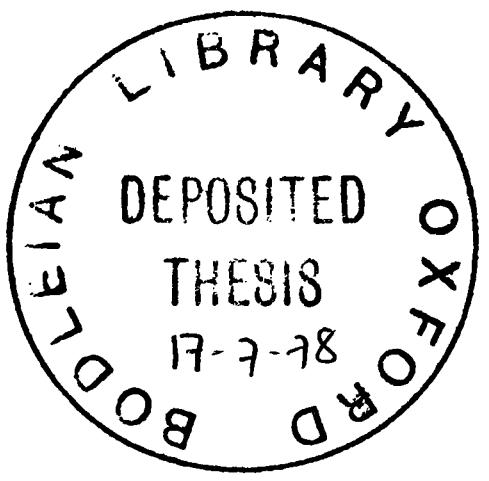
George Eliot and the Religion of Humanity



Dissertation in English Literature submitted by

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George Eliot and the Religion of Humanity

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Auguste Comte and George Eliot were both typical of their time but this thesis contends that many of the elements of his system found expression in her novels. It contains three parts: a study of Comte's ideas, a short history of their propagation in England, and an analysis of Eliot's novels. An appendix examines the previous critical recognition of her Positivism.

In Part One, a brief consideration of Comte's life and philosophical context leads to a thematic treatment of his ideas: in philosophy his development from the positive to the subjective method and his modified determinism, in history and sociology his law of the three states and his political utopia, in ethics his cerebral theory, and in religion his worship of women. A final chapter illustrates George Eliot's close study of Comte.

Part Two traces the reception of Comte's ideas in England, from the early enthusiasm of Mill and Lewes to the more orthodox discipleship of the Wadham Positivists. George Eliot's position in the whole spectrum of Positive thought is assessed in relation to these writers and to the widespread discussion of Comte in mid-Victorian England.

Part Three passes from George Eliot's religious development prior to her reading of Comte to her discussion of Positivism in her notebooks, essays and letters. Her novels are considered under the same thematic divisions as Comte's ideas. Her philosophy sought the same subjective synthesis of Positive knowledge and taught Comte's balance of resignation and activity. Positive elements are detected in her treatment of solidarity in Felix Holt, utopianism in Middlemarch, history in Romola, and continuity in Daniel Deronda. Her ethics revolved around a Comtean development of altruism through the family and the worship of women. The extent to which she accepted or modified Comte's Religion of Humanity is the subject of the final chapter.

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Prefatory Note

I have referred throughout to The Works of George Eliot in the Cabinet Edition, Edinburgh, 1878-(85), which has the same pagination as the Illustrated Copyright Edition, London, (1908).

Abbreviations

GE	George Eliot
SCL	Scenes of Clerical Life
AB	Adam Bede
MF	The Mill on the Floss
SM	Silas Marner
R	Romola
FH	Felix Holt
MM	Middlemarch
DD	Daniel Deronda
LJ	The Legend of Jubal and other poems
SG	The Spanish Gypsy
TS	The Impressions of Theophrastus Such
Life	George Eliot's Life as related in her letters and journals, arranged and edited by J.W. Cross.
Essays	The Essays of George Eliot, ed. Thomas Pinney, London, 1963.
GEL	The Letters of George Eliot, ed. G.S. Haight, 7 vols., New Haven, 1954–5.
AC	Auguste Comte
Early Essays	Early Essays on Social Philosophy
Crisis	The Crisis of Industrial Civilization
Phil.	The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte
Discourse	A Discourse on the Positive Spirit
Pol.	System of Positive Polity
Cat.	The Catechism of Positive Religion
Appeal	Appeal to Conservatives
Subj. Synth.	Subjective Synthesis
Confessions	Confessions and Testament of Auguste Comte and His Correspondence with Clotilde de Vaux

Ingram Letters	Passages from the letters of Auguste Comte, selected and translated by John K. Ingram.
CI	Correspondance inédite
GHL	George Henry Lewes
BHP	A Biographical History of Philosophy
HP	The History of Philosophy from Thales to Comte
CPS	Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences
PLM	Problems of Life and Mind

Nineteenth-Century Periodicals

AM	Atlantic Monthly
BEM	Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine
BFR	British and Foreign Review
BQR	British Quarterly Review
CR	Contemporary Review
DUM	Dublin University Magazine
ER	Edinburgh Review
FR	Fortnightly Review
HFR	Home and Foreign Review
HNMM	Harper's New Monthly Magazine
LLA	Littell's Living Age
LQR	London Quarterly Review
MM	Macmillan's Magazine
Month	Month and Catholic Review
NC	Nineteenth Century
PMG	Pall Mall Gazette
PR	Positive Review
QR	Quarterly Review
RG	Revue Générale

SR	Saturday Review
WR	Westminster Review

Twentieth-Century Periodicals

AHR	American Historical Review
EC	Essays in Criticism
ELH	English Literary History
JBS	Journal of British Studies
JEGP	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
JHI	Journal of the History of Ideas
KR	Kenyon Review
NCF	Nineteenth-Century Fiction
PMLA	Proceedings of the Modern Languages Association
PULC	Princeton University Library Chronicle
RES	Review of English Studies
RMS	Renaissance and Modern Studies
SAQ	South Atlantic Quarterly
SEL	Studies in English Literature
SLI	Studies in the Literary Imagination
SP	Studies in Philology
TLS	Times Literary Supplement
VN	Victorian Newsletter
VS	Victorian Studies
YES	Year's Work in English Studies

Other Abbreviations

tmv	Transcription with minor variants

I have abbreviated some other names and titles when they recur soon after being quoted in full.

Introduction

Ideas are clearly greater than their history and to label them may be a means of escaping their significance. When Dorothea Brooke outlines her own commitment to the side of light against darkness, she asks Ladislaw not to follow Casaubon's cataloguing tendencies by calling it 'Persian or something else geographical'. It is her life, the religion she has worked out for herself.[1] George Eliot herself attacked a review which attempted to diminish the significance of Comte's ideas by identifying their source. She protested against its 'treatment of ideas in the cataloguing spirit, which thinks it is enough to ticket them with a name and date, without entering heart and soul into the momentous consideration of their truth or falsity'.[2] If Positivism is the key to all George Eliot's mythologies, the spirit of Casaubon must be absent from its study.

But their history forms part of all ideas. It is not until we see them in all their historic developments that we fully understand them. And to see them clearly we must study them closely, tracing their origins with all possible thoroughness. George Eliot fully recognized the obligation to acknowledge intellectual debts. Her own, to Comte, she expressed unequivocally.[3] Theophrastus Such attacks 'communistic principles' in ideas, warning against the use of the concept of the spirit of the age to justify 'the non-payment of conscious debts'.[4] More apposite still, considering the similarities of Mordecai and Comte and the tortuous explanations in which Spencer insisted on his independence of Comte, are Daniel Deronda's thoughts on his own fear of commitment to the visionary Jew:

'If the influence he imagined himself submitting to had been that

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1. MM II 180
2. Leader V (1854) 448
3. See Part III Ch. II
4. TS pp. 158-9

of some honoured professor, some authority of learning, some philosopher who had been accepted as a voice of the age, would a thorough receptiveness towards direction have been ridiculed ? Only by these who hold it a sign of weakness to be obliged for an idea, and prefer to hint that they have implicitly held in a more correct form whatever others have stated with a sadly short-coming explicitness.' [1]

To suggest that George Eliot played Theophrastus to Comte's Aristotle, or even Deronda to Comte's Mordecai, may seem extravagant. But George Eliot was not an original thinker. Intellectually as well as emotionally, she required 'someone to lean upon'.[2] There is truth as well as bitterness in Eliza Lynn Linton's description of her as 'the most magnificent kind of Papin's digester ..... the result of other men's teachings'.[3] It is objectionable mainly because the metaphor distorts the relationship between intellect and imagination, as does David Cecil's description of her intellect as 'the engine which started the machinery of the imagination working'.[4]

The nature of influence and of the imagination is more complex than this. Harold Bloom has shown that literary influence is rarely a matter of benign transmission.[5] I intend to treat Comte as a precursor of George Eliot against whom she often reacted critically rather than submissively. Her frequently quoted late remark, 'I cannot submit my intellect or my soul to the guidance of Comte',[6] complements rather than contradicts her even more frequent avowals of his influence. Theophrastus Such refers to Aristotle as 'too much of a systematiser'.[7] This was George Eliot's feeling about Comte. She believed that 'human nature is stronger and wiser than religious systems'.[8] But is was important for her that his system was there, providing a complete, coherent and detailed alternative to traditional religions. From this she could adopt a position of wider tolerance

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1. DD II 357
2. Charles Bray, Phases of opinion and experience during a long life; an Autobiography, London, (1884) p.75.
3. Temple Bar LXXIII (1885) 514
4. David Cecil, Early Victorian Novelists, London, (1934) 1960, p.327
5. Harold Bloom, The Anxiety of Influence, New York, 1973
6. GEL I xlvi
7. TS p.26
8. Essays p.187

and understanding, which would not, or should not, be mistaken for vagueness.

It is dangerous to speculate too much about the process of creation. But it is important to distinguish the kind of influence Comte may have exercised over George Eliot from any mechanical models. George Eliot keenly defended her right to take any material and transform it into art without diminishing her originality. She insisted that her father and aunt were only the germs, not the originals, of Adam Bede and Dinah Morris. She refused to tell the story beforehand because she would not have it judged apart from her 'treatment which alone determines the moral quality of art'.[1] Jerome Beaty's work on the Quarries for Middlemarch has confirmed that these frameworks for the novels were not used as blueprints but as stepping stones in a creative process in which various ideas would 'simmer' in her mind. He reiterates that any novelist could have written the Quarries, but only George Eliot Middlemarch.[2] Similarly, any Positivist could have produced the framework of ideas on which her novels were based, but she alone transformed the ideas into art. Her friend and translator, Alexandre D'Albert-Durade, perhaps best describes 'sa puissance de conception et de création, qui une fois son plan déterminé la faisaient assister aux scènes qu'elle écrivait si les acteurs parlaient et agissaient devant elle'.[3] Comte loomed large in the formation of the plan and in the ideas which made up the diagram, to use the language of her correspondence with Harrison. But the creative genius which transformed the diagram into the picture was George Eliot's.

It is to the everlasting discredit of Comte's English disciples that they were too narrow to see the significance of George Eliot's achievement. Just as they attacked liberal Christians for developing

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1. GEL II 502-4
2. Jerome Beaty, Middlemarch from Notebook to Novel, Urbana, 1960, pp. 78, 84 and 105-8
3. Yale MSS III, A.F. D'Albert-Durade to J.W. Cross, 15/2/85

and modifying their understanding of orthodox doctrine, they refused to accept a broader understanding of their own system. Comte wrote to his Irish follower, Henry Dix Hutton,

'I can recognize as my true disciples only those who, renouncing the projects of founding a synthesis of their own, regard that which I have constructed as essentially sufficient and radically preferable to any other. Their duty is to propagate and apply it, without aiming at criticising or even improving it.' [1]

This thesis aims to show that George Eliot could probably have accepted the first sentence, but not the second. Like Mill, George Eliot envisaged the religion of the future as being 'essentially' that of Comte's, but not necessarily in every detail. She resisted all the attempts of the English Positivists to force her into making 'decided "deliverances"' on Comte.[2] It may have been a sense of guilt over this which prompted her to include among her 'Italian Notes' of 1862 Comte's disparaging remark:

"Quelques esprits excentriques comprennent le droit d'examiner comme imposant le devoir de ne se décider jamais". [3]

She remained uncommitted to any definite faith. Yet she was not a merely intellectual Positivist. She did not stop at the Cours. It was the later Comte that she admired most, the author of the Système and founder of the Religion of Humanity. Her works can be seen as an integral part of the Positivist movement, in fact, its most lasting product. It is hardly too much to claim that George Eliot fulfilled the hopes Comte had held for Clotilde de Vaux. For in the year that George Eliot began to write her first novel, he lamented the absence of 'Saint Clotilde' at a time when, 'the want of an able woman's pen now becomes more evident than ever'. Comte had seen the importance of art in spreading his ideas and looked to women to produce novels of domestic life. He had also expected Clotilde to help 'the advent of the final regeneration by fostering the rise of the true Positivist Salon'. [4]

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1. AC, Ingram Letters, p. 54
2. GEL : V 76
3. "Italian Notes", f. 19
4. AC, Confessions, p. 468.

George Eliot can be said to have fulfilled both these aims.

This thesis offers two mutually illuminating parallel studies. George Eliot's novels are considered as a concrete result of the Religion of Humanity. To study them closely is a specific and distinct way of studying a general tendency of thought. Her novels, too, are clarified by an understanding of the Positivist movement. Any reading depends on what we bring to it and is strengthened and informed by being placed in context. This is especially true of George Eliot, who, like Comte, was representative of her age.

A number of problems are raised by this claim that George Eliot was profoundly influenced by Comte. Why has it not been more fully recognized before ? What was George Eliot's relation to Lewes and to the other Positivists ? How can one distinguish Comte's influence from that of many thinkers whom George Eliot encountered before him, or from the whole tendency of the period ? The first question is answered in the Appendix. A detailed analysis of previous criticism on the subject traces the decline of the commonplace but largely unsubstantial nineteenth-century recognition of Comte's influence on George Eliot, parallelling the decline of the organised Positivist movement itself, up to the neglect or dismissal of the topic altogether by some of the leading and most influential modern critics. The other questions are incorporated into the structure of the whole thesis. It involves three parts: a study of Comte's ideas, a short history of their reception and propagation in England, and an analysis of their re-appearance, deepened, modified, but recognisably Comtean, in the novels of George Eliot.

After a brief attempt to place Comte within a philosophical and historical context, as heir not only to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, but to the Romantic and Catholic reaction, the first part of the thesis examines the main aspects of his teaching in

philosophy, history, sociology, ethics and religion. His philosophy was based on the abandonment of metaphysical speculation and the extension of empirical methods to the human sciences. But he recognised the necessary role of the imagination in the formation of hypotheses and attempted a 'subjective synthesis' of positive knowledge in relation to human needs. His modified determinism rested upon a hierarchy of the sciences in which phenomena became increasingly more general, more complex, more related to humanity, and more modifiable. Resignation was required to the inevitable, activity where change could be achieved, notably in the realm of human nature.

Comte's most important contribution to sociology was his elaboration of the 'historical method'. This involved the 'dynamical' study of social development in history, verified by reference to the 'statical' aspects of human nature revealed by physiology. His law of the three states taught that the sciences, humanity, and each individual tended to pass from theological through the metaphysical to the positive state. But it was imperative to maintain the continuity as well as the solidarity of Humanity. His analysis of the rise and fall of Christianity, which he believed to have been most fully developed in the Middle Ages, was central to his thought. It helped to form many aspects of his own utopian construction, which he elaborated in unnecessary and unfortunate detail.

Comte's ethics were founded on a cerebral theory which he derived from Gall. Believing that the motors of human action could be strengthened by exercise and diminished by disuse, Comte advocated the subordination of the egotistic to the altruistic instincts. His theory of the family, of worship, and of art, was based upon the view that morality was a matter of habit and could be inculcated by the systematic education of the feelings. Public opinion provided an external stimulus to morality and it was therefore essential to live

openly, to subject oneself to this influence.

The most important part of Comte's religion was the worship of women, whom he regarded as morally superior although intellectually and physically inferior to men. Whether publicly, as the Goddess of Humanity, or privately, as the guardian angel of a man's household, women were to be idealised. Priests were next in importance, regulating the life and education of the community. Among the rituals prescribed by Comte was the commemoration of the saints of Humanity in the Positive Calendar. Art was to play a major role in the worship of Humanity, the propagation of Positivism and the development of sympathy.

The first part of the thesis ends with an account of George Eliot's reading of Comte as evidenced by her unpublished notebooks, letters and journals, to illustrate her familiarity with the details of his system, which she clearly studied with great thoroughness. The second part traces the reception of his ideas in England, beginning with Mill and Lewes, his earliest disciples. Again, their writing is studied at first independently of George Eliot, and then in relation to her. Mill's early enthusiasm for Comte cooled as a result of the Frenchman's dogmatism, but many of his works reveal a strong sympathy with the Religion of Humanity. Lewes expounded Comte's ideas in books and articles throughout his career. For the last twenty-five years he was helped by George Eliot. Manuscripts in Princeton, Yale and New York show especially close co-operation on the Problems of Life and Mind, a discussion and development of Comte's moral theory from the standpoint of associational psychology. It seems that he introduced George Eliot to Positivism, but that she taught him the value of the Religion of Humanity.

The second chapter of Part Two studies "The Religion of Humanity in England" with the aid of the abundant Positivist papers in the

Bodleian, the British Library and other London Libraries. The Wadham Positivists, Congreve, Harrison, Beesly and Bridges, adhered more closely to Comte's system. The Congreves accorded George Eliot affection and esteem, and they tolerated Lewes. Harrison and Beesly were also prominent members of the George Eliot circle. They and other Positivists formed the nucleus of her Sunday afternoon gatherings at the Priory. But they disapproved, first of her unconventional union with Lewes and then of her abrogation of eternal widowhood in marrying Cross. She was too much of a heretic for them fully to appreciate her contribution to their cause.

The clearest way to distinguish Positivism from similar ideas of the time is to study the many critical reviews of Comte which appeared in the periodicals from 1850 to 1880. Scientists, philosophers, theologians, historians, men of letters and novelists all had something to say about Comte and in many cases George Eliot commented on what they said. This is the subject of the chapter on "Comte and the Victorians" which ends the second part of the thesis.

The third and largest part of the thesis concentrates on George Eliot. The first chapter considers the writers who could be said to have anticipated Comte's influence: Hennell, Strauss and Feuerbach in their attacks on Christianity, Bray and Combe with their phrenology, and Mill and Carlyle in early contact with Saint-Simonism. George Eliot's essays of the 1850's are examined, in the Westminster, where Comte was one of a number of thinkers she discussed, and in the Leader, where she could afford to be more explicitly Positivist. Her direct comments on Comte in letters, notebooks and journals are considered. Some of Comte's ideas are then traced in her letters before a final examination of the development of her aesthetic theory.

The chapters on George Eliot are divided into the same themes as those on Comte. She too was critical of metaphysical and theological

views of the world, constantly portraying belief in providence as a glorified egoism. She sympathised with the desire for a subjective synthesis of knowledge to give life meaning and purpose. She also preached a combination of resignation and activity. Four of her novels are seen to embody particular aspects of Comte's history and sociology: Felix Holt solidarity, Middlemarch utopianism, Romola history and Daniel Deronda continuity.

George Eliot's characterisation often fits Comte's cerebral theory. She taught his subordination of egoism to altruism, and the extension of love from the family to the community to the whole of Humanity. She saw both the strengths and the weaknesses of his beliefs in public opinion as a boost to conscience. Many of George Eliot's heroes develop their altruism through the worship of women as madonnas and guardian angels. Positive priests, saints and working-men form some of the ideal types on which her realism was founded.

The final chapter attempts to define the extent and limits of George Eliot's Positivism. Some passages from her novels and poems are analysed closely to illustrate the density of the ideas she derived from Comte. But other areas are considered in which she disagreed with him, or incorporated elements from different sources. The difference of form reflects a difference of outlook. The Religion of Humanity which emerges through her novels is both more religious and more humane than that defined by Comte.

The separation of the sections on Comte and George Eliot is essential in order to do justice to the complexity of their thought and to avoid begging the question of influence. But the division of the chapters of each section into the same themes encourages the reader to check the correspondences between their works. He will need continually to refer back to the first part of the thesis while reading the third, to verify for himself the claims that I make. This cannot be avoided.

It is a complex subject, on which clarity can only come from a close attention to detail. Under each theme the works of both writers are discussed chronologically, to illustrate any development in their ideas. But this plan is not rigidly adhered to when there are compelling reasons to link books written at different times. The ideas themselves matter. But it is also important to keep a sense of each book as a work of art in itself.

The accumulation of illustrations of the same point can easily degenerate into a form of pedantry. But in order to show the consistency of George Eliot's use of Comtean ideas and terminology I mention a large number of examples. I have tried to select the most significant for detailed discussion. I have risked the irritation of frequent quotation, kept as short as possible, to clarify the status of the words used. I refer to English translations of Comte whenever possible. George Eliot read the French originals before the English versions of her contemporaries, but the translations are clearer than the original and easier to follow. Throughout the thesis I aim for clarity and accuracy in a subject which is both complex and controversial.

PART I AUGUSTE COMTE

CHAPTER I

The Development of Comte's System

1. Context

'Comte did not discover the Religion of Humanity,' wrote Harrison, 'but only put into organic shape the floating aspirations of his century'.[1] He is often regarded as a representative figure, 'at once a symbol and producer of the intellectual climate' of the mid-nineteenth century.[2] It would seem that The Voice of the Nineteenth Century[3] has not gained the ear of the twentieth. Yet those who have studied Comte's works point to the paradox of his personal obscurity considering the widespread influence of his ideas.[4] It was not mere bravado for the final issue of the Philosophie Positive to claim that its purpose had been achieved, since Comte's theories were well known and absorbed into the general current of ideas.[5] Hayek found it necessary to attack scientism, objectivism, historicism and collectivism, as 'the whole system of thought which .... the whole world, has taken over from Comte'.[6] Isaiah Berlin also saw that Comte was seldom mentioned because he had done his work too well, affecting the very categories of our thought.[7]

There is a very good reason why Comte's influence should have

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1. Frederic Harrison, The Positive Evolution of Religion, London, 1913, p. 267.
2. Basil Willey, Nineteenth-Century Studies, London (1949) 1973, p.217; cp. Owen Chadwick, The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century, Cambridge, 1975, p.233.
3. This was the title of Jane Style's attempt to show that an acceptance of Comte's principles would have prevented the suffering of Europe in the First World War, London, 1920.
4. Gertrude Lenzer, AC and Positivism: The Essential Writings, New York, 1975. p. xx; Stanislav Andreski, The Essential Comte, London and New York, 1974, pp. 14-6.
5. La Philosophie Positive, XXXI (1883) 321-3
6. F.A. Hayek, The Counter-Revolution of Science, Glencoe, Illinois, 1952, p. 140.
7. Isaiah Berlin, Historical Inevitability, London, 1954, p. (3)

been more effective indirectly than through his own works. Put bluntly, 'Comte is one of the most tiresomely long-winded bores of all times'.[1] His most enthusiastic translators have acknowledged the incessant recapitulation, the wearisome repetition of epithets, the abstract and allusive language, which were partly a result of his method of writing, his scorn for preparation or revision.[2] The improvement often gained in translation is evident. One can compare Beesly's polished version of A Discourse on the Positive Spirit with the more literal earlier translation produced by W.M.W. Call. Beesly cut the long sentences to manageable length, from the very first paragraph.[3] Lewes tried to persuade Comte to cut down 'the length of the sentences and the superfluity of words', suggesting that he go through his manuscripts striking out most of the adverbs along with all anticipation or recapitulation of ideas elsewhere in the work.[4] Comte himself recognised the defects of style in the Cours, proudly announcing in the Preface to the fourth volume of the Système that he had limited all sentences to five lines and all paragraphs to seven sentences.[5] Clearly, something more drastic would have been necessary to make Comte pleasant to read.

Comte fully acknowledged his debt to past thinkers, whom he called his spiritual fathers. A passage in a letter to Gustave d'Eichthal, which George Eliot copied into two of her notebooks, claimed this firm anchorage in the past as an advantage:

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1. TLS, 23/8/74, p. 903.
2. Harriet Martineau, "Preface" to The Positive Philosophy of AC, 2 vols., London, 1853, I vi-vii; Frederic Harrison, "Preface" to 1896 ed. of Martineau's work, I xi; E.S. Beesly, "Translator's Preface" to A Discourse on the Positive Spirit, London, 1903, p. v; cp. "Translator's Note" to Andreski, op.cit.
3. Beesly, op.cit.; W.M.W. Call, Preliminary Discourse on the Positive Spirit, London, 1883.
4. GHL to AC, received 20/2/47, Maison d'AC.
5. AC, Pol IV xii-xiii.

'Plus nous aurons de précédents mieux nous vaudrons; il faut être vu comme ancien pour être bien ancré dans les esprits.' [1]

George Eliot herself answered a critic of Comte's philosophical indebtedness with some heat:

'A man who should construct a theory of knowledge or a philosophy of science, without building into his edifice any ideas of preceding thinkers, might indeed lay claim to originality; but an originality that would entitle him to lodging and gentle treatment in a lunatic asylum.' [2]

Comte was only sufficiently original for a short course of this treatment, in 1826.

It is not necessary here to trace Comte's relation to previous thinkers in detail. Gouhier and Manuel have covered most of the French ground, and Hayek some of his relations with Germany. [3] But it is important to attempt to place Comte in context. George Eliot was fully aware of the background to his thought, through Lewes's History of Philosophy, Littré's study of Comte's precursors, and Comte's letters to Valat. She produced a notebook tracing philosophical themes from Greek philosophy through British empiricism to Comtean Positivism.

Born in 1798, Comte belonged partly to the Enlightenment. His philosophy fulfilled many of the aims of the Encyclopedists, his political thought rested on that of Montesquieu and Condorcet, and his knowledge of science can be largely attributed to the École Polytechnique. He was also a child of the Revolution, and of the religious, political and scientific systems which sprang up in its wake, especially that of Saint-Simon. He can also be regarded as a Romantic, with his emphasis on feeling, his generalisation from his own emotions, his desire to unify, and his idealisation of the Middle Ages. His affinities with German thought include not only Lessing and Kant, but

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1. Émile Littré, AC et la philosophie positive, Paris, 1863, p.38, q. in Pforzheimer MS 707 f.97, and Nuneaton MS f.41.
2. Leader V (1854) 447.
3. Henri Gouhier, La Vie d'AC, Paris, 1931, La Jeunesse d'AC et le formation du Positivisme, 3 vols., Paris, 1933, 1936, and 1940; Frank E. Manuel, The New World of Henri Saint-Simon, Cambridge, Mass., 1956, and The Prophets of Paris, Cambridge, Mass., 1962.

also Hegel and Feuerbach. It would be wrong, finally, to omit his links with British empiricism, with David Hume and Adam Smith. Comte's relation to these movements, which I will now describe, may help to explain his belief that the living are governed by the dead.

Diderot and the Encyclopedists proclaimed the unity of all the sciences, including the study of history and of politics. In his Discours préliminaire, a title Comte twice used himself, d'Alembert traced the rise of the various sciences and their natural affinities. Turgot outlined the general history and development of the human race. His Histoire des progrès de l'esprit humain, as Littré observed, anticipated Comte's three stages of belief, from imaginary beings through abstract essences to laws of experience.[1] He and Condorcet applied the calculus of probabilities to politics and the moral sciences. Condorcet, in his Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain, conceived of history as a science able to foresee and to direct the future. All these ideas clearly contributed to Comte's thought.

In a letter to Valat early in 1817, Comte wrote that as well as reading Lagrange and Monge on the unity of the sciences, he was meditating Condorcet and Montesquieu. In 1819 he produced an essay of eulogy "Sur les travaux politiques de Condorcet".[2] His 1822 "Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for Reorganizing Society" reviewed the previous efforts to found a Positive polity. Montesquieu was represented as the first to treat politics as a science of facts rather than dogmas, but he neither perceived the law of progress nor aimed to construct a new social system. Condorcet had observed the progress of civilisation in accordance with natural laws, but his ignorance of science led to an arbitrary classification of epochs.

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1. Littré, op. cit., p. 47.
2. Gouhier, op. cit., I 213.

Also he overestimated the superiority of the eighteenth to preceding centuries, giving the impression that his own age was an effect without a cause. This analysis was repeated in the Cours, in a review of "Principal Philosophical attempts to Constitute a Social System". Beginning with Aristotle, Comte leapt to Montesquieu, Turgot and Condorcet.[1] In the Système Comte presented his own work as a recasting of Condorcet and Gall. He often referred to Condorcet as his spiritual and subjective father.[2]

The year after Condorcet's important essay came the foundation of the École Polytechnique, 'the source of the scientistic hubris'.[3] It was the intellectual attitude rather than the particular teaching at the school which made an impression on Comte. He wrote of its instruction: 'le caractère positif est absolument pur de tout mélange théologique et métaphysique'.[4] Maths and Biology seem to have been the most significant sciences for Comte. He encountered the logical rigour of the first through Encontre, his maths teacher at Montpellier, to whom he dedicated the Subjective Synthesis.[5] The physiological basis of mental activity was being spread at the École de Médicine, by Condillac and Cabanis, as well as by de Blainville, Bichat, Broussais and Gall. Comte referred to Cabanis's study of the "Relations between the Physical and Moral in Man" in his 1822 "Prospectus". But he dismissed the possibility of founding social sciences on physiology before the completion of the historical study of the relations of successive generations. He felt it necessary to separate the study of collective and individual phenomena.[6] The first five books of the Cours record Comte's appreciation of the contribution of scientists

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1. AC, Crisis, pp. 198 and 157-67 and 197-8.; Phil II 52-60.
2. AC, Pol I 588-9 and III xviii; cp. Cat p. 6, Confessions, p.432.
3. Hayek, op. cit., pp. 105-15.
4. Gouhier, op. cit., I. 123.
5. AC, Subj. Syn., pp. xxxi-xl.
6. AC, Crisis, pp. 172-6.

in the field of Mathematics, Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. His most important debt was to Gall, whose influence on Comte's cerebral theory will be considered in chapter four.

The French Revolution looms large in Comte's thought. It was the culmination of five centuries of the Western Revolution, the negative movement which Comte dated from the collapse of medieval feudalism at the end of the thirteenth century. It marked the beginning of the Positivist era, the Positivist Calendar dating from 1789. The French Revolution, Comte wrote in the Système, 'has now been agitating western nations for sixty years'. But only the first phase had been accomplished the complete destruction of the old system and the gradual formation of a sound philosophy. The western world was now waiting for the second stage of the French Revolution which was to be the establishment of Comte's political and religious system.[1] Comte's first written work, of June 1816, was entitled with full revolutionary ardour:

"Mes Réflexions
Humanité, Verité, Justice, Liberté, Patrie
Rapprochements entre la régime de 1793 et celui de 1816, adressés au peuple français".[2]

Later, as we shall see, he became more critical of the enthusiasm for constitutions and the 'metaphysical' concepts of Liberty, Equality and the Sovereignty of the People.

Comte recognised what Gouhier has shown in greater detail, that the rituals of the Religion of Humanity were anticipated by the revolutionary cults of Reason and the Supreme Being. In 1794, for example, there were official festivals to celebrate Humanity and its benefactors, the martyrs of liberty.[3] Just as La Révellière-Lépaux, grand pontiff of theophilanthropy, obtained the use of the nave in Notre Dame in 1798, so Comte was convinced that he would preach Positivism in that cathedral

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1. AC, Pol I 47-51
2. Gouhier, op. cit., I 172.
3. Ibid., I 5-12

before 1860. In 1791 the National Assembly had renamed the church of St. Genevieve the Pantheon and dedicated it to those who had served their country. In 1794 the cross and angels were replaced by allegorical portraits of Liberty and the Fatherland. The church had a stormy history, needing to be reconsecrated twice, on each occasion by order of a Napoleon, in 1806 and 1851.[1] It was this building, 'the temple which, at the very opening of the final crisis, was formally dedicated to the cult of great men', that Comte regarded as the first Temple of Humanity, in which he would rekindle the historical spirit of the West.[2]

The extent of Comte's debt to Saint-Simon is a matter of controversy. Comte entered his service in August 1817, acting for three months as secretary. For two years he remained a disciple, and for a further four years his colleague. Before meeting Saint-Simon Comte believed in no God, no King and no Absolute. More positively, he looked to the regeneration of society through mathematics, through the philosophy of the sciences and through political science. His interest in political economy led him to write for Saint-Simon's L'Industrie. But he had not yet systematised his ideas, or talked of the spiritual power, the rehabilitation of the Middle Ages, the three states or the classification of the sciences.[3] Saint-Simon's work prior to his association with Comte contains the germs of these ideas, particularly the Letters from an Inhabitant of Geneva to his Contemporaries and Memoir on the Science of Man.

It was Saint-Simon's constant aim to reorganise society on the basis of scientific knowledge. Knowledge would be the sole authority of the savants. Saint-Simon looked to the science of history to

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1. Chadwick, op. cit., p. 158.
2. AC, Appeal, p. 177; Subj. Syn., pp. xiii-xiv; Lettres à Congreve, pp. 27 and 46.
3. cp. Gouhier, op. cit., I 235-6.

predict the future from the past. He divided epochs into the critical or negative and the organic or positive, and he stressed the analogy between the development of the individual and the race. He envisaged a future in which man would amend the natural world through industry. Yet all these 'positivist' ideas were propounded sketchily and unsystematically in letters, dialogues and accounts of visions. Saint-Simon's method of learning was to invite professors to dinner, and it was precisely for this purpose that he took up lodgings opposite the École Polytechnique.

Madame Comte recorded her husband as having placed Saint-Simon among 'les hommes d'imagination, non parmi les philosophes, concevant vite, n'achevant rien, et changeant facilement de vues et de direction'. Comte explained to d'Eichthal that his break with Saint-Simon was inevitable because of the older man's revolutionary disposition, his increasing tendency towards changing institutions before doctrines.[1] Their differences were made clear in the two avertissements to Comte's 1822 "Prospectus des travaux scientifiques pour réorganiser la société", in Saint-Simon's Catéchisme des Industriels. Saint-Simon complained that Comte had only treated the scientific part of the system, leaving aside its sentimental and religious aspect. Comte emphasised his main purpose, to raise politics to a science of observation.[2]

Hayek argues that Comte played the more important role in their association and contributed to the increased coherence of Saint-Simon's later work:

'much of what is commonly regarded as Saint-Simonian doctrine, and what through the Saint-Simonians exercised a profound influence

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1. Littré, op. cit., pp.15 and 27, and see Chs. II and V.
2. Ibid., pp.15-23. This essay was published separately in 1824 as Système de politique positive. "Prospectus" was changed to "Plan" when Comte included it in the Appendix to Pol IV.

before Comte's public career as a philosopher began, was due to Auguste Comte'.[1]

This is uncertain. What is clear, as Lewes recognised, is that Comte received 'a determining ... stimulus' from Saint-Simon in the direction of social regeneration.[2] Comte wrote to Valat, 'par cette liaison ... j'ai appris une foule de choses que j'aurais en vain cherchées dans les livres'.[3] Gouhier wisely warns us against seeking the main ideas of Positivism in the writings of Saint-Simon.[4] Comte's own works refer rarely to Saint-Simon. He introduced the Saint-Simonian idea of reducing all natural phenomena to one law at the beginning of the Cours, but rejected it as an 'absurd utopia' at the end.[5] He denounced his former master as 'a depraved charlatan', but still made a virtue of his veneration for the man.[6]

Saint-Simon's late religious phase, which Comte abandoned in disgust, culminated in the New Christianity, which was a celebration of social love.[7] The intellectual side of Saint-Simonism was still presented in the Exposition: First Year, 1828-1829, with its combination of natural law, neo-catholic restoration and progressive philosophy of history.[8] But the movement disintegrated under Père Enfantin in the desire for the political and sexual liberation of women and the search for the female Messiah on the banks of the Nile.[9] Comte was understandably eager to dissociate himself from the Saint-Simonians and wrote long letters to the editors of the Globe and the

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1. Hayek, op. cit., p. 128.
2. GHL, History of Philosophy, London, 1867, II 560
3. AC, Lettres à Valat, p. 37.
4. Gouhier, op. cit., I 15.
5. Hayek, op. cit., p. 173, q. AC, Cours, I 10 and 44, and VI 601.
6. AC, Pol III xviii, and CI II 255.
7. Henri de Saint-Simon, New Christianity, trans. J.E. Smith, London, 1834.
8. The Doctrine of Saint-Simon: An Exposition: First Year, 1828-29, trans. G.G. Iggers, Beacon Hill, 1958.
9. Richard K. Pankhurst, The Saint Simonians, Mill and Carlyle, Norwich and London, (1957).

Tribune in 1832 to explain his position. He objected to a reference in the Globe to his separation from the Saint-Simonians. He had never belonged to their movement. His liaison with Saint-Simon ceased two years before his death as a consequence of the older man's growing religious tendencies.[1]

Like the Saint-Simonians, Comte drew on Catholic sources. He called Bossuet a model for "the rational co-ordination of the great series of human events, according to a single design", praising also the Catholic historian's restriction of his field of study to 'one homogenous and continuing series'.[2] Comte praised the Catholic reaction under Charles X, in particular Bonald, De Maistre, Chateaubriand and Lamennais. He had three interviews with Lamennais in 1826. Two of Comte's early essays introduced De Maistre's Du Pape as an example of the use of positive methods and as 'the most systematic, profound and exact exposition of the ancient spiritual organization'.[3] In the Systeme, Comte claimed that it was De Maistre who revived respect for the Middle Ages.[4]

But the movement behind this rehabilitation of the Middle Ages, and behind the intense subjectivity of Comte's Religion of Humanity, was that of Romanticism. George Eliot recognised this link in her review of Greseler's History of the Church from 1814 to the Present Time:

'The Reaction towards positive religion and pietism, which followed the revolutionary movement of the Eighteenth Century ... was strengthened by its alliance with the Romantic movement in literature and art which began with the Nineteenth Century. The main feature of this movement was the exaltation of the Medieval above the Classic'.[5]

Leszek Kolakowski entitled his chapter on Comte, "Positivism in the

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1. AC to M. Michel Chevalier, rédacteur en chef du Globe 5/1/32, CI I 65-72; to M. Armand Marrast, rédacteur en chef de La Tribune, 7/1/32, CI III 7-14.
2. AC, Phil II 65 and 181.
3. AC, Crisis, pp. 197 and 230.
4. AC, Pol III 527.
5. Leader VII (1856) 331.

Romantic Age".[1] Much of Comte's religion, as many have complained, was based not on scientific knowledge, but the idealization and generalisation of his own emotions and experience. It therefore appealed only to those who shared his temperamental characteristics.[2]

The impact of Romanticism on Comte was general and difficult to substantiate in detail. His desire to overcome the dualism of man and the world will be more closely examined in the following chapter. It is perhaps most explicit in his repeated linking of the true, the good and the beautiful.[3] There are also some similarities between Comte's analysis of language "communicating emotion" and Wordsworth's Preface to Lyrical Ballads. Comte argued that the "language of Poetry ... is in reality nothing more than the language of common men more perfectly expressed". He attacked classicism, the imitation of the ancients, for diminishing the originality and the popularity of art.[4] There is little evidence that Comte read much Romantic literature, although he was persuaded to include Shelley in the Positivist Calendar, in which Goethe and Schiller were already represented.

The intellectual relations between France and Germany in the nineteenth century were complex. Charlton claims that German thought was especially powerful in France during the Second Empire, translations of major German works appearing from 1835.[5] Butler has shown that the Saint-Simonians were extremely influential in Germany in the early 1830's.[6] In Comte's case, there was little direct influence from Germany. There is an interesting possible link with Lessing, whose

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1. Leszek Kolakowski, The Alienation of Reason: A History of Positivist Thought, trans. Norbert Guterman, Garden City, New York, Ch. III.
2. Simon, op. cit., p. 7, and "AC's English Disciples", VS VIII (1964) 17
3. AC, Pol I 227 and II 20.
4. AC, Pol I 235.
5. D.G. Charlton, Positive Thought in France During the Second Empire 1852-1870, Oxford, 1959, pp. 13-4.
6. E.M. Butler, The Saint-Simonian religion in Germany, Cambridge, 1926.

Education of the Human Race was translated by Eugène Rodrigues for the Saint-Simonian Nouveau Christianisme. Lessing makes explicit the analogy between the education of the individual and the race. He also refers to Joachim's 'Three Ages of the World' and the preparation necessary to make men 'worthy of their Third Age'. Comte also refers to Joachim, and may have been aware of the similarities between his stages and the mystic's ages, which reappear in Romola.[1] But Lessing's influence on Comte was at most contributory.

Comte actually read Kant, in 1824, in Gustave d'Eichthal's translation, "Idée d'une histoire universelle au point de vue de l'Humanité". This significantly distorted the original, "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltburgerlicher Absicht". What was cosmopolitan became more distinctly positivist. Littré exaggerates the seriousness with which Kant, examining 'this idiotic course of things human', looks to Nature to produce the man capable of understanding the underlying plan. Littré calls Comte the man 'prévu par Kant'.[2] But there may have been something inspiring in Kant's picture of the coming 'philosophical attempt to work out a universal history according to a natural plan directed to achieving the civic union of the human race'. Comte, less explicitly, sometimes repeated Kant's identification of Nature and Providence.[3] He thanked d'Eichthal for the translation and praised Kant as 'le métaphysicien le plus rapproché de la philosophie positive'.[4] He referred to Kant's philosophy of history , along with Herder's, in his essay of the following year.[5] There are also

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1. G.E. Lessing, "L'Education du Genre Humain", trans. Eugène Rodrigues, Nouveau Christianisme, Paris, 1832, p. 342; The Education of the Human Race, trans. F.W. Robertson, 3rd ed., London, 1872, pp. 71-3; AC, Pol III 408-9; see Donald G. Macrae, Ages and Stages, London, 1973, p. 17.
2. Littré, op. cit., p. 53.
3. Immanuel Kant, On History, introd. Lewis White Beck, Indianapolis, (1957) 1963, pp. 23-6.
4. Littré, op. cit., p. 156.
5. AC, Crisis, p. 197.

subsequent references in his work to Kant's distinction between the subjective and objective points of view.

The letter to d'Eichthal which discussed Kant also thanked him for an extract from Hegel. Comte preferred Kant, finding Hegel too metaphysical. There was 'un esprit positif dans les details" of Hegel's thought, and a number of points of contact, but no identity of principles.[1] This judgment has been confirmed by later critics.[2] Both constructed grand philosophies of history, the 'darling vice" of the century, but Comte's, in theory at least, was discovered à posteriori by examining the development of society with the aim of predicting and even modifying the future. Hegel's was an unfolding of the Absolute, discovered à priori through the self-consciousness of the individual mind. A number of important thinkers, notably Feuerbach, Marx, Renan and Taine, seemed to combine the influence of positivism and idealism, taking for a basis what was common to both. There is no evidence that Feuerbach read Comte, but it is 'difficult to believe that the obvious resemblances between his work and that of Comte was accidental'.[3]

British writers, including George Eliot in a notebook now at Nuneaton, have tended to link Comte with their own empirical tradition. Hume can certainly be regarded as 'the real father of positive philosophy'.[4] But there is no evidence that Comte studied Hume or his successors very closely. He advised Valat to read the history of Robertson and Hume, and the political economy of Adam Smith. He expressed to Mill his debt to Hume and Smith.[5] Some notes of 1819 contend that Smith and political economy raised politics to a positive science.[6] They are referred to in the "Considerations on the Spiritual

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1. Littré, op. cit., p. 157.
2. Charlton, op. cit., pp. 108-10; Hayek, op. cit., pp. 74 and 189-204; John T. Merz, A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century 4 vols., Edinburgh and London, 1896-1914, IV 186-93 and 481-3.
3. Hayek, op. cit., p. 162.
4. Kolakowski, op. cit., p. 31.
5. AC, Lettres à Valat, pp. 53 and 63; à Mill, pp. 365-6.
6. Gouhier, op. cit., I. 221.

Power" and again in the Cours, where Smith, who was included in the Positivist Library and Calendar, was exempted from the label, 'metaphysician', which Comte applied to those economists who believed their subject to be independent of political science. Political economy, however, was still regarded as a sign of the tendency 'to subject social researches to positive methods'.[1] Morley claimed that the 'Comtist system is utilitarianism crowned by a fantastic decoration'.[2] But the story that emerges from a study of Mill is that he deepened the Benthamite tradition partly under the influence of Comte.

It should be emphasised once again that influence rarely involves a simple passage of ideas from one man to another. Comte's study of earlier thinkers can be confined largely to his youth, before the beginning of his lectures on the Positive Philosophy. He inaugurated his regime of 'cerebral hygiene' in 1842, limiting his reading to the greatest works of art. After 1848 this meant little more than a morning chapter from à Kempis and an evening canto from Dante.[3] Comte himself portrayed his relationship to his precursors not as influence but as preparation. The whole of human thought led to the formation of the Positive Philosophy and he, Comte, was the fortunate instrument selected by Humanity to systematise its results. This belief emerges clearly in the chapters in which Comte traced the origins of Positivism. A chapter on "The Rise of the Elements of the Positive State", in the Cours, goes back to Nominalism and its opposition to Realism, which foreshadowed 'the main struggle between the positive spirit and the metaphysical'. Then Bacon, Descartes and Galileo are called 'the founders of the positive philosophy'. Positive politics is found to have originated with Hobbs, Bossuet, Hume and

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1. AC, Crisis, p. 231; Phil II 61.
2. John Morley, Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed. Edinburgh, 1877, VI 237.
3. F.J. Gould, AC, London, 1920, p. 78.

Adam Smith, the idea of progress with Turgot, Condorcet and Montesquieu.[1]

The third volume of the Système, includes in the development of the positive spirit Diderot and the Encyclopedists, Vico, Hobbes, Robertson and Voltaire among the historians. The biologists, Lamarck, Broussais, Cabanis and Gall are seen to have prepared the way for Comte's discovery in 1822 of the laws of sociology.[2] The Preface to the Catechism traces the positive geneology right back to 'the incomparable Aristotle, the eternal prince of true thinkers'. Comte presented himself as another Aristotle, converted by the angelic influence of Clotilde de Vaux into another St. Paul.[3] This was the grand context in which Comte placed himself.

II Life

The most significant events of Comte's life, for the present purpose, were his thinking and writing. 'Le roman d'Auguste Comte', wrote Gouhier, 'c'est la possession d'un homme par une logique.'[4] There are already enough biographies which reveal the more bizarre behaviour of The "Mad" Philosopher.[5] Yet Comte's life clearly influenced his writing. His system has been seen as expressing his reaction to the second and third decades of the century.[6] In this respect there is a distinct analogy with George Eliot's work, much of which is set in the late twenties and early thirties. In writing Middlemarch she turned to Littré's book on Comte and Comte's letters

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1. AC, Phil II 421-9.
2. AC, Pol III 498-530.
3. AC, Cat, pp. 8 and 19.
4. Gouhier, La Vie d'AC, p. 10.
5. Boris Sokoloff, The "Mad" Philosopher: AC, Connecticut, (1961) 1975.
6. W.L. Presswood, "The Influence of AC and the Rise of Positivism in England", Sheffield University Ph.D., 1935, p. 43.

to Valat for help in constructing the background for Lydgate.[1] I will concentrate here on outlining Comte's career as a thinker, relating his published works to his expressed intentions. Then his sad public life will be considered, the disappointment of his hopes in the academic world, in journalism, in the co-operation of workmen, and in the Positivist Society itself. Finally, I will glance at the strange and complex personality Comte revealed in his relations with Saint-Simon, with Littré and the other positivists, and with his wife and Clotilde de Vaux.

Comte's earliest work was published anonymously or under Saint-Simon's name. When Comte appended six early essays to the fourth volume of the Système, he claimed that there were only two ideas worthy of mention in his writing prior to these: the maxim that 'Everything is relative; this is the only absolute principle', and his argument for the liberty of the press as a means for securing for all citizens a consultative influence on society.[2] Five of these essays have been reprinted by Ronald Fletcher under the dramatic title, The Crisis of Industrial Civilization. They were political in emphasis. "A Brief Appraisal of Modern History", published in the Organiser in 1820, analysed the decline of the old social system established by medieval Catholicism and the rise of the new in the wake of scientific progress. This was a view of the preceding five centuries which Comte never altered. The "Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for Reorganizing Society", published originally as the "Prospectus" in May 1822 and included in the third volume of Saint-Simon's Catéchisme des Industriels, was even more explicit in its attack on contemporary anarchy, both intellectual and social. It criticised the negative

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1. See Part III, Ch. IV (ii).
2. AC, Early Essays on Social Philosophy, trans. H.D. Hutton, London, (1911), p.23.

revolutionary principles of Equality, Liberty of Conscience, and the Sovereignty of the People, along with faith in constitutional remedies. A new science of society, Comte argued, must be constructed on the historical guidelines laid down by Condorcet and the recent advances of science. This theme was maintained in two essays published in the Producer in 1825 and 1826, "Philosophical Considerations on the Sciences and Savants", and "Considerations on the Spiritual Power".

Comte came to the conclusion that a complete overhauling of human knowledge was the essential preliminary to any social reorganisation. He devoted himself to this imposing task, and announced in 1826 the programme of his "Cours de Philosophie Positive en Soixante-douze Séances", to begin in April.[1] There was a distinguished audience for these lectures but only three were delivered. The intense work combined with marital problems to bring on mental breakdown. After a spell in an asylum and a suicide attempt in the Seine, Comte recovered sufficiently to renew the lectures in January 1829. They became the basis of his Cours de Philosophie Positive, published in Paris in six volumes from 1830 to 1842. In this astonishing survey of intellectual progress, Comte attempted to demonstrate how each of the sciences, first Mathematics, then Astronomy, Physics, Chemistry and Biology, had become positive, based on empirically verifiable laws. Finally, he claimed that Social Physics, the historical study of the collective development of societies, was now sufficiently advanced to join the others.

The last few pages of the Cours, significantly omitted from Harriet Martineau's condensed translation, outlined Comte's plan for future writing. There were four essential works required of him: first, an analysis of Mathematics in two volumes, Abstract and Concrete;

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1. Littré, op. cit., p. 32.

second, a study of Sociology to be divided into four volumes: the Methods of Sociology, Social Statics, Social Dynamics, and the practical application of the doctrine; third, the principles of positive education, including 'the reorganisation of morals on a positive basis"; finally, 'the action of man on nature', the old Saint-Simonian goal. Because of limited time, Comte decided that he would begin with the second, the sociological work.[1]

This became the Système de Politique Positive, the later of the two monumental arches on which the great edifice of Positivism was built.[2] Its four volumes came out one each year from 1851 to 1854, appearing in English from 1875 to 1877. The first volume contained the "Introductory Principles" of Positive Logic, both of the world (Cosmology) and of life (Biology). It was translated by John Bridges. The second, "Social Statics, or the Abstract Theory of Human Order", translated by Frederic Harrison, explained Comte's concepts of the Family, the State and Humanity. The third dealt with "Social Dynamics, or the General Theory of Human Progress". Comte had hoped that first Holyoake and then Hutton would translate this as the "Philosophy of History",[3] but the task was finally left to Edmund Beesly, in co-operation with a number of other Positivists. The fourth volume, the "Theory of the Future of Man", translated by Richard Congreve, outlined Comte's utopia.

Comte wrote only the first volume of his intended work on Mathematics. This was the Subjective Synthesis, the only written volume of which explained 'the system of Positive Logic'. As outlined in the Système, this work was to comprise seven volumes, one for each science, ending with 'the Supreme science' of Morals.[4] The Subjective

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1. AC, Phil II 415-9, London, 1896, trans. Frederic Harrison.
2. Gouhier, op. cit., I 18.
3. AC, Confessions, p. 455; CI II 182-3; Lettres à Hutton, p. 25.
4. AC, P61 IV 176-216.

Synthesis itself discussed two more forthcoming works, a two-volume "System of Positive Morals", and a "System of Positive Industry".[1] We can be grateful that these were never written. The corpus of Comte's work was large enough as it was; he had said what he had to say several times over.

In addition to his major works, Comte wrote a number of shorter books designed to convey the outlines of his system. A Discourse on the Positive Spirit, published in 1844, was the introduction to the "Traité Philosophique d'Astronomie Populaire", a series of lectures delivered at the Mairie of the third arrondissement from 1830 to 1847. It was intended as an introduction to working-men of the intellectual and social teaching of the Positive Philosophy. It explained such key concepts as the law of the three states, Humanity, and Positive morality. It was translated by Beesly in 1903, with a helpful "Explanation of Philosophical Terms" and "Explanatory Notes". A General View of Positivism, published in Paris in 1849 and translated by Bridges in 1865, was included in the first volume of the Système. One of George Eliot's 'especial favourites', this was the volume from which she taught John Cross.[2] Five chapters dealt successively with the intellectual and social aspects of Positivism and its relation to the working classes, to women and to art, before the conclusion outlined the Religion of Humanity in detail.

The Catechism of Positive Religion, published in Paris in 1852 and translated by Congreve in 1858, was another attempt to popularise Positivism, intended especially for women.[3] A suitably submissive Woman asks a confident Priest to explain first the "General Theory of Religion", and then various aspects of the Worship, the Doctrine and

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1. AC, Subj. Synth., p.v; cp. Pol IV 217.
2. Life III 368.
3. AC, Cat. p. 27.

the Regime. The Appeal to Conservatives was for statesmen, what the Catechism was for women. Written in 1855 it treated conservatives as 'the provisional party which must prevail until the final transmission is fully entered upon'.[1] They lacked an appropriate doctrine, however, which Comte undertook to expound. All these summaries, most of all the General View, provide a good introduction to Positivism.

Comte retained, in his works at least, an optimism belied by his successive disappointments. In 1832 he had proposed to Guizot his own appointment as Professor of the History of Positive Sciences at the Collège de France.[2] He remained, however, tutor in mathematics and then Entrance examiner at the École Polytechnique. In 1836 he was passed over as successor to Professor Navier, in Chemical Analysis and Mechanics. Angered by lack of recognition, Comte wrote a bitter Preface to the Sixth Volume of the Cours in which he attacked the officials of the École Polytechnique, in particular M. Arago, for not giving him the Chair of Mathematics. He won a case against his publisher Bachelier for prefacing the introduction with an "Editor's Opinion", but he lost his job as examiner for 1844. Mill organised a fund to cover that year, half of which was provided by Grote, but Comte failed to realise that this was only a temporary expedient.[3] He fell out with both Mill and Lewes over their failure to drum up sufficient support.[4] Andreski estimated that 'longest lasting source of sustenance was the immoral earnings of his wife'.[5] But after the formation of the Positive Society in 1848, he was assured of a regular income from the subsidy.

In all attempts to organise the Positivist movement, Comte failed.

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1. AC, Appeal, p. 2.
2. Gould, op. cit., p. 42.
3. Sokoloff, op. cit., pp. 95-102.
4. See Part II Ch. I.
5. Andreski, op. cit., p. 7.

He tried on three occasions to establish the Occidental Review, in 1845, in 1848, and in 1852, as an organ for news, comment, and public announcements. He attributed the 'total failure' of the third attempt to a 'secret consciousness that it was intrinsically incompatible with the spirit and object of Positivism', and thereafter abandoned journalism to littérateurs.[1] For some time he remained optimistic about the adhesion of working-men to the Positivist movement. Addressing them in the Discourse, he argued that the proletariat was the most disposed of all classes to accept Positivism because of their common sense, their freedom from the taint of metaphysical and literary speculation, their appreciation of science, and their lack of self-interest.[2] But he soon found them 'too much taken up with Utopian schemes' properly to understand the historical point of view.[3]

The Positivist Society was soon torn by political and personal differences. All of its members had welcomed the uprising of February, 1848. They combined enthusiastically to produce a pamphlet entitled, Ordre et Progrès: Association libre pour l'instruction positive du Peuple dans tout L'Occident européen. The society itself was formed on March 8th. Three reports were compiled, one on the Labour question, one on the Positivist school, and one on the new revolutionary government. In this third report, Littré proved himself already sufficiently independent of Comte to advocate universal suffrage.[4] When Comte seemed to approve of Louis Napolean's coup d'état of December, 1851, the difference with Littré, who was already straining under Comte's increasing pontificality, became open. The division of the Positivists into two schools, the orthodox Comtist and the liberal Littréist, was

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1. AC, Pol IV xxxvi-xxxvii and liii-liv, "Preface to the Second Volume"; xiv-xv, "Preface to the Fourth Volume".
2. AC, Discourse, pp. 130-47.
3. AC, Pol I xxiv.
4. Stanislas Acquarone, The Life and Works of Emile Littré, 1801-1881, Leyden, 1958.

then inevitable. Comte was left with less able but more submissive disciples such as Robinet, Longchampt and Audiffrent.[1] He seemed to lose hope in the Positivists achieving much by themselves, advocating in the last few years of his life a Religious Alliance of Catholicism, Protestantism, Judaism and Islamism with Positivism.[2]

Comte was incapable of co-operation. He was expelled from the École Polytechnique in 1816 for instigating a written demand that a royalist teacher should be dismissed. He broke with Saint-Simon in 1824, complaining of the latter's 'machiavelisme', sensationalism, and tyranny. He had refused to publish his "Prospectus" under Saint-Simon's title, Catéchisme des Industriels. The older man reluctantly agreed to Comte's conditions, saying that it would mean the end of their association, since Comte was not prepared to accept his direction. In the end, the title remained and the association ended.[3] Comte himself was to show a similar tendency to dominate. He interpreted sympathy as complete adherence, and consequently suffered the successive 'desertion' of Mill, Grote, Holyoake, Martineau and Lewes. He seemed to prefer the discipleship of a man like Winstanley, who not only had land and wealth, but called him 'father', genuflected on departure, and offered silent prayers to the portrait of Clotilde.[4]

Comte's reaction to criticism was almost paranoid. In 1844 he complained frequently of persecution and conspiracy. In France this took the form of complete silence, in Britain of overlooking his social object or claiming that it was an addition to his original philosophy.[5] His description of the break with Littré was melodramatised. He

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1. cp. Gouhier, op. cit., I 18-9.
2. AC, Appeal, p. 117; The Eight Circulars, pp. 50 and 77, Ingram Letters, p. 130.
3. Littré, op. cit., pp. 8 and 23-31.
4. AC, CI II 376.
5. AC, Confessions, pp. 526-36; The Eight Circulars, p. 55; Ingram Letters, p. 89.

claimed that the political motives were only secondary, masking a personal animosity which had been brewing for some time. Littré had gathered against him 'tout l'Institut, la plupart des rouges, et mêmes les débris du saint-simonisme'. All this was under the satanic influence of Madame Comte. The imminent struggle between the true and the false Positivists was to be fought under the banners of the two women in Comte's life, 'l'ange qui ne cessera jamais d'avoir trente ans, et le démon qui vient de commencer sa cinquant-unième année'.[1]

Comte's relationship with his wife was clearly not ideal. In a letter to Littré which he copied in his will, he referred to his marriage to Caroline Masson in 1825 as 'the only capital error of my whole life'. Not only did she age, she was licentious and at the same time lacking in tenderness. They separated four times altogether: in 1826, after which she nursed him to recovery, in 1833, in 1838, and finally in 1842. During the seventeen years of marriage he 'often entertained thoughts of suicide'.[2] After their separation, she threatened him with returning if he failed to pay her regularly. In 1870, she challenged his will on the grounds of insanity, but it was upheld.[3]

Comte's relationship with Clotilde de Vaux was altogether different. They only saw each other frequently for a year before her death in April, 1846, at the age of thirty. But even in that time their correspondence reveals that the path of their love was by no means smooth. Comte began by offering 'the affection of an older brother'. But he soon complained of insomnia from thinking of her. He became ill and depressed, lamenting 'the grossness of my sex'. He described the nervous crisis he experienced in May, 1845, as similar

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1. AC, CI I 81-5
2. AC, Confessions, pp. 511-6.
3. Gouhier, op. cit., I 19.

to that which had precipitated his suicide attempt in 1827, but less intense. Characteristically, he explained that there had been three major crises in his life, each exercising a providential influence on his thought, and each celebrated by a symbolic gesture. The first had been the result of the fatal marriage in which he had sought a premature moral reorganisation. The second, in 1838, had coincided with his passing from the philosophical to the sociological part of the Cours, and had resulted in the stimulation of his taste for poetry and music. Now came his final moral regeneration. These three crises were consecrated by 'a definitive abstention first from coffee, then from tobacco, and now from wine'.[1]

Comte eventually settled for friendship with Clotilde. He seems to have been still able to distinguish and accept the reality of his position:

'I must return as on so many other previous occasions, to seek in my public life the noble though imperfect compensation for the undeserved misfortunes of my private life'.

