AN ANALYSIS OF THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF GEORGE ELIOT'S CHARACTERS IN *MIDDLEMARCH* ACCORDING TO LAWRENCE KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF MORALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

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This study analyzes the moral development of George Eliot's characters in her novel *Middlemarch* according to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory called "The Cognitive-Developmental Theory of Moralization". Eliot's moral view is characterized by man's relation with other men, not man's relation with God. As long as the individuals treat others with sympathy and understanding, they can develop morally. Eliot's aim is to contribute to the creation of a happier society by

presenting the harms of egoism. According to Kohlberg's theory, individuals can develop their role taking abilities parallel to their cognitive developments. This development is displayed by three levels and at the highest level an individual can go beyond the expectations of society with principles of justice and respect for basic human rights and dignity. However, although the characters in Eliot's novel are sometimes in conflict with the society, they tend to find solutions to their problems within the social structure they live in because Eliot contends that the harmony of society is more important than the personal satisfaction and happiness of individuals for the welfare and happiness of humanity as a whole.

Keywords: George Eliot, *Middlemarch,* Moral Development, Role Taking Ability, Cognitive Development.

ÖZ

GEORGE ELIOT'IN *MIDDLEMARCH* ROMANINDAKİ KARAKTERLERİN AHLAKİ GELİŞİMLERİNİN LAWRENCE KOHLBERG'İN AHLAK TEORİSİNE GÖRE İNCELENMESİ

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Bu çalışma, George Eliot'ın *Middlemarch* adlı romanındaki karakterlerin ahlaki gelişimlerini Lawrence Kohlberg'in "Bilişsel Ahlaki Gelişim Teorisi"ne göre incelemektedir. Eliot'ın ahlak anlayışını bireyin Tanrı'yla olan ilişkisi değil, diğer bireylerle olan ilişkisi şekillendirir. Bireyler başkalarına karşı şefkat ve anlayışla yaklaştıkları sürece ahlaki açıdan kendilerini geliştirebilirler. Eliot'ın amacı insanlara bencilliğin zararlarını göstererek daha mutlu bir toplum yaratılmasına katkıda bulunmaktır. Kohlberg'in ahlak teorisine göre birey zeka

gelişimine paralel olarak kendini karşıdakinin yerine koyma yeteneğini geliştirebilir. Bu gelişme üç temel evre ile ifade edilir ve en üst evrede birey insan hakları doğrultusunda toplumun beklentilerini aşabilir. Ancak, Eliot'ın romanındaki karakterler zaman zaman kişisel istekleri toplumla çatışsa da toplumun içinde yer almak eğilimindedirler. Çünkü Eliot toplum düzeninin bireylerin kişisel tatmin ve mutluluğundan daha önemli olduğunu ve düzenli bir toplumun insanlığın mutluluğuna daha büyük katkısı olacağını düşünür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: George Eliot, *Middlemarch,* Ahlak Gelişimi, Rol Alma Yeteneği, Bilişsel Gelişim.

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to analyse the moral development of George Eliot's characters in *Middlemarch* (The subsequent references to *Middlemarch* will be given as *MM*) according to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory called "The Cognitive-Developmental Theory of Moralization". The thesis contends that Eliot, as a believer in humanity, had a secular understanding of morality in which man has a potential for moral growth and responsibility for his actions. However, she also insists that morality is not a personal but a social phenomenon and it is essential for an individual to be in harmony with society for survival and happiness. That is why she ultimately integrates her characters within society which functions according to certain rules and regulations. Her individuals are necessarily part of society and those who cut themselves off from society fail (Hesse 128). Thus, in terms of Kohlberg's theory of moralization which does not see moral development as a result of socialization or social learning, but emphasizes the cognitive development behind moral judgment, Eliot's characters tend to be more concerned with society than with universal principles prior to

society.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development is deeply rooted in Jean Piaget's research which presents a developmental conception of intelligence and describes how the cognitive process in the individual develops from one chronological period to the next. Piaget and Kohlberg share the idea that there is a parallelism between an individual's cognitive and moral stage. To both, to act in a morally principled way requires a high stage of reasoning. The exercise of moral judgment is not confined to a few rare moments in life but is integral to "thinking process" (Hersh 48).

While cognitive development is a necessary condition for moral growth, it is not sufficient according to Piaget and Kohlberg because they claim that many individuals are at a higher cognitive stage than the parallel moral stage, but unfortunately none of them are at a higher moral stage than their cognitive stage. Moral stage is related to both cognitive advance and moral judgment (Kohlberg 32). That is why Piaget was concerned with the relationship between cognition (thought) and affect (feeling). To him, there can be no cognition without affect and no affect without cognition. Therefore, the separation of the two is artificial (Hersh 38). Kohlberg improved Piaget's theory by supporting his ideas and enlarging the stages of moral development in which cognitive level and moral behaviour are tightly connected to each other.

Kohlberg, in his theory "The Cognitive-Developmental Theory of Moralization", suggests mainly three levels of moral development starting from middle childhood to adulthood. These levels of moral reasoning are

preconventional, conventional and postconventional. There are two stages within each of three moral levels (Kohlberg 33). These levels and stages are going to be studied in detail in the following chapters while analyzing the characters in the novel, but briefly they can be outlined as:

A person at Level 1 (Stages 1&2) which is called preconventional level approaches a moral issue from the perspective of the concrete interests of the individual. As he is not concerned with what society expects, rules and regulations do not make any sense to him. While stage 1 involves only the concrete individual's point of view, in stage 2 the individual is aware of a number of other individuals and gains the role taking ability which is the cognitive ability to take the perspective of another. Although Level 1 represents mostly children's moral reasoning, many adolescents' and some adults' moral reasoning still belong to this level (Kohlberg 33).

A person at Level 2 (Stages 3&4) which is called conventional level approaches a moral problem with the perspective of society. He realizes and takes into consideration the fact that the group or society expects an individual to act in accordance with its moral norms. The stage 3 perspective is that of a participant in a small group, whereas stage 4 reflects the perspective of the whole society as a "system". It usually starts in the preadolescence period and develops in adulthood (Kohlberg 34).

A person at Level 3 (Stages 5&6) which is called postconventional level approaches a moral problem from a prior to society perspective. He can see beyond the determined norms and laws of society. He can differentiate his self

from the expectations of others and define his own values in terms of self-chosen principles. He does what he thinks is right without depriving others since they do what they think is right. He accepts that people may have different perspectives in society. A person at stage 5 may sometimes have trouble due to the relativist point of view, but ultimately at stage 6 when laws violate his principles, he acts in accordance with universal principles of justice: equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individuals. It is the rarest level among people. It arises, if at all, during adolescence or early adulthood and characterizes the reasoning of only a minority of adults (Kohlberg 34).

In George Eliot's novels, some of the characters are able to develop morally and climb from the first to the second level; from preconventional to conventional as a result of her belief in the human potential for moral growth. Her conviction in the moral growth of individuals largely depends on the influence of two great thinkers, Feuerbach and Comte. She always expressed her agreement with them (Argyros 56). To both of these thinkers, moral progress of mankind is possible. They think that once human beings realize the divinity within themselves, they will act humanely towards each other without any prompting from God or organized religion (Argyros 37).

Feuerbach contends that the true essence of Christianity is not a religion of God, but of man, a religion of humanity. Since he supposes that religion consists of love, sympathy, and sacrifice of man for man, he urges people to act humanely towards each other for universal harmony (Paris 25). Eliot conceives of Christianity and human relationships in a thoroughly Feuerbachian way as she

states: “If Art does not enlarge men’s sympathies, it does nothing morally” (*Selections from George Eliot’s Letters 217*). According to Eliot, art has a moral function which is to widen the vision of people and arouse sympathy for those who differ from themselves. While giving pleasure through her artistic writing, she also conveys moral messages to her readers. As a novelist, she tries to contribute to the happiness of humanity.

Comte’s “Religion of Humanity” shares the same notions with Feuerbach and was an effective religious substitute for Eliot. To Comte, if man does not deal with the sufferings of others, he cannot develop himself morally even if he worships God. As long as man adopts love and care for his fellows, he will both love himself and reach love of God because God’s main expectation from human beings is their reducing one another’s sufferings by forming a unity. Thus, self-sacrifice and altruism are the bases for a moral life for Comte.

Eliot’s understanding of morality is shaped by the profound impact of these thinkers. Adopting their ideas leads Eliot to think that the individual’s choice of the self or non-self determines his degeneration or regeneration. She questions one of the complex issues of determinism and its apparent opposite, free will. She conceives that man’s life and choice are basically determined, but man is still responsible for his choices and acts as he retains the faculty of free will. The determinism she follows is strictly scientific. Although the acts of man are subject to the laws of positive cosmology, he keeps the power of influencing the chain of causes and effects. Man must see the difference between the facts of existence and modifiable phenomena (Hesse 138). In other words, although Eliot perceives the

world as being rigidly predetermined, she claims that man is still allotted the responsibility for his actions. She sees a chance for moral growth in the scientifically determined universe. The important thing is to be aware of this power and act accordingly. As man may be educated to act morally, responsibly, and apply his free will, determinism is irrelevant in matters of moral choice for Eliot. Thus, she enables her characters to shape their own fate. Moral growth comes to those who recognize the limitations of their vision and who seek to widen their vision instead of despairing (Granlund 175).

While presenting examples of moral growth, Eliot follows a realistic approach as a result of her belief in positive science. According to her, human beings have weaknesses. That is why any type of heroism in the conventional sense cannot exist in her novels. About this issue, Paris, in his essay *Experiments*, points out: "George Eliot was both a realist and moralist. Realism and moralism were the two strongest demands of her culture and her nature, and her problem was to satisfy both by reconciling them" (qtd in Hesse 123). Eliot conveys her understanding of morality through a realistic presentation. She does this to make her readers believe that no matter how hard the circumstances are, man can act morally.

Besides realism, rationalism is another important asset of Eliot. She accepts that man can have false tendencies, but if he can get rid of his subjectivity and develop a detached point of view, he can cope with difficulties more easily and overcome his weaknesses (Hesse 126). So, Eliot suggests that man should be rational in his acts in order not to lose the control of his life.

Eliot strongly recommends rationalism to her readers to provide the security and peace of society. The improvement of society is her main concern. This is another important impact of Feuerbach and Comte as they have always supported the superiority of society to individuals. They supposed that the imperfections perceived in the individual man disappear in the species (Hesse 97). That is why Feuerbach, Comte, and Eliot proposed the close study of society and its continual progress instead of the sole observation of individuals. They came to the conclusion that man finds his true happiness by forming his life in accordance with the expectations and laws of society he lives in. In other words, harmony with the society is essential for both the satisfaction of the individual and the unity of society.

As this introduction suggests, while constructing her understanding of morality, Eliot urges people to goodness and love of humanity for the sake of society. Therefore, she does not approve of the characters who cannot adapt themselves to society because of their conflicting views. That is to say, Eliot's characters are more involved in the problems related to the level of conventional morality than postconventional issues in terms of levels of moral reasoning defined by Kohlberg.

CHAPTER 2

ELIOT'S MORAL VIEW

In order to understand Eliot's moral view, it is essential to know her understanding of religion. Eliot has a different view from the conventional view of Christianity. Although she grew up in a religious family and attended church services in her childhood, after her mother's death in 1836, she began to question the concept of religion.

Eliot did not reject the essence of Christian faith and always believed in a sense of belonging; an attachment to a kind of faith as a means of coping with loneliness and frustration, and of understanding and controlling the mysterious universe. She thought that everybody needed to have this means and the power of conventional religion lay in its ability to satisfy this need for attachment (Paris 12). Yet, she argued that it was possible to satisfy man's need for a sense of moral relation to the world "without" the illusion of God.

