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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Andrew Ragsdale Lallier entitled "Writing Duty: Religion, Obligation and Autonomy in George Eliot and Kant." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Allen Dunn, Major Professor

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Writing Duty:
Religion, Obligation and Autonomy in George Eliot and Kant

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Andrew Ragsdale Lallier
August 2011

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I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Allison Miller, whose love and sympathy possess for me an incalculable value, and to my parents, Charles Wesley Lallier and Rebecca Anne Ragsdale Lallier, whose support and encouragement have always been there for me.

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ABSTRACT

Connections between George Eliot and Immanuel Kant have been, for the most part, neglected. However, we have good reason to believe that Eliot not only read Kant (as well as many who were directly influenced by Kant), but substantially agreed with him on critical and moral issues. This thesis investigates one of the issues on which Kant and Eliot were most closely aligned, the need for duty in morality. Both the English novelist and the German philosopher upheld a vision of duty that could command absolutely while remaining consonant with human freedom and grounding a sense of moral dignity. This vision runs throughout the works of both writers, but is first developed and takes on a particular urgency in the works examined in this thesis, ranging from some of their early publications to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and Eliot's *Romola*.

The first chapter discusses duty in the wider context of debates about Divine Command Morality, in which the good is defined by its accord with the will or command of God, and which both Kant and Eliot resisted in formulating their own moral visions (while maintaining the language of law and command). This chapter also discusses evidence we have for Eliot's familiarity with Kant and establishes critical context for this paper. The second chapter discusses religion – in particular, religious enthusiasm – as a necessary background for duty, which exists in the absence of theological certitude, even as it seeks to preserve something of religion's capacity to command and its popular scope. Kant's path to the first *Critique* led through works foundational for, but also sometimes at odds with, the priorities and conclusions of critical science, and Eliot's first novel was preceded by a critical career that paints a quite different picture of religion than the sympathetic portrait of Dinah Morris. The third chapter deals with three dimensions of duty in Kant and Eliot, autonomy, reflection and respect, primarily through the second *Critique* and *The Mill on the Floss*. In the conclusion, I turn to *Romola* to illustrate the conflict and indeterminative power inherent in this conception of duty.

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Chapter 1: Command and Context

Duty and Divine Command Morality

Late into the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Immanuel Kant declares "All of my reason's interest (speculative as well as practical) is united the following three questions: 1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope?" (735). The focus of this thesis falls primarily on the second question, which is as much a statement about duty as a question concerning duty; i.e., both George Eliot and Kant presume that we do possess compelling moral obligations (there is something which I ought to do). The mentality which seeks after what one ought to do, knowing that such responsibility exists, already manifests a consciousness of duty, provided such a mentality neither submerges choice in submission to inclination, nor assumes the answer to be given in an arbitrary and external code. Kant's interrogative formulation and union of his three questions in a common interest should not be overlooked – duty, for both Eliot and Kant, is something requiring investigation (philosophical and literary), and questions about duty cannot be wholly separated from questions of knowledge and expectation. As Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* explores the nature and implications of moral duty, Eliot's novels frequently take on duty as a central thematic and site for conflict and drama. These philosophical and literary investigations arise, in part, from the conclusions and developments of critical works preceding them, which destabilize prior religious certitudes even as they seek to maintain a space for meaningful morality.

In an aphorism entitled "George Eliot" in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes "In England, one must rehabilitate oneself after every little emancipation from theology by showing in a veritably awe-inspiring manner what a moral fanatic one is" (*The Portable Nietzsche* 515, qtd. in Anger 92). In the same work, Nietzsche parenthetically identifies Kant as "a *crafty*

Christian, when all's said and done" (*The Nietzsche Reader* 464). Despite the apparent opposition between fanaticism and craft, one registers a similar sort of complaint being brought against both the English novelist and German philosopher: that the promise of liberation from theology incurs only a greater subjection to Christian morality. Nietzsche is anything but alone in this complaint – Kant had already been attacked on this account by Goethe, and Eliot's fall from favor in the early twentieth century was due in no small part to a moral seriousness that could come off as didacticism (Levine, "Introduction," 1). Yet Nietzsche is indebted to a critical legacy running from Kant, through figures like Strauss and Feuerbach, to Eliot, their English translator – a legacy which surely played no small part in generating the intellectual climate in which Zarathustra could be surprised that the saint in the forest had not yet heard that God is dead.

Distancing ourselves somewhat from Nietzsche's hostility, we can nonetheless affirm that religion forms a necessary background for understanding duty in George Eliot and Kant, and a background with which each writer has a complex relationship. Moreover, the terms Nietzsche employs get directly at the complexity of this relationship: both Eliot and Kant write in opposition to enthusiasm or fanaticism, yet both hold that there is something in morality which should inspire our awe. Likewise, rationality (satirized by Nietzsche as craft, and thus more the craft of Socrates than that of Odysseus) seems like a necessary component of morality – Eliot insists on the need for "intellect" to regulate "feeling," as a means of correcting the evangelical excesses of Dr. Cumming, and Kant identifies practical reason and morality. Yet the prospect of a morality only accessible to (or practicable by) those with highly developed rationality seems at odds with the scope of moral imperatives, and both writers defend the rights of a sort of popular interest in formulating duty: Kant argues that practical reason is grounded in an immediate and

universal moral awareness, and Eliot famously articulates her defense of sympathetic realism in *Adam Bede* with reference to common English country folk. Finally, moral duty does command, oblige or burden us, but it also offers emancipation, both for ourselves as (at least partially) self-determinative agents and for the field of morality itself from other concerns.

One of the primary fields from which morality must be separated or disengaged is theology as a dogmatic field. Having established the faith or assent (carefully distinguished from speculative knowledge) we may give to the existence of God as a postulate of practical reason from the prior fact of freedom, Kant concludes the first part of the second Critique with a meditation on the "proportion of the human being's cognitive powers to his practical vocation." In this section, Kant justifies our lack of knowledge of the creator on moral grounds. Imagining a world in which we possessed immediate knowledge of God, Kant declares:

> Instead of the conflict that the moral attitude now has to carry on with the inclinations, in which – after some defeats – moral fortitude of soul yet gradually to be acquired, *God* and *eternity* with their *dreadful majesty* would lie unceasingly *before our eyes* … Transgression of the law would indeed be avoided; what is commanded would be done. However, the *attitude* from which actions ought to be done cannot likewise be instilled by any command, and the spur to activity is in this [case] immediately at hand and *external*, and thus reason does not first need to work itself up in order to gather strength to resist inclinations by vividly presenting the dignity of the law. Therefore most lawful actions would be done from fear, only a few from hope, and none at all from duty; and a moral worth of actions – on which alone, after all, the worth of the person and even that of the world hinges in the eyes of the highest wisdom – would not exist at all. The conduct of human beings … would thus be converted into a mere mechanism, where, as

> in a puppet show, everything would *gesticulate* well but there would be no life in the figures. (185-6)

The prospect of complete divine revelation threatens to annihilate genuine morality. Morality relies on an internal conflict and a capacity to decide apart from the considerations of feared punishment or anticipated reward. A world in which choice is effectively eliminated by these considerations threatens at once our capacity to develop morally, the moral worth of our actions, and the moral meaning, dignity and drama of human life. Kant's belief that fear subverts moral motivation (expressed elsewhere in the second *Critique* as well as in *Religion within the bounds of bare Reason*) is echoed by Eliot's mistrust of apocalyptic preaching: to cite one example, "So long as a belief in propositions is regarded as indispensable to salvation, the pursuit of truth *as such* is not possible … the sense of alarm and haste, the anxiety for personal safety, which Dr. Cumming insists upon as the proper religious attitude, unmans the nature, and allows no thorough, calm-thinking, no truly noble, disinterested feeling" (*Essays* 167-8).[1] Likewise, Kant's belief that expectation of reward is incompatible with moral motivation seems echoed by Eliot formulation that a "more perfect" religion "must express less care for personal consolation, and a more deeply-awing sense of responsibility to man" (*GEL* v 29-31).[2]

In the remainder of this chapter, I will contextualize this moral position defended by both Kant and Eliot, that morality must be constituted and developed in a sphere separate from a

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[1] This "noble, disinterested feeling" seems to be a more particular type of feeling regulated by the intellect discussed by Eliot in the previous paragraph. As Eliot has just been arguing for the connection of truth-seeking intellect and morality, the impairment of truth is no less a moral obstruction.

[2] This sentiment is expressed in a letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1869, but Eliot also wrote to Sara Hennell that "the test of a higher religion might be, that it should enable the believer to do without the consolations which his egoism would demand" (*GEL* v 69). Peter Hodgson reads Eliot's developed or higher religion in line with Ricoeur's quotation that "atheism clears the ground for a faith beyond accusation and consolation," claiming that Eliot herself ultimately came to seek such a truthful faith (5, 16).

calculus of divine punishment or reward, relating it to Divine Command Morality, before moving on to discuss some of the critical context and motivation for this project and what evidence we have for Eliot's familiarity with Kant. The second chapter will focus on the complex presence and multivalent portrayal of religion (particularly enthusiastic Protestantism) in the early works of Eliot and Kant as a necessary background to their conception of duty, which proceeds in the absence of theological certitude, but possesses a religious-like capacity to inspire awe or command absolutely. The texts covered in this chapter run from Kant's pre-critical works and Eliot's translations of Feuerbach and Strauss to Kant's first *Critique* and Eliot's *Adam Bede*. The third chapter focuses primarily on the second *Critique* and *The Mill on the Floss,* elaborating on the sketch of duty introduced here and relating it to the concepts of autonomy, reflection and respect. Duty must open a possible space of self-determination, free from the influence of inclinations and external sanctions or commands, it must both permit and sustain critical self-reflection, and it must ground a moral dignity we can appreciate in others and experience in ourselves. The conclusion will take up *Romola* as a novel which illustrates both the dramatic content of duty and its necessary indeterminations. Duty, as discussed in this paper, is certainly present in Kant and Eliot's work after the second *Critique* and *Romola* – Deronda is no less concerned with the demands of duty than Dinah and the *Metaphysics of Morals* offers an extensive account of applied morality and types of duty. Nonetheless, Kant and Eliot's early pre-critical and critical works offer essentially important background to this concept, and duty in Eliot's early novels and Kant's second *Critique* takes on a particularly clear and urgent quality.[3]

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[3] I also draw on some of Eliot's less public writings (letters and journals) to elucidate her moral conceptions in her fictional and critical writings. In this, I partially follow an argument in Rosemarie Bodenheimer's *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans*, which makes the case for Eliot's letters themselves as (semi)public texts calling for close reading drawing off of literary techniques

Part of this urgency derives, no doubt, from the energetic conflict both writers engaged in with enthusiastic and dogmatic religion.

Eliot and Kant's distrust of a morality motivated by fear of divine wrath or hope for divine reward taps in to a debate dating back at least to Plato. In one way or another, Divine Command theories relate God (or some fundamental aspect of God) to morality, often in the form of arguing that statements like "one ought to x" or "it is morally right to x" ultimately equate to "x is commanded by God." In Plato's *Euthyphro*, Socrates poses the question as to whether the pious or holy (*to hosion*) is so because it is loved by the gods, or whether it is loved by the gods because it is pious. Either alternative seems problematic – if the pious is only pious because it is loved by the gods, then the piety seems to be an arbitrary quality; if the pious is loved by the gods because it is pious, then a principle seems to exist above and independent of the gods, to which their judgments appeal. This latter possibility is already troubling for the polytheistic Euthyphro, and only becomes more so in a monotheistic frame which grounds reality and the good in an absolute Being. Divine Command Morality seems to possess an intuitive accord with traditional understandings of biblical texts and grounds moral judgments and imperatives in an omnipresent and eternal entity, granting them objective validity. Yet the threat of rendering the morally good effectively arbitrary has troubled theistic and secular thinkers alike. This tension (among others) has ensured the endurance of Divine Command Morality as a problem to this day. Philip Quinn and Robert Adams have developed prominent recent Divine Command theories, while objections run the gamut from the problem of the arbitrary (the problem of an apparent lack of grounding for the good if it reduces to a will that could have

equally easily willed otherwise) to a need for virtue ethics in the place of legal obligation, to the simple refutation of theism.[4]

Divine Command Morality is also sometimes referred to as Theological Voluntarism due to its tendency to emphasize the absolute will of God in the place of, for example, God's nature or character. This emphasis establishes an intuitive connection between this moral position and theological orientations that stress the divine will, such as Lutheran or Calvinistic thought and their echoes in State and dissenting Protestantisms in Eliot's Britain and Kant's Prussia. The debate over Divine Command Morality seemed to draw particular attention in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Britian. In *Essays on the Law of Nature* (written in the early 1660s), John Locke divides moral obligation to natural laws (being equivalent to the laws of nature's creator) into two liabilities: "First, a liability to pay dutiful obedience, namely what anyone is bound to do or not to do at the command of a superior power" and "secondly, a liability to punishment, which arises from a failure to pay dutiful obedience" (qtd in Idziak 180). God's authority derives "partly from the divine wisdom of the law-maker, and partly from the right which the Creator has over His creation" – and it is clear that God needs no further justification, and that morality proceeds under a mode of command and punishment. Likewise, in the first book of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke speaks of "the true ground of morality"

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[4] Quinn's and Adam's theories have been developed through a number of works, spanning the 1970s, 80s and 90s (and more recently) – I cite them as they seem to be the most frequently referenced recent theories, although writers like William Wainwright, Mark Murphy and Edward Wierenga (among others) have also advocated versions of Divine Command Theories. Virtue Ethics objections have been made in both G.E.M. Anscombe's pivotal "Modern Moral Philosophy" (*Philosophy* 33.124 (1958): 1-19) and Linda Trinkaus Zebzebski's *Divine Motivation Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). For more information about and more objections to Divine Command theories, see Wierenga's "A Defensible Divine Command Theory" (Noûs 17.3 (Sept 1983): 387-407) and Quinn's "Divine Command Theory" (*The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, ed. Hugh Lafollette. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. 53-73)

as “the will and law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has his hand in rewards and punishments, and power to call to account the proudest offender” (*Works* i 14).

Locke’s position, however, was far from universal. One of Locke’s contemporaries, the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth attacked a will-based Divine Command theory in his *Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*, written in the seventeenth century but not published until well after Cudworth’s death in 1731. Drawing on a Platonic notion of immutable and independently-existent ideas (in part to combat Hobbes’s state-centered conception of morality), Cudworth argued that “moral good and evil … cannot possibly be arbitrary things, made by will without nature” (qtd in Idziak 160). God’s apparent incapacity to unfix the determinations of good and evil through an indifferent will no more impaired divine power than his inability to make a square a circle (168). In Cudworth’s view, God does of course command the good, but a full account of God’s relation to the good also requires accounting for God’s wisdom and nature as well as his will. A similar objection to Divine Command theory was voiced by Leibniz in his *Discourse on Metaphysics* (written in 1686, but not published until the nineteenth century – although some of its ideas appeared in his *Theodicy* and *Monadology*):

> In saying, therefore, that things are not good according to any standard of goodness, but simply by the will of God, it seems to me that one destroys, without realizing it, all the love of God and his glory; for why praise him for what he has done, if he would be equally praiseworthy in doing the contrary? Where will be his justice and wisdom if he has only a certain despotic power, if arbitrary will takes the place of reasonableness, and if, in accord with the definitions of tyrants, justice consists in that which is pleasing to the most powerful? (4-5).

Both Cudworth and Leibniz advocate essentially rationalist objections and are troubled less by Eliot and Kant's concerns with reward and punishment than the arbitrary and destabilizing force of will left to itself. However, Leibniz's argument by right and reasonable government against the threat of despotism is a familiar enough trope in Kant's critical philosophy – for example, as in Kant's claim that the *Critique of Pure Reason* will "assure to reason its lawful claims, and dismiss all groundless pretensions, not by despotic decrees, but in accordance with reason's own eternal and unalterable laws" (Preface to the first edition, xi-xii).[5] As Desmond Hogan argues, Kant's explicit break with dogmatic rationalism should cause us to overlook neither continuities between Kant and rationalists like Leibniz, nor "the persistently rationalist orientation of Kant's mature thought" (40).

While Locke's empiricism and Cudworth's rational Intuitionism[6] may not have had much direct influence on Eliot,[7] the British empirical intuitionist moral sense philosophy, or more particularly its reflection in the literary-philosophical phenomenon of Sentimentalism certainly did – both as target of attack for its excesses, but also as a source of inspiration (together with German influences) for Eliot's famous advocacy for a novelistic aesthetic grounded in sympathy. One of moral sense philosophy's primary advocates (and an important figure of the Scottish Enlightenment), Francis Hutcheson, attacked Divine Command Morality less because it threatens an arbitrary will than because it threatens logical triviality. According to Hutcheson, calling the laws of God good must, ultimately, "be an insignificant tautology, amounting to no more than this, 'that God *wills* what he *wills*.'" In place of this tautology, Hutcheson defines the

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[5] I here use Guyer and Wood's 1998 translation, rather than Pluhar's 1996 (which I use elsewhere in this text).
[6] Particularly, his defense of the objective reality and epistemic accessibility of moral ideas.
[7] Although, as I discuss in the third section of this chapter, Eliot may have possessed an early desire to reconcile the philosophies of Locke and Kant and entries on both Locke and Kant appear in a notebook Valerie Dodd makes note of in the George Eliot Collection of the Nuneaton library.

"*absolutely good*" as "*benevolence*, or the desire of the *public natural happiness* of *rational agents*." This benevolence is perceived by our "moral sense … [as] excellence" and is effectively what we refer to when we call God morally good (*An Inquiry concerning the Original of our Ideas of Virtue or Moral Good*, qtd in Idziak, 199). Hutcheson preserves theism, but, unlike Leibniz and Cudworth, does not appeal to other faculties of God (e.g., wisdom, understanding or nature), instead refocusing the morally good on "rational agents" – presumably humans.[8] Hutcheson was a significant influence on Kant earlier in his career, primarily for his theory of the moral sense (see Kuehn 107-8, 131, 176, 185), although Kant's moral interest in rational agents would lead him away from Hutcheson's empirical approach and the principle of happiness as a moral foundation.[9] Although Eliot certainly had more sympathy for an empirical account of morality than Kant, it is hard to imagine her being any more satisfied with happiness as the ultimate criteria of moral judgment and action.

While Hutcheson's moral sense was still a faculty owed to a divine creator, Hume attempted to develop a naturalistic account of moral psychology. In *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1740), Hume complains of philosophers "not content with the principle, that nothing exists but by [God's] will, that … rob nature, and all created beings, of every power, in order to render their dependence on the Deity still more sensible and immediate" (47). Like Leibniz and Cudworth, Hume sees a diminishment of the Deity in this reduction to will, but

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[8] Although not excluding heavenly beings or extra-terrestrials, as in Kant's assertion that moral freedom must be a property of all rational being in the *Grounding*.

[9] Kant seems closest to Hutcheson in his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764), which also employs an empirical method of investigation. Although Kant rejects happiness as an adequate moral motivation, he does frame it as a major moral concern, being part of the concept of the Highest Good, in second book of the first part of the *Critique of Practical Reason*.

Hume's protest here is on behalf of nature and its inhabitants.[10] The term "God" does not even appear in Hume's *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), "Gods" appearing only in a quotation from Cicero, lords being of the earthly variety, and "divine" referring to churchmen. Instead, the operations of human sympathy or moral sentiment provide a sufficient basis for moral judgment and action – besides providing moral motivation where reason cannot. Sympathy is a key term in Hume's moral philosophy as a means of explaining how a morality grounded in sentiment does not collapse into pure self-love. Hume even declares that "the end of all moral speculations is to teach us our duty," such education inculcating agreeable, admirable or useful habits "by proper representations of the deformity of vice and beauty of virtue" (5). Hume anticipates both Kant and Eliot in his construction of morality starting from human principles and his emphasis on a morality centered on duty that does not begin from fear or self-interested anticipation of a deity – and particularly anticipates Eliot with his focus on sympathy. Although Hume was a major and acknowledged influence on Kant, Kant found Hume's epistemic skepticism and his moral philosophy ultimately inadequate to the needs of critical philosophy.[11] Eliot's sympathy, though certainly indebted (directly or indirectly) to Hume, undermines the dichotomy Hume establishes here between deformed vice and beautiful virtue: In her defenses of sympathetic realism in "A Natural History of German Life" and the

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[10] Hume goes on to argue that "this theory of the universal energy and operation of the Supreme being, is too bold to ever carry conviction with it to a man, sufficiently apprized of the weakness of human reason, and the narrow limits, to which it is confined in all its operations." This theory carries us "quite beyond the reach of our faculties … we are got into fairy land, long ere we have reached [its] last steps" (47-8).

[11] In particular, Kant was suspicious of Hume's skepticism that moral rationality can provide motivation for moral action, but, more generally, he seems to have believed that Hume's positive moral concepts – for example, benevolence, utility, virtue and vice, the agreeable – were inadequate to ground a rigorous morality.

seventeenth chapter of *Adam Bede*, Eliot argues for a sympathy that acts where our usual sense of the agreeable or beautiful is absent or even repelled.[12]

Hume's application of the terms "utility" and "useful" as morally relevant suggests another British philosophical movement in the wake of Locke's empiricism, Utilitarianism. Utilitarianism did not necessarily mandate a Humean rejection of Divine Command Morality. In *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785), William Paley defined virtue according to three terms, in which "'the good of mankind,' is the subject, the 'will of God' the rule, and 'everlasting happiness' the motive of human virtue" (qtd in Idziak 214). Although this appears to be a modification of Divine Command theory, supplemented the theory with utilitarian benefit and emotional motive, Paley retains the theory's primary foci: a "violent motive" of reward or punishment, obligation to the command of God and a morality in which "Right … *signifies, the being consistent with the will of God*" (214-5).[13] Nonetheless, Utilitarianism certainly gave one the capacity to remove the divine from moral calculation. Well into the second chapter of *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), Jeremy Bentham stops to note "It may be wondered, perhaps, that in all this while no mention has been made of the theological principle; meaning the principle which professes to recur for the standard of right and wrong to the will of God" (qtd in Idziak 221). Bentham cavalierly concedes "whatever is right is conformable to the will of God," but argues that we possess no sufficiently distinct understanding of this will on which to build an understanding of the right. In a footnote to this

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[12] For a discussion of sympathy in Eliot in relation to another Scottish moral sense philosopher, see Rae Greiner's "Sympathy Time: Adam Smith, George Eliot and the Realist Novel" (*Narrative* 17.3 (Oct 2009): 291-311).
[13] Paley, I should note, is also discussed in *Gillian Beer's Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Fiction*, primarily in opposition to Darwin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). In contrast to Paley, Beer seems to suggest a potential alignment between Kant and Darwin with Kant's concept of Purposiveness without purpose (81).

argument, Bentham takes issues with theological focus on God's pleasure, claiming that "what is called the pleasure of god, is and must necessarily be (revelation apart) neither more nor less than the good pleasure of the person, whoever he be, who is pronouncing what he believes, or pretends, to be God's pleasure" (222).

Although Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* was published between these two works, in 1788, at this time Kant at most implicitly and indirectly engaged with Utilitarian thought, in discussing counsels of Prudence. Despite this (and quite reasonably), Kant's moral theory is often taught in opposition to Utilitarianism, the pair forming two alternatives of a rational moral vision not reliant on Divine Command theory. By the time Eliot came to be writing novels, Utilitarianism had become an established philosophy, and Eliot's familiarity with it likely came most strongly through John Stuart Mill.[14] Utilitarian calculation is ultimately inadequate to the reckoning of the sort of moral duty, as I shall argue, that Eliot defended within and beyond her fiction. Yet Bentham's concern with the capacity of religious pronouncement to mask personal desire is a concern very much shared by both Eliot and Kant, principally under the problem of Enthusiasm.[15] Moral Sense Philosophy and Utilitarianism cannot ultimately account for either Kant or Eliot's notions of duty, but both are essential grounds for the development of moral conceptions that go beyond Divine Command Morality. More particularly, they facilitate productive epistemic skepticism and more complex accounts of human psychology and moral motivation.

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[14] Eliot's intellectual engagements with Mill can be found in Gordon Haight and Avrom Fleishman's biographies of Eliot (among others). Valerie Dodd frames her *George Eliot: An Intellectual Life* between the figures of J.S. Mill and Carlyle as competing forces in British thought, but also writers who were powerfully influential on Eliot.
[15]Although neither Eliot nor Kant were slow to identify egoistic hypocrisy in more staid words and actions of less enthusiastic state clerics – Gascoigne in *Daniel Deronda* and some of the clerical discussion in "What is Enlightenment?" jump immediately to mind.

The issue of motivation also differentiates Eliot and Kant's notions of duty from the moral theories of two movements and Divine Command Morality. Cudworth and Leibniz seem to approach more closely to Kant's moral view, Cudworth emphasizing the objective validity of morality and Leibniz stressing the need for a rational approach and essence to morality – but even given the objective existence of a rational Good, the question remains as to what would motivate one to pursue the morally Good.[16] Divine Command Morality provides an answer of sorts – simplistically, the desire to be rewarded and avoid punishment, although more complex motivations on possible (see, for example, motivations relating to a Deity defined by love or benevolence in Adams or Quinn). Utilitarianism is also not wanting for an answer (i.e., use-value or benefit), but the conception of morality as something that could be reduced to calculation or the greatest benefit for the greatest number introduces problems both on the level of common-sense understandings of morality and individual motivation.[17] Moral Sense philosophy, particularly as developed by Hume, seems to offer an account of moral motivation most closely aligned with Eliot's – and Kant's early sympathy with Hutcheson and Hume should not be overlooked. Sympathy is undoubtedly a major force in Eliot's moral thought and Kant does not discount the positive value of beneficial or sympathetic inclination. Nonetheless, Kant held that inclinations were inadequate to ground a rigorous and universally applicable morality and sympathy cannot explain the whole of Eliot's moral thought. Eliot and Kant saw something

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[16] One might of course follow the strains of the Neoplatonic thought on which Cudworth draws and speak of a teleological drive in things towards the Good – moral motivation in Leibniz I will take as a topic of sufficient density to be beyond the scope of this paper.