But in September he began to press her again: 'the final natural seal is wanting to our union'. He signed his letters, 'Your devoted husband', but Clotilde replied to her 'tender father'. He had to apologise for kissing her on one occasion. There seems to have been little response to his ardour from Clotilde, whose poetic muse could only rise to the comparison, 'Your heart is as sweet as your apple jelly'.[2]

Comte continued to write to Clotilde every year until his own death. He visited her grave regularly on Wednesdays. She was transfigured into his guardian angel, and into the Goddess of Humanity, conscious idealisations of the real person whose worship he found to increase his benevolence. The prefaces to his later work constantly

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1. AC, Confessions, pp. 8, 17 and 44-9.
2. Ibid., pp. 24, 69 and 277.

acknowledged the moral regeneration effected by her 'angelic influence'. He described the Catechism as 'the extension to others of my own personal worship'.[1] All this, of course, earned him ridicule and scorn. Malicious rumours spread, for instance that, 'when Madame Clotilde died, Comte had her two arms cut off and dried; and hanging these around over her portrait, used to perform his daily worship to humanity before it'.[2] But others noticed the difference in him which was clear also in his work. Two British visitors whom he received in the 1850's were struck by his 'benevolence and purity'. One, who had been taught by the austere young Comte, could hardly recognise the 'old gentleman in a dressing gown' who resembled Saint Francis.[3]

George Lewes, treasuring his own Madonna, treated the subject sympathetically , if not sentimentally. It was as if Eppie had died in Silas Marner:

> 'the angel who had appeared to him in his solitude, opening the gates of heaven to his eager gaze, vanished again, and left him once more to his loneliness: but, although her presence was no longer there, a trace of luminous glory left behind in the heart of the bereaved man, sufficed to make him bear his burden, and to dedicate his days to that great mission which her love had sanctified.' [4]

We may be sure that George Eliot shared Lewes's sympathy.

III Purpose

'What is a great life ? A thought of youth fulfilled in the maturity of age.' Comte used these words of de Vigny as the epigraph to the Système. Littré, too, began the first part of his study of Comte with this quotation. There is no doubt that Comte's work presents a unity of purpose from his early philosophical essays to his late pontifical pronouncements. He intended to reorganise society

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1. AC, Cat, pp. 19-25 and p. 37; Pol I xv-xvii; Appeal, p. 39.
2. Tracts for Priests and People no. VII, "Two Lay Dialogues", p. 47 in Beesly Papers, UCL, item 44.
3. Sir Erskine Perry, "A Morning with AC", Nineteenth Century II (1877) 621-31; "Personal Recollections of AC; by an Anonymous Contributor to 'Chambers's Journal' of 19th June, 1858", Appendix A to Lettres a Hutton, pp. 125-33.
4. GHL, CPS, p.7.

on the basis of positive science. What was challenged, first by Littré and then by Mill, was Comte's consistency of method. They accused him of abandoning the test of empirical verification in his increasingly careless use of the subjective method. Comte's understanding of the objective and subjective methods will be examined more carefully in the next chapter. Here, after noticing the critical controversy on the subject, I will illustrate Comte's own explanation of his development, and the growth of his religiosity.

"The quarrel over Comte", as Kolakowski observed, was really restricted to the Nineteenth Century.[1] Littré used the assertion in the Cours, that 'la méthode est encore plus importante que la doctrine elle-même', to attack the Système. The subjective method of the later work he characterised as 'une méthode avec une tête positive et une queue subjective ou métaphysique'. To change metaphors, Comte had let his heart run away with his head.[2] Heavily committed to the Cours by his Logic, Mill separated his treatment of this work from his attack on 'The Later Speculations of M. Comte', which represented the 'melancholy decadence of a great mind'.[3] Bridges countered these attacks with an exposition of The Unity of Comte's Life and Doctrine, in which he argued that the system later elaborated by Comte was logically inherent in the teaching of the Cours.[4] Lewes distinguished method from points of departure. Comte was entitled to rectify the objective method by restoring to it the subjective point of departure, but not to abandon the principle of verification altogether.[5] The nineteenth century tended to see two Comtes, but his twentieth-century critics have restored his single identity, with a recognition

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1. Kolakowski, op. cit., p. 47.
2. Littré, op. cit., pp. 529-37.
3. J.S. Mill, AC and Positivism, London, 1865, p. 199.
4. J.H. Bridges, The Unity of Comte's Life and Doctrine, London, (1865) 1910.
5. GHL, "Comte and Mill", Fortnightly Review VI (1866) 398-402.

of the peculiar nature of his positivism.[1]

Comte himself, in the preface to the Système, spoke of having two careers, 'two philosophic lives of such different character'. He attributed the change to his moral renovation under the angelic influence of Clotilde de Vaux. He discussed his development through a seven year 'novitiate' to his work on the spiritual power in 1826. This proclaimed that "the goal of positive Science would be a sound Philosophy capable of supplying the foundation of true Religion." He acknowledged a difference of method between the Cours and the Système. The first retained 'the objective method in the ascendant'. The second regarded 'the subjective method' as the only source of complete systematisation, and introduced 'the higher logic' whose principle was 'the ascendancy of the heart over the intellect'.[2]

As the Système progressed, Comte increasingly emphasised the superiority of the synthetic heart over the analytical mind. The preface to the fourth volume claimed that his religious reconstruction had become 'more practical, by definitively placing the worship before the doctrine'. Comte regretted not doing so in the Catechism, Congreve adding a footnote to the effect that the second edition of the Catechism, following his own translation, did transpose the sections on Doctrine and Worship.[3] In the Appeal to Conservatives, Comte admitted that the Cours had made intellect supreme and had therefore given support to contemporary anarchy. It had failed to direct moral culture or regulate human existence. The Système had raised morals to the highest place among the sciences and established the true logic of feeling.[4] The Subjective Synthesis even modified the Système, which had provided only a preliminary synthesis. From 'unveiling truths' Positivism

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1. See Gouhier's list of scholars, op. cit., I 20, and since then Charlton, op. cit., pp. 27-8; Lenzer, op. cit., p. xxxi.
2. AC, Pol I ix-xii.
3. AC, Pol IV xiii.
4. AC, Appeal, pp. 37-41.

had developed into 'inspiring conceptions'.[1] Comte claimed that the early development of positivism had needed 'the spirit of research and even of discussion'.[2] But he described with distaste the 'moral dryness' he felt on re-reading the last three chapters of the Cours in 1857. He needed 'a canto of Ariosto to restore my tone'. He regretted publishing the Cours when he did. For he felt that Positivism would have succeeded more quickly if he had manifested himself with the Système. Instead, he had given rise to 'an intermediate intellectual position' which was hindering the acceptance of religious positivism.[3]

Comte never ceased to attack the merely intellectual positivists, who criticised his 'religious construction in the name of its philosophical basis', regretting particularly their strength 'in the very quarter, in England that is, where as yet my labours have had the best reception'.[4] It was unfortunate for Positivism that it had originated in the metaphysical school and had first been accepted by 'revolutionists' who were subsequently unable to accept its discipline.[5] The Eight Circulars of Auguste Comte contain frequent attacks on the incomplete as opposed to the religious positivists. He promised to unveil the egotism beneath their aloofness, their fear of discipline, and their lack of veneration.[6] He referred to Littré's circle as 'positivistes avortés' and 'faux auxiliaires'.[7]

Comte had not always been religious, in any sense of the word. He left Saint-Simon, complaining of 'théophilanthropie réchauffée'. He wrote to Gustave d'Eichthal in 1828 that he was glad he had not

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1. AC, Subj. Synth., p. 23
2. AC, Confessions, p. 47.
3. AC, Ingram Letters, pp. 133-4.
4. AC, Pol IV xvi.
5. AC, Appeal, p. 126.
6. AC, The Eight Circulars, pp. 6-7 and 25
7. AC, Lettres à Hutton, p. 113

been asked to the secret meetings of those connected with the Saint-Simonian Producer. They were making themselves ridiculous, Comte thought, with their plans for a new religion which would no doubt extend to a new version of the mass: 'Voilà où les conduit le sentimentalisme'.[1] There was no irony in 1832 in Comte's public denial of Saint-Simonism:

'Jugez, Monsieur, si j'ai jamais pu tremper dans la fabrication d'aucune nouvelle religion, et surtout d'une misérable parodie du catholicisme !'

He was not prepared to surrender his individual conscience to the despotism of 'père Enfantin, ou de tout autre pontife-roi'.[2] Yet this was precisely the sacrifice he came to expect of others.

Typically, Comte fixed an exact day for the origin of the Religion of Humanity. He wrote, in his third Saint Clotilde,

'Religious Positivism really began with our previous interview on Friday, the 16th May, 1845, when my heart unexpectedly announced, before thy astonished family, the characteristic saying: "We cannot always think, but we can always love." '[3]

Gouhier has shown that a year earlier, before he had even met Clotilde, Comte had protested against Mrs. Austin's association of Positivism with dryness of heart, predicting that 'le temps approche où "le caractère sentimentale de la philosophie nouvelle " apparaîtra'.[4] The emphasis on sentiment brought a corresponding relaxation of intellectual rigour. Two letters to Henry Dix Hutton, the Irish Positivist, expounded the virtues of faith, which involved the acceptance on trust of what seemed doubtful. This was the 'spiritual discipline' of the Middle Ages, which had been weakened by Protestantism. The doctrines of Positivism remained 'demonstrable' but the necessary conditions for their demonstration were seldom fulfilled.

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1. Littré, op. cit., p. 173.
2. AC, CI III 12.
3. AC, Confessions, p. 369.
4. Gouhier, op. cit., I 26.

Submission was morally beneficial, since it represented egoism and developed altruism.[1] Positivists should therefore accept the hypothetical system he propounded to meet their religious and moral needs. This was the 'logic' which led the man who had despised the pontifical pretensions of Enfantin to declare himself 'Founder and High Priest of the Religion of Humanity'.

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1. AC, Ingram Letters, pp. 49-50 and 55-8.

CHAPTER II

Philosophy

I Positive Method

Comte did not invent the word 'positive'. Derived from 'ponere' it had been used from 1300 to describe something explicitly 'laid down'. The sense of 'relating to fact' dates from the sixteenth century. It was commonly opposed to 'metaphysical' in the eighteenth, and applied to definite facts that were based on observation. Condorcet and Saint Simon used the word in this sense.[1] Comte's extension of the word's meaning will be considered here and connected with his insistence on the existence of an objective external order which was the proper object of scientific inquiry and to which men should subordinate their subjectivity. His equation of 'positive' with 'relative' will also be examined. Finally, the two cardinal doctrines of Positivism, the Law of the Three States and the Classification of the Sciences, will be explained as expressions of his understanding of these two terms.

In the Discourse and the General View, Comte gave six meanings to the word 'positive': real, useful, certain, precise, organic and relative. The Appeal to Conservatives added a seventh: sympathetic.[2] Clearly the word grew to mean anything which formed part of Comte's system. This was the Positive Philosophy, the answer to the negative philosophy of the metaphysical school. Explaining the 'intellectual Character of Positivism' in the first chapter of the General View, Comte carefully distinguished what it was not. It was neither Atheism, which claimed to be able to give an absolute answer to the question of cause, nor materialism, the encroachment of the lower sciences on

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1. OED, Compact ed., II 2247-8; Littré, op. cit., p. 31.
2. AC, Discourse, pp. 65-70; Pol I 44-5; Appeal, p. 46.

the domain of the higher. It was not Fatalism, since it acknowledged the external order to be modifiable, nor Optimism, since it recognised all the defects in nature.[1] In his "Final Estimate of the Positive Method", at the end of the Cours, Comte adopted the wise tactic of equating it with common sense. The positive method was 'simply a methodical extension of popular good sense to all subjects accessible to human reason'. It was not the 'invention of any special mind, but the product of the general mind'.[2]

Precision was essential. In his "Considerations on the Spiritual Power", Comte complained that 'social sentiment' without 'exact and fixed notions' of good, 'ends by gradually degenerating into a vague philanthropic intention'.[3] He set out to establish morality on a scientific basis. He claimed that the only basis for knowledge was observation and that the enunciation of facts alone was meaningful. His underlying assumption was that there existed an external order of the world which was revealed by science and which formed the objective basis of Positivism. The Priest in the Catechism announces 'the existence of an order, which admits of no variation' as the fundamental dogma of the Positive religion.[4]

According to Comte, Astronomy was the first science to illustrate the necessary opposition of the positive and the theological spirit. This incompatibility was a 'consequence of the irreconcilable opposition between laws and supernatural will'. The idea of God was capricious and subversive: 'What becomes of the wonderful order we have traced ... if we introduce an infinite power ?'[5] Comte attacked the notion of Providence in particular as preventing 'men from forming a true

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1. AC, Pol I 36-44.
2. AC, Phil II 512; cp. Discourse, p. 72.
3. AC, Crisis, p. 221
4. AC, Cat, p. 58.
5. AC, Cat, pp. 212 and 218.

conception of Law'.[1] Positivism recognised the imperfections of the real world in contrast with the illusions of providential optimism.[2] Theological belief, as became clearer in his attacks on Christianity, Comte believed to be a form of egoism. He pointed to 'a natural connection between Egoism and the Absolute', and the dangers of granting unlimited powers to an arbitrary will, to the neglect of the laws of natural consequence. Positivism guarded against such providential egoism:

> 'an at least general knowledge of an invariable order is the only check upon our spontaneous tendency to form our opinions in accordance with the hopes or fears resulting from our desires'.[3]

Accurate observation of the world was the key to the Cours. The scientific spirit was distinguished from the theological and the metaphysical by 'the steady subordination of the imagination to observation'.[4] The same principle was reiterated in the Système. The human brain was to be formed 'into an exact mirror of the Order of Nature'.[5] But Comte grew increasingly aware of the complexity of the whole question of knowledge. He recognised that our doctrines never represent the outer world with exact fidelity , that exact objective truth was unattainable. But he continued to emphasise the need to subordinate the subjective to the objective.[6] He described his position as Aristotelian, modified by Leibnitz and Kant. Man was subordinate to the world. There was nothing in the understanding that did not originate in sensation. But the subjective human mind was necessarily involved in the construction of thought. The relationship was one of 'the world supplying the materials, man shaping them'.[7]

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1. AC, Pol I 320
2. AC, Discourse, p. 64.
3. AC, Pol III 25-7.
4. AC, Phil II 68-9.
5. AC, Pol II 311.
6. AC, Pol III 19; Cat, pp. 92 and 95.
7. AC, Pol III 15; Cat, pp. 165-7

Positive meant relative. As early as 1817 Comte enunciated the first principle of positive philosophy: 'Everything is relative; this is the only absolute principle.'[1] The belief that we can know nothing about things in themselves but only the relations of things is central to positivism. Positivism abandoned the search for causes in favour of the elaboration of the laws of relation. The Priest in the Catechism explains this substitution of the relative for the absolute: Positivism 'never explains why a thing is, it limits itself to the question, how it is'.[2]

The relative point of view derived from Mathematics, as Comte recognised in the Cours.[3] The first book defines 'Mathematics' as the indirect measurement of magnitude 'according to the precise relations which exist between them'. Comte claimed,

'There is no inquiry which is not finally reducible to a question of Numbers .... the determination of quantities by each other, according to certain relations.'

The positive method, based on mathematics, was theoretically universal but practically limited, by the inadequacy of our intellect.[4] The Law of the Three States taught that all human conceptions passed from the theological through the metaphysical to the positive stage. From being explained as the result of superhuman will and then of inherent abstract essences, phenomena were finally seen to be related to each other by fixed and invariable laws. All the sciences passed through these three stages and were classified according to the speed with which they did so. Comte explained that his Classification of the Sciences was arranged dogmatically according to their dependence and historically according to the order of their becoming positive. Beginning with Mathematics and ending with Morals, the sciences displayed

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1. AC, Early Essays; p. 23.
2. AC, Cat, p. 57.
3. AC, Phil II 500
4. AC, Phil I 38 and 42-3.

increasing particularity, complexity, dependence, modifiability, and connection with man. The Cours ended with 'Social Physics', but this incorporated morals.

As early as 1825 Comte claimed that 'Moral Phenomena were the latest of all to pass out of the domain of theology and metaphysics and enter into that of physics.' They were given the rank of a separate science in the Système.[1] They were clearly the most detailed and complex, and the most related to man. They were also the most dependent. A change in any of the preceding sciences, for example a change in the distance of the earth from the sun, would radically affect human behaviour.[2] But moral phenomena were the most modifiable and so gave ground for optimism in the amelioration of human nature. Each of the sciences was dependent upon and grew out of the sciences which had preceded it, as the Cours illustrated in copious detail. Not content with seven sciences, Comte devised seven different ways of arranging them,[3] but the basic progression was from the inorganic through the organic to the social sciences.

II Subjective Synthesis

'The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.' Comte was undoubtedly a hedgehog, in Isaiah Berlin's terms. He was intent upon relating everything to a central system.[4] This obsession with unity in the later Comte led Mill to complain,

> 'It never seemed to enter his conceptions, that one could object ab initio, and ask, why this universal systematising, systematizing, systematizing ? Why is it necessary that all human life should point but to one object and be cultivated into a system of means to a single end ?' [5]

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1. AC, Crisis, p. 190; cp. Phil I 3-8, Book I, Ch. II, "View of the Hierarchy of the Positive Sciences"; Discourse, pp. 153-72; Pol I Ch. I, "Intellectual Character of Positivism", III 15-33, IV 157-71.
2. AC, Crisis, p. 194.
3. AC, Pol IV 166-8.
4. Isaiah Berlin, The Hedgehog and the Fox, London, 1953, p. 1.
5. J.S. Mill, AC and Positivism, London, 1865, p. 141.

Comte provided no answer but human need. He and others like him shared a temperamental desire, which he called religious, to give life unity and meaning. For him, unity was

'the normal type of Human Existence .... All progress therefore, whether of the individual or of the race, consists in developing and consolidating that unity .'[1]

Some of the passages in which Comte expressed this principle motive behind his creation of the Religion of Humanity will now be considered. He became concerned with things not in relation to each other, but relative to man's need. The reversal of his emphasis on the subordination of the subjective to the objective and of synthesis to analysis, will then be traced from his early elucidation of the nature of hypothesis, through his abandonment of objective unity, to the final acceptance of the Subjective Synthesis as the only means of attaining the essential unity. The concept of subjective immortality will be taken as the best example of his application of the subjective method.

The Woman in the Catechism asks the Priest to explain 'the radical sense of the word Religion'. The Priest answers with obvious relish but dubious etymology: Religion aims: 'to bind together man's inner by love, and then to bind the man to the other world by faith'. It expresses the 'unity' of man's existence, regulating each individual and society in one 'synthesis'.[2] The Système explains "The Religion of Humanity" in terms of its attempt to bring Reason, Feeling and Activity into harmony through the concept of Humanity:

'Our thoughts will be devoted to the knowledge of Humanity, our affections to her love, our actions to her service .... Thus Positivism becomes, in the true sense of the word, a Religion.[3]

The first chapter of the second volume explains more fully "the Positivist Theory of Human Unity".

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1. AC, Pol III 8
2. AC, Cat, pp. 46-51; cp. p. 26 and Pol I 6.
3. Pol I 264-5; cp. II 8 and IV 40-53.

Comte's desire for unity was clear even in his early essays. In 1825 he complained of the moral and social anarchy which had resulted 'from the absence of any preponderating system, capable of uniting all minds in a communion of ideas'. France must either build a new positive polity or restore the old theological regime.[1] The following year his "Considerations on the Spiritual Power" called for 'Spiritual association, founded on community of doctrine and the resulting harmony of sentiments' as the necessary prerequisite of temporal association.[2] The Cours advocated a similar unanimity of outlook. The laws of the external order need not be reduced to one, but they should be homogenous. Comte repeated his warning that men must have order, and if they were not satisfied by laws they would return to theological and metaphysical explanations.[3]

Comte had never doubted the place of imagination in science. He argued in 1820 that a science only becomes positive when founded on observed facts, but that 'no branch of knowledge acquires a scientific character until an hypothesis has combined all its fundamental facts'.[4] At the opening of the Cours he acknowledged the need for hypotheses as the basis for observation: 'facts cannot be observed without the guidance of some sure theory'.[5] Without this framework for research, science degenerates into the lowest form of empiricism, the 'barren accumulation of unrelated facts'. So long as imagination was subordinate to observation, the other extreme, mysticism, could be avoided. In the Système Comte attributed to the 'Imaginative faculties' the most distinct representation of the unity of human nature. He reiterated the need to avoid both empiricism and mysticism, but he

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1. AC, Crisis, pp. 199-200.
2. Ibid., pp. 233-4.
3. AC, Phil I 16-20.
4. AC, Crisis, p. 93 fn. 2
5. AC, Phil I 3-4;

further relaxed the burden of proof:

'A theory subjective in its origin will be held admissible when it sufficiently explains the essential phenomena, without waiting for the objective verification, and even where that complement can never be obtained.'

Positive cerebral theory was instanced as a case in point.[1]

In the Cours, as Harriet Martineau observed, the synthesis was only such as was necessary for analysis.[2] In the late work the emphasis was reversed. The Subjective Synthesis began with an avowal of the aim to subordinate 'analysis to synthesis', and to revive the spontaneous subjectivity of fetichism on a more systematic basis. It introduced 'Religious Logic', which 'no longer confines itself to the domain of verifiable hypotheses'. The Système had described Logic as an instrument 'calculated to reveal to us the truths which human necessities require'. Comte suggested a new definition:

'The moral concert of feelings, images and signs to inspire us with the conceptions which meet our moral, intellectual and physical wants.'

Utility became the main criterion, more important than reality.[3] Comte's letters acknowledged this change of emphasis from analysis to synthesis, from reality to utility.[4]

Comte's abandonment of objective analysis for subjective synthesis was a gradual process only completed at the end of his life. For the most part, even in the Système, he advocated a combination of the objective and subjective methods. The subordination of the intellect to the heart was the 'subjective principle' of Positivism: but its 'objective basis' remained the external order of the world as revealed by science .[5] The long struggle between the objective method and

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1. AC, Pol I 4 and III 21.
2. AC, Phil I xiii.
3. AC, Subj. Synth, pp. 1, 34, 23 and 16
4. AC, Ingram Letters, pp. 38 and 115-7
5. AC, Pol I 19.

the subjective method was now over. Analysis and Synthesis could work together in harmony.[1] 'The existence of an immutable order' remained 'the primary foundation of true religion'. But our intellects reacted upon it so that our conceptions were only approximations to that objective reality. The objective method was incapable of constructing syntheses but the subjective method had been betrayed into the search for causes. The ideal method was therefore a combination of the two, creating a synthesis of material provided by the study of laws.[2]

In the Catechism, the Priest explains that there is no such thing as objective unity. To wish for it was contrary to the study of laws, which revealed 'no unity but a purely relative and human one; in one word, a subjective unity'. This helped to mitigate the harshness of the 'dualism of the world and man'.[3] This unsatisfactory dualism was attacked in the Subjective Synthesis. 'Between Man and the World', Comte claimed, 'we need Humanity.' What he meant by Humanity will be considered in the next chapter. His systematic regeneration of fetichism created a Trinity with the addition of the Great Fetich and the Great Milieu, symbolic of the Earth and Destiny.[4] But those were not to be taken as real. With reference to positive worship, the Priest explains,

> 'The only essential difference between subjectivity in its later and in its primitive shape is this. In its later shape we must be fully conscious of it, and openly avow it, no one ever confusing it with objectivity.'[5]

In considering Comte's treatment of the subjective life it is important to remember that Comte did not mistake it for objective fact.

Death was the most obvious example of the failure of the objective

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1. Ibid., 361-4.
2. AC, Pol II 27-30 and 71-2.
3. AC, Cat, pp. 160-1.
4. AC, Subj. Synth., pp. 30 and 20.
5. AC, Cat, pp. 92-3.

life to satisfy man's needs. The General View wrote of 'ideal resurrection' through the imagination, and the Catechism discussed subjective immortality, the use of "subjective worship .... to call back into existence one whom we have loved'.[1] But Comte's fullest treatment of the subjective life came in the fourth volume of the Système. Our best attributes, he claimed, were freed and our nature purified by death. An individual could perpetuate himself by the worthy results of his service. Subjective immortality was 'the outward reward of a great life'. Activity could not be prolonged after death, but 'Intellect and emotion ....may pass into another brain, so as to be fused with the results attained by that other brain'. This was 'subjective assimilation', a secular form of the Kabbala. Comte recognised that the subjective life was an attempt to realise 'the dream of Theology-souls without bodies'.[2] In the Positivist regime the whole process was given formal and ritual expression. Those whose objective lives were considered worthy were publicly incorporated into the Great being of Humanity.[3]

III Resignation and Activity

In a passage of the Catechism which George Eliot was fond of quoting, the Priest describes life as 'a necessity admitting modifications'. Our response is 'destined to be a compound of resignation and action'.[4] We must submit to the inevitable and alter what we can. Comte began with the Saint-Simonian goal of modifying nature. He soon recognised the limits of man's power, and concentrated his efforts on the amelioration of human nature. He denied that his

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1. AC, Pol I 210; Cat, p. 96.
2. AC, Pol IV 31-2, 45 and 89-93.
3. AC, Pol II 54
4. AC, Cat, p. 61; cp. Pol I 284.

position was deterministic, since he preached both the modifiability of phenomena and the responsibility of moral agents. His vision of life was often harsh, even tragic. He emphasised the need for a stern resignation. Yet his optimism led him to insist on the moral value of submission to the inevitable.

Comte's 1820 'Appraisal of Modern History' had seen men as mere instruments of the law of human progress:

> 'Secondary results alone, are subject to our control. All that we can do is consciously to obey their law, which constitutes our true providence, ascertaining the course it marks out for us, instead of being blindly impelled by it.' [1]

Under the theological system man had believed himself the centre of the universe with indefinite control over phenomena. He had to learn the limits of his own power. Even his own nature was unalterable in essentials, although individual instincts could be accelerated or retarded. Similarly in politics there were limits to what legislation could achieve. 'Scientific Provision' could 'avert or mitigate violent Revolution' and aid progress. It could not alter the general course of events.[2]

The most modifiable phenomena, Comte thought, were the most complex. His cerebral theory rested on the belief that 'the phenomena of life and acts of the mind are so highly complex as to admit of modification beyond all estimate'.[3] Yet even here he insisted on 'the necessary invariableness of the human organism', the essential characteristics of which remained the same. It was not possible to create or destroy faculties or even to transpose their influence. One could merely modify the given qualities. Any vision of society should not contradict 'the known laws of human nature', for instance by supposing 'a very marked character of goodness or wickedness to

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1. AC, Crisis, p. 93.
2. Ibid., pp. 138, 146-50, and 193.
3. AC, Phil I 470.

exist in the majority of men'.[1] But within these limits the main task for mankind was 'the continual improvement of its own nature'.[2] The Priest explains that morals are 'the supreme art' in two respects. They are the most important, and they offer the largest field 'for wise action on our part'.[3]

Comte denied that his system was deterministic. In a letter to Hutton he contrasted 'modifiable' with 'absolute fatality'; everyone remained responsible for his conduct.[4] The Cours dismissed 'the supposed necessity of human actions' but attacked also any unrealistic optimism, especially in political thought. Positivism developed 'a wise resignation to incurable political evils'. This resignation was much more demanding than that of Christianity, which was 'only a prudent temporizing, which enjoins the endurance of present suffering in view of an ultimate ineffable felicity'. Positivism demanded 'a true resignation, that is, a permanent disposition to endure, steadily and without hope of compensation, all inevitable evils'.[5] The Système described the most striking features of man"s predicament as "the necessity of struggling against difficulties of every kind'. The main merit of this struggle was that it was shared: men 'are involved in the same miseries, and therefore stand alike in need of mutual help'.[6] Comte never ceased to attack 'Providential Optimism', which played down 'the constant struggle of Will against Necessity',[7]

In spite of the apparent rigour of Comte's attacks on theories of providence, his own analysis of human progress, as will become apparent in the following chapter, was infected with a secular form of the same

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1. AC, Phil II 113.
2. AC, Discourse, p. 47.
3. AC, Cat, p. 199.
4. AC, Ingram Letters, p. 39.
5. AC, Phil I 470 and II 45.
6. AC, Pol I 23 and 339.
7. AC, Pol III 135-6.

virus. At the beginning of the Cours he explained the necessity, the purpose, of the Theological stage in human development. It stimulated human intellect, by offering explanations of 'sublime mysteries .... even to their minutest details', and it encouraged industry by offering 'unlimited empire over the external world'. Too early an appreciation of our limits would have been enervating.[1] The same providential good fortune seems to have surrounded man's gradual understanding of his predicament as outlined in Comte's 'History of the Idea of Fate'.[2] He even argued that our dependence on things outside our control, such as the phenomena of the Solar System, was morally better for us than "that absolute independence to which metaphysical pride aspires'.[3] He claimed that the subjection of all phenomena to invariable laws gave coherence to our thoughts, purpose to our actions and fixity to our desires.[4] Power encouraged egoism, dependence altruism. Submission was so good for us that we should practice it even when it is not necessary:

> 'We may regret that the order of things is not more within man's power to alter. But .... As we advance, so far from shrinking from this indefinite yoke, we extend its range by paying to human institutions the obedience we cannot refuse to the laws of nature.' [5]

Comte's later work exaggerated this authoritarian delight in obedience. Conversation VII in the Catechism begins with the Woman asking if man's liberty was not threatened by the subjection of moral and social phenomena to invariable law. The Priest replies, like St. Paul, that liberty consists in obedience to law. There was no question of refusing assent to the demonstrable laws of science. It was only the liberalism of modern anarchy which aimed to sanction rebellion and individualism.[6] The Subjective Synthesis actually incorporated

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1. AC, Phil I 4: cp. Crisis, pp. 185-6, and Pol III 26.
2. AC, Pol III 135-7.
3. AC, Pol I 22.
4. Ibid., 335.
5. AC, Pol IV 35.
6. AC, Cat, pp. 228-30.

Destiny into the Religion of Humanity. We are encouraged to revere and worship fate, 'glorifying it in the name of its moral efficacy'.[1]

Comte's change of outlook appears striking, but it was not self-contradictory. The world remained the same. There was a difference of emphasis and purpose which came with the subordination of the objective to the subjective method. It had been necessary to destroy the false optimism of the theological system by a realistic assessment of man's predicament. That was the negative aspect of the positive movement. After that, the need for optimism directed our making the best of this world which Comte regarded as by no means the best of all possible worlds.

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1. AC, Subj. Synth., p. 15.

CHAPTER III

History and Sociology

I Humanity

The "Fundamental Theory of the Great Being" is explained in the first chapter of the final volume of the Système. Comte gives a clear definition:

'The Great Being is the whole constituted by the beings, past, future, and present, which co-operate willingly in perfecting the order of the world.' [1]

Individuals are its ministers, through their service of other 'composite beings' such as the Family, the Country and the West. The concept of Humanity is designed to meet man's religious needs. It replaces God. In the first conversation of the Catechism, the Woman complains that Positivism does not offer enough 'direct stimulus to the holy affections'. The Priest suggests the idea of Humanity, continually struggling against the necessities of the universe in the quest for perfection. This, he claims, affords 'a better object of contemplation than the capricious omnipotence of its theological precursor'.[2] The second conversation is devoted to "Humanity", which the Priest defines as 'the whole of human beings past, present, and future'. But he is careful to explain that this includes only the better part of humanity, 'those only who are really assimilable, in virtue of a real co-operation towards the common existence'. Parasites need not apply.[3] The lack of 'humanity', that broad sympathy with everything human displayed by the Russian novelists, has been seen as a major cause in the failure of Comte's Religion of Humanity.[4]

The sense of identification with a corporate being larger than the individual was developed by the Family and the Country. The

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1. AC, Pol IV 27.
2. AC, Cat, pp. 62-4.
3. Ibid., p. 74.
4. Chadwick, op. cit., pp.248-9.

Woman in the Catechism recognises the value of this intermediate sense of solidarity evident in patriotism.[1] Comte further developed the argument in his Appeal to Conservatives. Patriotism was to be no longer military but industrial, devotion to a 'Mother-country' rather than a 'Fatherland'. It was a necessary stage in the development of the social instinct, which it preserved from 'the narrowness of family feeling and the vagueness of philanthropy'.[2]

Comte insisted on the reality of Humanity as revealed 'by close investigation of objective fact'. The concept of the individual apart from the race was the abstraction.[3] At the end of his historical survey of the development of Humanity in the third volume of the Système Comte became almost Hegelian:

'Humanity has now completed her Initiation, for she has arrived at a full consciousness of her destination.'[4]

Humanity became providential in the Appeal to Conservatives, where Comte explained the Positivist sanction of 'all prior beliefs, as spontaneous institutions thrown up in succession by the instinct of the Great Being to guide its incomparable preparation'.[5]

In the Subjective Synthesis Humanity is regarded as the only corporate Being which can be endowed with thought as well as feeling and activity.[6] But, objectively considered, Humanity remained incapable of action except through the services of its individual ministers. It achieved reality in the consciousness of individuals, as an object of devotion for those who had lost faith in God. Its appeal to others was of this emotional nature. Littré, for instance, found no room for Great Beings in the positivist conception of the

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1. AC, Cat, p. 337.
2. AC, Appeal pp. 90-2.
3. AC, Pol I 267-8; Discourse, pp. 117-8.
4. AC, Pol III 532.
5. AC, Appeal, p. 62.
6. AC, Subj. Synth., p. 7.

world, but he still found value in the concept of Humanity:

'L'amour de l'humanité, qui comprend en soi l'amour des hommes, est cet intérêt vif e puissant, bien qu'impersonnel, qui nous attache à son progres, à ce qu'elle fut dans le passé, à ce qu'elle sera dans l'avenir, qui nous donne une joie profonde quand cette grande cause prospère et une non moins profonde tristesse quand elle subit quelque revers, et qui nous fait tant désirer de contribuer, pour si peu que se soit, à cette oeuvre reçue de nos aïeux, transmise à nos descendants.'[1]

This was an ideal that many could share.

Solidarity was the sense of belonging to Humanity in the present, continuity the sense of the past and the future. These two feelings Comte regarded as essential for individual and collective harmony. It was the whole purpose of Positivism to provide 'laws capable of regulating the Present with a view to the Future on the basis of the Past'.[2] Solidarity, or the dependence on others, was undeniable:

'The man who dares to think himself independent of others, either in feelings, thoughts, or actions, cannot even put the blasphemous conception into words without immediate self-contradiction, since the very language he uses is not his own.'[3]

Continuity was even more important. History was central to the Positivist education, in which individuals were made to repeat the history of the development of the race.[4] The Priest in the Catechism insists on the greater significance of continuity than 'the solidarity of the existing generation. The living are always .... under the government of the dead.'[5] Comte clearly felt more at home with the dead than the living. He justified his attitude to Hutton: great men must be submissive to the Past, but could despise 'the contemporary Public, when it impedes, instead of seconding them'.[6] Occasionally, as George Eliot noticed in her Pforzheimer and Nuneaton notebooks, Comte neglected the living in his treatment of Humanity. But continuity

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1. Littré, op. cit., p. 525
2. AC, Pol II 293-4 and III 536
3. AC, Pol I 177
4. AC, Discourse, pp. 160-1
5. AC, Cat, p.77
6. AC, Ingram Letters, p. 63

and solidarity were really complementary. The importance of solidarity will become apparent when we consider his Utopia. His emphasis on continuity was inherent in his adoption of the historical method.

II Historical Method

'The decisive characteristic of the present age will be the importance it assigns to History, by the light of which philosophy, politics, and even poetry will henceforth be pursued.'

So Comte began the third volume of the Système, "Social Dynamics, or the General Theory of Human Progress". He went on to explain that 'the anarchy of the West' consisted chiefly 'in the interruption of human continuity; first Catholicism cursing Antiquity, then Protestantism reprobating the Middle Age; and lastly Deism denying filiation altogether'.[1] The positive spirit of the second phase of the Revolution was illustrated by its historical spirit.[2] The closing words of the Catechism similarly express Comte's purpose, to bring about 'a noble acceptance of the inheritance of the past'.[3] In this section Comte's own definition of the aim and method of his treatment of history will be considered, with special reference to his fundamental Law of the Three States.

Comte's 1822 "Prospectus" distinguished his own scientific history from previous annals, which merely described isolated facts in chronological order.[4] In the Cours he welcomed the growth of historical study as an indication of the positive spirit at work, but deplored 'the literary and metaphysical bias' with which it was undertaken.[5] Comte turned to history as the foundation for sociology. Social Physics was not 'a direct deduction from the science of the

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1. AC, Pol III 1-2
2. AC, Pol I 68.
3. AC, Cat, p. 428.
4. AC, Crisis, pp. 179-80.
5. AC, Phil II 65.

individual'. The inductions of history could be checked with reference to physiology, but what was required first was a study of the development of human society. The historian proceeded from the general to the particular. He "must begin by apprehending in its ensemble the entire development of the human race, distinguishing at the commencement only a very small number of successive states'.[1] Social Dynamics was the term Comte gave to this study of the laws of continuous succession of social states.

Comte's historical analysis, as he explained in his "Preparation of the Historical Question", was limited to Western Civilization, 'the vanguard of the human race'. It was based on 'general phenomena which everybody is familiar with'. It was abstract rather than concrete, aiming to establish only general laws. Comte promised that he would refer to the names of men and of actions only to elucidate and consolidate these laws. He was establishing a working model, a series of 'landmarks' in history which would afford 'direction and a rallying-point to all subsequent observations'.[2] The Preface to Comte's "Social Dynamics" acknowledged that the treatment of history in this work was less detailed even than the Cours, although the general co-ordination had been improved. He would content himself with expounding his views, 'leaving the verification and development of them to the public'. The concrete study of history could follow the firm establishment of his hypothesis.[3]

Comte's 'Founding Hypothesis'[4] was the Law of the Three States. We have seen that the sciences were classified according to the speed with which they passed from the Theological through the Metaphysical to the Positive State. This development applied to all human history.

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1. AC, Early Essays, pp. 342-3; and Crisis, p. 192
2. AC, Phil II 181-4.
3. AC, Pol III ix-xi.
4. Ronald Fletcher, Crisis, p. 33.

The Theological State began with fetichism, the attribution of will to inanimate objects, and developed through polytheism to monotheism. It reached its completion in the Catholic Feudal System of the Middle Ages. But Catholicism was based on a fiction and had therefore to be destroyed. This task was undertaken by the Metaphysical or Negative State. The spontaneous decomposition of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries led to the rebellion of Protestantism which itself bred Deism. The culmination of the negative movement was the French Revolution. Throughout this negative process, which Comte called the Western Revolution, a positive movement was also taking place. The sciences one by one revealed more fully the working of invariable law, until it at last became possible to found society on a positive basis.

A providential undertone can be detected beneath this analysis. Comte referred to the intellectual evolution of Humanity under the Greeks, the active contribution of the Romans, and the affective evolution brought about by Catholicism. All culminated in the harmony of thought, action and feeling achieved by Positivism. Comte emphasised that although the three states could be divided into rough chronological periods , at all times there was a mixture of all three. The positive spirit, for example, could be traced to Aristotle. His school of mathematicians and astronomers was contrasted with 'the spurious philosophy' of Plato.[1] They represented the positive and metaphysical spirits respectively. The same struggle resumed in the Middle Ages between nominalists and realists.

Comte's philosophy of history can be found in his early essays, "A Brief Appraisal of Modern History", "Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for Reorganising Society", and "Philosophical

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1. AC, Pol III 284.

Considerations on the Sciences and Savants".[1] The Cours opens with an explanation of the Law of the Three States, and devotes most of Book VI, 'Social Physics', to its elaboration. The third volume of the Système and the final two chapters of the Catechism are the other main sources for Comte's historical views. The next three sections of this chapter will deal successively with his portrait of Christianity and Catholicism, his analysis of the course of the Western Revolution, and his construction of the utopian society with which Positivism was to replace the old order.

III Catholicism minus Christianity

Thomas Huxley's label for the Religion of Humanity, 'Catholicism minus Christianity', was not inappropriate. Congreve preferred the title 'Catholicism plus Science'.[2] Comte himself acknowledged the close relation between Positivism and Medieval Catholicism.[3] The Cours referred 'the entire spiritual movement of modern times' to 'that memorable season in human history which Protestantism is pleased to call the dark ages'. It had been the 'office' of Catholicism 'to prepare .... the elements of the positive regime'. Catholicism had taken ten centuries fully to develop but it had remained at the head of the European system for only two. Clearly, Comte argued, it could not have been meant to die out altogether.[4] Those elements in the Catholic system which were of permanent value were retained by Positivism, which could claim to be its true successor:

'For those alone are worthy to be called successors, who contrive or carry into effect the undertakings which former times have left unfinished; the title is totally unmerited by blind followers of obsolete dogmas, which have ceased to bear any relation to their

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1. AC, Crisis, pp. 79-213.
2. Fortnightly Review XI (1869) 141 and 409
3. AC, Pol I 69.
4. AC, Phil II 294, 299, and 303

original purpose, and which their own authors if now living would disavow.'[1]

The two main sources for Comte's treatment of Catholicism are the third volume of the Système and the sixth book of the Cours, of which George Eliot wrote, in 1861, 'few chapters can be fuller of luminous ideas.'[2]

Comte had little time for Christ, 'one of the many adventurers who would at that time be constantly making efforts to inaugurate monotheism; aspiring, like their Greek forerunners, to the honours of personal apotheosis'. Jesus was not original in teaching the forgiveness of injuries, and had made little sacrifice if he knew he would rise again in three days.[3] The early drafts of the Positivist Calendar had included Jesus, but Comte resolved the debate on this question by ruling that Christ's claim to rank with God forfeited his right to be considered among the Great Men.[4] Rejecting Hutton's request to have Christ reinstated, Comte referred to Congreve's having denounced Jesus as a charlatan on a visit in 1849. Congreve claimed to have been less outspoken, remaining agnostic through insufficient evidence.[5] Thomas Hardy recognised that Comte would have shocked less people and won more adherents if he had introduced Christ into his pantheon 'as a matter of policy'.[6]

Comte, like Gibbon, considered the rise of Christianity to have been inevitable. Greek philosophy had already outlined a coherent system beyond polytheism. The Romans had built an Empire through military power, but the consolidation of the conquest required an internal bond of unity. The civic impulse, the mainstay of Roman morality, had weakened; idleness and wealth had bred mischief; religious observance had degenerated into hypocrisy and scepticism.

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1. AC, Pol I 281.
2. GEL III 438; Cours V 297-491.
3. AC, Pol III 346 and 349.
4. Gould, op. cit., p. 85
5. AC, Lettres à Hutton, pp. 2-3
6. Robert Gittings, TLS, 14/1/77, p. 31.

'The want of some universal morality' was clearly felt, and Christianity arose to meet that need. All this Comte found completely predictable, but it was 'interesting to observe what Roman province must be the scene' for the birth of Christianity. Judea fitted the bill exactly. But if the Jews had not supplied their religious tradition some other nation would have sufficed, so long as it maintained an independent spiritual power. The separation of the spiritual and temporal power was exaggerated by Christianity's origin under a hostile regime. The doctrine of the Incarnation further strengthened the independence of the priesthood, giving divine authority to the revelation.[1] St. Paul realised this, and in 'sublime self-abnegation' accepted a 'founder who had no real claim'. St. Paul was 'the real founder of Catholicism'. He alone 'grasped the doctrine as a whole', and propounded a theory of Nature and Grace which anticipated the Positivist teaching on egoism and altruism.[2] Comte admired the courage of the early Christians, 'the heroic perseverance of men who felt themselves charged with the moral future of the human race'. But he paid little attention to patristics, referring only to some worthy individuals who suffered from the pernicious influence of Greek metaphysics.[3]

Comte subjected the doctrines of Christianity to a fierce attack. In the Cours he singled out the 'dogma of exclusive salvation' and the 'damnation of all heretics' for moral obloquy:

> 'nothing is more confirmatory of the provisional destination of all religious doctrines than their gradually leading on to the conversion of an old principle of love into a final ground of insurmountable hatred'.

He pointed to the inconsistency of the proposal to 'cultivate the social affections by the prior encouragement of exorbitant selfishness, for ever occupied with its future lot'.[4] The General View

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1. AC, Phil II 250-4; Pol III 336-45.
2. AC, Pol III 346, and Cat, pp. 250 and 394.
3. AC, Pol III 349-50.
4. AC, Phil II 275-6 and 288.

described the spirit of Christian theology as "altogether personal';

'the highest object placed before each individual was the attainment of his own salvation, and all human affections were made subordinate to the love of God'.

Theology, which 'fixed men's thoughts upon a visionary future', was contrasted with Chivalry, which concentrated their energies on the world around them. The book ended with a fierce attack on monotheism: 'the sole effect of its doctrine .... is to degrade the affections by unlimited desires, and to weaken the character by servile terrors'. The notion of Providence prevented men from forming a true conception of Law, and therefore inhibited the growth of industry. The poor were deprived of social improvements on the assurance of compensation in an imaginary future life. There was no compromising with such doctrines. It was altogether necessary to make a choice between Theology and Positivism.[1]

The Catechism began with a similar division between the two schools. Comte quoted his conclusion to his 1851 historical lectures:

'the servants of Humanity .... come forward to claim as their due the general direction of the world .... to constitute at length a real Providence, in all departments moral, intellectual and material. Consequently they exclude, once for all, from political supremacy, all the different servants of God - Catholic, Protestant, or Deist - as being at once behind-hand and a cause of disturbance.'

Comte took particular objection to 'a morality which proclaims that the benevolent sentiments are foreign to our nature', refers the origin of labour 'to a Divine curse' and 'puts forward women as the source of all evil'. Positivism centred on the instincts of benevolence, 'the inclinations which lead all creatures to a mutual union, instead of devoting themselves separately to their creator'. Christianity encouraged 'solitary ascetism' to the neglect of social duty and refused to recognise the existence of immutable laws. Finally, Catholicism broke human continuity: 'It cursed its parents, and was

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1. AC, Pol I 74, 205 and 320-21.

in turn cursed by its children.'[1]

The third volume of the Système represented Christian doctrine as opposed to the development of feeling, intellect and activity. Its emphasis on personal salvation created 'an unparalleled selfishness'. It was hostile both to solidarity and continuity. Its absolutism prevented scientific advance, its providential optimism the progress of industry. Comte went on to attack the concept of God. The 'radical imperfection' of the world made it impossible for him to accept that there could be a God who was both omnipotent and morally perfect. If he was all-powerful he should have done a better job. 'The principle of omnipotence' was itself morally harmful:

> 'For since the principle purpose of human affections is to supply the force required for surmounting the practical and theoretical difficulties of human life, there can be no proper sphere for their exercise in a being for whom no such difficulties exist.'

Belief in such a Being, 'the apothéosis of absolute egoism', was harmful to the affections; it stunted the growth of sympathy.[2]

Comte taught that Medieval Catholicism contributed to the moral progress of humanity in spite of these doctrines. The Catholic priesthood was given the credit. The Priest in the Catechism expresses his admiration and respect for his predecessors, 'the noble members of a priesthood which .... could find such powerful resources in a faith which was radically defective'.[3] Throughout his early essays Comte stressed the importance of the separation of the spiritual from the temporal power. When the powers were fused in a single authority, progress was impossible, since every intellectual discovery was seen as an act of revolt. Anticipated by Aristotle's neglect of politics for the natural sciences but properly established in the Middle Ages, the spiritual power was to be maintained under Positivism,

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1. AC, Cat, pp. 1, 9-10, 251, 395 and 402.
2. AC, Pol III 348, 364-5 and 376-7.
3. AC, Cat, p. 405.

which would replace theologians with scientists.[1]

The Cours described the catholic division of spiritual from temporal authority as 'the greatest advance ever made in the general theory of the social organism'. A moral power, which was wholly independent of the political power, was introduced into society. The two powers were to be kept entirely separate, the spiritual devoted to education, the temporal to action. Becket was a martyr for this cause, defending the choice of his functionaries from temporal usurpation. The priests taught a morality that was universal, applying alike to nobles and plebeians. There was no irony in Comte's praise of their wise restrictions of the working of the holy spirit to the Church, which extended 'the domain of human wisdom at the expense of that .... of divine inspiration'. But most important was their spiritual direction. Under polytheism the masses had been doomed to stupidity, but with Catholicism they were properly prepared for their social duties. The rite of confession further enabled the priests 'to watch over the daily application of the principles of conduct which they had instilled'.[2]

Catholic priests achieved their salutary moral influence, Comte maintained, by undermining theological conceptions, restricting miracles and new revelations to secondary questions,[3] and developing other doctrines to substantiate their own position. Christ's divinity, for example, gave them authority while the real presence made them indispensable.[4] Some doctrines even encouraged the development of altruism. The doctrine of Grace described human impulse in terms of divine inspiration, but it emphasised the need to control selfish passions and was therefore 'indirectly favourable to the growth of the

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1. AC, Crisis, pp. 204, 81 and 214.
2. AC, Phil II 261-74.
3. AC, Pol III 366-7.
4. AC, Phil II 276-7.

higher sympathies'. The love of God gave vent to these higher feelings, 'and any kind of exercise is calculated to strengthen them'. The incorporation of the Divinity into our own substance foreshadowed the sense of belonging to Humanity, and the worship of saints also contributed to the 'culture of the heart'. Even the damnation of unbelievers could be justified as a necessary measure for the restriction of doubt, which would have thwarted the moral aims of the priesthood.[1]

Catholicism, according to Comte, was most influential in the field of 'domestic morality'. It penetrated every relation, developing 'the sense of reciprocal duty'. It sanctioned paternal authority but, most importantly, raised the position of women, freeing them from the need to work and 'sanctifying the indissolubleness of marriage'.[2] Catholicism also anticipated Positivism in the construction of ideal types. Comte explained the value of the adoration of Christ and the Blessed Virgin: Catholicism concentrated

> 'in the Founder of their system all the perfection that they could imagine in human nature, thus constituting a universal and operative type, admirably adapted to the moral guidance of humanity .... and they completed the lesson by the addition of that yet more ideal conception which offers as the feminine type the beautiful mystic reconciliation of purity with maternity'.[3]

Polytheism, Comte argued, might have developed the worship of women more fully than Catholicism. But the adoration of the Blessed Virgin had been accepted by the Church, if not her significance as the symbol of Humanity.[4]

Comte also admired the development of Chivalry in the Middle Ages. This brought about the emancipation not only of women but of serfs. Chivalry inculcated 'the voluntary combination of the strong for the protection of the weak'. It taught 'a true sense of the social

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1. AC, Pol III 378-88.
2. AC, Phil II 291-2.
3. Ibid., 290.
4. AC, Pol I 207 and 285

dignity of labour".[1] Catholicism also made an aesthetic impact. Comte frequently extolled the beauty of medieval cathedrals, 'those religious edifices which are the most perfect monumental expressions of the ideas and feelings of our moral nature".[2] The greatest Catholic literature was written after the system had already begun to disintegrate. Comte was a fervent admirer of Dante and of à Kempis. He admired the Imitation so much that he made it a part of the Positivist liturgy:

> 'Posterity will never cease to revere the crude but sublime outline of the systematic picture of human nature .... In reading it, we may, by merely substituting Humanity for God, continually recognise the spontaneous presentiment of the normal harmony of our existence'.[3]

In Comte's analysis, Catholicism was left behind by the intellectual progress which it failed to incorporate into itself after 1300. It could only survive by becoming reactionary, attempting to stifle scientific discoveries.[4] Moral qualities without intellectual superiority were insufficient to establish an adequate spiritual power. Ultimately, Catholicism was unable to systematise life. But it had made an admirable attempt, and had succeeded in its real mission, which was to direct 'the moral or affective phase of progress'.[5] What Comte regarded as valuable in Catholicism was retained in the Positive synthesis, as will become apparent in the discussion of his Utopia and his Religion.

IV The Western Revolution

The Western Revolution was the title Comte gave to the second, metaphysical or negative stage, which brought about the downfall of

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1. Ibid.,I 206, III 412-3.
2. AC, Phil II 297-8; cp. Pol I 236, III 411.
3. AC, Pol III 460.
4. AC, Phil II 301; Pol III 414-7.
5. AC. Pol I 286 and III 353-4.

Catholicism and fostered the rise of positivism. The metaphysical movement was outlined as early as 1820 in "A Brief Appraisal of Modern History". It was not there treated as a complete stage, but rather as a transition between the two major attempts at synthesis. The insistence on the right to private judgement and liberty of conscience was the beginning of the end. The sixteenth-century attack on the spiritual power led to the seventeenth-century attack on the temporal power, the whole system being completely overthrown in the eighteenth century. Scientific discovery was seen as the most effective dissolvent of the old system.[1] A more political analysis was given in Comte's 1826 "Considerations on the Spiritual Power". The revolutionary dogmas of liberation of conscience, equality and sovereignty of the people helped to bring down the Catholic Feudal System. But the 'Modern Revolution' was characterised by the attempted fusion of the spiritual and temporal powers. Protestantism and Gallicism were to blame for the subordination of the spiritual to the temporal which was at the heart of contemporary disorders. War, mental anarchy, the absence of public morality, social materialism and corrupt bureaucracy were successively attributed to the absence in the metaphysical state of a strong independent spiritual power.[2]

The Cours explained "The Metaphysical State" as 'a transitional state', shielding 'the latent development of the positive spirit'. It was divided into two parts: the spontaneous decline of Catholicism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the growth of 'an avowedly negative doctrine' in the following three centuries. The rot set in with scholasticism, whose triumph in the Church 'was actually working the destruction of the theological philosophy and authority'.

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1. AC, Crisis, pp. 87-8.
2. Ibid., pp. 216-25.

The symptoms were clear in the rebellion of kings, priests and national churches against the papacy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Protestantism was anticipated by Catholic rebels:

> 'The universal prayer of the Catholic world for the regeneration of the Church had for some time shown that the critical spirit was predominant even there.'

Savonarola would be the clearest example, but Comte named no names. He merely stipulated the period, 'before the close of the fifteenth century', when 'the ancient chief of the European system had sunk down to be the elective sovereign of a part of Italy'. From this time also stemmed the 'retrograde character' of Catholicism, to be reinforced by the alliance of the Spanish Monarchy and the Society of Jesus.[1]

Protestantism laid 'the foundation of the revolutionary philosophy, by proclaiming the right of every individual to free enquiry on all subjects whatever'. Lutheranism, Calvinism and Socinianism marked the successive stages of the dissolution of the theological system. They brought political revolution to Holland, England and America. The development of the negative philosophy was also divided into three periods. The first was the 'systematic formation of the critical doctrine' by Hobbes, Spinoza and Boyle. It was pantheistic, substituting nature for the creator without a clear apprehension of invariable law. It sanctioned self-love by its 'doctrine of the "I"'. The second stage was the propagation of the negative doctrine by Voltaire and the deists. The third was the political elaboration of the negative philosophy by Rousseau and then by the Economists, who preached complete individualism and the absence of all government.[2] The French Revolution was the culmination of this movement.