Eliot proposes a new understanding of religion based on the fellowship among men rather than the personal satisfaction of his ego. She contends that the religion of the future should both satisfy the individual's need for faith and urge

man to take responsibility for his fellows on the basis of sympathy. She hopes that this religion will be a religion of man, not of God: it will be a human-oriented religion rather than a God-oriented religion in the conventional sense. Humanity is the center.

During the construction of her understanding of religion which implies a Godless universe, Eliot studied the literature of her age and read the works of many philosophers like Feuerbach and Comte, both of whom had a great impact on Eliot's moral view later on.

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), a moral philosopher, was deeply influential on Eliot's literary and intellectual development. Eliot translated his work *The Essence of Christianity* in which Feuerbach reverses the definition of God from "God is love" in Christianity to "Love is God". For Feuerbach, God is the reflection of man's ideal rather than its source. Love does not stem from the concept of God. On the contrary, it creates God. He further argues that the concept of God springs from man's potential for love, which inevitably takes humanity toward the idea of God. God is, therefore, a reflection of love. Feuerbach reasons that God is the mirror of man because God may be understood as a projection or reflection of humanity's ideals. He also establishes a close affinity between the divine and human nature as follows: "The almighty, infinite nature of the father of men is a sympathetic, tender, loving nature and thus the dearest, most sacred emotions of man are divine realities" (qtd.in Argyros 37). Feuerbach believes that the ethical potential of God is latent in all of us, in our capacity for sympathizing with one another. In fact, human beings possess divine qualities within

themselves. Therefore, according to Feuerbach, instead of divinity, humanity should become the object of worship. He also expresses his faith in man on account of man's huge potential for "sacred emotions".

Eliot expresses her agreement with Feuerbach's humanization of God:

> Namely, that the fellowship between man and man which has been the principle of development, social and moral, is not dependent on conceptions of what is not man: and that the idea of God, so far it has been a high spiritual influence, is the ideal of a goodness entirely human.
>
> (*Selections from George Eliot's Letters 249*)

Eliot thinks that man's moral development depends on his relationship with his fellows, not with God. Man can achieve this as he has the potential of "goodness" known as a Godlike quality. Therefore, she believes in the exaltation of human beings.

Feuerbach urges human beings to act on behalf of one another without expecting God's praise. He argues that man should not remain indifferent to his fellow's predicament. More importantly, this sense of kindness to each other should not in any way stem from the fear of divine retribution. Instead, it should be characterized by an intrinsic desire to help one another. In other words, adopting divine values like love, justice, wisdom and sympathy in our relationships means a fulfillment of religious duties. According to Feuerbach, human relationships are basically "religious" in character: "The relations of child and parent, of husband and wife, of brother and friend, -in general, of man to man,

-in short, all the moral relations are religious" (qtd. in Paris 25). For Feuerbach, it is the nature of human relationships that reflects whether human beings are religious or not. As long as man is devoted to the Christian frame composed of love, sympathy and sacrifice of man for man, he leads a truly religious and moral life.

According to Feuerbach's moral view, it is not advisable to learn morality from a conventional religion which encourages passive egoism. Instead he suggests that one should sincerely and actively sympathize with his fellow human beings (Purkis 44). He contends that if human beings can get rid of their egoism and treat others with affection, they will inevitably develop themselves morally. Therefore, in Feuerbach's understanding, to act morally, basically means to sympathize with other individuals. He regards moral development as a transition from a subjective, egoistic view of self and world to an objective and wider one believing that human beings can achieve this if they struggle to widen their perceptions and transcend their limits.

Eliot admires Feuerbach's essential faith in humanity characterized by a strong sense of sympathy for each other. She is profoundly touched by his commitment to the man's capacity to treat each other humanely. In her novel *Middlemarch* she defines egoism as "moral stupidity" (243). As a writer of fiction, Eliot's motive lying behind her profession is to draw her readers' attention to human relationships and to widen their perspective (Chase 5).

Auguste Comte (1798-1853) is another influential philosopher who played an important role in the understanding of Christianity for Eliot. He constructed a

world view and a system of ethics which include many of the fundamental ideas of Christianity (Granlund 14).

According to Comte, there is a basic choice in human life which is the choice of the "highest good"; the choice between the self and the non-self. If man places himself high in the order of things and pursues his own desires, he makes himself his highest good, which actually reduces him to lower egoism. He fulfills conventional religious duties for the sake of himself. In fact, he turns away from God to himself. As a lower egoist, he loves his distorted image and can never reach true happiness. On the other hand, if man places himself low in the order of things and adopts altruism in his relationships, he raises himself to higher egoism. He loves the Divine part of his nature. His self-love becomes part of love of God. He finds satisfaction and ultimate happiness in union with God. The pursuit of the highest good means identification with God as part of God's creation. However, it does not mean the complete denial of self. Man's choice of the non-self leads him to love of fellow-men, love of God and love of self because there can be no love of God without self-love. Comte declares: "Let man deny himself if he loves himself, for by loving himself he loses himself" (Comte 97). This constitutes Comte's paradox of self-love. If man's self-interest becomes his primary concern and loves himself more than the others, the thing he likes is his egoistic personality, whereas if he loves the others more than himself and fulfills God's expectations, he truly loves his good nature. In short, man's concept of himself is inversely related to God's judgment of him. If he prioritizes himself, he is in fact low and deteriorating. If his self-image is in decline, he is in fact improving

himself. The inverse relationship between what man thinks he is and what he really is determines his degeneration or regeneration (Granlund 19).

Although love of God seems to be the center of Comte's ethics, he is in fact more interested in human relations like Feuerbach. He is a defender of the command of love in the Gospel which says "you should love your neighbor as yourself" (Granlund 17). He thinks that individuals should help each other to live happily. He urges them to create a union based on love of man. Therefore, Comte's religion is called "The Religion of Humanity" which was a widely used term in the 19th century and then was used to refer to the new religion of Comte (Purkis 46). Comte notes: "The Absolute is found only in the race; in the race can we find death and resurrection, immortality" (Comte 183). Comte looks for the highest good within humanity. That is why he creates a religion based on humanity.

Comte's "Religion of Humanity" leads man to altruism. He rejects individualism because his main concern is the order and progress of society. He is aware of the fact that man is divided between his selfish, personal instincts and social pressure. He suggests that man should give up his egoistic side and reach salvation through altruism for the sake of society. He argues that man can find his true happiness only by acting in accordance with the laws of society. Therefore, in Comte's philosophy, society is superior to the individual. An individual should work gladly for others (Hesse 62). Comte's ultimate aim is to improve society and create maximally positive conditions for man.

It is possible to see the influence of both Feuerbach and Comte on Eliot. Eliot was deeply interested in the morality of human relationships and her view does not differ much from traditional Christianity in terms of the choice of the highest good. Comte's paradox of self love is central in the development of Eliot's characters. That is to say, her treatment of egoism reflects basic Christian ethics. Paradoxically, the choice of self leads to the destruction of self, while the choice of non-self leads to its fulfillment (Granlund 2). Thus, her characters have distinct egoistic and altruistic qualities. The plots in her novels are shaped by the egoism of main characters whose development depends on the protagonist's departure from egoism and selfishness, and arrival at objectivity and the "religion of humanity" (Paris 26). Eliot looks for points in the lives of her characters where they unconsciously anticipate and practise the new religion of humanity.

On the one hand, Eliot continually links her ideas to the religious tradition and enriches the analysis of moral development of her characters according to the Christian code of ethics, on the other hand, she rejects the supernatural elements of Christianity. While in Christianity, the highest good is outside of humanity and ultimate fulfillment is only found in the hereafter and man is immortalized with the faith for hereafter, according to Eliot, the highest good must be found in this life because she views man as a mortal creature, which is the main source of her departure from Christianity. Eliot's humanistic perspective causes her objection to the concept of hereafter as a place of final distribution of rewards and punishments. Thus, in her novels she generally arranges peace and

happiness as a reward for her higher egoists and corruption as a punishment for her lower egoists.

Eliot summarizes the history of her attitude toward Christianity in a letter to Sarah Hennel:

> I have no longer antagonism toward 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 overall argumentative tendencies. I have not returned to dogmatic Christianity-to the acceptance of any set of doctrines as a creed-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.
> (*Selections from George Eliot's Letters 366)*

Eliot's letter reveals her understanding of religion. Her life may be seen as an attempt to clarify which parts of traditional religion to preserve and which to replace. She disapproves of accepting the dogmatic elements of Christianity and living accordingly without questioning them. On the other hand, she admires the "sincere" Christians who realize the humanistic values of Christianity.

According to Eliot, the true religious life is characterized by the relationships among human beings. It is different from a conventional religious philosophy whose concern is God. She creates a Godless universe in which humanity is prioritized. The difference between Eliot's religion and the conventional religion emerges from her faith in humanity.

Eliot contends that there are two orders: the cosmic and the moral (human) order. In order to have both truth and value, each order must be viewed with the proper combination of objectivity and subjectivity. The cosmic order must be viewed objectively to learn the facts about nature. If a subjective method or religious point of view is applied instead of scientific approach, it becomes impossible to have truths of nature and control it. Eliot rejects the subjective approach as a means of arriving at truth about the facts of existence. She thinks that the only way of extending man's knowledge is the application of positive science and its universal principles. However, while science is seeking to know the relations of objects, its results may disappoint the hopes of human beings. Therefore, the function of moral order is to make sufferings caused by the non-moral conditions of life less severe and to teach human beings how to bear these frustrations. She argues that although objectivity leads human beings to truth about the cosmic order, it provides no morality. Without objectivity there is no truth, but without subjectivity there is no human value. That is why Eliot attempts to reconcile truth and value by combining the objective and subjective points of view. Her procedure is to view the cosmos objectively first by using the scientific methods and then seek its moral implications by regarding the cosmos from the subjective point of view without losing its autonomous being (Paris 28). She expresses the relationship between the cosmic and the moral order as follows:

> The consideration of molecular physics is not the direct ground of human love and moral action, any more than it is the direct means of composing a noble picture or of enjoying great music. One might as well hope to dissect

> one's own body and be merry in doing it, as take molecular physics (in which you must banish from your field of view what is specifically human) to be your dominant guide, your determiner of motives, in what is solely human. That every study has its bearing on every other is true; but pain and relief, love and sorrow, have their peculiar history which make an experience and knowledge over and above the swing of atoms.
>
> (qtd.in Paris 32)

Eliot reasons that both approaches are necessary. The objective approach enables human beings to learn the mysteries of the universe, which is beneficial for them. Nevertheless, besides the cosmic order which is supposed to be viewed objectively, there is an arena of moral (human) order in which man comes forward as a subjective object. Eliot disapproves of regarding human thought and feeling, pleasure and pain as matters of little significance. Regarding man in terms of cosmic time and space reduces him to insignificance.

Eliot insists on the importance of man's subjective experience of himself which enriches and colors the world. She draws her readers' attention to the individual's importance to himself. It is a fact that his own pleasures and pains are of great significance to him. This is the subjective basis of morality. The objective basis of morality is other men. If one is important to himself, other men have their own inner lives which must be important to themselves. In the analysis of moral phenomena objective analysis is helpful, but individuals should never forget that every individual is important to himself with his own feelings (Paris 35).

Eliot's intellectual exercise on the relationship between the cosmic and moral order leads her to question the issues of determinism and free will. She is

against the idea that the harshness of cosmic order prevents man from acting morally. Although she believes in scientific determinism, she claims that morality has nothing to do with this kind of determinism (Hesse 140). The individual may come across many difficulties and frustrations in life, but he can use his ability to choose the better over the worse course. If his personality is powerful enough, he can overcome problems and act morally. As a moralist, Eliot's aim is to strengthen the determination of human beings. This is not inconsistent with her notion of determinism. In her novel *Adam Bede*, the issues of free will and determinism are explained as follows: "Our deeds determine us, as much as we determine our needs" (136). Eliot's determinism is purely scientific and secular. As a realist, she is aware of the facts of existence which are beyond man's control. The circumstances in life are really difficult to bear for man. Nevertheless, according to Eliot, man can decide how to take an action under these circumstances. He does not have to feel like a victim in this universe. Even when he comes across an adverse situation, he can use his potential to survive and he can at least avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future and can learn from his own mistakes. He can educate himself by analyzing aspects of the situation and getting lessons from it. His acts determine his entire life. It is up to him whether to use his potential to improve himself or not. This is also related to Comte's choice of the highest good. It is man who determines his salvation or damnation by his choices.