[17] I am, of course, oversimplifying Utilitarian moral theory here. Nonetheless, it seems that Hume's objection to moral rationalism might be brought against certain formulations of Utilitarianism – e.g., it seems entirely possible that a subject might know that the moral good to consist in the greatest benefit or utility to the greatest number without this knowledge decisively influencing the subject's action.

valuable in a morality that could meaningfully speak of law, command and obligation (and not just influence, the pleasant or utility) without relying on arbitrary external force.

Critical Contexts

As of May 2011, There is only one article specifically on George Eliot and Kant: Andrew Lynn's "'Mr. Gilfil's Love Story' and the Critique of Kantianism." In this article, Lynn reads said story from *Scenes of Clerical Life* as an attack on Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. The term Kantian*ism* is entirely apt, as Lynn seems to be working with a mixture of work by and received understanding about Kant. Thus, no distinction is made between Kant's moral and aesthetic philosophy, and Sir Christopher can stand in as a paradigm of Kantian Autonomy – apparently in complete disregard of the necessary role the that Moral Law plays in Kant's positive conception of Autonomy. Lynn's article does make the case for Eliot's story as a critique of empty formalism – and draws our attention to what I argue is a common concern between Eliot and Kant, a concern with the capacity of humans to obscure egoistic or narrowly subjective motives behind religious or moral pronouncements. In any event, Lynn's article certainly goes beyond most critical work done on Eliot (even on Eliot in relation to philosophy), which is content not to posit any relationship between Eliot and Kant, beyond that of Eliot perhaps having read some Kant.[18]

However, Lynn is not alone in supposing that there may be a more robust relationship between the two writers. In "Daniel Deronda: *A New Epistemology*," George Levine proposes a

[18] See, for instance, Suzy Anger's article "George Eliot and philosophy," 77. Anger does mention Kant several times in this article, but more as a means of contextualizing Eliot's views - although she does suggest Eliot's awareness of and limited accord with elements of Kant's epistemology (83).

connection between Eliot and Kant that is unfortunately not elaborated beyond the following quotation: "the imagination" in *Daniel Deronda* acts as "a literary reworking of Kant's theory of judgment, [and] is thus understood to make the connection between the realm of the morally necessary and transcendent and the realm of the empirical and practical understanding" (57). In "G.H. Lewes Revised: George Eliot and the Moral Sense," K.K. Collins makes the case for Eliot's intuitionist (as opposed to utilitarian) moral commitments, explicitly aligning her thought, at least at this late point in her career, with Kant (I discuss this article in more detail in the third chapter). In *The Ethics of Reading*, J. Hillis Miller reads George Eliot's narrative technique in the famous seventeenth chapter of *Adam Bede* in opposition to a theological "Kantism." Miller deals with Kant's idea of respect in an earlier chapter, but here the primary text is the *Critique of Judgment*, which, Miller alleges, is grounded in a notion of a genius that brings a *logos* analogous to the divine *logos* to bear on the material of nature (66-7).[19] Specifically, Miller claims that George Eliot breaks the analogy between the two *logoi*, sending the work of the ideal genius into the realm of the "simply unreal" or the "fictive" without possible return (67). Miller also notes "It was by no means necessary to know Kant's works in order to be a Kantian or an anti-Kantian in the nineteenth century" – implicitly gesturing towards the cultural impact and currency of Kant's thought (67). As I argue in the next section, Eliot did have indirect knowledge of Kant's philosophy, but we also have reason to believe that she engaged with his philosophy directly. In the course of this paper, I will be making the case that some of the alignments with Kant that Collins detects in Eliot's late completion and revision of *Problems* can

[19] For reasons not immediately relevant to this paper concerning morality, I cannot agree with Miller's reading of the *Critique of Judgment* (admittedly, Miller does not seem to propose this explains all of the aesthetic theory third Critique, as he distinguishes the Kantian sublime from this Kantism (70)). In any event, how we understand Kant in relation to theological concerns is certainly an open question in both his moral and aesthetic philosophy.

be detected much earlier in her work, both critical and fictional. Miller's reading is useful for appreciating subversive complexities in Eliot's defense of sympathetic realism, but left on its own seems to underrate both constructive elements of Eliot's moral vision and theologically subversive elements of Kant's philosophy.[20]

Writing in 1999, Jonathan Loesberg noted that, although "George Eliot … quite evidently was deeply read in German idealism, … yet there is little treatment of the influence of any of those writers on the actual shape of her novels (the exception here is Feuerbach, who is, however, read as if he were a Victorian Comtean rather than a Young Hegelian)" ("Cultural Studies" 541). Loesberg's assertion that Eliot's engagement with German idealism does not seem adequately reflected in the criticism (relative to other concerns) is, I think, still valid, but that is not to say her engagement has been ignored in Eliot criticism. Lynn's article also came out in 1999, and Loesberg released an article reading Eliot in light of Hegel and Feuerbach, "Aesthetics, Ethics and Unreadable Acts in George Eliot," in 2001.[21] Hegel in relation to Eliot seems to have garnered significant attention even before Loesberg's article, from Darrell Mansell Jr.'s brief "A Note on Hegel and George Eliot" in 1965 to Sara M. Puzzell-Korab's *The Evolving Consciousness: An Hegelian Reading of the Novels of George Eliot* in 1982 to Gerhard Joseph's "Hegel, Derrida, George Eliot, and the Novel" in 1985.[22] Another German idealist whose

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[20] I am here thinking primarily of Kant's critical epistemic and moral philosophy, but even Miller's avenue of attack – the Kantian notion of Genius – is grounded in freedom from the pre-determination of prior rules (and, implicitly, commitment to the theological significance of works of art).

[21] I discuss this article in the third section of this paper. Loesberg's emphasis on unreadability as a morally relevant category potentially accords with my focus on Kantian incalculability in moral decisions, although the stakes of the arguments are notably different.

[22] Joseph also published "The *Antigone* as Cultural Touchstone: Matthew Arnold, Hegel, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Margaret Drabble" (*PMLA* 96.1 (Jan 1981): 22-35). Discussions of Hegel and Eliot also appear in Avrom Fleishman's *George Eliot's Intellectual Life* (2010), Valerie Dodd's *George Eliot: An Intellectual Life* (1990) and Rosemary Ashton's *The German Idea: Four English writers and the reception of German Thought 1800-1860* (1980) – most substantially in Dodd.

philosophy was developed (in part) in reaction to Kant, Schopenhauer, has also received some attention in relation to Eliot. Two notable articles on this head are E.A. McCobb's "Daniel Deronda as Will and Representation: George Eliot and Schopenhauer" (1985) and Peter Capuano's "An Objective Aural-Relative in Middlemarch" (2007) – the latter of which uses Schopenhauer's philosophy of music as an alternative to imagistic realism in reading Eliot.[23] Finally, Friedrich Schiller, a German philosopher, poet and playwright who, like Hegel or Schopenhauer, owed a great debt to Kant, has also been discussed in relation to Eliot: Robert E. Norton's "The Aesthetic Education of Humanity: George Eliot's *Romola* and Schiller's Theory of Tragedy" appeared in 1991, while Deborah Guth authored a series of articles on Eliot and Schiller in the late 90s, culminating in *George Eliot and Schiller: Intertextuality and cross-cultural discourse* in 2003.[24]

Like these critics, I believe that (as Suzy Anger puts it), "George Eliot's novels do philosophical work and enrich ethical discussion" (92) – and more particularly that this philosophical work can be brought into greater clarity and productively elaborated in conversation with German idealism. I do not, of course, wish to argue that Eliot was an idealist, but the critical developments, aesthetic speculations and moral engagements that characterize German idealism form an important background to Eliot's thought and writing.[25] More

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[23] McCobb had also written on Schopenhauer, Eliot and Music in "The Morality of the Musical Genius: Schopenhauerian views in Daniel Deronda" (*Forum for Modern Language Studies* 19.4 (1983): 321-330). There is also a book on Schopenhauer and Eliot (among others) by Penelope LeFew-Blake: *Schopenhauer, Women's Literature and the Legacy of Pessimism in the Novels of George Eliot, Olive Schreiner, Virginia Woolf and Doris Lessing* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2001).

[24] I will briefly return to Schiller in the conclusion.

[25] Although I agree with Deborah Guth and Robert Norton that *Romola* in particular incorporates idealism and I do think idealist strains thus far identified in *Daniel Deronda* can and should be productively elaborated and developed (on this latter point, see and Graham Handley's introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition of *Daniel Deronda* (1998/2009)). See also Fleishman's reading of the "idealistic vision" of Eliot's "A Minor Prophet" as a central credo of her thought and works (7-8).

particularly, Kant's philosophy can help us to appreciate some of the critical complexity of and moral motivation for Eliot's works.

It is a commonplace of Eliot criticism that Eliot's morality as manifest in her novels is grounded in combating "egoism" and, in Anger's words, "desires for one's own welfare must invariably be conquered" (93). Kant is also often thought of as advancing a morality that calls for the conquest of inclination (selfish and otherwise), and there is certainly a basis to these characterizations. Moreover, causal accounts may reduce Eliot's moral thought to a call for sympathy and Kant's moral philosophy to the demand that we follow the categorical imperative. In framing my discussion around the multivalent issue of duty – a concept given particular attention in Kant's moral philosophy and a site of conflict throughout Eliot's novels – I hope to suggest that we cannot write off Kant or Eliot's moral thought as mere masochism or self-denial, nor can we reduce this thought to one simple term or priority.

Part of the motivation for this project is to map Kant and Eliot's conception of duty as a connected historical development in the context of strains of thought in running throughout the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. As I shall argue in the next section, Eliot possessed both direct and indirect familiarity with Kant's philosophy. She also translated the work of Strauss and Feuerbach, Hegelian Higher critics working off of Kantian priorities in a field energized by Kantian philosophy. Yet Kant and Eliot are also reacting against a common background of enthusiastic Protestantism, as well as strains of moral thought at odds with a rational duty-centered conception of morality –Divine Command Morality, versions of moral sense theory, and Utilitarianism, among others. The relevance that the empirically-minded Eliot found in a rational, autonomous and absolutely imperative sense of duty speaks to the capacity of this

notion to persist amidst the demise of other enlightenment (and, arguably, Romantic, as moral autonomy was foundationally important for both British and German Romantics).

However, duty-centered or deontological ethics is also a current and vibrant strain of thought. Endorsed by philosophers such as Thomas Nagel and Frances Kamm, deontological ethics have been applied by even those who point out paradoxes in them (for example, Robert Nozick), are hotly contested by other schools of thought (e.g., Virtue Ethicists) and, I think, are implicitly present (albeit in radicalized form) in the philosophy of continental thinkers like Emmanuel Levinas, who insist on the demand or responsibility imposed on us by the Other. Quite naturally, Kant is an often-referenced and often-contested figure in debates about deontological ethics. Ethics and literature is an expanding field of sizable contemporary interest – particularly in nineteenth-century British literature, as suggested by a recent anthology on Levinas and the same and the work of critics like Andrew H. Miller, Amanda Anderson, Jil Larson and Adela Pinch, among others.[26] By developing an account of a consonant conception of duty in the respective literary and philosophical works of Eliot and Kant, I hope to offer a potential connection between particular current interests in deontological ethics and a more general interest in connecting nineteenth-century British literature and ethical philosophy.

Despite current academic enthusiasm for ethics, it seems like there is something unfashionable about morality. "Ethics," with its Hegelian reference to particular communal

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[26] The collection on Levinas is *Levinas and nineteenth-century literature: ethics and otherness from Romanticism through Realism* (Newark: University of Deleware Press, 2009), while some recent works of the critics mentioned above relating ethics and literature include Andrew H. Miller's *The Burdens of Perfection: on ethics and reading in nineteenth-century British literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), Amanda Anderson's *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the cultivation of detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press (which follows up previous readings of detachment as a potential ethical perspective)), Jil Larson's *Ethics and Narrative in the English Novel 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and Adela Pinch's *Thinking about other people in nineteenth-century British writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

forms of life or its Aristotelian reference to human flourishing, is widely adaptable and can permit anything on the spectrum from moral commitment to developed tolerance, and can be equally appropriated by the most straightforward political reading to the most elusive Derridean deconstruction. If there is to be morality, let it be resolved into "moral philosophy" or "moral life" (to the point that it becomes indistinguishable from ethics). Morality on its own seems all-too-eager to plunge into absolutes, to dissolve or ignore particularities and to bind us by inflexible rules or commands. Kant and Eliot, I believe, are inescapably moral thinkers, and some of our leeriness concerning Eliot's didacticism or Kant's distrust of inclinations is probably warranted. Yet they are also writers that have shaped our understanding of what philosophical critique and realist novel (respectively) can do, and thinkers that continue to challenge us to develop critically rigorous and morally satisfying understandings, both in the wider ranges of thought and politics and in our particular and practical lives. Eliot explicitly sought to widen the "ethics of art,"[27] and Kant persistently emphasized the practical nature of morality – neither of which positions led them to abandon a duty-centered morality that could command while also grounding meaningful freedom and dignity.

George Eliot and Kant

George Eliot was particularly well suited to possess indirect knowledge of Kant's philosophy. Eliot's familiarity with Hegel and Schiller no doubt assisted in this regard, as both

[27] This being in a reply to Bulwer-Lytton on the subject of Maggie in *The Mill on the Floss*, quoted in *George Eliot: The Critical Heritage* 111, which is in turn quoted in Jonathan Loesberg's "Aesthetics, Ethics and Unreadable Acts."

engaged quite thoroughly with Kant's philosophy, moral, theoretical and aesthetic.[28] Schiller in particular maintained Kant's insistence on the root of morality in freedom and stressed the role of this moral freedom in grounding human dignity. Besides Schopenhauer, Eliot may have even gained some familiarity with Kant through her thorough readings of the sometimes-antagonistic Goethe.[29] As I argue in the next chapter, Eliot's translations of Strauss and Feuerbach would also have afforded engagements with Kant's critical philosophy. But Eliot also read two of the best-known disseminators of Kant's philosophy in England: Coleridge and Carlyle.[30] Eliot also appears to have read J. G. K. C. Kiesewetter's *Grundriß einer allgemeinen Logik nach Kantischen Grundsätzen* (loosely translated, Outline of a universal Logic according to Kantian Principles).[31] This logic textbook contained an "effusive dedication to Kant" and, as the title suggests, seeks to derive its system of logic from Kant's philosophy. Keisewetter had been a

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[28] Exactly how much Eliot may have read from Hegel and Schiller is uncertain – *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* and *Aesthetics* seem probable for Hegel (and possibly the *Phenomenology*, according to Sara M. Puzzell-Korab), while for Schiller all of the plays and much of the poetry are certain, while the aesthetic treatises (on which Kant had the most direct influence) is "likely" (Norton 5, Guth 25 – both draw from a mixture of Eliot's letters, Anthony McCobb's *George Eliot's Knowledge of German Life and Letters* and other sources). For more information on these Eliot's knowledge and reading of these two figures, see the sources listed in the previous section.

[29] In his *Life of Goethe*, G. H. Lewes claims that Schiller "hampered his genius by fixing on his pegasus the leaden wings of Kant's philosophy" (116) and complains that Schiller's influence made Goethe, "in contradiction to his native tendency, speculative and theoretical," having the "noxious" effect of leading Goethe to be occupied with "Kant and scientific theories" (402).

[30] Dodd probably has the most extensive account of Eliot's readings of and engagements with Coleridge, but see also Diana Postlethwaite's comparison of Coleridge and Eliot at the opening of *Making it Whole: A Victorian Circle and the Shape of their World* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1984) (Fleishman seems to take Eliot's familiarity with Coleridge for granted, but is ambiguous about to what extent her thinking aligned with his (perhaps in reaction against claims regarding Eliot's organicism). As mentioned previously, Carlyle is one of the two main figures Dodd uses to frame Eliot's intellectual developments, and Eliot wrote on Carlyle (including a review of *The Life of Sterling*) for the Westminster Review. Carlyle is often brought up as relevant context for Eliot's conservatism or (her sometimes ironic takes on) heroes and heroines (see, for instance, Brian Rosenberg's "George Eliot and the Victorian 'Historical Imagination' (*Victorian Newsletter*, 61 (Spring 1982): 1-5) and Joseph Wiesenfarth's "Carlyle and the Prelude to Middlemarch" (*George Eliot-George Henry Lewes Studies* 50-51 (Sept 2006):143-54)). Both Coleridge and Carlyle are also, of course, relevant figures for discussing humanism and the importance of culture for Eliot.

[31] Eliot thanks Francis Watt for lending her this work in a letter (*GEL* ii 78).

copyist for Kant and worked to popularize Kant; the *Grundriß* itself was apparently sufficiently close to Kant's philosophy that Kant himself believed the author to have plagiarized.[32]

Probably the strongest claim for Eliot's engagement with Kant comes from Edith Simcox's article on Eliot for *The Nineteenth Century*:

> It was in this early period [at Foleshill] that in the course of a walk with a friend she paused and clasped her hands with a wild aspiration that she might live "to reconcile the philosophies of Locke and Kant!" Years afterwards she remembered the very turn of the road where she had spoken it (780).[33]

Given its second-hand conveyance and distance from the event in time, this account should be taken with a grain of salt. Nonetheless, we shouldn't discount the possibility of this philosophical ambition for a young Eliot who would go on to translate Strauss, Feuerbach and Spinoza. One reading of this ambition would be that it seeks to square Locke's insistence that we start from a blank slate and derive knowledge empirically with Kant's insistence that we possess knowledge prior to experience. Another possible reading would be that Eliot may have sought to reconcile Locke's empirical epistemology with Kant's moral philosophy, and more particularly its emphasis on the priority of practical to speculative reason.[34] Unfortunately, Cross's

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[32] This information comes from the J.G.K.C. Keisewetter article in the biographical section of Manchester College's Kant site (http://www.manchester.edu/kant/Bio/FullBio/KiesewetterJGKC.html), which will be in the forthcoming *The Dictionary of Eighteenth Century German Philosophers*, ed. Manfred Kuehn and Heiner Klemme (Thoemmes Press).

[33] Haldane quotes this passage from Simcox in *George Eliot and Her Times* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), p52. Valerie Dodd, in turn, quotes Haldane in *George Eliot: An Intellectual Life*, p.97. Although this idea of George Eliot desiring to reconcile the philosophies of Kant and Locke appears elsewhere (e.g., Cooke's *George Eliot: a critical study of her life, writings and philosophy*), in each case it seems to trace back to Simcox.

[34] It should be noted that Kant's moral philosophy actually preceded his epistemological philosophy in translation in England, as John Richardson released an anonymous translation of the Grounding in 1798 (for more on Kant's reception and translation in England, see Giuseppe Micheli's *The Early Reception of Kant's Thought in England 1785-1805* (1990) in the series *Kant's Thought in England* (Thoemmes Press, 6 Vols) and Rene Welleck's *Immanuel Kant in England 1790-1838* (Princeton University Press, 1931).

destruction of Eliot's journals before 1854 from knowing much about her thought during the time Simcox describes, or "Eliot's first 'German Period,' as Sara Hennell called it" (Anthony McCobb 85).

In July of 1855, she published a review of Gruppe's *Gegenwart und Zukunft der Philosophie in Deutschland* ([the] Present and Future of Philosophy in Germany) entitled "The Future of German Philosophy" in the *Leader*. In this review, Eliot takes up Gruppe's attack on the Kantian *à priori* and shows a greater awareness of Kant's first *Critique* than might have been expected from her reading of either Kiesewetter or Strauss, going into some detail concerning Kant's distinction between synthetic and analytic judgments (which Eliot rejects). Eliot seconds Gruppe's demand that philosophy abandon "the high *priori* road" but follow instead the "uphill *à posteriori* path" (*Essays* 153) and this suspicion of the *à priori* is maintained throughout Eliot's writings. Eliot approvingly relays Gruppe's demand that philosophy "renounce metaphysics" and instead focus on "Psychology … Aesthetics … Ethics; and … the principles of Jurisprudence" (153). Although Kant certainly never renounced metaphysics, the resemblance of these latter fields to Kant's own work is remarkable. Psychology is a major concern of the first Critique, ethics and morality are central issues of the second (and other works), aesthetics constitutes the first half of the third and jurisprudence is treated in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* (*Metaphysik der Sitten*). Although Eliot is clearly dissatisfied with Kant's attempt to establish a ground for metaphysics here, the scope of his overall critical project might not have met with the same disapproval.

Other references to Kant in the 1850s paint a more nuanced picture of Eliot's attitude towards Kant. In a letter to Sara Hennell in 1854, Eliot makes a fleeting reference to "the great Kant" in relation to Herbert Spencer (*GEL* ii 165). In another letter to Hennell in 1856, she

corrects a presumption of Hennell's, noting "Kant and everyone else who rejects the design argument would deny that 'to say the eye was designed to see is a safe affirmation'" (*GEL* ii 268). This could refer to either the first or the third Critique, as both deal with teleology and issues of design. Eliot appears to think Kant's position instructive. In October of 1855, Eliot releases a piece entitled "Translations and Translators" in the *Leader*, in which she commends Meiklejohn's translation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Although Eliot refrains from commenting on Kant's philosophy here, she does imply familiarity with the original text (*Essays* 208). Most strangely for someone who attacked *à priori* methods in July 1855, George Eliot explicitly uses such a method herself in her essay "Evangelical Teaching: Dr. Cumming" in October of the same year. Abstracting her objections from the truth or falsity of the Dr.'s claims, Eliot declares that "his use of prophecy must be *a priori* condemned in the judgment of right-minded persons" due to the faulty moral and cognitive frame Cumming brings to bear in creating these claims (*Essays* 181).

Kantian terminology also appears in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," published in the *Westminster Review* in October of 1856: "Lady novelists, it appears, can see something else besides matter; they are not limited to phenomena, but can relieve their eyesight by occasional glimpses of the *noumenon*" (*Essays* 310). Andrew Lynn's assertion that this line constitutes an "attack on Kantianism" (25) either neglects Kant's actual definition of the *noumenon* or makes the critical error of assuming that Kant's later Critiques simply negated the first: Kant defines the *noumenon* as the thing-in-itself that lies beyond any possible experience and never becomes theoretically knowable, let alone visible (*CPure* 317-19). Instead of criticizing Kant here, Eliot is making use of a distinction picked up from Kant to ridicule the pretensions of lady novelists. A similar though gentler sort of parody seems to be going on in "Amos Barton," when the

narrator remarks that twenty five years ago "the human animal of the male sex was understood to be perpetually athirst, and 'something to drink' was as necessary a 'condition of thought' as Time and Space" (*Scenes* 12). Again, the humor derives in part from the disparity between the pretensions of popular understanding and Kant's philosophy.[35]

Eliot also likely benefited from G.H. Lewes's continuing engagements with Kant for his revisions of his *Biographical History of Philosophy* and his incomplete *Problems of Life and Mind*.[36] In the former text, and amidst a fairly critical entry, Lewes speaks of "the *à priori* idea of justice – the moral law from which no conscience can be free" (Vol. 2, 118 (1845-6); 520 (1871)). Although Lewes elsewhere violently attacks the very notion of an *à priori* idea, here Lewes defends the idea that, though individual notions of justice may vary, the idea of justice itself is omnipresent in human culture. In 1846, Lewes even speaks of Kant's "noble vindication of the great idea of duty" (Vol. 2, 119), although this remark was cut from the 1871 edition. Lewes's take on Kant's moral philosophy is somewhat more combative in *Problems of Life Mind*. Eliot, however, appears to be more closely aligned to Kant than Lewes on this count, as discussed in the third chapter (in particular with reference to her Eliot's revision and completion of Lewes's Problems, as discussed by K. K. Collins). Probably sometime around the time that Lewes was working on *Problems of Life and Mind* in the later 1870s, Eliot wrote a notebook

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[35]Though here, unlike in the quotation from "Lady Novelists," Eliot leaves open the possibility that Kant's understanding, now thought necessary, is also inadequate. Hans Seeber's article on Kant for the *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000) makes note of this passage.

[36] Lewes's entry on Kant in his History grew from thirty to ninety pages in his revision and Problems of Life and Mind make reference to a variety of sources from Kant's metaphysical philosophy, with less attention to his moral and aesthetic philosophy (although *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (Anthropology from a practical perspective) and Kant's discussion of Life in relation to teleology in the third Critique do make fleeting appearances). Lewes read several works by Kant besides his *Critiques*, as well as commentaries on Kant by Kuno Fischer and Julius H. Kirchmann (McCobb, 112, 119-20). Items from George Henry Lewes and George Eliot that ended up at Dr. William's library include a translation of Kant in French and Borowski's biography of Kant, both with Lewes's linings and references, and secondary works on Kant in English, French and German (Baker 222, 108 and 33, 37, 45, 80, 105, 135, 137, respectively).

focused on Greek Philosophy, Locke and Comte, but containing four pages of quotations from Kant (Dodd "A George Eliot Notebook" 261).

Eliot's most explicit expression of her regard for Kant came in "A Word for the Germans" (1865), in which she defended the philosopher, declaring that "the most eminent of German metaphysicians, KANT, is cloudy in no other sense than that in which a mathematician is cloudy to one ignorant of mathematics … KANT was a rigorous thinker, who … felt the need of terms undefaced by a long currency, free from confusing associations" (*Essays* 387). This praise is particularly appropriate, given the fact that Eliot herself was criticized for the use of specialized terminology in her novels.[37] Eliot's positive use of the term "rigorous" here, as even her statements that might be read as anti-Kantian (the attack in Gruppe or her declaration in *The Mill on the Floss* against "men of maxims" (discussed in chapter three)) make demands for more, not less critical rigor. The problem of duty is partially a problem of how to conceptualize (or discover) a critical or rigorous inwardness, which can speak to and motivate the subject while standing the test of intersubjective necessity. To address this problem, to philosophically conceptualize duty or to make it compellingly manifest in a literary space, requires that we first seek to free ourselves from "confusing associations."

[37] In particular, she was criticized for the use of scientific terminology in *Daniel Deronda* by George Saintsbury (possibly among others) – apparently her use of the term "dynamic" (among other terms) outside of a scientific contexts was one of the first (Bonaparte 42 n1).