Comte gave a similar explanation of the 'positive theory of the

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1. AC, Phil II 304-24.
2. Ibid., 325-62.

Western Revolution' in the Système, and a simplified portrait of the 'Transition of the West' appears in the thirteenth conversation of the Catechism. The Priest explains how 'the Pope sank into an Italian prince' and how Protestantism asserted 'absolute individualism' and the end of all spiritual authority. The Woman interrupts, 'to express the profound dislike I have ever felt for Protestantism', which had suppressed all the best institutions of Catholicism: purgatory, the adoration of the Virgin and saints, confession and the eucharist. Protestantism, the Priest adds, was also responsible for the development of 'national selfishness'. The French Revolution arose because the negative aspect of the Western Transition outstripped its positive side.[1] Comte's attitude towards Protestantism mellowed at the end of his life. He explained that it was certainly preferable to scepticism.[2] It was eventually included in the Religious Alliance against the worst revolutionary aspects of the Negative Movement.

V Comte's Utopia

Many of the aspects of Comte's ideal society will be discussed in the following two chapters. The role of the family in the education of the feelings and the importance of living openly forms part of his ethics. The role of women in positivist worship, of priests in the positivist regime, and of art in the propagation of positivist doctrine will be considered under his religion. Here I will attempt to give an overall view of the 'normal' society as Comte conceived it, concentrating in particular on his analysis of the role of the spiritual power, the working classes and public opinion in general. The details of Comte's utopia will be seen to become in-

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1. AC, Cat, pp. 408-23.
2. AC, Ingram Letters, p. 166; cp. p. 60fn.

creasingly more clearly defined as Comte grew more dogmatic.

Comte's "Brief Appraisal of Modern History" described the growth of the new social system which was to comprise savants, artists, and artisans. His "Prospectus" envisaged scientists as the spiritual power and industrialists as the new temporal power. Scientists were to determine the plan, artists to propagate it, and industrial chiefs to establish the necessary practical institutions.[1] His "Considerations on the Spiritual Power" insisted that spiritual association, based on common beliefs and feelings, was to precede temporal association, based on common interests. No less than the moral unification of Europe and of Humanity was the task that faced the spiritual power. It would also have to supervise the division of labour and the recognition of social duty by all classes, chiefs of industry and working men alike. For left unregulated, as the political economists desired, the industrial spirit would lead to a despotism of the wealthiest.[2]

Comte's opposition to the liberal principles of political economy became even more apparent in the Cours. The economists demonstrated the interdependence of all human interests, but in opposing all industrial discipline they encouraged anarchy.[3] Comte proceeded to explain "Social Statics; or, Theory of the Spontaneous Order of Human Society". The individual belonged to the family which belonged to society. Domestic life was a preparation for social life, whose principle was co-operation. The spiritual power was to check the dangers of specialisation and to preach subordination, the joys of obedience to trustworthy authority.[4] The elements of the Positive State were seen to have developed gradually through the preceding five centuries, not to be the invention of a single mind. Comte traced

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1. AC, Crisis, pp. 90-2, 128 and 157.
2. Ibid., pp. 214-45.
3. AC, Phil II 61-4.
4. Ibid., 127-48.

the industrial, aesthetic and scientific progress from medieval Catholicism. Slaves became serfs and then workers. The industrial replaced the military life, co-operation hatred. The caste system gave way to meritocracy and mechanical inventions lightened the burden of labour.[1]

Comte was uncharacteristically diffident in the Cours in his definition of the new spiritual authority. It would comprise not the savants, but a wholly new class of morally and intellectually regenerate beings. They must be free from the temporal power, gaining authority only by voluntary assent. The temporal authority could also be predicted with difficulty: 'It is impossible for anyone to foresee more than the general principle and spirit which will regulate the classification of society'. Any details were 'altogether premature'. One principle that was clear was the abolition of the distinction between public and private function. No one was to work for himself. Property was a social responsibility, open to the moral supervision of all. Comte insisted on 'the superiority of moral over political solutions', the power of an educated public opinion in regulating the abuse of wealth. Among the practical classes the more general the function the higher was the position. Bankers were at the top of the hierarchy, followed by merchants, then manufacturers and finally agriculturalists. Every one should be placed in 'the situation best adapted to his abilities', although once the system was under way there would be few changes of class since it was 'natural for professions to be hereditary'. The spiritual power was to be the arbiter of all industrial disputes and 'moderator in social conflicts', giving protection to those most in need. Under these principles Comte envisaged a united, ordered and peaceful Europe with France, of course

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1. Ibid., 369-92.

at its centre.[1]

The second chapter of the General View gave a relatively concise picture of "The Social Aspect of Positivism", stressing the importance of education and the family, before considering "The Action of Positivism Upon the Working Classes" in the following chapter. As well as presenting Comte's ideal image of the working-man this important chapter outlined his theory of 'public opinion' and his attitude to Communism. Comte regarded the working classes as natural philosophers. Their preference for the real and useful came from a common sense uncontaminated by metaphysical literary education. Their domestic ties were stronger, since they were not so absorbed with personal interests. They preserved a 'sincere and simple respect for superiors', unconcerned with pride or competition. They had a strong sense of solidarity, of the support derived from union. Even their drinking habits were admirable. Such cultivating of the social instincts was preferable to 'the self-helping spirit which draws men to the savings-bank'. But the working classes were unfit for political supremacy: 'The workman must look upon himself, morally, as a public servant.' He must abandon the demand for rights, in particular the right to vote. He must relinquish the 'ambition for wealth or rank', and rest content to remain in his own class.[2]

The working classes were to combine with the philosophers in the formation of public opinion. An aid to domestic and personal morality, the force of public opinion was the main guarantee of political morality. There were occasional coincidences of public feeling even under the modern anarchy, but these were unsystematic, sometimes even wrong in principle. Comte explained the conditions for the proper organisation of public opinion:

'There are, first, the establishment of fixed principles of social

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1. Ibid., 447-96.
2. AC, Pol I 101-6 and 151-8.

action; secondly, their adoption by the public, and its consent to their application in special cases; and lastly, a recognised organ to lay down the principles, and to apply them to the conduct of daily life.'

Comte regarded working-men's clubs as affording 'the speediest and most effectual means of elaborating Public Opinion'. They were 'a provisional substitute for the Church of old times'. A sound educational system would provide the common basis for the opinions of the positivist public.[1]

Comte approved of Communism in that it was directed at 'progress of a moral rather than intellectual kind'. It was inspired by generous sympathies but shallow theories. It failed to see that property was social, not individual, in nature. Positivism regarded property as an important social function, to be controlled by moral rather than legal agencies. Communists also failed to recognise the importance of continuity and inheritance. Comte criticised their 'anti-historical spirit, which leads them to conceive of Society as though it had no ancestors'. Comte approved of the principle of inheritance, but for reasons which would not have appealed to Samuel Smiles:

'It saves the mind and heart from the mean and sordid habits which are so often engendered by the slow accumulation of capital.'[2]

The fourth chapter of the General View, "The Influence of Positivism Upon Women", depicted women as combining with philosophers and working men to form an alliance which represented the positivist harmony of feeling, thought and action. Each class supervised its own type of meeting. The philosophers presided over the Temple of Humanity, workers took the most active part in the discussions at their clubs, and women promoted conversation in their salons. Between them they were to form a public opinion which would teach the powerful and wealthy, merely by praise and blame, that 'the only justifiable

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1. Ibid., 110-5 and 136-7.
2. Ibid., 120-33.

use of power or talent is to devote it to the service of the weak'.[1]

Later expositions of Comte's ideal society added little to these principles but additional, often ridiculous, detail. Two concepts, in particular, were misleading. Comte wrote of labour as 'essentially gratuitous'. He did not mean that workmen were not to receive any wages, but that their primary reward was the satisfaction of fulfilling their duty and the gratitude which that elicited.[2] He also referred to his 'feminine utopia', which involved a form of artificial insemination which would make reproduction depend solely on women. Utopias, in this sense, were symbolic 'condensations of the final synthesis', encapsulating many ideas in one image, as the Eucharist in Catholicism.[3]

The fourth volume of the Système was devoted to a description of Comte's "Theory of the Future of Man". Again he defined the role of the four main classes: women, priests, industrialists and working-men. He reiterated the workers' duty to remain within their own class. He gave some specific advice on political issues, advocating the authorisation of the Trade Unions and the restoration of Algeria to the Arabs. He predicted that Louis Napolean's Dictatorship would lead immediately into the positivist régime, provided that it retained spiritual liberty. There were to be no restrictions on the press, but journalism was gradually to be replaced by placards, pamphlets and working-men's clubs. He ended with an outline of the order in which first the different nations of Europe and then the rest of the world would become positivist.[4]

The Catechism contained another discussion of the function of the four classes and another attack on the metaphysical and industrialistic

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1. Ibid., 186.
2. AC, Pol II 332.
3. AC, Pol IV 240-2.
4. Ibid., 62-74 and 324-454.

concept of rights as opposed to duties.[1] The Appeal to Conservatives contained an attack on universal suffrage, "the official sanction of the disease of the West". Immediate modifications Comte suggested were open ballots, which would increase the voters' sense of responsibility, and voting by proxy. Again Comte expressed his preference for Communism to individualism and Conservatism to both. He ended by urging Louis Napolean to proclaim himself 'Dictator for Life', thus inaugurating the transition to the Positivist régime.[2]

Comte was in no sense of the word a politician, but he influenced a number of more practical men. The Curious Strength of Positivism in English Political Thought has already been noticed. Particularly in the establishment of the Trades Unions and in their opposition to imperialism, Comte's English followers carried out his basic principles with an energy and political astuteness beyond his own powers. But the original ideas were his.[3]

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1. AC, Cat, pp. 237 and 331-3.
2. AC, Appeal, pp. 142-50 and 190.
3. Noel Annan, The Curious Strength of Positivism in English Political Thought, London, 1959, see Part II, Ch. II.

CHAPTER IV

Ethics

I Cerebral Theory

Comte claimed that Positive morality rested on a sound physiological basis. He was certainly indebted to Gall for some of the leading elements of his cerebral theory. But just as the British phrenologists followed Spurzheim and Combe in developing the moralistic potential in Gall's ideas, so Comte derived a whole system of morals from Gall's anatomical discoveries. This expansion from physiology to ethics will be examined here. An outline of Comte's physiological ideas in this section leads on to the following section's consideration of his insistence on the subordination of egoism to altruism.

Comte's early essays saw social physics as a combination of physiology and the social factor, 'the progressive influence of human generations upon each other'. Moral phenomena were the last to begin to become positive, but the process was 'hardly yet commenced'. Already Comte saw that to improve society he had to improve people. It was necessary to counteract 'the force of the anti-social dispositions naturally preponderant in human nature' and to develop 'natural morality'. Ideal citizens needed to undergo an education 'habituating them from childhood to a voluntary subordination of their personal interest to the common interest'.[1] An 1828 essay on Broussais recognised the recent achievements of Cabanis and Gall in the examination of mental and moral phenomena. Broussais was praised for his attacks on introspective psychology. Comte saw the need for an accurate cerebral theory, 'assigning an organ to each recognised affection, in order to place the discussion on a positive basis'. It was even better initially 'to propose a seat at variance with the true

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1. AC, Crisis, pp. 190-4 and 236-7.

one than none at all'. For subsequent observation would disprove or verify the hypothetical localisation of faculties within the brain.[1]

One important physiological aspect of positive moral theory was provided by Bichat. His discovery of the laws of intermittence and habit Comte described in the Cours as 'one of the chief bases of the gradual perfectibility of animals, and especially of Man'. It taught that voluntary acts could gradually be transformed into involuntary tendencies, and that all faculties needed exercise to remain strong.[2] In the Système this last point was raised into a separate law, that of exercise: 'every apparatus of animal life is developed by constant exercise, and diminished or even atrophied by prolonged disuse'. Human progress came about not through random physical or chemical changes but through deliberate and continuous direction of the modifications achieved by exercise or disuse. Comte did not believe in the evolution of new species, but, within the species, looked for progress through acquired modifications passed on by the Lamarckian law of hereditary transmission.[3] In the Catechism the Priest explains how these laws of animal life gave 'the power of improvement' to the human race, and set as a goal 'the direct amelioration of man's nature, his physical, intellectual, and above all his moral nature'.[4]

The Cours described man's "Intellectual and Moral, or Cerebral Functions". It attacked previous psychological systems which concentrated almost exclusively on the intellect. Comte maintained that 'the affections, the propensities, the passions are the great springs of human life'.[5] Gall had confirmed the pre-eminence of the

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1. AC, Early Essays, p. 345.
2. AC, Phil I 453-6.
3. AC, Pol I 492-3.
4. AC, Cat, pp. 225-7.
5. AC, Phil I 462-3.

affective faculties by locating their organs at the back and middle of the brain and the intellectual at the front. The characteristically human faculties of intellect were less energetic because further from the primitive centre of the nervous system. Gall and Spurzheim were also credited with having shown how exercise develops the faculties and inactivity wastes them, and how the intellectual faculties could channel the use of the others to meet the needs of any situation. Cerebral physiology showed the limits of the changes achievable by education or legislation. But it was only 'a scientific hypothesis'. Comte criticised Gall's 'venturesome and largely erroneous localisation of the faculties' and suggested some improvements to his theory. His main complaint was that there were too many faculties. Gall identified and located twenty-seven, Spurzheim thirty-five. Also, Gall had failed to link the brain with the rest of the nervous system. His achievements were important, but there was much more to be clarified.[1]

Comte's fullest analysis of 'the Positive Theory .... of the internal Functions of the Brain' came in the Système. He began with a tribute to Gall, 'my principal guide'. He described his theory as agreeing 'in all essential points with the leading ideas of Gall'.[2] Littré emphasised Comte's reliance on Gall for what was of value in the Positive cerebral theory, the construction of which marked the beginning of his second career. Littré regarded both with suspicion, describing Comte's theory as 'une hypothèse entée sur une hypothèse'.[3] A recent study of the relationship concludes that Comte's final table 'ne gardera de Gall que la division des fonctions en affectives et intellectuelles, et leur situation dans la topographie cérébrale'.[4] But some of the faculties which Comte retained also derived from Gall.

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1. Ibid., 468-79.
2. AC, Pol I 540-1 and 559.
3. Littré, op. cit., pp. 538-52.
4. Georges Lanteri-Laura, Histoire de la phrenologie, Paris, 1970, p. 143.

The Instinct of Generation, Love of Offspring, and Wish to Destroy, as well as Vanity, Pride and Attachment, among Gall's twenty-seven faculties, find places, slightly altered, in Comte's eighteen functions of the brain. As Comte admitted, he needed to remodel Gall's theory. Gall was unaware of the laws of social development which gave the starting-point and aim of Comte's cerebral theory. Both had adopted the subjective method, but Comte was conscious of this. He regarded 'the determination of cerebral organs as subsequent to, and indeed as depending upon, the scientific study of mental and moral functions'. Gall's emphasis had been anatomical, Comte's was moral. Comte confessed that the statical side of his theory was less certain than the dynamical side. The cerebral theory, especially the details of size, structure and localisation, would need to be tested à posteriori. But Comte felt confident about the development of the faculties which formed the basis of his moral system.[1]

The most important part of Comte's cerebral theory was his analysis of the ten 'affective motors'. Affection was the chief source of spontaneity and of unity. The 'affective life' fell into two basic divisions: personal and social, or egoistic and altruistic. 'Vital unity' was achieved through one or the other: 'the Intellect has simply to choose between two kinds of masters, the personal or the social propensities'. But between 'complete Egoism and complete Altruism', which were rarely attained by any individual, there were a number of intermediate affections. Comte's ten affective faculties were arranged in order of increasing altruism. First came the five egoistic instincts: self-preservation, the sexual, the maternal, the destructive or military and the constructive or industrial. Then came two intermediate propensities, Pride, or love of power, and Vanity,

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1. AC, Pol I 542-51 and 589-91.

or love of approbation. These were both essentially personal, but the reliance on others for their gratification made them partly social. Finally came the three altruistic propensities: Attachment, Veneration and Benevolence, or Universal Love. Love and respect for individuals led to love of communities which in turn aspired to Love of Humanity, the highest feeling possible to man.[1]

Comte also systematised the five intellectual functions, which were used to channel the ten affective motors into producing the three practical qualities of Courage, Prudence and Perseverance. All this was reproduced diagrammatically in the table entitled "Positive Classification of the Eighteen Internal Functions of the Brain, or Systematic View of the Soul". Printed in the Système and the Catechism and reproduced here in the appendix, this table was copied by George Eliot into two of her notebooks.[2]

II The Subordination of Egoism to Altruism

The recognition of the affections as the springs of human action posed a problem for human morality. For 'the least noble and most animal propensities are habitually the most energetic, and therefore the most influential'.[3] The personal or selfish instincts were not without their moral uses. They gave aim and direction to social action by enabling us to assess how our neighbours would like to be loved. But it remained the goal of individual and social development 'to subordinate the satisfaction of the personal instincts to the habitual exercise of the social faculties'.[4]

The Discourse aimed at a similar goal: 'the constant relative

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1. Ibid., 554-68.
2. Ibid., facing p. 594; Cat, Appendix Table C; see Ch. VI.
3. AC, Phil I 463.
4. AC, Phil II 131 and 151.

strengthening of the eminent faculties which most distinguish Humanity from mere Animality'. The metaphysical and theological encouragement of individualism and egoism was deplored. The Positive spirit was alone 'capable of directly cultivating social feeling, the first and necessary basis of all sound morality'.[1] This was the object of the morality expounded in the General View. The prime factor in this amelioration of human nature was to be 'the direct exercise of our social sympathies, whether systematic or spontaneous'. Family life, and the worship of women were systematised to this end.[2]

Comte frequently promised a systematic treatment of Positive Morality. The second volume of the Système divided human order into social and moral. The latter formed the seventh science, Morals 'the science of men's individual existence', to be based on the cerebral theory. It was to be fully explained in the fourth volume.[3] But in the fourth volume Comte referred forward again to another fuller forthcoming treatment of the subject in the seventh volume of the Subjective Synthesis, which never materialised.[4] He did, however, describe personal morality as a matter of 'compressing egoism, developing altruism'. Christianity had attempted the first; the second was 'essentially the more effective'. The personal instincts were not to be repressed, only disciplined, and channelled into useful directions. The French word was 'comprimer'. The instinct of self-preservation, for example, was sanctioned by altruism and entrusted with the care of bodily needs. It was disciplined by sobriety as opposed to ascetism. The sexual instinct was at present 'stimulated unduly by the brain'. It was to be rendered as inactive as possible while being discredited by the fuller development of the altruistic

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1. AC, Discourse, pp. 95 and 113.
2. AC, Pol I 73.
3. AC, Pol II 352-8.
4. AC, Pol IV 203-6.

instincts in family and public life. The constructive was to be encouraged while the destructive instinct was to be diminished by disuse. Pride and vanity were to become exclusive attributes of the temporal and spiritual chiefs, since, although impairing happiness, they contributed to more efficient work.[1]

The Priest in the Catechism explains that the moral law, 'Live for others', sanctions the egoistic inclinations as 'indispensable to our material existence', and opposes the practice of ascetic 'austerities which, by lessening our strength, makes us less fit for the service of others'. Gall had updated St. Paul's teaching on nature and grace by revealing 'the real opposition between the posterior seat of the brain, the seat of our personal instincts, and its anterior region, the seat both of our sympathetic impulses and our intellectual faculties'. The Priest outlines the cerebral theory. When the Woman expresses surprise that maternal affection should be classified as egoistic, the Priest explains that the egoism inherent in the animal instinct was the stimulus for a developed sympathy. This was the basis of positive morality:

> 'the greater energy of the personal instincts may thus serve to compensate the natural weakness of our instincts of sympathy, by originating the impulse which they stand in need of, but do not find in themselves. Once set in motion, the benevolent affection persists and grows by virtue of the immense superiority of its attraction, after the coarser stimulant has ceased to act.[2]

The maternal instinct must develop into a more altruistic love.

The same development, the Priest again teaches, must take place within marriage. For a man, the 'object of the sexual appetite is to originate or to sustain .... the feelings which lead him to give full scope to his tenderness'. This is necessary until he is 'sufficiently pure .... to dispense with this coarse stimulant'. Widowhood was preferable to marriage because 'the sexual relation impairs to a great

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1. Ibid., 246-52.
2. AC, Cat, pp. 253 and 260-3.

degree the influence of the wife, by mixing with it something coarsely personal'.[1] The sexual impulse, Comte lamented in the Appeal to Conservatives, was the worst of our personal impulses, the most disturbing and 'the least capable of being usefully transformed'. It was one of 'the chief imperfections of human existence'.[2] In this region at least, he was in danger of repressing rather than channelling the egoistic instincts. An elucidation of his teaching on the Family and on the worship of women will help to clarify the increasing idealism of his education of the feelings.

III The Family

The Family is the first and smallest community to which every individual belongs. For Comte it was crucial in the development of social love or sympathy:

'The love of his family leads Man out of his original state of Self-love and enables him to attain finally a sufficient measure of Social love.'

Comte went on to give 'a systematic view' of domestic relations. The clarity of this exposition and the importance of these ideas in his system warrant quotation at length:

'The first germ of social feeling is seen in the affection of the child for its parents. Filial love is the starting-point of our moral education: from it springs the instinct of Continuity, and consequently of reverence for our ancestors. It is the first tie by which the new being feels himself bound to the whole past history of Man. Brotherly love comes next, implanting the instinct of Solidarity, that is to say of union with our contemporaries: and thus we have already a sort of outline of social existence. With maturity new phases of feeling are developed. Relationships are formed of an entirely voluntary nature; which have therefore a still more social character than the involuntary ties of earlier years. This second stage in moral education begins with conjugal affection, the most important of all, in which perfect fullness of devotion is secured by the reciprocity and indissolubility of the bond. It is the highest type of all sympathetic instincts and has appropriated to itself in a special sense the name of Love. From this most perfect of unions proceeds

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1. Ibid., pp. 320 and 325.
2. AC, Appeal, p. 7.

the last in the series of domestic sympathies, parental love. It completes the training by which Nature prepares us for universal sympathy: for it teaches us to care for our successors; and thus it binds us to the Future, as filial love had bound us to the Past.'[1]

"The Positive Theory of the Family" was further explained in the Système, where Comte insisted that 'it is through their very imperfections that the domestic affections become the only natural medium between Egoism and Altruism'. Again he explained how filial love bred veneration, fraternal love attachment, and conjugal love brought out all three social instincts: attachment, veneration and universal love. Marriage was 'the only union which is able to produce complete personal identification'. It was also the best example of a strong egoistic instinct, the sexual impulse, awakening benevolent instincts. The Paternal relation developed benevolence, the love of inferiors. It could be made more voluntary by the increasing practise of adoption.[2]

Conjugal union, Comte maintained, was a true type of religion. It needed to be based on all three aspects of life: a harmony of feeling, thought and action. A marriage based solely on affection was liable to change and disaster, 'for want of a common Faith, to give strength to the mutual love'. Marriage was also a type of the Positive State, in its division of spiritual and temporal power. The moral superiority belonged to the woman but she must accept the rule of man in practical decisions. Comte quoted Aristotle with approval: 'The principal strength of woman consists in overcoming the difficulty of obedience.' But the key to Comte's conception of the Family was its aim 'to cultivate to the highest point the influence of Woman over Man'. The worship of women in Positivism will be considered more fully in the following chapter. Here it is sufficient to notice Comte's dictum, 'Woman is the real centre of the Family.'[3]

The indissolubility of marriage was central to Comte's teaching.

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1. AC, Pol I 75-6.
2. AC, Pol II 155-60.
3. Ibid., 162-71.

It extended beyond death to the duty of eternal widowhood. The Woman in the Catechism accepts,

'Unless you make the family ties unchangeable and eternal, you cannot ensure them the consistency and completeness which are indispensable if they are to have their due moral effect.'[1]

It was through the family that Comte hoped to regenerate mankind, a programme that was both spontaneous and systematic, based on the 'real' evidence of recent physiology, and aiming at an 'ideal' state of moral perfection.

IV Public Opinion

Comte's conception of the role of public opinion in maintaining political morality was considered in the final section of the previous chapter. Here will be outlined his extension of that concept to private life. Comte gave little space to the elaboration of the principle that positivists should live without concealment, but its importance was indicated by his adoption of the motto 'Vivre au grand jour', or 'Live Openly'.

The Discourse recognised that positive morality could only be established through the agency of the spiritual authority, aided by the spontaneous influence of public opinion.[2] Public opinion, Comte explained in the Système, was the

'surest guarantee for morality .... For as the whole tendency of Positivism is to induce everyone to live as far as possible without concealment, the public will be entrusted with a strong check upon the life of the individual.'

Public opinion was to replace the influence of theological illusions in checking man's worst instincts. Right conduct would be rewarded by 'the approval of our fellow-beings'. Comte seemed to envisage little trouble in the formation or functioning of this external

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1. AC, Cat, pp. 324
2. AC, Discourse, p. 111

bolster to conscience. It was obvious that 'the public is naturally the judge of the good or bad effect of action upon the common welfare'.[1]

The fourth volume of the Système explained how, in addition to the Temples of Humanity and the working-men's clubs, the salon was to aid the family in 'the formation of public opinion'.[2] The Priest also explained 'this fundamental rule' which was 'the personal basis of public life', that men must 'Live without Concealment'.[3] Comte seemed to feel that any further elaboration was unnecessary. It was a maxim which all the Positivists accepted without question.

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1. AC, Pol I 110-1.
2. AC, Pol IV 274-5.
3. AC, Cat, p. 335.

CHAPTER V

Religion

I Women and Worship

Comte's system was unequivocally geared to meeting the needs of Man, the male of the species. He was not concerned with women in their own right but in their value for men. He made his position quite clear: 'The most important duty of woman is to form and perfect man.'[1] Within this limit, I will consider first Comte's increasingly elevated view of women and their role in man's education before examining their function in Positivist worship. As guardian angels and representatives of Humanity, women played an essential part in the Religion of Humanity.

The Cours was unflattering to women. It stressed their mental inferiority and their incapacity for government. They were portrayed as children in comparison with men, and therefore 'more remote .... from the ideal type of the race'. But Comte already called them 'as superior to men in a spontaneous expansion of sympathy and sociality, as they are inferior to them in understanding and reason'. Their function, in the family and in society at large, was therefore to educate man's feelings, to thaw his 'cold and rough reason'.[2]

The fourth chapter of the General View explained in more detail "The Influence of Positivism upon Women". Comte maintained that 'women represented the affective element in our nature, as philosophers and people represent the intellectual and practical elements'. They were still regarded as inferior in all kinds of force, physical or intellectual, but their 'tendency to place social above personal feelings' made them morally superior to men. Their influence was to be felt through the salons but especially through the family. The

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1. AC, Cat, p. 137.
2. AC, Phil II 135-6.

mother inculcated the elementary principles of morality. On her man relied for the initial training of his affections. Marriage completed the education of the heart. Woman was purer than man, less dominated by the sexual impulse. In marriage, Comte maintained, "The influence of her purity reacts on man, and ennobles his affection.' But her life was to remain domestic. Comte attacked 'modern sophisms about women's rights'. If women attempted to compete with men in the practical sphere they would not only fail but suffer morally. They should not have to work, but be maintained financially by men. Their education should be the same as men's, however, since their vocation was to educate others. In particular, they must have 'sound historical views'.[1]

Comte emphasised the need for women to receive 'an encyclopedic education', in the Système. They were to be exempt from work, wealth and power. Their education would enable them to accept their positions: 'A sound appreciation of the order of things would lead them to see how important submission is to dignity.'[2] In the Catechism, the Woman fears that 'her ignorance exposes her to the ill-concealed contempt of a son puffed up with pride of knowledge'. The Priest reassures her that woman will be thoroughly educated to fulfill her task. Later, he explains that although man is stronger in character and intellect, 'woman is more accurate and penetrating'. Properly educated, the wife would be fully competent to succeed the mother in her chief function, 'the amelioration of man's moral nature'.[3]

In his appreciation of Medieval Catholicism in the Cours, Comte had referred to the worship of Jesus and his mother as ideal types. The moral doctrine of Positivism, he predicted, would also 'be composed of a series of types'.[4] In the General View he recounted from his

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1. AC, Pol I 164-201.
2. AC, Pol IV 61-2.
3. AC, Cat, pp. 291-2 and 320-2.
4. AC, Phil II 289-90.

own experience how 'constant adoration of one whom Death has implanted more visibly and deeply in the memory, leads all high natures .... to give themselves more unreservedly to the service of Humanity'.[1] These elements from the past history of mankind and of Auguste Comte were developed into a complete system of Positive worship.

The purpose of Positive prayer was the exercise and consequent strengthening of altruistic affections. Comte explained that Positivism deliberately separated worship from the self-interest inherent in Christian petitions. It became simply 'a solemn out-pouring .... of men's nobler feelings'.[2] In his "Definitive Systematisation of the Positive System of Worship", Comte described the object of 'the Positive cultus' as 'the direct and persistent encouragement of our instincts of sympathy'. Positive worship expressed 'emotions in an idealised form', purifying them 'from their ordinary admixture of egoism'.[3] The Priest also explains the purpose of "The Worship as a Whole" in the third Conversation of the Catechism. We adore Humanity, in her representatives, 'in order to serve her better by bettering ourselves'. The believer in God asked for benefits: 'The positivist prays in order to give expression to his best affections.' But the Priest was very careful to emphasise that prayer was only a supplement to action when that was impossible. To act altruistically was better than to think benevolently:

'Action will always have more effect than prayer, not merely on the external result, but also on the amelioration of our nature.'[4]

Comte carefully described the technique of Positive prayer. It needed to be definite:

'Prayer would be of little value unless the mind could clearly define its object. The worship of women satisfies this condition, and may be of greater efficacy than the worship of God.'

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1. AC, Pol I 192.
2. Ibid., 209.
3. AC, Pol IV 81.
4. AC, Cat, pp. 87 and 106-9

The positivist was to idealise a woman of his acquaintance. Comte claimed,

'No one can be as unhappy as not to be able to find some woman worthy of his peculiar love, whether in the relation of wife or mother; someone who in his solitary prayer may be present to him as a fixed object of devotion.'

Even a dead woman could be resurrected through the imagination. If there was really no one suitable known to them, positivists might 'choose from the women of the past some type adapted to their own nature'. They could also invent an 'ideal', if all else failed.[1]

Positivist worship was a form of art, which stressed moral rather than physical beauty.[2] The Priest described it as 'essentially aesthetic'. Every prayer 'becomes in Positivism a real work of art, in as much as it is the expression of our best feelings'. Worship was aided by the use of ornaments 'from the accumulated stores of human art, the aesthetic treasures of Humanity'. It was also subject to the same rules as art:

'The ideal must be an amelioration of the real, or it is inadequate for its moral purpose .... But the ideal must be subordinate to the real, otherwise the presentation would be untrue, and the worship would become mystical.'

The worshipper must be conscious that he is creating a subjective ideal:

'The Positivist shuts his eyes during his private prayers, the better to see the internal image; the believer in theology opened them to see without him an object which was an illusion.'

The Woman sees that 'in the subjective worship we may neglect physical laws in order to cling more closely to the moral'. But the Priest warns her not to forget the real. In meditation she should work 'from without inwards', and fix precisely the place, the seat, the attitude, and lastly the dress of the object of worship. The Woman promises to obey this Positive principle of subordinating the subjective to the objective.[3]

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1. AC, Pol I 209-11.
2. AC, Pol IV 84.
3. AC, Cat, pp. 89-111.

Comte's Preface to the Système explained how Positive worship originated in his own experience. His adoration of Clotilde de Vaux rekindled his love for his mother and led him to regard Sophie, his cleaning lady, as his subjective daughter. These three were taken as types for the three guardian angels. The worship of wife, mother and daughter involved the 'culture of the three sympathetic instincts, attachment between equals, veneration for superiors, kindness to inferiors'.[1] This 'private worship' was explained in the fourth volume of the Système. The 'three guardian angels' between them would care for the Positivist's whole life, and ensure that 'man has always by his side a superior being lending him benevolent assistance, judging him without illusion'.[2] The Priest similarly explains that 'each man finds around him real guardian angels' whose secret adoration .... tends to make us better and happier.' Widows made better angels than wives since they were freed from any sexual association. 'Angels have no sex', the Priest explains, 'as they are eternal'.[3] Comte even went so far as to specify three times of prayer each day, an hour on getting up, half an hour before going to bed and a quarter of an hour at mid-day.[4]

Public worship concentrated on women as the symbol or representative of Humanity. Comte claimed in the General View that woman was 'the purest and simplest impersonation of Humanity'. He described the banner to be used in religious Services, with "the emblem of Humanity pictured as a woman of thirty years of age, bearing her son in her arms'.[5] Any resemblance to the Madonna and to Clotilde de Vaux was completely intentional. Comte never elaborated the details of Positivist liturgy. He had made his original ideas ridiculous

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1. AC, Pol I xv-xix.
2. AC, Pol IV 272; cp. 96-7.
3. AC, Cat, pp. 120 and 325.
4. Ibid., p. 125; Pol IV 103.
5. AC, Pol I 169 and 312.

enough already. But the basic concept of moral elevation through conscious meditation and idealisation was not so absurd. And he emphasised that public worship was less important than private worship, which was based on simple family love.

II Priests and Régime

The place of the spiritual power in society was explained in the previous chapter, under Comte's 'Utopia'. Here I will outline the qualifications necessary for the priesthood, their chief function, that of education, and the whole régime it was their duty to direct. After describing the nine sacraments through which all Positivists were to pass, I will explain the Positive Calendar, which systematised the commemoration of the Saints of Humanity.

Comte's early essays recognised that the new spiritual power would consist of general scientists rather than specialists. They were to know 'the methods and the main results of all other positive sciences'.[1] Comte's Seventh Circular set a rigorous standard for this knowledge. Each candidate was to write seven theses, one on each science, and be interviewed on each one, at intervals of one to three months.[2] The Priest in the Catechism explains that those who wish to follow him must renounce property, wealth and power. One had to be twenty-eight to become an aspirant, thirty-five to become a vicar, and forty-two to become a fully-fledged priest. Marriage was obligatory, in contrast with Catholicism, since the moral guides of society could not dispense with the angelic influence of women.[3]

Comte's "Considerations on the Spiritual Power" acknowledged education to be its chief function.[4] The General View divided each

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1. AC, Crisis, p. 210.
2. AC, Circulars, pp. 65-6.
3. AC, Cat, pp. 300-3.
4. AC, Crisis, p. 227.

person's education into two main periods: the spontaneous cultivation of the affective and aesthetic instincts at home from birth until puberty, and the systematic lectures on science attended from puberty until adolescence.[1] Again, the Priest in the Catechism explains this in greater detail. The first fourteen years were unsystematic. The first seven were completely under the mother's care: the second seven brought the introduction of regular studies of a 'purely aesthetic' kind. Then came seven years systematic study of doctrine:

> 'Thus, from geometry up to morals, every young man must in seven years systematically go through the objective ascent which it took Humanity so many centuries to accomplish when left to its own natural efforts.'[2]

This was the governing principle of Comte's educational system. The individual was to follow the evolution of the race, consciously repeating what was achieved spontaneously in the past. For the first seven years he was a fetichist, for the next seven a polytheist.[3] Theological belief Comte came to see as only a transition between Fetichism and Positivism, 'necessary for the collective evolution of the race, but avoidable in the education of the individual'.[4] But this was the only exception to the general rule, which was to bind the individual more closely to Humanity.

Seven was a significant number for Comte. The nine sacraments of life were to take place at multiples of seven years, as the Priest explains under "Private Worship". First, at birth, came Presentation, the equivalent of baptism, when each infant was given two patron saints. At fourteen came Initiation, when the child passed from the care of the mother to that of priesthood. Through Admission, at the age of twenty-one, each individual became a servant of Humanity. Destination, at twenty-eight, sanctioned the choice of career. Marriage was to

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1. AC, Pol I 139-41.
2. AC, Cat, pp. 283-8.
3. Ibid., pp. 180 and 286.
4. AC, Appeal, p. 99.

be entered on by men at thirty-five and by women at twenty-eight. Maturity came at forty-two, Retirement twenty-one years later. Transformation was the last duty of an individual, in which he named his successor, to ensure the continuity of his work. Finally, in the sacrament of Incorporation, seven years after a man's death, 'a solemn judgement' was made, by public opinion, on whether he was worthy to be buried in the sacred wood which surrounded the Temple of Humanity, which would symbolise his attainment of subjective immortality.[1] Quite how seriously Comte took all these details it is difficult to establish. They were certainly not intended to amuse. Some of the sacraments, such as Presentation, Initiation and Marriage were performed by Positivists. But the ages at which they should be undergone were taken more as a guide than a necessity.

The Positive Year was divided into lunar months. The system of eighty-one festivals which systematised the public and private Worship of Humanity can best be understood by reference to the table Comte published in the Catechism, reproduced here in the Appendix. The same applies to the "Positivist Calendar" of great men, which George Eliot copied into one of her notebooks. Comte explained in the General View that the commemoration of great men was intended to continue 'the work of moral education'. It had been practised under Catholicism but limited to its own saints. Positivism could appreciate the great men of all ages. It encouraged a 'deep reverence' which was free from mysticism and should provoke emulation.[2] Comte also created an equivalent of hell, which preserved the memory of the wicked in perpetual infamy. This had included 'the two principal opponents of progress, Julian and Bonaparte', but reprobation was later abandoned as cultivating hatred.[3]

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1. AC, Cat, pp. 128-36.
2. AC, Pol I 81 and 276-7.
3. Ibid. I 82 and IV 351.

Comte recognised that his 'historical cultus' gave a disproportionate importance to modern times, but this was because there were no available individual representatives of earlier periods such as Fetichism.[1] He was always open to new suggestions, accepting Shelley, Spencer, Bunyan and Burns on the recommendation of British positivists.[2] Some of Comte's inclusions and omissions may appear strange. The whole concept of renaming months, classifying heroes and providing substitutes for leap years became ridiculous. But the basic principle of cultivating the memory of great men and women was at the heart of the Religion of Humanity. The General View expressed the emotion behind this identification with Humanity through its greatest representatives:

'To live in others is, in the truest sense of the word, life .... To prolong our life indefinitely in the Past and Future, so as to make it more perfect in the Present, is abundant compensation for the illusions of our youth which have now passed away for ever.'[3]

The fulness of the compensation is questionable, but the strength of the need and the courage of the attempt to meet it, is not.

III Art

Art, or Poetry, by which Comte meant any form of imaginative literature, occupied an increasingly important place in the positive system. From being a mild form of intellectual activity preparatory to philosophy and a useful means of propaganda it became an integral part of the development of the feelings and the Worship of Humanity. After tracing this development in Comte's work I will study his comments on different types of writing, in the Système and in his correspondence with Clotilde de Vaux. Finally, I will consider his

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1. AC, Appeal, p. 174
2. AC, Ingram Letters, p. 188-9; Lettres à Hutton, pp. 22 and 39-40.
3. AC, Pol I 278.

treatment of the historical novel, about which he had a number of definite views, many of which are reflected in George Eliot's Romola.

Comte's 1822 "Prospectus" insisted that the Positive polity must be founded on observation but propagated by the imagination. Art could give 'a vivid picture of the amelioration which the new system should bring about in the condition of mankind', which could help bring about the requisite 'moral revolution'.[1] Comte claimed that his mental crisis of 1838 increased his appreciation of the value of art.[2] But the sixth book of the Cours still presented art as relatively unimportant. It was a pleasant 'exercise of the aesthetic faculties' and 'an agreeable mingling of thought and emotion'. It 'prevented too strong a preponderance of the material life', but the education it provided needed to be confirmed by the more rigorous displines of science and philosophy. Its 'chief service' was that of 'charming and improving the humblest and the loftiest minds, elevating the one, and soothing the other'. It could also be used to popularise Positivism: 'What philosophy elaborates, Art will propagate'.[3]

The importance of literature in Comte's system was fully explained in chapter five of the General View, "The Relation of Positivism to Art". Positivism, Comte began, brought 'the long divorce of Reason from Imagination and Feeling to a natural close'. Philosophy, politics and poetry were all included in the Positive synthesis: the true, the good and the beautiful were one. Art was 'an ideal representation of Fact'. Science explained fact, art beautified it, cultivating our sense of perfection. The poet was not to direct life, but to elevate it. His 'mental and moral versatility' tended to make him an unfit guide. But he could assist the spiritual power by

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1. AC, Crisis, p. 156.
2. AC, Confessions, p. 49.
3. AC, Phil II 397-8 and 559-60.

idealising and stimulating goodness and beauty. Aestheticism was deplored. For art degenerated when 'held out as the aim and object of existence'. It lost its 'higher tendencies' and was 'reduced to a sensuous pleasure, or to a mere display of technical skill'. Its true purpose was 'to strengthen our sympathies'.[1]

Comte believed that 'Poetry .... does actually modify our moral nature.' Its direct aim was 'moral improvement', which it achieved by bringing feelings, thoughts and action into harmonious activity. Comte claimed,

> 'All aesthetic study, even if purely imitative, may become a useful moral exercise, by calling sympathies and antipathies into healthy play .... Art invites the thinker to leave his abstractions for the study of real life; it elevates the practical man into a region of thought where self-love has no place.'[2]

Positivism invited the poet to fulfil 'his noblest function, the culture of generous sympathies'. In the Subjective Synthesis, Comte claimed that art was superior to science. It was able 'to communicate emotions, especially those of sympathy', and so to form 'the connecting link between the preparation of the intellect and the supremacy of the heart'.[3]

The sixth chapter of the General View, recognised the importance of art in worship. Science supplied the principles of the worship of Humanity but Poetry its forms. Poetry could help men 'to realise the conception of Humanity':

> 'Science unassisted cannot define the nature and destinies of this Great Being with sufficient clearness for a religion in which the object of worship must be conceived distinctly, in order to be ardently loved and zealously served.'

Poetry should not overstep the fundamental principles established by science, but it could bring these to life. This was the poet's true mission: 'to give beauty and grandeur to human life by inspiring a

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1. AC, Pol I 221-7.
2. Ibid., 228-31 and 241.
3. Ibid., 241; Subj. Synth., pp. 7 and 37-8.

deeper sense of our relation to Humanity'. Comte planned great festivals of Art to celebrate the solidarity and continuity of Humanity, and to make everyone share his sense of the unity of the human race.[1]

Comte saw both the need for the artistic presentation of Positivist principles, and his own incapacity to meet that need. He wrote, in the Subjective Synthesis,

'For a fuller triumph we must look to purely poetical pictures, which it is not for me to execute, though I can conceive their nature, and foresee their advent.'[2]

He had to content himself with developing his aesthetic principles and describing the sort of works he would like to have written. He had called in the Cours for idealisation of public life.[3] But his aesthetic theory was most clearly expressed in the General View. He insisted, in art as in worship, that the 'ideal must always be subordinate to the real, otherwise feebleness as well as extravagence is the consequence'. The main function of art was 'to construct types on the basis furnished by science'. Women and workers would write about personal or domestic life, philosophers about public life. There would be two types of work which portrayed public life: 'prophetic pictures of the regeneration of man' which involved 'the systematic construction of Utopias', and historical writings contrasting the present with the past.[4]

Comte was particularly keen on historical novels. He wrote in the Cours,

'The kind of Art in the form of literature which appears most suitable to modern criticism is that in which private is historically connected with public life, which in every age necessarily modifies the character.'

He singled out Scott and Manzoni for special praise.[5] The General View

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1. AC, Pol I 272-80.
2. AC, Subj. Synth., p. 3.
3. AC, Phil II 560-1.
4. AC, Pol I 228 and 253-5.
5. AC, Phil II 455.

further elaborated the role of art 'in representing the great historic types'. Poets could help to familiarise students of history 'with poetic descriptions of the various social phases and of the men who played a leading part in them'. Corneille, Manzoni and Scott had 'already idealised some of the past phases of Humanity'. The Positivist poet would go further. He would so thoroughly identify himself with all past historical stages as 'to awaken our sympathies for them, and revive the traces which each individual may recognise of corresponding phases in his own history'. One particular duty of Positivism was to render 'the fullest and most scrupulous justice to Catholicism'.[1]

Comte became increasingly more definite in his description of the Positivist historical novel. He explained that it should portray the progress of Humanity:

> 'the successive phases of her physical, her intellectual, and above all her moral progress, will each in turn be depicted .... her constant struggle against painful fatalities which have at last become a source of happiness and greatness ...
>
> Comparisons, too, may be instituted, in which the poet, without specifically attacking the old religion, will indicate the superiority of the new.' [2]

The fourth volume of the Système recurred to this theme. Italy's special contribution to Humanity was to be 'a poetic embodiment of the past'. This was to be an 'ideal expression of the philosophy of history' of Positivism,depicting 'all the phases of the preparatory life of the race up to the advent of the final state'. There were to be thirteen cantos, most of which would portray the assent of the heart and intellect towards Positivism through fetichism, the development of Greece and Rome, and the Catholic synthesis. The final canto would idealise 'man's normal existence'.[3]

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1. AC, Pol I 242-5 and 254.
2. Ibid., 273.
3. AC, Pol IV 420-1.

It is no accident that these descriptions resemble Romola. Comte had always called women 'the most aesthetic element of society'. He had looked specifically to them for 'the poetry of private life', although he had believed epic poetry to be beyond their powers.[1] He wrote in glowing terms of Clotilde's idealisation of human nature in her portraits of 'private life, ever brought back to its moral centre'.[2] In her he was disappointed. But the year of his death saw the beginning of the career of the novelist who most nearly fulfilled his dreams, George Eliot.

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1. AC, Pol I 222 and 250-1.
2. AC, Confessions, p. 86.

CHAPTER VI

George Eliot's Reading of Comte

That George Eliot read Comte's works frequently and thoroughly is not only attested by her contemporaries but by the manuscript material that survives to-day. Her journals and diaries and those of George Lewes often indicate the dates of her reading. Her notebooks contain quotations from Comte sometimes repeated in different books. Even the marginal annotations in her copies of Comte's works help to illustrate the meticulous care with which she studied the details of his system. As evidence of influence this is at best circumstantial. One can only speculate about the date or significance of some of her notes. But it is important to show that she was familiar with Comte's system in detail and in depth.

In this chapter I will trace her familiarity with the Cours, the Catechism and the Système in turn. It is clear from her notes on the English translation of the Système, late in her life, that she was concerned with all the aspects of Comte's teaching which I have outlined in the last four chapters, in particular with his transition from the objective to the subjective method. She copied out his tables of the Cerebral Theory and of the Positive Calendar. Finally, her knowledge of Comte's life is indicated by two chronologies she compiled, and by her reading of his letters to Lewes, to Valat and to Mill. I will not consider here Eliot's defence of Comte against contemporary criticism or her comments on his ideas. These are examined in Part Two and in the second chapter of Part Three. I am merely concerned to illustrate that what survives of George Eliot's unpublished notes demonstrates her close study of Comte's work.

George Eliot was involved in the early plans to translate the Cours. A letter to John Chapman of September 1851 approved of Call's

plan to publish a condensed translation. Her opinion was that Call's version would be preferable to anything produced by Harriet Martineau, whose style was popular but whose 'calibre of mind' was suspect.[1] Harriet Martineau seems not to have been aware of these views, since she made George Eliot joint trustee with Atkinson of the fund for the publication of her translation.[2] George Eliot must have read both the original and the translation, although the only definite evidence for this is Herbert Spencer's account of her attempt to convert him to Comte's ideas. He told Cross that she helped him with the French as they read together the introduction to the Cours, 'sometime in 1852'.[3]

George Eliot returned to the Cours in preparation for Romola. Her journal records that she 'Read Comte on to Middle Ages' in July 1861, which is confirmed by her praise of 'the fifth volume of the Philosophie Positive' to Sara Hennell at that time.[4] Further reading of Comte for Romola is illustrated in George Eliot's 'Italian Notes', dated 1862. After a number of Italian phrases and historical details she suddenly added two entirely different notes:

> 'Influence of egoism in determining formulae.
> Necessity of strong theistic feeling as a preparation for the religion of Humanity.'

A few pages later came the quotation I have already mentioned, expressing Comte's scorn for the eccentric minds who never make up their minds. She told Mrs. Congreve in November 1863 that she had been 'swimming in Comte' at this time.[5]

George Eliot began to write Felix Holt on May 29th 1865. The day before, her diary records that she began again 'Mill's Political Economy and Comte's Social Science in Miss Martineau's edition'.[6]

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1. GEL I 360-1.
2. GEL II 17 fn. 2.
3. Herbert Spencer to J.W. Cross, 24/10/84, Yale MS III.
4. GE Journal, 9/7/61, Yale MS I; GEL III 438.
5. "Italian Notes", ff.22 and 19; GEL IV 116.
6. GE Diary, 28-9/5/65, Yale MS I.

She also turned to the Cours in writing Middlemarch. George Lewes wrote to his son Charles from Shottermill in May 1871,

'If the mutter's study is in such a state that you can look over the books in her cupboards and on her shelves will you see if Miss Martineau's translation of Comte (two vols 8vo brown cloth) can be laid hold of - if so enclose vol I.'[1]

George Eliot also noted three passages from the first volume of Martineau's translation on the use of calculus in geometry and mechanics in her notebook for Daniel Deronda now in the Berg Collection.[2] No systematic annotation of the Cours survives, but George Eliot clearly referred to it frequently for specific information.

George Eliot's first surviving reference to the Catechism was not until October,1859: 'I have been reading lately and have nearly finished Comte's Catechism'.[3] But Lewes had reviewed it favourably in the Westminster under her editorship in 1853.[4] Eliot may therefore have read it before 1859, when she was no doubt inspired by the Congreves, who had become neighbours and immediate friends from February of that year. Richard Congreve had translated the Catechism in 1858. The copy which survives among the Lewes collection at Dr. Williams's Library is the original French edition published in Paris in 1852, heavily annotated in George Eliot's hand.

Most of the pencilled marginal entries in this copy occur after the beginning of the Sixth Conversation, the "Culte Privé". There are few critical comments. George Eliot for the most part restricted herself to simple summaries of the contents. After noticing Comte's explanation of 'Guardian Angels: Mother, Wife, Daughter', she posed the question, 'What shall women worship ?' The answer, she noted, was 'Mother, Son, Husband'. She observed Comte's recommendation of

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1. GHL to Charles Lee Lewes (28/5/71), Yale MS II.
2. "Notebook containing miscellaneous notes: Perhaps made for Daniel Deronda", f. 101v, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
3. GE Journal, 25/10/59, Yale MS I.
4. WR ns III (1853) 318-20.

'Substitutions or compensations in case of unfitness', and his times of 'Prayer: morning, mid-day, evening '.[1] She copied the names and recommended times for the Sacraments. She made a note of the 'Symbol of Humanity, Madonna + child', and the Positivist banner: 'Madonna on the white ground. Formula on green-Love, Order, Progress.'[2] She took down the duties of the priesthood, and many of the details of Comte's Utopia, for example the 'Industrial Hierarchy' and the 'Gratuitousness of Labour'.[3] Her interest appears to have continued until the Conclusion, which is marked only once. On the final page she added an index or table of contents, with a brief chronology of Comte's life, in black ink. These notes may date from the same time as Pforzheimer MS 711, a repository of references compiled for Daniel Deronda in 1874, which includes among her reading since September, 'Comte's Catechism 2nd and 3rd Parts',[4] but it may equally well date from the 1850's.

George Eliot's study of the Système is not evident in her notebooks before the mid-sixties. Her "Commonplace Book" lists the detailed contents of the four volumes. This entry can be dated between September and October 1864, when she was reading about Spain for the Spanish Gypsy, and November 1865, when she was working on Neal's History of the Puritans for Felix Holt.[5] Between material on these topics come the contents of the Système, which were evidently copied from the table of contents at the back of each volume. For under Volume One George Eliot wrote, 'Discours Préliminaire pp. 1... 321'.[6] That section actually ends on page 399, but the last number given in the list of contents is page 321.[7] George Eliot gave no

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1. AC, Cat, Paris, 1852, Dr. Williams's Library, pp. 186-9.
2. Ibid., pp. 193-201 and 207-8.
3. Ibid., pp. 299 and 304.
4. Pforzheimer MS 711 f.11.
5. GE. Diary, 6/9/64, 5/10/64, 15 and 24/11/65, Yale MS I; cp. GEL IV 208-9.
6. GE Commonplace Book, f. (107), q.225, Yale MS I.
7. AC, Pol I, Paris, 1851, 747.

details of the General View, translated by Bridges in 1865, but copied the titles of all the chapters of the rest of the Système. She also quoted a long passage on the influence of contemporaries and predecessors on each individual, ending with Comte's belief that 'l'action providentielle de l'humanité protège chacun de ses serviteurs contre les ascendants moins nobles qu'elle modifie de plus en plus.'[1]

The following year George Eliot quoted a sentence from the Système in her notebook for Felix Holt. It was an interesting recognition that theological doctrine does not essentially exert evil influence:

'Quoique toute morale théologique soit naturellement égoiste, son influence realle dépend toujours davantage de la situation que de la doctrine.'[2]

The Leweses began to study the Système very closely at this time. They took it to Spain in 1867. Lewes recorded in his Diary for January 7th, that at Biarritz he got up at eight o'clock and read volume two of the Système over his cigar, before walking on the sands. George Eliot accompanied him, presumably not with the cigar. Their reading continued until January 20th when they 'Finished Comte'.[3] George Eliot described this to Mrs. Congreve:

'After breakfast we both read the "Politique" - George one volume and I another, interrupting each other continually with questions and remarks.'

It gave her a 'moral glow' for the rest of the day.[4]

A list of George Eliot's reading for August 1868 includes the first chapter of the fourth volume of the Système, or the "General Theory of the Great Being".[5] Lewes's Diary records reading the Système in Italy in 1869 and regularly every year from 1871 to 1875, when the first two volumes of the English translation appeared.[6]

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1. GE Commonplace Book, f.(108), q.227.
2. FH Notebook f. (33), Yale MS I; GE gives the reference,'Pol.Pos', but I have been unable to locate the page.
3. GE Diary, 7 and 20/1/67.
4. GEL IV 333.
5. GE Diary, Aug. 1868; Life III 57.
6. GHL Diary, 17/7/69, 20/3/71, 5-6/9/71, 23-5 and 29/2/72, 1-2/7/72, 16-9/2/73, 27/4-10/5/73, 26-7/9/73, 2-5/10/73, 15-6 and 21-3/9/74, 31/12/74, 25/1/75, 19-22/2/75, Yale MS II

The third volume came out in 1876 and the fourth in 1877. George Eliot had offered to share the expense of publishing this last volume with Richard Congreve ten years earlier. When Frederic Harrison finally sent her a copy of the first volume she wrote to thank him, praising 'Dr. Bridges' admirable rendering of the Preface and Dedication', which she read straight away .[1] The eventual appearance of the Système in English inspired George Eliot to a close study of the whole work, reflected in the detailed notes she took in two of her notebooks, which are now kept one in New York and the other in Nuneaton. Much of the material in these notebooks is common to both. The Pforzheimer MS 707, which has been edited by William Baker,[2] contains other material relevant to Daniel Deronda and to the Napoleonic novel George Eliot seems to have been planning. The quotations from Comte only begin on folio 73 and are interspersed with irrelevant details such as the date of Nelson's birth.[3] The material in the Nuneaton notebook is more homogeneous. Entitled "Greek Philosophy, Locke and Comte", the quotations relate to critical problems in philosophy, especially ethics and epistemology. After examining her treatment of earlier philosophers I will consider the Comtean material common to the two notebooks together.

George Eliot's notebook at Nuneaton, like Lewes's History of Philosophy, appears to treat earlier thinkers as precursors of Comte. She listed a 'Catena philosophorum' which began with Bacon and ended with Comte.[4] She was particularly concerned with what Comte termed the subjective and objective methods, the systematisation of the ideal and the real from Greek philosophy onwards.[5] She referred to

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1. GEL IV 430 and VI 126.
2. Some GE Notebooks: An Edition of the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library's GE Holograph Notebooks, MS 707,708,709, 710, 711, Vol I MS 707, Salzburg, 1976.
3. Pforzheimer MS 707, f.82.
4. GE Notebook, Nuneaton, f.11.
5. Ibid., ff.6-9.

Aristotle's belief that 'All representation, even the highest, developed out of experience .... Nihil in intellectu &c'. Later, she quoted Comte on Aristotle:

'As to the positive study of the human understanding, it was sketched out when Aristotle proclaimed the necessary subordination of the subjective conceptions to the objective materials out of which they are built. But that principle was more difficult than the preceding one for the want of the complement of Leibnitz and the systematisatisation of Kant.'[1]

George Eliot selected from Locke his division of knowledge into intuition and demonstration, and from Descartes the 'necessity of limiting deduction by experiment'. She noted Kant's terms: 'Transcendental ideality, empirical reality'. His categories, she wrote, 'cannot be deduced from experience, they are the conditions of all experience, are not innate to the human understanding, but are its necessary functions or operations'.[2] She listed a number of 'Questions' which she was seeking to answer. Among these were her major concerns:

'How far is virtue knowledge, feeling, habit ?
Is it to be tested by its relation to human welfare, or is to be ascertained à priori ?'