Eliot's aim is to make her readers see the difference between the realities of the universe and changeable situations. She claims that scientific determinism

is not an obstacle to man's free will. She tries to give the message that man's free will is the determiner of his ethics. Eliot not only conveys her idea of responsibility of man for his actions, but also shows the methods of leading a virtuous life which include rationality and a sense of duty and responsibility.

Rationality is the most important asset for a moral life for Eliot. In order to act rationally, man should leave his subjectivity and adopt an objective viewpoint. If he achieves it, he can struggle against the harshness of life more easily. He should enlarge his perspective to reach wise decisions. Otherwise, he cannot face the reality and cope with it.

Another important asset is the sense of duty and responsibility. Eliot has a powerful sense of duty. She thinks that if man does not fulfill his duties, he might cause not only his own deterioration but also the disaster of others. Therefore, she disapproves of individual's attempts to withdraw from his responsibilities. Irresponsibility means neglecting the demands of society according to Eliot and since the society is stronger, the individual will suffer (Hesse 137). Eliot feels an absolute commitment to social life and to the necessity of social duties.

Eliot's faith in humanity holds human beings responsible. She believes it to be a prerequisite for the order and peace of society. The continuation of society in peace and harmony is Eliot's main concern. That is why in Eliot's moral view, there can be no moral development without fulfilling one's duties which include responding to others' needs. The characters who are not in harmony with their environment cannot achieve moral development in her novels. As Eliot conveys: "My own experience and development deepen every day my conviction that our

moral progress may be measured by the degree in which we sympathize with individual suffering and individual joy" (*Selections from George Eliot's Letters 350).* The key to moral development lies in contributing to the happiness of society. As long as man helps others reduce their sufferings, he can develop himself morally. Therefore, personal aspirations and desires without any concern for others lead man to moral corruption. Isolation from society is not a morally accepted behaviour for Eliot.

Like Comte, Eliot aims to contribute to the progress of society. This concern is expressed by Hesse as follows: "What we perceive of as social repression is a desired and voluntary submission to society, and the author's depiction of such submission must be understood in the context of a latent anti-individualism in Victorian England" (20). Obviously, Eliot does not support individualism. She has a deep respect for society believing that one should voluntarily submit oneself to it, as she explains: "I think it is possible for this sort of impersonal life to attain great intensity" (qtd in Paris 36). According to Eliot's view, one should never lose his connection with society and he should try to contribute to the happiness of others.

Eliot does not consider morality as a personal phenomenon. She regards man as a social animal whose moral development is achieved only by integration with the community (Hesse 143). According to her, man should become aware of the power of society and act accordingly. He should keep his roots with his social group and respond to its needs. Otherwise, he will find himself in moral corruption.

As a writer of fiction, Eliot feels responsible to make a contribution to the progress of society. She supposes that art contains a moral mission. The ultimate aim of art is to reshape human consciousness by widening man's sympathy for the sake of society (Paris 8). To Eliot: "The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies" (*Selected Essays, Poems and other Writings 270*). She expresses her opinion on the function of a writer who should enlarge his readers' perspectives and help his readers arouse sympathy for other human beings.

While presenting examples of moral growth, Eliot wishes to adhere to realism in her fiction. She presents the bare and harsh laws of nature on human existence and man's reaction to them. In her novels, she attempts to search for the facts of life and to approach them scientifically. Her realism attempts to reconcile observations and insights. As a result of her observations, Eliot does not present wholly good or bad characters. She believes that every man has both positive and negative qualities in his character. Therefore, there are no heroes in her novels. While presenting all aspects of human beings, Eliot also founds her realism on idealism which longs for moral development. As she expresses in one of her letters:

> My artistic bent is directed not at all to the presentation of eminently irreproachable characters, but to the presentation of mixed human beings in such a way as to call forth tolerant judgment, pity, and, sympathy. And I cannot stir a step aside from what I feel to be true in character.
>
> (*Selections from George Eliot's Letters 204)*

By presenting different types of characters in her fiction, Eliot tries to make her readers see the deficiencies in human personality and invite human beings to tolerance. She conveys her idea that man can establish a peaceful atmosphere only through the guidance of sympathy and tolerance.

To sum up, Eliot's moral view is based on humanistic principles such as love kindness, compassion and sympathy known as the essence of Christianity. The nature of human relationships is the mirror of man's ethics. Like Feuerbach and Comte, Eliot believes in human beings' huge potential for moral growth which might be attained by giving up his egoism and adopting altruism. Man, as a rational creature, can enlarge his perspective through objectivity and shape his own fate. Therefore, he is responsible for what he does. In addition, he should have a sense of duty to ease the pains of his fellows.

CHAPTER 3

LAWRENCE KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF MORALIZATION

Lawrence Kohlberg is one of the American psychologists who is famous for his theory called "The Cognitive-Developmental Theory of Moralization". He draws a parallelism between an individual's cognitive and moral stage. According to Kohlberg's theory, cognitive development is essential for moral development. However, besides cognitive development, gaining a social perception based on role taking ability is required for moral development. First, a person attains a cognitive stage, then he attains a social perspective. Finally, he reaches a moral judgment. Thus, a moral stage is related to both cognitive level and moral reasoning (Kohlberg 32).

Kohlberg was influenced by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget who revolutionized the field of child psychology and described the development of human intelligence throughout childhood. Piaget was interested in the relationship between cognition (thought) and affect (feeling) in moral judgment. He introduced "the principle of interaction" according to which affect develops parallel to cognition; affect motivates the operations of cognition and cognition

structures the operations of affect. As individuals develop new abilities related to their social relations, the emotions they experience change. According to both Piaget and Kohlberg, the exercise of moral judgment is a cognitive process used to make sense out of the moral conflicts that arise in everyday life (Kohlberg 48).

In Piaget's theory, development is related to the human mind's tendency to systematize its processes into coherent systems (organization) and adapt those systems to changing situations (adaptation). The mind seeks to construct a system of order that makes a sense with the world. During this construction, there are four stages of cognitive development in children. These are sensorimotor (birth to two years), preoperational (two to seven years), concrete operations (seven to eleven years), and formal operations (eleven and older). During the preoperational period, children's interaction is egocentric and they fail to take into account others' points of view. During the period of concrete operations, children generally think about concrete objects. They want to know the tallest building or the biggest whale. And during the period of formal operations, children begin to think abstractly (Hersh 36).

The foundations of Kohlberg's theory are built on Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Like Piaget, Kohlberg constructs a stage concept and widens his pioneer's theory. According to Kohlberg, in order to determine an individual's stage of moral development, one should first know the characteristics of cognitive stages of development in detail. The first characteristic is that stages imply qualitative differences in modes of thinking. It means that although two people share a similar value, they may be at different stages because of the

qualitative differences in their way of thinking. (Hersh 52). For example, one may approve of friendship to avoid loneliness. However, another may approve of the same concept for the harmony of society. As the same value is appreciated for different reasons, the meaning of the concept has changed. Thus, the words used do not necessarily distinguish people's stages. Content and form should be carefully distinguished for the clarification of stages. The second characteristic is that stages form an invariant sequence. A child cannot reach the stage of concrete operations without passing through the stage of preoperational thinking. And the third characteristic is that stages are hierarchical integrations. When a person's thinking develops from one stage to the next, the higher stage reintegrates the lower stages. For example, when an adolescent develops formal operations, he does not forget how to use concrete operations (Hersh 52).

According to Kohlberg, the main difference among the stages emerges from individual's ability of role taking; becoming aware of their thoughts and feelings, putting oneself in their place. The emotional side of role taking emphasizes the term "emphathy". However, according to cognitive-developmental theories, role taking emphasizes the cognitive as well as the affective dimension; it involves understanding and relating to all social interactions, not merely the ones that arouse emotions of sympathy and emphathy. Role taking is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for moral development; it is a bridge between cognitive level and moral level; it is one's level of social cognition. It is a social skill that develops gradually from about the age of six and becomes the turning point in the development of moral judgment (Hersh 49).

Kohlberg does not think that a young child exercises moral judgment. A two-year-old child cannot be held responsible for his actions. Specific rules about behaviour are taught to him and then with time he is expected to understand why some actions are right or wrong. He learns about rules of proper behaviour before he understands their meaning. For example, a mother of a three-year-old comes home from work tired and with a headache. Her son wants to play with her. She explains to him that she cannot play with him, but he does not understand his mother's situation. His thinking at this stage is egocentric. He cannot distinguish his perspective from others. However, if this boy had been an eight-year-old, he would probably have reacted differently. He could have put himself in his mother's position. The example proves that the child learns to be considerate to his parents by the time he develops his role taking ability. Kohlberg attributes the difference between the three-year-old's and the eight-year-old's reaction to the development of role taking ability.

Kohlberg argues that an individual's moral development depends on his interaction with others. When a person's values conflict with others, the person decides which value to follow. This is a logical process for Kohlberg. The conflict introduces disequilibrium into the person's life. If he is to restore equilibrium, he must decide what he believes in and justify that decision to himself and perhaps to others. He may try to assimilate his problem to his accustomed way of thinking or he may find his accustomed way inadequate. In the latter case, he must accommodate his thinking to deal with the new crisis and figure out how to

resolve the conflicts in his value system. In the process, he may reorder that which he values (Hersh 46).

According to Kohlberg's theory, there are mainly three levels of moral reasoning. Level 1 is the preconventional level which includes stages 1&2. Level 2 is the conventional level which includes stages 3&4. And Level 3 is the postconventional level which includes stages 5&6. So, Kohlberg analyzes moral development according to six stages which starts from middle childhood to adulthood.

a) Level 1 (Stages 1&2)

Level 1(the preconventional level) is mostly characterized by children's moral reasoning, but many adolescents and some adults may still persist in this reasoning. For a preconventional person, rules and social expectations are something external to the self. He has not yet come to really understand and uphold conventional rules and expectations (Hersh 65).

Stage 1 is the least developed stage among the six stages in Kohlberg's research. The child adopts an egocentric point of view at this stage. He thinks about only his own welfare. He does not see things from other people's point of view and does not expect them to see things from his. He does not yet recognize that interests of others may differ from his own interests. His perception does not relate to two points of view.

The child believes that the wishes or orders of the authority figure are rules or commands that must be followed. He thinks that if he does not follow the rules of the authority, he will be punished. So, he acts in accordance with the wishes of superior people just to avoid punishment. For example, the child thinks that a person should not steal from a store because the police might arrest him. He sticks to rules because he sees physical punishment as automatically following wrongdoing. He does not yet understand that punishment might be a response to wrongdoing. Therefore, the inevitability of physical punishment is central to this stage's conception of doing right (Hersh 65).

The reasoning at this stage can be matched with Piaget's preoperational or early concrete operational level. It is still intuitive rather than logical. Therefore, it is the most primitive stage. The child at this stage thinks only in terms of physical problems and physical solutions. Actions are considered physically. For instance, the child thinks that if a lot of people do not like someone else, he must be a bad person. The person's feelings or rights are not taken into consideration by the child. If he is bad, people can punish him by beating him up. The problem is that simple; it ends when the punishment is given (Hersh 66).