Chapter Two: Religion and Criticism

On December 6th, 1859, George Eliot wrote to François D'Albert-Durade, an old friend from Geneva whom she had recently informed that she had authored *Adam Bede.* Writing that she could understand that Durade might well not recognize her hand in certain pages of that novel, Eliot explained:

> I think I hardly ever spoke to you of the strong hold Evangelical Christianity had on me from the age of fifteen to two and twenty and of the abundant intercourse I had with earnest people of various religious sects. When I was at Geneva, I had not yet lost the attitude of antagonism which belongs to the renunciation of *any* belief – also, I was very unhappy, and in a state of discord and rebellion towards my own lot. Ten years of experience have wrought great changes in that inward self: I have no longer any antagonism towards any faith in which human sorrow and human longing for purity have expressed themselves; on the contrary, I have a sympathy with it that predominates over all argumentative tendencies. (*GEL* iii 230-1).

Haight identifies this letter as "one of the most illuminating statements of her religious belief" (331) – yet this letter exploits an equivocation between sympathetic-emotional and argumentative-doctrinal agreement that opens her letter to multiple readings:

> I have not returned to dogmatic Christianity – to the acceptance of any set of doctrines as a creed, and a superhuman revelation of the Unseen – but I see in it the highest expression of the religious sentiment that has yet found its place in the history of mankind, and I have the profoundest interest in the inward life of sincere Christians in all ages. Many things that I should have argued against ten years ago, I now feel myself too ignorant and too limited in moral sensibility to speak of with confident disapprobation:

> on many points where I used to delight in expressing intellectual difference, I now delight in feeling an emotional agreement. On that question of our future existence, to which you allude, I have undergone the sort of change I have just indicated, although my most rooted conviction is, that the immediate object and the proper sphere of all our highest emotions are our struggling fellow-men and this earthly existence (*GEL* iii 230-1).

In writing about George Eliot and religion, biographers and critics have generally fallen between two extremes. One extreme can be characterized by Avrom Fleishman's approach in *George Eliot's Intellectual Life*, which seeks to cast doubt on Eliot's being anything other than a "typical Anglican churchgoer of the middling classes in early Victorian England" who became passionate only in rejecting Christianity (23). If we follow Fleishman's argument that Eliot was not, in fact, an Evangelical, and his tendency to downplay the extent and passion of her religious commitments, then we must consider the "strong hold" spoken of above to be fiction – and her account of sympathetic agreement a feint to excuse argumentative disagreement. An example of the opposite extreme appears in Peter Hodgson's *Theology in the Fiction of George Eliot*, which traces religious themes, sympathies and concerns throughout Eliot's novels, concluding with a chapter relating her work and thought to postmodern theology. Characterizing Eliot as "awakening [to] an intensely evangelical form of Christianity" at boarding school (vii), Hodgson claims that Eliot's abandonment of Christian doctrine did not result in a loss of religious interest, passion, or even faith (accepting modifications to these terms necessary to square them with her rejection of doctrine).[38] By this reading, sympathy does indeed predominate over argument and

[38] The first chapter of *Theology in the Fiction of George Eliot* lays out a sketch of Eliot's religious biography and, from p13-29, particulars of what Hodgson reads as Eliot's agreements and sympathies with religious thought and concerns with more detail and subtlety than the above terms admit. Nonetheless, as Hodgson makes strong claims for continuities in Eliot's religious thinking and the value religion held for her, I think the terms appropriate.

her rejection of dogma merely conditions, instead of eliminating or radically challenging, her religious sentiment and thought. While Hodgson's affirmation of Eliot's earlier evangelical phase falls in line with the mainstream of critical commentary, the extent to which he seeks to establish the continued value and validity of religion to her does not.

Although Fleishman's and Hodgson's books have both been published after 2000, the split they embody has been a part of George Eliot criticism for some time. In less extreme forms, it was present in articles by Martin Svalgic and Bernard Paris in 1954 and 1962, respectively. In "Religion in the Novels of George Eliot," Svalgic ultimately concedes Eliot's rejection of the Christian religion and faith, but insists that Christianity "retained a strong hold on her ideals, her affections, and her imagination" (158). Svalgic's article focuses on *Scenes of a Clerical Life*, *Adam Bede* and *Middlemarch*, excluding *Romola* and *Daniel Deronda*, whose intensely religious Catholic and Jewish registers, respectively, seem to trouble the idea of Eliot's evangelical protestant Christianity as her chief religious influence and interest. Although Paris deals with Eliot's novels in "George Eliot's Religion of Humanity," he centers his discussion primarily on Eliot's philosophy, drawing from her letters, criticism and translations as well as literary works.[39] Paris admits Eliot's earlier Evangelical phase, but argues that "the real crisis" of her life came with her transition from pantheism (á la Spinoza and the Romantics) to atheism, generating an "essential tragic" worldview and leading Eliot towards a "new religion" without God (418-9). The religion of humanity described by Paris comes about as a kind of collision between scientific and Feuerbachian thought and rests on a fundamental rejection of Christian

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[39] See Knoepflmacher's commentary in 1965 on George Eliot criticism in the wake of Haight's publication of *The George Eliot Letters* and its tendency to focus on "formal aspects of her art" or her philosophy and its ideological implications and commitments, but not both (*Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel* 24-7).

religion. Moderately phrased, the two positions seem unassailable: George Eliot's continuing interest in religion seems evident from her concern with religious characters and themes from *Scenes of a Clerical Life* (her first major literary publication) to *Daniel Deronda* (her last novel). Conversely, her rejection of religious doctrine is testified to by her translations of Strauss and Feuerbach, her personal life, and the way even her novels maintain distance and/or impose conditions on their religious characters and content.

Rather than attempting yet another argument about whether Eliot was or was not fundamentally religious, I want to shift the discussion away from both what Eliot herself really believed and what her novels as a totality show. Eliot's personal experience and belief and her literary production alike show flux, development, contradiction and complexity that should give us pause in attributing static positions to her self and her work. Rather than attempting to resolve the sorts of equivocations made in the letter to D'Albert-Durade, I will argue that they are intentional and necessary – and of particular critical interest in the context of Eliot's concept of duty. Instead of giving priority to either Eliot's sympathetic agreement or her argumentative disagreement with Christianity, I will show both are present and significant in her early work and the moral thought developed therein. This framework of complex affirmation will also help to elucidate the early work of Kant, whose famous critical destruction of theological proofs are preceded by an apparent interest in enthusiasm and coexist with a desire to preserve some form of faith. Moral duty, as understood by Eliot and Kant, exists in the wake of theological skepticism, but borrows from the reserves of religion.

As Eliot's and Kant's educations were both intensely evangelical, these reserves included a sense of absolute imperative, moral vocation and an inward and emotional spiritual focus. I am here using the distinction by which "evangelical" refers to enthusiastic, individually-concerned

and gospel-centric protestant Christianity, while "Evangelical" refers to a movement influenced by Methodism but internal to the Anglican church.[40] The evangelical Pietism that made its way to Kant's *Collegium Fridericianum* was a major influence on Wesley's Methodism and thereby the Evangelicalism Eliot was taught and embraced.[41] Abstracted from their context, Eliot's focus on inward self and life, her insistence on emotional truth that overcomes discursive rationality and her sympathy with "human suffering and human longing for purity" in her letter quoted at the beginning of this chapter could fit equally well into a Pietistic, Methodistical or Evangelical frame.

Of course, Eliot's careful and ambiguous rhetoric, her focus on "earthly existence" and her rejection of "superhuman revelation" require a quite different genealogy. Kant is an important part of this genealogy, as his critical reaction against enthusiastic and dogmatic religion informed the work of higher critics like Strauss and Feuerbach, whose writings Eliot would turn to and translate in her own rationalist-humanist rejection of Evangelicalism. That Kant and Hegel were important influences on nineteenth century Higher criticism in general is accepted widely enough; but Hegel's immediate influence on figures like Strauss and Feuerbach has, I suspect, overshadowed the ways in which these figures are still carrying on a Kantian project. From both current and nineteenth century perspectives, Hegel and Kant may come off

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[40] I adopt this distinction in capitalization from Ian Bradley's *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians*, while the definition of "evangelical" collects the common traits in definitions offered by Bradley, Boyd Hilton in *The Age of Atonement* (7-14), David Hempton in *Evangelical Disenchantment* (4-7) and Herbert Schlossberg in *The Silent Revolution and the Making of Victorian England* (29), the last of which in turn draws on David Bebbington's *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*. I use the term individually-concerned as opposed to individualistic to suggest that, while evangelicalism was fundamentally concerned with inward spiritual life, individual conversion and individual behavior, it was not individualistic in the ways that, for example, nineteenth-century Quaker or Unitarian Christianities were.

[41] John Wesley's religious awakening among Moravian Pietists, which would eventually lead to the founding of Methodism, is frequently cited (for two brief examples among many, see W.R. Ward's *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* 310-3 and Schlossberg's *The Silent Revolution* 31-4).

as critical hypocrites, alleging dedication to the free operation of reason while ultimately returning thought to the familiar paths of theology and State interests.[42] Whatever the balance of truth and error in such a conception (both being certainly present), it is important to remember that Hegel is both inspired by and writing against Kant's philosophy. Although Feuerbach was a young Hegelian and Strauss clearly drew on Hegel in his conception of myth, both writers owed at least as much to Kant's critical and destructive reason, and its more conditional reparations, as to Hegel's reconciliations.

For both Kant and Eliot, the concept of duty exists and becomes compelling against a background of epistemic concerns explored particularly in their early works. Naturally, for the famed English atheist and the philosopher declared a danger to religion across Europe, one of these concerns is the question of theism and how one is to understand or construct an imperative morality when the existence of a deity is either negated or unknowable. Another concern is enthusiasm, which might be broadly characterized as thought that goes beyond the limits of reason and understanding –thought that is usually, but not necessarily, religious. For both Eliot and Kant, this threat calls for critical activity, correction and destruction – for Kant, in the form of critical science, and for Eliot in higher criticism, but also in the criticism of a public press. Nonetheless, both Eliot and Kant make manifest a need for a morality that survives the limits of speculative knowledge – for Kant, with the idea of a moral faith, and, for Eliot, with the concerns of sympathy and vocation. Duty poses a general problem, approximately, the question of what I

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[42] Although I personally find it interesting to follow the reception of Kant by Foucault and Deleuze, two inheritors of of the arch anti-Kantian Nietzsche. Foucault's essay on Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" attests to an interest in possible reconfigurations of the enlightenment project, and, although Deleuze claimed to have written his monograph on Kant to "an enemy," the concern Deleuze shows with Kant's philosophy, together his description of his philosophical project as "transcendental empiricism" suggests an appreciation for the critical potentials and immanent constructions of Kant's philosophy. The current resurgence in critical interest in Hegel attests, I think, to power his thought continues to have to uproot prior certitudes and found new paths.

ought to do, but also poses problems more specific to the fields in which the two writers worked – to what duties are attendant upon the practice of critical science, and what obligations does the vocation of the novelist entail?

Enthusiasm, Critique and Faith

Unlike Eliot, Kant never had any period of intense dedication to the evangelical Christianity that informed his education. Attending the the *Collegium Fridericianum*, Kant reacted against its religiously-informed discipline, later complaining that its type of coercion "often robs people of all the courage to think for themselves" (Kuehn 45, 48). Kant's later criticisms of the "spirit of narrow sectarianism" and religious zealotry of Pietism seem to have their roots in his experiences at the *Collegium* (Wood, "Life" in *A Companion to Kant* 11, Kuehn 52-4). Allen Wood claims that attempts "to identify Pietist influences in Kant's moral and religious thought" ignore the fact that "virtually all explicit references to Pietism in his writings or lectures are openly hostile" (11), while Kuehn declares "Kant's moral and religious views betray a definite anti-Pietistic bias" (54). One might certainly read this rejection itself as a kind of influence, leading Kant to denounce the outward practice of Pietism while maintaining something of its discipline and severity in other spheres. Nonetheless, we should be wary of reading into every explicit rejection an implicit sympathy – and thereby missing the ways in which Kant's moral philosophy vastly exceeded the narrow bounds of the brand of Pietism inculcated at the *Collegium*.

By all accounts, Kant's parents were devout Pietists – and, given Kant's frequent praise for his parents, this fact seems to complicate Kant's often hostile remarks about Pietism. Manfred Kuehn quotes Kant's claim that his mother possessed "genuine religiosity that was not

in the least enthusiastic" and proposes that what is often read as Pietistic influence in Kant's admiration of his parents is more reflective of the moral code of Königsberg tradesmen (31, 39-44). Ernst Cassirer acknowledges superficial contradiction in Kant's later statements about Pietism, but contrasts the respect Kant held for his parent's religious serenity with his disdain for the public display and fanaticism Kant saw in other forms of Pietism (17-8). Kant's desire to contrast an ideal of "genuine religiosity" with enthusiasm seems to accord with Cassirer's division and seems further supported by reports of Kant's discussion of his mother's religious behavior alongside his attribution of the early development of his moral character to her (Kuehn 31, 429 n23, 24). Kant's distinction between genuine religion and enthusiasm may accord with a division within Pietism – between an earlier model of Pietism, centered on inward will and devotion, practical faith and a rejection of outward ceremony or form and the model apparently taught at the *Collegium*, centered on obedience, repetitive discipline and torturous self-examination.[43] Despite his later declamations against what he saw as religious superstition and hypocrisy, it seems that there were some elements of religion Kant found "genuine" and morally significant.

Kant began his university career studying Latin literature and ended it studying natural science, engaged in contemporary debates about Leibniz and Newton – throughout avoiding the theological conflicts between orthodoxy, Pietism and Wolffian rationalism that plagued Prussia's universities. As tempting as it is to read Kant's choice of research as an attempt to side-step

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[43] For this characterization of the Pietism taught at the *Collegium*, I draw on Cassirer 15-8 and Kuehn 50-5. My dichotomy certainly oversimplifies a complex religious movement (e.g., the focus on inward devotion was part of the motivation for mandated self-examination, obedience and the subduing of the natural will were necessary to the development of the true will) – yet the development of evangelical movements from radical, inward-focused origins to more disciplinary and apocalyptic modes has been argued for in a number of works by W. R. Ward and appears now to be widely recognized in histories of evangelicalism.

religious issues altogether, his early publications do not support this reading. The decision to write on and develop Leibnizian physics in his first published paper, *Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces*, would have carried a kind of political religious content – this being due to Leibniz's rationalism and its association with Wolff, whose philosophy and followers were currently being persecuted or expelled from Prussian universities by Pietists (Kuehn 68-9, 91-2). But there are three pre-critical works by Kant in particular I would like to draw attention to for their religious content: *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* (1755), *The Only Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God* (1762), and *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics* (1766).[44] In the first two of these essays, Kant expresses and advocates theism while defending positions whose religious implications complicate that theism, while the last engages directly with enthusiasm in the figure of Emanuel Swedenborg.

If mentioned at all, Kant's *Universal Natural History and Theory of the Heavens* is mentioned for its expression of the nebular hypothesis well before Laplace's more famous formulation (Kant's work being published but withheld from circulation due to the publisher's bankruptcy (Cassirer 40)). Although Kant was less thorough in the mathematical development of the hypothesis than Laplace, Kant's formulation, reasoning from empirical findings at the time, has in some ways better modeled current understandings of our solar system's development than Laplace's. This hypothesis led Kant to correctly predict the discovery of new planets, and has even helped to predict the location of the Oort belt (Hastie, "New" xxxv, Schönfeld in *A*

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[44] *Allgemeine Naturgeschichte und Theorie des Himmels* and *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes*, respectively. Although the translation I employ here uses "The One Possible Basis," "Only" is a more literal rendering of *einzig* ("sole" could also work). *Beweisgrund* does not render well in english (literally Reason/Ground of/for Proof), but basis conveys the structural intent in its use.

Companion to Kant 47). The majority of this work is a sustained scientific attempt, working and expanding off of Newton, to build a satisfying mechanical account of the genesis and structure of the Solar System.

Yet viewed in relation to Kant's later prose, it is remarkable how this natural scientific pursuit is presented. Kant's declaration in the *Critique of Practical Reason* listing "the starry sky [*Himmel*] above me" as one of "two things fill [that] the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and reverence" (203) seems reflected here as the physical system of the heavens leads Kant to far-ranging speculation and the domain of poetry. For example, after giving a mathematically-driven account of the formation of Saturn's rings, Kant speculates on the possibility of Earth having once had a ring, and such a ring being the original foundation for the water above the firmament in Genesis (130). In the concluding part of this work, Kant moves from his mechanistic account of the universe to "a comparison of the inhabitants of the Heavenly Bodies,"[45] finishing with speculation about "the conditions of the existence of man in the Future Life." Delving into poetry, Kant quotes from Pope, Addison and Albrecht von Haller throughout this work (particularly Pope), often for beginning chapters and/or standing in when the eternity, infinity or vast system of the universe demands further account than prose can manage.

In this work, the vast mechanism of the Universe that drives Kant to poetry also serves to attest to a divine intelligence behind itself – and the poetry serves to underscore this attestation with its own praise for God. In the preface, Kant takes pains to defend his mechanical account of the cosmos from charges of atheism that might arise with the account's apparent similarity to

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[45] It should be noted that Kant does not assume the existence of extra-terrestrials. Nonetheless, his curiosity here extends to the thinking or rational nature in such beings – which invites comparison with his insistence in the *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals* that freedom of the will is a necessary condition of any rational being, and not just humans (50).

ancient atomic theory. Against these accusations, Kant stages his argument as a means of defending religion against the claims of Naturalism: mechanism and the operations of matter are given full scope (thus avoiding facile or over-simplified religious accounts of the universe which Naturalists can easily take apart), but the necessary laws at work behind matter presume and evidence a first cause. In fact, in an argument Kant explicitly borrows from Englishmen borrowing from Descartes, the construction of the universe from "rude matter" and "a few simple and general laws" testifies all the more to the wisdom and capacity of God (27). The eighth chapter resumes this argument (God having been a frequent reference in the meantime), also suggesting an internal tendency to order in things as another proof of God's existence.

Nevertheless, Kant had reason to anticipate accusations of Naturalism. Although working off of Newtonian principles, Kant broke with Newton with his nebular hypothesis. For Newton, explaining the existence and movement of the solar system along an apparently consistent plane required falling back on the direct action of God. Kant's idea that the solar system – and the universe more generally – might have formed from matter in a gaseous state condensing over time allowed for a material explanation of the same phenomenon (Cassirer 48-9, Hastie xxi). Although Kant insists that this material explanation only magnifies the glory and wisdom of the Creator, his defensive maneuvers clearly indicate his awareness that the explanation might be put to other uses. This text is complicated by an interest in Nature that sits uneasily with its theistic satisfactions. Led to contemplate the eventual decay of the earth, Kant assures us:

> But we ought not to lament the perishing of a world as a real loss of Nature. She proves her riches by a sort of prodigality which, while certain parts pay their tribute to mortality, maintains itself unimpaired by numberless new generations in the whole range

> of its perfection. What an innumerable multitude of flowers and insects are destroyed by a single cold day! And how little are they missed, although they are glorious products of the art of nature and demonstrations of the Divine Omnipotence! (150)

The divine becomes almost an afterthought amidst the staggering material operations of Nature. Kant's prodigal and homicidal Nature seems to differ only in choice of emphasis from Nietzsche's "nature, prodigal beyond measure … with no compassion or fairness, fertile and desolate and uncertain all at once; imagine Indifference itself as a power" (315)?[46] Against this infinitely creatively and infinitely destructive Nature, Kant invokes a "Revelation [that] teaches us to hope" for the persistence of the soul in union with the Deity (155). Yet this is a hope that "Reason of herself could not be bold enough even to aspire to" (155) – and, despite the fact that Kant concludes in considerations of a "Future Life," both Kant's reason and his sense of wonder are squarely focused on the physical system of the universe.

If *Universal Natural History* evinces a near-enthusiasm in Kant's sense of wonder and range of speculation with respect to the heavens, the same cannot be said for *The Only Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God*.[47] Although Kant's cosmogony does receive a brief mention in this latter text, The *Only Possible Basis* shows a tighter scope and more careful and technical development and organization.[48] Kant's foray into the well-plowed fields of theological proofs makes use of Leibnizian terminology and concepts while pressing beyond

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[46] Kant goes on from considering the extinction of insects and flowers to consider "The injurious influences of infected air, earthquakes, and inundations [that] sweep whole peoples from the earth," noting that "it does not appear that nature has thereby suffered any damage" (150).

[47] Obviously, the term enthusiasm is used here in a broader sense than above in the definition of evangelicalism. Nonetheless, the sense of an emotional excess of entirely rational expression is present in Kant's wonder, with and beyond his use of poetry, and Kant's own complaints about the religious enthusiast's inappropriate expansion of speculation and assertion might be brought to bear on this earlier work.

[48] Part of the shift in style between these two works likely has to do with different intended audiences – *Universal Natural Theory* was intended for (relatively) popular release, while *The Only Possible Basis* was intended to establish Kant's academic reputation (at which it was somewhat successful (Kuehn 141-2)).

the limitations of Leibniz's theological arguments (Cassirer 61-3). The argument of *The Only Possible Basis* turns on the second proposition of its second observation, that "the internal possibility of all things presupposes some existence." From this perspective of what is necessary for the internal possibility of all things to hold, the argument is eventually able to conclude the existence of an absolutely necessary being. Having arrived at this latter position, the proof of which "may be adduced completely a priori" (95), Kant arrives at different necessary aspects of this being (such as unity, eternity and ultimate reality) and concludes that it must be God. Despite an opening quotation from Lucretius, Kant understandably sees no need to defend this work from charges of atheistic Naturalism.

As the title suggests, this work has both constructive and destructive aims; it offers the basis for a demonstration of the existence of God, but it is also argues that this is the "only" possible basis. In the second part of this work, after the proof has been demonstrated, Kant goes on to elucidate the utility of this proof (this being where cosmogony becomes relevant). In doing so, he attacks physico-theological proofs of God's existence, which move from observations of nature to knowledge of God. Nor are these proofs alone, as suggested by the title of part three, "In which it is shown that no argument for a demonstration of the existence of God is possible save that which has been cited." In this last section, Cartesian and Wolffian proofs join their physico-theological and cosmological brethren, the latter two failing in precision and necessity, while the former two run against an assertion made here and recurrent in the first *Critique*, namely that existence is not a predicate. Despite the fact that Kant ultimately abandons his ontological argument, this work anticipates the arguments of the Ideals of Pure Reason chapter of the first *Critique* – both its systematic and negative engagement with proofs of the existence of God and, in a much less developed way, its particular arguments. If the *Universal Natural*

History concludes with an expansive movement towards other planets and future lives, *The Only Possible Basis* concludes with a culling movement, limiting the scope of how knowledge may be justified.

The dangerous potential of Kant's attack on popular and traditional proofs of the existence of God is partially counteracted by his own proof, but also by a note on which Kant begins and ends his study: that our knowledge of God does not rest on metaphysical proofs. *The Only Possible Basis* concludes with a turn away from its proof and the assertion that "It is thoroughly necessary that one be convinced of God's existence; but it is not nearly so necessary that it be demonstrated" (239). As revelation offered truths beyond reason in *Universal Natural History*, personal conviction of what Kant at the beginning of this work calls "the most important of all our knowledge" does not need proceed through the methods of formal proof (43). "Providence has not intended that the insights most necessary for human blessedness should rest upon the subtlety of refined inferences, but rather has immediately provided such insights to natural common sense which, if it is not confused by false artifice, does not fail to lead directly to the true and the useful insofar as we most urgently require them" (43). Kant's turn from "refined inferences" to the practically necessary anticipates Kant's turn from theoretical to practical knowledge in the second *Critique* – yet the conditions here are troubling. How is one to recognize when "false artifice" is at work (especially in dealing with matters as complex and abstract as the divine) and what does "insofar as we most urgently require them" exclude? The priority of human blessedness (suggesting inward purity and outward benevolent action) carries Pietistic connotations here – as does the sense of religious urgency trumping theoretical concerns. Yet Kant's interest in this work resides not in the sunny realm of the blessed, but rather in "the fathomless abyss of metaphysics … [which] is a dark ocean without coasts and

without lighthouses where one must begin like a mariner on a deserted ocean who, as soon as he steps on land somewhere, must test his passage" (45).

Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics opens with a decidedly less heroic (though similarly dark and borderless) image, "The realm of shades … the paradise of fanatical visionaries … a country without frontiers which they [the visionaries] can cultivate at their pleasure" (305). The German for "fanatical visionaries" is "*Phantasten*," suggesting a dreamer, but also one given to fantasy; in this sense, "fanatical" might be equally rendered "enthusiastic," as both English terms render the same German term (*Schwärmerei*). The problem of fanaticism or enthusiasm for Kant is the problem of what happens when we overstep the bounds of understanding and reason. Although this text was occasioned by an investigation into the enthusiastic visions of Swedenborg, Kant reads the dangers of enthusiasm no less into the visions of rationalist philosophers, affirming that "there is a certain affinity between the *dreamers of reason* and the dreamers of *sense*" (329). Drawing from a quotation from Heraclitus (misattributed to Aristotle) concerning the community of the waking world and the isolation of dream worlds, Kant speaks of the dream "world known as *The Order of Things* … tinkered together by *Wolff* … [and] the world which was conjured out of nothing by *Crusius* using the magical power of a few formulae concerning *what can* and *what cannot be thought*" (329). The religious enthusiast and the unconsciously enthusiastic philosopher happily inhabit "imaginary worlds," removing themselves alike from the demands of rigorous reason and epistemic responsibility to human community. Freed from the constraints of rational testing and

consensus, these figures wander the abyss, shaping its unreal material with no guidance save arbitrary and unfixed pleasure.[49]

Nonetheless, this text is not a straightforward condemnation of metaphysics (or even, arguably, of enthusiasm). The "elucidation" promised in the title is at least partially facetious, as is the "Preamble, which promises very little for the execution of the project" – and yet parts of this text seem to be constructing and defending genuine philosophical positions. Moreover, Kant's inspiration for this project appears to derive from a genuine interest in and curiosity about Swedenborg. In the text, Kant complains of "the wild figments of the imagination of this worst of all enthusiasts," but in a letter to Charlotte von Knobloch written before this text, Kant seems to give much more credence to the possible veracity of the reports about Swedenborg (352, 451-55 n43-49). The text manifests something of this ambiguity, opening with the "unimaginable foolishness" of enthusiastic accounts, but also cautioning that "To believe none of the many things which are recounted with some semblance of truth, and to do so without any reason, is as much a foolish prejudice as to believe anything which is spread by popular rumour … without examination" (305-6). Despite its protests, the text does seem to seriously consider the possibility of a spirit world, and manages to come to a productive "practical conclusion." But both tentative speculations and complaints are complicated by a strange tone running throughout this text, starting from the preamble, which hopes "to leave the reader completely satisfied: for

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[49] Although this realm is not the sole province of individuals – in the Preface, Kant speaks of Holy Rome's "lucrative provinces in that realm" and speaks of its "exploitation-rights to that spirit realm, having been legitimized by considerations of state-interest" (305). In context Kant speaks ironically of Rome's autonomy from "futile objections raised by pedantic scholars" and this is clearly an anti-Catholic maneuver (sure to be an intelligent move in the Lutheran Prussian state of the time). However, one might well wonder about further implications of Kant's connection between religious and state interest in the regulation of "the invisible realm" (or, for that matter, the capacity of state-interest to fix and secure territory in a space inherently given to indeterminative flux and whether the "pedantic scholars" would in turn (and no less arbitrarily, although under the alleged aegis of right governance) reterritorialize the space unfixed from Catholic determinations in the interests of another state).

the bulk of [this work] he will not understand, parts of it he will not believe, and as for the rest – he will dismiss it with scornful laughter" (306). Kant varies between what seems like sincere argumentation and moments meant to occasion this scornful laughter. Kant explicitly grants the reader a kind of freedom, declaring the first chapter of the first part to present "a tangled metaphysical knot, which can be either untied or cut as one pleases" and recommending the truth of Swedenborg's story "to the reader's own free examination" (307, 340). Against the structured, directive motions of the *Critiques*, this freedom can come off as disorienting – not unlike moving from the guiding narration of *Adam Bede* to the chaotic activity of the doubly pseudonymous Theophrastus Such.[50]

As David Walford and Ralf Meerbote point out, *Dreams* is the first publication in which Kant truly comes to examine "the *limits* and *possibility* of metaphysical cognition" (xvli). The structure seems to anticipate a Kantian antimony, moving from two incompatible and incomplete viewpoints in the first part (a revealed "community with the spirit-world" and the cancellation of this community) to a conclusion that does not so much resolve the situation as enter upon a new awareness of limitation, but also balancing a "dogmatic" first part with a "historical" and empirical second part, concluding with a movement beyond both parts. Kant even comes to define a fundamental function of metaphysics as being "a science of the limits of human reason" (354). The particular conclusions of such a science in the immediate context appear to be our

[50] The freedom Kant gives the reader is itself indeterminate, seeming to direct the reader's reading of Swedenborg's visions, while calling his own voice (or at least motivation) as critic into question – an alternation quite like that of the narrator of *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, who presents a series of character sketches that critique others and problems in English thought and culture even as they problematize the speaker (see Nancy Henry's discussion of the "serious and playful exploration" of Eliot's last (living) major publication in her introduction to the work (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994 vii-xxxxvii))

"necessary ignorance" concerning the existence of spirits, for such spirits "can never be positively thought," but at most supposed (339).

Yet Kant does seem at least temporarily attracted by the explanatory potentials of a spirit world. Drawing on a mixture of Hutcheson and Rousseau, Kant speaks of a constraining "moral feeling" in which we sense "the rule of the general will … [which] confers upon the world of all thinking beings its moral unity" (322). The spiritual world would provide a plane of efficacy for morality beyond its meager appearance in this physical world. The awareness we have of "the strong law of obligation and the weaker law of benevolence" would reflect forces at work beyond physical nature, but not out of accord with the "order of nature" (322-3). Kant sees this latter feature to be of great advantage, avoiding the "necessity of having to resort to an extraordinary Divine Will in order to resolve a difficulty arising from the imperfect harmony between morality and its consequences in the world," which would amount "to a serious difficulty" (324). Kant does not believe this theory negates an obligation to believe in God, but does hold that it can evade an improper human tendency to "imagine new and arbitrary arrangements in the present or the future world, employing some scheme originated by [one's] own wisdom, which [one] then promptly converts into a rule for the Divine Will" (324). Here the general objection to Divine Command Morality of arbitrariness is complemented with the threat of personal or egoistic inclination (in a manner that anticipates Bentham's similar objection in 1789). Kant ultimately places even the moral dimension of the spirit world beyond the realm of the knowable, but his "Practical Conclusion" stresses that such knowledge is not necessary. Good action motivated only by epistemically secured reward is inherently suspect, while "the heart of man contain[s] within itself immediate moral prescriptions" that do not require knowledge of a future life to function (358). This does not rule out such a future state,

but "it seems more consonant with human nature and moral purity to base the expectation of a future world on the sentiments of a nobly constituted soul than, conversely, to base its noble conduct on the hope of another world" (359). This "moral faith," which does not rely on speculative knowledge for action, but finds motivation and hope beyond such knowledge, anticipates both the first and second *Critiques*.

Unlike the *Only Possible Basis*, the anonymously published *Dreams* did not help Kant's academic reputation (Mendelssohn, for one, chided Kant for his choice of subject (lxviii)), and, in writing the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant adopted the critical science he had gently satirized in *Dreams* (speaking of "Science in its vanity" (358)). Speaking as a practitioner of critical science in this work, Kant abandoned the satiric voice of *Dreams*, but also the more casual and literary voice of *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1764) and the wide-ranging and sometimes nigh-enthusiastic voice of *Universal Natural History*. Kant does maintain some of the scientific language of this last work, as well as the sense of the pathless space of metaphysics in *The Only Possible Basis*: in the first *Critique*, the secure path that metaphysics seeks might well be impossible, and, even if it is not, the reason by which we seek it threatens at every turn to betray us (20). In this space, one can proceed only by experiment (*Versuche* – "attempt" is another meaning), as explicitly stated and as suggested by various references to scientists such as Francis Bacon, Galileo, and most famously, Copernicus. Yet Kant is careful to insist that his Copernican Revolution will not affect the social order – or, to phrase it more sympathetically, he seeks to maintain popular concerns against the abstractions of speculative reason. Despite famously destroying proofs of God, the immortality of the soul and the freedom of the will, Kant insists that the first *Critique* "in no way … affect[s] *the interests of the people*" (32). Their common sense views about the soul, freedom and God arose from

natural predisposition, the consciousness of duties and the manifest order of nature, and are thus unaffected by Kant's assaults on "the arrogant claims of the schools" (33). Critical science is destructive in its ventures, but it is also careful in method and limited in scope.

Moreover, Kant consistently emphasizes that his critical method avoids both dogmatic and skeptical extremes. In the preface to the first edition, this involves his self-positioning between the despotic dogmatists and the anarchic skeptics, the former threatening a state of decay in their "obsolete, worm-eaten *dogmatism*" and the latter razing the cultivation of others in a chaotic nomadism (7). In both editions, this mutual distancing is the note on which Kant concludes, splitting his "critical path" from the dogmatic road of Wolff and the skeptical course of Hume, and inviting the reader to accompany him in the still unfinished project of bringing "human reason to complete satisfaction in what has always … engaged its desire to know" (774). To proceed along this path requires belief both in the possibility of progressively advancing knowledge and in the current inadequacies in the method and content of our knowledge. As a mechanistic account of the universe was supposed to defend religion against irrational claims, Kant's critical method can avoid extremes that would endanger science (in the above sense) and religion alike: "Solely by means of critique can we cut off, at the very root, *materialism, fatalism, atheism,* freethinking *lack of faith, fanaticism,* and *superstition,* which can become harmful universally" (34). Again, the term "fanaticism" (*Schwärmerei*) above might also be rendered "enthusiasm" – and the effective equation made above between negative religious and skeptical terms rests on their mutual neglect of what Kant sees as a necessary systematic and rational foundation. Without this foundation, arbitrary inclination will either gather tyrannical force about itself in dogma, or lay waste to itself and all else with it in skeptical dissolution.

After the examination of transcendental aesthetics, transcendental logic, concepts of the pure understanding and the principles of judgment and at the end of the first book, the pure reason of the title of this work finally emerges.[51] Beyond its merely formal use, reason "itself contains the origins of certain concepts and principles that it borrows from neither the senses nor from understanding" (351). Transcendental ideas are "pure concepts of reason" and fall under three classes of psychology, cosmology and theology, or the soul as subject, the world as series and God as the condition of possibility (376-9). Kant's destruction of the proofs concerning these three ideas, under the Paralogisms of Pure Reason for the Soul, the Antinomy of Pure Reason for the world and The Ideal of Pure Reason for God, are of sufficient fame and complexity that a summary here would not serve our purposes. Yet something that, while well-known enough among Kant scholars, seems to get lost in more casual discussions of the first *Critique*, is Kant's emphasis that the contradictions that arise in these sections are not, properly speaking, mistakes that people have come up with on their own. What Kant refers to as Transcendental Illusion arises from Pure Reason itself: "transcendental ideas are just as natural to human reason as the categories are to the understanding … [but] whereas the categories lead to truth … the transcendental ideas bring about a mere illusion – although an irresistible one" (617). The means by which we come to the conclusion that freedom of the will does and does not exist, by which we are led to regard God as a necessary being and the proofs of God's existence as impossible, are the operations of reason itself. "Hence the supreme being remains

[51] This progression being in line with Kant's assertion that "All our cognition starts from the sense, proceeds from there to understanding, and ends with reason" (351). A critique necessarily involves proceeding to the root and foundation of its matter, and thus a critique of pure reason would need to make account of the cognitive processes that precede the activity of pure reason proper.

for the merely speculative use of reason a mere *ideal* - but yet a *faultless* ideal, a concept that concludes and crowns the whole of human cognition" (616).

And yet Kant does not end on this note. Despite the merely regulative function of the ideas of reason, they nonetheless evince the interest of reason in systematic unity. Although this interest in the "purposive unity of things" cannot ground existence or knowledge (the attempts to do so lead to contradiction), it does lead us to regard "all arrangement in the world *as if* it had sprung from the intention of a most supreme reason" (650). This tentative principle, which proceeds as far as speculative reason can without contradiction, is reinforced by practical reason. Here, as in the second *Critique*, practical reason concerns freedom, action and moral purpose. Practical freedom offers the possibility of the unity of the moral or intelligible world (as opposed to the sensible world) and the ideal of the highest good, in which happiness and moral worthiness are reconciled. This ideal in turn leads to the concept of an absolutely necessary "single original being" behind the moral and natural worlds. Yet "moral theology is only of immanent use … it serves us, viz., to fulfill our vocation here in the world by fitting ourselves into a system of purposes" and to attempt to use it to expand speculative knowledge would return to transcendental illusion (745-6).

In the second preface, Kant claims "I had to annul knowledge in order to make room for faith" (31) and drawing towards his conclusion, Kant repeats this language and distinguishes faith from opinion and knowledge as subjectively but not objectively sufficient assent to a judgment and moral faith from doctrinal faith (692, 748-52). This latter faith derives from an awareness of the binding nature of moral law, which gives us an inescapable sense of purpose. As the harmonizing of this purpose "with the entirety of all purposes, [having] thereby … practical validity" is conceivable only with the existence of "a God and a future world," we have

a subjective warrant for believing in the latter (752-3). This moral faith can lead us only to subjective assent, but so long as we are aware of the moral law as binding for us, this assent holds. As in *Dreams*, moral faith cannot lead us to knowledge, but it can ground action and suggest hope.

Kant's discussion of the moral law and freedom in this text anticipate his turn to practical reason in the second *Critique*, but in itself, the first *Critique* does not seem to need any sequel. Indeed, between Kant's conditioned moral faith and his prefatory assurance of the imperviousness of popular religious belief, it seems unclear what more Kant could have to say. Throughout his pre-critical phase, Kant showed interest in a non-dogmatic theism consonant with a perspective in which discovery and moral vocation take precedence over submission. The ultimate position of the first *Critique*, affirming a subjective warrant for a rationally indemonstrable but purposively suggestive theism, strikes an even balance between this interest and what Kant came to see as the demands of critical rigor. This critical rigor is ultimately supposed to promote morality and carry social benefits by clarifying thought, but it does so through the destruction of insupportable positions and by excluding the contingent and empirical. By taking the necessary and rationally articulate as the subject for his *Critique*, Kant could avoid the equally pernicious incertitude of skepticism and ungrounded enthusiasm of dogmatism. This method also involved culling earlier interests of Kant from the critical project, including the starry heavens and reflections (however satirical) on the spirit-world. Yet Kant's critical reason leads us necessarily to contradiction and thus indeterminacy, and if we cannot venture into the horizons of freedom, self and God by proof, they remain before us as compelling problems. That Kant concludes his work in certainty of theoretical incertitude is arguably entirely proper to the ends of a critique committed at once to construction, destruction and an awareness of limits.

Evangelicalism, Higher Criticism and the Novel

Like Kant, Eliot started to write in the genre for which she would be known later in life and after publishing other types of writing. In what most critics refer to as her evangelical phase (starting sometime after she started attending her Nuneaton boarding school in 1828 and concluding outwardly with her refusal to attend church with her father in 1842), Eliot did not refrain from novel reading, taking in Scott, Bulwer-Lytton, Goldsmith and Dickens, among others (Haight 15, Fleishman 18). However, as Fleishman notes, judging from her letters, she was "particularly severe on fiction," distrusting its fanciful method, social consequences and spiritual relevance (15). Fleishman connects this with Eliot's asceticism – a term seemingly unavoidable in Eliot scholarship, critics differing only on when (if not always), and to what degree to the term applies. The asceticism did not prevent Eliot from writing poetry and her first published work is a poem of melancholy religious contemplation published in the *Christian Observer* in 1840, although the poem's content, bidding farewell to the things and inhabitants of the material world is of a decidedly ascetic turn (Haight 25-6). The poem concludes with the comfort that the speaker does not have to abandon the Bible, who she will "meet in heaven." Neither Haight nor the editor of the journal could "resist a note" on this point – as presumably a Bible would not be needed in the afterlife – and Eliot's interest here in the perseverance of this text here does seem to call for comment.[52] Although, as Redinger notes, Eliot's asceticism, combined with her "Evangelical framework … left her only a … narrow scope for ambition"

[52] Ruby Redinger (80-1) stands among others that have noted this poem and editor's note after Haight – though her reading of the Bible line expands off of a stanza quoted but not analyzed by Haight, concerning "Books that have been to me as chests of gold." Eliot's comfort at the maintenance of the bible and despair at the loss of her other books (placing their loss on par with the loss of the "the earth and all that breathe earth's air" indicates "the intensity with which she had read" her books (81).

(81-2), this same framework afforded her a sense of a supremely important text of continuing relevance and a venue for initial publication (albeit a venue not subsequently exploited).[53]

Eliot sent the poem to the *Christian Observer* on the prompting of Maria Lewis, principal governess at Mrs. Wallington's Boarding School, where Eliot studied from 1828 until 1832. By all accounts, Maria Lewis was a close friend and mentor to Eliot during and after her stay at Mrs. Wallington's and a strong Evangelical influence on Eliot's life. Moving to Misses Mary and Rebecca Franklin's school in Coventry in 1832 exposed her to another type of Christian influence. The School's girls attended the Baptist church where the Franklins' father preached and organized prayer meetings on their own (Haight 19). Although Evangelicalism was defined by a tendency towards enthusiasm and seriousness (among other things) within the Anglican church, Eliot's experience with Miss Lewis would not have readied her for the style and severity of Baptist Christianity. The difference between the two may be suggested by Miss Lewis's own conviction that "her erstwhile pupil's 'fall into infidelity was due to the overexcitement, fostered by the Methodist Franklins … and the Aunt [Mrs. Samuel Evans, for a while a Methodist preacher], leading to a reaction'" (Redinger 77). Lewis's mistaking Baptists for Methodists no doubt reflects an Anglican tendency to lump Dissenters, but also indicates a common tendency in the two denominations towards enthusiasm and rhetoric that did not avoid the use of terror.[54] Experience with this form of Christianity does not seem to lessened Eliot's religious interest – especially as she dates the "strong hold" of Evangelicalism starting at fifteen, shortly after she

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[53] Of course, the Bible functions both to offer a field for contemplation and writing (as evangelical publications of the times evince) and to potentially trivialize the importance of any other text. Yet this latter inadequacy could and did itself become a source of literary creativity.

[54] Naturally this characterization should not be seen as completely accurate to the complex and internally differentiated movements of Methodism and Baptism in England in the nineteenth century. The above 'rhetoric' refers to discourse shaped around the torments of hell and the needful redemption of sinner on the one hand and apocalypticism on the other.

would have entered the Franklins' school. Apparently, Eliot was active in this environment, leading some of the aforementioned prayer meetings and, according the Franklins, "sure to get up something very soon in the way of a clothing club or some other charitable activity" (Haight 19, Redinger 71).[55] Although Eliot wrote verse at school, it was only after leaving that she turned to publication with the *Christian Observer* and an abortive attempt at a Chart of Ecclesiastical History, intended for sale.

Her first major publication, a translation of Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu* (*The Life of Jesus*) would come after she had rejected Christianity. As Fleishman notes, "Eliot's demystification was astonishingly abrupt" (24), and most Eliot biographers see it as related to, but not entirely determined by her new acquaintance with the Unitarian Brays and Coventry and her subsequent reading of Charles Christian Hennell's *An Inquiry into the Origins of Christianity* (Hennell was the elder brother of Mrs. Bray and wrote the text in response to his sister's disturbance by her husband's free-thinking necessitarianism (Haight 37-8)). It was by means of this group that the project of translating Strauss came to Eliot, after several others deferred or abandoned it. Regardless of how she came by it, Eliot's decision to translate Strauss's work shows definite signs of the "antagonism" she spoke of to D'Albert-Durade (Eliot's extended stay in Geneva took place in 1849, only one year after the publication of her translation).

The Life of Jesus pushed trends in biblical higher criticism to a radical breaking point, and, in doing so, ignited debate and, more often, censure across Germany.[56] The basic project of the work is to read through the gospels in painstaking detail in order to investigate their origins.

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[55] Haight also mentions that "we are told" that she taught Sunday School near Griff before going to Coventry, the source apparently being Maria Lewis (19). The clothing club is also mentioned in Eliot's letters, Vol I, 43 (cited in Fleishman 17)

[56] For more about German reaction to Strauss's work, see the second chapter of Richard S. Cromwell's *David Friedrich Strauss and His Place in Modern Thought* (Fair Lawn, NJ: R.E. Burdick, Inc., 1974).

So far, this does not differentiate Strauss's work from that of any number of other theological scholars across Germany, including Strauss's teacher, F.C. Baur, who read competing Peterine (Jewish) and Pauline (Hellenic) forces at work in the composition of the New Testament. Strauss's decision to include Naturalism – in this case, disbelief in the supernatural, at least as manifest in miracles or other matter at odds with a rational understanding of nature – in his work would put him in a much more limited company; but this position is not unprecedented in biblical argument: Heinrich Paulus and an anonymous fragmentist were both prior critical advocates of Naturalism whom Strauss cites (13-21). But while the Wolfenbüttel fragmentist remained anonymous and Paulus carefully stressed the historical accuracy of the gospels, Strauss's project was intentionally more public and more inflammatory. Continuing the historical project of traditional higher criticism and the demystifying project of Naturalism, Strauss added the mythic as the central term of his analysis.

Myth, for Strauss, must be distinguished from intentional fabrications, being as "the necessary vehicle for the first expressions of the human mind," deriving primarily from a community rather than any one individual (25). Strauss's method throughout most of *The Life of Jesus* (excepting its introduction and conclusion) is to take an event in the Gospels, to posit a supernatural reading, oppose to that a naturalist reading, and conclude with a mythic reading of the event. This method straddles the line between Kantian and Hegelian dialectic: as in the Kantian dialectic, the contradiction of the two views indicates a mutual insufficiency or incapacity and necessitates abandoning them. As in the Hegelian dialectic, this mythic is meant to be a third term that reconciles or resolves the two earlier views; the symbolic and communal

myth maintaining the significance of the event while avoiding irrational claims.[57] Likewise, Strauss's method is not entirely consistent, sometimes delving in to the historical and symbolic significance of the event, at other times contenting himself with the discovery of inconsistencies and the improbabilities in a gospel event and abridging or neglecting his synthetic conclusion.

Critics of Eliot have quite rightly drawn attention to Strauss's conclusion, in which he sets out to "re-establish dogmatically what has been destroyed critically" (397). Fleishman cites Strauss's turn to the human significance of the Gospel, in which "It is Humanity that dies, rises and ascends to heaven" (Strauss 438) as decisively important to Eliot's humanism.[58] Near the conclusion of *Das Leben* Strauss says "the History [of Jesus] is not enough; it is not the whole truth; it must be transmuted from a past fact into a present one; from an external event to you, it must become your own intimate experience" (Strauss 445). Barry Qualls reads this quotation (and the sentiment behind it) as important for "understanding George Eliot's lifelong need for the Bible, its language and typologies" (121). Both Fleishman and Qualls stress the importance of positive Hegelian content to Strauss's project. Strauss's argument about the human significance of the gospels draws on Hegel's assertion that Christianity figures philosophical truth and, as Fleishman recognizes, Young Hegelian beliefs. Strauss contrasts his reading with Kant's moral symbolism, arguing for the need for "actual historical consciousness" and aligning himself with a Hegelian insistence on the particular.[59]

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[57] This is meant as a popular characterization of the two dialectics as relevant to Strauss's project. Obviously, the role of the negative in the Hegelian dialectic complicates how we understand its reconciling or preservative functions and Kant's dialectic does not simply abandon the opposing positions generated by transcendental illusion.
[58] More generally, he discusses the relevance of Strauss's mythic method to Eliot's interest in anthropology (read widely) and myth's meaning in human experience, calling Eliot's translation of Strauss "a turning point and the grounding of an orientation" (40).
[59] The primary text of Kant's that Strauss here engages with is *Religion within the bounds of Bare Reason*. Although the Christological content of Kant's work is more particular to that work, Strauss's engagement also deals

Yet Kant is an important presence in this work. The movement from the critical to the dogmatic suggests influence from Kant's turn to the dogmatic and speculative uses of pure reason after the destructive activity of the transcendental dialectic. Moreover, despite Strauss's claims about the importance of historical particularity, most of the work of the conclusion is engaging with other academics and philosophers and/or seeking humanly universal moral and/or theological significance, as in Kant's antinomies and *Critique of Practical Reason* (or its anticipation in the conclusion of the first *Critique*), respectively. As Rosemary Ashton points out, Eliot emphasized the subtitle of *Das Leben*, which she rendered "Critically Examined,"[60] and this likely shows her awareness of the similarity between the philosophical method here at work and that in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (*George Eliot* 51, *German Idea* 151). In the Preface to first edition of *Das Leben*, Strauss stresses the need to subject the gospels to a rigorous "critical examination," insisting that "Science cannot rest satisfied with" the "half-measure[s]" of either supernatural or rationalist presuppositions. Strauss's use of the term "science" (*Wissenschaft)* here clearly indicates his debt to Hegel, yet his method bears more similarity to the destructive tendencies of the *Critique* than the reconciliation of the dialectic.[61] As Kant's method's is not really a reconciliation of dogmatic idealism and skeptical empiricism, but a venture beyond and destructive of both, Strauss's critical science is meant to tear down the

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with themes that appear in many of Kant's works (e.g., concerning what Strauss calls "the moral imperative," concern with (subjectively) universal human experience and morality, an interest in the intelligible extracted from the empirical).

[60] The full title of the work is *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*. "bearbeitet" might be literally rendered "worked (on)" or "dealt with," but "examined" conveys the idea well and sounds much better.

[61] Of course, negation plays a central role in Hegel's dialectic, but this is a negation necessarily tied to preservation (both being inherent in the term *Aufhebung*)

pretensions and assumptions of dogmatic supernaturalism and incautious rationalism,[62] and, theoretically, move beyond them with a scientific mythic account of the gospels.[63]

Strauss's *Das Leben* presents us with a tension, in which the beginning and the conclusion of the work stress the positive or constructive nature of the mythic method and the moral significance of the Gospels, while the bulk of the work seems dedicated primarily to destruction. Likewise, readers who came to Kant's first *Critique* under the guidance of Reinhold, looking for a resolution to the *Pantheismusstreit*, may have been somewhat mystified in trying to square some of Kant's positive statements towards the opening and close of his work with the radical and ungrounding activity of the work itself. Many critics cite Cara Bray's account of Eliot coming before her and her husband "Strauss-sick…ill [from] dissecting the beautiful story of the crucifixion" as proof of Eliot's distaste for the destructive aspects of Strauss's project – or even as coming to a reconsideration of the project itself (*GEL* i 206). Yet, as Redinger and Fleishman note, at the end of Eliot's translation, she wrote to Sara Hennell praising Strauss as "so Klar und Ideenvoll" (clear and full of ideas, or insightful) and apparently exuberant: "next week and we will be merry and sad, wise and nonsensical, devout and wicked together!" (*GEL* i 218, qtd in Redinger 145 and Fleishman 36).[64] Cara Bray's letter describing Eliot as "Strauss-sick" also mentions the toll tending to her ill father had taken on her, yet concedes that "nevertheless she looks very happy and satisfied at times with her work." Eliot certainly had differences with Strauss's work, yet her decision to translate the work in the first

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[62] Rationalism and Naturalism being functionally identical terms in this context – and thus closer to empirical materialism than Kantian reason

[63] The German term *Wissenschaft* has wider disciplinary implications than the English science, including the humanities and other knowledge / research ventures besides what we might call sciences. Strauss's Hegelian use of this term would also indicate a self-reflexive nature to this venture.

[64] Despite noting this passage, Redinger insists that Eliot's experience of translating *Das Leben*, once underway, was primarily negative, while Fleishman seems more inclined to emphasize sympathy.

place and her continued labor at and satisfaction in it, even when she is allegedly made sick at it, speak to the value she saw in it. As this work is predominantly given to destruction or dissection, we need to account for ways in which Eliot saw value in this devout (or at least rigorously attentive) and wicked activity. Like Kant, Strauss speaks of the imperviousness of popular religion: "the author is aware that the essence of the Christian faith is perfectly independent of his criticism" (xi). Unlike Kant, Strauss concedes that incautious forays of readers into his critical investigations may "inflict a wound on the faith of individuals."[65] Moreover, Strauss and Eliot were both wagering their time, effort, and potential careers on the social impact of this work – an impact whose positive developments would depend upon more immediate rejections and reconsiderations.