She then turned immediately to Comte's 'religious precept bidding us in the name of good sense and morality, limit the study of the lower sciences to what is required for the prosecution of the highest'.[3] She had already referred to the utilitarians and Hutcheson's search for 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.[4] All this, it seems, was a preliminary to the study of Comte, placing him in philosophical context. From this point on, the notebook was entirely devoted to the study of his ideas. The implication was that Comte might help to solve some of these great questions.

After defining Humanity, both notebooks launched straight into

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1. Ibid., ff.10 and 39; Pol III 260-1 tmv.
2. Ibid., ff.12, 14 and 23.
3. Ibid., f.24.
4. Ibid., f.16.

a consideration of the 'Subjective and objective methods', beginning with Comte's recognition of their complementary nature:

'The natural harmony of the two methods had already been made evident on the subject of the Classification of the Sciences. The Objective Method classified them according to their logical relation to each other. The Subjective Method arrives at the same result by considering their connection with the religious purpose to which they converge'.[1]

Both notebooks also point to Comte's argument that morality was subjective in that it was to some degree independent of the external world:

'For supposing we knew that the Earth was destined to be shortly destroyed by collision with a star, yet none the less to live for others, to subordinate personal to social feeling, would remain to the last the highest good and the highest duty.'

The only complete synthesis was the subjective one, which regarded 'the facts of nature' in 'their relation to Humanity'.[2]

Both notebooks noticed Comte's attack on specialists who neglected the social purpose of science.[3] Comte argued that it was 'idle and indeed injurious, to carry the study of natural order beyond the point needed for the work of the artificial Order constructed by man'.[4] George Eliot referred in both books to Comte's insistence on the subordination of all scientific inquiry to social laws, to the needs of Humanity'. But she also noticed Comte's confusion of the issues, complaining, 'At II 72 Comte uses Objective and Subjective method as equivalent to practice and theory.' The solution was the balance of both methods: 'to govern the world we require on the one hand the knowledge of its laws, on the other, a real interest in its destinies'.[5]

The question refused to be solved easily. Both notebooks quoted Comte's warning against the extreme reached by following either the subjective or the objective method exclusively: 'Empiricism and

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1. Pforzheimer f.74; Nuneaton f.25; Pol I 363 tmv.
2. Pforzheimer ff.75-7; Nuneaton ff.26-7; Pol I 410 tmv. and 479.
3. Pforzheimer ff.74-5; Nuneaton f.26; Pol I 384.
4. Pforzheimer f.80; Nuneaton f.29; Pol II 39 tmv.
5. Pforzheimer ff.81-2; Nuneaton f.30; Pol IV 25

Mysticism are the Eternal Scylla and Charybdis of human reason.'[1]

George Eliot noticed Comte's own tendency to exaggerate subjectivity. She quoted his turning his original principle on its head:

'Not only may this primitive tendency to believe what one desires be justified relatively, it must be directly judged conformable to the fundamental principle of sound logic .... the necessary complement of the universal principle that the simplest hypothesis explaining the facts is the best'.[2]

Comte argued that our speculations were limited to our own universe, and 'as this tiny field only deserves our interest so far as it concerns Humanity, Subjectivity as well as Relativity, became at last a predominant principle in natural philosophy'.[3]

This was by no means the only topic with which George Eliot was concerned. The notebooks also quoted Comte's opposition of Will and Necessity and his description of Fatalism as 'the necessary corrective of every Theology'.[4] They recorded Comte's definition of Humanity, as composed essentially of the dead, and as the '<u>continuous whole formed by the beings which converge</u>'.[5] They summarised Comte's teaching on the importance of a sense of solidarity which came from the concept of Humanity. Each individual must belong to a larger community:

'no coherence, no dignity have been or are possible for the individual unless in subordination to some larger and composite existence. It is only in dependence on some such existence that we can satisfy our desire to perpetuate this transitory life for we thus link it to an imperishable being.'

This was prepared for by the sense of the family and the country.[6]

The Pforzheimer notebook went on to quote Comte's insistence that

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1. Pforzheimer f.86; Nuneaton f.33; <u>Pol</u> III 21
2. Pforzheimer f.88; Nuneaton f.35; <u>Pol</u> III 78-9 tmv.
3. Pforzheimer f.97; Nuneaton ff.40-1, adding a question mark in brackets after 'deserves'; <u>Pol</u> III 483 tmv.
4. Pforzheimer ff.79 and 92; Nuneaton ff.28 and 36; <u>Pol</u> I 498 and III 134 tmv.
5. Pforzheimer ff. 73 and 82; Nuneaton ff.25 and 30; <u>Pol</u> I 333 and IV 27 tmv.
6. Pforzheimer f.81; Nuneaton f.30; <u>Pol</u> IV 22 and II 48-52.

these two smaller communities still had an important role to fulfil in the education of the feelings. He lamented,

'The conception of Fatherland, at one time co-extensive with that of Home, is now in danger of being swallowed up in that of Humanity.'[1]

Both Notebooks noticed Comte's teaching on 'The sacred law of continuity'.[2] They summarised the sociological laws explained in the introduction to the third volume of the Système. These are four in number: the three states, the classification of the sciences, the active evolution and the affective evolution. They are further elaborated later in the Système. The three stages of the active evolution are 'first military conquest, second military defence, third, industry'. In the active evolution, the 'Social Instinct had to be purely civic in Antiquity, collective in the Middle Ages, and universal in the Final State'.[3]

Both notebooks copied Comte's tabulated Cerebral Theory in its entirety, as illustrated in the Appendix. They explained the principle of 'the increase of efficiency by exercise' and quoted Comte's claim that moral and intellectual progress was the exclusive property of the human species.[4] George Eliot also picked up Comte's attack on the fictitious theological regime as antipoetical, substituting the elaboration of conventional ideas for reliance on feeling:

'From Homer to Walter Scott Western Art has always derived its main effects from a faithful representation of human nature irrespective of divine influence.'[5]

In all this abundant recognition of the major elements of Comte's Religion of Humanity, George Eliot added little comment. All evaluation contained in the above analysis was inferred from the selection and juxtaposition of the material. Occasionally George Eliot added a small comment, or a question mark, to illustrate her perplexity on

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1. Pforzheimer f.96; Pol III 307.
2. Pforzheimer ff.84 and 93; Nuneaton ff.31 underlined and 37.
3. Pforzheimer ff.85-6; Nuneaton ff.32-4; Pol III 23-57 tmv.
4. Pforzheimer ff.37 and 77-8; Nuneaton ff.34 and 27; Pol I 492-3.
5. Pforzheimer f.94; Nuneaton f.38; Pol III 235.

some point. She seems to have felt that Comte sometimes emphasised continuity at the expense of solidarity. In quoting his definition of Humanity as 'composed essentially of the dead', admitting the living rarely and only provisionally, she demanded a broader definition of Humanity: 'If our duties are towards Humanity how are the living and those who are to come to be excluded ?'[1] She asked what Comte meant by an obscure passage on Fetichism, and she pointed to a possible inconsistency in his belief that man's control over the world was increasing and that the living were more and more dominated by the dead.[2] She was interested in the question on which Comte differed from Lamarck, 'Persistence or instability of species ?'[3]

These points were raised in exactly the same way in both notebooks. But one should not make too much of them. It is easy to make mistakes, as when Baker takes George Eliot's instruction, 'see this whole page for the illuminating influence of affection', as an enthusiastic comment on Comte. It is the influence of affection that is 'illuminating', not Comte's study of it.[4] George Eliot's main concern seems not to have been to question Comte's ideas, but to find out precisely what they were. The notebooks are evidence of her keen and detailed reading of the Système although their late composition rules out this particular study of Comte as an influence on anything but Theophrastus Such.

At the end of her treatment of Comte in these two notebooks George Eliot turned to different works. She quoted a letter of his to Gustave d'Eichthal, presumably from Littré, and she ended with four references to the Cours, three in French and one in Martineau's translation. The last is perhaps suggestive: 'What supports the

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1. Pforzheimer f.73; Nuneaton f.25; Pol I 333.
2. Pforzheimer ff.92-3; Nuneaton f.37.
3. Pforzheimer f.77; Nuneaton f.27; Pol I 480.
4. Pforzheimer f.85; Baker ed. p.76.

most eminent minds in their devotedness'.[1] At the very least, George Eliot was devoted to discovering what Comte had written.

Another instance of George Eliot's almost slavish copying of Comte occurs at the end of her notebook for Daniel Deronda in the Berg Collection, where she took down the whole of his Positivist Calendar. It is difficult to date this entry. The notebook itself was begun in black ink in 1868. After page 66 George Eliot then used a mixture of black and purple, before continuing in purple from page 91 until the last numbered page, at the end of the Jewish material, page 174. Page 91 quotes an article dated October 1873, which is in keeping with Beaty's observation that she switched to purple ink in 1872.[2] The Positivist Calendar she copied at the back of this notebook is in black ink and so may perhaps be dated between 1868 and 1872. It occupies thirteen sides, one for each month. It was probably taken from a French edition, either of the Catechism or the Système. She preserved the French form, St. Eloi, where the English translation had St. Eligius and her Anglicisms elsewhere differ from the English versions. She wrote 'Francis Bacon', not 'Lord Bacon' for 'Le Chancelier Bacon', and lengthened the slightly ridiculous original G. Fox and W. Penn. She also added dates and other small pieces of information to Comte's Calendar. For instance, under Homer, the second month, devoted to ancient poetry, she noticed that Ictinus and Phidias were contemporaries of Pericles, that Aristophanes was alive during the Peloponnesian War, and that Virgil, the last entry, died in 19 BC. But the importance of these pages lies not in the tiny additions but in the fact that George Eliot considered it worthwhile to copy out the complete Positivist Calendar as instituted by Comte.

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1. Pforzheimer f.100-1; Nuneaton ff.41-2, Cours V, Paris 1842, 306.
2. Jerome Beaty, "GE's Notebook for an Unwritten Novel", Princeton University Library Chronical XVIII (1957) 181.

John Cross recorded George Eliot's attempts to teach him the main ideas of Comte's General View in the last year of her life. A copy of the second edition of Bridges' translation, which appeared in 1880, survives among the Lewes collection in Dr. Williams's Library. Her diary shows that they 'Finished the Discours Préliminaire' on the last day of October, but continued to read Comte in November and December.[1] It was not only Comte's major works that she read with Lewes. In 1866 the Congreves gave them a copy of the Subjective Synthesis, for which George Eliot thanked Mrs. Congreve, assuring her that Lewes was becoming sincerely impressed by the Système 'and also by what he is able to understand of the "Synthesis"'.[2] Lewes's diary shows that he returned frequently to this last work of Comte's.[3]

Through Lewes George Eliot was familiar with the details of Comte's life. She must have read Comte's letters to him, some of which she sent to Sara Hennell in 1858.[4] In January 1865, the Leweses visited Comte's house. His old servant showed them over the apartment, Lewes noticing in particular Comte's portrait and the photograph taken after his death.[5] George Eliot recorded, 'such places, that knew the great dead, always move me deeply'.[6] Both their diaries record their reading of 'Littré on Comte' in July and August 1869,[7] and Comte's correspondence with Valat in August and October 1870.[8] These letters were only published in that year. A similar avidity for Comte's correspondence with Mill is evinced by George Lewes's diary. He recorded beginning the letters on the first of April and finishing them on the sixth, in 1877, the year in which they were published.

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1. GE Diary, 31/10/80, 24 and 30/11/80, 2/12/80; GHL VII 341.
2. GEL IV 227 and 324.
3. GHL Diary, 13/9/69, 31/3/71, 12 and 14-5/5/71, 23/1-1/2/73.
4. GEL II 495-6.
5. GHL Journal, 18/1/65; GEL IV 176 fn 4.
6. GEL III 176.
7. GE Diary, 25/7/69 and 1/8/69; GHL Diary, 25/8/69.
8. GE Diary, 27/10/70; GEL V 119; GHL Diary, 19-25/8/70.

Lewes also kept up with 'the proces Comte' in 1870, when Madame Comte challenged her husband's will on the grounds of insanity.[1] George Eliot even quoted Clotilde in a letter of 1873, from what source it is difficult to discover.[2]

George Eliot's biographical knowledge of Comte is demonstrated by the chronologies of his life which she compiled at the back of her copy of the Catechism and in her commonplace book in 1865. I will quote the latter in full, since it encapsulates successfully his whole career:

Chronology of Auguste Comte's Life

Born, January 19, 1798.
Beginning of relations with Saint-Simon, 1818.
Rupture with Saint-Simon, 1824 (Death of S.-S. 1825).
Marriage, 1825. Beginning of the'Cours', Ap. 1, 1826.
Interrupted by Mania after 3 Leçons: resumed 1828.
Cours de Phil. Pos. 6 vols 1830-1842. Loss of Proft. 1843.
Discours preliminaire, 1848. Separation, 1842. [sic]
Relations with Madame de Vaux, 1845.
Politique Positive, 1851-1854. Synthesis, 1856.
Death, September 5, 1857.[3]

In the Catechism, George Eliot noted in addition the date of that book and of the Appeal to Conservatives.[4] There is a pencil marked copy of the Appel aux conservateurs in Dr. Williams's Library, but it is not a part of the official Lewes collection, and so cannot be used as evidence of their reading. However, there is already sufficient evidence to establish that George Eliot certainly knew enough about Comte and his Religion of Humanity to have been strongly influenced by them.

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1. GHL Diary, 7-8/5/70.
2. GEL V 437.
3. GE Commonplace Book, f. (108), q.227.
4. AC, Cat, 1852, Dr. Williams's Library, opp. p.388.

PART II ENGLISH POSITIVISM

CHAPTER I

John Stuart Mill and George Henry Lewes

I John Stuart Mill

John Stuart Mill was the first and the greatest of the English Positivists. He was also the least subservient. Reading and admiring Comte's work as early as 1829, he entered into a lengthy and intimate correspondence with him in 1841. His widely-read System of Logic enthusiastically directed others to read Comte's writings. He never accepted some aspects of Comte's system, but he encouraged his own disciples to study Comte, and expressed sympathy with the Religion of Humanity in letters of the 1840's and '50's. His Utilitarianism advocated cultivation of the feelings in Comtean terms. His books on the Principles of Political Economy, psychology, On Liberty, and The Subjection of Women emphasised his differences from Comte, which were fully clarified in Auguste Comte and Positivism. He continued to attack Comte's despotism in his Autobiography, but retained a belief in the Religion of Humanity which was fully revealed in his posthumously published Three Essays on Religion. Lewes and Eliot were familiar with all these works and cannot have been unaware of his relation to Comte.

Mill's relation to Saint-Simonians will be examined more closely in the first chapter of Part Three. It was through them that he first encountered Comte's ideas. For Mill, the most impressive Saint-Simonian document was Comte's 1822 "Prospectus". But, he told Gustave d'Eichthal, even this was stronger in its 'partie critique' than in its 'partie organique'. Mill praised Comte's coherence and clarity, but he complained of the French vice of over-systematisation

in his attempt to deduce politics like mathematics. Comte's aim, to direct the united forces of society to one single end, Mill found neither possible nor desirable. The same law of development did not apply to both France and England. Similarly, Comte's simplified view of progress overlooked the merits of Greece and Rome and the faults of the Middle Ages. Mill admitted,

> 'there are many excellent and true remarks in Mr. Comte's book; and if people could be contented to take part and leave the rest, these doctrines would probably receive the proper corrections and modifications, and would be very valuable'.[1]

This selective role was precisely the one which Mill himself was to play in the reception, modification and propagation of Positivism in England.

As he wrote in his Autobiography, Mill lost sight of Comte for several years, although he remained in contact with the Saint-Simonians.[2] The first two volumes of the Cours were brought to England in 1837 and used by Brewster to attack Whewell in the Edinburgh Review the following year.[3] Mill, who had resumed work on his System of Logic in 1837, had already written two thirds of that book before he read the Cours. But he admitted to having 'gained much from Comte, with which to enrich my chapters in the subsequent rewriting' and to use more thoroughly in the final third.[4] Yet this acknowledgement of his debt to Comte was regarded by Alexander Bain as an inadequate expression of 'the influence in detail' and of 'the warmth of esteem and affection displayed in the five years of their correspondence from 1841 to 1846'.[5] I will consider first the Logic and then the letters.

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1. J.S.M. to Gustave d'Eichthal. 8/10/29, Cosmopolis VI (1897) 28-32.
2. J.S.M., Autobiography, London, 1873, p.166.
3. ER LXVII (1838) 271-308.
4. J.S.M., Autobiography, p. 210.
5. Alexander Bain, J.S.M., London, 1882, pp. 70-1

Comte's influence upon the System of Logic is most noticeable in the final book, "On the Logic of the Moral Sciences". Mill begins by expressing his belief that the phenomena of man himself can be included within the hierarchy of positive science.[1] If we knew everything about a man and his circumstances, Mill argues, we could predict with certainty what he would do. This would not deprive him of free will, since it is always possible for him to modify his character. As Comte had shown, habits of egoism and altruism could be developed. Mill quotes Novalis to the effect that character is destiny, a belief George Eliot was to discuss in Middlemarch.[2] Unlike Comte, Mill claims that there can be a science of mind, psychology, independent of physiology. For there are 'uniformities of succession among states of mind' which are ascertainable by observation. He turns to Hume and the associationists for illustrations of these laws. He suggests an intermediate science of ethology, or the formation of character, based on the laws of psychology and leading to those of sociology. Another social science which Mill regards as sufficiently independent to deserve separate status is political economy.[3]

Mill returns to Comte to discuss the methods to be employed in sociology. He calls Comte 'the greatest living authority on scientific methods'. He admires in particular the historical method employed by Comte, which Mill calls 'the inverse, Deductive Method'. It involves a reversal of the usual order of deduction: the construction of hypotheses by à posteriori reasoning and their verification à priori. Generalisations from history were to be tested against the laws of human nature.[4] Mill also accepts Comte's division of sociology into statics and dynamics, the laws of co-existence and the laws

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1. J.S.M., A System of Logic, 2 vols., London, 1843, II 475-6.
2. Ibid., II 480-9.
3. Ibid., II 499-530 and 573.
4. Ibid., II 564.

of succession, which would help to establish political stability and intellectual progress respectively. He regards Comte as the pioneer of the historical method and gives an enthusiastic account of the law of the three stages.[1]

W.M. Simon has shown that later editions of the Logic removed many of the eulogistic references to Comte. But Simon's detailed comparison of the first with the eighth edition reveals that although Mill toned down his enthusiasm and cut out many of the tributes to Comte which he had added to the first two thirds of the book, his substantial reliance on Comte for the historical method remained unaltered. He replaced the motto for Book VI from Comte with one from Condorcet but preserved all the material quoted above. He added some criticism of Comte's recommendations for the future, which he regarded as greatly inferior to his appreciation of the past. But he also added a long footnote defending Comte's law of the three stages. The changes were of tone rather than substance.[2]

In November 1841 Mill wrote to Comte to express his admiration for the Cours, and his desire to co-operate with the founder of Positivism. There were minor differences of opinion between them, which they could discuss, but he was struck by their complete agreement on scientific method. Mill remained diffident about his own work, mentioning the Logic only in his second letter and even suggesting that, had he known the Cours earlier, he would have translated that rather than write his own book.[3] Comte returned the compliment by breaking his rule of cerebral hygiene to read the Logic, which he admired greatly. Mill regarded this as a sanction of his role in the propagation of Positivism. He hoped to contribute also to its elaboration.[4]

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1. Ibid., II 594-612.
2. W.M. Simon, European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century, pp.275-9
3. L. Lévy-Bruhl, Lettres inédites de J.S.M. à A.C., Paris, 1899, pp. 1-4, 12 and 77.
4. Ibid., p.207.

Comte had accepted an enthusiastic and deferential disciple, but was less prepared to receive Mill as a colleague, certainly not as a critic. Mill attempted early on to change Comte's historical bias against Protestantism and against England.[1] They disagreed more fundamentally over psychology and the position of women.

Comte and Mill discussed the possibility of a science of psychology during the winter of 1841-2. Comte's insistence on the physiological basis of psychology stemmed from Gall, whom he made Mill read. Mill accepted that Gall had opened a new approach to the subject, but argued the need for introspection, the study of successive mental states, and ethology, the study of the influence of environment on the formation of character. The discussion was adjourned inconclusively.[2] Apart from this, Mill remained submissive until July 1843, when the same letter which claimed a larger role in the development of Positivism insisted on a frank discussion of differences. He accepted Comte's method and social dynamics, but not his social statics. In particular, he disagreed with Comte's strong defence of property and marriage. The subordination of women he regarded as an accident of history rather than an unchangeable relation between the sexes. Comte argued on phrenological and historical grounds that woman was, and had always been, inferior. He regarded Mill's 'youthful heresies' as an example of the intellectual anarchy of the time.[3] Mill showed the correspondence to Harriet Taylor, who was astonished at his apologetic tone towards 'this dry root of a man'. But throughout their correspondence Comte had adopted a tone of parental guidance and correction[4]. After the rejection of his views on women, Mill became more reserved.

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1. Bain, op. cit., p.72.
2. Lévy-Bruhl, op. cit., pp. 65-88.
3. Ibid., pp. 207-18.
4. Michael Packe, The Life of J.S.M., London, 1954, pp. 277-8.

He contented himself with reporting the opinions of others.[1]

In spite of these differences, when Comte lost his job as examiner for the École Polytechnique, it was to Mill that he turned for financial aid. Mill collected a subsidy for 1844, but found his friends unwilling to repeat their generosity the following year. He passed on this sad news.[2] Comte replied with a long letter setting out his theory of patronage and resenting this latest example of humanity's failure to respond to his call. Mill explained that neither he nor his friends were disciples, but sympathetic liberals prepared to support him through a crisis. Comte insisted that even general agreement imposed the duty of patronage, and that Mill was only helping to prolong the period of mental anarchy.[3] The fundamental differences between them were raised yet again. In March 1846 Mill wrote to reproach Comte for his narrow-minded refusal to expand his own knowledge, especially in the area of psychology. Comte refused to accept this criticism and their correspondence gradually petered out.[4] As Presswood concludes, the dispute over the subsidy was the occasion rather than the cause of the break. The real cause was Comte's refusal to learn or modify anything.[5] Mill realised that he would have to develop Positivism independently, without the aid of its founder.

Mill's enthusiasm for Comte in the early 1840's is reflected in his letters to others. He recommended Bain to read the Cours, which he called ' very near the grandest work of this age'. Bain read the book in the summer of 1843, discussing it with Mill chapter by chapter. At the same time Mill initiated Lewes in the Positive Philosophy.[6]

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1. James Murphy, "Positivism in England: The Reception of Comte's Doctrines, 1840-1870", Columbia University Ph.D., 1968, p. 39.
2. W.L. Presswood, "The Influence of A.C. and the Rise of Positivism in England", pp. 119-21.
3. Lévy-Bruhl, op. cit., pp. 482-519.
4. Ibid., pp. 520-4.
5. Presswood, op. cit., p. 123.
6. Bain, op. cit., pp. 63, 71 and 76 fn.

Also in 1843, Mill wrote to Bulwer Lytton that Comte was 'by far the first speculative thinker of the age'.[1] When Littré approached him for a contribution to Comte's subsidy in 1848, Mill sent 250 francs with an explanation that he agreed with Comte's method but not with his views about society. A letter of 1854 explained further that although he could not accept Comte's politics, he agreed with the idea of Humanity as an object of religious worship.[2]

Diary entries for 1854 illustrate the extent of Mill's sympathy with the Religion of Humanity. After describing Comte as one of the two original thinkers of the age, to whose 'practical doctrines and tendencies there are the gravest objections', Mill wrote, on January 24th,

> 'The best, indeed the only good thing (details excepted) in Comte's second treatise, is the thoroughness with which he has enforced and illustrated the possibility of making le culte de l'humanité perform the functions and supply the place of religion.'

He outlined its main doctrines, solidarity and continuity, universal moral education and the cultivation of imaginative worship, concluding, 'there is no worthy office of a religion which this system of cultivation does not seem adequate to fulfil'. In the following two months, Mill recurred to the same theme. He believed the Religion of Humanity capable of supplying both 'the ultimate basis of thought and the animating and controlling power over action'. Gratified by examples of individual devotion to country and to mankind, he again declared his faith in the possibility of developing these feelings into a religion.[3]

Mill's Utilitarianism, written in the same year but not published until 1861, made this faith public. Whittaker claims that 'Mill here in effect adopts the Religion of Humanity'.[4] Mill does not call it

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1. H.S.R. Elliot, ed., The Letters of J.S.M.., 2 vols., London, 1910, I 124.
2. Ibid., I 139 and 182.
3. Ibid., II 361-3, 371-2 and 379.
4. Thomas Whittaker, Comte and Mill, London, 1908, p.70.

this. But he does refer specifically to Comte's Système as a demonstration of

> 'the possibility of giving to the service of humanity, even without aid of the belief in a Providence, both the psychological power and the social efficacy of a religion'.[1]

He argues that internal sanction of utilitarian morality could be developed in exactly the same way as the conscience in the Christian tradition. He admits that the 'capacity for the nobler feelings is in most natures a very tender plant, easily killed .... by mere want of sustenance!. But he claims like Comte that these higher feelings can be developed by exercise into habits.[2] Again like Comte, he acknowledges the necessity for external sanctions, such as the opinion of others, to bolster the internal. But he rests his optimism on the belief that moral feelings can be acquired. The 'social feelings of mankind', the desire to help others and to unite with them, may be weak. But 'the smallest germs of the feeling' can be nourished by education and sympathy. If taught as a religion and backed by all the external sanctions, altruism could grow strong.[3] All that Mill adds to Comte's Religion of Humanity is a closer knowledge of the laws of association.

Some of Mill's other works clarify the differences between his brand of Positivism and Comte's. The Principles of Political Economy, a science which Comte refused to recognise, was published in 1848. Comte deplored this retrograde study, which only prolonged the metaphysical state. Bain found evidence of Comtean influence even in this work,[4] but it was at most general. On Liberty, which appeared in 1859, was written to define 'the nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual'. It points to Comte's system as an example of the increasing belief in

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1. J.S.M., Utilitarianism, London, 1863, p.48.
2. Ibid., pp. 14-5.
3. Ibid., pp. 38-48.
4. A.C. to G.H.L., 7/4/47, Maison d'A.C.; Bain, op. cit., p. 88.

state interference, which Mill calls the 'despotism of society over the individual'.[1] Mill also expresses his dislike of the power of public opinion. This could only lead to 'collective mediocrity'. He is particularly critical of public interference in personal matters. It is often misinformed, he argues, and 'it is seldom thinking of anything but the enormity of acting or feeling differently from itself'.[2] This scorn for an overzealous and undereducated public opinion resembles George Eliot's commentary in The Mill on the Floss and Middlemarch.

Although On Liberty advocates a strong individualism, it continues to place man's hope for the future in the education of the feelings which Comte had systematised. Man's egoism must be subordinated to his altruism, 'the better development of the social part of his nature, rendered possible by the restraint put upon the selfish'. Government interference, Mill claims, prevents men 'strengthening their active faculties'. To make their own decisions, serving on local institutions, is part of people's political education, which takes them out of 'the narrow circle of personal and family selfishness'.[3] Positivist ethics here support liberal politics.

Mill wrote more favourably about public opinion in his Considerations on Representative Government. George Eliot copied his 'Arguments against the Ballot' into her notebook for Felix Holt. Mill argues that 'the spirit of the ballot is, that a man's vote is given him for himself - for his own use and benefit - not as a trust for the public'. But voting is not a personal right. It is a public duty, and should therefore be 'performed under the eye of the public'.[4] These ideas will be shown in Part Three, chapter four, to fit easily into the other aspects of Felix Holt's Positivism.

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1. J.S.M., On Liberty, London, 1859, pp.7 and 29.
2. Ibid., pp.118-9 and 150-1.
3. Ibid., pp.114 and 196-7
4. J.S.M., Representative Government, London, 1861, p.190 tmv.

Mill's disagreement with Comte on the issues of psychology and the role of women is reflected in two works published in 1869, his edition of his father's Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind and his own attack on The Subjection of Women. The first of these rests within the tradition of introspection and association dismissed by Comte. In the second, Mill repeats the arguments he had used in correspondence with Comte, that women had been conditioned over the centuries into being weaker and subordinate to men. His description of the view that he opposes, that 'it is the duty of women, and .... that it is their nature, to live for others, ... and to have no life but in their affections', certainly fits Comte. Mill repeats that the only way to discover the natural difference between the sexes is to study 'the most important development of psychology, the laws of the influence of circumstances on character'.[1] This is the science of ethology, which had been spurned by Comte.

The ambivalence of Mill's position is clearly illustrated in his long and careful study of Auguste Comte and Positivism, which appeared first as a series of articles and then as a book in 1865. Comte's work is divided in two. The Cours was 'essentially sound .... with a few capital errors'; the later writings were generally unsound, with 'a crowd of valuable thoughts'.[2] Mill praises Comte's 'wonderful systematization' of the philosophy of science. He has provided excellent 'methods of investigation', although he supplied no 'test of proof'.[3] In sociology, Comte had made the creation of a science possible by his conception of its method, although he had done nothing which did not 'require to be done over again, and better'.[4] He had failed to understand the peculiar nature of England's development

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1. J.S.M., The Subjection of Women, 1869, pp. 27 and 41.
2. J.S.M., A.C. and Positivism, London, 1865, p.5.
3. Ibid., pp. 53-9.
4. Ibid., pp. 123-4.

or the contribution made by Protestantism to the development of individual conscience. But Mill found 'no fundamental errors in M. Comte's general conception of history'. Unfortunately, neither could he find 'any scientific connexion between his theoretical explanation of the past progress of society, and his proposals for future improvement'.[1]

Mill expresses complete sympathy with the aims of the Religion of Humanity. Belief in God was not a necessary element of religion. Comte had provided both a creed and sufficient 'sentiment connected with this creed'. Mill answers any doubts about whether Comte's Great Being 'is capable of gathering round it feelings sufficiently strong' to command widespread devotion. It is certainly preferable to a Being who bribes devotees with promises of eternal happiness. It is a majestic concept, appealing to man's feeling for the infinite. Mill agrees with Comte that 'the highest minds, even now, live in thought with the great dead, far more than with the living'.[2]

Mill is critical of Comte's ethics. The Benthamite in Mill finds Comte 'a morally-intoxicated man' who required the sacrifice of all egoistic pleasures. He overlooks Comte's recognition that the egoistic propensities, as a source of energy, should not be starved but rather channelled in altruistic directions. He also attacks Comte's obsession with unity, questioning the need for a complete systematisation of life.[3] Although sympathetic towards the central idea of the Religion of Humanity, Mill ridicules the details which Comte had stipulated. It is an essential part of religion to cultivate devotion. Mill finds 'nothing really ridiculous in the devotional practices which M. Comte recommends towards a cherished memory or

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1. Ibid., pp.111-8.
2. Ibid., pp.132-6.
3. Ibid., pp.138-47

an ennobling ideal, when they come unprompted from the depths of the individual feeling'. They become ridiculous only when prescribed three times daily for two hours. Had he not been completely lacking in humour, Mill claims, Comte would have checked his characteristically French 'mania for regulation'.[1] Mill describes Comte's utopia with increasing distaste. It merely illustrates the 'melancholy decadence of a great mind'. Yet in the end he ranks Comte with Descartes and Leibnitz, as 'great scientific thinkers' who 'shrank from no consequences, however contrary to common sense, to which their premises appeared to lead'.[2]

Mill was less generous in acknowledging his own debt to Comte in his Autobiography, published in 1873, the year in which he died. This described the Système as 'the completest system of spiritual and temporal despotism which ever yet emanated from a human brain'.[3] But in his Three Essays on Religion, published the following year, Mill reiterated his sympathy with the Religion of Humanity. The second essay, on the "Utility of Religion", recognises that religion will always be necessary 'so long as human life is insufficient to satisfy human aspirations'. But Mill questions whether

> 'it is necessary to travel beyond the boundaries of the world which we inhabit; or whether the idealization of our earthly life, the cultivation of a high conception of what it may be made, is not capable of supplying a poetry, and .... a religion, equally fitted to exalt the feelings, and .... still better calculated to ennoble the conduct, than any belief respecting the unseen powers'.[4]

He becomes more specific. The life of the human species, he claims, 'combined with indefinite capability of improvement', offers a sufficient object of devotion. The Religion of Humanity provides 'an ideal object' which is superior to other religions in so far as it is disinterested and does not require the intellectual sophistry of

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1. Ibid., pp. 153-4.
2. Ibid., pp. 199-200.
3. J.S.M., Autobiography, p. 213.
4. J.S.M., Three Essays on Religion, London, 1874, pp. 104-5.

ascribing perfection and omnipotence to the creator of this world and of hell. Like Dorothea, Mill speaks of the commitment to the principle of good in its struggle with evil.[1]

In the third essay, on "Theism", Mill goes further than Comte towards indulging hopes in the superhuman. He treats the prospect of individual life after death as a legitimate though uncertain aspiration. He dismisses the possibility of 'a providential government by an omnipotent Being', but not the creation of the universe by 'an Intelligent Mind', limited in power and love but desiring our good.[2] He does not rule out completely the possibility of Christ's claim being at least partly true. But the realm of the supernatural is 'removed from the region of Belief into simple Hope', and must not contradict 'the evidence of fact'. The Christ of the gospels is a supreme example of the idealisation of moral excellence in an individual. Mill recommends devotion to his memory as 'excellently fitted to aid and fortify the real, though purely human religion, which sometimes calls itself the Religion of Humanity and sometimes that of Duty'. This religion, Mill has no doubt, 'is destined, with or without supernatural sanctions, to be the religion of the future'.[3]

Mill's eclectic brand of Positivism provided an excellent example of the possibility of adhering to the Religion of Humanity without accepting the details of Comte's system. George Eliot specifically denied being strongly influenced by Mill.[4] Yet she read all his major works. Having lent her copy of the Logic to John Sibree in 1849, she asked Mrs. Bray for her husband's copy two years later, 'to have it by me for reference'.[5] At the time of writing Felix Holt she studied

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1. Ibid., pp.106-17.
2. Ibid., pp.196-211; cp. p.118.
3. Ibid., pp.240-57.
4. GEL VI 163.
5. Ibid., I 310 fn 5 and 363.

Mill's Political Economy,his articles on Comte in the Westminster Review, On Liberty, and the Logic yet again, copying extracts from them into her notebook.[1] In 1869, Lewes records that she read aloud both The Subjection of Women and Utilitarianism. He also records reading the Autobiography, the Three Essays on Religion and Comte's letters to Mill, in the years in which they were published.[2] George Eliot's comment on the Autobiography was that the early parts were good, but that some of the pages in the latter half 'one would have liked to be different'.[3] Perhaps she resented his harshness towards Comte. What is highly unlikely is that she was unaware of his debt to the founder of Positivism. For as well as the evidence of his own books, she had the testimony of George Lewes. She may have regarded Mill's influence upon her own writing as slight, since she derived her Positivism directly from Comte. But he helped to confirm the possibility of sympathetic but critical allegiance to the Religion of Humanity.

II George Henry Lewes

Lewes was a man of many enthusiasms. He was critic, novelist, philosopher and physiologist in turn. He declared allegiance to a number of different thinkers. He became one of Carlyle's "young men" perhaps as early as 1835. It was Carlyle who inspired his interest in German thought and sent him to Berlin in 1838. Lewes later dedicated his Life of Goethe to Carlyle as 'a memorial of gratitude for intellectual guidance'.[4] Another strong debt which he acknowledged was to Herbert Spencer. His journal paid tribute to Spencer's

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1. GE Diary, 28/5, 7/6 and 15/11/65, 7/3/66; GEL IV 233; see Fred Thomson, "The Genesis of FH", PMLA LXXIV (1959) 576-84.
2. GHL Diary, 26/6 and 14/10/69, 21-24/10/73, 7-10/12/74, 23/8 and 1-4/4/77.
3. GEL V 458
4. G.S. Haight, "The Carlyles and the Leweses", pp. 183-93.

help 'in a very dreary, wasted period of my life", just before he met George Eliot. It was Spencer who developed Lewes's interest in Science, which became his major concern for the last twenty years of his life.[1] To read through Lewes's journals is to realise the astonishing range of his reading.

One label constantly attached to Lewes, both by his contemporaries and by critics of this century, is that of 'Comtist". The obituary which George Eliot cut from the Echo of December 2nd, 1878, called him 'a prophet among the Comptists".[2] Frederic Harrison recalled 'his close connexion with Comte and with Positivism". Although he had repudiated Comte's social and religious reconstruction, Lewes remained 'the chief representative to most reading Englishmen of the Positive Philosophy'.[3] Presswood contrasted Lewes with Mill. Although neither had accepted the Système, 'Lewes remained a Comtean enthusiast' throughout his career. Kitchel recognised his debt to Comte and his difference:

> 'Lewes was an avowed Comtist, but his interpretation of the "Religion of Humanity" seems to have been a rather indefinite though sincerely held form of Unitarian belief.'[4]

Frederic Locker-Lampson also detected this unusual combination in Lewes. He recalled the funeral of 'the little Comtist', at which a Unitarian minister 'half apologised for suggesting the possible immortality of some of our souls'. Richard Congreve regarded this as 'a curious mistake' on George Eliot's part, but she must have known Lewes's beliefs better than anyone else.[5]

This section of the thesis will trace Lewes's Comtism from his early articles in the 1840's through his exposition of Comte's

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1. GHL Journal, 28/1/59; A.T. Kitchel, GHL and GE, New York, 1933, pp.150-1.
2. Yale MS, X.
3. F.H., "GHL", The Academy XIV (1878) 543-4.
4. Presswood, op. cit., p.64; Kitchel, op. cit., p.78.
5. F. Locker-Lampson, My Confidences, London, 1896, pp.314-6; R.C. to his wife, 7/12/78, Bod MS Eng. Lett. e 55 f.172.

Philosophy of the Sciences in the 1850's to his modification and development of Positivism in the 1860's and 1870's. His enthusiasm for Comte's philosophy, derived from Mill in 1842 and publicly avowed the following year, reached its climax in the Biographical History of Philosophy of 1845-6. This portrayed Positivism as the culmination of Western thought. 1846 was the year in which Lewes entered into correspondence with Comte. They exchanged friendly but unphilosophical letters for several years, but ceased to write after 1853, when Lewes too proved unable to extract a satisfactory subsidy from Comte's English followers. Lewes used the Leader as a vehicle for the propagation of Positivism from 1850 to 1854. A series of articles for that paper formed the first half of his exposition of Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences in 1853. But in the Leader, in his novels and elsewhere, Lewes expounded religious ideas which differed considerably from Comte's. He also grew increasingly critical of Phrenology.

In 1865, Lewes helped found the Fortnightly Review, which soon won a reputation as the organ of Positivism. As editor in 1866, he wrote two long articles on Comte, which formed the basis of his revised chapter on Comte in the third edition of the History of Philosophy the following year. But Lewes's major achievement was his discussion of the Problems of Life and Mind, published in five volumes from 1874 to 1879, in which he interpreted and modified Comte's ideas in the light of the evolutionary associationism of Bain and Spencer. George Eliot edited the last two volumes. In this and in all Lewes's writing from 1854 until his death, she co-operated very closely.

Alexander Bain remembered Lewes as a frequent visitor at Mill's house in 1842, when he sat at Mill's feet, 'read the Logic with avidity, and took up Comte with equal avidity'.[1] Mill was less enthusiastic

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1. Bain, op. cit., pp. 65 and 76.

about Lewes. It was the solid Bain rather than the spirited Lewes whom Mill regarded as his prize convert to Positivism. But after meeting Lewes in May, 1842, Comte described him as a loyal and interesting young man. Mill flatteringly agreed that the youth's admiration of Comte was a credit to his character and intelligence, considering that his scientific education had been inadequate.[1]

Lewes was soon trumpeting Comte's merits.' In an article of 1843 to which George Eliot turned with nostalgia the year after his death,[2] he discussed "The Modern Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy of France" in terms which made no secret of his allegiance to Positivism. He welcomed the constructive and religious 'spirit of the age' and accepted the need for "a common creed" on which to reorganise society. He differed respectfully from Comte on the issue of psychology, criticised the extravagances of the Saint-Simonians, and attacked the personification of Humanity propounded by Pierre Leroux. Comte's predecessors were all lacking in method. Only he could terminate the intellectual anarchy of Europe. Lewes explained the central ideas of the Cours, the law of the three states and the classification of the sciences. The Cours could become 'the most memorable work of the nineteenth century'. Lewes's enthusiasm for Comte was exceeded only by his praise of Mill's Logic. Comte had philosophic power and scientific knowledge. His only fault was a ponderous and repetitious style.[3]

In December 1843, Lewes expressed his admiration for Comte in a letter to Michelet. He could not understand why the French did not read him. The Cours had become the textbook of the 'leading thinkers' in England, where greater success was precluded by his antagonism to

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1. Murphy, op. cit., p. 54; Lévy-Bruhl, op. cit., p. 69.
2. GE Diary, 27/3/79.
3. GHL, BFR XV (1843) 353-406.

religion.[1] Lewes's analysis of "The State of Historical Science in France", the following year, proclaimed the construction of a philosophy of history as 'the urgent want of the age'. But he agreed with Mill that the philosophy of man, or ethology, must precede the philosophy of history. However, he agreed with Comte against Mill on the physiological and ethological differences between the sexes. In both ethology and history, Comte had made 'the most valuable contributions'. By providing 'the true historical method' and discovering 'the fundamental law of human evolution', Comte had laid the foundations of the new science: 'History has had its Newton'.[2]

Similarly grand claims are made in the chapter on Comte in the Biographical History of Philosophy. He is described as

'the Bacon of the nineteenth century. Like Bacon he fully sees the causes of our intellectual anarchy, and also sees the cure.'

Comte alone aims to construct a philosophy "general enough to embrace every variety of ideas, and positive enough to carry with it irresistible conviction'. Lewes again explains the law of the three states and the classification of the sciences before referring readers to the Cours itself.[3] The introduction contrasts 'philosophy', or metaphysics, with 'positive science'. The first aspires to the knowledge of essences and causes, the second constructs laws by generalisation from experience. Philosophy operates à priori, Science à posteriori. Lewes sets out to answer the question whether we can have any knowledge independent of experience. The history of philosophy leads him to a negative conclusion.[4] It seemed to Jowett 'a poor thing to have studied all philosophies and to end in adopting that of Comte',[5] but this is what Lewes did.

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1. Yale MS II; Murphy, op. cit., pp. 59 and 74.
2. GHL, BFR XVI (1844) 85-99.
3. GHL, Biographical History of Philosophy, 4 vols., London, 1845-6, IV 245-62.
4. Ibid., I 11-6, IV 262-4.
5. E. Abbot and L. Campbell, eds., Life and Letters of Benjamin Jowett, 2 vols., London, 1897, I 261.

The correspondence between Comte and Lewes, preserved in the Maison d'Auguste Comte, begins in 1846 and ends in 1852. It is reasonable to assume that George Eliot read at least some of these letters, since among the autographs she sent to Sara Hennell in November 1858 were old letters from Comte to Lewes.[1] The earliest letter which survives Lewes wrote in Paris on April 1st, 1846, thanking Comte for an earlier letter and regretting not being able to see him, 'vous à qui je dois tout'. But since he would be in Paris for another ten days, he hoped still to meet him.[2] Lewes brought Comte the first two volumes of his Biographical History of Philosophy during this visit. Three months later Comte wrote to thank and praise him for it. His only criticism was of Lewes's neglect of the Middle Ages and of Christianity, which he assumed was too dangerous a topic in England.[3] Lewes replied immediately. Comte's letter found him reading the sixth volume of the Cours 'for the fourth time with encreased /sic/ admiration and assent'. He explained that his omission of the Middle Ages was due to his own ignorance, the need for brevity, and the sensitivity of the English public on matters of religion. They would permit him to attack metaphysics but not theology. Lewes followed an account of 'the immense popularity' of his own work with an expression of his eagerness for the Cours de Politique'. He signed, 'your sincere friend and affectionate pupil'.[4] Comte accepted Lewes's account of his work and encouraged him to produce more.[5]

Comte renewed the correspondence in January 1847 with enquiries about Mill. He referred to the disagreements which had followed Mill's opposition to the proposed Revue Positive and cessation of the subsidy. Comte asked Lewes to find out if Mill's silence represented

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1. GEL II 495-6.
2. GHL to AC, 1/4/46, Maison d'AC.
3. AC to GHL, 4/7/46.
4. GHL to AC, 10/7/46.
5. AC to GHL, 24/7/46.

a serious change of outlook. He congratulated Lewes on the Biographical History of Philosophy, which made him the most complete and explicit English adherent to Positivism. He suggested a possible history of England as something more substantial than reviews. He accepted Lewes's criticism of his style, hoping that this would improve as a result of the angelic influence of Clotilde de Vaux.[1] Lewes replied in February, reporting that Mill's silence stemmed from 'certain differences of opinion - certain deficiencies of sympathy on some points', about which he could not be more specific. He also made various suggestions for the improvement of Comte's style.[2]

The correspondence continued with Comte urging Lewes to play an even greater role in the dissemination of Positivism, and repeatedly dangling before him the carrot of leadership of the English disciples. They rarely entered into discussion of Positivism itself. Comte wrote movingly of his devotion to Clotilde, and Lewes replied sympathetically.[3] Lewes's letters were comparatively short. He reported the continued success of his History and recommended Comte to read Goethe, 'the eminently positive nature' of whose genius Lewes was about to demonstrate.[4] He arranged to meet Comte again in July 1847, and expressed interest in the forthcoming Système.[5] Comte must have sent Lewes an advance copy of the General View, since a letter of October 1848, headed 'Mon cher maître', expressed unbounded admiration for the 'Discours', especially the 'chapter on women'. Lewes also boasted of successful evangelism: 'I have the satisfaction of making a great many Comtists'.[6] Comte objected to the personal nature of this title, but in terms inoffensive enough to make it more probable that the four

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1. AC to GHL, 28/1/47.
2. GHL to AC, 20/2/47.
3. AC to GHL, 20/3 and 7/4/47, 12/4/48.
4. GHL to AC, 28/3/47.
5. GHL to AC, reçu 6/7/47 and 2/3/48.
6. GHL to AC, 9/10/48.

year gap in the correspondence after this letter was originally filled with letters now lost than that they ceased to write altogether.[1]

Lewes was the first to whom Comte revealed his split with Littré in 1852. After five pages of vitreolic attack on the leader of incomplete Positivism in France, Comte directed his complaints against Lewes for repeating the stories of his supposed affiliation to the charlatan, Saint-Simon. But he continued to regard Lewes as the head of Positivism in England.[2] Lewes was unable to provide good news from his side of the channel. He reported that a number of prejudices, against subsidies, foreigners and infidels, had combined to reduce the size of the fund he was collecting for Comte.[3] The correspondence degenerated into a rather sordid squabble over the size of the subsidy and the slowness with which it was sent.[4]

A final letter from Lewes, dated October 1853, accompanied a copy of Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences, 'in which', he wrote, 'you will see what I have done in the way of popularizing Positivism in England'. With the appearance of Harriet Martineau's condensed translation of the Cours, Lewes hoped that 'our public will be in a condition to form a correct idea of the only true system of thought'.[5] Comte's reply has been lost or destroyed. It was certainly not complimentary, as he explained to Hutton in November. He had told Lewes that his book was insufficient and

> 'often unfaithful. The volume seems to have been composed in haste, to get the start of Miss Martineau's publication, which, I feel sure, will be much more satisfactory, and, particularly, more conscientious.'[6]

The change in Comte's attitude towards Lewes appears to have taken place in September 1853. The previous month, he had been 'un

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1. AC to GHL , 15/10/48.
2. AC to GHL, 12/8/52.
3. GHL to AC, reçu 18/8/52.
4. AC to GHL, 26/9 and 7/10/52; GHL to AC, 5/10 and 9/10/52.
5. GHL to AC, Oct. 1853.
6. AC, Ingram Letters, p.33

homme intéressant; quoique fort incomplet'. But by September 17th Comte had decided that his failure to contribute to the subsidy, although he was well off, revealed his opportunism: 'il ne s'intéresse au positivisme que comme domain d'exploitation'.[1] Subsequent references complained of Lewes as a deist, to be lumped with Mill as an intellectual Positivist only, a party to the conspiracy of silence which was preventing the Système from becoming well known in England.[2]

In spite of these complaints, Lewes was largely responsible for the popularisation of Positivism in England in the early 1850's. The organ which he used for this purpose was the Leader, which he co-edited with Hunt from its foundation in 1850. The epigraph for the first issue established the tone for this weekly paper, quoting Humboldt on the 'Idea of Humanity', brotherhood and progress. Lewes regularly wrote the sections on literature and drama from March 1850 to April 1854. He often signed his work in other sections of the paper.[3] Kaminsky lists some of his contributions, which Lewes himself collected in a scrapbook now at Hull University.[4] All discussion of Comte in the Leader is likely to have been his, since he was the acknowledged expert. When George Eliot stood in for him in May 1854, she specifically mentioned 'the absence of the writer to whom the exposition of Comte in the columns of the Leader peculiarly belongs'.[5] In order to illustrate the degree of sympathy he displayed not only with the positive philosophy but with the Religion of Humanity, I will select the more significant of his many references to Comte.

In August 1850, Lewes referred to Comte in a signed letter to David Masson and in a review of Mackay's Progress of the Intellect.

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1. AC, CI I 85 and 269.
2. AC, Lettres à Hutton, pp.7, 20 and 71; Ingram Letters, pp. 34 and 89; Lettres à Congreve, pp.23, 54 and 56.
3. Kitchel, op. cit., pp. 65, 84 and 90.
4. Alice Kaminsky, GHL as Literary Critic, Syracuse, New York, 1968, pp. 201-4.
5. Leader V (1854) 447.

Positivism was seen to show that the development of society depended upon its religion, which should be based on its knowledge.[1] Correcting a misunderstanding of Comte's message in the Westminster the following January, Lewes announced

'the intention we have had ever since this Journal was established, of commencing a series of articles upon Comte's philosophy, with a view of rendering the study of his works facile and instructive'.[2]

This series eventually appeared from April to August 1852, along with advertisements and information relating to the Comte fund. It will be considered in the form it took in 1853, Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences.

Lewes continued to keep Comte's ideas before his readers. In March 1851, he explained the Positivist motto, "Order and Progress". He praised Comte's regular gratuitous lectures on the philosophy of history and noticed the announcement of a new series designed to connect the past, present and future. He ended with the question, 'Can none of our English Teachers imitate so fine an example ?' In June, after mentioning an advertised American translation of Comte, he deplored the failure of English publishers to produce one: 'the importance of COMTE's philosophy it is impossible to overestimate, and a translation is decidedly one of the wants of the age'.[3]

In August 1851 the Leader printed a surprisingly harsh review of the first volume of the Système. After accepting that the Religion of Humanity grew naturally from the Positive Philosophy, it expressed the belief that Comte would 'find but few adherents to the forms of his new religion'. He had committed 'an enormous blunder in attempting to regulate the details of the future. He here falls into the trap of all the Socialists /sic/ system-builders'. The review ended

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1. Ibid., I (1850) 469-71.
2. Ibid., II (1851) 15.
3. Ibid., II (1851) 345 and 609

by discussing sympathetically the part played by Clotilde de Vaux in the elaboration of Comte"s religion.[1] Kitchel attributes this review to Hunt or Pigott, since Lewes was sick and away from London at the time.[2] But in the absence of definite evidence to the contrary, we may assume that Lewes was the author of all reviews of Comte in the Leader.

Lewes's review of the Catechism in December 1852 concentrated on 'the deep and ineffaceable influence of one woman upon his life and system'. He could not resist a smile at Comte's conception of his work as combining that of Aristotle and St. Paul. But he was again sympathetic towards the devoted love of this 'man of austere science, a man grown old and solitary'.[3] Lewes returned to his former unapologetic enthusiasm in reviewing "Miss Martineau's Translation of Comte", which he called 'the opus magnum of our century'. But even here he criticised her failure to rectify Comte's scientific errors.[4] There was never any suggestion in Lewes"s defence of Positivism that Comte was infallible. He was quick to defend Comte against unfair criticism. He objected to Huxley"s attempt to dismiss Comte as 'a mere bookman' in the field of Chemistry.[5] But he welcomed serious discussion of Positivism, however antagonistic:

'Believing as we do in the immense value of the ideas set forth by COMTE, we wish for nothing better than that public attention should be drawn to his works.'[6]

Lewes differed from Comte on the question of religion. Lewes always preserved a sense of the mystery of the universe, which precluded both negative statements and neglect. His unfinished novel which ran in the Leader from March to June in 1850, "The Apprenticeship of Life",

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1. Ibid., II (1851) 731.
2. Kitchel, op. cit., p.88 fn 3
3. LeaderIII (1852) 1189-90.
4. Ibid.IV(1853) 1171-2.
5. Ibid.,IV (1853) 1023.
6. Ibid., V (1854) 330.

began with a first episode on "The Initiation of Faith". The hero, Armand, preserves his religious instincts in spite of a rationalist education by followers of the Encyclopedists. He is converted by the arguments of Frangipolo, a Christian Platonist, and the example of Gabrielle, a devout Catholic. The most important lesson Frangipolo teaches is that "The Soul is Larger than Logic". His Christianity is based on sentiment rather than dogma. But Lewes remarks that "a new development of Christian principles' is preferable to the various current attempts to found a new religion.[1]

The following year, Lewes returned to the formuls, "The Soul is larger than Logic', in a review of the Letters on Man"s Nature and Development. He objected to the deification of law by Martineau and Atkinson, who ignored the evidence of men's instincts. He summarised his own beliefs:

'men have religious Instincts called forth by the great Mysteries of the Universe; these Instincts find expression in creeds; the various Beliefs of men are the attempts to explain the Mysteries which lay their burden on the soul'.

He quoted with approval Comte"s dismissal of atheism as 'the product of effete metaphysics".[2] But he went much further than Comte in the indulgence of the sense of the infinite. Like George Eliot at that time, he expressed profound admiration for Francis Newman. His review of "Newman on the Soul" specifically protested against 'the vague charge of mysticism being brought against those who find a higher law within them than is realised by any positive creed'.[3] He sympathised completely with the progressive renunciation of dogma for conscience portrayed in Newman's Phases of Faith.[4] He did not believe that Positivism and Christianity were incompatible, provided that both were given a liberal interpretation.

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1. Ibid., I (1850) 17-8 and 42-4.
2. Ibid., II (1851) 201-3.
3. Ibid., I (1850) 39.
4. Ibid., I (1850) 206-7, 232-3, 256-8, 281-2 and 329-30.

A more complete picture of Lewes's relation to Comte is provided by his exposition of Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences. The original articles in the Leader, based upon abstracts of the Cours provided by Walker and Bain in Aberdeen,[1] were carefully revised. Together with three new chapters they form the first part of the book. The second part, "Social Science", was completely new. Lewes presented a copy of the book to George Eliot, with the inscription, "Marian Evans from G.H.L.".[2]

The "Biographical Introduction" to Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences makes no secret of Lewes's personal allegiance to Positivism:

> 'I owe too much to the influence of Auguste Comte, guiding me through the toilsome active years, and giving the sustaining Faith which previous speculation had scattered, not to desire that others should likewise participate in it.'

He explains that this does not prevent him from 'dissenting" from some of Comte's opinions. For 'reverence is not incompatible with independence'. He makes no attempt to conceal Comte's early insanity or his late devotion to Clotilde. He strongly defends Comte's subordination of the intellect to the heart. It should be the aim of science to 'subserve some grand religious aim', enlarging man's conception of his life and destiny.[3]

Lewes progresses to some "General Considerations on the Aim and Scope of Positivism". Its mission is 'to generalise science, and to systematize society'. He outlines Comte's three initial conceptions, the positive method, the law of the three states, and the classification of the sciences. These form the basis of the Positive Philosophy. Lewes makes little attempt to judge Comte's ideas. His concern is merely to explain them. In the first part of the book, the main departures from orthodox Comtism occur on the issues of religion and

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1. Ibid., III (1852) 354fn; Alexander Bain, Autobiography, London, 1904, p. 157.
2. GEL II 126fn 4.
3. GHL, CPS, London, 1853, pp. 1-7.

psychology.

Lewes expresses 'the most decided and unequivocal dissent' from Comte's view that astronomy destroyed religion. He distinguishes between theology, which astronomy had destroyed, and religion, which it helped to promote. For man was not the measure of all things. He could not gaze at 'the starry heavens' without feeling 'religious emotion'.[1] For the added chapter on "Psychology: A New Cerebral Theory", Lewes turns to the Système rather than the Cours. He calls Comte's cerebral theory 'an improvement on that propounded by Gall'. It was constructed à priori, by the subjective method, the consideration of mental functions, their order of development and their relative dignity. It was checked by the objective method, à posteriori, the physiological observation of mental faculties. Lewes explains the Comtean scale of ten instincts, 'of which the two extremes are represented by Egoism and Altruism'. He makes no attempt to judge Positive cerebral theory, but he adds, 'this abstinence from criticism is not to be interpreted into entire assent'.[2]

The second part of Lewes's exposition of Positivism is also descriptive rather than evaluative. He explains Comte's philosophy of history and his sociology, sparing no details of Comte's ideal society. He reserves all comment to the "Conclusion". Here he admits that Comte's main achievement was his philosophy of the sciences. His 'attempts to reorganize society' were 'premature'. His Religion, based on 'the demonstrated truths of Positive Science', Lewes finds unobjectionable but insufficient. It reduced

> 'Religion purely and simply to what has hitherto been designated Morals .... Humanity can only be the Supreme Being of our world - it cannot be the Supreme Being of the Universe'.

