{ibid., Ch.VII, p.115.}\]
agency for the restoration of his gold. It is in this state of hopefulness that he discovers the sleeping child by the side of the fire. And as he stretches his hand and becomes conscious of her presence, his first thoughts go back to the past. The vision of the old home, of the old street leading to Lantern Yard, is revived, and in that vision is revived the vision of his past religious life. Thus the religious and the human feelings coalesce in the sense of the mystery of the child's sudden presence. His feeling towards adjustment and integration is aroused. In his daily duties towards Eppie he discovers the need of more and more communion with his neighbours. She becomes the agent of his integration into the Raveloe community:

Silas began now to think of Raveloe life entirely in relation to Eppie: she must have everything that was a good in Raveloe; and he listened docily, that he might come to understand better what this life was, from which, for fifteen years, he had stood aloof as from a strange thing, wherewith he could have no communion: as some man who has a precious plant to which he would give a nurturing home in a new soil, thinks of the rain and the sunshine, and all influences, in relation to his nursling, and asks industriously for all knowledge that will help him satisfy the wants of the searching roots, or to guard leaf and bud from invading harm. 135

The integrated images here from the human and the natural worlds suggest the harmony between man and nature, towards which Silas is moving. By discovering a purpose in his life

135 *ibid.*, Ch. XV, p. 272.
for Eppie, he discovers a meaning in Providence, society and nature.

Like Michael's son, Eppie brings hope and forward-looking thoughts to Silas. And with his changed attitude to the community comes a corresponding change in the community's attitude towards him. The aroused benevolence of his neighbours corresponds with his own vivid attentiveness to the environment. His participation in the community life reflects its humanity and goodwill and also the gradual humanisation and assimilation of Silas into the community.

With his experiences of joy in the joys of Eppie, Silas' senses are reawakened to "the old winter-flies that came crawling forth in the early spring sunshine." A perfect harmony of man and nature is revealed in the conversation of Silas, Eppie and Aaron about the garden. Silas willingly responds to Eppie's wish to have a garden. The human aspect of the usefulness of nature is clear from the

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136 cf., "Eppie is the agent of making Silas learn reverence, piety for nature, and for the common details of life." Thale, The Novels of George Eliot, p.152; vide Bennett, op.cit., p.131.

137 cf., Silas Marner, The motto from Wordsworth's Michael. Here it may be noted that George Eliot's picture of the rustic life is not as flattering as Wordsworth's.

words of Aaron. Nature is pliant enough to the caressing hands of man. As Aaron says:

There's never a garden in all the parish but what there's endless waste in it for want of somebody as could use everything up. It's what I think myself sometimes, as there need nobody run short o' victuals if the land was made most on, and there was never a morsel but what could find its way to a mouth. It sets one thinking o' that - gardening does.139

Gardening here obviously symbolises the humanisation of nature and its usefulness to man. Thus the process of humanisation of Silas coincides with that of nature's humanisation. The beginning of Part II with a bright autumn day culminating in the spring wedding of Eppie and Aaron is suggestive of the fulfilment of the process of harmony between man and nature.

Implicit in this attainment of harmony and congeniality in society and in nature is a higher spiritual fulfilment. There is a sense of divine direction in the coincidence of the theft of Silas' gold and the appearance of the child. The first response of Silas to the child is associated with 'utter amazement', 'marvel' and 'blank wonderment'. At first he'd formed no conjecture of ordinary natural means by which the event could have been brought about."140

139 ibid., Pt.II, Ch.XVI, p.284.
140 ibid., Pt.I, Ch.XII, pp.230-1.
The fairy-tale quality of the novel co-ordinates its naturalism with a vaguely religious supernaturalism. Silas' awareness of the reality of the child's presence coincides with his consciousness of some Power presiding over his life. Thus his reorientation in nature and in society becomes also a reorientation in religion and God. But it should be remembered that George Eliot did not seek a spiritual value in religion and nature as independent of the moral value of human love and sympathy. Whatever meaning in nature and religion is discovered by Silas, it is a direct outcome of the sense of human love and sympathy.