If Strauss's project embodies the destructive tendencies in Kant's critical project, Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, which Eliot translated in 1854, seems anticipated by Kant's explanation in the second preface to the first *Critique* of the popular belief in personal immortality. In this explanation, Kant posits that, rather than lying in any theologian's abstraction, this belief derives from "the feeling, which exists in the breast of every man, that the temporal is inadequate to meet and satisfy the demands of his nature" (34). Although Kant's explanation leaves the door for the genuine existence of Immortality open and Feuerbach does not, this explanation of religious belief by means of universal human psychology and nature encapsulates the fundamental thesis of Feuerbach's *Essence*. As with Strauss, the more

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[65] Although, in a note that may suggest a parallel with a less explicit element of Kant's first critique, Strauss claims that his work is so framed as to turn away the popular laity. Kant does speculate about potential damage to the a hypothetical reader in *Dreams*, and, like Strauss, there seems to be some satiric intent in both writers' cautions, as Kant speculates about mooncalves resulting from the ideal conceptions of readers exposed to too much Swedenborg (535), and Strauss speaks of a sort of just punishment being rendered to the over-ambitious layman reader.

immediate point of reference is Hegel, and Marx's desire to turn Hegelianism around[66] has its origins in Feuerbach's materialism. Yet Marx's famous break with Feuerbach is based primarily on what he saw as the inadequacies of this materialism, falling back on intangible essences, even while tearing down God and religion. Both Feuerbach's radicalism and his essentialism can be found in his claim at the conclusion of the first part of *The Essence of Christianity* that we have now accomplished "our most essential task," namely:

> We have reduced the supermundane, supernatural and superhuman nature of God to the elements of human nature as its fundamental elements. Our process of analysis has brought us again to the position with which we set out. The beginning, middle and end of religion is MAN. (184)

As God, immortality, and the whole panoply of Christian symbolism and structure are systematically reduced to human nature, the figure of man (in his species) rises proportionally to become a kind of God: in the concept of God, man observes the tendencies of his own longings, but also the power of his species in aggregate. This latter, positive maneuver is possible because religion provides a locus for universal human experience, emotion and concepts. While Feuerbach's abstract human essence seems to leave no room for a Marxist awareness of physical labor and economic activity, Feuerbach never loses sight of emotion. To cite a few examples, in prayer, "God is the affirmation of human feeling" (123), in the incarnation, god becomes "a being of the heart" (50) and the trinity spring "out of the feeling of a want" and a need for community (73).

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[66] Although often quoted as saying that he sought to turn Hegel on his head, in the afterword to *Capital*, technically Marx claims that Hegelianism is already standing on its in head and must be turned right-way up again.

Indeed, Eliot's emphasis on her "emotional agreement" with Christianity lends itself readily to a kind of Feuerbachian reading in which, whatever may be mistaken about its formulas or dogma, religion correctly understands and emphasizes the truths of love and suffering. In a frequently-cited letter, Eliot declares to Sara Hennell that "with the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree" (*GEL* ii 153). In "George Eliot's Religion of Humanity," Paris argues that Eliot's religious humanism was highly indebted to the philosophy of Feuerbach. In "George Eliot, Feuerbach and the Question of Criticism," U.C. Knoepflmacher reads *Adam Bede* in light of Feuerbach's interpretive method in *Essence*, arguing that Eliot adopted and adapted it in creating her novel's structure and symbolism.[67] More recently, Feuerbach often appears as a side note or minor comment, elaborating on Eliot's views on sympathy or her complex religious apostasy. A notable exception appears in Susan E. Hill's "Translating Feuerbach, Constructing Morality: The Theological and Literary Significance of Translation for George Eliot." In this essay, Hill argues that Feuerbach's theological method informs Eliot's ideas of translation, and that these ideas in turn appear in Eliot's fiction, as her literary character must "become good translators in order to become successful moral agents" (636). Barry Qualls makes note of Feuerbach's elevation of the female, arguing that Feuerbach's inversion of "Mother/Nature, Father/Spirit" dichotomies was influential on Eliot's fiction.[68]

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[67] Knoepflmacher's essay also makes note of Feuerbach's literalizing of the sacraments, especially Baptism and the Lord's supper. In a work that often turns to the abstract qualities, emotions and powers of man, it is interesting (and perhaps complicates Marx's objections) that Feuerbach chooses to conclude his work discussing the need for literal bread and water as necessary grounds for humanity, consciousness and intellect, declaring "Therefore, let bread be sacred for us, let wine be sacred, and also let water be sacred! Amen."

[68] Qualls connects Feuerbach's thought her with Comtean Positivism – although it would be interesting to compare and contrast Feuerbachian and Comtean readings of Eliot's most explicit Madonna figure (although a Madonna figure that does not give birth), Romola.

These readings generally draw off the first part of *The Essence of Christianity*, which deals with "the True or Anthropological Essence of Religion," and seems to ground a positive and sympathetic religious humanism. They map less well onto the second part of this text, "The False or Theological Essence of Religion." This section is more overtly hostile, declaring that "Darkness is the mother of religion," and seeking to dispel this darkness by "the discriminating light of the understanding" (193). Feuerbach attacks what he describes as "contradictions" in Christian assertions and belief about the existence and nature of God, the trinity, the sacraments and in the concepts of faith and love. In this view, God ceases to be the alienated essence of man (in any positive sense) and becomes the negation of nature and material existence, generating and permitting contradictions in proportion to his abstraction from reality. In this attack, Feuerbach cites Kant's "critique of the proofs of the existence of God" and defends Kant from "the blame which was cast on him by Hegel" (201). Although Feuerbach's materialism, prioritizing the senses as evidence of existence, is at odds with Kant's transcendental idealism, this does not prevent Feuerbach from agreeing with what he takes to be Kant's conclusion (the impossibility of proving God's existence). Moreover, although Feuerbach here claims that "it is absurd to reproach reason that it does not satisfy a demand which can only address itself to the senses" (201), seeming to diminish the importance of reason against sense-certainty, he elsewhere presents a reason more in line with Kant's moral philosophy: "Wherever religion places itself in contradiction with reason, it places itself also in contradiction with the moral sense" (246). The point here is not so much the opposition of reason and religion (which Kant frequently complicates) as the alignment of rationality and morality and the concern with what Kant calls heteronomy in the second *Critique* (i.e., the contamination of morality by particular, non-universalizable and irrational principles). Yet the more immediate and obvious similarity

for this destructive undertaking lies with Kant's first *Critique*. Although Feuerbach's incautious speed and empiricism would have appalled Kant, his method of drawing out contradictions in the conceptions of abstract religious concepts to demonstrate an impossibility of proof manifests Feuerbach's debt to Hegel's predecessor.[69]

Positive humanism and the desire to find communal human significance in religious thought, doctrine and narrative are certainly part of Strauss's and Feuerbach's work. Furthermore, critical tendencies to emphasize these aspects of their work with respect to Eliot (or to deemphasize Strauss altogether) accord well with Eliot's famous aesthetic concern with sympathy in chapter seventeen of *Adam Bede*. However, these works are also decidedly invested in critical and destructive operations that we must also take into account in understanding Eliot's decision to translate these works for the British public. Eliot's desire for antagonism, to use her later term, seems all the more likely, given the fiery reception both of these works had already received in Germany – Strauss received condemnations far and wide across Germany and Feuerbach was "lionized by students and radical intellectuals" and delivered popular lectures in Heidelberg amidst the revolutions of 1848 (Wartofsky xix). It is also worth noting that it was to Feuerbach's radical text, and to no other text that she published, that Eliot affixed the name of Marian Evans (Haight 143).

The year after *Essence* was published, Eliot wrote an article for the *Westminster Review*, the journal which she had been editing since 1851, entitled "Evangelical Teaching: Dr. Cumming." Eliot was more careful to conceal the identity of the author here, alleging in a letter sent to Charles Bray that "the strong impression" the essay had produced "would be a little

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[69] Of course, Kant was also interested in leaving open the question of what the proofs sought, whereas Feuerbach seeks to destroy proofs to demonstrate the impossibility of the same.

counteracted if the author were known to be a *woman*" (*GEL* ii 218, qtd in Byatt 478). The particularly aggressive tone taken in this article, combined with the fact that this was Eliot writing, instead of translating, may also have been factors in her desire to conceal the authorship of this piece. As Fleishman notes, "Dr. Cumming" and Eliot's essay on Young (both figures being evangelicals) "are as close as she ever came to getting angry in print" (50). Fleishman, Haight and Redinger all agree in reading some note of self-rebuke with a religious content in this essay, Haight and Redinger focusing on past beliefs, while Fleishman focuses on past texts (Haight 186, Redinger 102).

Yet Eliot's decision to open her essay with a satiric meditation about professional concerns is suggestive of another possible cause for the vitriol of this essay. Eliot's image of a man of "moderate intellect, a moral standard not higher than average … great glibness of speech … a smattering of science and learning" passing for profound and instructive as an evangelical preacher (38) anticipates her recipe in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" for such a novelist, beginning "Take a woman's head, stuff it with a smattering of philosophy and literature, chopped small" and leading to similar presumptions of wisdom and grandeur (149).[70] But it also recalls her objection to Hannah More in a letter to John Sibree in 1847, in which she likes "neither her letters, nor her books, nor her character," describes her as "a blue stocking – a monster, which can only exist in a miserably false state of society, in which a woman with but a smattering of learning or philosophy is classed along with singing mice and card playing pigs" (GEL i 245, qtd in Haight 63). This comment belies Eliot's earlier interest in More's letters and biographies of

[70] The commentary in this essay on the "Evangelical substitute for the fashionable novel" (156) (and Eliot's criticism of what she sees as the moral insipidity of these novels) suggests further parallels between these two essays.

other female evangelicals like Mrs. Mary Fletcher (Haight 24). This turn against women authors and evangelicals suggests an awareness of a path not taken by Eliot in light of her first publication. Eliot's turn to the relatively unprofitable translation of Strauss and Feuerbach (received 20 and 30 pounds, respectively) was also a turn away from a publishing arena in which women had gained circulation, and, in More's case at least, public respect and importance. While it is difficult to avoid reading anti-feminist themes in "Silly Novels," Eliot's concern with mediocrity that passes for wisdom across different essays and genders suggests that religious and professional concerns should also be taken into account. Eliot's private satire of More and her public satire of Dr. Cumming certainly come off as mean-spirited, but they also speak to her personal and professional desire to engage in public discourse in a manner that will be taken seriously and avoids what she sees as falsifying handicaps.

Having translated higher critics, Eliot now introduces herself as a critical member of the public press in "Evangelical Teaching: Dr. Cumming." Emphasizing the central role of sympathy in Eliot's accusations against Dr. Cumming's teachings (i.e., the lack of sympathy or feeling in his doctrine), Fleishman convincingly discusses this essay as "applied Feuerbachism" (51). Yet Eliot's language in justifying her essay seems aligned with Kant's description of the role of the critic in "What is Enlightenment" (Kant's conception of the critic in this essay and his *Critique*s likely having reached Eliot through Strauss and/or Feuerbach, if not (also) directly). Eliot comments on the benefit of publishing sermons, thus laying them "open to the criticism of any man who has the courage and patience to treat them with thorough freedom of speech and pen" (40). As in Kant's essay, courage to know and to write in a free space of public discourse is necessary to the critic, and the space of this discourse is distinguished from private realms, including that of the church. Like Kant, Eliot insists that "criticism of clerical teaching [is]

desirable for the public good" and to instill greater responsibility, as false guidance in this realm is particularly pernicious (40). Moreover, Eliot seems to share Kant's confidence in the possibility of enlightenment, Kant holding that, with freedom, enlightenment is almost inevitable and Eliot ends her essay on the hope (slightly complicated by a conditional) that "the tendency towards good" in humans will ensure "the ultimate triumph … over all dogmatic perversions."[71]

Of course, an opposition to dogma does not necessarily indicate a wholesale rejection of enthusiastic evangelicalism:

> Dr. Cumming's mind is evidently not of the pietistic order. There is not the slightest leaning towards mysticism in his Christianity – no indication of religious raptures, of delight in God, of spiritual communion with the Father. He is most at home in the forensic view of Justification, and dwells on salvation as a scheme rather than experience. He insists on good works as the sign of justifying faith…but rarely represents them as the spontaneous, necessary outflow of a soul filled with Divine love. He is at home in the external…and is only episodically devout and practical. …But of really spiritual joys and sorrows, of the life and death of Christ as a manifestation of love that constrains the soul, of sympathy with that yearning over the last and erring which made Jesus weep over Jerusalem…of the gentler fruits of the Spirit, and the peace of God which passeth understanding – of all this, we find little trace in Dr. Cumming's discourses. (41)

Eliot is not simply indicating contradictory elements of Cumming's preaching, as she does elsewhere in this essay. Rather, Eliot's attack here seems to be of a fundamentally evangelical (in the sense which includes pietistic) nature. Cumming's failure to manifest inward concern,

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[71] One might also compare Kant's gradualism and conservative belief in the need for the cultivation of the wider public before granting it wider civic privileges in this essay with some of Eliot's later remarks concerning reform.

awareness, and depth condemns him both religiously and morally. His attention to scheme and doctrine over mystical experience and practical application duplicate the alleged failings that motivated the foundation of evangelical organizations throughout Europe. Moreover, Eliot's language concerning spiritual joys and sorrows suggest deep awareness of, and possibly some sympathy with, evangelical interest in the comforts of the Spirit and the suffering of Christ.

Yet one cannot neglect the fact that Eliot is writing this for a public audience and may be exploiting a rhetoric that she knows to possess wide currency, nor can one neglect this essay's emphasis on the necessity of reason. Despite Eliot's apparent sympathy with enthusiastic priorities, she insists that, "as religious sects exalt feeling above intellect" and become "removed from rationalism," "their sense of truthfulness [becomes] misty and confused" and their moral beliefs become vulnerable to egotism (44). Eliot's designation of the Methodists as "our friends" seems facetious, given her claim "no one can have talked to the more enthusiastic Methodists … without perceiving that that they require no other passport to a statement than that it accords with their wishes and their general conception of God's dealings" (44-5). Eliot does distinguish between the enthusiastic Methodists and Cumming's evangelicalism: the former develop "a state of emotion submerging the intellect," whereas Cumming exercises "a formula imprisoning the intellect" (45). Cumming perpetrates falsehoods of which the Methodists cannot be guilty (by virtue of their emphasis on emotion), yet neither group allows scope for "proper function" of the intellect "– the free search for truth."

In this essay, Eliot both participates in and exceeds the legacy of the Kantian rational critique, as practiced in the first *Critique*. As with the Kantian critique and its continuance in Feuerbach's work, Eliot's criticism of Dr. Cummings seeks out contradictions in abstractions and stresses the "conviction that the free and diligent exertion of the intellect" is a "responsibility"

(67). But Eliot's criticism also moves in the direction of Kant's second *Critique*, stressing the rationality of the moral: "There is not a more pernicious fallacy afloat in common parlance, than the wide distinction made between intellect and morality. Amiable impulses without intellect, man may have in common with dogs and horses; but morality, which is specifically human, is dependent on the regulation of feeling by intellect" (44).[72] Despite her use of the terms regulation here, Eliot's elsewhere imagines more of a cooperative venture of the faculties, as in Kant's third *Critique*, than Kant's stress on the rule of reason in second *Critique*: "The fundamental faith for man is faith in the result of a brave, honest, and steady use of all his faculties" (67).[73] In line with this cooperative model, Eliot supplements her rational religious criticism with references to literature: she illustrates her call for the above faith with a quotation from Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, uses Walter Scott's character Andrew Fairservice's words to criticize Dr. Cumming's preaching, and defends the late Byron from the preacher's attacks (68, 43, 47-8). Literature then serves a triple purpose in this essay: an elegant means for the better expression and illustration of an idea, a means of undercutting satire (the quotation from Fairservice describes preaching as "clouts o' cauld parritch") and a space requiring defense, in which the expression of "a high and sympathetic purpose" can be expressed.

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[72] Both Kant and Eliot appear to regard animals as incapable of morality but not, for that reason, undeserving of moral treatment. Kant justified compassion towards animals as part of a more general injunction towards compassion. While Eliot was in favor of medical and scientific tests on animals, the treatment of animals in her novels (e.g., speculating on the quiet tolerance of horses bearing a driver towards the opening of *The Mill on the Floss*, or illustrating Grandcourt's sadism by his cruelty to a pet dog in *Daniel Deronda*) suggests a sympathy she both felt and encouraged with non-human animals.

[73] Eliot does not seem to have Kant's three-fold division of the faculties (between the theoretical, the moral and the aesthetic/teoleogical), but rather stresses the commonality between first two, while the last seems more like "feeling" in line with sympathy than aesthetics per se – although Eliot's use of literature in this essay may suggest a wider scope. In any event, her use of the term "faculties," her emphasis on the growth of knowledge in the Tennyson quote she employs immediately after this term, and her phrase elsewhere of "a spontaneous exertion of the faculties" (44, comp w/ Kant's emphasis on the spontaneous alignment of the faculties brought about by the beautiful, discussed in the third chapter) suggests a framework in some way drawing from Kant.

Eliot's search for purpose – high and sympathetic, but also professional – led to her own entry into literature with *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Initially published in Blackwood's Edinburg Magazine as three separate installments, starting with "Amos Barton" in 1857, *Scenes* was collected into one work in 1858. As a whole, these stories seem to confirm Eliot's autonarrative of conditional reconciliation – turning to her clerical figures with a sympathy and gentle humor that seems infinitely removed in tone from the translations or her attack on Cumming, and yet the focus that these stories show on the emotional and professional lives of these clerics implies an intentional distance from their doctrine. In line with their separate publication, these stories offer different perspectives on religion with respect to their central figures.

The first scene, "The sad fortunes of the reverend Amos Barton" subverts its doctrinal religious content through a mix of community satire and the preeminence of its emotional narrative. "Amos Baron" begins with a lengthy discourse on the Shepperton church building, leading up to "Evangelicalism and the Catholic Question" as relatively recent events (locally, at least). However, the title character is no sooner embarked than he is beset with economic problems (expenses exceeding income) that plague him throughout the story. Although questions of religious doctrine and affiliation enter into this story, they usually do so in a satiric vein, through the mouths of Sheppertonians who at best partially understand what they discuss. The reverend himself hardly stands in any better position: "Now the Rev. Amos Barton was one of those men who have a decided will and opinion of their own … He would march very determinedly along the road he thought best; but then it was wonderfully easy to convince him which *was* the best road" (26). As Barton fails to effectively ply his trade (the attendance in church is much declined since the previous preacher), his religious waffling becomes an undesirable commodity: "He was like an onion that has been rubbed with spices … The Low-

Church onion still offended refined High-Church nostrils, and the new spice was unwelcome to the palate of the genuine onion-eater" (26). Yet these party concerns provide a minor background to the narrative of the story, which evolves around the above-mentioned economic troubles, mistaken social scandal involving the Countess Czerlaski, friend to Barton's wife, Milly, and Milly's ultimately fatal illness. Barton redemption (of sorts), comes at the loss of his wife, "for Milly's memory hallowed her husband" and it is only after her death that the "cold faces" of his parishioners "looked kind again" (61). Religious doctrine is, in the end, entirely beside the point of the importance and significance of human life, community and sympathy.

Mr. Gilfil was introduced in Barton's narrative as a predecessor at a remove, and, like Barton, he does not seem to be at the center of his nominal narrative. Apart from its first chapter and the epilogue, "Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story" makes no mention of Mr. Gilfil's clerical function, devoting itself instead to romantic narrative, in which a younger Gilfil plays a neglected third corner of a triangle between himself, Caterina Sarti and Sir Christopher Cheverel. Outside of this central narrative, Mr. Gilfil possesses the esteem of his congregation by virtue of a mild good nature and laxity in doctrine. "Mr. Gilfil's sermons, as you may imagine, were not of a highly doctrinal, still less of a polemical, cast. They did not search the conscience very powerfully…but, on the other hand, they made no unreasonable demand on the Shepperton intellect – amounting, indeed, to little more than an expansion of the concise thesis, that those who do wrong will find it the worse for them, and those who do well will find it the better for them" (72). Gilfil's avoidance of doctrine allows him to reach his audience in way Barton could not, and the definitions of wrong and well-doing that follow this quotation seem fairly incontestable (lying is wrong, charity is good, etc.). At the same time, there criticism at work here alongside the author's manifest sympathy with the pastor who, we are told, delights in

giving sugar-plums to children. Mr. Gilfil fits his community a little too well, as his general thesis and undemanding style allow his parishioners to justify prior inclinations and beliefs. As the neglect of intellect is clearly damning from Eliot's critical perspective in "Dr. Cumming," so Mr. Gilfil's neglect of conscience and his appeal to consequences for moral motivation are respectively wrong and inadequate from Eliot's moral perspective, as elaborated in her later works. Eliot's concluding metaphor in this story, describing Gilfil as a "poor lopped oak…sketched out by nature as a noble tree," withered by the loss of Caterina, suggests the image of an essentially genial and praiseworthy man who did not quite accomplish what he might have.

If Barton avoids doctrinal commitment through indecision and Gilfil is genially indifferent, Tryan's Evangelicalism is unequivocal and passionate. After two stories that carry male characters in their title but conclude with the death of the female figures who define the narrative, "Janet's repentance" is arguably as concerned with the Tryan's career and Evangelical ministering as its titular matter and concludes with the minister's death and memory. This narrative opens with drunken Milbyites complaining about Tryan's "demoralizing, methodistical doctrine," manifesting in their complaints such anger, quarrelsomeness (among each other, as well), pretension, and apparent lack of moral concern that one is left with no particularly positive impression of the minister's opposition (169). Eliot emphasizes the divisive nature of Tryan's creed, as the town becomes "divided into two zealous parties, the Tryanites and anti-Tryanites" (182) and insists that Evangelicalism, "like all other religious 'revivals,' had a mixed effect" (227). Members of Tryan's congregation, no less than those of Mr. Gilfil's curacy, are apt to "gain a religious vocabulary rather than religious experience" and mistake and misinterpret

religion through ignorance or selfishness (227). Yet Eliot takes the positive effects of this movement to be undeniable:

> Nevertheless, Evangelicalism had brought into palpable existence and operation in Milby society that idea of duty, that recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of the self, which is to the moral life what the addition of a great central ganglion is to animal life…Whatever might be the weaknesses of the ladies who pruned the luxuriance of their lace and ribbons…they had learned this – that there was a divine work to be done in life, a rule of goodness higher than the opinion of their neighbors; and if the notion of heaven in reserve for themselves was a little too prominent, yet the theory of fitness for that heaven consisted in purity of heart, in Christ-like compassion, in the subduing of selfish desires…The first condition of human goodness is something to love; the second, something to reverence. And this latter precious gift was brought to Milby by Mr Tryan and Evangelicalism. (228)

Here, as in Eliot's letter to D'Albert-Durade, divine work is meant to be done in this earthly existence – and among our fellows, as Eliot's repeated emphasis on the charitable engagements of Tryan's Evangelicals suggests. Eliot has not abandoned the notion that enthusiasm can encourage egotism, but Tryan's Evangelicalism at least contains the idea that such egotism ought to be avoided.

Equally important to this story is Eliot's explicit abandonment of the role of the critic. "Any one looking at [Mr. Tryan] with the bird's-eye glance of a critic might perhaps say that he made the mistake of identifying Christianity with a too narrow doctrinal system; that he saw God's work too exclusively in antagonism to the world, the flesh and the devil" (229). Yet Eliot refuses this mode: "But I am not poised at that lofty height … I am on the level and in the press

with him" (229). Eliot is not here posing two equal views against one another, as the critic neglects the fact that "The blessed work of helping the world forward, happily does not wait to be done by perfect men" and Tryan's doctrinal antagonism to the world does not prevent his actual and positive engagement with its people (228). The critic would make Tryan into "the text for a wide discourse on the characteristics of the Evangelical school in his day" and thus miss Tryan's humanity and the way in which he, and other Evangelicals, espoused more than doctrine and schools (229). In each of these three Scenes, the narrator explicitly insists on the need for a sympathetic interest in the interiority and suffering of a flawed male cleric. In "Amos Barton," this is accomplished through a demand made of the reader ("Depend on it, you would gain unspeakably" (37)) and "Mr. Gilfil" employs a mix of communal approval and narratorial intervention against a skeptical reader in its first chapter. The narrator of "Janet's Repentance," however, reflects on and takes ownership of his own relationship to Tryan, and only then moves on to address and subsume the reader in a plural first-person, "enabl[ing] us to feel with" the cleric (229).

It is with a similar kind of self-reflection that the narrator of *Adam Bede* proceeds in the famous seventeenth chapter, "In which the story pauses a little," synthesizing a moral interest in sympathy with a critical interest in truth. Eliot's rejection of the critic's birds-eye perspective should not – and, in any wide view of her fiction, cannot – be read as an abandonment of critical interests and methods. Rather, it is a call for an approach to fiction that goes beyond doctrine in its criticism and remains searching and articulate in its sympathy. Eliot's defense of sympathetic realism in the seventeenth chapter of *Adam Bede* is widely regarded as her definitive statement of novelistic aesthetics and an important text in understanding Victorian realism more generally. Eliot's decision to articulate her aesthetic theory in relation to the somewhat lax reverend Irwine,

whose actions seem questionable,[74] rather than the morally unimpeachable Methodist Dinah Morris (who has also gained far more critical attention), maintains the essential need for sympathy for flawed characters already present in *Scenes*. To present a flawless preacher would violate the very aim of Eliot's novelistic project:

> Certainly I could [have improved Irwine's moral discourse] if I held it the highest vocation of the novelist to represent things as they never have been and never will be. Then, of course, I might refashion life and character entirely after my own liking; I might select the most unexceptionable type of clergyman, and put my own admirable opinions into his mouth on all occasions. But it happens, on the contrary, that my strongest effort is to avoid such an arbitrary picture, and to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind. (159)

This faithful account serves a double purpose, setting a proper scope to the exercise of one's imagination and sympathy (returning these faculties to the world in which one lives) and maintaining a difficult commitment to true representation against falsity. Eliot's previous abandonment of the role of critic is here supplanted by a question of the positive role of the novelist – and phrasing this question in terms of the "highest vocation" of this novelist makes clear its moral weight.