Lewes feels that man's 'emotions of love and awe' are bound to wander

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1. Ibid., pp. 87-92.
2. Ibid., pp. 213-32.

beyond the limits of this world. Comte's morality itself meets with Lewes's full approval, especially his view of the role of the family in the development of altruism. Finally, for a fuller understanding of Positivism, Lewes refers his readers to the works of Comte himself.[1]

In the first edition of his Biographical History of Philosophy Lewes had enthusiastically acknowledged the part played by phrenology in the destruction of metaphysics. The theory of the physical basis of mind admitted verification and disproof. It could therefore contribute to positive science.[2] But Lewes grew increasingly sceptical of the phrenologists. In an article in the Leader in December 1853 he distinguished between "Phrenology and Phrenologists", between the science and the art of phrenology.[3] The following month Lewes printed a letter from Charles Bray defending the phrenologists, and further clarified his views on "Phrenology and Physiology". He felt that it would take another century to complete Gall's labours.[4] He clashed with Bray again in 1855 after writing a satirical review of James Buckingham's Autobiography. George Eliot had to pacify the outraged apostle of phrenology.[5] Lewes's reviews of "Herbert Spencer's Psychology" later in the year placed Gall in a wider perspective of the "History of Psychological Method" and anticipated his own work in demanding further study of the genesis of the moral sentiments.[6]

In 1857 Lewes continued his attack on sectarian phrenology. An article in Blackwood's on "Phrenology in France" repeated some of the detailed objections to Gall's theory which had been raised in France. Phrenology itself, Lewes regretted, had been insufficiently self-critical. He encouraged phrenologists 'to cease for the present

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1. Ibid,, pp. 339-45.
2. GHL, BHP, IV 232-4.
3. Leader IV (1853) 1192-3.
4. Ibid., V (1854) 20-1.
5. GEL II 209-10; see Part III. ch. I.
6. Leader VI (1855) 1012-3, 1036-7 and 1062-3.

their accumulation of corroborative instances, and direct all their efforts to the accumulation of contradictory instances'. This would re-establish their scientific respectability.[1] Also in 1857, the second edition of the Biographical History of Philosophy modified his earlier enthusiasm. Phrenology had contributed to the recognition of the connection between physiological form and psychological function. But the science of phrenology had degenerated into the art of cranioscopy in claiming to be able to read character by the topography of the skull. Lewes quoted Comte's criticism of Gall's multiplication of faculties, rejected cerebral localisation out of hand, and deplored the failure so far to improve the original theory. A new introduction to this edition insisted that it was the process of verification which distinguished positive science.[2]

The direction of Lewes's thought is illustrated by the publication of his books on the Physiology of Common Life and Studies in Animal Life in 1860 and 1862. But he retained his concern for the propagation of all aspects of the Positive Philosophy. In December, 1864, the Leweses were discussing the possibility of starting a new periodical. Advertisements announced that the articles were to be signed, their consistency being 'one of tendency not doctrine'.[3] But the Fortnightly Review, which began in May 1865 with Lewes as editor, soon became 'extensively stigmatized ... as "a positivist magazine"'. Morley, who succeeded Lewes as editor in January, 1867, complained of this image.[4]

Lewes himself wrote two long articles on Comte in the Fortnightly Review in 1866. The first was both biographical and critical. It traced Comte's development from discipleship of Saint-Simon to devotion

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1. BEM LXXXII (1857) 665-74.
2. GHL, BHP, London, 1857, pp.629-45, xxiii and xxxi.
3. GEL IV 169.
4. CR VII (1868) 469; FR ns VIII (1870) 118-20.

to Clotilde. Lewes denied that there was much detailed influence, but suggested that Saint-Simon was responsible for Comte's turning from destruction to construction. He showed that Comte's early essays contained all the essentials of his later system. He discussed Comte's marriage, his illness, and his composition of the Cours. He attributed the breakdown of his correspondence with Mill to the Englishman's coolness as well as Comte's 'haute magistrature morale'. He then considered 'the unspeakable influence of a deep affection' for Clotilde de Vaux. He deplored the abandonment of the objective for the subjective method, when 'the philosopher brusquely assumed the position of a pontiff'.[1]

Because Lewes had made no secret of his opposition to the later system, other positivists regarded him as a heretic. But he was a 'reverent heretic'. He attributed his increased respect for Comte's social system to George Eliot:

> 'My attitude has changed now that I have learned (from the remark of one very dear to me) to regard it as an utopia, presenting hypotheses rather than doctrines, suggestions for future inquirers rather than dogmas for adepts - hypotheses .... to be confirmed or contradicted by experience.'

Lewes felt that the development of a 'pontifical spirit' in the later Comte was exacerbated by the homage of his disciples. But he praised their courageous'efforts to establish and spread the Religion of Humanity, undismayed by the ridicule and social persecution which awaits every religious movement at its outset'. He ended with a plea for openness:

> 'Unlike the Catholic and Protestant, the Positivist need shrink from no discussion .... because the system claims to rest on demonstrated truth, not on revelation or authority.'

Comte may not have advocated such liberty, but Positivism was greater than Comte. Mill provided a good example of the combination of respect

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1. FR III (1866) 385-403.

and criticism which Lewes admired, but 'more might have been said for Comte than Mr. Mill has said'.[1]

In the October issue, Lewes considered more closely the question of "Comte and Mill". He thought that, by 'adopting the principles and methods of Positivism', Mill had attained 'the right position for pointing out its defects, and suggesting modifications'. Lewes distinguished Littré and Mill, as Positivists, from Comtists such as Dr. Bridges, 'a disciple of Comte from first to last'. He concentrated on two issues: psychology and the positive method. He agreed with Mill that Comte was wrong to reject introspection. But he agreed with Comte that psychology was dependent upon biology, for 'all psychical phenomena .... are reducible to neural processes'. He also rejected Mill's complaint that Comte had failed to provide 'a test of inductive proof'.[2]

Lewes came down on the side of Littré and Mill against Bridges and the unity of Comte's career. The difference between the early and later Comte was not one of purpose but method. Social reorganisation under a spiritual power had always been Comte's aim. But in constructing his Polity, Lewes argued, he 'forsook the Method which had organised the Philosophy'. In substituting the subjective for the objective method he was

> 'no longer subordinating his conception to the facts ... but was calling in the avowed aid of fictions to assist him in the construction of a scheme deduced, without verification, from sentimental processes'.

Comte had legitimately 'rectified the objective method' by relating everything to human needs. He was right to admit hypothesis as 'a necessary instrument of research'. His mistake lay in failing to submit his subjective hypotheses to the test of verification. But even in his later work, Lewes concluded,

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1. Ibid., 404-410.
2. Ibid., VI (1866) 385-95.

'the constant presence is felt of a vast meditative mind, earnestly aiming to unriddle the great mysteries of life, and to make that life nobler by a wise subjection of the lower to the higher impulses'. His system could not possibly have achieved completeness in his lifetime because of the imperfection of scientific knowledge. But his was the groundwork on which Positivism should build.[1]

These two articles were incorporated in the third edition of the History of Philosophy of 1867, in the first two sections of the new chapter on "Auguste Comte", "His Life" and "The Positive Philosophy".[2] A third section examined the "Transformation of Philosophy into Religion". Again Lewes described Comte's attempted systematisation of society as utopian and premature: 'politics must grow, they cannot be made'. But the Religion of Humanity had illuminated the whole history of religion. It was the natural development of Christianity. Apart from certain lightly held metaphysical doctrines, Lewes claimed, 'there is little in the conceptions of the most enlightened Christian which is not identical with Positivism'. The Religion of Humanity fulfilled the two essential roles of religion: to "satisfy the intellect, and regulate the feelings'. Comte's detailed prescriptions had obscured these central points. A common faith would gradually lead to an agreed Polity. 'Meanwhile', Lewes concluded, 'anarchy continues, and the Faith is slow in growing'.[3] His melancholy anticipated that of George Eliot in Middlemarch, which was begun two years later.

Lewes's magnum opus, which attempted to develop Positivism in accordance with the advances in scientific knowledge since Comte's time, was his Problems of Life and Mind, published in five volumes from 1874 to 1879. To the Positive Philosophy he brought Bain's associational psychology and Spencer's views on evolution and heredity. He attempted to balance the objective and subjective sides of psychology,

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1. Ibid., 396-406.
2. GHL, History of Philosophy, 2 vols., London, 1867, II 557-89, omitting the last 3 pp. of the first FR article, and II 597-8 and 627-32, reproducing pp. 387-8 and 391-4 of the second.
3. GHL, HP, II 635-9.

the physiological and the introspective. Historians of psychology, while admitting that Lewes's volumes are prolix, unsystematic and sometimes obscure, have felt that the Problems were unjustly submerged in the flood of idealism which followed their appearance.[1] I will concentrate here on showing how much of Comte's system Lewes retained. The positive method, the combination of resignation and activity, and the development of the moral sentiments, here expounded by Lewes, derived directly from Comte.

The first volume of Problems attempts to lay The Foundations of a Creed. Lewes begins by stating unequivocally the religious purpose of his work. While others argue that religion is extinct, he places himself among those who believe that it will continue to regulate 'the evolution of Humanity'. But it must be 'a Religion founded on Science expressing at each stage what is known of the world and of man'. This is the kind of faith acceptable in the new era inaugurated by Auguste Comte, with his extension of positive method to all enquiries. Lewes aims to extend this method even to metaphysics.[2]

After explaining "The Method" and "The Rules of Philosophy", Lewes attempts to establish some "Psychological Principles". He takes for this section an epigraph from Comte: 'Entre l'Homme et le Monde il faut l'Humanité. He claims that it is this intermediate social factor which gives man his capacity for moral improvement:

> 'Man is not simply an Animal organism, he is also a unit in a Social Organism. He leads an individual life, which is also part of a collective life. Hence two classes of Motors: the personal and the sympathetic - the egoistic and the altruistic.'

Just as Comte had written about the laws of intermittence, habit, exercise and heredity, Lewes discusses the laws of Correlated Development, Adaptation and Heredity, quoting the Système on the development of the moral sentiments. The greatest difference between animal and

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1. Howard Warren, A History of Association Psychology, New York, 1921, pp. 137-52 and 174-5; L.S. Hearnshaw, A Short History of British Psychology, London, 1964, 46-52.
2. GHL, PLM I (1)-6.

human consciousness, according to Lewes, is a man's Social Medium, 'the collective accumulation of centuries, condensed in knowledge, beliefs, prejudices, institutions and tendencies'. Man is conscious of what he inherits, and can control it. Lewes claims to differ from Comte on this point. He explains, in a long footnote,

'as COMTE'S Politique Positive will be known to few of my readers, justice demands a summary statement of the fundamental agreement and difference between his conception and my own. They agree in regarding science as a social product stimulated by social needs, and constructed by the co-operation of successive generations, so that civilization and Humanity are developed pari passu. They agree in subordinating individual introspection to the study of the collective evolution ... But they differ primarily in this: he holds that Humanity develops no attribute, intellectual or moral, which is not found in Animality (I) 624, whereas I hold that the attributes of Intellect and Conscience are special products of the Social Organism'.[1]

One reference to the Cours does not alter the fact that the moral theory of Comte's later works consistently stresses the difference between men and animals. The similarities between Comte and Lewes are certainly greater than the differences.

Lewes accepts Comte's teaching on resignation and activity. Faced with suffering,he argues,

'The civilized man tries to understand the causes that he may modify them when they are modifiable, and resign himself to them when they are unmodifiable.'[2]

Moral sentiments come into the first category. They can gradually be developed. Lewes repeats the basic distinction between egoistic and altruistic impulses, employing variations on the Positivist motto, "live for others":

'Moral life is based on sympathy: it is feeling for others, working for others, aiding others, quite irrespective of any personal good beyond the satisfaction of the social impulse.'

He believes, as Adam Bede discovers, that 'Suffering humanizes'. He explains, like Comte, that egoism can be channelled into altruism, love extended from the family to all mankind. He describes the sexual

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1. Ibid., I (107), 109, 116-8 and 125 fn.
2. Ibid., I 168.

instinct as 'the first of the sympathetic tendencies, the germ of Altruism'. Similarly,

> 'the love of Approbation .... is the sympathetic form of the egoistic impulse. The love of wife and children extends to relatives and friends, to the tribe to the nation, to Humanity.'[1]

The second volume of Problems applies the positive method to metaphysical questions, the third to physiology. The fourth returns to The Study of Psychology. It reiterates the belief that "man is distinctly a social being' whose 'higher faculties are evolved through social needs'. Again, Lewes acknowledges, "The credit of this conception is due to Auguste Comte.' But again he expresses reservations about the details of Comte's system:

> 'His abstention from analysis and detailed investigation kept him from specifying the mode of operation of the social factor; and his "cerebral theory", so unsatisfactory in its method, and so fantastic in its anatomy, could not supply what he left unspecified.'[2]

In order to clarify his views on psychology, Lewes examines 'the argument of three thinkers with whose general principles I am most in agreement', Comte, Mill and Spencer. Comte's rejection of introspection he regards as an error which became 'more conspicuous in his exposition of a cerebral theory .... founded avowedly on subjective analysis'. But Mill had "erred on the opposite side' by neglecting the study of nervous states and so separating psychology from biology. Spencer reconciled the two sides, showing 'how Mind is evolved as one of the forms of Life'.[3] Lewes explains "The Social Factor", the way in which society influences the individual, which Comte had recognised but only Spencer properly appreciated. The 'feelings of each are blended into a general consciousness'. Similar to Comte's Humanity, 'this mighty impersonality is at once the product and factor of social evolution'. It works through language, through tradition, and through

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1. Ibid., I 166 and 176.
2. Ibid., IV 5-6.
3. Ibid., IV 54-9.

physiological inheritance.[1]

Lewes devotes a whole section to the "Difference of Animal and Human", which again amounts to the dominance of egoism or altruism.[2] He then outlines the development of "The Moral Sense". This section appears in George Eliot's handwriting among the manuscripts now at Yale. It contends that the attachment towards each other observable in animals is the germ of the moral feeling developed in human beings. Animals too can be influenced by 'expressions of approbation and disapprobation', which for men 'has incorporated itself as custom, law, and public opinion'. But, as George Eliot had argued in The Mill on the Floss,[3] the progress of mankind depends upon the occasional resistance to, and consequent development of public opinion. Social sanction remained the main moral influence, but in human beings the sentiment of remorse had developed from fear of punishment to 'sympathetic imagination' of the suffering caused by wrong-doing. Man attains 'moral intuitions' which are handed down not just by heredity, but by language and by other social institutions. On this basis it was possible to be optimistic about 'the moral education of our race'.[4]

The analysis of "The Moral Sense" leads straight into a section on "history". Lewes refers to Comte's law of the three states, which he reformulates with characteristic exuberance:

> 'History unrolls the palimpsest of mental evolution ... History discloses how the mind passes from wonderment at the miraculous to the discernment of order, from sorcery to science'.

He introduces the concept of "The General Mind" for the influence of the race on the individual, 'the residual store of experiences common to all'. Like Comte's Humanity, the abstraction, Mind, is a symbol not an entity. Lewes specifically rejects any metaphysical notion

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1. Ibid., IV 71-81.
2. Ibid., IV 137.
3. MF II 6; see Part III ch. IV iv.
4. GEL, PLM IV 144-52.

of a 'Soul of the World'. But 'there are men, and there is Humanity'.[1]

The final volume of Problems treats Mind as a Function of the Organism. It attempts to give a neurological explanation of associationism. As Warren remarks, "substitute the historic term "association" for Lewes's grouping or "Logical processes" and his psychology proves to be thoroughly associational'.[2] Lewes explains in a lengthy "Note" that he borrows the terms, 'Logic of Feeling, Logic of Images and Logic of Signs', from Comte, but changes their significance.[3] The logic of feeling, or sensation, is instinctive and common to all animals, but the intuitive logic of images, imagination, and the intelligent logic of signs, conception, are uniquely human. Lewes attacks a cerebral physiology of single organs, insisting that it is 'the combination of organic processes which determine these responses'. In this he differs from Comte. But when he describes the development of egoistic desires into sympathetic emotions, he returns once more to a familiar Comtean theme. The 'social medium' and 'the consciousness of independence' transform egoistic impulses into altruism. The original instincts of nutrition and reproduction have eventually developed the achievements of modern science and 'the sentiments which constitute our moral, religious and aesthetic life'. Intuition becomes habit.[4] Comte's theory has indeed been modified. All attempts at cerebral localization have been rejected, and Lewes has added some of the insights derived from evolutionary associationism. But his work can still be identified as positive in its method, its morality and its religious aim.

George Eliot worked closely with Lewes throughout the composition of the Problems. The author's copy of the first volume, now in Dr.

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1. Ibid., IV 152-70.
2. Warren, op. cit., p. 174.
3. GHL, PLM V 239.
4. Ibid., V 370 and 386-9.

Williams's Library, contains some of her marginal comments. They are sometimes critical, for instance of the term 'lapsed' in describing the fixed action of acquired habits, because it implied degeneration.[1] She continually summarises his arguments, occasionally adding an enthusiastic 'Admirable MEL'. She addresses him personally, asking for clarification of what 'you mean'.[2]

George Eliot's part became more active in the final two volumes, which she edited for publication after Lewes's death. As he had feared, his "Key to all Psychologies" was left to Dorothea to complete, although he was able to 'make known to her his last wishes' during his illness.[3] A "Notice" at the front of the fourth volume announced that it was 'published separately in obedience to an implied wish of the Author' and 'printed from his manuscript with no other alterations than such as it is felt certain that he would have sanctioned'. But some parts of the manuscript, which is now divided between Yale and Princeton, are in her hand. Of particular interest are six separate leaves of her writing which, with slight alterations, became the section on "The Moral Sense" already discussed. It is a matter of speculation whether she wrote these herself or at Lewes's dictation. A list of thirteen items among her papers leaves the question open.[4] The number and nature of the alterations make copying unlikely. This passage, for example, suggests dictation:

'In the self-repressing effort induced by the sexual and parental instinct, /especially overscored/ in /some overscored/ birds and intelligent mammals / and in their capability of attachment apart from any direct link added/ we may recognise the /same added/ germs /of that altruistic life which overscored/ as those which in /human man are overscored/man /have reached overscored/ the social life has developed into passionate sympathy /devoted affection and self denying fore-thought added/.

There are two different versions of this first page of the manuscript.[5]

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1. GHL, PLM I, copy in Dr. Williams's Library, p.141.
2. Ibid., pp. 358, 360 and 427.
3. GEL V 291 and VII 90.
4. Yale MS VI 23a.
5. Yale MS, Eliot VI 33; GHL, PLM IV 144-5.

It is quite possible that George Eliot attempted to polish Lewes's ideas. But if the passage were substantially hers she would have said so.

George Eliot was scrupulously exact in her "Prefatory Note" to the fifth volume, which contained 'all the remaining manuscript for Problems of Life and Mind so far as it was left by the Author in a state that he would have allowed to be fit for publication'. He would have revised, rewritten and rearranged the work, "the actual arrangement being partly the result of conjecture'. A notebook now in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library shows that she annotated very carefully the contents of this fifth volume and drew up a list of chapter headings. She also listed the contents of the fourth volume in this notebook and on a sheet of paper now at Yale. Both lists omit chapter five, "Subjective Analysis of the Introspective Method".[1] The manuscript of volume five, now in the Parish Collection at Princeton, contains several passages in George Eliot's hand.[2] Again, their status is a matter of speculation.

Whether or not George Eliot actually wrote parts of the Problems, she was deeply involved in its construction. This is not particularly surprising, since she identified herself closely with all his work. As early as September 1852, less than a year after she had first met him, she defended his introduction of Psychology into Comte's Philosophy of the Sciences, which had been criticised by Harriet Martineau. The following December, she complained about Huxley's criticism of the same book in the Westiminster Review.[3] She looked back with affection to the first edition of 'the dear little old Biographical Hist/ory/ of Philosophy', and she welcomed Sara Hennell's praise of the second edition. She rejoiced that it was being used as 'a text book at Oxford',

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1. "Notes for Vol IV of/GHL's/ Problems of Life and Mind", containing notes of vol. V, Berg Collection, New York Public Library; Yale MS VI 23b.
2. Manuscript of PLM V, Parish Collection, Princeton University Library, see pp. 73-4, 119-20, 133-4, 155 and 173-4.
3. GEL II 54 and 133

and a substitute Bible by working-men at Leicester, who 'met together on a Sunday to read the book aloud and discuss it'. It was a strain on Lewes to revise his work for the fourth edition, but, she told Sara Hennell, 'I cannot help being pleased that his work is being used by the public'.[1] After his death, she made a list of all his articles. This is now in the Sully Collection at University College, London, along with her pencilled comments on the proofs of his obituary of Lewes for the New Quarterly Review. Among the aspects of his life which she left unquestioned were the account of his introduction of Comte to English readers in 1843, his criticism of Comte in the Fortnightly Review, and his regarding the Problems as 'rather a development of Comte's principles than a departure from them'.[2] That she was familiar with the Positive nature of his work at all times cannot be doubted.

To what extent Lewes influenced George Eliot, or she him, is less obvious. On one occasion, quoted above, he acknowledged that she had helped him to appreciate the later Comte. His reverence for her is attested by their visitors. Leslie Stephen described their house as 'a temple of a domestic worship, in which he was content to be the high priest of the presiding deity'. Dickens wrote of attending 'service at the Priory'.[3] It is probable that she helped him to clarify his ideas in other works besides the Problems. At the same time, he helped her with the construction of her novels. An example of their co-operation is provided by his journal entry for June 13th, 1865: 'Sat with Polly for two hours in the garden discussing her novel and psychological problems.' This is one of many occasions on which we know that they discussed her work.[4]

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1. Ibid., VI 146, II 389 and V 98.
2. 8 Letters from GE, Sully Collection, UCL; New Quarterly Magazine II (1879) 356-76.
3. Leslie Stephen, GE, p. 49; G.S. Haight, GE, pp. 453-4.
4. GEL IV 194.

The difficulties involved in assessing the balance of influence in such a close relationship are well illustrated by the disagreement between Kaminsky and Haight on the part played by Lewes in the development of George Eliot's theory and practice of the novel. Kaminsky traced her views on aesthetics to his articles on the subject, which were collected into the Principles of Success in Literature in 1865. This argued that realism and idealism were not opposite but complementary virtues.[1] Kaminsky traced Lewes's views back to Comte. She called on his aesthetic theory 'a translation of the positivistic views of Comte from the language of the sociologist into the language of the artist'.[2]

Haight objected to the exaggeration of Lewes's influence on George Eliot on the chronological ground that she was 'expounding her well-formulated views before she met him', and the belief that, 'of the two intellects, hers was the more powerful'. Although she read her work aloud to him and adopted many of his suggestions, Haight contended that it was emotional support that Lewes provided.[3] The argument cannot be resolved, for want of evidence. What can be stated for certain is that both Lewes and Eliot knew Comte's theory of art. Together or separately, they both derived their Positivism from Comte himself.

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1. WR ns XIV (1858) 493-4.
2. Alice Kaminsky, "GE, GHL, and the Novel", PMLA LXX (1955) 998.
3. G.S. Haight, "GE's Theory of Fiction", VN X (1956) 1-3.

CHAPTER II

The Religion of Humanity in England

I Richard Congreve and the Church of Humanity

'Wise are their leaders beyond all comparison -
Comte, Huxley, Tyndall, Mill, Morley, and Harrison.
Who will adventure to enter the lists
With such a squadron of Positivists ?'

Mortimer Collins jumbled together six very different figures in a jingle which is more representative than accurate.[1] Of the men he mentions only Harrison could be called a leader of organised Positivism in England. Neither he nor the other committed disciples of Comte were very wise. But they were very few. The list of members of the 'Positivist Society of England', founded in 1867, closed after sixteen names in 1876.[2] In 1857 there were only 21, in 1878 only 61 non-French contributors to the central fund in Paris.[3] Yet their impact was considerable. Edward Beesly could hardly believe the commotion caused by their defence of Trade Unions in 1867:

> 'When I think that there are some half dozen of us that make all this stir, I must say we manage wonderfully well. We run here, and peep in there, and tread on this man's toes and stick a pin in that man and bonnet the next and so they are all hitting about wildly as if they were assailed by a legion.'[4]

This reaction nearly cost Beesly his Professorship. It certainly led to the persecution of Positivists in the press, which partly accounts for the siege mentality they sometimes displayed. Temperamentally, they were all born evangelists. Congreve, Harrison, Beesly and Bridges were all Christians in the evangelical Wadham College of the early 1850's before they directed their allegiance from Christ to Comte. Their passionate need for commitment, combined with a fanatical

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1. E.M. Everett, The Party of Humanity, New York, (1939) 1971, p. 101
2. BM Add MS 45258, ff.14-7.
3. Malcolm Quin, Memoirs of a Positivist, London, 1924, p. 91.
4. E.S. Beesly to Henry Crompton, 5/10/67, Beesly Papers I, UCL.

refusal to compromise, frightened even their admirers.[1] George Eliot managed to find a middle way. She gave them encouragement and financial support while maintaining a respectful distance. They responded with suspicious admiration. While accepting that her novels helped their cause, they failed to comprehend the significance of her achievement.

Richard Congreve was the first English apostle of the Religion of Humanity. Educated at Rugby and Wadham, he took a first class degree in 1840, orders in 1843, and a fellowship the following year. After three years as a master at his old school, he returned to his old college as fellow and tutor in 1849, the year of his first interview with Comte. In 1852, the year of his second interview, he gave the University Sermon. At that time, as Frederic Harrison recalled, he was "the best type of a College tutor .... He taught History thoroughly, and with a broad mind." Harrison could only lament the transformation to 'the arrogant egotist, the fierce intriguer, and the pitiless misanthropist that ambition, vanity, and fanaticism have made the Dr. Congreve of 1892'.[2] The Whitehall Review also found it hard to believe that in 1852, aged thirty-two,

> 'Richard Congreve was idolised by every Wadham undergraduate, that he was the life and soul of a not very lively common-room, and generally considered to be on the high road to the highest preferment in the Anglican Church'.[3]

The Times obituary repeated the sad tale of Congreve's heroic acceptance of Comte's system, which 'gradually made him as narrow as itself'. Other papers mentioned his link with George Eliot, which is now his major claim to fame. If he was not a model for Casaubon, as the Englishman suggested, he might well have been. As the Times concluded, 'It is all very pathetic, this life of noble and unselfish aims, with failure from first to last.'[4] I will sketch first his life, and then

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1. See W.L. Presswood, op. cit., pp. 275-82.
2. FH, Autobiographic Memoirs, 2 vols., London, 1911, I 83-4
3. Bod MS Eng. Misc. d 487, f.52v, Whitehall Review, 10/12/82, p. 10.
4. Ibid., c 350, ff.173, 179 and 181, Times, 10/7/79, Englishman, 25/7/79.

his link with George Eliot.

Congreve first encountered Positivism in the 1840's. Letters from his friend John Blackett of 1844 and 1845 recommended both the Cours, 'in spite of its bad style', and Lewes's Biographical History of Philosophy, "an introduction of Comte's Positivism in an English dress". By August, 1846, Blackett was expecting Congreve's adhesion to 'Lewes' doctrine, or rather Comte's, about laws of nature'.[1] But Comgreve's autobiographical notes recall that he approached Positivism very slowly, a fact he urged himself to remember in judging others.[2] He visited Comte in 1849 because his name had been raised so often in Mill's Logic and in discussion at Rugby and Oxford. But at this stage he did not regard Comte 'as a guide in action or as a religious teacher'.[3] Harrison claimed that at Oxford, 'Congreve never once referred to Comte in conversation'. He had imbibed Positivism indirectly.[4]

1852 appears to have been the decisive year for Congreve. Letters from Harrison to Beesly of that year refer to his brooding in solitude over 'disappointed hopes .... Boiling with all sorts of fierce feelings and drawing closer into himself every day .... He is more murderously philanthropical than ever, more crabbedly benevolent'. His aspirations, according to Harrison, were greater than his intellect. Vexed with failure, 'he becomes discontented with everything but the real cause'. Harrison was later to argue that it was overwork at this time which 'broke down his very strong constitution and affected his whole temperament'.[5] In September, Congreve visited Comte a second time, and entered into correspondence with him. The following February,

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1. Bod MS Eng. Lett. c 185, ff.136 and 141-4.
2. Bod MS Eng. Misc. c 349, f.75.
3. BM Add MS 45259, f.2.
4. FH, op. cit., p. 87.
5. Ibid., p. 85; FH to ESB, (1852), Harrison Papers 1/3, LSE.

Comte was writing to thank him for his subscription to the Positivist fund and to welcome him as the first Englishman to express more than intellectual adherence.[1] Congreve resigned his fellowship in June, 1854, and married his cousin, Maria Bury, in July. They settled in South Fields, Wandsworth, the following May, where he survived through private tutoring while concentrating on his own work. His edition of The Politics of Aristotle and his Edinburgh lectures on The Roman Empire of the West both appeared in 1855. In the summer of 1856 he saw Comte for the last time and accepted his commission to write a pamphlet on Gibralter. Congreve dated his discipleship and 'English Positivism in the true sense, the complete sense, the religious sense', from this time.[2]

Comte's attitude towards Congreve changed in the last year of his life. He had been flattered on his visit of 1849 by the suggestion that everyone in Oxford was studying the Cours.[3] He congratulated him on his Roman history and his Gibralter essay. These showed an understanding of Positive history and politics.[4] But Comte's letters to Laffitte, Hutton and Fisher in 1855-6 refer to Congreve's false position, his lack of independence and of energy.[5] By 1857, however, Comte was urging him to aim at the full priesthood and thanking him for procuring disciples from Oxford. Comte hoped he would long remain the leader of British Positivism, a wish he also expressed to Edger and Fisher.[6]

Congreve's earliest publications made no attempt to disguise his allegiance to Comte. The introduction to his edition of Aristotle

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1. AC, Lettres à R.C., p. 14
2. Bod MS Eng. Misc. c 347, f.103.
3. AC, CI II 85.
4. AC, Lettres à R.C. pp. 30-1 and 33-4.
5. AC, CI II 188-9 and 195; Lettres à Hutton, p. 84; Lettres à Fisher, pp. 8, 23 and 26.
6. AC, Lettres à R.C., pp. 39 and 58-61; Lettres à Edger, p. 62; Lettres à Fisher, pp. 71-3.

referred specifically to the later synthesis compiled by Comte. Like Comte, Congreve attacked Plato, defended property and the family, advocated the need for dictatorship, and predicted the absence of war in the normal industrial state.[1] The Roman Empire of the West was also seen through Comtean spectacles as a major step in the social progress of Humanity. Congreve ended by advocating a provisional dictatorship leading to "the new organization of society on the basis of industry".[2] The essay on Gibralter again acknowledged his debt to Comte and treated the Roman Empire and the Papacy as models of unity. He called for a "new spiritual power" in Europe, which could only be achieved by the removal of all points of discord. By returning Gibralter to Spain, England would set an example.[3] The preface to his pamphlet on India in 1857 admitted that his previous pamphlet had been suggested and sanctioned by the late Auguste Comte. It explained that the aim of Positivism was to 'subordinate politics to morals'. Since there was no moral justification for the retention of India, he took it upon himself, "as the avowed servant of Humanity", to condemn it.[4] These views, naturally, did not recommend themselves to the British press, who reviled both Congreve and Comte.[5] The attack in the Times in January, 1858, extinguished all hope of Congreve making a living from teaching.[6]

It was Comte's death in 1857, Congreve recalled, which 'changed our whole position'. The disciples were thrown back on themselves to propagate the Religion of Humanity.[7] In "A Chapter of the Early History of Positivism", Congreve recorded that he went to Paris after

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1. RC, Essays, 3 vols, London, 1874, 1892 and 1900, III 480-528.
2. Ibid., III 769.
3. Ibid., I (3) 65.
4. Ibid., I (69)-72 and 95.
5. Bod MS Eng. Misc. d 487, ff. 4^{v}- 5^{v}.
6. Ibid., c 349, ff.181-2.
7. BM Add MS 45259, f.25.

Comte's death, to discover that 'our Master had spoken of me in a way which made them attach importance to my co-operation'. It was even suggested that he might take the direction of the movement, but he urged the appointment of Laffitte.[1] A year later, the Positivist Society was in great disarray. Congreve circulated a letter to eight British Positivists in October, 1858, explaining the situation in Paris. Although Laffitte had been agreed on as director, he was lacking in both energy and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, Congreve urged the British Positivists to 'support him heartily' and 'exercise a salutary influence upon his conduct'.[2] Congreve himself was not lacking in energy. But Harrison observed to Beesly as early as 1856 that their former tutor was becoming 'the victim of a system'. An 'iron mould' had clamped down upon him:

'I see with great grief the fatal petrification of his fine mind. He has no shadow of an idea that does not come straight from "the System".'

Harrison feared that Bridges too was in its grip. By 1858 he was convinced that Congreve was 'settling into a man of formulas'.[3]

Congreve was certainly committed to the Religion of Humanity. His translation of the Catechism appeared in 1858. The following January, on the anniversary of Comte's birth, he delivered his first sermon. He told his small audience that they were attending 'a religious meeting'. Since they had 'a faith, the outlines of a ritual, and sufficient members', they constituted a Church. He announced,

'I look on this present act of joint religion, as the inauguration, however imperfect, of the ministerial functions in the English branch of the Church of Humanity'.

He went on to describe their worship of the dead and their attitude to the past. He quoted his former headmaster, Dr. Arnold, on the hostility they must expect as believers. The next year, on the same day, he

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1. RC, Essays III 92-5.
2. Bod MS Eng. Lett. c 185, ff.4-12; BM Add MS 45232, ff.39-40.
3. FH to ESB, (1856) and (1858), Harrison Papers 1/4 and 5.

preached on "The Propagation of the Religion of Humanity", again quoting Dr. Arnold, on the need to take up social and political causes.[1]

Each year from 1860 to 1863, Congreve delivered a series of lectures on Positivism in a room in the basement of the Institute in Cleveland Street, off Fitzroy Square.[2] From his notes, which are now in the British Library, it is clear that he attempted to cover the whole religios system of Positivism. The seven lectures of 1860 were entitled, "Humanity", "Human Nature", "Society", "Religion", "Labour and Capital", "Education", and "Practical Conclusions". In this last lecture, he urged material adhesion, contribution to the Sacerdotal Fund, and spiritual adhesion, the formation of a nucleus of believers.[3] In 1861 he delivered a comprehensive series of thirteen lectures. The following year he composed a completely new series, also thirteen in number, and in May, 1863, a shorter course of five lectures.[4]

In 1863 Congreve suffered "a severe illness brought on or much increased by the disappearance and suicide' of the wealthiest of the English Positivists, the fellow-Rugbeian Winstanley. On medical advice, he spent the winter of 1863-4 abroad.[5] For the next two years he worked hard to gain the medical qualifications necessary for the Positive priesthood, and was admitted as a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians in 1866. In the same year he contributed an essay on "The West" for the Positivist publication on International Policy. Again he argued the need for reorganisation and the control of industry.[6] On May 1st, 1867, Congreve officially founded the Positivist Society of London, for which the conditions of membership were general uprightness, emancipation from theology and metaphysics,

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1. RC, Essays I 278-321.
2. Ibid., III 278.
3. BM Add MS 45243, ff.3-10.
4. Ibid., ff.11-43.
5. Bod MS Eng. Misc. c 350, ff.214-5.
6. RC, Essays, I 127-58.

and the acceptance of Comte's scientific and political ideas.[1] He began a new series of nine lectures on May 5th, at Sussex Hall, Bouverie Street, off Fleet Street. Again he preached a fully-fledged Religion of Humanity. In the second lecture he demanded of Comte's followers the attitude of disciples. Even on minor matters, he argued, it was 'the prerogative of genius to be recognised'.[2] Lewes estimated an attendance of seventy at the first lecture, but many of these were curious rather than convinced. Congreve dejectedly attributed his failure to infuse greater commitment to the fashionable and aristocratic nature of his audience.[3]

Bridges was one of the founder-members of the Positivist Society of London, but it was he who first challenged Congreve's view that Positivism must 'proceed on the principle of staid and literal adherence to Comte's precepts'. He defended his remarriage, and the right to develop 'the tradition of the Master'.[4] Congreve's sympathetic reply explained his 'discipular frame of mind'. He had looked closely at Comte's major points before accepting them. The minor points, such as the colour of the flag, were not worth questioning. In areas beyond his competence, he continued, 'my general adhesion would carry my acceptance'. Once the Religion of Humanity had been tried, Congreve agreed, 'the experience of mankind will modify and enlarge' it. But for the moment unity could more easily be preserved by everyone's complete adhesion. The letter ended with the hope that Bridges would continue to co-operate on social and political questions, as did Beesly and Harrison, who were also outside 'the pale'.[5]

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1. Bod MS Eng. Misc. c 347, ff. 107-8.
2. BM Add MS 45243, f.46.
3. GEL IV 360; RC, Essays III 278.
4. JHB to RC, 30/6/68, BM Add MS 45227, ff. 109-18.
5. RC to JHB, 3/7/68, Bod MS Eng. Lett. c 185, ff.14-20.

Bridges questioned 'this pale' .... the degree of adherence necessary to constitute a Positivist'. He claimed to speak for many who were prepared for the Religion of Humanity,

> 'the gradual and organic growth of a new Spiritual Power, to whom yet the acceptance of a complete and detailed organization, not the result of centuries of growth, but springing at one jet from a single mind, is utterly impossible'.

He suggested five basic principles of Comte's on which all could agree as the basis for Positivist allegiance.[1] Congreve remained adamant.

Congreve preserved an uncertain friendship with his other former pupils. Both Harrison and Beesly attended the 1860 lectures, but Congreve complained to his wife that the former was 'lax about engagements'. He should have 'a higher sense of propriety'.[2] Harrison had grown less critical of Congreve since the 1850's. He agreed to join the Positivist Society in 1867, although he confided to Beesly that Congreve's dry lecturing style was no better than before.[3] Beesly felt it was his 'duty to join' the Positivist Society in May 1869. He appreciated Congreve's support, but argued that it was better to leave the political fighting to Harrison and himself:

> 'My view is that you occupy a rather different position from us and that you would lose in weight and dignity by descending into an arena which we may enter more appropriately.'[4]

Congreve occupied a unique position as the only English priest of the Religion of Humanity.

The next step for organised Positivism was the establishment of the Positivist School at 19, Chapel Street, Bedford Row. At the inaugural meeting on April 9th, 1870, Congreve explained the choice of the word "School" rather than "Church" or "Club". Their aim was the 'formation and direction of a public opinion', the 'propagation of Positivism'. There would be 'no literary lectures', not even any

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1. JHB to RC, 9/7/68, BM Add MS 45227, ff.119-25.
2. RC to his wife, 29/8/60, Bod MS Eng. Lett. e 52, f.45.
3. FH to ESB, (1867), Harrison Papers 1/14.
4. ESB to RC, 15/5/69 and 4/10/69, BM Add MS 45227, ff.27 and 45.

'single lectures', but coherent courses. The Positivist Society would meet there on Wednesday evenings and there would be additional meetings of a 'religious character' on Sundays.[1] Harrison explained to Beesly that his interest was in the lectures. He too thought these should be systematic, without 'any literary tendency'. He hoped they would continue as before, 'that is - put forward the leading ideas of Comte on Philosophy and Society - but not come forward as Apostles of the Positive Church". He was worried by Congreve's tone, but felt that it was important to work together.[2]

When Congreve attempted to convert the School into a Church, Harrison was appalled. He complained to Beesly, in July 1870, that Congreve had fixed to the walls in Chapel Street 'a tablet of white marble .... engraved in bright green letters (a truly fantastic thing !)'. He drew for Bridges' benefit the offending tablet, with its formulas:

'Religion of Humanity

Love for our principle
Order as our basis
Progress for our object

Live for others'.

Harrison promised to 'treat it with contempt'. He would make no secret of his dislike of all religion:

'I suppose Congreve is a priest - and what is once in a man who has had the bishop's hand on him can't come out. We shall have a woman and a baby next and be expected to touch the three organs'.

This was the Positive equivalent of the sign of the cross. He asked Beesly,

'Do you worship the Great Being, do you publicly praise and bless him, do you privately pray to him, do you practise the sacraments'.[3]

Harrison clearly did not.

The Positivist schism, which did not become official until 1878,

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1. BM Add MS 45243, ff.60-6.
2. FH to ESB, 15/1, 26 and 28/2 and 25/4/(70), Harrison Papers 1/16.
3. FH to ESB, 25 and 30/7/(70), Ibid.

really existed from the beginning. The differences of attitude between Congreve and Harrison continually flared up during the 1870's. In March, 1872, Harrison wrote to explain why he did not wish to contribute to Sémérie's review. He felt that Positivism could be spread more easily without 'a formal society':

> 'I still retain as strongly as ever my old opinion that the real task before those who adopt Comte's conceptions is to work for the spread of Positivist convictions and Positivist life, and to leave the formation of a formal Church .... to the spontaneous and natural result of a considerable society finding itself permeated with the same sentiments and faith.'

They should avoid becoming 'a sect'. Positivism gave him 'a religious basis for life' in 'the conscious service of Humanity'. But he found no enthusiasm for the ritual envisaged by Comte and would 'wait to see how a sufficiently large body of opinion might show any disposition to adopt it'.[1]

In November, 1872, Beesly, Bridges and Harrison all signed a letter of protest against Congreve's handling of the Pradeau affair. This was a question of judgment rather than belief. The rebels, ironically, wanted stronger condemnation of the French Positivist who continued to live with his mistress.[2] Congreve expected Harrison's secession over this issue, but by December was more optimistic. Beesly had called to explain that they still supported him on everything but this one point. Congreve reported to his wife that they were all coming to accept the religious side of Positivism, including Harrison.[3] Emboldened by this unexpected support, Congreve told his cousin and sister-in-law, Emily Bury, that he was making his lectures at the Positivist School 'more and more directly religious'. That was in August, 1873. Two months later he was complaining of the

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1. FH to RC, 21/3/(72), BM Add MS 45228, ff.239-45.
2. BM Add MS 45242, ff.15-20.
3. RC to his wife, 22/11 and 17/12/72, Bod MS Eng. Lett. e 54, ff. 57v and 65

dampening influence of 'the University coterie'. The two elements of the Positivist Society were not mixing. Workmen did not attend the Wednesday evening meetings, where 'we always with the Beesly Bridges element get back on the Times or some journal'.[1]

Harrison's increasing respect for the rituals of Positive religion is evidenced by his presenting his two sons for the Sacrament of Presentation in February, 1874, the year in which Congreve was lecturing on the sacraments.[2] But in April Congreve still attributed 'the very slow growth' of Positivism to being governed by 'the most lukewarm Positivist among us, F. Harrison'.[3] Congreve's annual addresses from 1875 to 1877 were all entitled "Human Catholicism", which differed from Roman Catholicism on 'the assumption of a God'. He referred sympathetically to 'those who, accepting the human side, are not disciples of the Religion of Humanity, as we preach it, but still look for the promise of its coming '.[4] In June 1876, Beesly wrote to Congreve to express a difference of opinion on 'the degree of importance to be attached to forms, ceremonies and symbols of conformity', but an increased support for 'the religious organisation of Positivism'.[5] When, the following year, he actually suggested 'the commencement of liturgical worship at the Positivist School on Sunday mornings', Congreve was overjoyed. He had been waiting till 'the time was ripe', and Beesly's encouragement spurred him into action.[6]

Commemoration services had been held for Samuel Lobb and Dorothea Crompton (a post-Middlemarch child) in March, 1876 and May, 1877. But the first regular Sunday service of the Religion of Humanity was held

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1. RC to Emily Bury, 14/8, 9 and 16/10/73, Ibid., c 63. ff.105 and 112-3v.
2. "Religion of Humanity Register of Sacraments", BM Add MS 43844, f.9; Bod MS Eng. Misc. d 491, f.35.
3. RC to J.C. Geddes, 1/4/74, BM Add MS 45231, f.203v.
4. RC, Essays II 225-304, q.303 and 229.
5. ESB to RC, 15/6/76, BM Add MS 45227, ff.56-7.
6. ESB, Remarks on Dr. Congreve's Circular, London, 1878, p.2 fn; RC, My Answer to Dr. Bridges, London, 1878, p. 6; BM Add MS 45242, ff.173v and 181v.

on July 8th, 1877. Congreve stressed that although liturgy and ritual was still wanting, the meetings were services and not lectures.[1] Passages from à Kempis were combined with excerpts from a wide range of other writers. In October, Congreve introduced prayers.[2] In a letter to Albert Crompton in November, Beesly welcomed these innovations:

'The Sunday mornings improve. Congreve has composed two admirable prayers and gives good lectures. The service is a help and consolation to all of us.'[3]

An order of service for the "Commemoration of Auguste Comte" on September 5th, 1878, began with the invocation and sacred formula to which Harrison had taken such exception in 1870. There followed a reading from the Imitation, a prayer to the 'Great Power', a sermon, and then,

'A passage from some poet, most frequently from one of the poets in the Positivist Library. On this occasion: "O may I join the choir invisible." George Eliot, "Legend of Jubal, and other Poems."'

The service was concluded with another prayer.[4]

Some of the French Positivists were eager to progress towards more religious observance. They were impatient with Laffitte's lethargic direction of movement. When Congreve was in Paris in June, 1877, it was suggested that he might stay there, to 'strengthen the direction'. Audiffrent and Sémérie wanted him to take over from Laffitte, but they 'miscalculated the strength of the discontented party'.[5] Congreve issued a "Circular", in both English and French, on June 17th, 1878, inviting all who agreed with him that Laffitte had failed to impart 'a religious character' to the movement to group themselves around his leadership. But few took that opportunity, in spite of Congreve's closing address to Comte himself: 'we evoke thy

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1. BM Add MS 45246, ff.1-4.
2. Ibid., ff. 5-62.
3. ESB to A. Cromptom, 28/11/77, Beesly Papers I.
4. Religion of Humanity: Commemoration of Auguste Comte, London, 1878.
5. BM Add MS 45259, ff. 50-60.

memory; we feel strong in the conviction that we should have thy approval'.[1] A separatist group under Audiffrent remained in contact with Congreve until 1881, when they severed the English connection altogether.[2]

In England, Congreve's action precipitated a crisis. On May 1st, 1878, Beesly recounted,

'Dr. Congreve .... suddenly announced his withdrawal from the Positivist Society .... He said that he considered the society at an end and declined therefore to name any successor.'[3]

At the following week's meeting of the society, Beesly nominated himself President, whereupon Congreve's supporters withdrew.[4] Throughout the summer, various members of the society circulated their opinions. The Appeal to English Positivists by Bridges, and the Remarks on Dr. Congreve's Circular by Beesly, placed the blame on personal ambition rather than difference of doctrine. Congreve printed My Answer to Dr. Bridges, which attacked the others' intellectualism and lack of loyalty. Cotton contrasted the religious with the philosophical side of the movement, Congreve's 'spirit of apostolic zeal' with Laffitte's 'tendency .... to secularize Positivism'. Harrison denied that there was this distinction, but then proceeded to define the wider meaning which Positivism gave to religion:

To say, "We only are truly religious, who have the root of the matter, who utter praises to Humanity, and invocations to union and to unity," - this is an error.'[5]

A Positivist Schism was inevitable. A practical problem arose over the use of the room in Chapel Street. After two stormy meetings of the Positivist Society in October and November, Beesly, Bridges and

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1. Circular addressed to all my co-religionists, to all the disciples of Auguste Comte, London, 1878, Maison d'AC.
2. J.E. McGee, A Crusade for Humanity: The History of Organized Positivism in England, London, 1931, p. 113.
3. ESB to J.C. Geddes, 2/5/78, BM Add MS 45242, f.83.
4. Minutes of Positivist Society meeting, 8/5/78, Ibid., f.92.
5. Ibid., ff. 166-92.

Harrison withdrew their claims to its undisputed use, the only condition on which they would remain.[1] Congreve reported these events to Geddes, rightly observing, "there is a very strong dose of personal bitterness in it .... It is clear that it is directed more contra me than pro Laffitte.'[2] But there was a clear difference of approach, which he acknowledged in his Annual Address for 1879, in which he admitted responsibility for the split. But, he argued, it had been a duty to make 'a bolder, fuller, more direct assertion of the religious aspect of our doctrine', which had been swamped by intellectualism. He reported "the slow creation of a liturgy' during the year, although the services remained as yet 'rudimentary and tentative".[3]

Chapel Street became the "Church of Humanity" and a liturgy remarkably similar to that of the Church of England was developed. Organ music and hymns were added to the readings, collects and prayers. There was an alter in front of a reproduction of the Sistine Madonna, a pulpit, a lectern, and busts of Comte and the thirteen saints of Humanity by whom the months had been named in the Positive Calendar.[4] A complete liturgy was published in 1899, the year of Congreve's death, under the heading, The Religion of Humanity. As well as "Ordinary Morning Service" it includes collects and "Prayers for Special Occasions".[5] This sad little document reflects the smallness of Congreve's achievement, after a life of self-sacrifice.

II The Congreves and the Leweses

The Congreves and the Leweses were thrown together by the social ostracism and the respect for Comte which they shared. Neighbours for

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1. Minutes of meetings of the Positivist Society, 2/10/78 and 3/11/78, Ibid., ff.147-58 and 194-205.
2. RC to J.C. Geddes, 8/11/78, BM Add MS 45231, f.245.
3. RC Essays II 366-70
4. McGee, op. cit., pp. 112-7.
5. Religion of Humanity, Liturgy, London, 1899.

only seventeen months, the two women established a firm friendship which survived the mutual suspicion of their husbands and George Eliot's failure to fulfil the Positivist ideal of eternal widowhood. The Leweses gave moral and financial support to the English priest of the Religion of Humanity. But although aware of their considerable contribution to the propagation of Positivism in England, Congreve deplored their presumption that they could improve upon Comte's system. His reaction to George Eliot's marriage to John Cross was characteristic of the Positivists' sensitivity on this subject.

George Eliot reported hearing 'much that interested us about Richard Congreve' from Charles Bray in November, 1858,[1] four months before they became neighbours of his on moving into Holly Lodge in Wimbledon Park. She soon had to modify Bray's enthusiastic account of Congreve's destitution. But Lewes recorded, after returning the Congreves' visit, that he and George Eliot 'found them both charming and likely to be agreeable neighbours'. She too told Sara Hennell that they liked the Congreves:

'She is a sweet, intelligent, gentle creature. I already love her, and his fine beaming face does me good, like a glimpse of an Olympean'.[2]

The Congreves responded with equal warmth to George Eliot, but disliked Lewes. Richard Congreve wrote to his wife, on March 14th,

'I agree with you that Mrs. Lewes might be of use to you, and a comfort. And I like what I see of her. It is rather unfortunate that they are so inseparable'.

The next day he speculated on his wife's visit to the Leweses:

'If Bridges but detached Monsieur you might have some quiet conversation with Madame which would be good for you'.[3]

Emily Geddes, their niece, recalled that the Congreves' affection and respect helped George Eliot to overcome her feeling of being a moral

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1. GE Journal, 25/11/58; GEL II 500 fn.1
2. GEL III 16, 27 fn.5 and 53.
3. RC to his wife, 14 and 15/3/59, Bod MS Eng. Lett. e 51, ff.307v and 310.

outcast. But Lewes tried Congreve by "lowering the tone of the table" and "keeping Marian back from better things".[1] Lewes recorded a discussion with Congreve in March 'about men of specialties for whom he has caught Comte's extreme contempt'. But the following month he dissected one of two drowned kittens which Congreve had sent, and showed his wife 'some microscopic curiosities'. When Congreve took her abroad at the end of April, to recover from the shock of her father's death, Lewes expressed regret at losing "these pleasant new friends for five months'.[2]

The closeness of the friendship so quickly established between Maria Congreve and George Eliot is evident in their letters immediately after this parting. Mrs. Congreve wrote from Dieppe on May 1st to express her joy 'that you will let me love you and even give me some love too'. George Eliot replied with equal affection. She also praised her to Sara Hennell, whom she offered to put up at the Congreves' for a night. Longer was not possible:

'Mr. Congreve is not at all a man to be free and easy with: he internally resents everything like a freedom, looking very benignant all the while'.[3]

Mrs. Congreve wrote twice in June, urging George Eliot to accompany Lewes to Switzerland and join them at Lucerne.[4] George Eliot complied with her request, and the Leweses reached Lucerne on July 12th. They immediately called on the Congreves. Lewes wrote in his diary,

'Mrs. Congreve came at 3 and stayed till 5. Talked of Adam Bede, Littré, Comte and other interesting matters.'[5]

The following day, Lewes departed for Hofwyl to visit his sons, returning on the 16th. George Eliot spent the interim 'in quiet chat with the Congreves, and quiet reading on my sofa'.[6] For three days

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1. L. and E. Hanson, Marian Evans and GE, Oxford, 1952, p. 210
2. GHL Journal, 22/3, 11, 12 and 29/4/59.
3. G.S. Haight, GE, p. 300; GEL III 62-3 and 70.
4. Mrs. RC to GE, 8 and 24/6/59, Yale MS II.
5. GHL Journal, 12/7/59.
6. GE Journal, 13/7/59.

after Lewes's return this programme was maintained, interspersed with long rambles,on one of which Lewes wrote,

'I discussed Positivism with Mrs. C/ongreve/ and explained why I could not go on with Comte when he attempted to construct a cultus'.[1]

He did not include George Eliot in this position.

The intimacy between the Leweses and the Congreves was continued in Wimbledon on their return. Lewes recalled discussing the Religion of Humanity with them one night in November. George Eliot described how they spent a pleasant 'Christmas day with the Congreves'.[2] The point need not be laboured. In spite of the destruction of the correspondence between Maria Congreve and George Eliot, because of its intimate nature,[3] the evidence which survives sufficiently illustrates their closeness.

When the Leweses travelled to Italy in the spring of 1860, George Eliot wrote to express her pleasure at the increase of numbers at Congreve's inaugural lectures. She hoped 'to help in some small nibbling way' in their attempt to reduce 'the sum of ignorance, degradation and misery'.[4] After the Leweses left Holly Lodge in July, 1860, they saw less of the Congreves. But Marian maintained her closeness to Maria. In Positivist terms, she worshipped her. She wrote, in October, 1861,

'We talk of you very often, and the image of you is awakened in my mind still oftener. You are associated by many subtle, indescribable ties with some of my most precious and most silent thoughts.'

The following month she complained to Sara Hennell of the infrequency of Mrs. Congreve's visits, caused by the difficulties of travel across London.[5]

George Eliot's support for Richard Congreve's movement was not

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1. GHL Journal, 18/7/59.
2. GEL III 197 and 238.
3. Haight, GE, p. 496.
4. GEL III 293.
5. Ibid., III 460 and 467.

merely a result of her love for his wife. She sympathised strongly with him after Winstanley's suicide. She reported a 'long chat' with him in November, 1862, expressing to Sara Hennell her admiration of his leaving his 'Oxford clique for conscience's sake'.[1] His record of this visit to Blandford Square rejoiced at her 'Promise of subscription' and her 'Acceptance of Humanity'.[2] The accounts of the Sacerdotal Fund from 1864 to 1891 mention a payment from Lewes or Cross every single year except 1878, where some pages are missing, and 1880-1, the time of George Eliot's death. From 1868 the reference is pointedly to Mrs. Lewes.[3] But even Mr. Lewes rose in Congreve's esteem. He described for Emily Bury a visit to the Leweses in June, 1864:

'Marie talked to Mrs. I to Monsieur. He was more sedate and agreeable in tone, as he has in fact of late always been. We spoke much of Positivism. He gratified me much by an unqualified retraction of his criticism on Comte's style in the Politique.'

He also agreed with Congreve on Spencer's debt to Comte. The following March, after a morning's conversation with George Eliot, Congreve reported, 'She is very pleasant and on the religious point very satisfactory.'[4]

George Eliot's support for Congreve's cause appears to have deepened in 1865. Her diary reveals an increase in the visits between the two households in that year.[5] A letter from George Eliot to Mrs. Congreve in January, 1865, described a recent visit to Comte's house, enclosed a cheque for the Sacerdotal Fund, and wished them success in the commemoration of Comte's birthday:

'I shall think of you on the nineteenth. I wonder how many there really were in that "small upper room" 1866 years ago.'[6]

It was to these Positivist meetings that George Eliot must have been referring in her notebook, when she deplored the failure of her contemporaries to recognise greatness in their own time. The Last

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1. Ibid., IV 52 and 67.
2. BM Add MS 45261, f.62.
3. BM Add MS 45257, ff. 2-77.
4. RC to Emily Bury, 26/6/64 and 12/3/65, Bod MS Eng.Lett. e 62, ff.160v and 178v.
5. GE Diary, 8/1, 17 and 18/2, 12/3, 14 and 20/6 and 29/7/65; GEL IV, 174, 178 and 195
6. GEL IV 174.

Supper itself was rightly commemorated:

'But let any modern teacher of what he believes to be great truths likely to regenerate society be represented as glad to have a "small upper room" (say above a baker's) /parenthesis overscored/ where he can speak of great issues to a handful of working men, and the small wit of narrow imaginations is at once active against him.'