A comparison with Charlotte Bronte may be appropriate here. Charlotte seeks a spiritual order in nature from a romantic belief that there is a transcendent moral order in the universe. It comes in conflict with her conventional sense of morality because she thinks alternately of the individual's relation to nature and to society. She has not been able to work out a common order of values in nature and society, which would simultaneously reconcile the individual to both nature and society. George Eliot too recognised the dichotomy between nature and society, but the spirit of science was too strong in her to let her seek

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142 vide above pp.78,100,105-7.
a self-sufficient spiritual and moral order in nature. As already pointed out, she rather emphasises the absence of such an order in nature. She is not concerned with the romantic search of spirituality in nature outside the frame of man's life in society. In her view the higher destiny of the individual is not limited to the self-fulfilment. The meaning in the individual's life derives from his relation to the society. The individual must sacrifice his self-love to the love of his fellow beings for the fulfilment of his higher destiny. In relating the individual to the society through sympathy George Eliot finds a common basis for the individual's relation to nature and society. By discovering the role of human feelings for others' happiness and his own emotional fulfilment the individual realises the need of the humanisation of nature for the social happiness. He is thus reconciled to the external worlds both of nature and society. In this respect George Eliot's view is nearer Meredith's inasmuch as she condemns egoism and recognises the need of the individual's relation to society on a humanistic basis. But George Eliot essentially differs from Meredith because, unlike him, she does not believe in a self-sufficient moral and spiritual order emanating from the individual and nature. She also 

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\[143\] Vide below pp. 207, 214.
does not share Meredith's idea of a religious system based on nature. She rather believes that man's relation to nature and religion should be based on his consciousness of the value of human love and sympathy.

In her later novels, from *Romola* onward, George Eliot continues to treat nature but with a comparatively different emphasis. In the novels of the first phase of her creative life, natural landscapes find much more prominent place than in the later novels. Nature in the physical sense is given very little place in her later fiction. For instance, in *Felix Holt* there is little natural description apart from the introductory chapter which is largely discursive and analytical. In *Daniel Deronda* physical background does not play a significant part, and in *Middlemarch* "what George Eliot surveys may be called a landscape of opinion, for it is not the natural landscape that is dominant here." In the later novels, it is the scientific concept of the deterministic order of universe that is more consciously

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144 Leavis, op.cit., p.60; Bennett, op.cit., p.138.
145 Auster, op.cit., p.55.
146 ibid., p.56.
and prominently treated.

George Eliot brought the idea of the deterministic order and the organic unity of nature to bear upon her vision of life. Like the life of the organism determined by its own nature and the environment in which it is placed, the life of man is seen as determined by his own nature and the society in which he is born. The individual and the society exercise influence upon each other. The life of the individual is a determined event to the extent that he inherits his nature from the past. His life is also determined by his relation to the society. And to the extent the society at a particular period of history is an event resulting from the interaction of the causes lying far back in the past it is by its nature a determined externality.

This deterministic world order does not in itself provide a basis for man's conduct in the society. But this deterministic order of the inner and the outer worlds, of the individual and the society also implies a dynamic

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148 cf., "The determinism most explicitly attacked in the works of George Eliot is not the determinism of physical science (as the letters would lead us to expect) but rather psychological determinism: the utilitarian principle that all human behaviour can ultimately be reduced to the pleasure principle." Ian Adam, "Character and Destiny in George Eliot's Fiction," "Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XX (September, 1965), 129."
relationship of the organism and the environment, of the individual and the society. As every cause in nature has its inevitable consequence, the actions of an individual affect his own life as well as the lives of others. His life is shaped by the actions and thoughts of other members of the society and by the state of the society at a particular period. Likewise, the actions and thoughts of the individual modify the lives of others and the state of the society itself. George Eliot, like the positivists of her time, discovered a place for the moral value in human life in this dynamic inter-connection of the social elements. The individual is no doubt committed without choice to a social life; but he is not only acted upon but also cannot help shaping the life of others. His sense of duty grows out of the consciousness of this connectedness of things.