Yet the choice of Mr. Irwine for the staging ground of this short manifesto also permits the narrator to evade Dinah's doctrinal passion, even as the same passion is sympathetically portrayed elsewhere in the text. What was previously a discussion between the reader and the

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[74] On this point, see John Sutherland's "Why doesn't the Reverend Irwine speak up for Hetty?" in *Can Jane Eyre be Happy? More puzzles in Classic Fiction* (Oxford UP 1997, cited in *Oxford Reader's Companion to George Eliot*). For a more sympathetic take on Irwine that still acknowledges Irwine's failing in regards to Arthur, see Christopher Herbert's "Preachers and Schemes of Nature in *Adam Bede*" (*Nineteenth Century Fiction* 29.4 Mar 1975).

narrator becomes a conversation between the narrator and Adam himself, as the conversation shifts from aesthetic and moral theory to a comparison of Mr. Irwine and Mr. Ryde (the preacher who succeeded Irwine) and a discussion about religion. Having defended Mr. Irwine on his own, the narrator lets the role fall to Adam, who enthusiastically sets Irwine's "short moral sermons" and genial attitude against the severe, doctrinal and domineering Ryde. "I've seen pretty clear ever since I was a young un, as religion's something else besides doctrines and notions," Adam insists, giving a brief narrative of his own experience in doctrinal argument and textual criticism as proof (156).[75] Adam's speech is complicated by the fact that earlier in this chapter Eliot has spoken against putting the author's opinions into the mouths of his characters, reinforced by the narrator's comment that "Adam, you perceive, was a warm admirer, perhaps a partial judge, of Mr Irwine" (166). And yet it is precisely this kind of sympathetic partiality that the narrator is seeking to occasion in us. By presenting an anti-doctrinal stance in the words of Adam, Eliot invites us to imaginatively engage with the position while avoiding the potentially dogmatic approach of demanding the reader adopt this stance herself. Both the position and its presentation are meant to inform us about what following "the highest vocation of the novelist" entails.

It is perhaps strange that the text in which Eliot was perhaps most clearly defining the vocation of the novelist ends with Dinah's abandonment of her vocation. Bruce K. Martin's comment in 1972 that, starting with Henry James, critics have often objected to the seemingly forced happy ending, with Hetty's rescue and the marriage (745-6), still holds true today –

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[75] Adam's ability "to pike a hole or two" in religious enthusiasts' notions, his joy in disputing and "weighing and sifting" texts, together with his self-narrated turn from this mode to an emotional interest in real religion and communing with his "fellow-men" in his local church suggest a few parallels with Eliot's own experience.

although more attention has since then been given to the price paid by Dinah. In "Dinah and the Debate over Vocation in *Adam Bede*," Jennifer M. Stolpa argues that Eliot's sympathetic and positive portrayal of Dinah as a female preacher, together with her insistent attention to Dinah's "calling" and "vocation," give this text a radical leaning in nineteenth century debates about women preaching. Stolpa negotiates a variety of critical perspectives, from critics insisting that Dinah is a fundamentally disempowered figure in this text (limited by her voice, iconic status, and/or marriage) to those who insist Dinah is part of a "new religious or moral model [which is simultaneously] a harsh critique of a patriarchal Christianity" (42, 33). Stolpa herself claims that "the restrictions on Dinah's pursuit of her ministerial vocation at the end of the novel *can* be viewed as intentionally disappointing to readers, thus spurring them to rethink a patriarchal gendered ministry" (32). Although the emphasized "can" reflects the fact that Stolpa does not entirely commit to this reading, we should at least pause before assuming that Eliot could not have built disappointment into her ostensibly happy ending (which does, after all, follow infanticide and transportation).

Dinah's vocation, somewhat like duty in Kant and Eliot more generally, strikes an uneven balance between autonomous self-determination and submission. As Stolpa argues, Dinah's vocation does grant her a social function beyond limits of Anglican patriarchy and a profession beyond marriage. Moreover, the inward turn of calling grants Dinah a kind of liberation from determination by human authorities, both secular and religious – and allows her to draw upon appeals to conscience as legitimate and ultimately determining moral motivation – as Adam acknowledges, "I'll never be the man t'urge you against your conscience" (455). What from one perspective is a turn away from happiness and personal satisfaction (the marriage proposal by Adam in chapter fifty two) is, from another perspective, an assertion of the rights of

self-determination and an insistence that a woman can rightly have a "calling … not towards marriage" (457). Yet, if this is self-determination, the form of its expression is submissive: refusing Adam's proposal, Dinah commands, "I must go from you, and we must submit ourselves entirely to the Divine Will. We are sometimes required to lay our natural, lawful affections on the altar" (456). Even when Dinah comes to affirm these affections, she can only marry Adam under the warrant that "it is the Divine Will" (475). The apparently arbitrary nature of a will that could resist and encourage the same action takes on a more troubling aspect with Dinah's decision to abandon open preaching. We hear of this decision not from the much-noted voice of Dinah, but through the approving voice of Adam. Despite Adam's assurance that Dinah's decision to follow the mandates of the Methodist Conference banning women's preaching was her own, one cannot help but wonder what Dinah herself would have said – and to what extent she would claim this decision to follow an institutional will followed the dictates of a divine will.

We should not be too eager to collapse Dinah's vocation into being *really* another form of submission. Dinah's accomplishments in this text, and the social good she does even after abandoning preaching should not be trivialized. Nor should we neglect the moral force of duty and vocation in this novel more generally. Adam draws our readerly approval not in the least for his intense consciousness of familial duties, and characters without a sufficiently imperative sense of duties, Hetty and Arthur in particular, are at the mercy of their inclinations. Arthur is even described as possessing "a loving nature … Deeds of kindness were as easy to him as a bad habit: they were the common issue of his weakness and his good qualities, of his egoism and his sympathy" (280). And yet such sympathy is powerless to stand against unconsidered egoism, lacking any foundation in an obligation that outlives the feelings of a moment. Arthur's moral

sense may engender a sense of unease following an offence, but cannot prevent that offence's commission: "No man can escape [the] vitiating effect of an offence against his own sentiment of right, and the effect was the stronger in Arthur because of that very need of self-respect, which, while his conscience was still at ease, was one of his best safeguards" (283). In this state, Arthur feels himself subject to the "terrible coercion in our deeds" and resolves the genuine task of decision and resolution before him into foregone conclusions. Dinah's duty and vocation, by contrast, are a space of intense moral and personal deliberation, in which self-respect is secured by a conscience that wins, rather than assumes its peace.

As critics, we would do poor service to ourselves and to the texts we read by ignoring the disappointments and senses of unease that we encounter – and the frequent coalescence of these emotions around the ending of *Adam Bede* surely tells us something. Dinah's compromise is not necessarily a complete self-betrayal – refusing Adam, she claims her "peace and joy have come from having no life of my own, no wants, no wishes for myself," while her acceptance of Adam signals the potential reconciliation of positive inclination and personal affection with the calling of divine command (454). In this sense, we might even read the ending as stopping too short in a conversion away from submission to an arbitrarily voluntarist religion towards a more emotionally healthy and humanly grounded mode of life. Yet the value of Dinah's vocation derived at least in part from the dignity it gave to the determinations of conscience, to a will that can be affirmed as morally worthy in its desire to perform its duty.

The question of vocation and its attendant duty is as important to Maggie and Romola as it is to Dinah and the narrator of *Adam Bede*, and we would do Eliot and Kant a disservice to miss the questions and conditions in their negotiations of religious and moral concerns, or the ways that questions and conditions can become answers and assertions. Like Kant's moral

subject, *Adam Bede*'s narrator seems to possess an immediate awareness of moral vocation, rationally explicable (one may give reasons for it) but prior to rational articulation. But Eliot's narrative presentation, doubly filtering the anti-doctrinal, pro-sympathetic message through the narrator and the figure of Adam, makes manifest the complexities of the communication of a real moral obligation through imagined characters and a fiction that insists on truth. Likewise, for Kant, moral faith arises as a conditioned development in the productions of reason and the immediacy of moral consciousness does not prevent morality itself from becoming a site for problems and critique. Both Kant and Eliot possess a complex relationship with religion, refusing unfounded or insupportable content (and reading this quite widely), yet finding something essentially important in the emotional significance, motive force or imperative claims of religion. Kant's insistence on the subjective conditions of moral faith is no more a failing of his system than Eliot's presentation of novelistic morality through Adam (and upon the imperfect occasion of Irwine). Instead, the reference of the moral law to the subject constitutes the strength (and interest) of its obligation, and Eliot's novels allow scope for both the compelling and the problematic natures of duty and vocation.

Chapter 3 Autonomy, Reflection and Respect

> [Eliot], stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet-calls of men, – the words *God, Immorality, Duty*, – pronounced, with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable the first, how unbelievable the second, and yet how preemptory and absolute the third. Never, perhaps, have sterner accents affirmed the sovereignty of impersonal and unrecompensing Law. (Haight 464)

This quotation comes originally from F.W.H. Myers's account of Eliot in *Century Magazine* (Nov 1881), and, by the time that Haight cited it in 1968, had already become "often quoted." Haight notes the "over-dramatized" nature of the account (Myers later describes Eliot as a "sibyl," speaks of the scrolls of fate and "twilight and starless skies"), but seeks to counteract this tone not by denying Eliot's melancholy utterance, instead insisting that even Myers acknowledged a gentler side to Eliot's teaching (465). Despite Myers's melodramatic presentation, critics generally appear to take the content of the speech attributed to Eliot as authentic. This is doubtless due in part to the widely spread image of Eliot in later life as a sort of sage or sibyl, but the concerns and pronouncements of this quotation also seem to map well onto concerns that guided her writings, literary and otherwise: the inconceivability of God aligning with her critical translations; immortality being the subject of a book conceived though never published[76], but also, conceived more generally, as futurity or posterity – a concern present and problematized throughout her fiction and perhaps most famously developed in *Middlemarch*;

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[76] The book's title being *The Idea of a Future Life*, announced by Chapman as a book that would come out along with *The Essence of Christianity* (Haight 141). Although this work is frequently mentioned, and despite Chapman's announcement and discussion about the work in Eliot's letters, no manuscript of this work has apparently yet been found.

and duty, a concern that is central to any of Eliot's novels, but, as will be discussed in this chapter, is particularly important in understanding *The Mill on the Floss*.

As far as I have been able to determine, the only critic to detect Kant in this quotation is Fleishman, who notes that "the terms partially echo Kant's triad of God, freedom and immortality – presuppositions rationally necessary for morality – and deny at least two-thirds of it" (279 n10). There are a number of problems with this statement. First of all, although in the second *Critique*, Kant does define God and Immortality as postulates (*Postulate*) of pure practical reason, these are postulates only arrived at after the fact of freedom and the law of morality have been established, or, as Kant phrases, "these postulates commence from the principle of morality, which is not a postulate but a law" (167). The German here begins *Sie gehen alle von Grundsatze der Moralität aus* (132) – the verb *ausgehen* (*von*) clearly indicating that the principle of morality is prior to the postulates that commence, emanate or issue from it.[77] Secondly, Fleishman ignores the fact that immortality of the soul, the possibility of freedom in nature and the existence God were also the subjects of the transcendental ideas of the first *Critique*. Taking Eliot's objections to immortality and God to refer to what Kant would class as theoretical knowledge – taking them to be essentially epistemological, concerning the limits of intellectual concepts (inconceivable) and warranted or justified belief (unbelievable) – it appears that Eliot is actually in line with Kant. Technically, Kant never controverted his proofs in the first *Critique* that to attempt to conceive of the soul and God through theoretical knowledge and reason would lead to contradiction. In the second *Critique*, Kant continues to insist on the

[77] These postulates do possess a rational necessity for Kant, but this is a necessity that hinges on the possibility of perfection (for immortality) and the reconciliation of happiness and morality (for God). Morality itself has an immediate bearing on us and practical (and rational) reality that precedes these determinations, both in the course of the second critique and logically.

incapacity of theoretical reason to deal with these concepts; the discussion of immorality and God in this work proceeding under the aegis of practical reason, which can ground what Kant refers to as a "rational faith" (*Vernunftglaube*), but not knowledge or cognition (*Wissen* or *Kentniss*) in the sense of the first *Critique*.[78] But, perhaps most importantly, Eliot's terms more than partially echo Kant's triad, as duty and freedom were integrally connected in Kant's moral philosophy and, as Fleishman concedes, "on duty, [Eliot] and Kant were closely aligned" (279).

If we are to avoid the extremes of Dinah's theological voluntarism and Arthur's sensitive moral indirection (or, to put it in Kantian terms, the extremes of despotic dogmatism and anarchic inclination), then a connection between duty and freedom must be both present and robust. Duty must incorporate human freedom and reflect the dignity of the autonomous will (lest it become arbitrary or despotic), and human freedom must be grounded in a sense of duty and obligation (lest it become arbitrary or anarchic). This connection must be robust – that is, it must not be exhausted by the tautology that duty is freedom and vice versa, because such an abstract tautology would lend itself to arbitrary appropriation, as in Kant's concern about the attribution of personal rules to divine will in *Dreams*.[79] One element of Eliot and Kant's more robust account of duty is autonomy – encompassing at once a freedom from theological concerns (as hitherto elaborated), freedom from the determination of inclinations, and self-determination with reference to the moral law. Equally important (and entwined with this concept) are the elements of reflection and respect – duty should permit critical self-reflection and survive the tests of such reflection and duty should ground a sense moral dignity and occasion the feeling of

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[78] This distinction between theoretical knowledge and practical faith recurs towards the end of the Methodology of Teleological Judgment in the third critique.
[79] And Bentham's similar point in 1789, as well as Eliot's description of the power of egoistic wishes in the visions and exclamations of enthusiasts in "Evangelical Teaching: Dr. Cumming."

respect. The imperative and sovereign nature of duty affirmed by both Kant and Eliot rests primarily on the basis of these elements – although for both writers, there remains an aspect of duty and the moral law that is not entirely articulable, but relies on a fact or awareness antecedent to critique and novel-writing (or reading). In this Chapter, I will trace these dimensions of duty in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* and Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, as well as three pieces outside of her fiction. In these works, both writers still carry on the projects of earlier works – Kant is still engaged in critical science, Eliot is still formulating and experimenting with the realist novel and sympathy – but duty and practical morality take on a priority that exceeds the limits of speculative knowledge and sympathy.[80]

It is not often that one encounters the trope of apostrophe in Kant's critical works. Therefore, it is surprising when, in the third chapter of the first book of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant exclaims:

> Duty! You sublime, grand name which encompasses nothing that is favored yet involves ingratiation, but which demands submission, yet also does not seek to move the will by threatening anything that would arouse natural aversion in the mind and terrify, but merely puts forth a law that on its own finds entry into the mind and yet gains grudging veneration (even if not always compliance), a law before which all inclinations fall silent even if they secretly work against it: what origin is worthy of you, and where does one find the root of your noble descent that proudly rejects all kinship with

[80] As indicated in the last chapter, these developments are anticipated in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Adam Bede*. But while moral faith and practical knowledge exist as concluding forces existing on the periphery (or beyond the bounds) of critique in the first *Critique*, these forces are central to the second *Critique*. Likewise, Dinah seems to possess a moral vocation that goes beyond sympathy, but Maggie brings questions of sympathy and duty into focus as problems that the conciliatory ending of *Adam Bede* moves away from.

> inclinations, the root from which to be descended is the irremissible condition of that worth which human beings alone can give themselves? (111)

This passage appears in the chapter "Incentives of Pure Practical Reason," which tackles the problem of how the moral law can determine the will directly. Kant's answer is, more or less, respect (which I will return to later), but here Kant seems to almost revel in the mystery of moral motivation. Duty's sublimity appears to reside precisely in its ability to attract without "ingratiation" and command without threatening or inducing fear. Without resorting to reward or punishment, duty nonetheless provides us with a kind of practical knowledge and cause for action. In light of this, the more immediate question of duty's origin is likewise a question about its power or efficacy. Kant's immediate answer is "personality" (more on this shortly), but both question and answer point to issues of human worth, respect and vocation, which in turn rely on a conception of a moral law which grants the rational subject autonomy from inclinations.

Kant famously begins the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* declaring that the only unconditionally good thing is a good will, proceeding then to include the good will under the concept of duty and thereby connecting it with the moral law, for "Duty is the necessity of action done out of respect for the law" (7, 9, 13).[81] The *Critique of Practical Reason* virtually begins with the moral law, distinguishing individually-valid maxims from universally valid practical laws.[82] In both works, this moral law is emphatically distinguished from inclination

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[81] Duty and respect might be thought of as two aspects of what motivates moral action and fidelity – Duty (primarily) indicating the necessary condition of moral actions, while respect designates the psychological intervention or effect of the moral law – although this is an approximate division.

[82] Kant uses the terms *subjectiv* (subjective) and *objectiv* (objective) to distinguish maxims and law, but I use the above terms as Kant's definitions turn on whether the principle is valid for one or all rational subjects and, given other meanings of the terms, Kant's terms may be confusing: maxims do not hold for all subjects and laws do; practical laws not exist objectively as a common-sense naturalism would hold material objects to exist. Kant does

(*Neigung*) and empirical or prudential questions of happiness. Critics and philosophers differ as to how we should read this distinction, ranging from Lacan and Žižeck's connection of Kant and De Sade, reading a kind of Sadistic logic into Kant's moral logic, to analytic arguments that Kant is not voicing an opposition to inclination, but is only clarifying what can be classified as unconditionally moral.[83] By any reading, the moral law is universally binding, and thus must be separated from the contingency of (only) subjective maxims and personal inclinations. As the empirical is almost by definition a space of flux and contingency, the empirical determination of inclinations disqualifies them for the formal rigor of a moral law.[84] Kant does not completely discount beneficent inclinations, but their alignment with the right or good can be, at most, coincidental, for there is no formal guarantee of their consistency or fidelity.[85] "Inclination, whether it be good-natured or not, is blind and servile" (*CPract* 150): Blind because, in following her inclination, the subject loses a kind of self-reflective awareness (and, arguably, modal actuality)[86] and servile because, in the same state, the subject lacks self-determination.

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hold that the moral law exists objectively, but what exactly that means, and how it relates to the law's validity for all rational subjects, is up for debate.

[83] More specifically, Lacan and Žižeck read a kind illicit pleasure into the very severity of the moral law, whereas more moderate readings often argue that, in excluding the inclinations from the purely moral will, Kant is not advocating a course of life (such as that for which Schiller satirized Kant, in which one would have to hate one's friends and be just towards them only from a sense of duty), but only seeking to illuminate the conditions under which we can attribute a moral action to purely rational and necessary grounds.

[84] The empirical determination of inclinations rests on a fairly intuitive basis – i.e., that when we speak of most feelings, we are speaking at the same time of mental states and tendencies which vary depending on external conditions: if I am feeling happy and am then caught outside in a cold thunderstorm without protection, I will likely not continue to be happy; if I am feeling jealous and then experience a sudden rise in station, the jealousy may subside. But, furthermore, it seems as though these initial emotions are themselves the product of external conditions more or less remote (from an event just happened to chemical structure of a medicine to a long-distant event still present in memory (and still capable of occasioning emotion and action) or learned behavior).

[85] On this point, I am approximately echoing Barbara Herman in *The Practice of Moral Judgment*.

[86] I.e., in abandoning rational deliberation and simply following inclination, the subject abandons other possible modes of being and acting. I personally think Kant's commentary on the reality of the "fact of Reason" in the second critique and his discussion of the sensible and intelligible in the *Grounding* (e.g., "Regarding himself in this way as intelligence, man thereby puts himself into another order of things" (57)) commit him to a strong account of the reality of the rational will and the rational subject.

By acting from duty, with respect for the moral law, the subject possesses an autonomy that avoids the determination of contingent inclinations – and Kant's German term here, *Autonomie*, reflects the same Greek roots of self and law as the English; rendering the term in light of Kant's philosophy, the law of the self, or the law that the self gives to itself (by virtue of being a rational self). The initial formula Kant gives for the "only" categorical imperative (I here take the categorical imperative to be an expression of the moral law)[87] in the *Grounding* is "act only to the maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law" (30) and clearly aligns with his subsequent definition of autonomy as "the property that the will has of being a law to itself" (49). The reflection built into this formula, requiring the subject to test her subjective maxims against the possibility of consistent universal application, presupposes the capacity of the subject to will and choose in this manner. Kant's definition of autonomy in the *Grounding* is also his definition of freedom (*Freiheit*), and, in the second *Critique*, Kant defines freedom (of the will) in terms of negative and positive aspects of autonomy: negatively, freedom denotes "independence from all matter," matter indicating both contingent empirical content and the determination of natural laws, while, positively, freedom indicates "practical reason's own legislation," or the "determination of the power of choice by the mere universal legislative form which a maxim must be capable of" (49). A very similar division characterizes what Kant refers to as "personality" in the second Critique, "the freedom and independence from the mechanism of all of nature, yet regarded at the same time as a power of a being subject to pure practical laws that are peculiar to it, viz., are given to it by its own reason" (111-2). Willing

[87] This relation does not appear to be controversial in itself, although understandings of the content of this imperative or law certainly are.

the moral law allows the subject to be something more than another effect in an infinite chain of natural causation, capable of self-reflection and self-determination.[88]

This freedom is inextricably connected with the positive determination of the will by the law and the universally imperative nature of the law. For Kant, a lawless freedom "would be something absurd" (*Grounding* 49), collapsing into determination by external factors (inclinations being themselves dependent on external factors) or into the random (*Willkür*).[89] The moral law offers us a morally meaningful freedom, not in which any choice is equally valid, but in which our choices affect our status as praiseworthy or blameworthy agents, and even determine what extent we can really be said to be acting as rational agents. This law must exist for us as an imperative, Kant insists, due precisely to our capacity for choice: "in the case of…finite beings, the moral law has the form of an imperative, because in them, as rational beings, one can indeed presuppose a *pure* will, but, as being affected by needs and sensible motivating causes, not a *holy* will, i.e., a will that would be not be capable of [drafting] any maxims conflicting with the moral law" (47). The pure will can determine itself by the moral law, but the subject possessing it always had the capacity to will otherwise. The moral law rests, in part, on a self-reflexive basis. In the *Grounding*, the moral law concerns the capacity of a rational will to consider "rational nature … as an end in itself" (36) and "the [rational] will … is subject to the law in such a way that it must be regarded also as legislating for itself and only on this account as being subject to the law" (38). The necessity and the form of the moral law refer

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[88] For an analysis of Freedom in Kant, particularly as developed in the first critique in relation to natural determinism, see Andrews Reath's "Kant's Critical Account of Freedom" in *A Companion to Kant*.
[89] Although to what extent Kant would conceive of randomness in an absolute sense as possible for a human is an open question – and not something he appears to discuss in detail.

to one another: the moral law possesses a form that can hold necessarily for all rational subjects, and because it must hold for all rational subjects, the moral law necessarily possesses this form.

Yet the middle clause, that the moral law must hold for all rational subjects, should not be regarded as simple tautology. Although our understanding may benefit from formulations, our capacity to act morally does not rely on our capacity to formulate: As Kant insists in the first *Critique*, popular interests are unaffected by abstract philosophical argument, and the moral law is not something only philosophers understand. In the *Grounding*, Kant speaks of the "common idea of duty and of moral laws" (2), and, in the second *Critique*, he insists that we possess a direct and immediate consciousness of morality, referring to this consciousness as "a fact of reason" (*Factum der Vernunft*) (46). Because the moral law is universally binding, it must be something of which all rational subjects are aware, even if the extent to which it is followed is always limited. Kant insists that the fact of reason cannot be an intuition, either empirical or pure, as this would involve it in theoretical, not practical knowledge; yet this state does not impair our immediate awareness of the fact, as Kant later illustrates in his discussion of conscience (124-5). As abstract as Kant's argument becomes, its foundation is easily tested: so long as the reader can attest to an awareness of moral imperative in herself (as conscience, as restraint, as desire, and, as I will shortly discuss, as respect), and reasonably presuppose this awareness in others, she has a warrant for granting the fact of reason and its basic law.

This law precedes and grounds our awareness of freedom (*CPract* 43) and, as Allen Wood emphatically notes, its initial formulation given above (concerning maxims capable of becoming universal laws) is not its only formulation given in the *Grounding*. Wood's argument in "Kant's Formulations of the Moral Law," that the "supreme principle of morality" is progressively formulated and developed throughout the *Grounding*, is lent credence by the

progressive structure of the text (with chapters indicating ascending "transitions"), and also by the fact that Kant provides multiple formulations in the first place. Appreciating these multiple formulations, Wood argues, can prevent us from attributing a too-formalistic or tautological basis to the law, instead recognizing that "the categorical imperative is grounded on the absolute worth of rational nature as an end in itself, and the dignity of the rational will as self-legislating" (305). Wood is here referring to two distinct formulations of the imperative, but these formulations are importantly related.

The first formulation is "Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means" (36). Early on in the *Grounding*, Kant speaks of the "idea that existence has another and much more worthy purpose, for which, and not for happiness, reason is quite properly intended, and which must, therefore, be regarded as the supreme condition to which the private purpose of men must, for the most part, defer" (9) – and this formulation rests on the assertion that this "much more worthy purpose" is something that inheres in the rational natures of ourselves and others. Both the *Grounding* and the second *Critique* maintain the insistence of the first *Critique* that morality does not guarantee happiness, but rather worthiness, or (in the turn that allows Kant to reintroduce and arguably revise moral theology in the second *Critique*), the worthiness to be happy. Humanity in the above formulation signifies what is exceptional and worthy in human rationality, and its possession and recognition entail unconditional personal worth, but also a binding awareness of the like worth of others.

In the same chapter of the second *Critique* in which Kant apostrophizes duty, we are told that "Respect applies only to persons, never to things" – and, like Kant's moral philosophy more generally, respect is articulated between the moral law, the subject, and the community of other

subjects. "What is essential in all moral worth of actions is that the moral law must determine the will directly" (*CPract* 94) and, in both the *Grounding* and the second *Critique*, respect is what permits this direct determination. Kant is careful to distinguish respect from Hutcheson's moral sense (and Humean sympathy), insisting that respect is, negatively, an awareness of the restriction of inclination and feelings, and, positively, an awareness of the direct determination of the moral law.[90] Respect in relation to the self is complex: in part, it functions in a way that anticipates the activity of the sublime in the third *Critique*, as respect humiliates feeling and self-conceit and elevates the rational moral law (*CPract* 103-4). Yet Kant also holds out the possible adaptation of natural self-love (*Selbstliebe* or *Eigenliebe*) (as distinguished from self-conceit (*Eigendünkel*)) to the moral law, resulting in what Kant calls "rational self-love" (96).[91] Rational self-love is a particularly problematic form of respect due to its proximity to self-conceit, which is also a regard for the self, but which makes a particular self the basis for morality. Self-conceit subverts the priority of the moral law and destroy any possibility of universal validity and necessity. Respect in relation to others does not seem to threaten this kind of subversion: "*Respect* is a *tribute* that, whether we want to or not, we cannot refuse [to pay] to merit; we may perhaps hold back outwardly, yet we cannot help feeling it inwardly" (101). If we recognize the rational natures of others as unconditional ends being of supreme worth, then we also cannot avoid acknowledging dignity in others who manifest this nature.