Although stage 2 is still within the preconventional level of reasoning, it represents a major advance over stage 1 because the child develops both his cognition and role taking ability. While stage 1 involves only concrete concerns of an individual, in stage 2 the individual is aware of a number of other individuals. The child becomes aware that everybody has interests to pursue which can conflict with his. He learns to approach a problem from a more distanced, logical

perspective (Hersh 59). At stage 2, the individual anticipates the other person's reaction. Unless they make a deal, each will put his own point of view first. If they make a deal, each of them will do something for the other (Kohlberg 39).

The shift from stage 1 to stage 2 can be clarified by the following example: Two children are asked whether an older brother should tell his father about his younger brother's misdeed. A child at stage 1 replies that on the one hand, it is right to tell because his father might beat him up, but on the other hand, it is wrong because his brother will beat him up if he tells. Another child who is at stage 2 says that the brother should not tell because it will trouble his brother; if he wants his brother to keep quiet for him sometime, he had better not squeal now. It is obvious that there is an extension of concern for the brother since it affects the subject's own interests through anticipated exchange. There is a much clearer picture of the brother's point of view and its relationship to his own at stage 2 (Kohlberg 39).

The child at this stage discovers a new standard of judgment: the standard of fairness which is termed as "market place exchange" by Kohlberg. Fairness primarily involves everyone's getting an equal share or chance at stage 2. This takes both a positive and a negative form. The positive form carries the idea that people of equal status should get equal shares. For example, everyone in class should have the same amount of homework. Yet, the negative form brings retributive justice. For instance, if one child hits another, the one who is hit believes that he has the right to hit the other back. The child does not think that hitting back is wrong; it is what the other deserves (Hersh 68).

b) Level 2 (Stages 3&4)

Level 2 (the conventional level) is the level of most adolescents and adults. A conventional person internalizes the rules and expectations of others, especially the authorities. It is different from the preconventional level since it has concerns about social approval, about loyalty to persons, groups or authority, and about the welfare of others and society (Kohlberg 37).

Stage 3 begins to develop during preadolescence and becomes dominant during adolescence. The main change here is the shift of one's perspective from the concrete interests of individuals to the interests of a small group or society. At stage 2, the right thing is the pursuit of one's own interests without harming anybody else, but at stage 3 more than this is expected from the individual. The motivation for moral action becomes living according to the expectations of significant others. The individual feels the need to be a good person in the eyes of others and tries to fulfill their wishes which support stereotypical good behaviour. Setting up relationships based on mutual trust, loyalty, respect and gratitude becomes the goal of the individual. Expectations of significant others take primacy over the individual's personal interests (Hersh 73).

The difference between the second and the third stage emerges from the advance in the role taking ability. Assuming a third person perspective is crucial in the development of moral judgment. It allows the person to perceive how the group will react to his dealings with other individuals. The person begins to consider an extra dimension of the social situation. For example, there are two

girls who are interested in the same boy and are invited to the same party, which he will be attending. If one of the girls is at the second stage of role taking, she will be able to take the role of her rival and anticipate that the other girl will be watching her. If the other girl is at the third stage of role taking, she will be able not only to anticipate her rival's reaction but also to take the role of other people who will be watching them. She will take into consideration both her rival's and the others' observations and she might be concerned with how the people at the party will think about their rivalry (Hersh 72).

The social perspective at stage 3 is less aware of the whole society. Stage 3 perspective sees things from the point of view of shared relationships between two or more individuals. Whereas stage 3 perspective is that of a participant in a shared relationship or group, stage 4 perspective is the perspective of the whole society which reflects the "system" (Kohlberg 34). In other words, stage 3 role taking is primarily characterized by the ability to take the third-person perspective of "significant" others, but stage 4 role taking is primarily characterized by the ability to take the shared point of view of the "generalized" other. A person takes the perspective of the social system in which he participates (Hersh 74).

The ability to view social problems from the perspective of the whole system brings the concern of law. The people at this stage think that society is bound together by certain social and moral agreements, some of which are arranged by the system of law. Any action that breaks the system threatens the order of the social system. Stage 4 individuals, as members of society, appreciate the centrality of the value of law. For example, they think that stealing from a

store is wrong because it is a matter of law. They are concerned about keeping the law for the protection of society. Nevertheless, they also realize that human life is sacred and law should serve the sacredness of life. Therefore, if the values of law and life conflict, they have a problem of choice. Thus, Kohlberg believes that stage 4 is inadequate for dealing with situations in which laws or beliefs come into conflict with basic human rights. If a person lives in a society in which the system of law underestimates human life, he realizes the inadequacy of the system and tries to find a new construct to solve it (Kohlberg 36).

c) Level 3 (Stages 5&6)

Level 3 (the postconventional level) is reached by a minority of adults and is usually reached after the age of 20. A person at the postconventional level understands and basically accepts society's rules, but acceptance of society's rules is based on formulating and accepting the general moral principles that underlie these rules. If society's rules conflict with these principles, he judges by principle rather than by convention. A postconventional person can differentiate his self from the rules and expectations of others and define his values in terms of self-chosen principles. He can see beyond the given norms and laws of his own society. He questions the determined rules and follows the humanistic principles (Kohlberg 33). The postconventional perspective is prior to society; it is the perspective of an individual whose moral commitments are based on a good and

just society. This is a perspective by which social practices may be judged and an individual may rationally commit himself to a society (Kohlberg 36).

For a postconventional person, morality involves recognizing the rights of other individuals as well as pursuing a life that pleases him. For example, a person at this level thinks that stealing from a store is wrong as it violates another person's rights, which are prior to law and society. To him, the demands of law and society derive from universal moral rights rather than vice versa (Kohlberg 37).

Stage 5 can be seen as a direct outgrowth of relativism. The person at this stage thinks that people might have different moral views, but he also seeks a principle that will bridge these differences. The principle of social contract is helpful. For example, in a business deal, two partners come to an agreement and sign a mutually binding contract which represents a compromise, but it also allows each man to pursue his own interest without interfering with the other's right to pursue his interests. They both obey the rules determined together and satisfy their own rights and needs. The partners have the responsibility of the social contract (Hersh 78).

The individual at stage 5 thinks that there are also some non-relative values and rights like life and liberty which must be supported in any society regardless of majority opinion. He feels an obligation to law for the welfare of the people and for the protection of all people's rights. He owns the perspective of a rational individual who believes in the priority of values to social attachments. He

sometimes finds it difficult to integrate the conflicting views of his own with others' (Hersh 79).

A person at stage 6 follows self-chosen ethical principles. Particular laws are valid as long as they support the universal principles of justice: the equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings. As a rational person, he believes in the validity of universal moral principles and a sense of personal commitment to them. He can imagine himself in others' situation and consider all aspects of a situation. He tries to enlarge his perspective (Hersh 61). He evaluates the actions as moral or immoral regardless of any personal ties. For instance, when he is asked if a husband can deceive his wife, he argues that honesty should be kept among all people; between a father and a son, a teacher and a student, a lawyer and a client. If an action is moral or immoral, it remains the same for all people independent of any social attachments.

To conclude, according to Kohlberg's theory of moralization, the exercise of moral judgment is a cognitive process that allows human beings to reflect on their values and order them in a logical hierarchy. Kohlberg does not see moral development as a result of social learnings unlike social theories of moral development.

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF GEORGE ELIOT'S CHARACTERS IN *MIDDLEMARCH* ACCORDING TO LAWRENCE KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF MORALIZATION

Dorothea Brooke is one of the major characters who struggles to find a compromise between her aspirations and the expectations of society. She has a passionate and idealistic nature longing for some undefined good, something meaningful and great to break with the boundaries of a patriarchal society. At the beginning of the novel, she is depicted as a higher egoist:

> Her mind was theoretic, and yearned by its nature after some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own rule of conduct there; she was enamoured of intensity and greatness, and rash in embracing whatever seemed to her to have those aspects; likely to seek martyrdom, to make retractions, and then incur martyrdom after all in a quarter where she had not sought it. (10)

What Eliot explores in Dorothea is the higher egoist's search for an active and practical way of implementing her highest good within the conditions of a provincial society.

Through Dorothea, Eliot draws the attention of her readers to the problems of women who were excluded from work and fulfilling their own ideals. The education women received did not equip them for intellectual pursuits. The practical activities open to women were also limited. They were just involved in domestic duties; getting married and bringing up children. However, Dorothea is discontented with the prescribed roles of women in the society. She tries to escape from the petty activities of women and be more active in charitable works. She yearns for a life dedicated to ideals and wants to do something different from what the society designates for women. Her desire is to surpass the conventional roles of women. In other words, she needs to embody a "binding theory" (85) which is an intellectual understanding of the world and human existence and of the individual's own place in it (Granlund 75). She tries to achieve a reconciliation between her wishes and the expectations of the small group she lives in. Thus, in terms of Kohlberg's theory, Dorothea is depicted as a woman who strives to break the chains of the third stage within the conventional level.

The main difficulty for Dorothea is to find an expression for her ideals, a practical way of living her life which fulfills her dream of a "binding theory" (85). Her search for a more active life and need for human fellowship cause her to accept the proposal of Casaubon. She looks for a change that will offer her limited "freedom" (Tush 129). "She was looking forward to higher initiation in ideas, as she was looking forward to marriage, and blending her dim conceptions of both" (85). Marriage with an "intellectual" man seems as a means of escape from the troubles of her single life: "now she would be allowed to live continually in the

light of a mind she could reverence" (38). Dorothea regards Casaubon's proposal as an opportunity to fulfill her aspirations because "his manners, she thought were very dignified; the set of his iron-grey hair and his deep-eye sockets made him resemble the portrait of Locke" (18). She is impressed by Casaubon's mental qualities. He appeals to Dorothea for his seeming scholarly pursuit of the truth, for his seeming removal from the pettiness of daily life, for his association with noble pursuits (Argyros 179). As she has the image of Casaubon as a man who is "above" her, she regards his proposal as an opportunity to fulfill her aspirations. So, Dorothea is not forced into marriage, nor does she marry an old man for his money as in the traditional story. She is led into marriage with Casaubon because she has been denied access to the discourse of higher learning. Now, she hopes to find a husband "who was a sort of father, and could teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it" (12). About Dorothea's choice of Casaubon, Tush comments that although her criteria for selecting a husband are different, her desire to marry a man who is her intellectual superior and will act as her guide is entirely conventional. Her seeking a "wise man" to help her fits the conventional pattern (120).

When Dorothea's lack of experience and self-knowledge combine with her idealistic nature, she hastily accepts the proposal of Casaubon without regarding his expectations from marriage. In fact, neither of them know each other. Casaubon marries Dorothea because of the conventional reasons; he needs a wife to accompany him in the society. He is not aware of Dorothea's yearning for knowledge, but Dorothea never doubts that she will be able to submit to this

idealized man. All she wants is to find the right guide who teaches her (Tush 120). She sees the role of a husband as primarily that of a teacher and the role of a wife as a mother (Perlis 206). Since her primary motive is not really Casaubon's need for help but her own needs and desires, she never conceives of him as different from what she wants him to be. She blinds herself to his shortcomings and deafens herself to the warnings of others. As a consequence, she replaces her highest good with self and falls into lower egoism without realizing what she is doing (Granlund 78). While trying to reach her high ideals, Dorothea ignores her husband's expectations from marriage. She is not fully conscious that marriage involves two people and should fulfill both parts' needs. This selfish tendency causes Dorothea's moral decline and she begins to recede from the conventional level to the preconventional level according to Kohlberg's theory of moralization since the advance of moral reasoning requires relationships and experience that would promote new constructs of cognition which she lacks in her marrige.