The cosmic process is amoral because it is indifferent to the life of the social organism which in turn is indifferent to the organic life of the individual. The individual's selfish concern with his own organic life is part of the same amoral order. The disparity between his nature and the circumstances reflects the amorality of the cosmic process. A 'moral order' in society, which is deterministic,

149 Paris, Experiments in Life, p. 42; cf., "The progress of the world...can certainly never come at all save by the modified action of the individual beings who compose the world." Grosz, opfile., il, 392.
is part of the amoral cosmic process. But this 'moral order' is also in opposition to the amoral cosmic process because it checks the immoral impulses of the individual. The individual's awareness of the connectedness of things leads to the realisation of the significance of his actions for others, which gives a sense of worth to his own life. In this feeling of the significance of his life for others lies the basis of moral action, i.e., actions done not with a view to their consequences on one's own life but also on the life of others.

George Eliot uses the river symbolism in the "Proem" of Romola to suggest the deterministic order of the cosmic process. The broad sameness of the individual lot and the landscape over the centuries suggests the invariability of this process:

The great river-courses which have shaped the lives of men have hardly changed; and those other streams, the life currents that ebb and flow in human hearts, pulsate to the same great needs, the same great love and terrors. As our thought flows close in the slow wake of the dawn, we are impressed with the broad sameness of the human lot, which never alters in the main headings of its history - hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest, love and death.

The river symbolism also suggests the complex relation of the individual organism to its life process. The organs (the streams) of the river are parts of the cosmic organism

\[\text{Paris, loc.cit.} \quad \text{Romola (Edinburgh, 1912), p.2.}\]
(river-courses). But these organs are also organisms with their own individuality and are capable of conscious voluntary actions (ebbing and flowing).

Romola presents a picture of Florence at the end of the fifteenth century in which the individual life is bound with the larger social life. Through the contrasted development of the characters of Tito Malema and Romola, George Eliot presents the immorality of the selfish impulses and actions of Tito, and the moral nature of those actions and thoughts of Romola which reflect her awareness of the value of sympathy. Tito's actions are motivated by his concern with his own fate. He is primarily engrossed with his actions as they affect his own life but is indifferent to their consequences on others. By disclaiming his foster-father, Tito turns his back on his duty towards his benefactor, which is the result of following his own wishes. He finds justification for his conduct in the thought that the end of life is to extract the utmost sum of pleasure. In thus following what he calls "the order of nature", Tito fails to recognise the value of the "moral law restraining desire" in the social life of the individual. In his attempts to escape the consequences of his initial action, he is led from base to baser actions.

152 Ibid., Ch.IX, pp.153-4. 153 Ibid., Ch.XI, pp.175,177.
In contrast to Tito, Romola discovers a purpose in life through her works of womanly sympathy for the suffering people of Florence. She finds a higher fulfilment of life in the "enthusiasm of sympathy with the general life" than what she had found in "the woman's tenderness for father and husband."\textsuperscript{154} The more she comes to know of human suffering the more she becomes conscious of "the drama of human existence in which her life was a part." Self-denial becomes the means of the fulfilment of her emotional need.\textsuperscript{155} Instead of preoccupation with her own happiness, assuaging the sufferings of others becomes the goal of her life. When she is faced with the burden of a choice between her unhappy life with Tito and death, she leaves herself 'adrift'\textsuperscript{156} in a boat on the waters of the Mediterranean. After the execution of her uncle, "the vision of any great purpose and end of existence which could ennoble and exalt the common deeds of a dusty life with divine orders, was utterly eclipsed for her now by the sense of a confusion in human things which made all effort a mere dragging at tangled threads... ."\textsuperscript{157}

\textsuperscript{154}ibid., Bk.III, Ch.XLIV, p.591. \textsuperscript{155}ibid., p.592.