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[90] In both the *Grounding* and the second critique, Kant calls respect a feeling that opposes feelings (even referring to it as something that "cannot be compared with any pathological feeling" (*CPract* 100)) and has the moral law for its content – emphasizing these aspects to the extent that what Kant means by calling respect a feeling seems at time unclear.

[91] Kant also calls self-love benevolence toward or liking toward oneself – one might incautiously think of it as positive feeling towards oneself – while self-conceit is connected with a structural tendency to regard the self as a determining basis or end of the will. Kant does not explicitly discuss what respect for oneself might be, but the term rational self-love, combined with the discussion in the *Grounding* of the rational subject's self-regard as intelligence (53), suggests that respect for oneself is possible.

If I may be forgiven for dividing what is a common term in Kant, it seems to me that there are at least four aspects to respect in Kant – respect for the moral law and the more problematic self-respect as indicated above, but respect for others being divided between what I am calling universal respect and exemplary respect. Respect may apply to persons, not things, but the moral law is not, properly speaking, a thing, and "respect for the moral law is … the sole and also indubitable moral incentive" (102).[92] Whatever complexities Kant may introduce to the concept, respect for oneself is a necessary element of Kantian moral motivation, as without it, it would be unclear how the individual subject would experience the elevation of the moral law as a subjectively motivating force. Universal respect results from the inherent dignity we recognize in rational human nature, or what is particular to the human in a given human's humanity. Although we may or may not effectively manifest this dignity in our actions, we cannot help feeling or registering it on the level of respect. This respect is occasioned by the recognition of the capacity of a will or nature to act according to the moral law, and thus applies to all humans (and rational animals more generally, presuming other such beings to exist). Exemplary respect, on the other hand, is occasioned by particular manifestations of a moral nature, or merit rendered recognizable through action. This is the form of respect which Kant argues it is possible not to feel towards another human (100). Borrowing from Fontanelle, Kant contrasts a prominent (but presumably morally unimpressive) man with a "lowly, plain common man in whom I perceive righteousness of character," arguing that, although physically one might bow before the former but not the latter, one would involuntarily give respect (bow inwardly) to the latter but no the former (101). The common man's "example holds before me a law that, when I compare it with

[92] Kant gives as examples of things material objects and animals.

my conduct, strikes down my self-conceit, and I see compliance with it – and hence the law's *practicability* – proved before me through the deed" (101). This exemplary respect occurs not because another human with a moral nature is encountered, but because this other human presents this nature before us through action – and, as one's action might manifest this nature more or less, this respect appears variable in its possible intensity.[93] Kant's confidence in the effective power of stories of morally exemplary figures in moral education (towards the end of the second *Critique*, discussed later in this chapter) seems to rest on this differentiation – the presentation of certain moral examples as particularly effective seems to presume that examples are capable of occasioning more or less respect in the student.

This differentiation may help to illuminate a difficulty in Eliot's fiction. Eliot, as narrator and critic, famously speaks of a need for sympathy that extends to all as they are, yet one would be hard-pressed to point to an Eliot novel in which it seems that moral differentiations are not being drawn and emphasized between the characters of the story. For an example, *Adam Bede*'s portrayals of the egotistical Arthur or Hetty stand in stark contrast to its portrayals of the driven but other-focused characters of Adam and Dinah, and one might even argue that this narratorial judgment is translated into narrative punishment for Hetty. And yet the sympathy which we are told to feel is supposed to extend particularly to the imperfect. Applying Kant's framework to Eliot, we might oppose an idea of exemplary respect in contrast to universal sympathy, rather

[93] In the very least, it can be active or inactive, but Kant's comment that "great talents and an activity proportionate to them can also bring about respect or a feeling analogous thereto" (together with his interest in extreme examples in this *Critique* and the *Grounding*) seems to suggest a respect capable of greater or lesser intensity, while Kant's comment contrasting the respect lost for Voltaire by "the common horde" from the respect maintained "at least from the viewpoint of the man's talent" by the "true scholar" seems to suggest that different subjects might be differently susceptible to this respect (102).

than universal respect (although the two should be capable of some overlap).[94] We might thus maintain Eliot's apparent insistence that sympathy is a universal readerly duty (and presumably a duty more generally), while acknowledging the fact that we might or might not (involuntarily) feel a character to be capable of being a moral exemplar. On some level, *Adam Bede* does not really give us a choice as to whether we pay respect to Adam and Dinah; we can certainly doubt their perceptions, maybe even the practical concerns of a choice, but we cannot doubt the moral value of their intentions. Hetty, on the other hand, does not seem capable of fulfilling the role of moral exemplar (and thus cannot occasion involuntary respect of that sort), but this does not prevent the novel from bringing us into proximity with her thoughts and feelings and demanding we make a sympathetic attempt to understand her. Between these extremes we have the communally concerned (but given to a sort of plump self-satisfaction) Irwine, whose faults and virtues the narrator makes equally manifest. Adam intervenes on Irwine's behalf, manifesting sympathetic partiality while arguing for the presence of something admirable within the minister. However, this intervention makes sense to us because Adam is already an unquestionably respectable character, and whether or not Irwine calls for our respect seems at least a matter for debate. None of which negates the intrinsic worth of either Irwine or Hetty as human persons, however it may cause us to regard them as moral examples. As *Adam Bede* concludes in a gesture of communal reconciliation (at least for Arthur), the operations of sympathy should at

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[94] Both respect and sympathy call for an imaginative construction of and emotional (admittedly, with respect, a non-pathological emotion) engagement with a subjectively particular but structurally similar human other according to a moral logic that asserts a possible and mutually responsible community among human subjects. Although this lies beyond the scope of the works dealt with in this paper, Kant's Metaphysics of Morals does include sympathy under under the duties of Virtue, holding that sympathy (or, as Allen Wood specifies, "sympathetic participation" (*Kantian Ethics* 176) is generally a duty

least have the potential to ground a community beyond the scope of the novel in which the mutual recognition of humanity acquires motive and force.[95]

Kant calls a state in which subjects experience a mutual recognition of rationality (and thus of mutual worth) and unite in the self-legislation of universal law (in the mutual recognition, willing, and pursued actualization of the moral law) the "Kingdom of Ends" (*Reich der Zwecke*). "End" here, as elsewhere, is the conventional rendering of the German term *Zweck* in dealing with Kant's moral philosophy, but it also means purpose, as in *Zweckmässigkeit,* or Purposiveness. The feature of self-legislation is essential to this kingdom, as each rational subject belongs to it as legislative member, subject and sovereign (*Grounding* 40). Here again the concept of duty returns: "The practical necessity of acting according to…duty, does not rest at all on the feelings, impulses and inclinations, but only on the relation of rational beings to one another" and this relation in turn rests on "the idea of the dignity of a rational being who obeys no law except what he at the same time enacts himself" (40). Kant stresses that this kingdom is possible through morality, and has its grounding actuality not in external empirical facts, but in the relation of subjects. Although Kant dubs a kingdom that one might call a kingdom of ends "only an ideal" (39), a later distinction between teleological and moral conceptions of this kingdom complicates this ideal condition: in teleology, the kingdom exists as a "theoretical idea"

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[95] Sympathy in Eliot is, at this point, a quite developed critical venture (and one with frequent reference to questions of psychology and community). For references to much of this venture, see Forest Pyle's "A Novel Sympathy: The Imagination of Community in George Eliot." Pyle's own reading, dealing primarily with *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, situates Eliot in a larger context of Romanticism and opposes the forces of Imagination and Sympathy (in opposition, for example, to Barbara Hardy) and considers sympathy to function as an always incomplete reparation of ideological fissures in the fact and idea of community generated or discovered by imagination – although Pyle emphasizes that Eliot is not a naïve narrator in this regard, knowing "full well that community is always 'at loose ends'" and "imagined" (in Anderson's sense of the term) (22). Pyle's insistence that sympathy seeks a "genuine" and simultaneously fabulated community (presumably grounded on a common and cultivated faculty) I think opens the door for connections with Kant's kingdom of ends – although I would argue that both concepts have more radical potential than Pyle's division of conservative sympathy and subversive imagination implies.

for explaining nature, whereas from the practical perspective of morality, the kingdom of ends is an idea "that can be made actual by our conduct" (42 n28). Both in this kingdom and in the concept of discussion of respect as described in the second *Critique*, the moral law is absolutely necessary, but no reference is made to a law-giver apart from the community of rational subjects.[96]

The disappearance of the term "Kingdom of Ends" from Kant's second *Critique* is somewhat confusing. In this work, Kant does mention a "kingdom of morals" of which "we are indeed legislating members" (107) and Kant maintains that "in the order of purposes the human being (and with him every rational being) is a *purpose in itself*" (167).[97] Yet the term used far more often is the "Kingdom of God," which arises not from the behavior and self-conception of rational subjects, but from the harmony of nature and morality (163). This does not indicate, as some contemporaries of Kant asserted, an uncritical return to religion.[98] Kant's definition of rational religion in this work maintains Kant's prioritization of immanent and critical self-determination: religion is "*the cognition of all duties as divine commands, not as sanctions – i.e., chosen and by themselves contingent ordinances of another's will* – but as essential *laws* of every free will by itself" (164). Moreover, unlike the moral law, moral or rational faith (the terms being effectively identified) does not command us, but is rather "a voluntary determination of our judgment" (182).

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[96] In the discussion of respect, Kant asserts that "respect for the law cannot be attributed to a supreme being" (100), and the kingdom of ends shares a common basis with universal respect in the recognition of the dignity of human rationality.
[97] I here am using Pluhar's translation, which renders *Zweck* as purpose rather than end.
[98] An opinion that Allen Wood noted was also prevalent in philosophical discussion of Kant in 1970, when he published *Kant's Moral Religion,* and that has certainly not vanished from academic scenes.

Earlier I mentioned that Kant ultimately comes to regard the immortality of the soul and the existence of God as postulates issuing from the prior moral law – more properly, these postulates issue from the moral law being adapted to subjective conditions and the principle of the highest good. The former results from squaring the infinite demands of moral perfection that the law places on us with our mortal and imperfect but gradually perfectible condition. The concept of the highest good posits the ultimate unity of morality and happiness (as moral virtue implies a worthiness to be happy) and, together with the moral law, leads us to the conclusion of the existence of God as the moral cause of the world. Kant insists that the practical assent we give to these postulates must not be mistaken for theoretical or speculative knowledge, yet Kant takes the third section of the second chapter of book two to assert "the primacy of pure practical reason in its linkage with speculative reason," insisting that practical reason provides motivation and completion for speculative reason.[99] The indeterminacy of speculative reason cannot override the commands of the moral law; instead, practical reason demands that we follow and further the moral law and that we seek to align our moral vocation and our natural existence – the necessity and possibility of which we must grant. The choice of rational faith (after the prior commitment to practical reason) lies in how we (speculatively) conceive of this possibility.

Kant justifies the priority of practical reason over speculative reason on the basis of the structural necessities of reason – but there is also an intuitive basis for this priority. Essentially, when deliberating over a moral dilemma, we may seek what Kant would call empirical knowledge to get a better understanding of the circumstances of the dilemma, but we do not seem to seek such knowledge in determining the standards of our moral judgment. For example,

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[99] Kant's argument here might be connected with the opening of the *Grounding*, speculating on how we understand the motivating purpose for the human possession of reason and will.

one most likely should seek particular knowledge about an event to determine whether or not murder took place (and possibly what reaction to such an action is called for), but it does not seem like we need particular knowledge to determine whether or not murder is morally wrong. Anticipating some of Wittgenstein's commentary on philosophical problems of language, Kant claims that "if one asks, what, then, properly, is pure morality, by which as a touchstone one must test the moral import of every action, then I must admit that only philosophers can make the decision of this question doubtful" (*CPract* 194). We have, it seems, an immediate awareness of the moral law – which Kant calls the fact of reason – that does not require empirical knowledge or philosophical speculation. Practical reason, for Kant, must involve this immediate awareness and its attendant sense of moral vocation and duty to engage with and seek to further this vocation.

The cultivation and pursuit of moral vocation is both an individual and a social problem, and in the "doctrine of method," Kant discusses moral education. In this discussion, Kant makes room for "preparatory guidance" through inclination and the inculcation of "habitual use" in moral education – acknowledging the role of this habitual use in "common human reason['s]" maintenance of morality and moral understanding (190, 194).[100] Yet Kant stresses the that this guidance is to be exercised only to lead the student to an independent moral motivation, which "teaches the human being to feel his own dignity – gives to his mind a power" (190). To this end, he argues for the power of exemplary stories drawn from "the biographies of ancient and

[100] On this point, Kant seems aligned with a moment in Eliot's "Evangelical Teaching," in which Eliot defines the "highest moral habit" as "the constant preference of truth both theoretically and practically" which "demands the co-operation of the intellect with the impulses" (145), as well as Eliot's inclusion of habit in morality in *The Mill on the Floss* (mentioned towards the end of this chapter). Kant's moral philosophy is often presented as having an antagonistic, rather than cooperative, model with respect to habit and impulse or inclination.

modern times,"[101] and even makes space for the role of literature, admiring how "Juvenal presents such an example [of moral elevation] in a climax that lets the reader vividly feel the force of the incentive hidden in the pure law of duty as duty" (198).[102] The quotation Kant uses from Juvenal emphasizes a philosophical point, yet he seems as interested in Juvenal's capacity to present and powerfully convey this point as its philosophical content.

Kant concludes his work by advocating the role of "science (critically sought and methodically initiated)" in moral education. Drawing an analogy with human awe at the heavens and the development of astrology, Kant argues that morality, starting from "human nature's noblest property, whose development and cultivation point to infinite benefit," has resulted in "fanaticism, or … superstition" through incautious and irrational ventures. As rational physical science has lead to progressive and grounded knowledge of our world and universe, rational moral science can lead us to similar knowledge. Kant stresses the role of this science for teachers who seek "the path of wisdom," but insists that, though the public need not interest itself in philosophical "subtle investigation" (as our basic moral awareness of duty is immediate and common), it should nonetheless be interested in the results of such investigation (205). Science is not meant to teach us "what one ought to do" – as the knowledge of duty is already within us as rational agents – but it can serve to clarify and instill discipline in our moral consciousness

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[101] For the role of moral examples in another of Kant's moral works, see Marcia Baron's "Moral Paragons and the *Metaphysics of Morals*" (in *A Companion to Kant*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 335-49). Baron's focus is on Kant's concept of the "morally excellent agent," and although she does not deal with stories, her focus on exemplary agents and developing a more ethically robust account of Kant's idea of moral excellence could be useful in motivating and developing an account of exemplary stories in Kant's moral philosophy.

[102] More specifically, Kant's example refers to a contrary feeling, by which an action opposed to inclination but in line with respect (e.g., the sacrifice of the self for a moral cause) becomes itself an incentive that overpowers other incentives. As in Kant's prior discussion of respect, this incentive is non-pathological, but bears upon the emotions.

and help to secure us against the dangers of moral fanaticism.[103] Back in the "Incentives of Pure Practical Reason," Kant speaks of moral fanaticism as "an overstepping of the bounds that pure practical reason sets for humanity," and includes "not only novelists and sentimental educators … but sometimes even philosophers … [among those that] have introduced *moral fanaticism* in place of sober but wise moral discipline" (111).

Kant's assumption that novelists (*Romanschreiber*, literally novel-writers) and sentimentalists would engage in moral fanaticism may reflect some note of condescension, but it is also grounded in the assumptions of the literary and philosophical movement of sentimentalism – in German, *Empfindsamkeit*. Sentimentalism is founded, in part, on moral sense philosophy and a belief in the positive moral capacity of sensibility. As Kant's definition of moral fanaticism includes anything that posits moral motivation in something besides the moral law (110), any form of sentimentalism would fall under this heading due to its commitment to a moral source of morality. The German movement of *Empfindsamkeit* was partially inspired by the work of English novelists (particularly Sterne in translation), and Kant could equally have had Germans, English writers, or both in mind with this comment. Kant's approving quotation of Juvenal (and his admiration for writers like Pope) suggests that this is a criticism of a particular movement, rather than a wholesale attack on literature.

Although Eliot was indebted to both moral sense philosophy and sentimentalism, this did not prevent her from attacking the conventions of sentimentalism in her own era – among many

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[103] Kant distinguishes the "the doctrine of wisdom" provided by critical science from the more general knowledge of "what one ought to do" as a doctrine "to serve *teachers* as a standard for preparing well and recognizably the path to wisdom that everyone ought to walk, and to secure others against erroneous paths" (205). Exactly what Kant means by the path of wisdom is not entirely clear, although "well and recognizably" seems to suggest that the moral law and its applications might be presently with more or less clarity and force, while Kant's own work in the *Metaphysics of Morals* might be read as a clarification of the different applications of the moral law, and thus a path of wisdom in itself.

other places, in her somewhat infamous essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (1856). Eliot's criticism in this essay of sentimentalist novels rests in part on the tendency of the novelists to imagine they can transverse bounds they either cannot. It is in this context that Eliot remarks on the Lady novelists able to catch "occasional glimpses of the *noumenon*" (quoted in the first chapter) and who form unqualified opinions "on the knottiest moral and speculative questions" (310). As hitherto indicated, Kant and Eliot shared a concern about religious enthusiasm, but it seems that Eliot also shared a concern about moral fanaticism or enthusiasm – provided we read the latter term somewhat more widely than Kant, as that which constructs or alleges morality or moral motivation beyond the bounds of duty. Eliot clearly and unequivocally attacks sentimentalist lady novelists for positing speculative knowledge where none exists, but she also attacks ungrounded assertions of moral knowledge – and in this essay in particular shows concern with what Kant would identify as self-conceit, or morality without any real basis apart from an unreflective egoism. This is a concern that one might point to in any number Eliot's novels, from Arthur in *Adam Bede* to Grandcourt in *Daniel Deronda*, but is particularly present and pressing, as I will argue, in *The Mill on the Floss*.

Before proceeding to Eliot's fiction, I want to touch on three points in her writings outside of her novels that suggest sympathy with a Kantian moral outlook, as characterized by a notion of duty centered on autonomy, self-reflection, respect/dignity and a morality that possesses a practical priority over speculative concerns: a letter written in 1874, a notebook entry, likely from some time in the 1870s, and Eliot's completion and revision of the subchapter "The Moral Sense" in Lewes's *Problems of Life and Mind* from 1878-9. The relatively late date of these texts, combined with Eliot's attack on *à priori* methodology in her review of Gruppe in 1855, seems to suggest that the Kantian tenor of these texts is a similarly late development.

Other texts from the 1850s (e.g., "Evangelical Teaching: Dr. Cumming") suggest more common ground between Kant and Eliot – and, as I will suggest later in this chapter, *The Mill on the Floss* turns on Eliot's adaptation of what we might reasonably identify as Kantian moral problems. Moreover, the central Kantian tenets of these texts, affirming the priority of practical moral concerns, the unconditional demands of duty, and the connection of morality, dignity and purpose, are no less present in Eliot's earlier writings. Nonetheless, between Lewes's revisions of the *Biographical History of Philosophy* and Eliot's own continuing engagement with German thought, one wonders if Eliot's engagement and agreement with Kant may have grown over time.

Writing to Mrs. Ponsonby (an attendee at the priory Sundays and devotee of Eliot) in 1874, Eliot stressed the importance of our immediate awareness of practical freedom:

> As to the necessary combinations through which life is manifested, and which seem to present themselves to you as a hideous fatalism which ought logically to petrify your volition – have they, in fact, any such influence on your ordinary course of action in the primary affairs of your existence as a human, stoical, domestic creature? And if they don't hinder you from taking a bath…why should they hinder you from a line of resolve in a higher strain of duty to your ideal, both for yourself and others? (GEL, vi. 98)

Like Kant, Eliot seems to consider quite seriously the possibility of a deterministic universe, but insists on a practical turn that supersedes theoretical knowledge.[104] In "Determinism and Responsibility in the works of George Eliot," George Levine argues that Eliot is committed to a deterministic view of the world, "in which duty becomes primary" (272). However, the

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[104] For Kant's consideration of the possibility of a deterministic universe, I am referring in particular to his meditations in the first *Critique*.

determinism that Levine attributes to Eliot is founded on parallels with John Stuart Mill's commitment to complex universal causality, rather than, for example, Charles Bray's necessitarianism.[105] Levine quotes the letter just cited to argue that Eliot's "determinism reinforced a moral bias," splitting Eliot's felt freedom from her belief in universal causality (274). Eliot clearly does distinguish between a logical concession to necessity (a conclusion, Kant would argue, towards which theoretical reason leads us) and the experienced fact of volition, of which we have an immediate awareness that supersedes theoretical concerns. Nonetheless, this latter fact seems to carry theoretical weight, enabling resolve towards an ideal and an effective alternative to the rhetorically rejected "hideous fatalism."

Eliot seems to advocate a similar position in one of her unpublished notebook pieces entitled "Moral Freedom," probably dating from the 1870s.[106] In this piece, Eliot begins "At the opening of the question, 'Are we free agents, or are we not?' we are met by the fact – as indisputable as anything that can possibly be urged on the matter – that to occupy the mind in contemplating human action as a chain of necessary sequences must neutralize practice" (365). She goes on to argue:

> Life & action are prior to theorizing, & have a prior logic in the conditions necessary to maintain them…when we have once satisfied ourselves that any one point of view is

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[105] More specifically, Levine argues that Eliot's determinism should be distinguished from necessitarianism (and other reductive determinisms) by its commitment to complexity, causality as distinct from compulsion, and character – this last factor being a limited space of personal choice and self-causality within the larger determinations of one's self nature. A stronger version of character than the model that Levine uses could offer significant parallels with Kant's concept of the rational agent as a cause in herself. Charles Bray was an early acquaintance of Eliot's in Coventry, around the time of her rejection of Christianity (mentioned in the first chapter in connection with Charles Christian Hennell), who advocated a materialist version of determinism, reading the work of universal necessity in all things and agents – the full title of his best-known work being *The Philosophy of Necessity; or, the Law of Consequences as Applicable to the Mental, Moral, and Social Science* (1841).

[106] As Pinney notes, the date for these notebook entries is uncertain, though Charles Lee Lewes (who published other pieces from the same notebook), conjectures the notebook as a whole to have been written in the 1870s ("More Leaves from George Eliot's Notebook" 356).

> hostile to practice…it is not the dominance of the intellect, but poverty of judgment that determines us to allow its interference in guiding our conduct, either in the implicit conduct which goes on within us, or the explicit which is its completion (365).

Although one might take Eliot's logic here to Nietzschean extremes, the core is essentially Kantian (although also partially in line with British common sense philosophy): Eliot asserts the primacy of moral practice and the prior logic that grounds such practice over a completely necessitarian theoretical view of causality. In defending this practice and logic, Eliot insists on an internal or cognitive space, which we must conceive of as potentially autonomous or free from external determination.

Some of the strongest evidence for Eliot's agreement with Kant's moral philosophy comes from her completion and revision of G.H. Lewes's subchapter on "The Moral Sense" in the fourth volume of his unfinished *Problems of Life and Mind*. In his article on the subchapter, "G.H. Lewes Revised: George Eliot and the Moral Sense," K. K. Collins proposes that Eliot "shifts the emphasis of Lewes's version by counterbalancing it, thereby overcoming the limits of his naturalism" (480).[107] Adding paragraphs and rewriting the subchapter substantially, Eliot shifts the emphasis of the article from Lewes's basically naturalist-historical account to one that makes room for "binding ethical principles" and "rational moral conceptions" (475, 480). One of the ways Eliot does this is by exploiting a quotation from Kant, which Lewes mentions in passing (476). The passage in question talks of "Kant's fine phrase – 'Man refuses to violate in his own person the dignity of humanity'" (490). The closest approximation to this line I have

[107] In the following, I quote and follow Collins's reading, but citations from pages 463-483 refer to Collins's argument, whereas citations from pages 484+ refer to Eliot's original text, which Collins provides as an appendix to the article.

been able to find comes in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, where Kant does discuss the liar as one who "violates the dignity of humanity in his own person" (182) – but the concept the dignity of humanity residing in and demanding respect from one's person is present throughout Kant's moral works.[108] While Lewes uses Kant almost incidentally to advance his own argument, Eliot, takes this sentiment in a larger context, making room in Lewes's account for an individualist and rational notion of duty (476-7).

Along with this idea of duty, Eliot adds to Lewes's account the idea of a "Moral sense" that comes to "incorporate itself [in select members] as a protest and resistance, as the renunciation of immediate sympathy for the sake of a foreseen general good, as moral defiance of material force, and every form of martyrdom" (486). Those of us accustomed to think of Eliot as the great advocate of sympathy may find Eliot's subordination of sympathy to a more calculated "general good" surprising, or even threatening utilitarianism. However, the idea of martyrdom (familiar enough in Eliot's fiction), combined with a Kantian opposition of moral will and material force, suggests an understanding of moral sense that does not proceed along the lines of any material calculus, instead placing value in a self-determinative human dignity. Lewes himself talks of "moral conceptions & organized ethical tendencies" to ground "the *à priori* [moral] Intuitional doctrine" which is nonetheless "explicable on the principles of Experience" (490). Eliot takes this opening and runs with it. Within the limits of experience and history, Eliot holds, as Collins phrases it, "Binding by virtue of its status as a rational, self-

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[108]Although the translation I am quoting from is Mary Gregor's, the same phrase occurs in John William Semple's *Metaphysic of Ethics* (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1836, numerous reprints), which is actually a collection of three different works by Kant, including the *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Moral* and parts of the *Critique of Practical Reason* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*. It is entirely possible, of course, that Lewes is working directly from the German.

imposed moral conception, the principle of duty…is unconditionally and absolutely imperative" (480).