The collision between Dorothea and Casaubon takes place during their honeymoon in Rome. She encounters the difficulty of adjusting her premarital fantasy to the reality of marriage (Tush 121). She realizes that the imaginary portrait of Casaubon as a modern Milton has been an illusion. Since Dorothea desires to devote herself to someone wiser and deeper than herself, she urges her husband to write his book and offers her help. However, Casaubon perceives nothing but a threat in Dorothea's eagerness and responds with hostility because he lacks self-confidence (Swinden 78). Her intellectual brightness and Casaubon's deep distrust of his work daunt Casaubon as the narrator explains:

> What was fresh to Dorothea's mind was worn out to Casaubon's; and such capacity of thought and feeling as had ever been stimulated in him by the general life of mankind had long shrunk to a sort of dried preparation, a lifeless embalmment of knowledge. (180)

Clearly Casaubon not only fails to promote Dorothea's education, but he also impedes it (Tush 150). Moreover, her compassionate treatment of Casaubon's cousin, Mr. Ladislaw, arouses Casaubon's jealousy. They begin to quarrel very early in their marriage. The narrator gives the portrait of their marriage: "They were shocked at their mutual situation – that each should have betrayed anger towards the other" (189). Casaubon tries to have complete authority over her movements and he does not share anything "intellectual" with Dorothea. They are like two strangers. There is nothing mutual in their relationship which turns into a tragedy because

> She was as blind to his inward troubles as to hers; she had not yet learned those hidden conflicts in her husband which claim our pity. She had not yet listened patiently to his heartbeats, but only felt that her own was beating violently. (194)

Eliot gives the reason of tragedy as Dorothea's tendency to selfishness. Looking at the issues from a single point of view causes their unhappiness. So it is not only Casaubon but also Dorothea who needs to develop her role taking ability.

The Roman honeymoon becomes the turning point for Dorothea as she conceives Casaubon's "equivalent centre of self" (205). After an argument over

Ladislaw with Casaubon, she thinks that she has hurt him and apologizes for it. Her tendency to self-examination and self-doubt is the first sign of moral awareness (Granlund 85). It is the beginning of her emergence from the "moral stupidity" of egoism (205). "She recognizes not only the egotism of her husband, but also the hidden egotism in herself which had prompted her to accept Casaubon as a mate, when she discovers the reality of the center of self in her husband" (Paxton 182). So, Dorothea's discovery leads her to moral growth and regeneration. She is still the devoted wife, but there is no longer an element of selfishness in her mission. Her mind begins to flow "towards the fullest truth, the least partial good" (197). She may have been deluded in selecting her first husband, but her reaction to her disillusionment raises her to higher egoism again. Instead of weeping, Dorothea prefers "transforming all hard conditions into duty" (193).

She thinks that the only solution for her is to preserve her faith in the practice of good. After a while, she suppresses her disappointment and begins to treat Casaubon with patience. She learns to control her emotions and, more importantly, gives up her single point of view and approaches Casaubon with more tolerance. In other words, by developing her role taking ability, Dorothea awakens from "moral stupidity" and takes a huge step in moral development moving towards being aware of other people's perspectives, which marks the characteristics of stage 3 moral reasoning within the conventional level of Kohlberg's theory.

It is Dorothea who plays the altruist role in their marriage (Paxton 181). Dorothea's submission arises out of her pity for her husband: "She was traveling into the remoteness of pure pity and loyalty towards her husband" (353). Although Casaubon is still unable to receive her sympathy, she voluntarily submits to him:

> There was no denying that Dorothea was as virtuous and lovely a young lady as he could have obtained for a wife; but a young lady turned out to be something more troublesome than he had conceived. She nursed him, she read to him, she anticipated his wants, and was solicitous about his feelings. (402)

Dorothea tries to be what Casaubon wishes. Her husband is ill and she submits to him voluntarily. Even though he cannot perceive her good nature, she helps him because she feels pity for "poor Casaubon". She tries to be a "good wife" which displays the characteristics of stage 3 where individuals try to do their best and be good role occupants.

Dorothea's preoccupation with despondency and despair at the beginning of their marriage is replaced with strength and wisdom (Granlund 87). Before his death, Casaubon asks her to carry out his wishes. First she "feels helpless as a child" (459). Since she knows that Casaubon's study is out of date, she feels in conflict with herself for a while. Then she remembers that she married him to help him with his work which she has thought to be "greater" and decides to meet his demand just to soothe his grief: "Neither law nor the world's opinion compelled her to this - only her husband's nature and her own compassion, only the ideal and

not the real yoke of marriage" (461). However, Casaubon dies before she promises him. This crisis contributes to Dorothea's moral development. She becomes more altruistic and less selfish with this experience.

Dorothea has learned how to get rid of her selfishness during her marriage as she conveys to Ladislaw: "I try not to have desires merely for myself, because they may not be good for others, and I have too much already" (377). She has learned a moral lesson from her relationship with Casaubon. Although her sense of identity remains, her "ardent soul" is muted because of loss of individuality. She tells Celia: "I have delightful plans. I should like to take a great deal of land, and make a little colony, where everybody should work, and all the work should be done well" (524). As an altruist citizen, she desires to do something beneficial for the sake of society. That is to say, Dorothea raises herself to the fourth stage within the conventional level because now she is able to think in terms of the benefits of the whole society.

Dorothea's moral growth continues with the events connected to Lydgate, who has been accused of taking a bribe from Bulstrode. When Dorothea wants to help Lydgate, she finds herself opposed by Chettam, Farebrother and Brooke. Chettam argues that "a woman is bound to be cautious and listen to those who know the world better than she does" (672). Nevertheless, Dorothea manages to act on her own and makes an independent decision. Although her intention is not approved by the circle of people around her, Dorothea's moral maturity which involves viewing problems above her immediate circle gives her the strength for independent action along with stage 3 characteristics of "love" and "loyalty". She asks Farebrother: "What do we live for, if is not to make life less difficult to each

other? I cannot be indifferent to the troubles of a man who advised me in my trouble, and attended me in my illness" (698). As Dorothea believes in Lydgate's innocence, she cannot endure his awful situation and urges Farebrother to take an action against this injustice: "People glorify all sorts of bravery except the bravery they might show on behalf of their nearest neighbours" (699). Obviously, Dorothea is the only person who has the courage to rescue Lydgate from the misinterpretations of Middlemarch. After talking to Lydgate, she feels sure that he is not guilty and asks him to deal with the plan of the hospital which he has always dreamed of. Dorothea attempts to help him because she contends that people should make other people's lives better to them (727). However, Lydgate declines her help as he cannot overcome his sense of defeat. She opposes: "That is not brave to give up the fight" (729). Then she decides to talk to Lydgate's wife, Rosamond, to convince her that he has never acted dishonorably.

At the Lydgates' home, Dorothea catches Ladislaw, who is supposed to be out of town, holding hands with Rosamond. This scene is significant for "consciousness which has never awakened before" (748). For the first time, Dorothea becomes conscious of her love for Ladislaw after she has been informed of Casaubon's codicil which prevents her from marrying Ladislaw. And now she comes to a full recognition of her love. Until that moment, she had not discovered her feelings for Ladislaw, who aroused Casaubon's jealousy. This is a new crisis for Dorothea: "She discovered her passion to herself in the unshrinking utterance of despair" (748). Fortunately, she overcomes her despair. She wakes with a sense of restored strength and calm, and turns away from her sorrow towards the needs of others (Granlund 93).

> The objects of her rescue were not to be sought out by her fancy: they were chosen for her. She yearned towards the perfect Right, that it might make a throne within her, and rule her arrant will. "What should I do – how should I act now, this very day if I could clutch my own pain, and compel it to silence, and think of those three!" (750)

Obviously, Dorothea is a model for dealing with despair. She overcomes her own despair by turning to the goodness of others and fixing her mind on their troubles rather than her own. Her despair is temporary.

And Dorothea looks through her window at the rural scene. The symbolic opening of the curtains implies an expansion and maturing of Dorothea's sympathies since she begins to see beyond her personal difficulties (Perlis 69).

> She opened her curtains, and looked out towards the bit of road that lay in view, with fields beyond outside the entrance gates. On the road there was a man with a bundle on his back and a woman carrying her baby; in the field she could see figures moving – perhaps the shepherd with his dog. Far off in the bending sky was the pearly light; and she felt the largeness of the world and the manifold wakings of men to labor and endurance. She was part of that involuntary, palpitating life, and could neither look out on it from her luxurious shelter as a mere spectator, nor hide her eyes in selfish complaining. (750)

Middlemarch is depicted through Dorothea's eyes. She perceives there where her duty must be found and she forgets her pain. Her capacity for self-forgetfulness, sympathy and love leads her to develop morally.

According to Bennet, the portrait of Dorothea is incomplete till the reader witnesses her courageous faith in Lydgate and her mission of mercy to his wife when she returns to Rosamond in the full belief that Ladislaw is her lover and Rosamond has destroyed her own last hope of personal happiness (167). Dorothea acts according to the religion of humanity (Purkis 149) since she feels love and sympathy for her fellows. She buries her "private joy" (751) and goes to save Rosamond. The scene between Dorothea and Rosamond is interesting. The two women belonging to different moral stages begin to talk about their frustrating marriages and Rosamond's confession occurs. Rosamond says to Dorothea that Ladislaw has never loved her.

Finally, Dorothea and Ladislaw come together. Although he loves her, he does not think they belong to each other due to Casaubon's codicil according to which Dorothea will be deprived of Casaubon's fortune in case of her marriage with Ladislaw. Dorothea says to Ladislaw: "That was a wrong thing for you to say, that you would have had nothing to try for. If we had lost our own chief good, other people's good would remain, and that's worth trying for. Some can be happy" (770). As a mature woman, Dorothea has trained herself to care for others as well as herself. She saves Ladislaw from despair and rejects Casaubon's money. However, nobody thinks that Ladislaw is a proper husband for Dorothea (781). When Celia argues that Dorothea should not marry because she "might have gone on all her life doing what she liked ", Dorothea retorts: "On the contrary, dear. I never could do anything that I liked, I have never carried out any plan yet" (780). Later on, in the finale, the narrator comments on Dorothea's

second marriage: “She had now a life filled also with a beneficient activity which she had not the doubtful pains of discovering and making out for herself ” (792). Thus, Dorothea paradoxically gains more control over her life by remarrying than by remaining single because Ladislaw represents freedom to her. He teaches her to connect the past and the present and allows her to fulfill her emotions and desires. Their love for each other compromises mutual sympathy, understanding and respect. Dorothea invents no fiction about Ladislaw nor he about her; they respect one another for what they discern in one another (Bennet 176). It can be said that Dorothea has found fulfillment and happiness in the fifth stage of postconventional level according to Kohlberg’s “Cognitive–Developmental Theory of Moralization”. In spite of the objections of society, she accepts Ladislaw as a husband, which means resistance to patriarchal authority. She acts against the wishes of society (Paxton 182). When society’s expectations conflict with hers, she acts according to her own principles.

To sum up, Dorothea’s process of maturity occurs as follows: At the beginning of the novel, she has the cognitive capacity to be involved in the fourth stage of conventional level. However, her moral stage is below her cognitive stage. Since she is not mature enough emotionally, she lowers herself even to the second stage of preconventional level during her marriage with Casaubon. She postpones developing her maturity by marrying him (Perlis 137). Fortunately, she leaves her egoism behind and raises her moral stage again. She learns how to cope with despair as a result of her sufferings. At the end of the novel, she marries the man of her choice regardless of society’s expectations, which carries her to the

postconventional level. However, she never completely cuts herself from the society she lives in. As the reader learns in the Finale, she gives Ladislaw wifely help, invites his friends to dinner parties and helps his promotion by establishing good relations with their environment.