\textsuperscript{156}cf., "By 'drift' we mean that George Eliot sees certain characters as degenerating not so much through positive and malicious action as through non-resistance to the current taking them down the course of least resistance." Thales, "River Imagery in Daniel Deronda," p.300.

\textsuperscript{157}Romola, Bk.III, Ch.LXI, p.765.
This relapse into moral turpitude and passivity is a result of her impulse to set herself free from her obligations to the society. In shirking from facing the consequences of her marriage with Tito, she is succumbing to the egoistic impulse in which the purpose of life is limited to the self. The drift imagery in this chapter (Romola, Ch. LXI) suggests the amoral nature of her passivity in not resisting her impulse to escape the burden of choice. Like Maggie in The Mill on the Floss, Romola has severed the bond of relatedness to the society. It leads her to the sense of alienation from the external world. In this passive state of mind she finds that the 'Great Mother, Nature' can offer no milk 'to still' the thirst of human sympathy in which the self finds emotional orientation. Nature does not offer satisfaction to the moral desires of her soul:

Romola felt orphaned in those wide spaces of sea and sky, she read no message of love for her in that far-off symbolic writing of the heavens... 158

Like the poet In a London Drawing-Room, Romola tries to create a self-reflexive picture of the world which is unresponsive. 159

158 ibid., p.770.

159 cf., "'In a London Drawing-Room' presents an experience of the world as wholly alien and unresponsive to consciousness - consciousness is utterly alone, thrust back upon itself by the disparity between it and its external medium," Paris, "George Eliot's Unpublished Poetry," p.549.
Hence her vision of a world (nature) in which, she feels, her life has no meaning.

The sense of reorientation and rehabilitation is established through Romola's active sympathy with the suffering humanity. After waking in the boat, she finds herself near a pestilence-stricken village. In the midst of this suffering, she realises that "it was mere baseness in me to desire death. If everything else is doubtful, this suffering that I can help is certain; if the glory of the cross is an illusion, the sorrow is only the truer." In tending the sick and helping them she discovers the significance of her life, which in turn satisfies her need of higher spiritual experience. Thus in the character of Romola, George Eliot has presented a reconciliation of realism and moralism, for suffering is the reality and sympathy is the morality.

In the first chapter of *Felix Holt, The Radical*, George Eliot uses the landscape to show that society is an organism undergoing the process of evolution. The contrasted pictures of the old rural England and the new industrial England reflect the continuity of actions and reactions going on in the life of the society. The state of the old rural England is, on the one hand, a part of the traditions evolved in its past history, and on the other, it cannot remain unmodified.

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by the changes taking place in the wake of the industrialisation. The two aspects of the rural landscape, one determined by the past and the other being reshaped by the present, reflect the determined state of the society and also the dynamic process it is passing through, which can be illustrated by the following descriptions:

Suppose only that his [a traveller's] journey took him through that central plain watered at one extremity by the Avon, at the other by the Trent. As the morning silvered the meadows with their long lines of bushy willows marking the water courses, or burnished the golden corn-ricks clustered near the lawn roofs of some midland homestead, he saw the full-uddered cows driven from their pasture to the early milking. Perhaps it was the shepherd, the head-servant of the farm, who drove them... his solar system was the parish... . He cut his bread and bacon with his pocket-knife... .

and

The breath of the manufacturing town, which made a cloudy day and a red gloom by night on the horizon, diffused itself over all the surrounding country, filling the air with eager unrest... .161

Similarly, the fate of the characters in the novel is influenced by their relation to the society:

The social changes in Treby parish are comparatively public matters... but there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life.162

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161 Felix Holt (Edinburgh, 1910), Introduction, pp. 2-3 and 6-7.
162 ibid., Ch. III, p. 72,
Mrs. Transome's unhappiness and disappointments are the consequences of her past actions and of the reactions of others. Her disappointment in her son, Felix, is a result of her nature which has not enlarged itself into a "power of living in the experience of another." Her life is also conditioned by the reactions of Felix and Jarmyn, whose own reactions are determined by their own natures and by the lives of others related to them. Similarly, Esther's life is influenced by her own choice and by the influence of others on her character. But the difference in the significance Mrs. Transome and Esther attach to their actions makes the difference in their destiny. Mrs. Transome is indifferent to the feelings of others produced by her actions. Esther, on the contrary, has learnt from Felix the importance of her actions not only in relation to herself but also to others. The choice that she makes between the poor, hard life with Felix and the comfort and ease of Transome Court is a result of her consciousness that the consequences of her actions are not limited to herself.