Charles Lewes omitted this over-committed passage from the published "Leaves from a Notebook".[1]

In January, 1867, George Eliot wrote from Biarritz to tell Mrs. Congreve how much she and Lewes were enjoying their study of Comte.[2] In May they attended Congreve's lectures in Bouverie Street. After the second lecture, George Eliot expressed reservations about Congreve's 'mode of lecturing" but was glad that 'he has now a great opportunity'. The third she found 'chilling'. Most of the faces in the audience were new. The fourth was 'rather better', but they were unable to attend the others. Lewes was in Germany and George Eliot complied with his wish that she should not attend alone. She explained to Mrs. Congreve,

'Mr. Lewes objected, on grounds which I think just, to my going to any public manifestation without him, since /the reason for/ his absence could not be divined by outsiders'.[3]

They were clearly sensitive to the suggestion that there was a difference in their attitude towards the Religion of Humanity. It was the third edition of the History of Philosophy, published in that year, which referred to his learning from her the merits of Comte's later work.

The years 1867-8 mark the height of George Eliot's adherence to the Church of Humanity. In April, 1868, she offered to share the expenses of publishing Congreve's translation of the final volume of the Système. Mrs. Congreve sent her a medallion of Comte in October.

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1. Thomas Pinney, "More Leaves from GE's Notebook", HLQ XXIX (1966) 356.
2. GEL IV 332-4; see Part I ch.VI and Part II ch.II.
3. Ibid., IV 363 and 413.

In December, George Eliot thanked her for news of another Positivist meeting. She explained, perhaps disingenuously, 'I shall not be able to join it bodily, but I am glad always to have the possibility of being with you in thought'. She passed on good news about her own work:

> 'Tell Dr. Congreve that the "mass of Positivism", in the shape of "The Spanish Gypsy", is so rapidly finding acceptance with the public that, the second edition being all sold, the third, just published, has already been demanded to above 700. Do not think that I am becoming an egotistical author. The news concerns the doctrine, not the writer.'[1]

This is the most explicit surviving recognition by George Eliot of the Positivist nature of her writing.

Richard Congreve appears to have been remarkably obtuse in failing to appreciate the significance of George Eliot's novels. As early as September, 1859, he sympathised with her suffering from the pressure of authorship. He wrote to his wife, suggesting that Lewes keep criticism from her, even in letters, at the same time as advocating complete openness about her identity: 'for the future I hope full publicity will be the refuge - for much comes from the want of it in the present case'.[2] Subsequent letters to his wife refer to Silas Marner, Romola, Felix Holt and The Spanish Gypsy, without mentioning Positivism.[3] But a letter to Henry Edger discusses the matter. After expressing dislike of The Mill on the Floss but admiration of Romola and Felix Holt, Congreve concluded, somewhat lamely, 'She is most useful to our cause I imagine as she is decidedly with us.'[4] He seems not to have grasped this from the novels themselves. He was unimpressed by Middlemarch, which, he complained, 'leaves a very gloomy impression of everybody's failing',[5] and saw no reason to encourage

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1. Ibid., IV 430, 482, 498 and 496.
2. RC to his wife (1859) Bod MS Eng. Lett. e 51, ff.313.
3. Ibid., 5/9/61, 3/6/64, 5/6 and 12/10/66, 9/6/68, e 52, ff.131 and 323^{v}; e 53, ff.73, 89v and 187v.
4. RC to Henry Edger, 21/6/67, BM Add MS 45232, f.149v.
5. RC to his wife, 14/2/73 Bod MS Eng. Lett. e 54, f.82.

Sophie Edger to persevere with Romola:

'More clearly every day do I see that it is in the right conduct of life and in the exercise of thought that lies our true welfare and in these are also our strength - knowledge is but an instrument in this work and a very dubious instrument.'[1]

In his correspondence with Fanny Byse, Congreve revealed his disdain for literature. He described those engaged in its pursuit as 'a social incubus which we shall gradually shake off'.[2] His failure therefore to appreciate the contribution George Eliot had made to the Religion of Humanity lay in his low estimate of literature as much as his failure to recognise the Positivism which was embodied in her novels.

The Congreves remained on good terms with the Leweses throughout the 1870's. The diaries of both the Leweses record frequent lunches and dinners with the Congreves and with Emily Bury, who lived with them until her marriage to Geddes in 1871. Congreve attended many of George Eliot's Sunday afternoon gatherings. At one of these, in March, 1873, he recalled agreeing with her condemnation of the purposeless reading encouraged by Mudie and with her 'very great misgivings as to the advantage of so much light-hearted emancipation in women'. But he resented her wider contacts, and the unpredictability of her being in when he called. 'It is impossible to see much of her', he complained. 'They have it is clear, a superabundance of the social in the peculiar form in which they get it.' But he was pleased that Lewes, with the publication of the first volume of his Problems, seemed 'more favourable to the whole system of Comte's construction' than Mill.[3] The Congreves kept the Leweses in touch with the latest developments in the Positivist Society. For example, Emily Geddes wrote to George Eliot in July, 1874, 'Marie sends her best love and

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1. RC to Sophie Edger, 6/7/75, Ibid., e 67, f.26v.
2. RC to Fanny Byse, 26/4/86, BM Add MS 45230, f.178v, cp. ff.188 and 198v.
3. RC to Emily Geddes, 20/3/73, 20 and 27/2/74, Bod MS Eng. Lett. e 63, ff.66, 141 and 143v.

a circular".[1] The two came together. Throughout the relationship it is difficult to separate George Eliot's affection for Mrs. Congreve and sympathy with her husband from her intellectual commitment to Positivism.

Bridges suggested to Laffitte that George Eliot was deterred from even closer involvement in the Religion of Humanity by 'le fanaticisme étroit et formalité de Monsieur Congrève'. But he warned the French leader not to spread this about,

"car "George Eliot" etait l'amie intime de Madame Congrève, femme si supérieure, sous tous les rapports, à son mari."[2]

Bridges' account is confirmed by John Morley, who recalled that George Eliot

'more than once assured me that she saw no reason why the Religion of Humanity should not have had a good chance of taking root, if Congreve, its chief authority and expounder in our island, had only been blessed with a fuller measure of apostolic gifts'.[3]

There were certainly two sides to the example Richard Congreve provided, of self-sacrifice and devotion on the one hand, and of fanatical rigidity on the other. He fully illustrated the consequences of commitment to the details of Comte's Religion of Humanity.

III Abrogation of Eternal Widowhood

In a letter to his wife on November 25th, 1878, Richard Congreve discussed George Eliot's probable attitude to the recent schism. He revealed, even before Lewes's death, his lack of sympathy with the circle in which she moved:

'The literary people in all their various degrees will not feel much sympathy with our movement and though Mrs. Lewes by natural tendency would be more with us, yet her milieu is of a nature almost insensibly to weigh upon her. I should grieve very much at any breach between you - the more so as I think the time is at hand when

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1. Emily Geddes to GE, 24/7/74, Yale MS II.
2. JHB to P. Laffitte, 10/2/81, Maison d'AC.
3. John Morley, Recollections, London, 1921, p. 62

she will probably stand more alone. I imagine she will wish to keep as clear as possible of any row, and that partly from her position in general as well as her entourage.'[1]

Lewes died three days later. Congreve's letters for the next month were full of concern at George Eliot's shutting herself away from all her friends. He questioned whether her work on the Problems was 'worthwhile as compared with what she might do'.[2] Mrs. Congreve was the first of the friends to whom she wrote. She allowed her to visit in March, her husband in August. It was probably their influence which Blackwood suspected of encouraging 'morbid notions about poor Lewes' memory'.[3] Beesly was another who urged George Eliot to 'draw real comfort from your sense of the subjective union which no physical dissolution can destroy or impair'.[4] When she decided to marry John Cross rather than remain a perpetual widow, she left Charles Lewes to break the news to Mrs. Congreve. She repeatedly pressed him for a report on how it was received. She eventually wrote herself to explain to the Congreves that she would not take their reaction bitterly, for 'such alienation is very natural where a friend does not fulfil expectations of long standing'.[5]

The Positivist reaction to George Eliot's marriage was certainly extreme. In some cases it bordered on hysteria. Harrison wrote a double-edged letter of congratulation and veiled excommunication. The Positivist doctrine of eternal widowhood, he claimed, rested

'upon a whole system of truly religious ideas, ways of looking at life and its meanings. And I should not presume to think of imposing such opinions on those who stand entirely aloof from our ways and our thoughts'.[6]

Congreve wrote to his wife from Alassio expressing disbelief. But if it were true, he added, with immediate thought for the party image,

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1. RC to his wife, 25/11/78, Bod MS Eng. Lett. e 55, ff.156-156v
2. Ibid., 3, 4, 7, 9 and 14/12/78, e 55, ff.165-77.
3. GEL VII 121; see Part III ch. II (iii).
4. ESB to GE, 5/12/78, Yale MS III.
5. GEL VII 270, 277, 282, 288-9 and 295-6.
6. Ibid., VII 271-2.

'we may rejoice that her adhesion to Positivism has not been more open and complete'. He was still thinking of their image two days later:

'Surely it will be far from increasing her usefulness .... in her widowed state there lay a power which her new state cannot have - and a dignity which she has lost .... The world will taunt Positivism with it.'[1]

Sophie Edger was so violent in her disapproval that Congreve had to write to calm her down:

'Remember always that she is not nor ever has been more than by her acceptance of the general idea of Humanity a Positivist - so that she will not harm our cause as much as she might have done, had she /been overscored/ given a more complete assent .... calm down .... You may state strongly that Mrs. Lewes never accepted the details of the system, never went beyond the central idea. There may be some to whom it may be worth while to state this .... You little homicide, I wish I could see you to talk it over - but be calm'.[2]

Further letters show Congreve attempting to turn the event to the good of the movement:

'I have long doubted whether we should get any real fresh service from her .... but human life is so complicated and we are so weak all of us .... our claim to her support is rightly estimated not diminished - She has never given anything but intellectual support, the support contained that is in the fact that so powerful an intellect adopts the doctrine - the central idea of our system - the religion of Humanity - and that no weakness can take from us - I do not suppose that she renounces it now - and curiously enough if she did - it would be of less force as against us as all would attribute any change to the influence of her action'.[3]

That Congreve should be forced to take this line, admitting her close connection with their movement, argues at least some appreciation on his part of the strength of her influence.

The Positivists had always been extremely sensitive on the question of marriage, which was at the heart of their religion. When Bridges had remarried in 1868, Congreve had explained that Positivism did not depend upon the doctrine of eternal widowhood:

'Yet it is tested by it very strongly. For a religion will be judged largely by its power of support and consolation. And the most critical case in which that power will be tried is the separation by

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1. RC to his wife, 10 and 12/5/80, Bod MS Eng. Lett. e 56, ff.142-5v
2. RC to Sophie Edger, 16/5/80, Ibid., e 67, ff.119v-20.
3. Ibid., 23/5 and 2/6/80, ff.122v-4.

death of husband and wife - If there it is found to fail - well, that is a blow to it - and the proof that it has failed lies in the filling up otherwise the void.'[1]

He did not question the realism of the original requirement. On the Pradeau affair, surprisingly, Congreve had been more tolerant than others, who complained at his failure to excommunicate a confessed adulterer. They had insisted that he must leave either his mistress or the movement.

George Eliot's case was more complex. They had accepted with reluctance her union with Lewes, treating it as marriage. For her now to remarry required a tolerance which was beyond most of the Positivists. A letter from Mrs. Beesly to her husband, dated December 27th, 1880, illustrates the extent of the suspicion and prudery surrounding their attitude to George Eliot. She was arguing very strongly against Harrison's desire to commemorate the novelist:

'How could he use such language about her, and yet want to hold her up as an example ? .... I hope you will steadily refuse. I used to think it a less bad case than M. Pradeau's .... The Lewes one I used to look upon in this way. I thought she had sacrificed everything - for the sake of saving a man whom she loved well enough to see the nobler side of his nature through all the sin and coarseness that had obscured and half ruined it .... But since her second marriage - so soon - I cannot believe that her love could have been that single devoted self sacrificing passion whose purity carried her even through everything'.

She repeated Ethel Harrison's belief that George Eliot'had got tired of Mr. Lewes and had liked Mr. Cross before he died'. If Harrison also thought this, she asked, 'How can he want to have an éloge of her ?' They must condemn her in order to preserve the ideal of marriage.[2] Middlemarch had changed little in ten years.

Public acknowledgements of George Eliot's intellectual contribution to Positivism were forthcoming from both Beesly and Harrison.[3] The Congreves were sufficiently reconciled to dine with the Crosses

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1. RC to JHB, 3/7/68, copy, Bod MS Eng. Lett. c 185, f.17.
2. Mrs. ESB to her husband, 27/12/(80), Beesly Papers 5.
3. See Appendix.

shortly before George Eliot's death, and to accept her husband's continued subscription until 1892. But their various prejudices, against critical freedom with regard to Comte's system, against literature as such, and against both her 'marriages' combined to obscure from them the significance of her achievement. Even in 1890, when the Positivist Society of North London held a series of "Conférences sur le Positivisme contenu dans quelques-uns des Romans de George Eliot", translated and summarised by Paul Descours for the Revue Occidentale, they were quick to condemn her life. A Mr. Higginson propounded the theory that she realised too late the error of her ways, but was able, in the fate of men like Jermyn, to publicise the fatal consequences of adultery. The main lesson to be learnt from her work was the importance of fulfilling the duties she neglected in her life.[1] The same arguments were proffered in the Positivist Review in 1917. Edward Clodd refused to accept that eminence excused license, while S.H. Swinny wanted to 'temper moral reprobation by gratitude for great services'.[2] By this time the flouting of conventional morality in her union with Lewes outweighed her abrogation of eternal widowhood in marrying Cross. But their concern with both these issues prevented the majority of Positivists from recognising the importance of her novels to their cause.

IV Frederic Harrison

Among the massive body of Frederic Harrison's work the most sympathetic critic can find nothing new. Sydney Eisen admits that he was a defender and populariser only. He made 'no contribution of any significance to the synthetic philosophy of Positivism'. He was

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1. Revue Occidentale XIV (1891) 76-88.
2. PR XXV (1917) 66-7.

intellectually backward: 'His understanding of science and theology was rooted in mid-century'.[1] He was inflexible to the point of paralysis. In the 1870's he followed Congreve into "that Comtian morass' which he himself had criticised twenty years earlier and from which John Morley tried in vain to rescue him. In his son's words, he 'insulated his mind' against the possibility of change.[2] But his very consistency makes him a useful representative figure. He defended Comte against critics of all kinds, entering into successive controversies with the liberal Christian authors of Essays and Reviews, Mathew Arnold, James Fitzjames Stephens, Mark Pattison, John Ruskin, W.H. Mallock, T.H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer and A.J. Balfour. These public arguments, traced in the following chapter, help to clarify and define the precise position of Positivism in the broad spectrum of nineteenth-century agnosticism.

There is more than initial correspondence between Frederic Harrison and Felix Holt. Like the fictitious defender of Positivism, Harrison is described by Eisen as "honest, steadfast, energetic, and high-principled, yet a bit of a prig'. Felix Holt's 'passionate devotedness' was fed by a temperament which occasionally exploded in ungovernable rage. Austin Harrison described his father's Victorian temperament, which bred spates of temper in which his lips would quiver and his face turn purple.[3] Felix Holt called his teaching the attempt to impart "a little knowledge and common-sense". Frederic Harrison collected many of his articles under the title, 'The Philosophy of Common Sense. His Autobiographic Memoirs described himself as 'a Radical', like Felix Holt.[4] Harrison was busy defending Trades-

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1. Sydney Eisen, "FH: The Life and Thought of an English Positivist", John Hopkins Ph.D., 1957, ch. VI, "Defender of the Faith"; "FH and the Religion of Humanity", SAQ LXVI (1967) 579.
2. John Morley to FH, 15/8/73, Harrison Papers 1/80; Austin Harrison, FH; Thoughts and Memories, London, 1926, p.113
3. Ibid., pp. 102-6; FH II 76.
4. FH I 107; FH, Autobiographic Memoirs, 2 vols., London, 1911, I 158.

Unions in 1866, but agreed to help George Eliot with the legal aspects of Felix Holt, another advocate of working-class solidarity. It is difficult to attribute to coincidence the similarities between the two bearded, hearty, muscular Positivists.

There is one major difference between the two men. Felix Holt is genuinely working-class and resolves to remain so. Frederic Harrison never earned his living in his life. As a barrister, his radical politics deprived him of briefs. His books made an overall loss in excess of a thousand pounds. He refused on principle to accept money for his periodical writing, preserving these principles through his father's wealth. He was a member of numerous dining clubs, including the Political Economy and the Metaphysical Societies.[1] The fact that he disbelieved in both political economy and metaphysics did not prevent him from enjoying their dinners. He made no secret of his views, and clearly relished his arguments. But there remains a fundamental inconsistency between his radical ideas and his conventional behaviour which John Morley observed. After praising an address by Congreve which claimed that the strength of Positivism was its religion, he continued,

> 'Alas, my dear Harrison, Peter and Paul, Mathew, Mark, Luke and John, did not belong to the tailed-coat class, nor live on fine views. They lived in mortal spiritual stress, and clung to Christ as we do to clean linen and good hats.'[2]

After sketching Harrison's ascent to the Positivist apostolate, I will outline his defence of these 'fine views' on religion, philosophy and politics, before tracing his links with George Eliot.

Harrison recalled that he went up to Oxford in 1849 'with the remnants of boyish Toryism and orthodoxy', high and dry. He left six years later 'a Republican, a democrat, and a Free-thinker'.[3]

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1. Eisen, op. cit., ch. II, "The Happy Humanist, 1860-1923".
2. JM to FH, 3/1/73, Harrison Papers 1/80.
3. FH, Aut. Mem., I 95.

The struggle was keen, he remembered: "Lewes's History of Philosophy and the Lives of the Saints occupied me alternately'. He hardly missed a University Sermon or a copy of the Westminster. In 1855 he visited Comte, whom he regarded as a great philosopher but not yet as a priest. Over the next twenty years he accepted in turn Comte's view of history, his scheme of education, his social and political utopia, and finally his religion.[1] For the rest of the 1850's, however, Harrison's commitments were more diffuse. He studied at Lincoln's Inn from 1855 until he was called to the bar in 1858. He joined the staff of Maurice's Working-Men's College, where for four years he taught history and wrote for their magazine. It was the preaching of F.D. Maurice, he claimed, which 'thoroughly emancipated me from theological creeds'. He found Maurice 'muddle-headed and impotent'. Maurice regarded him as 'a dangerous disciple of Auguste Comte', and threatened to resign if his plan of lectures on history were accepted. Outvoted, Harrison himself resigned, and delivered his lectures on "The Meaning of History" at Holyoake's Free Thought Hall instead. During this period Harrison campaigned against the Crimean War and for the liberation of Italy. He also supported Bright's campaign for reform of the franchise, but became quickly disillusioned with party politics.[2]

In a diary entry of 'Agenda et Legenda' in 1861 Harrison mapped out his aim. He must first settle 'the question of religion'. He must increase his 'knowledge of the working classes' and engage in 'Popular Education' and "Social Improvement".[3] I will examine his work in all these areas. His religious views developed from a liberal theism through a loose acceptance of Comte's general ideas to

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1. FH, Memories and Thoughts, London, 1906, pp.8 and 15.
2. FH, Aut. Mem., I 150-69; Eisen, op. cit., ch. I.
3. FH, Aut. Mem., I 257-50.

a definite commitment to the Religion of Humanity. His contribution to philosophy was a common-sensical reiteration of Comte's distaste for metaphysics, relayed through Lewes. His greatest achievement was in politics, where his courageous defence of the Trades Unions was largely responsible for securing their legal position in 1871. I will draw mainly on his own collections of articles into books: The Creed of a Layman and The Positive Evolution of Religion,' The Philosophy of Common Sense, and National and Social Problems. But I will concentrate on those essays which appeared before George Eliot's death in 1880.

Harrison entered the theological arena in October, 1860, with an explosive review in the Westminster of the "Neo-Christianity" expressed in Essays and Reviews. He pointed to the Positivist elements in its teaching. Temple referred to the human race as 'a colossal man', similar to Comte's Humanity. Williams saw the significance of the Old Testament in God's education of man through history rather than through miracles. Baden-Powell and Goodwin looked to the preservation rather than the interruption of 'universal law' for revelation. Wilson attempted to 'embrace in one panorama the whole religious history of mankind'. Pattison treated eighteenth-century doctrine in a spirit 'purely historical', while Jowett interpreted 'the Scripture like any other book'. Throughout these essays, Harrison complained,

> 'the same process is continued; facts are idealised; dogmas are transformed; creeds are discredited as human and provisional; the authority of the Church and of the Bible .... is discarded'.

Christian ethics alone were preserved. But, he insisted, Christianity was either inspired or it was a completely natural development. There was no middle way. No theology could survive if it abandoned all definite beliefs. The essayists had been bold in expressing

their views. But, Harrison ended, they should go further: 'What is wanted is strength not merely to face the world, but to face one's own conclusions.' In order to regain the world, religion must not merely make peace with science; it must found itself upon the basis of science.[1]

In January, 1861, Harrison still believed in a "guiding Hand' and 'one great Author'. But there followed

'a gradual fading of the conception of Personality behind the mystery of the Universe and a clearer perception of the Human Providence that controls Man's destiny on earth'.

He was struggling for system against 'vague sentimentality'.[2] His 1862 diary records his finding a 'coherent system of principles' in the study of Comte. But he wished to found a school rather than a sect. He adopted "the Positivist Faith" but preserved a dislike of Congreve's misanthropic sectarianism. Positivism, he thought, should remain at the level of education, the diffusion of its principles in society.[3]

Harrison joined the Positivist Society in 1867 but expressed his view of "The Positivist Problem" two years later in the Fortnightly Review. He was, he explained, 'a disciple and not an apostle'. He believed that a Positivist synthesis was necessary but possibly premature:

'The real point at issue is whether it be possible to direct mankind by a religion of social duty, if humanity as a whole - past, present, and to come - can inspire a living devotion, capable of permanently concentrating the highest forces of the soul; whether it be possible to maintain such a religion by appropriate observances and an organised education.'

The difficulty was that Positivism fell between two stools:

'Those whom the philosophy attracts, the religion repels. Those whom the moral theories strike shrink back from the science.'

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1. FH, The Creed of a Layman, London, 1907, pp. 95-157.
2. Ibid., pp. 40-6.
3. FH, Aut. Mem., I 280-3.

In addition, students of Comte were being persecuted as a "malignant sect", and were driven to behave like one, 'to defend every statement of Comte's, as if it were a question of verbal inspiration'. But he for one remained outside Congreve's church although within Comte's school.[1]

The scathing references to Positivism in Fitzjames Stephen's attack on Mill elicited from Harrison another definition of the Religion of Humanity as he was prepared to believe in it. He confided to Morley, now editor of the Fortnightly, his aim: to refute Stephen's charge of blank materialism by demonstrating 'the superior succulence of Positivism'. After attacking Stephen's "Religion of Humanity", he would pass on to an explanation of the spiritual power. 'Religious music in the orchestra' should accompany the third act in his little drama, the presentation of Positive religion.[2] He began this final section by explaining what he meant by religion:

'Religion is the state of harmony that results when man's entire life, both as an individual and as a member of society, corresponds with the real conditions - first of human nature; and secondly of the world around us.'

Religion must satisfy man's thought, activity and feeling. It must supply a creed, a code of conduct and a cult. Positivism fulfilled these conditions:

'Life for Humanity is at once:-
1. The grandest field for the intellect.
2. The most practical sphere for the energies.
3. The purest satisfaction of the feelings.'

The satisfaction of all three elements of man's nature, he freely admitted, involved a way of life 'which it will take us years to master in understanding, and to make a habit in reality'.[3] But it was worth the attempt.

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1. FH, "The Positivist Problem", FR ns VI (1869) 469-93.
2. FH to JM, 14 and 19/5/(73), Harrison Papers 1/56.
3. FH, The Positive Evolution of Religion, London, 1913, pp. 233-47.

Harrison re-read Comte in 1874 so that he could draw up the index at the back of the English translation of the Système. But he rejected Morley's accusation that he was giving himself up to a "sect". He accepted 'the doctrines and method of Comte' but not in an exclusive spirit. He complained of the scepticism which 'repudiates the possibility of there being a system of truth or a system of life' and 'the attitude of mind which holds itself degraded' by adopting someone else's ideas. The following October he explained that Morley's refusal to print 'direct religious exposition of Positivism' in the Fortnightly had led him to send two articles to Knowles, editor of the Contemporary. In November he announced,

"I am now distinctly entered on the task of formal adoption of the religion of Humanity. I am, in a literary sense at any rate, in the position of Congreve."[1]

Harrison's two articles in the Contemporary described "The Religious and Conservative Aspects of Positivism". The first claimed that most of the attacks on Comte's system applied to 'any definite organization of religion'. Harrison himself found the vagueness of Neo-Christianity and the "higher Pantheism" unacceptable. He sneered at the phrases of Spencer and Arnold, "the Unknowable" and "the stream of tendency that makes for righteousness". He did not believe 'that men and women can be taught to bow down before a nebulous Theosophy'. Yet only Rome, of all the Christian denominations, had been 'distinctly, systematically, hardening her own system'. Religion remained subjective and personal, however, unless founded on 'a coherent scheme of doctrines, as the basis of an organized code of practice'. Religion had to be both definite and systematic.[2] The second article complained that theology had been so battered by science that it now claimed only a small area of life. In contrast, Positivism claimed

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1. FH to JM, 2/11/75, Harrison Papers 1/61.
2. FH, "The Religious and Conservative Aspects of Positivism, PartI", CR XXVI (1875) 992-1012.

'to do what for centuries Theology has ceased to do; to make religion again the basis and the end of man's thoughts, of his affections, and of his energies'.

Positivism was also the 'heir of all the religious sentiments, institutions, and conceptions of the past. Harrison depicted the feelings of 'a worshipper of Humanity" appreciating the traditions maintained in a medieval cathedral. The Religion of Humanity, he claimed, was the consummation of that tradition.[1]

Harrison never ceased to attack the intermediate positions between dogmatic Christianity and Positivism. "A Socratic Dialogue", which he wrote for the Contemporary in May, 1876, involved Sophistes, an Oxford 'son of sweetness and light', and Phaedrus, a London barrister who happens to have all the best lines. Phaedrus refuses to live in 'a phantasmagoria of dissolving creeds'. He insists on 'some real power to revere, some ever-present goodness to love, some faith which can explain and guide my life'. The discussion is adjourned while they observe evensong, in his words, "as if we were studying a noble dead religion'. Sophistes finds man too evil and Humanity too feeble an object for devotion. Phaedrus accuses him of cynicism and despair, offering in their place the optimism of the Religion of Humanity.[2] A further attack on "Pantheism and Cosmic Emotion" appeared in the Nineteenth Century, a further redefinition of religion in "The Creed of a Layman", both of 1881.[3]

The ritual of the Religion of Humanity was the last aspect of Comte's teaching which Harrison came to accept. In 1870 he reacted violently against its introduction in the Positivist School. But by 1874 he was submitting his children to the Sacrament of Presentation and by 1877 urging George Eliot to contribute towards the construction

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1. FH, "The Religious and Conservative Aspects of Positivism, Part III", CR XXVII (1876) 140-59.
2. FH, Creed, pp. 158-94.
3. Ibid., pp. 195-250.

of a Positivist liturgy. By February, 1879, he had built a small Positivist chapel in his home, where his son recalled that Sunday worship included prayers, collects and addresses.[1] But one of the major differences between Chapel Street and Newton Hall, after the schism of 1878, was supposed to be their attitude towards religious observance. Harrison himself, in an 1884 "Bulletin" for the Revue Occidentale, made this very point:

'Ceux qui viennent à Newton Hall n'y trouvent aucune de ces manifestations qu'on est habitué à regarder comme inséparables de la religion et du culte: on n'y fait ni service, ni prières, ni invocations; rien qui rappelle, en paroles, gestes ou images, le rituel théologique.'

Newton Hall concentrated on education, scientific, social and moral.[2]

In 1879 Harrison had been named by Bridges as his successor as President of the "London Positivist Committee" appointed by Laffitte the year before. The society settled into Newton Hall in 1881. The naming of the hall reflected their desire to emphasise the scientific basis of their faith. They never adopted the terms, 'Church', 'priest' or "service', but they gradually developed an unmistakable ritual. The hall itself acquired all the trappings of Chapel Street: the thirteen busts, a tablet of sacred formula and a large copy of the Sistine Madonna. They introduced music and hymns, many of them composed by Harrison's wife, who published a book on The Service of Man.[3] Six of Comte's nine sacraments were celebrated at Newton Hall, most of them by Harrison himself. There were pilgrimages to Comte's grave and to the birthplace, homes and tombs of other great men. All this accompanied a full programme of educational lectures and political activity. But it was little different from

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1. FH/to Dubuisson ?/ 25/2/79, Laffitte Papers, Maison d'AC; Austin Harrison, op. cit., p. 86.
2. Revue Occidentale VII (1884) 133-4.
3. Ethel Harrison, The Service of Man, London, 1890.

Congreve's Church of Humanity.[1]

Harrison's philosophical writings were his worst. Like himself, they were completely predictable. His son called him 'the embodiment of common sense': 'he was so sensible that he was positively disconcerting'.[2] Harrison revelled in this image and entitled his collected philosophical essays, The Philosophy of Common Sense. This traced, quite seriously, 'how I came by degrees to solve the main problem of Thought', with the very substantial aid of Lewes's History of Philosophy, 'in all its successive forms'.[3] He first explained the positive synthesis, which was based on science, 'the systematic form of spontaneous good sense' and then how Positivism developed the realm of feeling and so softened the harshness of the external world revealed by science.[4]

Two of Harrison's essays turned to Lewes's later work on the Problems of Life and Mind, about which he was initially very enthusiastic. He claimed that the first volume 'must be said to carry the religious claim of positive philosophy far higher than has yet been done by any Englishman of science'. He also welcomed Lewes's recognition of "The Social Factor in Psychology".[5] Harrison's letters to Morley reveal that his early enthusiasm for the Problems soon subsided. In February, 1874 Lewes had encouraged him to write on the book 'from the positivist point of view', confessing that his own 'position in philosophy was more and more one of convergence towards Comte'. Harrison expressed the hope that the Problems would become 'as much the text book as his history of Philosophy'. He thought it was 'the most important step Positivism has ever received since the publication

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1. McGee, op. cit., pp. 152-83.
2. Austin Harrison, op. cit., pp. 182 and 187.
3. FH, The Philosophy of Common Sense, London, 1907, pp. xii and xxv
4. Ibid., pp. 42, 62 and 81-6.
5. Ibid., pp. 103 and 122-30.

of the Politique'. But by June, Harrison had cooled considerably:

'His book is not very well put together, and rather tantalising by a want of coherence and completeness'.

The review became 'a great deal more difficult a task to do honestly than I ever calculated, especially being as I am so much Lewes' friend'.[1]

The remainder of The Philosophy of Common Sense derived more directly from Comte. Most of the essays were papers delivered to the Metaphysical Society, refuting metaphysical concepts such as "The Absolute" or "The Soul". He explained "The Basis of Morals" from the Positivist point of view. The problem was that 'morality will be undermined if based on a theology which is not true' and that 'morality without religion is insufficient for general civilization'. Common sense and Positivism taught that the solution was 'a non-theological religion'.[2] The book continued with similarly clear answers to the objections to Positivism raised by Spencer, Huxley and Balfour, to be studied in the following chapter.

The two prongs of Positivist political agitation, on an international level opposition to imperialism, and on a national scale raising the dignity of labour, are reflected in Harrison's discussion of National and Social Problems. In both areas, the Positivists were extremely lively. After one of their more violent disagreements on Germany, Morley mocked Harrison's interpretation of Comte's hierarchy of the sciences:

'Mathematics at the bottom; hysterics at the top. As you say, it makes political action so simple.'[3]

There was certainly a passionate political commitment on the part of the Positivists, but the hysteria was often the prerogative of their opponents. In their defence of the Trades Unions in particular, the

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1. FH to JM, 12 and 27/2, 13/6/(74), Harrison Papers 1/59 and 60.
2. FH, Phil., pp. 151-6.
3. JM to FH, 22/2/71, Harrison Papers 1/78.

Positivist position was the one which eventually triumphed over the prejudices which they fought.

Harrison's first international cause was the liberation and unification of Italy. He spent 1859 as Italian correspondent for the Morning Post, Daily News and Westminster Gazette. Passages from his essays for the Westminster Review in January, 1861, are reprinted as "The Making of Italy" in National and Social Problems. They treat the Italian cause as a type or model of the Positivist movement, just as Comte saw patriotism as a stage towards love for Humanity. Cavour and Garibaldi between them achieved the Positivist ideal of order and progress. In 'this recent Italian movement', Harrison claimed,

> 'we have seen the conception of national existence matured and upheld through dreary years of suffering by a few brilliant intellects, gradually growing up as the religion of the finer minds, until it at last spread to be the passion of all that is generous in the national character'.[1]

The implication was that Positivism could achieve similar success.

In 1870, Harrison issued severe warnings against Bismarck's 'militarism', and the following year urged England to intervene in order to save France from destruction at the hands of Germany.[2] In 1873, shortly after Morley had entrusted him with the "Public Affairs" section of the Fortnightly Review, Harrison reacted violently to Bismarck's attempts to curb the power of the Catholic Church in Germany. He told Morley that he had consulted Congreve and the other Positivists, who all felt it 'a matter of high and pressing principle'. When Morley agreed to print Harrison's article but added a critical note of his own, Harrison exploded in a series of tirades against editors and hacks. There would never be 'sense and honesty in political criticism', he complained, 'till the last "Editor" is grinding the last "Organ" in Hell'.[3] The demands of professional

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1. FH, National and Social Problems, London, 1908, pp. 117-9
2. Ibid., pp. 3-70.
3. FH to JM, 28/10, 3, 8, 12 and 14/12/(73), Harrison Papers 1/57-8

journalism, as Comte had found, were incompatible with Positive commitments.

Harrison and the other Positivists continued Congreve's attack on imperialism. Their joint publication on International Policy in 1866 included a criticism of British imperialism by Beesly and suggestions towards a less selfish paternalistic attitude to China, Japan, India and 'the uncivilised Communities', by Bridges and others. Congreve and Harrison expounded the Positive solution of a spiritual power to end the anarchy of the West.[1] The attack on imperialism was renewed with Harrison's protest in 1879 against 'the wanton invasion of Afghanistan' by the Viceroy of India. Native leaders, he claimed, were being treated as rebels and hanged for defending their own country.[2] Harrison was one of the founder-members of the Anti-Aggression League formed in 1882 to express dissatisfaction with the handling of the Zulu and Transvaal wars, the Borneo annexation and other imperialist expeditions. He continued into the twentieth century to condemn British policy in Egypt and Africa.[3]

Harrison's major achievement was his contribution to the defence and legal recognition of the Trades Unions. In 1861, he and Godfrey Lushington drew up two letters, signed by eight Positivists and Christian Socialists, explaining and defending the demand of the building operatives for a nine-hour day.[4] Beesly and Harrison were regular contributors to the Bee-Hive, 'the principal working-class organ' from 1861 to 1877. Harrison told Morley, 'Beesly and I in the Bee Hive never touch religious questions or preach positivism', but everyone knew the basis of their sympathy with labour.[5] The public

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1. International Policy, London, 1866.
2. FH, Nat. and Soc. Probs., pp. 164-182.
3. Ibid., pp.184-265.
4. Sidney and Beatrice Webb, The History of Trade Unionism, London, 1894, pp. 226-9.
5. Ibid., p. 282n; FH to JM, 21/8/(73).

panic at union intimidation in 1866 led Beesly to defend the primciples of peaceful trades-unionism in a pamphlet of 1867, The Sheffield Outrages and the Meeting at Exeter Hall. Harrison was chosen to represent the workers on the Royal Commission inquiring into the subject. He was able to demonstrate the restraining influence of the great Amalgamated Scoieties in local quarrels. It was the minority report of Harrison, Hughes and Lichfield which formed the basis of the Trade Union Bill, drafted by Harrison and passed in 1871. This guaranteed the legal status and financial protection of the unions. Harrison and the other Positivists continued to be involved in union affairs until the 1880's.[1]

The first three of Harrison's essays on "Social Problems" originally appeared in the early years of the Fortnightly Review. It was Lewes who encouraged him to write on the iron trade dispute in Staffordshire for the first issue in May, 1865. In this article, Harrison pointed out the limits of conventional political economy, basing his views 'on Comte's philosophic proof that Economic dogmas become both false and mischievous when detached from Social science as a whole'. The laws of political economy, he argued, treated man merely as a producing animal motivated by competition ignoring the more complex and therefore more modifiable social phenomena. He launched a fierce attack on the 'degrading fatalism', the materialism, and the subservience to self-interest encouraged by political economy.[2]

The Fortnightly for the second half of November, 1865, contained a general defence of "Trades-Unionism" by Harrison. This described their strength and importance, and their main function, that of providing resistance to market forces. It outlined the Positive ideal of union between capital and labour. Unions would become redundant

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1. Ibid., pp. 240-63 and 348-60; McGee, op. cit., pp. 69-82; Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists, London, 1965, ch. VI "The Positivists", pp. 251-342.
2. FH, Nat. and Soc. Probs. pp. 271-307.

when 'a higher moral spirit' existed in industry and society, to be developed by 'greater self-control, higher education, and purer domestic life'. Until then, they provided a temporary political solution short of a revolution.[1]

Harrison's third article for Lewes, on "Industrial Co-operation", in the first Fortnightly of 1866, began with a motto from Comte on the moral regulation of wealth. It deplored the change in the co-operative movement from the division of profits among workers to their distribution among shareholders. This only turned workers into capitalists. Harrison again quoted Comte on the evils of saving money and changing class. Workers ought to rejoice in their freedom from responsibility and concentrate on the development of their "mental and moral faculties".[2] Harrison's later essays advocated a similar brand of "Moral and Religious Socialism", preaching duties rather than rights and depending upon the reconstruction of society along Positivist lines. Selfishness, he believed, the true cause of social and industrial problems, could 'be cured only by Religion'.[3]

Harrison's letters to Beesly reveal that he accepted Lewes's editorial recommendations even less willingly than Morley's. He was suspicious from the start:

'I want to know what we are to do about Lewes' proposal. Don't let us be considered to be taking it up in a literary way .... merely as a means of getting a hearing for our principles'.

He was not pleased by Lewes's suggestion that his first article was too long:

'It is not too long - and I will not alter it to please triflers. I am not Lewes' hack and he shall suppress it if he likes ...
Oh what a fool I was ever to put my neck under an Editor who wants 16 pages neither more nor less of something smart .... Hang Lewes and hang editors and reviews.'

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1. Ibid., pp. 307-32.
2. Ibid., pp. 333-376.
3. Ibid., pp. 440-62.

He asked Beesly to correct the proofs of his second and third articles. His instructions were clear:

'Don't let him hack [?] or alter them or take out the motto from Comte. He engaged to let me have my fling and he ought .... You alter what you like but don't let him.'[1]

Harrison never overcame his suspicion of Lewes, although he admired his intellect. In 1855, he had inadvertently found himself carried away by admiration for the Leader. He confessed to Beesly, 'I almost forgot Lewes' private enormities'.[2] He seems never to have forgotten them for long; a letter to Morley of 1873 refers to him as Silenus.[3] This combination of suspicion and respect carried over into his attitude to George Eliot.

V George Eliot and Frederic Harrison

The similarity between George Eliot's Positivism and that of Frederic Harrison was noticed by W.M. Simon.[4] Harrison himself acknowledged her influence on his own religious development through her translation of Strauss, through the Westmimster Review and through personal contact. He included her among those who introduced him to Comte.[5] I wish here to concentrate on three aspects of their relationship: her response to his articles in the 1860's and 1870's, his attempt to persuade her to write more directly for the Positive movement, and his failure to understand her novels or the compromise with Positivism which she eventually reached.

It was at the Congreves' on New Year's Day, 1860, that Lewes recorded first meeting 'a Mr. Harrison there who told us about the Working Men's College'.[6] Harrison appears to have been greatly

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1. FH to ESB, 3 undated letters and 5/9/(65), Harrison Papers 1/12.
2. FH to ESB, (1855), Ibid., 1/3.
3. FH to JM, 19/5/(72), Ibid., 1/56.
4. Simon, op. cit., p. 213.
5. FH, Creed, p. 17.
6. GHL Journal, 1/1/60.

impressed with both the Leweses:

'She was, in 1860, nearly what she was in 1880 - reserved, earnest, dignified, speaking with deliberate force, and wholly free from pretension or exhilaration with her success. He was, as ever, the brilliant and affectionate Bohemian'.[1]

George Eliot was impressed by the attack on Essays and Reviews in the Westminster before she knew it had been written by Harrison. She told Mrs. Congreve, 'Though I don't quite agree with his view of the case, I admired the tone and style of the writing greatly.'[2] He also, in 1860, was very nearly what he was in 1880: unreserved, dogmatic and totally uncompromising. But they were both earnest admirers of Comte. It was a sound basis for sympathy and respect.

George Eliot admired Harrison's early articles for the Fortnightly, which she praised in her letters to him and to Mrs. Congreve.[3] When she asked his help with the legal problems of Felix Holt, he willingly obliged, and they remained in close contact throughout the first half of 1866.[4] This co-operation may have contributed to George Eliot's closer involvement in the Positive movement at this time, which Harrison reported in his letters to Beesly. In January, 1866, he praised Lewes' article on Comte:

'The tone is very good in spite of his flippancy - you can see her hand or rather mind in it. It is too the first announcement of her Positivism.'

The following year he mentioned her desire to help in finding Congreve a room in which to lecture.[5] She supported him against Mathew Arnold in 1867 and Fitzjames Stephen in 1873. She was moved to tears by his article on "Bismarckism" in 1870.[6]

George Eliot's most extended commentary on Harrison followed his article on "The Positivist Problem" in 1869. On a second reading,

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1. FH, Aut. Mem., I 204.
2. GEL III 353.
3. GEL IV 192 and 214; FH, Aut. Mem., I 325
4. GEL IV 215-65.
5. FH to ESB, 1/4/(66) and (Easter, 1867), Harrison Papers 1/14.
6. GEL IV 395, V 125 and 421-2.

she told him, 'I gained a stronger impression of its general value, and I also felt less jarred by the more personal part at the close'. She went on to explain her 'unreasonable aversion to personal statements'. She referred to a conversation in which Harrison had argued in favour of definite resolutions:

> 'I give a hearty "Amen", praying that I may not be too apt to prefer the haze to the clearness. But the fact is, I shrink from decided "deliverances" on momentous subjects, from the dread of coming to swear by my own "deliverances" and sinking into an insistent echo of myself. That is a horrible destiny - and one cannot help seeing that many of the most powerful men fall into it.'[1]

What she had seen in Congreve was to happen to Harrison, who seems not to have heeded this warning against dogmatism.

Harrison first urged George Eliot to write a directly Positivist novel in July, 1866. His long letter outlined the 'normal relations" of a Comtean community which could be described in a realistic contemporary setting. Her reply distinguished between propaganda and aesthetic teaching , but promised to consider his proposal seriously. His suggestions bore fruit in Middlemarch, as I will show, but transmuted in a manner beyond his comprehension.[2] He pressed her more urgently in June, 1877. Referring to Congreve"s use of the "Choir Invisible" in their recent services, he suggested she might make further contributions to Positivist liturgy. He took the opportunity of questioning her more closely on the "Religion of Humanity as a possible rallying point for mankind in the future'. How far did she differ from Comte ? Her reply thanked him for rousing her from 'resignation to being of no use'. She doubted whether she could construct a liturgy, although she might serve as 'an organ of feelings which have not yet found their due expression'. Such timidity failed to satisfy him. He demanded an unambiguous statement of belief,

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1. Ibid., V 75-6.
2. Ibid., IV 284-9 and 300-1; see Part III ch. IV.

'a direct estimate of the main idea of the Religion of Humanity as a possible thing. I see the world running off upon the details of Comte's ritual, and the dominant principle is being forgotten by it, and overlaid by Positivists. And then, I ask, why should you so long abandon Religion for Art.'

This correspondence, combined with long discussions with Harrison at Witley, spurred her into polishing her "College Breakfast-Party".[1] She also rethought her position on Positive liturgy. She told him that she withdrew her remarks on 'the Prayers we spoke of'. She now felt that they kept 'within the due limit of aspiration and do not pass into beseeching'. She also accepted that 'a ritual might bring more illumination than sermons'. In April, 1880, she sent him five pounds 'towards your branch of the Positivist work' and various excerpts from poems which expressed the worship of Humanity.[2]

Harrison's resentment at George Eliot's standing aloof from organised Positivism flared up, we have seen, on her marriage to Cross. The reservations he expressed to Laffitte on her death were considerable:

'C'est une perte profond pour le monde, et pour nous - bien qu'elle n'a jamais été un membre de l'église Positiviste, et rejetait meme l'idée de toute réorganisation sacerdotale'.[3]

But at the celebration of the "Day of All the Dead" on the last day of 1881, the "Choir Invisible" was performed as a cantata, for voices and chorus. In his address, Harrison claimed that this was 'no mere idle work of the poet's fancy', but 'the inmost belief of her great brain'. She was, he continued,

'one of the greatest creators in the world of imagination whom our own generation has known. She was the friend of myself and of many of us who meet in this Hall; she assisted us in our movement; the world knows perfectly well that she was in profound and perhaps in growing sympathy with it, but that there was very much in Auguste Comte from which her reason entirely stood aloof. But in his conception of the filiation of all human truth, work and beauty, she was wholly with us in brain as much as in heart.'

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1. Ibid., VI 387-8; Haight, GE, pp. 506-7; see Part III ch.VII
2. GEL VI 439 and VII 260-1.
3. FH to P. Laffitte, 28/12/80, Maison d'AC.

As they sang and listened to the cantatas, he believed,

'she who wrote these verses, and he, who first conceived the idea that inspired them, will be living tonight in us, bringing with them to our hearts all the company of the good and great in all ages and nations of our earth'.[1]

She was fully incorporated in the Great Being.

Three published articles on George Eliot by Harrison, outlined in the Appendix, described her general adhesion to the Religion of Humanity but failed to notice the detailed incorporation of Positive ideas in her novels. His letters offered her nothing but praise. When she sent him a copy of The Spanish Gypsy, he replied,

'I need not say I am sure what pleasure it gives me to recognise the profound truths and sacred principles which /that which/ we call the Faith of the Future is preparing, for the first time truly idealized.'[2]

But to Beesly he confessed that the mixture of narrative and drama was 'damnable'. Apart from 'some grand bits' it was 'a fiasco'.[3] His opinion of Daniel Deronda was even lower. He told Morley, 'it is the d-dest mincing style we now read'. A later letter explained his disappointment:

'Knowing all I do of her, and how she recently spoke to me of "us Positivists", I am quite indignant at the silly playing about Judaism, and the unfair appeal to Theistic prejudice ... I say nothing of the literary affectation, and the shallow cynicism ... But when I think of the level from which she has descended, and when I think of the Positivist view of her art which she perfectly understands and professes to embody in art, I am quite grieved to see her career end in a poor literary aim, and an artificial bitterness, an unsocial unhuman argot which she has bought her life to mince at the applause of a sycophantic group. I will not be one of it.'[4]

Harrison's criticism degenerated into uncomprehending and incomprehensible rant. The irony is that most critics would allow Daniel Deronda to be the most Positivist of all George Eliot's novels.

Austin Harrison recalled that his father 'was for Dickens, and

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1. FH, Creed, pp.84 and 93-4.
2. GEL IV 484.
3. FH to ESB, (May, 1868), Harrison Papers 1/15.
4. FH to JM, 8/2 and 17/9/(76), Ibid., 1/62-3.

the innovating Russianism of Gissing disconcerted him'. He was 'no psychologist. He took practically no interest in the analysis of motive and modern fiction bored him.' He opposed all forms of aestheticism: 'writing to him signified teaching'.[1] Frederic Harrison himself confessed to finding George Eliot"s later novels and poetry 'too much laboured'. She was not lively enough for him. In some respects she might have learnt more from Lewes: 'it would have been well if he could have inspired her with a dose of the rattling devil within him'.[2] Temperamentally, he was out of sympathy with her.

The difference between Frederic Harrison and George Eliot can be seen in their attitude to compromise. In Memories and Thoughts, Harrison contrasted compromise, "the soul of politics', with 'the principles of Positivism'.[3] For him the two were incompatible. He demanded clarity; a man was either a Christian or a Positivist. He could not understand 'the compromising sentiment' which made George Eliot choose for Lewes the Unitarian burial service which was later accorded to her.[4] Her view of life was infinitely more complex than his. The outspoken polemicist should not be expected to have understood so subtle a novelist.

VI Bridges, Beesly and the other Positivists

Congreve and Harrison were not the only Positivists with whom the Leweses were on friendly terms. From the late 1860's through the 1870's their house fulfilled the function of a Positivist salon. Under the benevolent gaze of George Eliot the varieties of Positivist allegiance were allowed full freedom of discussion. Chief among her

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1. Austin Harrison, op. cit., pp. 111-2, 143 and 176.
2. FH, Aut. Mem., II 108-9.
3. FH, Mems. and Thoughts, p. 14.
4. H. Spencer to FH, 26/12/80, Harrison Papers 1/107.

visitors were Dr. Bridges and Professor Beesly, who merit separate treatment. The others I will consider briefly in relation to George Eliot.

John Henry Bridges was another product of Rugby and Wadham. He recovered from a disastrous third class degree in 1854 to gain an Oriel fellowship in 1856 and admission to the Royal College of Physicians in 1859. He emigrated to Australia the following year, to return immediately because of the death through typhoid of his wife. He brought her body back to England, concealed in a trunk, while translating the General View. After this grim experience, he assured Harrison that 'the religion of Humanity stands the test of sorrow'. But he needed the London barrister to help him overcome the extreme depression from which he suffered while working as a doctor in Bradford in the early 1860's. In 1868 he married his cousin's eldest daughter, returning to London the following year as medical inspector to the Poor Law Board. From then until his retirement in 1891 he waged a ceaseless struggle for health and sanitation. This work was 'ever his religion'.[1]

Bridges' main contribution to the Positivist movement was his translation of the General View and the remainder of the first volume of the Système, published in 1865 and 1875 respectively. Also in 1865, he defended The Unity of Comte's Life and Doctrine against the criticism of John Stuart Mill. He pointed out that Mill had accepted the backbone of Comte's system, including the law of the three states, the classification of the sciences, the idea of a humanist religion, the development of altruism and the importance of the family. What he could not accept was 'the necessity of an organized Spiritual Power'. But this had been the major component of Positivism from the beginning.

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1. Susan Liveing, A Nineteenth-Century Teacher: JHB, London, 1926, esp. pp. 85, 104-6 and 213.

Comte had seen the western world 'paralysed by doubt' and had attempted to supply a definite creed and an authority on which men could rely. Mill sought liberty. Comte and the complete Positivists thought that 'the highest liberty is that which comes unsought through nobleness of life'. An additional note defended Comte against the detailed criticisms of historical bias, neglect of Psychology and abandonment of the principle of verification.[1]

Bridges' reply to Mill was by far his best piece of writing. His many other papers and articles added little to the Positivist canon. Like Harrison, he reduced Comtism to common sense. His representative address on " Prayer and Work", in the only year of his presidency of the London Positivist Committee, redefined worship in a manner no more specific and considerably less urgent than Dorothea:

'Communion with Humanity, then, that is to say, the attempt to bring before ourselves strongly and definitely that stream of continuous effort for good, whether material or moral, which has flowed from the first ages till now, and which is the source of our spiritual life, would seem to be the sole centre and stronghold of Positivist prayer.' He invited his audience to conceive the advancement of 'the triumph of good over evil' which would accompany the daily clothing of family relations 'with beauty and mercy and truth' in private meditation. He was unenthusiastic about public worship. Comte himself had never attempted to construct a Positive liturgy, and Bridges preferred to attend the Christian services of their community, 'without hypocrisy, rather with deep and unfeigned sympathy'.[2]

The general nature of Bridges view of Positivism made him unwilling to teach and guide directly, and he passed on the presidency to Harrison in 1879. He preferred a lower profile both for himself and for the movement. In 1886, he explained to Harrison his revulsion

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1. JHB, The Unity of Comte's Life and Doctrine, London, (1865) 1910, pp. 7-64.
2. JHB, Essays and Addresses, London, 1907, pp. 11 and 16-8.

to reciting the Positive formula. He felt that Harrison was leading Newton Hall in the direction of Chapel Street, to imitate Anglican practice, 'to go to Church once, or twice, a Sunday, and to have a "Service"'. Instead they should remain 'informal and plastic', awaiting future developments.[1] Bridges also exercised a restraining influence on Beesly and Harrison in the realm of politics. He recognised that England was not ready for Positive ideals, such as the granting of home rule to Ireland. He told Beesly,

> 'I think you underrate the strength and depth of the average commonplace untaught Englishman's prejudice against Ireland. I have lived in Middlemarch, I think longer than you'.

The growing awareness of the distance between his own aims and those of his countrymen, dramatically evident in the Boer War, brought him sad and depressed into the twentieth century.[2]

Bridges encountered the Leweses soon after moving into John Chapman's boarding house in Spring Gardens in 1856. There, at the soirées, Susan Liveing recounted,

> 'The philosophy of Comte was a frequent subject of discussion. George Eliot and Lewes were steeped in it; Mill admired and partially accepted it; Huxley and Spencer assaulted and abused it as was their wont.'[3]

Lewes's journal refers to meeting 'Mr. Bridges, a very intelligent and amiable Medical student, a disciple of Comte', showing him some 'preparations of the spinal chord', and having 'a philosophic talk' with him in March, 1859.[4] It was Bridges who was partly responsible for the breakdown of George Eliot's anonymity. He wrote to her from Paris in September, 1859, explaining that Dr. and Mrs. Chapman used to talk frequently of a woman known to them as George Eliot. He knew she was from the Midlands and passed on to the Congreves his inference

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1. JHB to FH, 6 and 28/10/86, Harrison Papers 1/24.
2. Liveing, op. cit., pp.215-20 and 242-58.
3. Ibid., p.62.
4. GHL Journal, 13 and 14/3/59; GEL III 238 fn.6.

that she it was who had written Adam Bede. He apologised for any trouble he might have caused but not for his disagreement with her failure to write openly.[1] Bridges was an ardent admirer of her novels. Dr. Dawtrey Drewitt recalled arousing his indignation by repeating a criticism of George Eliot by Ruskin.[2] He was a frequent visitor to the Priory after his move to London in 1869, but there is no record of any close co-operation between them.

Edward Spencer Beesly was an even more regular devotee of George Eliot's salon. Among his obituaries, the Westminster Gazette began,

'No more striking figure was seen at the famous Sunday afternoons in The Priory, during the seventies, than that of Professor Beesly. Six-feet-two or more in stature, erect, his handsome features not disfigured by the favoris or flowing whiskers of the period, outwardly he towered above the celebrated men - poets, critics and artists - gathered around George Eliot's chair'.

The Times recalled that he was one of the least knowledgeable but fiercest of the Wadham Positivists, a view that was confirmed by the Spectator's quotation of Morley's reference to

'The Fortnightly chiefs of the Radical garrison,
Implacable Beesly and high-minded Harrison'.[3]

By profession an historian, Beesly was by temperament a polemicist. Another of Congreve's rebellious pupils, he began his journalistic crusade for Positivism with two articles in the Westminster Review in 1861. The first slated "Mr. Kingsley on the Study of History". The second defended the "Trades Unions". A frequent contributor to the Bee-Hive and the Fortnightly, Beesly expressed to Henry Crompton in 1867 his longing for 'a newspaper of our own wherein to hurl defiance at our enemies'.[4] He eventually founded the Positivist Review in 1893. He clearly enjoyed the struggle with Middlemarch which so depressed Bridges.

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1. GHB to JE, 11/9/(59), Yale MS III.
2. Recollections of JHB, London, 1908, p. 217.
3. Westminster Gazette, 15/7/1915; Times, 9/7/15; Spectator, 17/7/15; Beesly Papers 27 UCL.
4. ESB to H. Crompton, 19/8/67, Beesly Papers I,

Beesly became a good friend of the Leweses. George Lewes's journal for March, 1863, refers to a visit by 'Beesley', George Eliot's diary for January, 1865, to 'Mr. Beasley'. Thereafter they generally managed to spell his name correctly. In 1865 he introduced not only Harrison but Henry Crompton into the Leweses' circle. He told Crompton that Chapman and Hall had been sounded as publishers for their International Policy through Lewes.[1] When "Professor Beastly" was being hounded for his defence of the Trades Unions at the time of the Sheffield outrages, George Eliot defended him warmly in a letter to Mrs. Bray. She also congratulated Mrs. Congreve on her husband's support of 'Mr. Beesly' in his pamphlet entitled Mr. Broadhead and the Anonymous Press. She disagreed with him over the Franco-Prussian war, however, and implored Oscar Browning not to 'infer my opinions from those of my friends'.[2]

Beesly had little time for literary criticism. But he used the Spanish Gypsy in one of his political speeches, as he explained in a letter to George Eliot in November, 1868. He found it 'irritating to see the literary man applying his purely literary standard to such a work' and ignoring its 'social purpose'. She may not have appreciated his willingness to sacrifice all her prose for this one poem. But it was apparent that he appreciated her vivid portrayal of 'the sentiment of "vivre pour autrui"'. Further letters to her announced his engagement to Henry Crompton's youngest sister and the birth of their baby, and paid tribute to Lewes after his death.[3]

In the annual address on "Some Public Aspects of Positivism" in January, 1881, Beesly not only acknowledged George Eliot as an artist who had been deeply inspired by Positivism, but spoke sympathetically

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1. Ibid., 5/4 and 26/10/65.
2. GEL IV 374 fn. 1 and 378, V 118.
3. ESB to GE, 16/11/68, 20/8/69, 10/6/70 and 5/12/78, Yale MS III.

of her attitude towards the spiritual power:

'Like most of the stronger and thoroughly emancipated minds in this period of transition and revolutionary disturbance, she looked not beyond her own conscience for guidance and authority .... I do not for a moment suppose that she looked on the organisation of a /Positive/ church as unattainable; but she did not regard it as attained. Which, indeed, we must confess to be the strict truth.'