Casaubon is influential in Dorothea's maturation. As an old and wealthy man, the only thing he needs is a wife which he regards "as an object to be found by search" (84). The need of companionship to avoid loneliness leads him to marry Dorothea:

> It had occurred to him that he must not any longer defer his intention of matrimony, and he had reflected that in taking a wife, a man of good position should expect and carefully choose a blooming young lady-the younger the better, because more educable and submissive-of rank equal to his own. (269)

Casaubon has conventional reasons for marrying Dorothea. He wants female tenderness in his declining years and hopes to gain from marriage exactly what Dorothea has hoped to give: voluntary submission. He chooses a young woman to submit to him completely.

Casaubon does not take Dorothea's expectations into consideration because he has a conventional point of view about women. When Dorothea expresses her wish to learn Latin and Greek, he says that such things are "wearisome" (65) for women and adds: "There is a lightness about the feminine mind -a touch and go- music, the fine arts, that kind of thing- they should study those up to certain point, women should; but in a light way, you know." (65).

According to Casaubon, a woman is supposed to fit in the conventional pattern and be involved in domestic duties. He has never considered the issues of women from their point of view because "Society never made the preposterous demand that a man should think as much about his own qualifications for making a charming girl happy as he thinks of hers for making himself happy" (270). In this male dominant society, Casaubon feels secure. He does not feel responsible for making his wife happy. He just thinks of his own needs as a lower egoist. "Dorothea might really be such a helpmate to him as would enable him to dispense with a hired secretary, an aid which Mr. Casaubon had never yet employed" (270). Clearly, Dorothea's aspirations do not mean anything for Casaubon. He does not have any intention of teaching Latin or Greek to her. What he wants is a secretary to type his task.

Casaubon's "equivalent centre of self" (205) which causes their isolation and loneliness appears very early in their marriage. They do not share anything as they have nothing in common. With Ladislaw's entrance, the tension increases. Dorothea tries to compensate for Casaubon's coldness and rudeness to Ladislaw, yet it arouses Casaubon's jealousy: "There is a sort of jealousy which needs very little fire; it is hardly a passion, but a blight bred in the cloudy, damp despondency of uneasy egoism"(204). Casaubon becomes more irritated everyday because he is aware of his shortcomings and afraid of Dorothea's awareness of them through a rival who has what Casaubon lacks. Ladislaw is energetic, lively and young. Casaubon sends Ladislaw away from a conviction of his scorn for the futility of his study *The Key to All Mythology* as he "foresees with sudden terror" (401) that

Dorothea's blind worship of his learning might disappear. Casaubon knows that he is incompetent at his task. His failure is symbolized also by the word "labyrinthine" (215). His secure world is threatened by Ladislaw.

After his illness, Casaubon's nervousness increases as the narrator exclaims:

> Poor Mr. Casaubon! This suffering was harder to bear because it seemed like a betrayal: the young creature who had worshipped him with perfect trust had quickly turned into the critical wife… To his suspicious interpretation Dorothea's silence now was a suppressed rebellion; a remark from her which he had not in any way anticipated was an assertion of conscious superiority; her gentle answers had an irritating cautiousness in them. (402)

Since Casaubon is unaware of Dorothea's good nature, he regards her help and affection as insincere. With the passionate egoism in his character, he becomes more and more cruel.

As Casaubon feels quite sure that Dorothea has been the cause of Ladislaw's return from Rome, he wants to get rid of Ladislaw forever. Before his death, Casaubon asks Dorothea to carry on his wishes. When Dorothea says that it is not right to make a promise as she is ignorant, he objects to it: "But you would use your own judgment, I ask you to obey mine; you refuse" (457). Casaubon still tries to be oppressive and writes his selfish codicil which is an example of "retributive justice". What Casaubon wants is to punish her in case she disobeys him. This market place exchange also shows that Casaubon is a character who

belongs to the second stage of the preconventional level according to Kohlberg's theory.

Will Ladislaw is totally different from Casaubon. In contrast to Casaubon, Ladislaw is open-minded, receptive, handsome, rebellious and unconventional. The narrator confirms their rivalry through her description of the two men, which places them in opposition: "The first impression on seeing Will was one of sunny brightness…When he turned his head quickly his hair seemed to shake out light…Mr. Casaubon, on the contrary, stood rayless" (203).

Although Dorothea and Ladislaw meet at Lowick for the first time, their attachment starts in Rome. Ladislaw sees Dorothea in the Vatican Museum where she is standing in front of a piece of sculpture without understanding its beauty because she is thinking of the argument she has just had with her husband. As Ladislaw is a sensitive man, he feels that Dorothea has been offended. On the same day, he goes to see her. While talking, he contends that: "she must have made some original romance for herself in his marriage" (203). He understands that Dorothea is unhappy because "she felt an immense need of someone to speak to, and she had never before seen anyone who seemed so quick and pliable, so likely to understand everything" (203). Ladislaw is the one who perceives Dorothea's inner world and wishes to release her from imprisonment: "And now you will go and be shut up in that stone prison at Lowick: you will be buried alive" (214).

After Casaubon's illness, Dorothea tries to prevent Ladislaw from coming to Lowick because of Casaubon's dislike of his cousin, but Mr. Brooke invites

Ladislaw to Tipton Grange to work for the *Pioneer*. Ladislaw's love for Dorothea leads him to give up his dependence on Casaubon's money and stand on his own feet. His attachment to Dorothea is deep: "She should know that she had one slave in the world… The simple truth was that nothing then invited him so strongly as the presence of Dorothea" (347). Ladislaw's existence also means a lot for Dorothea: "The mere chance of seeing Will occasionally was like a lunette opened in the wall of her prison, giving her glimpse of the sunny air" (348). His responsiveness to women and beauty attracts Dorothea. For example, during one of their conversations, Dorothea asks Ladislaw what his religion is and he replies: "To love what is good and beautiful when I see it" (377). Clearly, Ladislaw is not a conventional man. He is different from not only Casaubon, but also from the other men who classify people according to their ranks, religions and money as the narrator informs: "He was a sort of gypsy, rather enjoying the sense of belonging to no class; he had a feeling of romance in his position" (441). These characteristics of Ladislaw reflect the properties of the fifth stage within the postconventional level because he is the one who defines his own values according to his own principles.

After falling in love with Dorothea, Ladislaw resolves to do something beneficial for the society and channels his potential to public affairs. Although he has been only fond of art before meeting Dorothea, now he directs his interests to law to gain Dorothea's appreciation. He decides to work for public service and gets involved in politics which is respected more than art. He becomes a successful politician because "He could speak and could write; he could master

any subject if he chose, and he meant always to take the side of reason and justice on which he could carry all his ardour" (478). Dorothea appreciates Ladislaw's occupation: "You care that justice should be done to everybody. I am so glad. When we were in Rome, I thought you only cared for poetry and art" (517). Ladislaw's attempt to find a proper place in society under Dorothea's guidance reflects his application of concerns related to the society which characterizes the qualities of stage 4 in Kohlbergian model of moral reasoning.

Ladislaw stays in Middlemarch for Dorothea, but after learning the truth about Casaubon's codicil, he decides to leave Middlemarch. It is another sign that Ladislaw does not want to act against the expectations of society along with a concern for Dorothea's well-being. He knows that Middlemarch will disapprove of their relationship if they get married. Although Ladislaw loves Dorothea, he never wishes to give harm to her.

When Dorothea sees Ladislaw and Rosamond close to each other, Ladislaw tells Rosamond: " I would rather touch her hand if it were dead, than I would touch any other woman's living" (740). After Rosamond's confession of Ladislaw's love for Dorothea, Ladislaw and Dorothea express their love to each other for the first time. Ladislaw says that he has rejected Bulstrode's offer of a good income to him, but it is still impossible for them to belong to each other (727). However, Dorothea cannot bear to suppress her feelings any more and tells him that she does not mind about poverty (727). In the Finale, the reader learns that Dorothea has never repented that she gave up position and fortune to marry Ladislaw because "they were bound to each other by a love stronger than any impulses" (792).

At the beginning of the novel, Ladislaw is depicted as a person whose characteristics reflect the fifth stage within the postconventional level in which the individual differentiates his self from the expectations of others according to Kohlberg's theory. Then to gain Dorothea's admiration of him, Ladislaw needs to lead a new way of life which is more respected by the community. Like Dorothea, he tries to integrate himself within society and humanity, which displays the integration of stage 4 into stage 5. Ladislaw makes use of stage 5 qualities through Dorothea and their marriage which causes the reactions of Mr. Brooke, Chettam and Celia. Nevertheless, they never break off their social relations and their concern for the people in their environment.

Tertius Lydgate, like Dorothea, aspires to make the world better. He has had a medical education not to make money but to make scientific discoveries which will serve human beings. He is young, poor, ambitious, clever, intellectual and warm-hearted. His ideal is to use his intellectual passion to find cures of illnesses. "Such was Lydgate's plan of his future: to do good small work for Middlemarch, and great work for the world" (144). Consequently, Lydgate is the one who has the potential to move towards the postconventional level of Kohlberg's theory.

However, Lydgate's cognitive level is not parallel to his moral level. He has not developed his moral reasoning yet as he has developed his cognition. He is too self-assured. "Lydgate had plenty of confidence in his resolution to avoid it as far as possible: being seven and twenty, he felt himself experienced" (142). Besides being over confident, he is also prejudiced. His prejudice against women

causes him to make wrong judgments. Before coming to Middlemarch, the readers learn that he fell in love with an actress called Laure and proposed marriage to her thinking that she was innocent and lovely, but she admitted that she had killed her husband (149). Then, in his first encounter with Dorothea at the party, he thinks that she is good but too earnest as he expresses: "It is troublesome to talk to such women. They are always wanting reasons, yet they are too ignorant to understand the merits of any question, and usually fall back on their moral sense to settle things after their own taste" (91). He has a low opinion of women, which men are accustomed to in that society. Like other men, he thinks that a woman ought to be graceful and "produce the effect of exquisite music" (93). The narrator draws the attention of her readers to Lydgate's shortcomings:

> Lydgate's spots of commonness lay in the complexion of his prejudices, which, in spite of noble intentions and sympathy, were half of them such as are found in ordinary men of the world: that distinction of mind which belonged to his intellectual ardour, did not penetrate his feeling and judgment about furniture or women. (146)

Lydgate is an example of a person whose moral development lags behind his cognitive level. Although he has some aspirations beneficial for humankind, his moral shortcomings pose a threat to his ideals.

Lydgate's marriage ruins both his professional and personal life. He makes the mistake of marrying a lower egoist and finds himself trapped in a dilemma (Granlund 109). He had been a man of great energy with a high purpose before, but now Rosamond paralyses all his energy because he is entangled with money

difficulties (Stephen 179). The only thing he focuses on now is their debts. The entanglements and debts into which he falls mainly as a result of his wife's extravagance put him off scientific research (Bellringer 109). Lydgate eventually realizes that he is "powerless" to influence Rosamond, because she is incapable of recognizing "his superior knowledge and mental force" (557). They argue over money constantly and Rosamond cries during their arguments. Rosamond and Lydgate's experience in marriage mirrors that of Dorothea and Casaubon. Like Casaubon, Lydgate often demands that his wife follow his judgment (Tush 125). "He wanted to smash and grind some object on which he could at least produce an impression, or else to tell her brutally that he was master and she must obey" (628). However, he cannot persuade his wife that they have to cut down on their expenses and he loses his self-esteem (Perlis 147). As the narrator conveys: "Nevertheless, she had mastered him" (656). His submission to Rosamond is full of suppressed bitterness and a sense of defeat (Granlund 111). Lydgate is defeated by his wife who he has thought of as a "lesser creature" (160). Rosamond's moral stupidity; her incapacity to see beyond her own standards causes Lydgate's disintegration. The gap between his goals and the means to their attainment widens with his marriage. He becomes preoccupied with matters distracting to a researcher (Perlis 145). "He was amazed, disgusted that conditions so foreign to all his purposes, so hatefully disconnected with the objects he cared to occupy himself with" (561). Now, he is too preoccupied with personal problems and discontent with this way of life which he has never dreamed of " 'This is what I am thinking of; and that is what I might have been thinking of' was the bitter

incessant murmur within him" (616). He becomes the portrait of a failed scientist. He falls short off his ambitions and acts in opposition to his own highest ideals (Wright 41) "He had no longer free energy enough for spontaneous research and speculative thinking" (637).