*Middlemarch* also presents a study of the complex relationship of the individual and his social environment. In a review of the novel Henry James observed, "*Middlemarch*

163 ibid., Ch. I, p. 32.
is too often an echo of Messrs Darwin and Huxley." But it is very important to note that George Eliot is not concerned merely with the presentation of the adaptability of the individual to the society and its influence on him but also with the moral question as to how a meaningful relationship can be developed without ignoring the realities of life.

The individuals in Middlemarch are presented as 'egoes' at different stages of development in terms of moral consciousness. Their life is determined by their relation to the environment, and the indifference of the social order is reflected in the limitations that the circumstances impose on their aspirations. These limitations stem from three sources, namely, the inevitable consequences of the actions of the individual, his relation to other individuals, and the 'givenness' of the external world, that is, the society. Dorothea has a passionate desire to do something good and kind to her fellow beings. Lydgate has a high ideal of achieving great results in the field of medical science by modern scientific methods. The fulfilment of their ideals is conditioned by the social conventions and prejudices. It is also limited by the choice they make. Dorothea

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165 Bennett, op.cit., pp.164-5.
chooses Casaubon as her husband and suffers a "moral imprison-
ment which made itself one with the chill, colourless,
narrowed landscape, with the shrunken furniture..."156
Her hungry soul creates a vision of the ideal character in
him, in which she feels her ego will find fulfilment. Within
a short period of her married life, she discovers that he is
completely insensitive to her feelings. Her 'tomb-like
life'167 with Casaubon is a result of his reaction to her
and to Ladislaw's presence near her. Her choice of Casaubon
and her feeling for Ladislaw are her own. Like her, Lydgate's
life is affected by his marriage to Rosamond and by the social
prejudices, the professional opposition and the limited
opportunity in Middlemarch. The contact with Bulstrode has
a blighting effect on Lydgate's character and career. But
the public and private life of Lydgate is also determined
by his marriage which leads him into debt, compels him to
accept monetary obligations from Bulstrode. As the past
deeds of Bulstrode come to light, they affect the course
of his own life and of those connected with him.

This picture of the individual in society is similar
to the organism in nature adapting to the given environment.
It reflects the scientific picture of the universe in which

156 Middlemarch (Edinburgh, 1918), Vol. I, Ch. XXIII, pp. 419-20.
167 ibid., Vol. II, Ch. XLIII, p. 69.
ethical considerations have no place for the determination of the individual's conduct. But the conflicting interaction of organisms in a given environment in which the givenness of the environment is all important is only one side of the contemporary idea of the development of nature. This aspect was mainly emphasised in the Darwinian theory of the struggle for existence. The other side is that there is also scope for the co-operation of the organisms by which they can create their own environment. The moral value of the actions of an organism is implied in the fact that the environment has a plasticity to the co-operative effort of the organisms. The modification of the environment being the common goal of the organisms the scope of conflict between them is minimised.

The value of an individual's life in Middlemarch is shown through his actions and thoughts by which he tries to mitigate the sufferings of others. Through Dorothea's efforts and sympathy, a hostile, humiliating Middlemarch comes to see Lydgate's life and character in a more human and favourable light. Lydgate and Rosamond become sympathetic towards one another. Farebrother's active sympathy adds much to the happiness of Lydgate, Fred Vincy and Mary Garth. Besides, these sympathetic actions also fulfil the emotional

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need of the individual by making him conscious of his worth. The thought of this emotional satisfaction changes the aspect of the indifferent external world into a calm and benign one. Dorothea has convinced Farebrother in her "justifying explanation of Lydgate's conduct." She now decides to cheer the loneliness of Rosamond with this good news:

'I shall talk to her [Rosamond] about her husband,' thought Dorothea, as she was being driven towards the town. The clear spring morning, the scent of the moist earth, the fresh leaves just showing their creased-up wealth of greenery from out their half-opened sheaths, seemed part of the cheerfulness she was feeling from a long conversation with Mr. Farebrother, who had joyfully accepted the justifying explanation of Lydgate's conduct. 169

Thus through Dorothea's character George Eliot shows the significance of the minor acts of kindness in lessening the hardship of others' lives.

In *Daniel Deronda* the theme of the immorality of the egoistic impulses is presented through the character of Gwendolen Harleth. Like Rosamond in *Middlemarch*, she gives sole importance to her pleasures. She feels the outer world in conflict with her egoistic life and is irritated by the restraints of the social forms on the pursuits of her pleasures. It makes her feel that "the world was not equal to the demands of her fine organism." Her love for Grandcourt is directed

by her feeling that by marrying him she will get "the power of doing a great deal of what she liked to do." She accepts him because it will save her from the hard and unpleasant life of a governess. She knows about the relationship of Grandcourt and Mrs. Glasher and is also conscious of the harm she would be doing to the latter by marrying him. She finds justification of her action in the thought that even if she were not to marry Grandcourt, things would not be better for Mrs. Glasher. Gwendolen takes life like a gambler and holds that it is in the order of things that one's gain is another's loss. She fails to see that her action can be adjusted to reduce the conflict of interests. She has not learnt the value of "looking on other lives beside her own," because her vision of the consequences of her action is limited. When she finds out that her marriage has not been the realisation of her vision of personal power and happiness, she desires liberation from the bond of marriage. This desire takes the form of 'willing' the death of her husband. The evil desire becomes momentous and works itself out in the form of her complicity in Grandcourt's death. When he is drowning and cries for help,


171 ibid., Ch. XXIX, p. 504.

172 ibid., Vol. II, Ch. XXXVI, p. 70.
she remains a passive spectator. After she becomes conscious of the result of her desire, the dying face of Grandcourt becomes a perpetual remorse to her. In her suffering she discovers the value of sympathy, and her moral recovery begins with the growing feeling of kindness for others.

The other story, concerned with Deronda and his Jewish parentage, presents the theory of the inheritance of the racial experience. George Eliot was influenced by Lewes and Spencer, who attributed "man's apparently innate moral sentiments to the biological transmission of the structural modification produced in organisms by their experience." In other words, the organism inherits the moral sentiments of the race along with its biological character. This theory does not take into account the fact that the moral development of man is not coincident with the biological evolution. Biological changes, produced by the experience of the race, are automatically transmitted from one generation to the other and the inheritance of these structural changes is of an unconscious nature. The organism has no choice and hence no responsibility in the inheritance of biological qualities. Moral sentiments of an individual are not part of this biological process and are not automatically transmitted from one generation to the other. Because, if such were the case,
moral sentiments should come to us as naturally as other natural desires do.

The idea of the inheritance of the racial experience in moral sense is contradictory to George Eliot's more widely and strongly held belief that "we are born in moral stupidity," and that human consciousness is the source of man's moral conduct. That is why the characters in her earlier novels are not presented as morally perfect. They have to learn the value of moral sentiments from their life in society.

Daniel Deronda is the only major character in George Eliot's fiction who is 'cut in marble' and is something 'solid and unalterable'. He is Gwendolen's moral guide, is himself free from any egoistic desires and is always expecting a high spiritual destiny for himself. He is in no danger of falling in love with Gwendolen because "his history had given him a stronger bias in another direction. He felt himself in no sense free." This stronger bias turns out to be Judaism, which he appears to have inherited in his blood. He rescues Mirah from drowning herself in the

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175 ibid., Vol.II, Ch.LXXII, p.456.
river and is instinctively impressed by her Hebrew song of which he does not know a word. Mordecai's spiritual rhapsodies have a strange influence on him. Deronda, without any obvious reason, feels that Mordecai is "a preternatural guide", a "manifest Power".\(^{177}\) When Deronda learns of his Jewish parentage, he exults over it as if "an inherited yearning"\(^ {178}\) has been satisfied. The identification with his Jewish destiny comes naturally to him.