Her judgment was a valuable warning against a distorted or sectarian presentation of Positivism. They should not attempt to develop a prematurely definite liturgy. The adoption of the forms of Christianity ran

'the danger of cramping and strangling the natural tendencies of our religion to create gradually and spontaneously for itself such forms of manifestations as may be most appropriate to it'.

Comte himself 'made no attempt in his lifetime to carry out anything like what we English understand by public worship'. Beesly understood that 'exceptional individuals may prefer to stand alone' but still urged the advantages of definite adherence to a Positivist organisation for 'ordinary people'. Behind much criticism of Comte, he argued, there often lay "moral indolence, a secret fainting before a more arduous standard'.[1] This argument shows traces of the influence of his wife but in general Beesly's address treated George Eliot with great respect.

Among other Positivists frequently visiting the Priory, Henry and Albert Crompton and Godfrey and Vernon Lushington were the most prominent. James Geddes, who married Emily Bury, was another Positive to call, and Lewes's journal entry for August 8th, 1869, refers to 'two young Comtists, Kaines and Sulman'. Henry Crompton recalled, in the memorial service for Thomas Sulman, in 1901,

'he came to Positivism more than thirty years ago, in the latter half of the sixties. He had been struck with some article in the Fortnightly Review of which George Henry Lewes was then editor. He and the late Dr. Kaines went to call on Mr. Lewes, who with his wife, George Eliot, were so far with us to subscribe to our movement and

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1. ESB, Some Public Aspects of Positivism, London, 1881, pp. 7-15.

contribute some of the books which form our Positivist Library. Mr. Lewes advised them to go and see Dr. Congreve. Thence their Positivist life began.'[1]

Other visitors connected with Positivism were Leslie Stephen, the Morrisons, the Calls, and the Amberleys. The records which survive, sketchy as they are, reveal the prominence of George Eliot's position in the discussion and diffusion of Positivism in the 1870's.

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1. Henry Crompton, "Thomas Sulman", London, 1901, p. 5.

CHAPTER III

Comte and the Victorians

I Introduction

Few critics have accepted Basil Willey's invitation 'to regard Comte as the central figure of his century'.[1] Those who have deigned to discuss his influence have displayed a marked reluctance to take it seriously. Among the different Anglican Attitudes Anthony Cockshut mentioned 'the extraordinary vogue enjoyed by Auguste Comte, whose naive humane religious seriousness' appealed to a particular type of agnostic temperament. Among The Unbelievers he recognised a "positivist phase in English high culture' from 1860 to 1890, but made no attempt to tie this to the founder of Positivism. 'A few flirted with Comte", we are told, but his religion "proved to be so enmeshed in the personal oddities of its founder that it never took a strong hold in England'.[2] Owen Chadwick treated Comte as an important symbol of positive attitudes, 'a symbol which by 1870 carried a power far beyond the intellectual influence of the lectures he gave or the books which he published'.[3] Many who dismissed Comte, it is true, may not have read his works, but I will attempt in this chapter to show how widely and how seriously his ideas were discussed by eminent Victorians in all fields.

The symbolic or representative nature of Comte's thought causes major problems in the attempt to attribute influence. Victorian reverence for the dead, for women, and for heroes were far too widespread to be labelled specifically Comtean. But it is significant that the attempt to depict The Victorian Frame of Mind often finds its clearest representation in the pages of Comte or his followers.

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1. Basil Willey, Nineteenth-Century Studies, p. 198.
2. A.O.J. Cockshut, Anglican Attitudes, London, 1959, p. 25; The Unbelievers, London, 1964, pp. 175, 150 and 126.
3. Owen Chadwick, op. cit., p. 233.

Walter Houghton rightly centres his discussion of hero-worship around Carlyle, but cannot avoid mention of the Positive Calendar. He quotes Harrison's lecture on "Family Life", delivered in 1893, as typical of an attitude which 'goes back at least to the sixties'. But Harrison's analysis of the development of attachment, reverence and love through the family derives directly from Comte.[1] The sentiment was general, but the specific form it took in this instance was undeniably Comtean.

Other writers expressed similar sentiments with no thought of their systematic elaboration by Comte. Tennyson, for example, was profoundly opposed to Positivism. Harrison recorded the bard's questioning his right to attend the Metaphysical Society and continuing,

> 'You are a Comtist eh ? Well if I were a Comtist. No God - no soul - no future - <u>No right and wrong</u> !! I should not care to live.'[2]

Yet <u>In Memoriam</u> attempts to bring Arthur Hallam to subjective life by concentrated meditation and George Eliot gave the poem a Positivist interpretation. She claimed, in 1855, that it 'enshrines the highest tendency of the age' because its 'deepest significance .... is the sanctification of human love as a religion'.[3] In this case we know enough about the background of both Tennyson and Eliot to say that one is writing with Comte in mind, the other not. The ideal of family life was hardly the prerogative of Positivism, but Comte seems to have been the first to incorporate the sentiment into a moral system. Eric Trudgill points to no previous explanation of the role of the three guardian angels in the home. Yet their cult reached its peak in Coventry Patmore's <u>Angel in the House</u> of 1854-6 and in the domestic magazines of the same period.[4] Comte's influence upon this writing is at most general and indirect.

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1. Walter Houghton, <u>The Victorian Frame of Mind</u>, New Haven, 1957, pp. 323 and 347-8.
2. FH to JM, (16/6/70), Harrison Papers 1/75.
3. <u>Essays</u>, p. 191.
4. Eric Trudgill, <u>Madonnas and Magdalens</u>, London, 1976, p. 47.

The present study is limited to those Victorian writers who specifically discussed Comte's system. In the twenty years following Comte's death it seems that few did not. I will begin by charting Comte's reception in the British press, which was often prejudiced, usually critical but occasionally sympathetic. I will consider carefully the position of the Protestants of Positivism, represented by Wathen Call and John Morley, and then the attitude displayed by various men of letters, such as Leslie Stephen, Mathew Arnold and John Ruskin. The novelists who described a religious humanism related to Comte include Mrs. Humphrey Ward and William Hale White. The most damaging attack on Comte came from the established scientists, Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer, both of whom clashed with the Leweses over this very issue. Comte's philosophy of history was attacked by Professors at Oxford, Cambridge and London, but at least partially incorporated in the works of Grote, Buckle and Lecky. Some theologians treated the Religion of Humanity sympathetically, most notably Westcott and Caird. But two contributors to Essays and Reviews who were friends of George Eliot, Mark Pattison and Benjamin Jowett, made no secret of their dislike of Comte. Against the Leweses' advice, Sara Hennell took upon herself the defence of Theism against Positivism.

This chapter, then, is designed to serve several purposes. It illustrates the extent of Comte's influence in Victorian England. It defines the precise position of Comtean Positivism by a consideration of the criticisms levelled against it by other positivists. And, since George Eliot was in contact with most of these writers and very often commented on their work, it helps further to clarify her own position in the positive spectrum.

II Reception in the Press

Much of the reaction to Comte in the British press was uninformed, prejudiced, or even hysterical. After a particularly savage attack in the Saturday Review in April, 1876, Harrison wondered whether 'this rage against Positivism' would ever abate:

'If one of us were to make remarks about the horses for the next "Derby" there would be a hullabaloo about Clotilde de Vaux, Priestcraft, monkeys and protoplasm.'[1]

As Morley remarked, the only two British papers to treat Positivism in a consistently serious manner were those with which George Eliot was connected, the Westminster and the Fortnightly.[2] I cannot hope to cover the whole of the press but will consider the sympathetic reviews in the Westminster while George Eliot was editor and the serious criticism in the British Quarterly Review later in the 1850's. The Athenaeum and the Spectator provide examples of the ridicule which was often heaped upon the Religion of Humanity. The Times can be regarded as representative of a certain block of opinion.

The first sustained attention to Comte was paid by Lewes in the Leader, the second in the Westminster under George Eliot.[3] John Chapman's diary recorded her agreeing to write 'the article on foreign literature for each number of the Westminster'. In fact, under her practical editorship, the 'French Summary' was often written by Lewes. But even if she had no hand in its composition, she read the proofs and supervised the letter-press.[4] Of the four summaries of the "Contemporary Literature of France" in the first year of the new Westminster Review, three began by discussing Comte. The first emphasised the importance of the first volume of the Système, instituting the Religion of Humanity. His

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1. FH to JM, 10/4/(70), Harrison Papers 1/62.
2. FR ns VIII (1870) 119.
3. For earlier references see Presswood, op. cit., pp.46-53.
4. G.S. Haight, GE and John Chapman, New Haven, 1940, p.30 and GE, pp.97-8.

change of outlook was treated sympathetically:

'A new influence, penetrating like sunshine into the very depths of his being, awakened there feelings dormant since childhood, and by their light he saw the world under new aspects. He became religious'. There was an observable increase of 'unction' in his writing.[1] The second, in July, began by calling Comte 'the greatest of modern thinkers', before criticising his verbosity and therefore welcoming Littré's popular exposition of Positivism. This work was necessary, since Mill and Lewes,

'Comte's two best known English disciples separate from him on too many points, and those often essential points, to be properly regarded as apostles of his doctrine'.[2]

It is difficult to believe that Lewes himself wrote this. In October, the contents of the second volume of the Système were carefully explained, with little additional comment. But the first two volumes were recommended as "so eminently suggestive and so novel' as to repay any study.[3]

The first issue of 1853 contained a sympathetic review of the Catechism, while the third discussed the work of two of Comte's French disciples.[4] 1854 saw a reorganisation of the Westminster, in which "Contemporary Literature" in all languages was divided into different sections according to subject. The January section on "Science" contained Huxley's review of Harriet Martineau's translation and George Lewes's exposition of Comte, in which he criticised both Lewes and Comte for scientific inaccuracy. In July there was a whole article on the Cours, praising its systematisation of the sciences of history and sociology. But his detailed study of history was found to be inadequate and his politics and religion sentimental. His critics, however, could be expected to 'winnow out the chaff from the wheat'.[5]

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1. WR ns I (1852) 346-8.
2. Ibid., II (1852) 306.
3. Ibid., II 614-8.
4. Ibid., III (1853) 318-20 and IV (1853) 302.
5. Ibid., V (1854) 254-6 and VI (1954) 173-94.

Throughout these articles Comte was treated with great respect, an attitude of which the editor presumably approved.

The British Quarterly Review responded to this pushing of Positivism with a long article on Comte in 1854. It criticised many of the details of his system, attempting to counteract 'the effort now made to place him before the minds of our countrymen in a light as partial in its substance, as it is mischievous in tendency'. In the Leader, George Lewes welcomed its seriousness while George Eliot questioned its assumptions.[1] The following year, the British Quarterly combined its attack on Comte's Système with one on George Eliot's translation of Feuerbach.[2] But it was Congreve's translation of the Catechism in 1858 which received the brunt of the British Quarterly's scorn. It was 'so puerile, so silly, so drivelling', that it could only be the product of an insane mind. Comte had been grossly over-rated, and Clotilde was to be thanked for bringing into the open the latent assumptions of the early writings.[3]

The Athenaeum also found the Catechism ridiculous. It poked fun at Comte's pontifical pretensions and his idea of religion:

'one might suppose that religious worship consisted in shutting the eyes, and imaging the handsome woman of one's acquaintance'.

It devoted just over six lines to a review of Bridges' translation of the General View:

'The negativism which Comte calls Positivism is very clearly Englished, and its unfitness for the English mind is more obvious than it was in the French.'

It welcomed the translation of the Système for similar reasons:

'it helps to show up the absurdity and shallowness of many elaborate phrases and pompously-stated dogmas that might pass for wisdom and philosophy in the original'.

However, it concluded that there was some 'good sense and generous

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1. BQR XIX (1854) 297-376; see Part II ch.I and Part III ch. II.
2. Ibid., XXI (1855) 417-28.
3. Ibid., XXVIII (1858) 422-46.

thought mixed up with the absurdities and monstrosities of the Religion of Humanity' and therefore recommended the study of Comte.[1]

The Spectator took the Positivist threat seriously. In 1867, it saw little danger of Comtism becoming an influential creed in England, but observed its followers' proficiency in politics. In 1871 it even defended Positivism from misrepresentation. But a review of Congreve's first volume of Essays, in 1874, described the Religion of Humanity as 'the most eccentric structure of insane and sanctimonious vanity ever fashioned outside of a mad-house'. The 'real object of Comte's own worship', it claimed, 'was the grand être who lived at 10 Rue Monsieur-le-Prince'. Laffitte and Congreve completed the Positivist trinity. The Essays comprised 'such a book as might be written by a pious and benevolent but misanthropical Atheist' after twenty years as a recluse.[2] It was twenty years since Congreve had resigned his fellowship, and this malicious review, preserved among his papers in the Bodleian,[3] must have hurt him considerably.

One attitude towards Comte was reflected in the pages of the Times. The second popular exposition of Comte's views in English, by Harriet Martineau, was welcomed in December, 1853. How little either was known is illustrated by the consistent mis-spelling, 'Compte'. But he was now described as 'the prophet, or rather the divinity of a new era', who had presented 'an entirely new theory of the world, of man, of religion, of society, politics and history'. His Religion of Humanity, however, was dismissed as 'rubbish'. His dogmatic and systematic nature were both too Catholic and too French for English stomachs and he approached too close to authoritarianism, atheism and fatalism for the Times.[4] As we have seen, it attacked Congreve quite

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1. Athenaeum (10/4/58) p. 463, (4/3/65) p. 312 and (11/8/77) pp.171-3.
2. Spectator (3/8/67) p.857, (5/8/71) pp.952-3 and(12/9/74) p.1142-3.
3. Bod MS Eng. Misc. d 487 f.47.
4. Times (23/12/53) pp.8-9.

savagely in January, 1858. But ten years later it felt secure enough to appreciate the merits of Comte's system. He had 'great force of intellect', 'a marvellous genius for scientific method' and a powerful faculty of co-ordination. His style was tedious and unattractive, when comprehensible. But even his later works were worth reading, for 'the rich though broken lights of truth which they reveal amid masses of astounding self-assertion and even downright nonsense'.[1] Reduced to a harmless eccentric, Comte could be tolerated.

The crucial times for the study of Comte appear to have been the early 1850's, with the popularisation of his ideas by Martineau and Lewes, the Leader and the Westminster, and the late 1860's, after the appearance of the Fortnightly. Two long critical articles on Positivism appeared in the Edinburgh Review and the New British Review in 1868, followed by a third in the London Quarterly in January, 1869.[2] There was hardly an issue of the Fortnightly in 1869 which did not discuss Comte in detail. For ten years from its foundation in 1865, under the editorship first of Lewes and then of Morley, the Fortnightly continued to propagate his ideas. But the critical balance which it preserved, and the number of liberal, agnostic and scientific traditions from which it drew, seem both to have diffused and to have defused the topic. Positivism, it became clear, could be discussed calmly and rationally. It was a tendency of thought which would survive the peculiarities of its first systematic propounder.

III Protestants of Positivism

One of the rare sympathetic reviews of Congreve's translation of the Catechism, in the Westminster of April, 1858, was largely written

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1. Ibid., (21/4/68) p.5.
2. ER CXXVII (1868) 303-57; NBR IL (1868) 209-56; LQR XXXI (1869) 328-48.

by Wathen Call. Like Congreve, he had resigned orders in the mid-fifties and found that Comte's system gave 'scientific precision and ampler development' to the religious humanism to which he had long been tending.[1] George Eliot wanted to publish his translation of the Cours rather than commission one from Harriet Martineau. Call had married Elizabeth Hennell, the widow of Charles Hennell and daughter of Robert Brabant, with whom George Eliot translated Strauss. It was Mrs. Call who first broke the social ostracism the Leweses suffered on their return to England in 1857. George Eliot admired her husband's 'thoroughly cultured and refined mind' and the Calls became part of their 'little circle of friends'.[2] She defended his review of the Catechism in a letter to Sara Hennell:

'I am sorry to hear that there was anything in Mr. Call's article that you didn't understand. I admired it thoroughly."[3]

Presswood even suggests that she had a hand in its writing.[4] Call confessed to the first part only, but the author of the rest remains unknown.

The article begins by claiming to represent

'the numerous adherents of the Positive Philosophy who, while refusing to accept the religious elaboration of the "Politique" and of the "Catechisme de la Religion Positive", yet recognise the moral Ideal which they believe that philosophy evolves'.

Call promises to outline 'the general belief of the Positive school disengaged from the specialising theories of its founder'. After a brief history of the Positive Philosophy from Aristotle through Bacon to Comte, he explains the general aim of the Religion of Humanity, to meet the intellectual, moral and practical needs of the time. A new faith and a new spiritual power were emerging. He evoked a powerful feeling of belonging to 'the collective life of Humanity' in the past

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1. W.M.W. Call, Reverberations, London, 1875, pp. 33-8.
2. GEL I 360-1; G.S. Haight, GE, pp.47-51, 242 and 388.
3. GEL II 456.
4. Presswood, op. cit., p.102; Call, op. cit., p.34fn.

and in the present:

'we really participate of this common life, we see it reflected around us in the lives of the good and noble men, of the true and tender women, that continue it'.

The Positivist rests his faith upon feeling. He rises to universal sympathy: 'in the affectionate and joyful identity with universal life, he lives and soars and worships'.[1]

The second half of the article repeats that the 'foregoing outline' represents the convictions of

'a number of the most able and accomplished of modern thinkers; of men who, while avowing adhesion to the system of Positive Philosophy, a profound respect for M. Comte, and their great obligation to him as an instructor, have yet so far maintained their own independence as to constitute themselves judges of what portions of the doctrines and ceremonial of the Positive religion are worthy of their acceptance'.

They are 'the Protestants of Positivism'. The article goes on to expound the 'cardinal principles' of the Catechism, quoting long passages from Congreve's translation on subjective immortality, personal and public worship, the festivals and the priesthood. Comte is seen to have suffered from the French fondness for system. He is also criticised for his 'dogmatism and inflated egoism', his proscription of various branches of science, his forbidding women to remarry or to hold property, and his neglect of 'the realm of mystery'. Man needs to worship a perfect 'Reality", it is claimed, and not 'an idol of his own creation'.[2] Whoever wrote the second half of this article, it may be taken to represent the attitude of George Eliot"s circle at this time.

A decade later, a similar but more regular expression of The Party of Humanity was provided by the Fortnightly Review. As Everett acknowledged, George Eliot 'did not write for the Fortnightly after the first number, but by her intellectual charm she attracted to herself and to Lewes many who did'.[3] Among these were the Positivists already

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1. WR XIII (1858) 305-24.
2. Ibid., pp.325-50.
3. E.M. Everett, The Party of Humanity, New York, (1939) 1971, p.70.

discussed and the man who took over from George Lewes as editor in 1867, at the age of twenty-eight, John Morley. Introduced to Comte's ideas by J.C. Morrison at Lincoln, Morley worked on the Leader shortly before its expiry in 1860 'of dulness and Comte'. He admired Lewes for his wit, but much preferred George Eliot. He dined frequently with them in the 1860's and early 1870's, a pleasure for which he was prepared to risk horrific encounters with mutilated animals on the stairs. His friendship with George Eliot, which he 'prized only less than his association with John Mill', began after Lewes called to thank him for his appreciative article on her in Macmillan's Magazine in 1866. Although he never became 'an orthodox member of the Positivist sect', he was 'brought into an outer ring of sympathisers by George Eliot'.[1] He recollected that the Wadham Positivists 'became known to me through Lewes and George Eliot, who were both, in a more or less informal way, adherents of Comtist doctrines'. For a time he was himself 'not far off from a formal union with this new church'. He confessed to never having known "such high perfection of social intercourse as the Thursday dinners at the Priory', with their 'talk of serious things without solemnity'.[2]

Morley's admiration of George Eliot was clear in his early reviews. In 1866, he ended his discussion of her novels with an appraisal of their inevitable influence.

> 'in the great movement of which we are the half-unconscious witnesses in the sphere of religion .... the invigoration of belief by the effusion into it of a current of lofty and fertilising ideas drawn from a wide and generous observation of life as it is'.[3]

In February, 1871, Morley told Harrison that she and Mill were the only two Positivists in England. When Harrison criticised her 'sad anatomical novels', Morley defended her 'great soul'. The sadness

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1. F.W. Hirst, Early Life and Letters of John Morley, 2 vols., London, 1927, I 41, 55 and 72.
2. John Morley, Recollections, I 62-3 and 338.
3. JM, "GE's Novels", MM XIV (1866) 279.

of Middlemarch was fully justified: 'does not our smug grocer public need to be taught that its Protestant well-to-do optimism is a lie and a delusion'. In December he discussed who should review the novel. Taine was too busy. Besides, Morley complained, 'he thinks she is the greatest of English romancers, which is true - but not true enough. She has no second'.[1] As he grew less sympathetic towards Comte, Morley admired George Eliot less. Since she lived in 'a moral and intellectual hot-house', he wrote in 1885, her work was 'bookish, artificial and mannered'. She adopted 'a positive faith' which was inspired and clarified by Comte. To this she adhered more rigidly than Mill:

> 'George Eliot was more austere, more unflinching, and of ruder intellectual constancy than Mill. She never withdrew from the position she had taken up, of denying and rejecting.'[2]

Morley's Recollections admitted to having placed her too high in his initial enthusiasm. He now agreed with Acton that she had been limited by the assumptions of her time.[3]

Morley's own Positivist phase lasted roughly ten years, from his introduction to Mill and George Eliot in the mid-sixties until his article on Comte for the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1876. He was always a Protestant of the Millite mould. He first attracted Mill's interest by his article on "New Ideas" in the Saturday Review of October, 1865, in which he criticised the rejection of ideas such as Comte's merely because they seemed odd. In his first issue of the Fortnightly he distinguished between the 'catholic' attitude which accepted a given religious tradition and the 'protestant' openness of mind which refused to accept any system uncritically. He repeated this distinction in a letter to Congreve in 1874, explaining why he differed from the Positivists over Bismarck:

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1. Hirst, op. cit., I 178, 220-1 and 225.
2. JM, "The Life of GE", MM LI (1885) 241-56.
3. JM, Recollections, I 14

'I fall back upon the critical, individualist, scheme of things, which my protestant upbringing and the influence of Mill have made congenial to me.'

Harrison consistently attacked Mill as 'the origin of evil' but succeeded only in driving Morley further from Comte.[1]

Morley's biographical writing in the 1860's and 1870's drew deeply from Comte. His studies of Burke and De Maistre recognised their anticipation of Comte in exposing the revolutionary fallacy that moral reform could be achieved by legislation independent of historical development.[2] Harrison complained when Morley then turned to Voltaire, whom he claimed Comte had neglected:

'Your obligations to Comte, direct and indirect, are immense, and I think they ought to have been more distinctly accepted. You only mention Comte, I think to express differences.'[3]

Morley replied the next day at great length, acknowledging his debt to Comte for his 'whole idea of history'. Three-fifths of what he said about Voltaire had been influenced by Comte. He had written a preface defining these obligations, but had rejected it on the grounds first that it was irrelevant to Voltaire and second that it was unnecessary, since critics habitually treated him as a disciple of Comte. He insisted, 'I agree with you and Bridges and Beesly and Crompton five million times more than I differ from you'. But if he had to define his position,

'I am not Comtist but Positivist. I accept your statement (your own, I mean) of the Positive Problem. I do not accept your solution - certainly not Comte's new organisation, which I entirely dislike.'

His mind was not yet made up, but he believed he would become 'more and more Millite, less and less Comtist'. In spite of these differences, however, he could not deny that he was 'indirectly and involuntarily indebted to him at every line'. If the Positivists

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1. D.A. Hamer, JM: Liberal Intellectual in Politics, Oxford, 1968, pp.21-23.
2. Basil Willey, More Nineteenth-Century Studies, London, 1956, pp.256-9.
3. FH to JM, 8/12/(71), Harrison Papers 1/53.

demanded more support, he would speak 'in the most generous and full spirit I can summon'. Finally, he adduced all the reviews of his previous book as evidence that his debt to Comte was common knowledge:

> 'Clotilde de Vaux and all the rest was thrown systematically into my very innocent face, though I heartily detest everything about Clotilde de Vaux, including the ideas that Comte associated with her name.' [1]

Comte's influence is also apparent in Morley's books on Rousseau and Diderot later in the seventies, as Hamer has shown.[2] But the biographical nature of all this work indicates his preference for individuals over systems.

Morley's general position was encapsulated in his treatise On Compromise, published in 1874, which has been called the Victorian Prince or Courtier.[3] Harrison, of course, hated compromise. Morley saw that the 'English feeling for compromise' was a practical application of the empirical method articulated in Mill's Logic. It tempered the abstract and deductive systems of France. But compromise had been extended beyond its proper limits so that there no longer remained any rigorous guidelines as to 'what is right and best in thought and conduct'.[4] The basic principles proposed in his "Introductory" chapter clearly derive from Comte. He complains,

> 'Physical science is allowed to be the sphere of accurate reasoning and distinct conclusions, but in morals and politics, instead of admitting that these subjects have equally a logic of their own, we silently suspect all fast principles, and practically deny the strict inferences from demonstrated premisses.'

Moral principles, he claims, are 'registered generalisations from experience' and therefore 'rest on the same positive base as our faith in the truth of physical laws'.[5] He departs completely from Comte in favour of Mill on the question of liberty. He believes that 'self-

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1. JM to FH, 9/12/71, Ibid., 1/78; Hirst, op. cit., I 199-200.
2. Hamer, op. cit., pp.17-9.
3. Ibid., p.51.
4. JM, On Compromise, London, 1874, pp.18-20 and 2-3.
5. Ibid., pp.15 and 21.

regarding acts' should be free from state interference, since 'observation of the recorded experience of mankind' indicates that 'the richest expansion of human faculty' and the "greatest sum of happiness' result from unrestricted individual activity. He too opposes the tyranny of the majority: 'Whether the lawmakers be laymen in parliament, or priests of humanity exercising the spiritual power, it matters not.'[1] The only spiritual power that Morley advocated was an advisory one, which he believed to be the function of the 'man of letters'.[2]

Morley re-read Comte for his article on the founder of Positivism in the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1876. He was profoundly disappointed, as he confessed to Harrison:

> 'Comte provokes me more than ever. I have read and read and meditated and re-meditated - and at the end of it my whole soul revolts - and how you of all men on this bright planet have gone over to such an idol doth perplex me by day and by night. The whole thing has provoked a crise cérébrale. All night I toss and tumble, and water my bed with my tears, and moan, - "And how does Harrison find a key to this stuff - this dreary - ".'[3]

The article itself begins by placing Comte in the perspective of the eighteenth-century thinkers with whom Morley was so familiar and the social speculation which followed the French Revolution. It proceeds to give a clear outline of Comte's life and thought, defending his consistent social purpose. 'Comte's immense superiority' over revolutionary utopians is seen to lie in his emphasis on the moral progress which must precede the social and political. But the Religion of Humanity Morley describes as 'utilitarianism crowned by a fantastic decoration'. Comtists were no better equipped than other utilitarians to judge what precise conduct would bring the greatest happiness. Comte had managed to clothe an 'intrinsically conciliatory' doctrine in a most unattractive manner. But Morley hopes that 'the

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1. Ibid., pp.210-1.
2. FR ns XVII (1875) 160-1.
3. Hirst, op. cit., II 16.

world .... will take what is available in Comte' and ignore his peculiar aberrations.[1]

Morley's "Commonplace Book" discussed the possibility of the Religion of Humanity leading a 'strong moral and spiritual reaction' against the prevailing 'luxury, materialism, and secularity'. He came to the conclusion it would not. It lacked an inspiring text, a 'history of martyrs and high examples' and an ascetic strength: 'It does not strike the imagination enough to catch any of the vast number if indifferents who can only be seized by the external.'[2] Yet Positivism partially succeeded in this task in Morley's own generation. The last chapter of his Recollections claims that the Victorian age was one in which feeling and intellect combined in 'a common stream of vigorous and effective talent'. He mentions the influence of Bacon rather than Comte, to avoid controversy, but the 'New truths' welcomed by 'free minds'[3] were surely the principles of Positivism espoused by the circle in which both he and George Eliot moved.

IV Men of Letters

The contributors to the Fortnightly Review comprised a new generation of Victorian men of letters. Leslie Stephen shared Morley's sympathies with the Religion of Humanity; John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold did not. But they could not avoid defining their position in relation to Comte's. Leslie Stephen's book on George Eliot, commissioned by Morley, attributed to the influence of Positivism a decline in her creativity which he traced to Romola.[4] But in the 1870's he had sat at her feet and offered 'acceptable worship', and he was himself a careful student of Comte.[5] He confessed to Harrison, who had expressed

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1. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th ed., Edinburgh, 1877, VI 229-38.
2. Hamer, op. cit., pp.388-9 .
3. JM, Recollections, II 317
4. See Appendix.
5. F.W. Maitland, Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen, London, 1906, p.294

approval of his George Eliot, 'if I had gone to Oxford instead of Cambridge, I should have been a positivist myself - I did read Comte and was much impressed'.[1] He read the Cours in 1859, and his note-books for 1865 and 1866 reveal his close interest in Positivism.[2]

When Leslie Stephen reviewed Harrison's collected essays on Order and Progress for the Fortnightly in 1875, he complained that the Positivists, like Carlyle, failed to offer a sufficient alternative to the political practices they denounced. Social evolution would be gradual and spontaneous, and not even Comte could predict the details of the future:

'We cannot believe that even so great a thinker as Comte has found out the final formula, though he may have added to the store of established truths, and cleared away some fictions.'

In spite of his visionary tendencies, however, there was much of value in his teaching.[3] Much, certainly, was incorporated in Stephen's own writing. His Science of Ethics, he admitted, was indebted to the Religion of Humanity, and for his sermon on "Materialism", delivered at South Place and printed in An Agnostic's Apology, he also 'plagiarised a bit of Comte'.[4]

Matthew Arnold was saying almost the same thing as Comte in a manner entirely different. The dualism of Culture and Anarchy was inherent in the Religion of Humanity. Arnold, like Comte, saw the task of religion and culture as the development of human perfection, 'the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality'. The harmony of an individual and of society resulted from an orderly combination of feeling, thought and action. Arnold chose the name, 'Culture', but maintained,

'what we are concerned for is the thing, not the name; and the thing .... is simply the enabling ourselves, whether by reading, observing, or thinking, to come as near as we can to the firm

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1. LS to FH, 31/5/02, Harrison Papers 1/108.
2. Maitland, op. cit., pp.73, 172 and 185.
3. FR ns XVII (1875) 820-34.
4. Maitland, op. cit., pp.352 and 389.

intelligible law of things, and thus to get a basis for a less confused action and a more complete perfection than we have at present.'1

Where Arnold differed from 'Mr. Frederic Harrison and other disciples of Comte' was in his dislike of 'system-makers and systems':

'A current in people's minds sets towards new ideas .... and some man, some Bentham or Comte, who has the real merit of having early and strongly felt and helped the new current, but who brings plenty of narrowness and mistakes of his own into his feeling and help of it, is credited with being the author of the whole current, the fit person to be entrusted with its regulation and to guide the human race.'

Any one system 'was of necessity limited and transient', however, and Arnold contrasted the sweetness and light of true perfection with the two aspects of Jacobinism represented by Harrison: 'its fierceness, and its addiction to an abstract system'.[2]

Harrison responded quickly with "Culture: A Dialogue", in which he posed as a defender of sweetness and light against the rigorous attack of a blunt German friend, Arminius von Thunder-ten-dronck. Arminus criticises Arnold's 'flabby religious phrases'. He wants to know by what methods culture is to be attained and how it is tested. How can it recognise perfection if it has no system or logic ? In a world of evil and suffering he finds Arnold's solution objectionable:

'over all sits Culture high aloft with a pouncet-box to spare her ears aught unpleasant, holding no form of creed, but contemplating all with infinite serenity .... crying out the most pretty shame upon the vulgarity, the provinciality, the impropriety of it all'.

Informed of Arnold's misrepresentation of Comtism, which differs from Jacobinism in its reverence for the past, its hatred of revolution, and its belief in education, Arminus feels that Arnold should study Comte more closely, since they appear to hold much in common.[3]

George Eliot wrote to thank Harrison for his reply to Arnold. Although her own view of culture was 'the highest mental result of past and present influences', she felt he had said 'the serious things

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1. MA, Culture and Anarchy, Cambridge, (1867) 1932, pp.47 and 163.
2. Ibid., pp.66-9.
3. FR ns II (1867) 603-14.

most needful to be said in a good humoured way, easy for everybody to read".[1] Arnold was one of her favourite poets.[2] Among the quotations from Wordsworth in one of her Pforzheimer notebooks was the whole of his translation of the "Hymn of St. Francis", taken from his article on "Pagan and Christian Religious Sentiment" in the Cornhill of 1864.[3] Another of her Pforzheimer notebooks contains not only his definition of culture but his attempts to redefine God in Literature and Dogma:

> '"God is really here, at bottom, a deeply moved way of saying conduct or righteousness"...
> For Science God is the "stream of tendency whereby all things fulfil the law of their being" - for Religion, i.e. "Morality heightened by emotion", He may be most adequately conceived as "the eternal Power, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness"'.[4]

She here condenses the whole of Mathew Arnold's lengthy argument. Lewes recorded reading him in January and entertaining him to dinner in December, 1876.[5] But any influence which he exercised on George Eliot was not only later than Comte's, but much less specific. Comte clarified things. The details of his system demanded straightforward acceptance or rejection. Arnold complicated the matter, by showing the impossibility of defining the mysterious. Harrison characterised his position as 'Anglican minus Christianity' and "plus Pantheism". For him, as for George Eliot, Arnold was primarily poet and critic rather than philosopher and theologian.[6]

Ruskin and Comte, Harrison observed, were 'constantly saying the same thing', yet Ruskin 'furiously denounced Comte, who was dead before Modern Painters was finished.[7] In the 1882 Preface to Sesame and Lilies, however, Ruskin claimed that his own ideas were old-fashioned,

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1. GEL IV 395.
2. JM, Recollections, I 121.
3. Pforzheimer MS 707, f.29.
4. Pforzheimer MS 711, ff.(14) and 65
5. GHL Journal, 20-4/1 and 26/12/76.
6. FH, Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill and other Literary Estimates, London, 1899, pp.111-34.
7. Ibid., p.101.

in contrast with new-fangled ideas such as "positivism with its religion of humanity'.[1] His idealisation of the "Lilies, of Queen's Gardens", drew on the same medieval tradition as Comte, regarding women as 'the highest heroic type of humanity'. But Ruskin required her education to consist only of what would enable her to sympathise more fully with man.[2] It is doubtful whether Ruskin ever read Comte. Impressed by his essays, "Unto this Last", in the Cornhill in 1860, Harrison urged him to study 'the social and economic principles laid down in the Positive Polity', which also considered property a social responsibility. But 'John would take no ideas from the Angel Gabriel himself'. In 1868, Harrison again tried to convince him that Comte provided a scientific basis for his economic theories. But Ruskin was not interested, and in 1876 roundly denounced both Harrison and Positivism in Fors Clavigera. 'All the time', Harrison recalled, 'he wrote me private letters full of affection, intended to mitigate the effect of his public denunciations'. He took particular offence at the Positivist doctrines of subjective immortality and positive knowledge, 'intolerant of any doubt'. Harrison replied in an article on "Past and Present", in the Fortnightly Review of 1876, in which he argued that Ruskin could not have read Comte and still accuse him of insensitivity to the past.[3] George Eliot admired Modern Painters, the second volume of which, she told Morley, 'made a deep and lasting mark on her mind.[4] In her review of the third volume, she wrote enthusiastically of his 'doctrine that all truth and beauty can be obtained by a humble and faithful study of nature'.[5] His idealisation of the Middle Ages, in the Stones of Venice, was reflected in Romola.[6] But the emotional

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1. John Ruskin, Sesame and Lilies, London, (1865) 1891, p.viii.
2. Ibid., pp.112-80.
3. FH, Aut. Mem.I 229-40.
4. JM, Recollections, I 14-5.
5. Essays, p.266.
6. See Part III ch.IV.

impact of a writer like Ruskin served rather to complement and deepen than to rival the detailed influence of Comte.

Among the men of letters whose unthinking sneers at Comte aroused George Eliot's anger were Leslie Stephen's father and brother. She wrote to Sara Hennell objecting to Sir James Stephen's "Study of History" in the Cornhill of July, 1861. Positivism might be one-sided, she agreed,

'but Comte was a great thinker, nevertheless, and ought to be treated with reverence by all smaller fry '.

Twelve years later, she congratulated Harrison on his caricature of "The Religion of Inhumanity" represented by Sir James Fitzjames Stephen's 'shallow undiscriminating scorn' for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.[1] Another critic of Comte to whom she took exception was David Masson, whose survey of Recent British Philosophy included some disparaging remarks about Lewes's enthusiasm for Comte's sentimental 'delirium and moonlight'.[2] This, she complained, was 'stuff' and 'jargon'. She told Sara Hennell that it was

'much better to read a man's own writings than to read what others say about him. Especially when a man is first rate and the "others" are third-rate.'[3]

All of George Eliot's novels, except Daniel Deronda, are set in periods before Positivism had become an organised movement, so that it would be anachronistic for them to include self-confessed followers of Comte. But other novelists included Positivists among their characters. W.H. Mallock followed up his general satire on The New Republic in 1877 with a more specific attack on The New Paul and Virginia, or Positivism on an Island, the following year. The hero, Professor Paul Darnley, appears to combine the characteristics of a number of positivists. Sailing from Melbourne, he is shipwrecked on an island

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1. GEL III 438-9 and V 421-2.
2. David Masson, Recent British Philosophy, Cambridge, 1865, pp.246-8.
3. GEL IV 207.

with the beautiful Virginia St. John. Having converted her to his own half-baked devotion to Humanity, he is just about to initiate her in the joys of crooning to the moon when they are rescued. A series of "Notes" from the works of Tyndall, Harrison, Huxley, Clifford and others presses home the satire.

In the year of George Eliot's death, George Gissing, tutor to Harrison's children, portrayed belief in the Religion of Humanity in Workers in the Dawn. Arthur Golding practices the worship of women as taught by Comte. Harrison appears to have been the model for the barrister, Wardlaw, in Mrs. Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere. A 'devoted and orthodox Comtist', Wardlaw was Elsmere's predecessor and colleague at North R -. After his day in chambers, he 'would give his evenings to teaching or committee work'. Mrs. Ward paid tribute to 'that potent spirit of social help which in our generation Comtism has done so much to develop'. But she attacked Wardlaw's narrowness. When he came to dinner, he 'talked freely to Robert plus his wife, assuming, as every good Comtist does, that the husband is the wife's pope'. The niece of Mathew Arnold emerges clearly in her complaint that Wardlaw's 'solitary eccentric life, ... had developed in him a good many crude Jacobinisms'. He describes to the Elsmeres the ceremony of baptism performed for their child by 'an eminent French Comtist', but he is deeply offended by the 'strongly religious bent' of Elsmere's "New Brotherhood of Christ".[1]

Robert Elsmere's faith has some affinities with Comte's. He feels that 'the problem of the world at this moment is how to find a religion'. He sees how 'history repeats itself in the individual', and he plunges energetically into historical scholarship, 'to realise for himself and others the solidarity and continuity of mankind's long

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1. Mrs. Humphry Ward, Robert Elsmere, London, (1888) n.d. (Nelson Library), pp. 451, 490 and 557.

struggle from the beginning until now'. Mrs. Ward constantly writes of the inevitable laws of the outer and inner world. Elsmere himself, in his lecture at the North R - Club,

> "turned to the glorification of Experience, "of that unvarying and rational order of the world which had been the appointed instrument of man's training since life and thought began".'

He founds a new religion which aims to establish "a new social bond".[1] The major differences from the Religion of Humanity are his retention of Christian symbolism and belief in God.

Mrs. Ward drew on a tradition to which both Comte and George Eliot had contributed. Like Eliot, Elsmere was "not made to stand alone". He was deeply influenced by the German higher critics he encountered through Wendover. His wife is likened to 'Dinah Morris in society'. He teaches "Love and reverence" as insistently as Comte and George Eliot.[2] But it is only on this general level that his position resembles theirs.

"Mark Rutherford" also battles through the same three Comtean states as George Eliot, 'from a narrow, intense, provincial piety, through emancipation, to a hard-won and precariously held religion of the heart and conscience'.[3] William Hale White belonged for a time to Chapman's household, and his characterisation of Theresa appears to draw on his memories of George Eliot in the early 1850's. She deplores sentimentality but accepts the value of 'a great devotion to a woman'. She sees love as "the one thing that keeps the world straight', the instinct which prevents the complete victory of evil and despair. She 'eschewed metaphysics', we are told, and attacks Mark's 'luxurious revelling in the incomprehensible and indefinably sublime'. She defies classification: 'She was not a this or a that

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1. Ibid., pp.394-6, 194-7, 475 and 548.
2. Ibid., pp.351, 493 and 479.
3. Willey, More Nineteenth-Century Studies, p.188.

or the other'.[1] Yet what she says fits Positivism to perfection. Hale White here encapsulates the difference between himself and George Eliot. Like many of his contemporaries, he remained vaguely mystical in his religious humanism. She was never dogmatic. But she was eminently clear-headed and rigorous in her thinking. While most Victorians were content with a general idea of Positivism, George Eliot studied Comte in detail and in depth.

V Scientists

The most damaging attacks on Positivism came from professional scientists, in particular Herbert Spencer and Thomas Huxley. Both criticised Comte to clear their own names from the stigma of Positivism attached to them by members of the clergy in the 1860's. An American friend of Spencer's explained the situation:

> 'Theologians of all men, love to throw mud ... and the Comtean puddle is now the favourite. In looking over the American press notices of your works I find the dominant idea is that you belong to the positive school; and although not one in a hundred knows what Positivism is, all are agreed that it is positively dreadful.'

Spencer was so incensed by these suggestions that he persuaded Thomas Huxley, John Tyndall, Sir Charles Lyell, Sir John Heschel, Charles Babbage and Michael Faraday to sign a testimonial denying any scientific influence by Comte.[2] I will concentrate here on Spencer and Huxley because their criticism of Comte was the most sustained and consistent, and because George Eliot was involved in the controversies which they provoked.

Spencer was as eager to deny any debt to Comte as any love for George Eliot. But what there was of the first would have derived from the second. For it was to Spencer's friendship with the Leweses

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1. WHW, The Autobiography of Mark Rutherford, London, (1881) 1928, pp.204-8; cp. Stephen Merton, "GE and WHW", VN XXV (Spring, 1964) 13-5.
2. Sydney Eisen, "HS and the Spectre of Comte", JBS VII (1967) 56-7.

'both saturated as they are with Comte', that Harrison pointed in order to substantiate his claim that Spencer was indirectly familiar with Positivism at an early stage.[1] Spencer defended himself on both fronts. He wrote to John Cross asking him to include in his biography of George Eliot a note specifically denying that he had been in love with her. He complained, 'I don't like being thought of as jilted and wandering "half-distracted" round London.'[2] He also asked Cross to amend the suggestion

'that Comte was a common subject of conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Lewes and myself. The reverse was the fact. After the publication of my unsparing criticism of the Comtean classification of the sciences etc. in 1854 - an unsparing criticism which was practically a slight [sic] upon their judgment - Comte was hardly ever spoken of between us ... knowing, too, from the contents of the "Social Statics" how utterly I detested the Comtean scheme of social organization and knowing to [sic] that I had no sympathy with his Religion of Humanity, there were further reasons for keeping clear of the topic.'

He added a postcript asking whether Cross could find corroborative evidence of his memory of reading with George Eliot the introduction to the Cours 'sometime in 1852': 'I read aloud to her: she helping me with the French when I was in difficulty'. That was his first reading of Comte, he claimed. Three days later he added,

'I can recall two occasions on which (other persons being present) Comte was discusussed [sic]. And I remember one occasion on which she sought to enlist my sympathy with the Comtean religion, but, meeting with no response, never raised the subject again.'[3]

Professor Haight's account of Spencer's correspondence with Cross concentrates solely on his denial of love and omits all reference to George Eliot's attempts to convert him to Positivism.[4] Spencer also omitted this from his Autobiography, although he did recount George Eliot's surprise at his attack on Comte's classification of the sciences,

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1. FH, Standard (12/9/84), Bod MS Eng. Misc. d 488, f.27.
2. HS to JWC, 13/1 and 12/10/84, Yale MS III.
3. Ibid., 24 and 27/10/84, written by amanuensis.
4. Haight, GE, pp.121-2.

'having, as she said, supposed the classification to be perfect. She was but little given to argument; and finding my attitude thus antagonistic, she forthwith dropped the subject of Comte's philosophy, and I read no further.'

He also claimed to have read Harriet Martineau's condensed translation of the Cours partly because 'two of my friends, Mr. Lewes and Miss Evans, were in large measure adherents of Comte's views'. Positivism, he recalled, became 'a tacitly tabooed topic' between them because of their disagreement.[1] The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer records his reading of the introduction to Harriet Martineau's Positive Philosophy 'at the instigation of George Eliot and with her aid'.[2] Spencer's memory was clearly confused, but there can be little doubt that George Eliot attempted to make him read and accept Comte's ideas.

Spencer's first published criticism of Comte's classification of the sciences appeared in an essay on the "Genesis of Science" in 1854. Two separate accounts of his supposed similarities to Comte led him to write a more elaborate explanation of his differences, in 1864, The Classification of the Sciences to which are added Reasons for Dissenting from the Philosophy of Comte. Comte's classification was a ladder, linear and chronological; Spencer's was logical, a three-fold expansion from abstract to concrete sciences, like the branches of a tree. Spencer objected to Comte's neglect of psychology, his three states, his rejection of cause and his notion that ideas governed the world. He rejected his authoritarian utopia and his religion.[3] Spencer submitted his proofs to Lewes, which led to a fierce disagreement between them. George Eliot's Journal for April 4th, 1864, recorded Spencer's first call 'after a long correspondence on the subject of Comte'. In the course of this correspondence, Spencer clarified the difference between his system and Comte's:

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1. HS, An Autobiography, 2 vols, London, 1904, I 398 and 445, II 365
2. David Duncan, Life and Letters of HS, London, 1908, p.545.
3. Eisen, op. cit., pp.54 and 57-9.

'What is Comte's aim ? To give a coherent account of the progress of human conceptions. What is my aim ? To give a coherent account of the progress of the external world ... The one end is subjective. The other is objective.'[1]

Comte's system was relative, Spencer's absolute. The difference was emphasised in the debate between Harrison and Spencer over "The Unknowable" in the Nineteenth Century in 1884. Harrison attacked Spencer's "Agnostic Metaphysics", the 'deliberate assertion of an unknown cause of phenomena'.[2] He stressed the dignity and importance of men. While Spencer described an inevitable evolution of force and matter, the positivists concentrated on human history, which could be modified by the development of the altruistic element in human nature through the Religion of Humanity.[3]

George Lewes's diaries show that Spencer remained on friendly terms throughout the seventies, during which time both the Leweses read his works. Spencer even visited George Eliot in April, 1879, characteristically 'asking advice about his Autobiography'.[4] He never overestimated his influence on her. A letter to an American friend admitted,

'she has been more a disciple of Comte than of mine; although her acceptance of Comte's views was very much qualified, and, indeed, hardly constituted her a Comtist in the full sense of the word. Still she had strong leanings to the "Religion of Humanity", and that always remained a point of difference between us.'

He went on to claim that when he visited her 'the very day she was taken ill', she acknowledged a movement away from Comte towards his views of society, as expressed in the Data of Ethics and the Study of Sociology.[5] This remains a matter for speculation. Further study could be done on George Eliot's reading of Spencer. But on the major points of difference, she clearly sided with the Positivists against Spencer.

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1. Ibid., p.61.
2. Simon, op. cit., pp.217-9.
3. Eisen, op. cit., pp.54 and 57-9.
4. GE Diary, 20/4/79.
5. HS, An Autobiography, II 364.

T.H. Huxley was spurred into criticism of Comte by the Archbishop of York's identification of his empiricism with Comte's Positivism. He announced to the world, in the Fortnightly Review of February, 1869, what he thought of Positivism:

> 'I find therein little or nothing of any scientific value, and a great deal, which is as thoroughly antagonistic to the very essence of science as anything in ultramontane Catholicism. In fact, M. Comte's philosophy in practice might compendiously be described as Catholicism minus Christianity.'[1]

There were mixed reactions. Kingsley wrote to congratulate him. Beesly complained, rather feebly, 'You have dealt us a very hard and damaging blow'.[2] Congreve replied in the Fortnightly in April. Positivists accepted their debt to Christianity, although a more apt description of their faith was 'Catholicism plus Science'. Scientific specialists, Congreve claimed, attacked Comte because they feared his aim, 'to put an end to their indiscipline' and to recall them to their social function. He could not believe that Huxley preferred to be one of their number rather than a member of the 'new scientific clergy'. He suspected that Huxley based his impatient remarks on a cursory inspection of Comte's treatment of his own subject, biology. Congreve craved 'a more deliberate judgement from the Professor'.[3]

Huxley accepted Congreve's challenge. A second article in the Fortnightly defended his accusation of Positive Popery by reference to Comte's own claims and proceeded to justify his two propositions, 'that the "Philosophie Positive" contains little or nothing of any scientific value' and that 'Comtism is, in spirit, anti-scientific'. Huxley concentrated on Comte's two central laws. He pointed to inconsistencies in the exposition of the law of the three states, even within the Cours. He objected also to the terminology. The word

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1. TH, "On the Physical Basis of Life", FR ns V (1869) 141.
2. Leonard Huxley, Life and Letters of T.H. Huxley, 2 vols, London, 1900, I 300; Sydney Eisen, "Huxley and the Positivists", VS VIII (1964) 342.
3. RC, "Mr. Huxley on M. Comte", FR ns V (1869) 407-18.

'positive' was evidence only of Comte's dogmatism, while 'metaphysics' was 'a general term of abuse for anything he does not like'. Huxley followed Spencer in his critique of Comte's classification of the sciences and stressed the 'unreality and mere bookishness of M. Comte's knowledge of physical science'. His 'arrogant dogmatism and narrowness' was matched by his 'spirit of meddling systematisation'. It was a fundamental duty of scientists to doubt what Comte wanted people to accept without question, the 'principles established in the sciences by competent persons'. The only achievement with which Huxley would credit Comte was his impelling others 'to think deeply upon social problems and to strive nobly for social regeneration'.[1]

Huxley had aroused the anger of Lewes and Eliot in the 1850's by his suggestion that both Comte and Lewes were book-scientists. On this occasion they again opposed him. George Eliot sent their congratulations and 'warmest sympathy to Dr. Congreve in the anxieties of his difficult task'.[2] Lewes added a few extra paragraphs to his section on "Comte's Life" in the fourth edition of his History of Philosophy in 1871, including Huxley among the 'foolish and unworthy' critics of Comte.[3] Huxley in turn despised the compromising attitude of George Eliot. He totally opposed Spencer's suggestion that she be interred in Westminster Abbey. She had rejected conventional Christian dogma and practice. He was sorry to hear that she had expressed the wish herself: 'One cannot eat one's cake and have it too.'[4]

Like Spencer, Huxley was less optimistic than the followers of Comte, as his later clashes with Harrison revealed. Sensing that Harrison's attack on materialism in 1877 was directed at him, Huxley launched another offensive against Positivism. He described it as

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1. TH, "The Scientific Aspects of Positivism", Ibid., pp.653-70.
2. GEL V 26.
3. GHL, History of Philosophy, 2 vols, London, 1871, II 687-9.
4. Leonard Huxley, op. cit., II 18.

'a half-breed between science and theology, endowed, like most half-breeds, with the faults of both parents and the virtues of neither'. 1889 brought the 'third round' between Huxley and Positivism. Harrison called Agnosticism bleak: 'It destroys but it does not replace'. Huxley slated 'the sham pietism of the Positivists'. In 1892 Harrison made the mistake of labelling Huxley 'a rudimentary Positivist'. The result, "An Apologetic Irenicon" from Huxley, settled the question beyond dispute. He disliked all parties and sects, and he felt that the doctrines of 'original sin, of the innate depravity of man' and "the essential vileness of matter' were nearer the truth than 'the "liberal" popular illusions' of the Positivists.[1] His position might be described as Calvinism minus Christianity. He planned to write a philosophy of history which would finally discredit Comte, opposing science to theology. Discovered by Ionian philosophers, 'sound scientific ideas' had been submerged in the dark Middle Ages.[2] To the end, Huxley believed in empirical science, but he was never a Positivist.

VI Historians

For twenty years, from 1850 to 1870, the view of history as a scientific study of the laws of man's development was associated in England with the name of Comte. Some English historians derived some of their ideas from Positivism, but even those who did not found it difficult to escape the label. I will trace the development of Positivist attitudes towards history and the extent to which they were inspired by Comte during these two decades. I will consider in particular the work of Grote, Buckle and Lecky. Again, I will attempt to define George Eliot's relation to them.

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1. Eisen, op. cit., pp.347-58.
2. Leonard Huxley, op. cit., II 425-6.

George Grote knew Comte early in the 1840's. Comte told Hutton that he first met him in 1840 and became more closely acquainted during his long stay in Paris in 1844. But the Englishman's atheistic scruples prevented his progress from the philosophical basis to the religious reconstruction of Positivism.[1] Grote 'found M. Comte's conversation original and instructive', and contributed half of the subsidy collected for him by Mill in 1844. But, as he explained in a letter of 1851, he could accept only Comte's 'conception of philosophical method' and the general idea of his 'philosophy of history'. He defended his notion of fetichism, but found the details of his sociology and history untenable. Comte's only standard appeared to be 'his own taste and feeling', which had been powerfully affected by his Catholic upbringing. Grote added, 'I do not at all trust his knowledge of the facts of history', which appeared to have been gleaned mainly from Bossuet and Montesquieu.[2]

Grote's History of Greece, published over ten years from 1846 to 1856, reflected Comte's philosophy of history. It traced the evolution of Greek thought through the three stages of their explanation of the world, from primitive myths through abstract concepts to positive philosophy. The "absence of positive knowledge' in the early stages of development resulted in 'an original fetichism, in which particular objects had themselves been supposed to be endued with life, volition, and design'. This grew into polytheism. Myths sprung out of 'a past which is little better than a blank as to positive knowledge'.[3] Eventually there developed a 'physical philosophy, with its objective character and invariable laws'. But the Greeks did not pass straight from myths to laws. There was an

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1. AC, Lettres à Hutton, pp.19-20.
2. Mrs. Grote, The Personal Life of George Grote, London, 1873, pp.158 and 202-4; M.L. Clarke, George Grote, London, 1962, pp.183-4.
3. George Grote, History of Greece, London, (1846-56) 1862, I 285-6 and 365.

intermediate stage of 'substituting metaphysical eidôla in the place of polytheism'. Grote acknowledged his debt to Comte for this idea: 'the most profound study of the human mind points out such transition as an invariable law of intellectual progress'. A long footnote refers specifically to the Cours and its explanatiom of the three states.[1] There are other Comtean features in the History of Greece which George Eliot herself included among the notes she took from the second edition for her "Middlemarch Miscellany".[2]

Grote was the first of a number of British historians who attempted to trace the laws of human evolution. George Eliot's first printed reference to Comte occurred in her review of Mackay's Progress of the Intellect as Exemplified in the Religious Development of the Greeks and Hebrews, published in 1850.[3] In the same year, the anonymous "Theory of Human Progression" was immediately attributed to a follower of Comte. Opponents of this view of history, such as Sir James Stephen, Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, defended the notion of Providence against Comte. The third edition of Stephen's History of France, in 1857, included an introductory chapter "On Certain (so-called) Philosophies of History".[4] His sneers at Comte, as we have seen, brought George Eliot's grave disapproval.