There's a further similarity between Eliot's account and Kant's notion that morality gives us the dignity of a higher purpose. In a section Eliot added to "The Moral Sense," she notes that

> But in the intermediate states [of human moral development] also…at the same time that the dread is directed to an external vengeance of gods or men, we see the moral education of our race proceeding, in the more and more rational classification of actions as right or wrong, towards the final identification of the Divine Will with the highest ascertainable duty to mankind, and in the continual elevation of public opinion towards the highest mark of Feeling informed by Knowledge" (489-90).

Eliot's idea that a morality based on external commands and dread of an external authority belongs to an incomplete state of moral education accords with Kant's insistence, running from the *Grounding* until his last publication, *Religion with the Bounds of bare Reason*, that true morality cannot be grounded on fear or external sanction. Moreover, like Kant, Eliot seems to advocate a vision of morality at once already universal (public and possessed by an immediate feeling or sense) and improvable (Knowledge or critical science has a role to play in moral cultivation). Feuerbach is, of course, at work in the equation of the divine and human, but Eliot's equation of divine will with human duty, rather than human power or human desire aligns this passage more closely with Kant. For both Eliot and Kant, duty indicates a pinnacle of human potential and vocation, calling for our respect and deserving of the appellation "divine."

If we were to reduce Kantian morality to the abstract formula of the categorical imperative, then it might seem like the apparent pro-Kantian stance of Eliot's work on *Problems* is contradicted in the earlier *The Mill on the Floss*. The narrator of *Mill* famously advocates "the

truth, that moral judgments must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked and enlightened by a perpetual reference to the special circumstances that mark the individual lot" (438). The "man of maxims," who engages in such false judgments, is

> the popular representative of the minds that are guided in their moral judgment 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 – without any care to assure themselves whether they have the insight that comes from a hardly-earned estimate of temptation, or from a life vivid and intense enough to have created a wide fellow-feeling with all that is human (438).

Eliot is clearly attacking abstractions in moral judgment that close off feeling and particularity.[109] Yet Kant also argues that, for "common human reason," the question of morality is not decided "by abstract general formulas" (194), and that even the philosopher following the moral law quickly finds herself enmeshed in a series of commitments (for example, commitments to human dignity and the kingdom of ends) that cannot be exhausted by the formula of the categorical imperative. Moreover, the way Eliot characterizes necessary moral feeling – impartiality, wide fellow-feeling with all that is human – demands a kind of abstraction from our own situation, and the demand for patience and discernment is entirely in keeping with a Kantian moral perspective. A Kantian moral view is not content with any presentation of general rules, as, for Kant, only maxims that pass the test of reason qualify as moral; like Eliot, Kant is aware of the dangerous

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[109] I also suspect that Eliot's economic metaphor of a "ready-made patent method" may be a jab the sometimes economically-minded philosophy of Utilitarianism (to which Kant's rational Intuitionism is often opposed). Eliot offers a more direct attack on Utilitarianism in *Romola*, where she speaks of "moments when the vaguely animal spirits of a crowd are most likely to be … ready to sacrifice a stray individual for the greater happiness of the greater number" (98). For a discussion of problems of economy and morality for generally (although in relation to Lockean thought that helped to ground Utilitarianism), see Eric P. Levy's "Property Morality in *The Mill on the Floss*."

human tendency to try to turn inclination into general laws. The man of maxims fails to submit his general rules to any kind of critique or test, and thus passes off his mere inclination or "temptation" as objective. Unexamined maxims, no less than the dogma of Dr. Cumming or the dreams of Swedenborg, are a means of avoiding careful and rational thought.[110]

If, instead of writing off Kantian morality as an all-too-simple formula, we understand Kant's moral philosophy as a complex system of priorities, as I have tried to elaborate in this chapter, then the connections between Eliot's second novel and Kant's second *Critique* become both evident and pressing. As indicated above, both novelist and philosopher prioritize self-reflection, deliberation and the striving after a morality that can achieve impartiality. This last term is particularly important, as both Kant and Eliot emphasize the human tendency to mask subjective inclination as objective law, and both resist the manifestations of this tendency throughout their respective critical and literary works. Autonomous duty, guiding moral purpose and human dignity (with its concomitant concept of respect), as hitherto indicated, are important elements of Kant and Eliot's thought and writing, and are no less present concerns in *The Mill on the Floss*.

Among many characters in this novel, Tom seems to be an example of what Kant would call a self-conceited individual, an individual who fails to see the real origin of what he takes to be duty and morality in the contingency of his own egoism:

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[110] For an alternative reading of the men of maxims, see Mary Jacobus's "The Question of Language: Men of Maxims and *The Mill on the Floss*." Drawing in part from Nancy Miller's reading of *Mill*, Jacobus reads the men of maxims as figures of the dominant patriarchal culture whose faith in general rules reflects their assumptions about other general unities and coherences, particularly in language. In Jacobus's reading, Eliot resists these false unities, both as narrator and through the character of Maggie in a manner that invites comparisons with Irigarayan theory. While Jacobus's reading is more interested in feminist linguisitic strategies than moral deliberation, her insistence on Eliot's linguistic resistance to false unities is far from irreconcilable with the claims of this paper.

> He did not know how much of an old boyish repulsion and of mere personal pride and animosity was concerned in the bitter severity of the words by which he meant to do the duty of a son and brother. Tom was not given to inquire subtly into his own motives, any more than into other matters of an intangible kind; he was quite sure that his own motives as well as actions were good, else he would have had nothing to do with them (302).

The sort of tautologies Tom implicitly engages in (his motives are good because they are his, they are his because they are good) disguise the origin of his motives and alleged "duty" in his personal and petty emotions. But they can do this only because Tom does not subject them to the examination of a discerning reason. Tom's blindness on the point infects his sense of duty and his morality generally. When he first learns that he and Wakem's son will be going to the same school, he wishes that Philip were not deformed, "for then Tom would have had the prospect of pitching into him with all that freedom which is derived from a high moral sanction" (140). A sanction, as we know from Kant's definition, is something that comes from without, an ordinance of another's will. Tom's morality is constructed around an arbitrary moral code – arbitrary because unexamined and drawn from without – in which attacking a well-formed son of someone your father doesn't like is fine.

Tom is far from alone in his adherence to an unexamined moral code. The Dodson pride themselves on their adherence to "traditional duty" and their "faithfulness to admitted rules" (239). Relying on ideas of faithfulness and tradition, the Dodsons place their morality beyond their scope of examination.[111] But the term "admitted" already informs the reader of the selective

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[111] Eliot presents this traditionalism as primitive, describing their religion being "of a simple, semi-pagan kind" but defending them from the accusation of heresy, "if heresy properly means choice" (239). However, n excusing themselves from the moral deliberation of choice by appeal to an unquestionable, even apparently involuntary

function that these traditions and rules serve: as the narrator makes clear, the Dodson's steadfast adherence to their traditional rules serve as a means to gratify personal inclination, be it greed, pride or simple sloth – one need think only of Mrs. Glegg's use of family tradition to appeal to her pride or the various Dodson deliberations in the chapter "The Family Council" (Book 3, Chapter 3). Nor are the Dodsons alone in this narrowness, as it is both the Tullivers and the Dodsons the narrator speaks of in stating, "their moral notions, though held with strong tenacity, seem to have no standard beyond hereditary custom" (238). As Melissa Ganz notes in "Binding the Will: George Eliot and the Practice of Promising," "Like Mr. Tulliver, Tom uses the [family] Bible to shore up a pledge" (572). For both, a pledge on its own is insufficient and needs the verification of external authority; both the traditional authority of the bible and fact that it is the family bible, or, as Tom perhaps unintentionally blends the two, "my father's Bible" (*Mill*, 301). For both Tom and his earthly father, this appeal to external authority provides the vehicle for binding others to the mandates of their own personal vindictiveness (Ganz, 572). Precisely because the authority is arbitrary – it is the physical fact of the bible and its importance in hereditary custom, not its content that matters – this authority can be put to use by personal inclination.

Tom's appreciation for external and unexamined authority may not be entirely the product of familial upbringing. In his education at school, Tom is exposed to another whose appeal to authority masks unexamined inclination: "Because teaching came naturally to Mr Stelling" he teaches "with that uniformity of method and independence of circumstances, which distinguish the actions of animals understood to be under the immediate teaching of nature"

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tradition, the Dodsons by no means free themselves from the determination of inclination (as the enthusiast does not avoid the determination of her own wishes by appealing to the Divine Will).

(121). For Mr Stelling, his method of teaching and the assumptions that ground it (e.g., "Aristotle was a great authority") are completely unquestionable. Although supposedly imparting a rational education (Euclid and Aristotle, among others), Mr Stelling is in fact a creature of unexamined inclination. In "The Two Rhetorics: George Eliot's Bestiary," J. Hillis Miller traces the remarkable complexity and irony at work in Eliot's extended examination of Mr Stelling's educational method and metaphor. In problematizing Mr Stelling's favorite agricultural metaphor, that narrator involves the reader in a seemingly inescapable series of metaphors, including reflection on metaphor itself and the camel as the ship of the desert, which is "a metaphor of a metaphor" (65). Ultimately, the reader "is as imprisoned as much as Tom, Mr Stelling or the shrewmouse [to whom Tom is compared] within the linguistic predicament that the passage both analyses and exemplifies" (68). In context, however, one can read this passage as an illustration of the danger of taking a metaphor as given, or "literal" in Miller's terminology. Precisely because Stelling substitutes a metaphor in place of a reasoned defense and construction of an educational strategy, he opens himself to the kind of metaphoric inversions and destabilization that Eliot exploits. Any abstraction, authority or trope we treat as unquestionable is already arbitrary and is more likely to excuse sidestepping thought and self-examination in favor of following inclination than to lead to any tenable educational or moral position.

This is a lesson even Maggie misses on some level. In discovering Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, Maggie undergoes a transformation into what seems to her a complete fulfillment of the ideal of duty. Maggie strives to follow "the path we all like when we set out on our abandonment of egoism – the path of martyrdom and endurance, where the palm-branches grow, rather than the steep highway of tolerance, just allowance, and self-blame, where there are

no leafy honours to be gathered and worn" (256). Maggie's conception of herself as martyr saves her from the threat of self-examination, or even from seeing how her image of herself as a martyr gratifies a kind of personal inclination and need at great expense to herself.

Yet there is a danger in reading Maggie as simply mistaken. As Jonathan Loesberg notes in "Aesthetics, Ethics, and Unreadable Acts in George Eliot," the gossips of St. Oggs construct two possible stories for Maggie's elopement, and conclude from what they know that she must belong to "melodrama of the fallen woman" (136). However, Maggie's story is unreadable in a way that even critics of Eliot routinely miss in trying to fashion a consistent and "coherent moral narrative" (137). In response to a criticism by Bulwer-Lytton regarding "Maggie's position towards Stephen," Eliot replies "If the ethics of art do not admit the truthful presentation of a character essentially noble but liable to great error – error that is anguish to its own nobleness – then, it seems to me, the ethics of art are too narrow, and must be widened" (138). Although Loesberg uses this to insist that Eliot seeks to create "an aesthetics that creates sympathy out of … moments of unreadability" (138), I want to remain for a moment with the gossips' failed reading and Eliot's defense of Maggie.

The interpretation of the gossips is conditioned by narratives their culture has taught them to expect, but it is also conditioned by their idea of capital "S" Society: "The ladies of St. Oggs were not beguiled by any wide speculative conceptions; but they had their favourite abstraction, called Society, which served to make their consciences perfectly easy in doing what satisfied their own egoism" (445). The abstraction "Society" excuses these ladies from "courage, deep pity [and] self-knowledge" and functions like Tom's "high moral sanction," giving free reign to personal inclination. The mind that falls back on this abstraction in place of moral and rational effort has "cheated itself" into "the belief that life can have any moral end…which excludes the

striving after perfect truth, justice, and love towards the individual men and women who come across our own path" (444-5). While the syntax of this passage technically leaves open the possibility of a life without a moral end, the tone of it does not. This notion of a moral end bears important resemblances to Kant's; for Kant, reason is also concerned with perfection[112], and the pursuit of perfect truth and justice parallel the drives of theoretical and practical reason. Furthermore, though the love towards others is certainly line with the Christian teaching later discussed in Eliot's chapter, the focus of the moral end on the members of the human community (as opposed to God, or on the members through God) more closely resembles Kant's kingdom of ends than the Christian kingdom of heaven.[113]

In pursuing this greater moral end, it is necessary to free oneself, as far as possible, of "inordinate inclination to thyself" (253). Although Maggie carries "exaggeration and willfulness, some pride and impetuosity, even into her self-renunciation" (256), she is not wrong in seeking a duty that exceeds the demands and inclinations of the self. She is right to fear having "no law but the inclination of the present" (417), for she has seen in her own family what happens when this law guides people, albeit under other names. "Faithfulness and constancy" and morality must "mean something else that doing what is easiest and pleasantest to ourselves" (417). Maggie is "essentially noble" despite whatever errors she may have precisely because she strives after this greater purpose.

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[112] See for instance *Grounding*, 47, in which "among the rational principles of morality … there is the ontological concept of perfection" and *Critique of Practical Reason*, 177. Perfection, although part of reason and morality, is an "indeterminate concept" and thus does not provide an adequate conception of moral duty on its own. More generally, however, perfectibility, or at least improvability, seems to be a feature of critical science, whether it investigates theoretical or practical knowledge.

[113] Again, Feuerbach is clearly present here.

As we know from Eliot's remark on "Moral Freedom," Maggie is wrong to conclude that "our life is determined for us – and it makes the mind very free when we give up wishing, and only think of bearing what is laid upon us, and doing what is given us to do" (266). But this is because in this case she fails the test of duty, not because she dedicates herself to it excessively. Duty as Maggie conceives it here is not a ground for moral action, but rather an excuse for avoiding demands of rational and moral deliberation and subjecting the self to an external "given." Maggie herself has read and knows well enough that moral consciousness attends to "the Truth, which teacheth inwardly" (253). She is also not quite the determinist (or, better, fatalist) implied in these earlier lines, becoming indignant at Stephen's attempt "to deprive [her] of any choice" in their boat ride, or later reflecting in indirect discourse on the "fruit from all her years of striving after the highest and best – that her soul…could never deliberately consent to a choice of the lower" (413). A major theme in this book is the tendency for characters to excuse themselves from the burden of moral deliberation in false commitment to an external and arbitrary authority that serves to mask the real determination of inclination, and Maggie deserves credit for her genuine deliberation and her struggle both to free herself from inclination and to determine and choose her true duty.

Although Maggie's purpose is Kantian, she struggles to achieve it in a Lewesian universe. The moral knowledge Maggie strives after is not something immediately accessible to her, but requires scientific patience and effort as well as sympathy and rational discernment – and, more particularly, the patience and effort of a science that contains a greater empirical component than Kant's critical science. Maggie lacks "that knowledge of the irreversible laws within her and without her, which, governing the habits, becomes morality" (*Mill*, 252). This knowledge cannot be approached by the "high *priori* road," but rather must be striven for, taking

account of habits, our historical situations and the empirical laws without us as well as the moral law within.

None of which lessens Maggie's (or our own) imperative duty towards that moral law. Whatever frustrations we as readers may have with Maggie's choices, her awareness of and attempts to act in accord with this duty do not waver – and thus we owe to Maggie, no less than Adam or Dinah, the tribute of respect. The title of the sixth book "The Great Temptation" doubtlessly plays with Maggie's self-conception as a martyr – Eliot makes no attempt to hide satirical intents in her chapter headings, either through ironic distance of diction (as in "A variation of Protestantism unknown to Bousset") or alignments of which the characters are unaware ("How a Hen takes to a stratagem"). Nonetheless, the temptation possesses a psychological and effective reality for the reader no less than Maggie, and although Maggie's discipline goes to excess in resisting what the narrator calls Maggie's vanity, Maggie cannot be wrong in resisting this vanity (383). *The Mill and the Floss* ends in a mortal reconciliation, but the novel consists principally in and gives us cause to respect Maggie's struggles – to borrow terminology from Eliot's additions to "The Moral Sense," her moral defiance of material force, but also force exerted from familial expectations, social judgment and internal inclination.

Some idea of the distance between the moral worlds of *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss* might be seen in their primary ministerial figures, Mr. Irwine and Dr. Kenn. Irwine shows a proper affability and communal concern and receives the praise of Adam. Dr. Kenn at least ostensibly meets the demands of sympathy, spending years in "devoted service to his fellow-men" and showing great concern and deliberation over Maggie's situation. Dr. Kenn assures Maggie that he is bound to aid her "by the very duties of [his] office" and that he also has "a deep interest in [her] peace of mind and welfare" – yet despite this external duty (belonging to

the office rather than the person) and personal interest, the reverend immediately falls into a kind of theorizing that negates action and useful counsel (437). Dr. Kenn speaks of the necessity of moral obligation, yet this obligation cannot ultimately lead him to prevail against what he calls "counteracting circumstances." Against the current of popular opinion and in consideration of "the peculiar responsibility attached to his office," Dr. Kenn lets Maggie go as the governess to his children. The reverend's failure becomes all the more acute viewed in relation to Maggie's actions: his inability to translate his resolve into action suggests a failure in the strength of his resolve, but also the ways in which, even at his most sympathetic, Dr. Kenn calculates, whereas Maggie's troubles stem, at least in part, from her recognition of the incalculable value of others. If Irwine can be made into a lesson about the necessity of sympathy, Dr. Kenn indicates the limits of a sympathy that fails to sufficiently incorporate practical imperatives or recognize the ways in which subjects place an absolute duty upon us.

Conclusion

Remembering the demise of Eliot's most recent heroine, readers of *Romola* might well have expected Romola to follow Maggie in death after lying down in a boat and "gliding away…on the darkening waters" (admittedly, this time in the sea rather than a river) (474). Eliot even seems to reference the concluding image of *Mill*, in which Tom and Maggie, having embraced after going under the water, are united beneath their tomb: "Presently [Romola] felt that she was in the grave … she was touching the hands of the beloved dead beside her" (475).[114] Moreover, Romola seems to have picked up some of Maggie's primary traits, developing an intense religious severity in the course of the novel without losing a strong sense of sympathy and feeling torn between competing claims of duty, besides having a dead father. Romola was serialized in the Cornhill Magazine, and the image of Romola drifting away appears at the end of a monthly part (June 1863). As Romola does not appear in the next issue (July), the readers may well have expected that Romola's wish "that she might be gliding into death" (475) had been granted – especially as her husband, Tito, dies in the issue following her departure and the central and heroic (if not unquestionable) friar Savonarola is clearly heading towards his execution.

Eliot's reincorporation of Romola into the text in the August issue violates both tragic development and realist priorities. Romola not only survives her drifting in the sea, she happens across an unidentified village struck by pestilence, ministers to the afflicted villagers with milk and water, and even becomes a legend as "the blessed Lady who came over the sea" (527). Romola has already been compared with a Madonna in her ministrations in her home town of

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[114] In *The Mill on the Floss*, the narrator also imagines Maggie and Tom holding hands after their demise.

Florence, but this return from death threatens to make the earlier metaphor of divinity (or at least supernatural character) literal. Romola had drifted off feeling "orphaned in [the] wide spaces of sea and sky … she read no message of love for her in that far-off symbolic writing of the heavens" (475) and her improbable preservation (and even reincarnation of sorts) threatens to destroy this fundamentally realistic awareness of the reality of death and the division of the self from nature. Romola's continued life seems to lack the sort of tragic logic that grants wider meaning to Maggie's death. Both Romola and Maggie suffer from the pull of irreconcilable duties, both have a strained relationship with their closest living loved one (Tom and Tito, respectively), and both of their deaths would have pointed to a larger truth of ultimate irreconcilability: Maggie's death is also a statement about her incapacity to square her vocation with the society in which she lived, and Romola's death could resonate on the level of irreconciliation with the determinations and contingencies of nature. The moral dignity of martyrdom falls instead to Savonarola, who, the narrator posthumously declares, labored "for the very highest end – the moral welfare of men – not by vague exhortations, but by striving to turn beliefs into energies that would work in all the details of life" (538).

Eliot herself conceded that "[t]he various *strands* of thought I had to work out forced me into a more ideal treatment of Romola than I had foreseen at present" (*GEL* iv 103). Both Deborah Guth and Robert Norton read this ideal quality to Romola as part of Eliot's engagement with the tragic theory and works of Schiller. As Schiller drew quite directly from Kant's moral and aesthetic philosophy (even while parodying the former), these readings are quite amenable to a Kantian reading of the same text. The praise of Savonarola above centered on moral vocation and practical engagement, as well as the general focus on imperative moral force, could be Kantian, Schillerian or both. Savonrola's description of his moral-political cause as "the cause

of freedom" (463) meets both Kant and Schiller's equation of morality and freedom. The narrator's discussion of the need for "a moral law restraining desire" (and its apparent absence in Tito) (112) may sounds slightly more Kantian, but can certainly be squared with Schiller's call for a moral personality to master the senses and their inclinations. Schiller opens up the possibility of reading non-realistic elements of this text not as literary failures, but as articulations of a different literary vision from English realism.[115] Discussing Schiller in relation to *The Mill on the Floss*, Guth quite rightly emphasizes the need "to harmonize warring inner needs," as harmony is a larger priority in Schiller's moral and aesthetic thought. This prioritized harmony is arguably derived (in part) from Kant's aesthetic theory, but is not in entire accord with his moral philosophy.

Romola brings before the reader, perhaps more strongly than any other novel by Eliot, the force, demands and dignity of ideal and practical morality. Romola, who restlessly follows the dictates of duty, becomes a latter-day Madonna.[116] Tito, who lacks a proper respect of the moral law and speaks of the obligations of duty as "air-woven fetters" easily dispersed with "a little philosophy" (270), is strangled to death by his betrayed adoptive father. These narratorial sentences correspond to Romola and Tito's respective stories of moral development and degeneration, and the narrative itself emphasizes and dramatizes moral dilemmas. There is a sense of balance or coherence in Tito's punishment, Romola's reward and the dignified fate of Savonarola, who was at least possessed of some element of hubris. Furthermore, Romola herself

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[115] Schiller also offers advantages for reading Eliot as a playwright and philosopher who wrote both aesthetic works and theory – Guth reads Eliot as not only borrowing from Schiller's aesthetic theory, but even modeling Savonarola, for instance, on the Schillerian hero Wallenstein.

[116] See also on this point Felicia Bonaparte's discussion of Romola in *The Triptych and the Cross: The Central Myths of George Eliot's Poetic Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 1979).

seems capable, at the end, of bringing emotion, personal moral vocation and social existence into an effective harmony, remaining as a paragon of Florence and reconciling with Tito's mistress.

However, as Kant recognizes and illustrates, the ideal is not necessarily a space of harmony. Reason begets its own internal conflicts, and ideal moral rationality also exists in a sort of necessary conflict with inclination, in which moral dignity may be won or lost. Romola herself is caught between "the demands of an outward law which she recognized as a widely ramifying obligation, and the demands of inner moral facts which were becoming more and more peremptory" (441). Such a conflict is permissible in Schillerian harmony (and is used in Schiller's dramas), so long as it leads to an ultimate conciliation or a properly tragic and dramatic conclusion. *Romola* nearly concludes with the death of Savonarola, but the story continues into an epilogue, which contains Romola's praise of the deceased – but also a note of doubt indirectly introduced by the artist Piero di Cosimo, who apparently "abuses [Romola] for dressing the altar, and thinking so much of Fra Girolamo," i.e., Savonarola (548).

We are not given di Cosimo's reasons for the abuse (admittedly moderated by his gift of flowers), but this story has given us reasons for not worshipping at Romola's altar, despite the narrator's praise for Savonarola. Romola first encounters Savonarola fleeing from Florence and Tito (who, by this point, has made manifest his moral indifference and sold Romola's father's library against expressed orders) – at which point the friar seeks to convert Romola and call her back to her duties as a wife. Given what we know of Tito, this call seems doubtful enough on its own, but Savonarola further justifies his demand by claiming that "The higher life begins for us, my daughter, when we renounce our own will to bow before a divine law" (343). Although the friar refers to the law, and even makes a Kantian injunction against "a freedom which is lawlessness," the logic here is that of the divine will and Divine Command Morality.

Savonarola's ready conversions between divine law, formal social obligations and personal politics testify to the fundamentally arbitrary quality at the heart of this law. Romola even comes to recognize "a fanaticism" in Savonarola that startles her (421). Savonarola presents a more impressive figure than the Dodsons or Grandcourt, and, unlike them, seems to seek, and, in some limited way, accomplish real good in a Florence that is clearly beset with problems. His political ambitions complicate his character, but his demand for submission to apparently arbitrary norms and external wills – and his ability to resolve Romola's struggles of moral deliberation into a matter of submission – prevent us from taking Savonarola as a moral model.

Towards the end of the *Grounding*, Kant says that "Reason … restlessly seeks the unconditionally necessary" (62). In speaking of moral concerns in both Eliot and Kant, I think it is essentially important for us to keep in mind the restless quality of philosophical and literary activity for these two writers. We can and have good reason to speak of duty as an essential motive force running through the works of Eliot and Kant – the works examined in this paper, but also those that follow – and a concept that exists in particular philosophical and literary contexts and possesses structural relations to other concepts (autonomy, reflection, respect, etc.) that cohere to form a more general and compelling image of moral motivation and possibility. But duty is also a problem or question, a warp that gathers philosophical and literary discourse without permitting a final or complete account. Dinah's moral vocation, Maggie's tragic duty and Romola's ministerial moral life all possess common threads – and echo, for instance, in Deronda's vocation or Dorothea's less violent tragedy – but cannot be equated, being particular "experiments in life" under different conditions and in different contexts. Likewise, the moral faith arrived at after the self-destructions of pure reason is not quite the same as the moral faith arrived at after the structural conflicts and constructions of practical reason – nor is it quite

identical with what moral faith means after aesthetic and teleological judgment exist as realms of critical science and morality is symbolized by beauty. For both Eliot and Kant, duty derives its imperative power not from theological warrant or external sanction, but from its capacity to manifest a critical human dignity unbounded by anything save recognition of the same dignity in other agents, and the responsibility attendant upon that recognition. Duty is thus radically indeterminate, refusing the determinations of subjective inclination, natural influence, historical tradition, etc. But duty also necessarily involves practical engagement with other sensible, finite beings in a world in which non-trivial moral stakes exist.

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