As a result of his loyalty and tenderness for the wife he no longer loves, Lydgate finds himself involved in events related to Mr. Bulstrode. He has been on Mr. Bulstrode's side just to get his help for a new hospital to serve the needs of the local community. He has many times boasted both to himself and others that he is totally independent of Mr. Bulstrode (646). He has not tried to use any occasion for his private purpose. However, after Raffles's death, Mr. Bulstrode offers Lydgate the money he needs to pay his debts and Lydgate accepts this offer. Lydgate thinks that Mr. Bulstrode lends it as he has repented of having refused that help before. Unfortunately, Mr. Bulstrode's intention is different; he wants to get rid of Raffles and he needs Lydgate to achieve it. Later on Lydgate comes to a recognition that Mr. Bulstrode has given the thousand pounds as a bribe and "the treatment of Raffles had been tempered with an evil motive. The inferences were closely linked enough; the town knew of the loan, believed it to be a bribe" (695). The Middlemarchers think that Lydgate has accepted money as a bribe to "insure [Lydgate's] silence about scandalous facts" (698).

It is only Dorothea who believes in Lydgate's innocence. She offers him salvation saying that "The hospital would be one good and making your life quite whole and well again would be another" (727). Dorothea is aware of Lydgate's disintegration and "she expects him to embody the wholeness as she knows what

it is to abandon the primitive tissue" (Perlis 146). However, Lydgate refuses Dorothea's plan that he should keep his position at the hospital and adds:

> It is impossible for me now to do anything - to take any step without considering my wife's happiness. The thing that I might like to do if I were alone, is become impossible to me. I can't see her miserable. She married me without knowing what she was going into, and it might have been better for her if she had not married me. (727)

Lydgate is capable of seeing the difference between the life he has intended and the life he is actually living. However, because of loss of faith in himself, he cannot overcome his despair. He leaves his aspirations and acts according to Rosamond's wishes. He has lost all his spirit to carry on his ideals.

The relation between Lydgate and Dorothea is a principle factor in the development of Lydgate's character. The ennobling of Lydgate and purgation of his "spots of commonness" are affected by his contact with Dorothea (Bennet 166). Although he has criticized Dorothea before, a little later he compares her with Rosamond and decides that: "She did not look at things from the proper feminine angle" (93).

In spite of Dorothea's offer of help, Lydgate loses control over his own meaning, over the development of his own life and cannot prevent the emergence of a self different from the one he has earlier believed in. Thus, the restoration of Lydgate's character is incomplete; he can never recapture the unbroken image of his earlier self (Wright 42). He chooses a new way of life: "I must do as other men do, and think what will please the world and bring in money, look for a little

opening in the London crowd and push myself" (729). He declines precisely because he restrains his passions and instincts and chooses to identify with causes he thinks will be socially acceptable (Perlis 149). The material problems deflect him from the moral principles he drives from. Lydgate descends from "the supremacy of the intellectual life" to the "absorbing soul-wasting struggle with worldly annoyances" (701). So, the young doctor with great gifts and a high ideal is frustrated by the circumstances and by the human mixture of faults and virtues in his own nature (Bennet 163).

Consequently, Lydgate's moral development draws a decline. Although he has a potential to be involved in the sixth stage of postconventional level at the beginning, he finds himself in a lower moral stage at the end. He is a good example which supports Kohlberg's theory that moral stage is related to both cognitive advance and moral judgment. Since Lydgate's moral stage is lower than his cognitive stage, he makes mistakes. During his marriage, he lowers himself even to the second stage within the preconventional level. He tries to adjust to his narrower world with Rosamond. In terms of Kohlberg's theory of moralization, Lydgate's marriage with a woman whose aspirations are in conflict with his, has introduced disequilibrium into his life. In order to restore equilibrium, he must decide what he really wants and justify that decision to himself. As Kohlberg argues, when a person's values come into conflict with one another, deciding which value to follow is significant to determine his moral stage. According to Kohlberg, interaction with other individuals is essential for moral growth. However, Lydgate avoids interaction; consequently, he cannot deal with the crisis

and solve the conflicts. He gives up his ideals for humanity and just thinks of meeting Rosamond's material needs. Finally, he finds a place in the third stage within the conventional level as a good role occupant, as a good husband. He continues his practice in London to earn his living. Though he gains popularity in his community, "he always regarded himself as a failure" (791) because he has given up his scientific ambitions and chosen to be an ordinary doctor whose aim is to make money. Nevertheless, if Lydgate had chosen a more altruistic life which had been his motive in his early life, he would have been happy and reached a higher level of moral maturity.

Rosamond is a character who matches all men's idea of a woman. Her fair skin and blue eyes reflect the physical characteristics of a conventional heroine. Besides her beauty she has "dignified" manners. Thus, she fits in the portrait of a "perfect lady" as the narrator informs: "Rosamond had a Providence of her own who had kindly made her more charming than other girls" (255). She sees herself as superior to those around believing that "each man she meets would have preferred her if the preference had not been hopeless" (715).

As Lydgate has a conventional taste for women, "circumstance was almost sure to be on the side of Rosamond" (262). Since she thinks that she can impress any man she wants, Lydgate's attraction to her is not a surprise for Rosamond. After meeting Lydgate, she plans to marry him:

> In Rosamond's romance it was not necessary to imagine much about the inward life of the hero, or of his serious business in the world: of course he had a profession and was clever, as well as sufficiently handsome, but the

> piquant fact about Lydgate was his good birth, which distinguished him from all Middlemarch admirers, and presented marriage as a prospect of rising in rank. (161)

Rosamond's idea of the best match is Lydgate. She is impressed by him because he fits her dream perfectly. He is like a character from one of the romantic plots Rosamond thrives upon; he is a stranger, handsome and a well-connected man; he is unlike the other men in her environment. His otherness is mysterious to Rosamond.

However, their marriage becomes a disappointment for both. In the early days of their marriage, Rosamond's baby is born prematurely as she has persisted in riding a horse. After that, Lydgate warns her not to go out on horseback, but she "had that victorious obstinacy which never wastes its energy in impetuous resistance. What she liked to do was to her the right thing and all her cleverness was directed to getting the means of doing it" (557). As Lydgate thinks that women are weak and vulnerable creatures, he cannot take any action against his wife's meaningless persistence. One day, Lydgate attempts to talk to her about their expenses which he cannot afford, but "Rosamond had no scowls and had never raised her voice: She was quite sure that no one could justly find fault with her" (564). It is apparent that Rosamond is ignorant and overconfident. She never questions her behaviour and puts the blame for the difficulties of their marriage always on Lydgate refusing to take any responsibility. She is not used to budgeting. "Rosamond, accustomed from her childhood to an extravagant household, thought that good housekeeping consisted simply in ordering the best of everything" (560). Instead of trying to cut down the expenses, she secretly

disobeys Lydgate by asking her father to help them. It causes Lydgate's anger, but after a short while he carries on soothing and comforting his wife. He suggests moving to a smaller house and selling most of the furniture, but Rosamond insists on leaving Middlemarch and holds Lydgate responsible for the trouble: " If we are to be in that position, it will be entirely your own doing" (620). She tries many tactics to prevent Lydgate's plans. For example, she prevents the sale of their furniture and then defends herself: "I think I had a perfect right to speak on a subject which concerns me at least as much as you" (627). Rosamond has the conviction that she is not the person who is at fault. Instead of looking at problems from Lydgate's perspective, she consistently expresses her disappointment: "When we married everyone felt that your position was very high. I could not have imagined that you would want to sell our furniture" (628).

Although Rosamond is never depicted as deliberately wicked, she is merely incapable of understanding any values more altruistic than her own (Bennet 168). She cannot conceive of any perspective beyond her own. She gets married to Lydgate not to contribute altruistically to the welfare of the race, but to fulfill her romantic dreams (Paxton 177). Unfortunately, her self-involvement defeats Lydgate as Stephen argues:

> Rosamond Vincy is a model of one of the forms of stupidity against which the gods fight in vain. Being utterly incapable of even understanding her husband's aspirations, fixing her mind on vulgar kind of success, and having the strength of will which comes from an absolute limitation to one aim, she is a most effective torpedo. (180)

Rosamond lacks the kind of sympathetic imagination that would enable her to see from each person's perspective. Her egocentric point of view contributes to Lydgate's failure.

Rosamond's reaction to the gossip about Lydgate's taking a bribe from Mr. Bulstrode shows that she does not really know her husband. Instead of asking Lydgate about the matter and helping him, Rosamond goes on thinking of herself: "She had innocently married this man with the belief that he and his family were glory to her!" (719). She does not feel sympathy for her husband who needs support; she just feels pity for herself. With her narrow and assertive attitude, she achieves to master Lydgate: "Surely now at last you have given up the idea of staying in Middlemarch" (721). She never gives up what she has set her mind on.

Rosamond's self-confidence is distorted for the first time by Ladislaw who does not respond to her love and prefers Dorothea: "Her little world was in ruins, and she felt herself tottering in the midst as a lonely bewildered consciousness" (742). Rosamond has never thought that a man could admire another woman more than herself. Another crisis for Rosamond occurs when Dorothea comes back to reveal Lydgate's innocence: "She was under the great shock that had shattered her dream-world in which she had been easily confident of herself and critical of others" (757). Rosamond's narrow world experiences great shocks with these developments.

The most crucial moment happens during Rosamond's conversation with Dorothea. Rosamond tells Dorothea the truth about her own one-sided flirtation with Ladislaw: "He has never had any love for me… he has thought slightly of

me. He said yesterday that no other woman existed for him besides you. The blame of what happened is entirely mine" (759). Rosamond's confession is significant for her moral development as Argyros argues: "Even if Rosamond requires the kind of tremendous jump start of sympathetic energy in order to discover within herself her own limited capacity and desire to ease another suffering, such a discovery represents progress" (172). Rosamond's confession also reflects Eliot's optimistic view about the capacity of characters to change for the better (Argyos 179).

In short, Rosamond's egoism and narrowness of judgment put her into the first stage within the preconventional level at the beginning. She cannot see things from her husband's point of view. Then, with her confession to Dorothea, she develops a little and raises herself to the second stage within the preconventional level which is still primitive according to her age. Rosamond learns to approach a problem from a more distant perspective and realizes others have wishes independent of hers, but she is still unable to combine different perspectives to form a whole abstract body which would involve moving to stage 3 at the conventional level of moral reasoning.

Mary Garth is a complete contrast to Rosamond. Mary follows her mother's profession as a teacher and avoids being trained to be a "useless doll" like Rosamond (Paxton 180). What makes Mary different from Rosamond is her independence, her integrity and her commitment to work. Furthermore, she always treats people with kindness as the narrator expresses: "If you made her smile, she would show you perfect teeth; if you made her angry, she would not

raise her voice, but would probably say one of the bitterest things you have ever tasted the flavour of; if you did her kindness, she would never forget it" (391). Mary has been brought up as a warm-hearted, tolerant and helpful person. She never injures anybody consciously.