The river imagery in this novel suggests that the life-history of Judaism is like a river on which the lives of the individuals converge as do the currents of the river. The river is associated with the first meeting of Deronda and Mirah. It is again on the river that Deronda appears as the living image of his ideas to Mordecai. They are fascinated by the beauty surrounding the waters of the river. The image of Deronda as one who "would take the sacred inheritance of our race" is as much potent in Mordecai's mind as that of the river for which "he yearned with a poet's yearning."\(^ {179}\) Deronda's life becomes a current of the river of Judaism as has been the case with Mordecai and as it was with Deronda's grandfather.

\(^{177}\) ibid., Vol.II, Ch.XL, p.142.
\(^{178}\) ibid., Ch.LXIII, p.533.
\(^{179}\) ibid., Ch.XXXVIII, pp.120-1.
Unlike Gwendolen who learns the moral value of her life and discovers the source of social goal in human feelings, Deronda has only to learn of his Jewish parentage which in itself becomes the determining factor of his destiny. So far as the moral and spiritual sentiments are concerned, Deronda has nothing to learn; he has inherited them. If this idea of spiritual inheritance is carried to its logical end, it will appear that the concept of determinism in nature extends to that of moral determinism. If the sense of moral values is inherited, the individual cannot be held responsible for the morality or otherwise of his feelings. This rules out the possibility of the moral significance of an individual's actions. And it has been seen that George Eliot was passionately occupied with the thought of the moral value of actions resulting from the conscious choice made by the individual. Deronda, like Mordecai, remains an idea and is not realised as a character. What Constantanius says about the entire novel is particularly applicable to the theme of the Jewish inheritance: "Instead of feeling life itself, it is views upon life that George Eliot tries to feel."

Thus it is seen that George Eliot's attitude to nature affected her vision of life. The absence of spiritualism (in the metaphysical and theological sense) in her fiction

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is mostly due to her scientific view of nature. The drama of human life is presented in terms of the deterministic order in nature, and the individual and society are only human variants of the organism and the environment in nature. Her characters are constantly seen in their organic relationship to the society in which they live and have their being. The concept of the law of consequences in nature is extended to the actions and thoughts of her characters in society. The connectedness of things in nature is reflected in George Eliot's "habit of imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself."181 Her search for a moral basis of human conduct in society stems from the acceptance of the non-moral order of nature. Related to the recognition of the non-moral natural order is the rejection of romantic naturalism and the purity of impulse.

Besides affecting George Eliot's vision of life, the scientific concept of nature also influenced the treatment of her characters and stories. She held the view that "in art as in nature no species stands in isolation."182 That her most interesting characters are not morally perfect is because she presents them in the process of development.

181 Cross, op.cit., II,97.
Likewise, her stories grow like plants. Different parts of her story are connected like different organs of an organism, and "the composition of causes is consistently operative in George Eliot's plots." 

George Eliot is said to be an intellectual writer because she wrote her novels not out of "a wish to convey her impressions of life but her judgements on it." In this sense her treatment of nature can be taken to be intellectual. She treats nature not as she felt about it but as she thought about it. It explains the absence of the 'subjectivist' approach to nature. It is also responsible for the diminishing landscape in her novels. Charlotte and Emily Brontë and Mrs. Gaskell see nature as they personally, in their different ways, wished it to be. George Eliot, on the contrary, treats nature as an objective reality not as a subjective experience. Although she was highly sensitive to the beauty of nature, she exercised an intellectual control on her sensitivity. In her novels the romantic nostalgia for nature is replaced by scientific realism and Romantic naturalism has given way to religious humanism.

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183 Bennett, op. cit., p. 77.