Among the female characters in the novel, Mary is the only woman who never lives in a world of illusions. Her dreams are not grandiose. As a sensible woman, she knows exactly what she wants. By her realistic point of view and common sense, she also saves Fred's life. Because of his fondness for gambling, Fred borrows some money from Mary's father and cannot pay it back. At this point, Mary plays an important role in Fred's moral development by drawing his attention to his irresponsibility: "How can you bear to be so contemptible, when others are working and striving, and there are so many things to be done- how can you bear to be fit for nothing in the world that is useful?" (246). As an altruist, Mary teaches Fred to control his selfishness without sacrificing herself. She succeeds in helping him find the strength to renounce his egocentric habits. Fred's love for Mary motivates him and he gives up gambling. Mary also becomes influential in Fred's choosing a career which fits him: "Indeed, he has plenty of sense, but I think he would not show it as a clergyman" (496). She thinks rationally and encourages Fred to choose a profession which will make him happy. Though she sometimes mocks Fred to motivate him, she never considers marrying anybody else and at the end they achieve a mutual happiness based on love and respect. She promises to be constant to Fred as long as he is constant to her (786).

Mary is the virtuous woman whose personality reflects the characteristics of the fourth stage of the conventional level according to Kohlberg's theory because she has always been in full integration with society; she has always been aware of the limitations imposed on her and has shaped her life and aims accordingly. Eliot's portrayal of Mary supports her idea that human beings reach happiness when they are in harmony with society.

One of the couples in the novel is the Bulstrodes. Mr. Bulstrode, like Ladislaw, is an outsider who achieves financial success and marries Harriet Vincy , the mayor's sister. Mr. Bulstrode so identifies his cause with that of God that he interprets all financial success as evidence of divine favour. It has been a principle with Mr.Bulstrode to gain as much power as possible, that he might use it for the glory of God: "He went through a great deal of spiritual conflict and inward argument in order to adjust his motives, and make clear to himself what God's glory required" (150). He seeks power through money and he builds power which he justifies by using it in God's cause. He has achieved a fine balance between his theory of life and circumstances, between his spiritual election and its worldly assurances (Caroll 255). The root of his hypocrisy is his continual striving for self-deception. Although Mr.Bulstrode manages for some time to maintain the image of himself as a pious citizen, he cannot escape from his guilty past with the reappearance of Raffles who threatens to disintegtarate this self-image. Raffles is a threat to Bulstrode's insincere inner life as he reminds Bulstrode of his scandalous past which keeps the secret that Bulstrode has a daughter. He struggles to explain Raffles's coming as part of the 'divine plan' to conceal his egoistic

terrors, yet he fails even to convince himself (Wright 70). It is no longer possible to find a compromise between his worldly ambitions and religious zeal for Bulstrode. He plans to get rid of Raffles in order to preserve his status in Middlemarch. To achieve it, he uses Lydgate and offers him to lend the money he needs, which causes the gossip about bribe. Because of his egocentric point of view, Mr.Bulstrode belongs to the first stage of the preconventional level of Kohlberg's theory. He considers only his own interest and thinks of everthing in terms of money.

Mr.Bulstrode's fall is mitigated by the support that he receives from his wife who has a warm and affectionate nature. When the Middlemarchers hear about the scandal, they expect Mrs.Bulstrode to separate from her husband or leave the town and live abroad somewhere (708). However, although Mrs.Bulstrode's confidence in her husband is shattered, she suppresses her frustration, gathers up her strength and carries on her life as a devoted wife. She is aware that she will leave the comfort she is accustomed to and lose the community respect, but she accepts to live under such circumstances to preserve the unity of her family. Even though she knows that she will no longer lead a prestigious life in the town, she does not leave her husband. She acts differently from her niece Rosamond who has not shared the trouble of her husband. In spite of having led an honourable life up to now in the society, Mrs.Bulstrode chooses to live in a smaller world now just for the sake of her family. That is why she falls from the fourth to the third stage of the conventional level according to Kohlberg's theory of moralization. Nevertheless, she is not only occupied with

her personal sufferings, but she also carries on dealing with her kins' problems. She urges her husband to help Rosamond: "I would rather do without something for ourselves, to make some amends to my poor family" (783). She never acts selfishly and helps her relatives as she feels pity for them. When she learns that Lydgate has rejected any further service from Mr.Bulstrode, she intends to help Rosamond's brother, Fred, who needs support and she asks Mr.Garth to let Fred manage the land. Shortly, even though Mrs. Bulstrode's moral level recedes from the fourth to the third stage, she never loses her affectionate nature and never has any selfish tendency unlike her husband.

Among the minor characters in the novel, Peter Featherstone and the Reverend Camden Farebrother are significant as they help Eliot to convey her moral messages. The role of money in society is explored trough Mr. Featherstone who is the owner of Stone Court. Featherstone's character is illuminated by the way he regards money; he uses his wealth to gain power over people. All his relatives wait impatiently for his death and they only pretend affection for him thinking that he will leave them money. There is a great deal of hypocrisy in their conceptions. As Featherstone is aware of their intentions, he hopes to circumvent their desires by giving his money to his housekeeper Mary. When she refuses the money, most of his money goes to his illegitimate son Mr. Rigg, which disappoints especially his nephew Fred. Featherstone is a tyrannical and stern man who uses his money as a threat to other people. He loves money "as a means of making others feel his power more or less uncomfortably" (310). Since he is

depicted as a mean and unkind man who likes showing off the power, he is involved in the preconventional level of Kohlberg's theory of moralization.

As a contrast to Mr. Featherstone, Eliot portrays Mr. Farebrother who is a poor and sincere vicar. As an honest clergyman, he looks after his sister, mother and aunt with very little money. He is loved by the farmers and the people of his parish. His humane approach to religion makes him a moral agent in the book. Like every human being, Farebrother has some shortcomings such as gambling to make ends meet. However, he does not give any harm to anybody and he always tries to help the ones who need him. For example, although he himself loves Mary, he sacrifices his love for her after learning that Fred and Mary love each other. He also becomes a good friend with Lydgate and advises Lydgate to avoid any personal relationship with Mr. Bulstrode. However, when Dorothea urges Farebrother to do something immediately to rescue Lydgate from the gossip about bribe, Farebrother tells her: "You can't undertake to manage a man's life for him in that way…He must act for himself" (698). In spite of his good nature, Farebrother acts like ordinary men in that society. Thus, he can be placed in the third stage within the conventional level of Kohlberg's theory.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

As Wright claims on the cover page of his book, to read *MM* is to be provoked into exploring profound questions about the construction of character which is presented as a complex business, a matter of illusion and misconstruction. *MM* is not only 'A Study of Provincial Life', but also the reflection of Eliot's moral perspective. The readers can grasp Eliot's understanding of morality through her presentation of characters.

As stated before, Eliot does not approve of conventional religion which encourages man to pray to God for his personal wishes. So as to justify her opinion, she depicts Mr.Bulstrode who prays to God to rescue him from his troubles in spite of his sins. His religion is based upon fear and it emerges in the way he tries to propitiate his threatening Providence. The narrator comments on Bulstrode's religion: "Does any one suppose that private prayer is necessarily candid- necessarily goes to the roots of action! Private prayer is inaudible speech, and speech is representative: who can represent himself just as he is, even in his own reflections?"(677). In the figure of Mr.Bulstrode, Providence is portrayed as

a projection of self-centredness, a baptizing of egoism. Readers have learned to view this idea of God as self-interest.

MM has been called "a novel of religious yearning"(Wright 62). It begins with the question of faith, the search by Dorothea, which would give her life meaning. It explores Dorothea's soul-hunger for sympathy because there seems to be no object adequate to satisfy it. She is forced to cover over the absence of God with a self-consciously subjective religious substitute: a life of devotion to others and a belief in people. The essence of Christianity, as Eliot had read in Feuerbach, lay in altruistic feelings. After the death of Casaubon, Dorothea continues to trust in human qualities and sees herself as part of the divine power against evil represented by all human goodness (Wright 62). As she confesses to Ladislaw, this is the religion she has been finding out since she was a little girl (377) and it forces her to abandon the prayer of the Orthodox Christian kind and to concentrate on developing her altruism, her capacity to do what is good for others. It is, of course, the religion of humanity, the moral essence of Christianity. In fact, Dorothea goes on praying, but her prayer becomes the kind of meditation recommended by Comte. According to Comte, simply to think benevolent thoughts increases one's capacity to act benevolently, to help others when actual opportunities arrive (Wright 63). Dorothea is the most striking character who supports Eliot's belief in the human capacity for moral growth.

As Eliot's moral principles are based on humanity, she holds human beings responsible for their actions. "To Eliot, as to Comte, the important thing is not the outward conditions of human lives, but the inward response to these

conditions"(Granlund 124) which is moral reasoning in Kohlbergian terms. Through the character of Lydgate, Eliot questions the issues of free will and determinism. The narrator's judgment falls on Lydgate: "It always remains that if we had been greater, circumstances would have been less strong against us"(568). It is implied that Lydgate could have achieved his aims if he had overcome his despair, in other words if he had had a more advanced moral judgment. If he had acted like Dorothea who overcame her despair by widening her vision, he would not have been a failure. Through Lydgate and Dorothea, Eliot also conveys her belief that man can shape his own fate. Ladislaw is another example to emphasize that man has free will. In spite of the financial pressures of Casaubon's codicil and the prejudices of Middlemarch, he marries Dorothea. If he had thought that his life had been determined, he could not have spent the rest of his life with Dorothea. Determination and action in this case overcome determinism.

Apparently, *MM* is a post-Christian account of the death of God since human providence takes the place of divine providence. Like Feuerbach, Eliot conceives that it is the human feelings which are divine and worthy of the highest reverence, not their false objectification into dogma (Wright 63). Thus, Eliot's conception of morality is characterized by the relationships among men rather than the relationship between God and man. Similarly, according to Kohlberg's theory of moralization, man's moral development is based on the interaction with other individuals. To Eliot, moral growth comes to those who leave the egoistic concerns and give way to a sympathetic response to the sufferings of others. The critical consensus regarding character development in Eliot's fiction is that it

proceeds from egoism to altruism. As a meliorist, a believer that the world could be improved, Eliot urges human beings to sympathize with one another.

The application of Feuerbachian principles of moral growth explains Eliot's understanding of the relationship between the self and the society. The growth of the characters is parallel to the characters' compromising the self with the environment. To Eliot, man should contribute to the happiness of the society he lives in. He should not cause disorder by acting on his own. *MM* allows Eliot to confirm her view that human happiness is assimilated to the wholeness of society, that community values should prevail over individual ego (Karl 457). As the narrator in *MM* declares: "Sane people did what their neighbors did" (11). Although Eliot depicts the details of individual differences, she expects her characters to contribute to the welfare of society in their own ways.

As Eliot's conception of morality requires a harmonious relationship with the society, the characters who get a respected place in the community reach satisfaction and happiness in her novel *MM*. They struggle to reconcile their aspirations with the expectations of Middlemarchers.

Since the key to contentment is given as the full integration with the environment by Eliot, the characters who have the moral potential in *MM* have a tendency to fit the conventional level according to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory called "The Cognitive–Developmental Theory of Moralization". For example, even Ladislaw who has been portrayed as an artist at the beginning of the novel, chooses a career which is more respected in the society. Although Kohlberg claims that moral development is possible by enlarging one's perspective and

improving his role taking ability like Eliot, he does not disapprove of personal differences in the society. On the contrary, to Kohlberg, having different viewpoints with a mutual respect is a plus for that society. He appreciates the individual's differentiation of himself from others and application of his own principles known as principles of justice. He supposes that it is a development for an individual to be involved in the postconventional level which encourages human beings to adopt their own values for the benefit of humanity.

In conclusion, in spite of the fact that Eliot has a secular understanding of morality based on love, respect and understanding of one another, according to Kohlberg's theory of moralization, her characters are more involved in the conventional level which approaches a moral problem from the perspective of the society than the postconventional level which approaches a moral problem from a prior to society perspective. Eliot favours society more than individuals. Consequently, she expects her characters to strive for the happiness of humanity which involves the principles of justice, freedom and the dignity of human beings, which constitute the principles of stage 6 of the postconventional level of moral reasoning and moral maturity depicted in the "The Cognitive-Developmental Theory of Moralization" by Kohlberg.

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