Another landmark in the development of a positive science of history was Buckle's History of Civilisation in England, whose two volumes appeared in 1857 and 1861. The introduction made no secret of Buckle's admiration of the Cours, referring to Comte as 'a living writer who has done more than any other to raise the standard of history'.[5] W.M. Simon has shown that Buckle read Comte with care and

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1. Ibid., pp.305-6.
2. See Part III ch.VII (iii).
3. See Part III ch.II (i)
4. Presswood, op. cit.,pp. 210-6.
5. H.T. Buckle, History of Civilisation in England, 2 vols, London, 1857, and 1861, I 5fn.1.

agreed with him on a number of specific issues. He differed on others, such as psychology, economics and the relation of intellect and morality.[1] But the important point was his association with Comte, which was brought out in many of the reviews. Simpson attacked "Mr. Buckle's Thesis and Method", Acton "Mr. Buckle's Philosophy of History", in the Rambler of 1858.[2] The new Professors of Modern History at Cambridge and at Oxford joined in the attack. Kingsley attempted to define the Limits of Exact Science as applied to History by pointing to those heroic individuals who had changed the course of history. Goldwin Smith directed his attack specifically at Comte. Beesly leapt to his defence. In two articles in the Westminster in 1861 he explained Comte's philosophy of history, criticised Kingsley's confusion and upbraided Goldwin Smith for 'sneering religion into favour'. It was too easy to rely on the unpopularity of Comte's name and to misrepresent his point of view.[3]

Maine's Ancient Law, of 1861, was welcomed by Frederic Harrison for its Positive philosophy of history.[4] In 1864 the London Quarterly Review claimed that Comte's Positive Philosophy was behind Renan and nearly all the contemporary writers who treated the study of historical phenomena as a science.[5] But they had by no means all read Comte. W.H. Lecky provides an interesting example of a writer very much in this tradition who appears to have owed very little to the founder of Positivism. He regarded Comte as one of the 'most suggestive seminal minds of England and France' in his century, but placed himself in a wider tradition which included Vico, Condorcet, Herder and Hegel.[6]

Lecky's 1865 History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of

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1. Simon, op. cit., pp.220-1.
2. Rambler X (1858) 27-42 and 88-104; see Joseph L. Altholz, The Liberal Catholic Movement in England, London, 1962, p.68.
3. WR XIX (1861) 305-36, XX (1861) 293-334.
4. Ibid., XIX (1861) 457-77.
5. LQR XXI (1864) 462-5.
6. H. Montgomery Hyde, ed., A Victorian Historian: Private Letters of W.E.H. Lecky, 1859-1878, London, 1947, pp.66 and 10

Rationalism in Europe refers occasionally to Comte. He is presumably the 'very high authority' who called fetichism the natural religion of the uncivilised. His recognition of astronomy as the first step towards forming a philosophy of history and of Christianity's influence on the decline of slavery are noticed by Lecky.[1] But there are many areas of difference between Lecky and Comte. Lecky cast doubt on the influence of definite arguments as opposed to general currents of thought in the intellectual development of mankind. He was a great admirer of the Reformation. He stressed the link between Protestant rationalism and the development of conscience, even claiming 'the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism'. He contrasted the spirit of dogma with the spirit of truth.[2] But he ended his work with an attack on the defects of rationalism and utilitarianism. Along with the decline of Christianity he feared a decline in 'the moral nature of mankind'. The 'philosophy of experience' represented by Mill in England and Comte in France was tending towards 'avowed materialism'. This was 'the shadow resting upon ... the history of Rationalism'.[3]

George Eliot's review of the History of Rationalism in the first number of the Fortnightly took exception to some of these differences from Comte. She felt that Lecky failed to distinguish between 'objective complexity and subjective confusion'. Even vague habits of thought, she argued, were a result of 'definite processes'. He gave too little prominence to the conception of invariable law which derived from 'physical science'. She was particularly critical of the 'mingled laxity of statement and ill-pitched elevation of tone' in his ending. She resented the suggestion that the decay of religious belief had 'destroyed the motives to self-sacrifice for an ideal'.[4]

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1. Lecky, History of Rationalism, 2 vols, London, 1865, I 208 and 303, II 259 fn.1.
2. Ibid., I 182, II 77 and 96.
3. Ibid., II 404-9.
4. Essays, pp.413-4.

Lecky anticipated the hostility of all Utilitarians, Comtists and religious adherents to his History of European Morals in 1869.[1] This attributed to Christianity the sense of the sanctity of human life and of universal brotherhood. But it attacked ecclesiastical despotism and referred somewhat offensively to the prostitute as 'the eternal priestess of humanity'.[2] George Eliot filled eleven pages of her "Middlemarch Miscellany" with notes from this book. But she seems to have been as much interested in his sources as his theories. Most of her notes relate to Roman attitudes to death, law and religion. She noticed the anticipation of the Positive priesthood by Roman families who kept philosophers as 'chaplains', to be consulted as 'spiritual guides' and 'Directors of conscience'.[3] But the similarities with Comte were not made explicit, either in his text or her notes.

By the late 1860's the scientific study of history had largely escaped any close connection with Comte. Froude, for example, based his claim that the science of history presumed self-interest to be the ground of all actions on a limited study of Buckle. Morley's reply, in 1867, explained that Comte, 'the thinker who has done more than any other towards laying the foundation of scientific history', believed the opposite. Altruism was at the heart of the Religion of Humanity. There was hardly a page of Comte which did not insist on 'the hopeless inadequacy of self-interest as a social principle'.[4] Comte's moral and social opinions, however, had never been accepted by the British historians I have discussed. They adopted this historical method or his philosophy of history, but only Beesly and Morley came near to belief in his religion.

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1. Hyde, op. cit., p.75.
2. Lecky, History of European Morals, 2 vols, London, 1869, II 300
3. Pratt, op. cit., pp.xliii-xlv and 54; History of Morals I 327 tmv.
4. JM, "Mr. Froude and the Science of History", FR ns II (1867) 226-37.

VII Theologians

Positivism was attacked by the religious and the anti-religious alike. I will consider first its relation to Secularism and other humanist movements. Comte contributed considerably to the ideas of men such as George Holyoake but made little impression on hard-line atheists. I will then study the reaction of various theologians towards the Religion of Humanity. Sara Hennell attacked Positivism from the standpoint of theism. Two other friends of George Eliot, Mark Pattison and Benjamin Jowett, were also harsh in their criticism of Comte. But Westcott and Caird acknowledged the merits of his analysis of religion from the human point of view. Christianity was capable of assimilating some of his ideas.

Edward Royle recognised the importance of Positivism 'in the shaping of Secularism'.[1] The official organ of Secularism, the Reasoner, founded by George Holyoake in 1846, assumed the subtitle, "Journal of Free-Thought and Positive Philosophy", ten years later. In 1853 it welcomed Harriet Martineau's translation of the Cours, which it described as 'a scientific Bible of Secularism', saving the movement 'from incoherence or purposeless sentimentality'. For its last two years, 1860 and 1861, the Reasoner carried an epigraph from Harriet Martineau on the Positive Philosophy, which was regarded as the intellectual aspect of Secularism.[2] Holyoake visited Comte in 1855 and expressed interest in translating the third volume of the Système. But when this came to nothing, Comte lost patience with Holyoake, whom he described as a revolutionary agitator unable to submit himself to spiritual authority.[3] Holyoake had been a friend of George Lewes, with whom he had helped to found the Leader, but

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1. Edward Royle, Victorian Infidels, Manchester, 1974, p.155.
2. Presswood, op. cit., pp. 95-7.
3. AC, Confessions, p.455, Lettres à Fisher, pp.36 and 53.

George Eliot was disappointed with the Reasoner. She told Sara Hennell how much she disliked it. She felt that 'so superior man as Holyoake, who has written so well elsewhere", ought to produce a better paper.[1]

George Eliot had no sympathy with dogmatic atheism or free thought in antagonism with religion.[2] Holyoake remained constructive and respectable, but Bradlaugh, elected in his place as President of the London Secular Society in 1858, led the militant opposition to religion of any kind. There remained two wings of the Secular movement, one positive, intellectual and middle-class, with a ritual devised by Charles Watts and Annie Besant, the other negative, working-class and anti-religious, delighting in the destructive rhetoric of Charles Bradlaugh.[3] The Reverend Maurice Davies travelled Heterodox London recording the varieties of unbelief. As examples of "The Ritual of Infidelity" he described "The Naming of Infants", by Charles Watts, and "A Marriage Ceremony", by Austin Holyoake. 'Our secularist friends', he concluded, were 'more ecclesiastical than they have any idea of'.[4]

South Place Ethical Society grew out of the Universalist Unitarian chapel founded in 1793 and developed early in the nineteenth century by W.J. Fox. Its most famous minister was the American, Moncure Conway, appointed in 1864. Under him it was renamed the South Place Religious Society. It retained a belief in God along with Evolution and Progress. Like Chapel Street and Newton Hall, it decorated its chapel with tablets of great moral teachers, although, unlike the Positivist Church, Jesus was included among their number. On Moncure Conway's temporary retirement in 1884, the guest speakers included

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1. GEL II 473.
2. Ibid., I 162 and II 421.
3. Susan Budd, "The British Humanist Movement, 1860-1966", Oxford D. Phil., 1968, pp.33-210.
4. Charles Maurice Davies, Heterodox London, 2 vols, London, 1874, II 165-87.

Leslie Stephen and Frederic Harrison. The Ethical Movement seems to have differed very little from Positivism, which it eventually absorbed. But it was not officially founded until fifteen years after George Eliot's death.[1]

Among those known to George Eliot, Sara Hennell adopted a brand of Christian Theism with which she grew increasingly less sympathetic. She praised Hennell's early prize essays and responded warmly to her Thoughts in Aid of Faith in 1860. She called this

> 'quite unparalleled in the largeness and insight with which it estimates Christianity as an "organized experience", a grand advance in the moral development of the race'.

It showed her that 'we are much nearer to each other than I had supposed'. She admired in particular two passages expressing this sense of the inheritance by each individual of the religious sentiments developed by Christianity.[2] Sara Hennell attempted to combine the beliefs of her brother, Strauss, Feuerbach and Spencer. In her work the ideal figure of Jesus became the 'cherished image of Divine Humanity', God 'the essence of the Species of humanity'.[3] Lewes praised her Thoughts but criticised her careless dismissal of Comte. This led to a painful quarrel which ended with George Eliot's request that they cease their discussion of 'opinions on large questions'.[4] Sara later compounded her error by attacking Positivism in her study of Present Religion. 'The development-view of religion' which she espoused differed from both orthodoxy and Positivism. No creed, she believed, could be permanent. It could only present a symbol of truth at a particular stage in human development.[5] The introduction of the second part of Present Religion announced itself as "explaining the principle by which religion appears still to be set in NECESSARY

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1. Budd, op. cit., pp.286-416
2. GEL III 315-7; Sara Hennell, Thoughts in Aid of Faith, London, 1860, pp. 105 and 174.
3. Ibid., pp.53 and 65.
4. GEL III 320 and 338.
5. Sara Hennell, Present Religion, Part I, London, 1865, pp.107-10.

ANTAGONISM TO POSITIVISM".[1] As Sara Hennell grew more obscure, George Eliot's politeness became more strained. Their 'difference of opinion' only fell short of 'substantial disagreement' because Hennel's ideas were so vague.[2]

Sharper criticism of Comte came from two of George Eliot's Oxford friends. Mark Pattison was sympathetic to the positive spirit, especially in history. His 1857 review of Buckle in the Westminster referred to Richard Congreve in describing the benefits to be gained from the study of history:

> 'a wisdom which can embrace in one comprehensive view the whole of the past history of mankind, and read aright the lesson it conveys ... Such wisdom, based upon knowledge and disciplined by social morality, shall in its large conclusions be applicable to all the demands of life.'[3]

His contribution to Essays and Reviews, a study of the "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750", drew the conclusion that 'good sense' could construct a religion and an 'ethical code, irreproachable in its contents and based on a just estimate and wise observation of the facts of life' without heavy reliance on revelation.[4] But Pattison was too much of a Protestant to accept "The Religious and Conservative Aspects of Positivism" as outlined by Harrison in 1875. He explained his dislike of "The Religion of Positivism" the following year.

Pattison regarded religion as a matter for 'the individual consciousness' rather than 'social regulation'. No single intellect, he believed, was 'capable of embracing and codifying all truth'. Systems of philosophy were necessarily inadequate explanations of the mysteries of life. He distinguished between 'the positive spirit' and 'Positivism, as a religion'. He accepted the method advocated by

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1. SH, Comparativism, London, 1969, title page.
2. GEL VII 72
3. Essays by the late Mark Pattison, 2 vols, Oxford, 1889, II 418.
4. Ibid., II 85.

Comte in his early work, but not the 'Utopian institutions' which he proceeded to construct. Comte's religion overlooked the relationship of an individual to 'another person, or intelligent power, conceived as vastly superior to the ego'. It was all law and no spirit. It could neither be deduced from positive principles nor verified by experience. It was 'an arbitrary creation of Comte's individual fancy'. Humanity itself was an abstraction, 'the deification of a thought'. But intelligent and sincere people became its disciples:

> 'Comtism, it seems, has attractions in its plausible completeness and superficial systematisation, for minds powerful and educated, but ill-grounded in science or philosophy, who catch eagerly at a doctrine which professes to be the one scientific remedy for the inveterate disease of our social life'.[1]

If Casaubon is taken as a caricature of Pattison, this description might be seen as retaliation on his part. But the Pattisons remained on friendly terms with the Leweses in the 1870's and we have no record of their discussing Positivism.[2]

With Benjamin Jowett the subject was definitely raised. He had studied Comte about 1850 and valued his positive method. But he opposed the sectarian aspects of Comtism and warned Harrison in 1861 against too servile a submission to Comte. It was presumably her escape from this which was signified by the statement of George Eliot which he reported, that 'she was never a Comtist' but would not renounce 'a poor and unfortunate sect'. He respected Comte himself.[3] Bridges later claimed that Jowett studied Comte with care and accepted, for example, his teaching on resignation and Humanity. But he always spoke contemptuously of the founder of Positivism because his life was 'a practical rebuke to his own'. Comte had given up all status because of his beliefs, while Jowett could maintain his position only by hypocrisy.[4] The failure of Positivists to understand the complexity

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1. CR XXVII (1876) 593-614.
2. see Haight, GE, pp.563-5.
3. Simon, op. cit., p.212.
4. PR V (1897) 125-9.

of liberal Christianity does not entirely invalidate Bridges' remark.

Comte was treated more generously by Brooke Westcott, who found 'no fundamental antagonism between the Positive method and Christianity'. His two articles in the Contemporary Review in 1868 attempted to show that 'a Positivist in philosophy may be a Christian in religion'. Christianity was founded in history. It therefore provided in fact 'what Positivism symbolises in a conception'.[1] Westcott accused Comte of failing to understand Christianity. St. Paul, for example, was devoted to the Person of Christ and inspired by the resurrection in a way which belied Comte's explanation of the foundation of the Church. Comte also underestimated the Greek fathers. He made the mistake of treating Christianity as a 'systematization of human life'. It was not 'a principle of order' but "a spirit of life', which would survive the decay of all organisations. Comte had demonstrated, nevertheless, the religious nature of mankind, and Westcott found comfort in the view that

> 'the boldest analysis of the past reveals not, as has been supposed, the transitoriness of Christianity, but its divine power to satisfy and to anticipate the latent wants of man and of society'.[2]

George Eliot may not have read Westcott, but she certainly asked for copies of the first two of Edward Caird's series of articles, in the Contemporary Review of 1879, on "The Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte".[3] Like Westcott, Caird valued Comte in spite of his faults. For he possessed 'that unmistakable instinct for truth which renders even the errors and inconsistencies of men of genius more instructive' than the orthodoxy of others who "need no repentance". Caird linked Comte with German idealism. Like Kant, he was "broken into inconsistency by the effort of transition' from the old world to the new.

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1. Brooke Westcott, "Aspects of Positivism in Relation to Christianity", CR VIII (1868) 371-86.
2. Westcott, "Comte on the Philosophy of the History of Christianity", CR VI (1867) 399-421.
3. GEL VII 159.

But his systematic and rigorous thinking helped to clarify the great questions of religion.[1]

Frederic Harrison complained of Benn's History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century that although it recognised the enormous influence exercised by Comte in England through Mill, Lewes, George Eliot and others, it 'actually prophesies that Neo-Christianity is more likely to absorb the Religion of Humanity than to be absorbed by it.'[2] Harrison affected incredulity but Benn has been proved right. Few have been able to accept the details of Comte's system. But his profound insight into areas of philosophy, history, sociology, ethics and religion has not been lost. Through numerous Victorian writers, some of whom I have discussed in this chapter, what was of value in Positivism was preserved, modified and enriched. Not least among these writers was George Eliot.

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1. Edward Caird, The Social Philosophy and Religion of Comte, Glasgow 1885, pp.xx and 247-9.
2. PR XIV (1906) 253.

PART III GEORGE ELIOT

CHAPTER II

Anticipation of Positivism

I Christianity: Strauss and Feuerbach

Many other critics present a more balanced picture of the range of George Eliot's intellectual interests. My aim is to show the closeness of her relationship to Comte's system. I will therefore treat her other reading in this light, attempting to see to what extent this prepared her for the reception of Positivism. This is not to fall into Comte's habit of regarding every thing as providentially geared towards himself. The influences I will now trace were often completely independent of his inspiration. He had no patent on her mind. But some of the ideas George Eliot encountered before she read his works can be connected indirectly with him. For instance, Bray's phrenology, like Comte's, was inspired by Gall. Saint-Simon she mentioned in the 1840's, and his influence, which to some extent incorporated that of the early Comte, was palpable on both Mill and Carlyle, possibly even on Strauss and Feuerbach. It is impossible to cover the whole of George Eliot's extensive reading, but a selection of the most important and most representative examples should provide a good basis from which to progress to a study of Comte's influence on her work.

George Eliot's development was remarkably consistent and predictable, falling neatly into Comte's three stages. From her youthful evangelical fervour she lapsed into a form of metaphysical theism which she soon abandoned for a fully-fledged Positivism. This chronological process I will outline here, concentrating on a few major influences. Her study of Church History led her back to a close

analysis of the gospels, which destroyed her faith in the doctrines of Christianity. But she retained an appreciation of the value of Christianity and Judaism as expressions of man's highest feelings. This development was marked by her translations of Strauss, Spinoza and Feuerbach. I will attempt to define the similarities and differences between their ideas and those of Comte, and to assess to what extent their influence anticipated or even precluded his.

The study of George Eliot's intellectual development necessarily relies on her own letters. But these can be misleading. Quite naturally, she tended to write what people wanted to read. During the severe illness of her Methodist aunt, in August, 1840, George Eliot's letter to Uncle Samuel was abnormally full of Biblical quotations.[1] She confessed to Bessie Parkes, 'I know you like materialism, so I talk it to indulge you.'[2] It is neither very surprising nor very significant, therefore, that her letters to the Brays were full of phrenological descriptions and her letters to the Congreves of Positivist terminology. It only indicates for certain that she was fully aware of those ideas.

Even as an evangelical a month before her twentieth birthday, George Eliot took a large intellectual view of the world. It was on a letter to Maria Lewes of October 1839 that Sara Hennell wrote, 'Notice the root here of true Positivism.' There is nothing in the contents to suggest any specific reading of Comte. But there was the injunction to look 'out of ourselves to the approaching changes' in the world, and to take 'an enlarged view of material and immaterial existences, representing to ourselves our insignificance among them'.[3] Among the "Qualities of George Eliot's Unbelief" which Comte helped to

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1. GEL I 61-2.
2. Ibid., II 109.
3. Ibid., I 32.

confirm was her deep interest in history. In 1839, at the same time as Dr. Stanley at Christ Church, she completed a Chart of Ecclesiastical History. Her reading of Joseph Milner's History of the Church of Christ, the Oxford Tracts and Isaac Taylor's Ancient Christianity led her to describe herself as veering to 'all points of the compass ... on the nature of the visible church'. While Newman was agonising over early Church History at Littlemore, Bennett argues, George Eliot too 'saw her face in that mirror' as 'a gnostic or perhaps a Manichean'.[1] House also attributes 'the beginning of her religious doubts' to her study of history, showing how close 'were the studies and frame of mind of those who became technically infidels and many of those who became technically Roman Catholics'.[2]

Isaac Taylor sent her back to the gospels themselves in her historical quest for pure and uncorrupt Christianity, but her reading of Hennell and Strauss did little to strengthen her faith. Charles Hennell's Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity of 1838 placed Jesus in his Jewish context, relating him in particular to the Essenes. He discussed the dating and reliability of the Gospels. He assumed 'the à priori unlikelihood of miracles', resolving their accounts either by naturalistic explanations or by 'the exaggeration or the invention of the narrators'.[3] Hennell retained his Unitarian belief in Jesus without abandoning his faith in the invariable laws of nature. Perhaps inspired by her recent meeting with the Brays, George Eliot studied the second edition of Hennell's Inquiry at the end of 1841, confessing to Maria Lewes that she was 'engrossed in the most interesting of all enquiries'.[4] It is difficult to assess its impact. When she returned to it in 1847 she told Sara Hennell that she admired it

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1. Bennett, GE, Cambridge, (1948) 1954, pp.16-7.
2. Humphry House , "Qualities of GE's Unbelief", in All in Due Time, London, 1955, pp.111-2.
3. Ibid., p.113; Charles Hennell, An Inquiry Concerning the Origin of Christianity, London, 1838.
4. Haight, GE, p.39.

more than she had done on her two readings five years before.[1]

Strauss's Life of Jesus Critically Examined was related more closely to the traditions of German historical criticism. But it was based on a similar belief in the 'rational laws of history', which he divided into three kinds: 'natural laws', according to which 'the absolute cause never disturbs the chain of secondary causes by arbitrary acts of interposition', the laws of succession, which required gradual processes rather than sudden changes, and psychological laws of normal behaviour. These laws were to be used as criteria of historicity. Anything which contradicted them could not have happened.[2] But Strauss resolved the simple opposition proffered by Hennell and previous writers, between supernatural and natural explanations of miracles. He propounded a mythological interpretation of the Gospels. He discussed at length the nature of myth, which he divided into different kinds. An evangelical myth was not the expression of a fact but the product of an idea of Christ's earliest followers. A pure myth was actually based on fact. Then there were additional myths created by the authors themselves.[3]

The effect of the translation of Strauss, which George Eliot took over from Rufa Brabant in 1844, was two-fold. In one sense it was completely destructive. Mrs. Bray told Sara Hennell, how "dissecting the beautiful story of the crucifixion' made her 'Strauss-sick'[4] But,in Comte's terminology, the negative stage was necessary before the positive synthesis could be established. On the positive side in Strauss was the suggestion that the history of Humanity supplied an ample inspiration for faith and hope. He anticipated Comte, but in Hegelian terminology:

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1. GEL I 237.
2. David Friedrich Strauss, The Life of Jesus Critically Examined, trans. GE, London (1846) 1973, pp.87-8.
3. Ibid., pp.39-87.
4. GEL I 206.

'Idea ... is not wont to lavish all its fulness on one exemplar, and be niggardly towards all the others ... by the kindling within him of the idea of Humanity, the individual man participates in the divinely human life of the species'.1

Strauss was most moving when he described the love and reverence of the disciples for Jesus, which led them retrospectively to recognise his significance as the Messiah. He accounted for the experience on the Emmaus road in this way. The problem for the disciples had been to incorporate 'into their idea of the Messiah the characteristics of suffering and death'. But they turned to the scriptures and discovered there all the prophesies of a suffering Christ. Their 'hearts burned within them' and they felt themselves to be experiencing the presence of the glorified Jesus. George Eliot wrote to Sara Hennell in 1846 of the significance of the Emmaus road appearance, referring to Jesus as 'the same highest and best, only chastened, crucified instead of triumphant'.[2] While translating Strauss, she distinguished between the Christian dogmas and feelings. The first were uninspiring, but 'Christianity with its Hebrew retrospect and millennial hopes, the heroism and Divine Sorrow of its founder and all its glorious army of martyrs' afforded abundant material for art.[3]

George Eliot's affirmation of universal law can sometimes be traced directly to Strauss. For example, he rejected the miraculous account of the feeding of the five thousand as unnatural:

'That which comes to pass in the space of three quarters of a year, from seed-time to harvest, was here effected in the minutes which were required for the distribution of the food.'[4]

The phrase and the sentiment were repeated when George Eliot wrote in Romola of 'the broad sameness of the human lot, which never alters in

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1. Strauss, op. cit., pp.779-80.
2. Ibid., p.742; GEL I 228.
3. GEL I 177.
4. Strauss, op. cit., p.511.

the main heading of its history - hunger and labour, seed-time and harvest, love and death'.[1] Strauss rejected the Transfiguration as a ridiculous invention:

'compared with the spiritual glory which Jesus created for himself by word and deed, this physical glorification, consisting in the investing of his body with a brilliant light, must appear very insignificant, nay, almost childish'.[2]

George Eliot criticised Savonarola's hope for a similar miracle. Villari had recorded his prayer, on the elevation of the host, to be struck dead if he were insincere. Eliot dramatised the moment by making 'a stream of brightness ... spread itself over Savonarola's face with mild glorification'. The crowd shout, "Behold the answer", but the natural sunlight soon reveals itself, spreading 'impartially over all things clean and unclean'. Similarly, as he returns from the debacle of the Trial by Fire, Savonarola is illuminated only by 'the light which shines on, patiently and impartially, justifying and condemning by simply showing all things in the slow history of their ripening'.[3] Dinah appears like the angel at the tomb after the resurrection, Romola has a naturalistic halo from the sun when she arrives at the plague-stricken village, and Deronda is similarly transfigured by the setting sun as he rows up the Thames to fulfil Mordecai's expectations. These details derive from Strauss, who was certainly one of the thinkers who prepared George Eliot for the fuller exposition of the reign of law in the external world and in human history contained in the Positive Philosophy.

One of the sources of Higher Criticism, as William Baker observed, was provided by Spinoza with his rationalistic explanations of Biblical events and his arguments for humanity as a whole, rather than one

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1. R I 2.
2. Strauss, op. cit., p.536.
3. Pasquale Villari, The Life and Times of Savonarola, trans. Linda Villari, London, 1888, pp.607-8; R II 378.

chosen nation. The third chapter of his Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, which George Eliot translated in 1849 as 'a rest to her mind', emphasised the significance of the preservation of historical continuity by the Jews.[1] George Eliot began to translate his Ethics in Berlin at the end of 1854, finishing it early in 1856. His relativism and tolerance were clearly congenial. Spinoza reduced religion to the love of God and of our neighbour, and taught that virtue was its own reward. Bennett argues that these made an impact on his translator.[2] But it is difficult to establish any detailed influence on her own ethics. Spinoza was undoubtedly metaphysical and theistic, whereas George Eliot soon progressed to the Positive state.

During the 1840's, after her break with orthodox Christianity, George Eliot espoused a form of theism. Charles Hennell had followed his Inquiry by an explanation of Christian Theism. George Eliot seems to have followed him. Mrs. Bray recorded her saying in 1842 'What a beautiful refined Christianity your Unitarianism is !' But she denied affinity with any community of Christians. She admired the moral teaching of Jesus, but regarded 'the systems of doctrines' built up around his teaching as 'most dishonourable to God and most pernicious in its influence on individual and social happiness'.[3] In October 1843, she was already able to look back upon her antagonism to Christianity as immature. Abandoning the idea of intellectual agreement, she turned to 'the truth of feeling as the only universal bond of union'. She had nothing but contempt for the 'quackery of infidelity'. At this stage she had no desire 'to reorganise opinions'.[4]

As late as 1849, George Eliot wrote about 'the divine human soul' and 'the living soul - the breath of God within us'.[5] But by 1852,

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1. cp. William Baker, GE and Judaism, Salzburg, 1975, pp.26-7.
2. Bennett, op. cit., pp.41-2.
3. GEL I 128.
4. Ibid., I 162.
5. Ibid., II 278 and 280.

as Paris has shown, she had rejected pantheism.[1] In that year, she wrote to John Chapman that the Westminster Review could follow three possible courses. They could ally with the Theistic school represented by James Martineau, which treated 'Jesus as the Ideal Man'. They could adopt a new policy, she argued,

> 'if you believe, as I do, that the thought which is to mould the Future has for its root a belief in necessity, that a nobler representation of humanity has yet to be given in resignation to human nothingness, than could ever be shewn of a being who believes in phantasmagoria of hope unsustained by reason'.

Or they could continue with the current compromise between these two schools. George Eliot made it clear what her position was.[2]

One element in this development from the second to the third of Comte's three stages, was her reading and translation of Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity. She had been lent a copy of this work in 1851. She began the translation at the end of 1853, finishing the following year. Feuerbach divided the book into two parts: an appreciation of "The True or Anthropological Essence of Religion", and a condemnation of "The False or Theological Essence of Religion". The negative part of Feuerbach's analysis attacked in turn the notions of God, of Revelation and of Faith. The idea of God was a confusing objectification of a necessarily subjective experience of man's own consciousness. Feuerbach saw no point in separating His existence from our knowledge of Him. To believe that God was the necessary condition of virtue was to believe in 'the nothingness of virtue in itself'. Such a believer 'sacrifices his relation to man to his relation to God'.[3] Revelation erected feelings into facts whose denial was called heresy. It injured moral sensibility by inculcating 'moral actions without moral dispositions', and it poisoned the sense

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1. B.J. Paris, Experiments in Life, Detroit, 1965, p.14.
2. GEL II 48-9.
3. Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, trans. GE, New York, 1957 (1854), pp.197-203 and 272.

of truth by encouraging the defence of Revelation by sophistry. The mind which was committed to its position regardless of 'truth' was led on to 'impudent assumptions' and 'shameless falsehoods'.[1]

Feuerbach became most venemous in his attack on "The contradiction between Faith and Love". Faith was arrogance disguised as humility: 'In faith there lies a malignant principle', an egoism which blesses self, curses unbelief and persecutes heretics:'

'The flames of hell are only the flashings of the exterminating, vindictive glance which faith casts on unbelievers.'

Faith made salvation depend on itself rather than 'the fulfilment of common duties'. It led the early Christians to reject family life, 'the intimate bond of love which is naturally moral'.[2]

Feuerbach's positive appreciation of Christianity treated God as the mirror of man: 'God is for man the commonplace book where he registers his highest feelings and thoughts'.[3] God was pure Feeling, 'the highest subjectivity of man'. To make God act humanly was to declare human activity to be divine.[4] Feuerbach interpreted "God loves man" to mean "the highest is the love of man". Again, "God is love", meant that human feeling was absolute.[5] Much of his argument was emotional reiteration:

'out of the heart, out of the inward impulse to do good, to live and die for man ... has sprung what is best, what is true in Christianity'.[6]

But it was nonetheless powerful.

To Feuerbach self-consciousness was everything. It was even the origin of the world (the self-distinguishing of God from himself). The Imagination was a divine power.[7] The fundamental dogmas of

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1. Ibid., pp.204-12.
2. Ibid., Ch. XXVI, pp.250-61 and 70.
3. Ibid,, p.63.
4. Ibid., pp.29-31.
5. Ibid., pp.58 and 121.
6. Ibid., p.60.
7. Ibid., pp.81 and 75.

Christianity were 'realised wishes of the heart'. Prayers were the expression of the heart's desires, miracles their realisation. All these beliefs were harmless enough if recognised for what they were. Man could celebrate the beauty of his feelings.[1] The individual freed himself from his 'painful sense of limitation' by the contemplation of God, the idea of perfection. God was 'the idea of the species as an individual', which moved man's feelings more than 'the idea of humanity'. Christ was 'the typical man', the embodiment of human goodness, the image 'under which the unity of the species has impressed itself on the popular consciousness'. Faith in God and in Christ was 'faith in the truth of human feeling'.[2]

Feuerbach interpreted love full-bloodedly. He had little time for the sexless heaven of Christianity, quoting with disapproval Thomas à Kempis on our pilgrimage as strangers on this earth. Christian love was limited by its epithet, narrow-hearted and false.[3] The Conclusion of the Essence of Christianity emphasised that all the moral relations were religious, especially within the family. They did not need the priest's blessing. Marriage was sacred as 'the free bond of love'. Friendship and even material possessions were "sacred in and by themselves'. Earlier, Feuerbach had argued that work was worship, 'the essential aim of life'. Now he re-interpreted the sacraments. Baptism symbolised the value of water and the purification of the soul. In the Lord's Supper, bread and wine represented man's products, in which he could celebrate 'the supernatural power of mind' which relied on nature and yet controlled it. Even eating and drinking were religious acts, common, every day, but essential. Their sacramental celebration gave a religious significance to the commonest activities of man.[4]

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1. Ibid., pp.122-40
2. Ibid., pp.153-4 and 268
3. Ibid., pp. 164-9 and 265.
4. Ibid., pp.271-8 and 171.

There are some significant differences between Feuerbach and Comte. The Essence of Christianity retains much Hegelian discussion of absolute self-consciousness. The worship of man that it advocates is both individualistic and introspective. There is something aggressive and bullying about its reductionism, with its constant refrain, that the essence of doctrine is 'nothing but' feeling. It is unsystematic and unconstructive, full of impulsive insights which it fails to organise and of poetic overstatements which it makes no attempt to clarify. Feuerbach was innocent of methodology, turning neither to history nor to natural science for support. Finally, he left unresolved what the religion of the future should be, besides a mystical celebration of man and nature.

The impact of Feuerbach on George Eliot was powerful, at least for a time. She felt obliged to omit his 'occasional offensive defects of taste'. Sending a portion of 'the raw Feuerbach' to Sara Hennell, she asked her advice on how to modify it for the English public:

'With the ideas of Feuerbach I everywhere agree, but of course I should, of myself, alter the phraseology considerably.'[1]

She was excited about throwing this 'bombshell ... into the camp of orthodoxy'.[2] As James Martineau observed, she 'executed her task even better than before' but it was surprising that she should choose Feuerbach 'to exhibit the New Hegelian Atheism to English readers'.[3]

Feuerbach clearly inspired her attack in 1855 on Dr. Cumming for his 'unscrupulosity of statement' in defence of Revelation, his 'absence of genuine charity'in his faith, and his 'perverted moral judgement'. His God wanted us to 'replace sympathy with men by anxiety for the "glory of God"'.[4] Her criticism of Young's egoism also derived its sting from Feuerbach. The sacramental symbolism in her early novels can be traced to his influence. Adam Bede

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1. GEL II 142, 153 and 147.
2. Leader V (1854) 617; GEL II 164 fn.3.
3. WR ns V (1854) 559-60; GEL II 187 fn.8.
4. Essays, pp.165, 179 and 184-6.

is 'baptised' by sorrow and partakes of a Feuerbachian eucharist with Bartle Massey.[1] The sacramental flood at the end of the Mill on the Floss can perhaps be blamed on his influence. In Romola Baldassare dramatises the vindictive element in faith. His hatred for Tito responds to Savonarola's call for martyrdom and inexorable vengeance. He takes up the Priest's words: "Come, o blessed promise ! Let my blood flow, let the fire consume me !"[2]

These are detailed examples. But Feuerbach's main impact on George Eliot was general, teaching her that religious experience was an important element of human life, which need not be dismissed because it was often illusory. She added a greater balance and broader understanding to Feuerbach's insight. She wrote to Sara Hennell in January 1858, 'I have long ceased to feel any sympathy with mere antagonism and destruction'.[3] At the end of the following year she explained to D'Albert-Durade the development that had taken place since the days of her hostility to Christianity. She was still opposed to its dogmas, but saw 'in it the highest expression of the religious sentiment that has yet found its place in the history of mankind'.[4] She resented Madame Bodichon's suggestion in 1862 that she might 'rob a man of his religious belief'. She explained her lack of 'sympathy with Free-thinkers as a class' and of 'interest in mere antagonism to religious doctrines. I care only to know, if possible, the lasting meaning that lies in all religious doctrine from the beginning till now.'[5]

Feuerbach undoubtedly contributed to this development at least as much as Comte. But what he did not supply, and what the Religion of Humanity did, was a sufficiently coherent explanation of religious

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1. AB, II 209-11.
2. R I 352.
3. GEL II 421.
4. Ibid., III 231.
5. Ibid., IV 64-5.

need and how it could be satisfied without falling into illusion. Feuerbach may have inspired her reconstruction of faith, but it was left to Comte to supply the details.

II Phrenology: Bray and Comte

George Eliot was introduced to the Brays in November 1841. This was the year in which Charles Bray published his Philosophy of Necessity, subtitled "The Law of Consequences: as applicable to Mental, Moral and Social Science". I will attempt to assess the influence of this work, and of The Education of the Feelings, published three years earlier, on the development of George Eliot's ideas. I will describe her attitude towards phrenology, to which Charles Bray introduced her, in which George Combe encouraged her and from which George Lewes helped to ween her. From this should emerge an estimate of the extent to which Bray's Philosophy of Necessity formed a base from which George Eliot could mount to Comte's Positive Philosophy. In the Philosophy of Necessity, Bray divided the functions of the mind into four categories: 'Animal Feelings', 'Social Propensities', 'Moral Sentiments' and 'Intellectual Faculties'. These were in turn subdivided, to form thirty-five separate faculties, which he analysed one by one.

The different cerebral systems of Gall, Spurzheim, Combe and Bray may be compared with Comte's in the tables reproduced in the Appendix. It is sufficient here to observe that Comte's cerebral theory was comparatively simple. Bray and the other phrenologists seemed more concerned to discuss the functions of the separate faculties than to form a coherent system of morals. They also located all thirty-five faculties in precise areas of the brain, believing that the bumps on the skull were an indication of the size and therefore the strength of

each affection. Comte accepted some of Gall's localisation, but preferred to concentrate on the moral principles behind the faculty psychology. Bray observed, as did Comte, that the animal feelings were naturally stronger than the moral sentiments. But he approved of this in a commonsensical way:

> 'Those feelings that have reference to the preservation of the individual are the most numerous, and generally the strongest; and perhaps necessarily so, for if everyone were unmindful of himself and occupied only in taking care of others, the race must soon come to an end.'

Happiness, he taught, consisted in 'the legitimate gratification of all the faculties'.[1]

The Second Part of the Philosophy of Necessity expounded "Moral Science". Bray began his chapter on "The Principles of Morality" by quoting Bentham, and his views can be seen as a Unitarian form of Utilitarianism. It was the 'object of Infinite Benevolence ... to produce the greatest sum of enjoyment', which sometimes required the sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the community. The 'selfish feelings' had been provided for individual welfare, the 'disinterested feelings' for the benefit of the whole society. Thus Bray reached the same conclusion as Comte, although this terminology was utilitarian:

> 'The greatest possible amount of happiness can only be experienced when the disinterested feelings predominate, and in proportion as these take precedence over the rest, does happiness increase'.[2]

Bray certainly differed from Comte on the understanding of Religion. He attacked degrading notions which invested the Deity with a capricious personality and he separated Religion from Morality: the first was concerned with our relation to God, the second with our relation to each other. Religion was a form of transfigured science,

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1. Charles Bray , Philosophy of Necessity, London, 1841, 2 vols, I 66-7.
2. Ibid., I (252), 271 and 279-80.

the study of 'the book of Natural Revelation'.[1]

Bray anticipated Comte in systematising The Education of the Feelings, which was published in 1838. This defined education as 'the developing and perfecting of all our faculties'. Bray's object was 'the cultivation, by exercise, of those feelings which make us wish to do that which we ought to do'.[2] The second chapter outlined "The Education of each feeling considered separately". It pointed to the Family as the intermediate stage in the development of the moral feelings, and ended with a declaration of faith in the 'gradual predominance of the higher and unselfish feelings of our nature'.[3] All these beliefs became part of the Religion of Humanity.

Bray's autobiography acknowledged in a vague and begrudging way the similarity of his own teaching to that of Positivism:

'The object of my "Philosophy of Necessity", published in 1841, was to show that Law reigned equally in Mind and in Matter; that there could be no mental, moral, and social science if it did not. We are now told by Dr. Bridges, a leading Apostle of Comtism, that this was the principle aim of Comte's Philosophy ... It is this "new thing" that I have been preaching for this last forty years, but I was not aware that I had so strong an ally in Positivism - certainly none of its disciples have ever recognised me.'[4]

He lumped Mill and Comte together as 'book-worms' whose social feelings, long dormant, finally exploded into an unbalanced activity. But he recognised that George Eliot's opinions came nearer to Positivism 'than to any other recognised sect'. Discussing his 'intimate friendship' with her from their meeting in 1841 until her departure in 1851 for London, he claimed that their long discussions established agreement on most things, and that he 'laid down the base of that philosophy which she afterwards retained'.[5]

George Eliot was introduced to George Combe through the Brays. Combe gave Chapman the first subscription to the Westminster Review,

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1. Ibid., I 296-9, II 371-9 and 487.
2. Charles Bray, The Education of the Feelings, London, (1838) 1849 pp. (ii) and 1.
3. Ibid., pp.68 and 160.
4. Charles Bray, Phases of Opinion, pp.92-3.
5. Ibid., pp.129, 186 and 72-4.

and wrote her long letters of encouragement. George Eliot told the Brays, 'He says, he thinks the Westminster, under my management the most important means of enlightenment of a literary nature in existence'. He was 'indefatigable in writing and thinking for us',[1] among other things on Hereditary Transmission and William Ellis's schools, 'a system of education based on natural morality that would rescue the faculty of veneration from centuries of abuse'. The April issue of the Westminster in 1852 praised phrenology and the Combes for popularising the principles of physiology.[2] George Eliot even supported Combe in some of his complaints against Chapman's conduct of financial affairs.[3] She went to stay with the Combes in Edinburgh in October 1852, where she described him as playing the part of Socrates in the Platonic dialogues while others had 'little to do but shape elegant modes of negation and affirmation'. But he was 'an apostle', enjoying the retrospect of his struggles for the gospel of phrenology, and the Combes were 'really affectionate' to her.[4] They continued their friendly correspondence until her elopement with Lewes, which so horrified Combe that he questioned her sanity: 'her conduct, with her brain, seems to me like morbid mental aberration'.[5] Combe's exasperation was increased by his dislike of Lewes, a 'shallow, flippant man' who presumed to criticise phrenology.[6]

Combe had been the first British disciple of phrenology, popularising Spurzheim's ideas in his 1819 Essays on Phrenology, published in later editions as A System of Phrenology, and in his 1828 Constitution of Man. The latter in particular revealed its position within the traditions of natural theology by quoting Butler's Analogy on the title

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1. GEL I 369, II 33 and 39.
2. WR, ns II (1852) 1-32, ns I (1852) 419.
3. GEL II 82-3.
4. Ibid., II 59-61.
5. Haight, GE., p.166.
6. GEL II 264.

page. He argued, not 'that the world is arranged on the principles of Benevolence exclusively', but that 'it is constituted in harmony with the whole faculties of man'. Every faculty stood 'in a definite relation to certain external objects', which could supply its exercise and consequent gratification.[1] Chapter Three, "To what extent are the miseries of mankind referable to infringements of the laws of nature ?", was an orthodox exercise in theodicy. Combe's answer to the problem of suffering was that calamities only arose from the infringement of the laws of nature. The resulting punishment led to moral and religious progress. Combe's main aim was to teach the control of the 'animal faculties ... by the sentiments of Conscientiousness, Benevolence, Veneration and Intellect'. Man must give increasing exercise to 'the highest feelings', his true source of happiness. But all thirty-three of Combe's faculties had a purpose, and he systematically explained the uses and abuses of each one.[2] It appears that George Eliot actually proof-read some of Combe's work, including the ninth chapter of the 1847 edition of the Constitution of Man, "On the relation between Religion and Science", expanded in 1857 into a separate volume.[3] But his influence seems to have been strong only in the early fifties, before he disavowed her.

George Eliot for a time shared Bray's enthusiasm for phrenology. As early as November, 1838, she wrote to Maria Lewes about her 'organs of ideality and comparison'. She was subjected to frequent phrenological analyses; but she seems not to have taken them too seriously. Having not written to Maria Lewes for some time, she challenged her, in February, 1842, to dispute the findings of phrenological science by calling her indifferent or forgetful:

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1. George Combe, The Constitution of Man, Edinburgh and London, 1828, pp.20 and 39.
2. Ibid., pp.34-8.
3. David de Giustino, Conquest of Mind: Phrenology and Victorian Social Thought, London, 1975, p.130.

'having had my propensities, sentiments and intellect gauged a second time, I am pronounced to possess a large organ of "adhesiveness", a still larger one of "firmness", and as large of conscientousness'.[1]

She wrote to Mrs. Bray the following year regretting that she would have to 'miss my lessons from the arch-phrenologist', Mr. Donovan, the Principal of the London Phrenological Institution:

'I shall miss too, being told that I have some very bad propensities and that my moral and animal regions are unfortunately balanced, all of which is too true to be heard with calmness'.[2]

Two years after that, she wrote to tell her that she was becoming so amiable that 'Mr. Donovan's wizard hand would detect a slight corrugation of the skin' in her unexercised 'organs 5 and 6', Combativeness and Destructiveness.[3] She confessed to Sara Hennell that she sometimes harboured mischievous thoughts about hitting Dr. Brabant with the works of Spinoza, 'so as to give a salutary bruise to Nos. 6 and 7'.[4] She reported to Charles Bray that her acquisitiveness was "in a state of inflammation, like the Veneration of that clergyman to whom Mr. Donovan said, "Sir you have recently been engaged in prayer."'[5]

With Charles Bray she was often more serious. She consented to be taken along to the Strand to have a cast taken of her head by James Deville. Mrs. Bray assured Charles Lewes, years later that she did not have her head shaved for this purpose: 'it was merely smoothed down'. Bray solemnly recorded the findings, and handed the cast over to Cross.[6] Phrenological terminology recurs throughout her letters to the Brays. She was disappointed with Dickens's 'anterior lobe', but not with those of Mr. Atkinson or Professors Greg and Owen.[7] In the month of her death she praised Cross's 'coronal arch', adding,

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1. GEL I 126.
2. Ibid., I 167.
3. Ibid., I 193.
4. Ibid., I 231-2.
5. Ibid., II 233.
6. Mrs. Caroline Bray to Charles Lee Lewes, 28/3/90, Yale MS III; Bray, Phases of Opinion, pp.74-5; GEL I 178 fn.2.
7. GEL II 23,5, 21 and 56.

'If his head does not indicate fine moral qualities, it must be phrenology that is in fault.'[1]

George Eliot wrote to congratulate Bray on the publication of the second edition of the Education of the Feelings in 1849, promising to read it 'with a disposition to admire' rather than 'the petty acumen that sees difficulties'. On the publication of the third edition in 1860 she promised to read the parts he recommended, and she also welcomed the fourth edition in 1872: 'I don't know any sort of work more needed among the educators.'[2] But there was always an element of diplomacy in her letters to the Brays after her elopement with Lewes, who was regarded not only as loose morally but phrenologically heretical. She had to reassure Bray, after his exchange of views with Lewes in the Leader in 1855, that all he had wished to argue was that the size of an organ was not an absolute measure of its power. She defended her own position:

'I am not conscious of falling away from the "physiological basis". I never believed more profoundly than I do now that character is based on organization. I never had a higher appreciation than I have now of the services which phrenology has rendered towards the science of man.'

This appreciation, she insisted, did not require an acceptance of 'all Mr. Combe's views of organology and psychology'. Her own doctor, she added, was a phrenologist, and had been an intimate friend of Spurzheim.[3]

Further explanations were required after Bray's complaints against Lewes's treatment of phrenology in the second edition of his History of Philosophy in 1857. George Eliot explained to Sara Hennell that Lewes was not 'in sublime ignorance of what phrenologists say', as she and Bray appeared to believe. She confessed her dislike of the 'sectarian feeling' which the topic of phrenology seemed to arouse.

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1. Ibid., VII 342.
2. Ibid., I 318, III 324 and V 329.
3. Ibid., II 209-10.

She expressed her own essential agreement with Bray, but in terms more clearly derived from Comte's classification of the sciences:

'In the fundamental doctrine of your book - that mind presents itself under the same condition of unvariableness of antecedent and consequent as all other phenomena (the only difference being that the true antecedent and consequent are proportionately difficult to discover as the phenomena are more complex) - I think you know that I agree ... there can be no Social Science without the admission of that doctrine.'[1]

This passage illustrates succinctly the way in which George Eliot was deeply indebted to Bray for the original elucidation of her fundamental ideas but progressed from him to their more complete systematisation under the influence of Comte.

Bray certainly saw Comte behind the position adopted by Lewes. The second edition of his Philosophy of Necessity, published in 1863, took offence at Lewes's complaint about the phrenologists 'keeping behind the science of their day'. Bray counter-attacked by ridiculing Comte:

'We know that Mr. Lewes considers Auguste Comte quite up to the science of the day, and he in his Catechism of Positive Religion gives "Positive Classification of the internal functions of the Brain", wherein in virtue of a mental analysis purely hypothetical he throws several organs into one, reducing the number to 18. He might as well have thrown several nerves or muscles into one, notwithstanding their distinct organic structure.'

Comte, he added, had claimed that his classification was complete. The phrenologists only believed theirs to be sufficiently established to provide the foundations of moral and social science, and to be able to place people in those positions for which their constitution made them most fitted.[2]

There are frequent references to phrenology in George Eliot's novels. In "Janet's Repentance" Dempster has a 'preponderant occiput and bulging forehead, between which his closely-dipped coronal surface lay like a flat and new-mown table-land'. His intelligence, in other

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1. Ibid., II 401-3.
2. Bray, Philosophy of Necessity, London, 1863, pp.145 and 149.

words, outstrips his benevolence.[1] Seth Bede, on the other hand, has 'a coronal arch that predominates very decidedly over the brow', so that discerning tramps feel sure of a copper from him.[2] In "The Lifted Veil", Latimer complains that his father, on the evidence of a phrenological examination of his head, insisted on a special scientific education, to remedy 'the defects of my organisation'.[3] Felix Holt laughs at the way phrenologists escaped contradictory evidence. He recounts to Rufus Lyon, "a phrenologist at Glasgow told me that I had large veneration". When a friend objected that he was an iconoclast, the phrenologist immediately attributed this to "his large Ideality, which prevents him from finding anything perfect enough to be venerated".[4] Elias Baptist Butterworth, the American vegetarian satirised in "A Minor Prophet", 'adopts the latest views', including phrenology. He brushes back his hair 'to show his great capacity'. Whereas 'shallow men' prove their wit by their repartees, he displays the 'testimony of his frontal lobe'.[5]

George Eliot seems to have grown increasingly sceptical of the reliability of the phrenological relation between skull-formation and strength of faculty. But she accepted with Lewes that the forms and functions of the brain were connected. Rather than speculate on the exact relation, she preferred to concentrate on the education of the feelings, the principles of which remained valid even if the specific nomenclature was rejected. Chapter five will illustrate that her novels embody these principles as outlined by Comte. But the similar ideas expounded earlier by Bray and Combe contributed to her understanding of Comte's cerebral theory.

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1. SCL II 42.
2. AB I 5.
3. SM pp.282-3.
4. FH I 98.
5. LJ p.180.

III Saint-Simonism: Mill and Carlyle

Saint-Simonism prepared the way for Positivism in English radical thought. Harriet Martineau is one example of a Saint-Simonian convert who later contributed to the Positive movement.[1] In George Eliot's case, it cannot be proved that she read Saint-Simon's work. But either through the Brays, through Mill or through Carlyle, she became familiar with his main ideas. It is significant that Carlyle's essay which attracted Saint-Simonian notice was called "Signs of the Times", and Mill's treatment of Saint-Simonian ideas, "The Spirit of the Age". The British radicalism to which the Brays introduced George Eliot was permeated with Saint-Simonian ideas. I will trace these views as outlined by Mary Hennell, before considering their presentation by Mill and Carlyle, hoping that a general picture will emerge of the atmosphere to which George Eliot was subjected in the 1840's, and from which she was able to progress to Positivism.

The long Appendix to the first edition of the Philosophy of Necessity contained 'a review of the variety of forms adopted by the principle of co-operation in the history of society', compiled by Mary Hennell. It was published separately in 1844 as An Outline of Various Social Systems. Beginning with Minos in Crete, she sketched the views of a number of ancient and modern thinkers, among whom she included Saint-Simon. She gave a brief outline of Saint-Simon's life, before examining his ideas. She quoted his famous dictum, "the golden age is not behind but before us; it consists in the perfection of social order". She explained his hopes in the new industrial system with reference to L'Industrie, L'Organizateur and Le Catéchisme des Industrials. She extracted the main ideas of his followers from the Exposition of Saint-Simonism in 1828-9. She referred in particular

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1. R.K. Webb, Harriet Martineau, London, 1960, p.180

to his belief in the alternation of organic and critical epochs. The first critical epoch, an attack on the established order of society, was by Greek philosophers, the second by the Reformation. She described his optimism for the future of mankind:

'Humanity is a collective being, and perfectibility the law which guides it; from the progress which it has made, may be demonstrated that which it will make.'

His hopes were seen to have rested in education, both intellectual and moral. He envisaged the 'full development of the religious sentiments':

"The religion of the future ... will be the expression of the collective mind of humanity, the synthesis of all its conceptions, the rule of all its actions."[1]

She illustrated the religious basis of his whole system:

"The idea of God is for man the conception of unity, order, and harmony, the belief that he has a destination, and the explanation of his destiny. The sciences derive their power from an idea essentially religious - that there is a consistency, order and regularity in the succession of phenomena."

She made no mention of Comte, but recognised that, in spite of the breakdown of official Saint-Simonism, his ideas were 'exerting great influence at the present day in France'.[2]

Perhaps from this very source, probably through the Brays and Hennells, certainly at some stage in the 1840's, George Eliot encountered Saint-Simon's ideas. She referred to their discussing Fourier at Rosehill in 1843. After the 1848 Revolution, she expressed her joy to John Sibree that her fears that hers 'was what St. Simon calls a purely critical epoch, not at all an organic one', were confounded. Early in 1852 she recounted to Sara Hennell her two-hour conversation with Pierre Leroux, who was founder of the Globe, and friend of Saint-Simon.[3] Her Diary records her discussing with Professor Masson in 1869 the neglect of women's debt to Saint-Simonism, even by Mill.[4]

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1. Bray, Philosophy of Necessity, 1841, II 548-64
2. Ibid., II 610.
3. GEL I 168, 253 and II 5.
4. GE Diary, 18/7/69.

Mill generally acknowledged his debt to Saint-Simon. In that very year he criticised Dr. Cazelles, who translated the Subjection of Women into French, for not recognising the contribution of the Saint-Simonians to their liberation.[1] His Autobiography recorded his learning from the Saint-Simonians the limitations of classical political economy, in which property, inheritance, and freedom of production and exchange were unquestioned. He admired their boldness, especially 'in proclaiming the perfect equality of men and women'.[2] He first encountered Saint-Simonism through Comte's friend, Gustave d'Eichthal, who was conducting a survey of working-class conditions in Britain. D'Eichthal left Mill copies of Saint-Simon's Opinions Littéraires and Comte's 1822 "Prospectus". Mill admired the latter much more than the 'shallowness' and 'crudities' of the former. But d'Eichthal had become an ardent disciple of Saint-Simon and immediately attempted to persuade Mill to join the cause. Mill confessed his admiration of Saint-Simon's eclecticism, his division of epochs into critical and organic, and his analysis of the necessity of a pouvoir spirituel'. But he differed on many practical points of reconstruction.[3]

In February 1830, Mill repeated that he sympathised with the Saint-Simonian spirit, but still retained his objections to their 'organisation'. He attempted to discourage the other's missionary zeal.[4] But on the outbreak of the July Revolution he hurried to Paris, where he met both Enfantin and Bazard, the leaders of Saint-Simonism. He returned to England much more enthusiastic in their cause and wrote seven articles on "The Spirit of the Age", published in the Examiner from January to May, 1831, propagating their concept of history and their attack on

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1. The Letters of John Stuart Mill, ed. H.S.R. Elliot, London, 1910, 2 vols., II 204.
2. J.S. Mill, Autobiography, London, 1873, p. 167.
3. "Letters of John Stuart Mill to Gustave d'Eichthal", Cosmopolis VI (1897), 20-38.
4. Ibid., pp. 348-55.

contemporary intellectual anarchy.[1] He wrote to d'Eichthal, 'although I am not a St. Simonist, nor at all likely to become one, je tiens bureau de St. Simonisme chez moi'. They were 'decidedly à la tête de la civilisation', and he envisaged their form of social organisation as 'likely to be the final and permanent condition of the human race'. But England was as yet unprepared for them.[2]

Nevertheless, the Saint-Simonians came on their first "Mission" to Britain in 1832 and received much help from Mill. He suggested persons to whom to send the Globe, and even assisted in the drafting of An Address to the British Public, by the Saint Simonian Missionaries.[3] This attempted to attract all those 'desirous of ameliorating the present state of society, by means of religion, politics, or philosophy'. It flatteringly acknowledged 'the superiority of France and England over all the other nations of the world'. It gave an outline of Saint-Simon's career, presenting him as providing the answer to the industrial, intellectual and moral anarchy of the times, as Jesus had resolved the anarchy of the ancient world. It presented the Saint-Simonian ideal: 'each shall be classed according to his vocation, and be recompensed according to his works'. It described the popularity and also the prosecution of the Saint-Simonians in France.[4]

The general reception of the Saint-Simonian missionaries was epitomised by the suggestion in the Times that they should be ducked in a horse-pond.[5] But Mill remained sympathetic. He wrote in the Examiner, the Globe and the Monthly Repository that he did not anticipate much success for their movement, but regarded their ideas as important. He condemned the French government for their sentences and the Times

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1. J.S. Mill, The Spirit of the Age, Chicago, 1942.
2. Cosmopolis VI (1897) 356-7.
3. Richard Pankhurst. op. cit., pp.37-8 and 76-7.
4. An Address to the British Public by the Saint Simonian Missionaries, London, 1832, pp.1-14.
5. Pankhurst, op. cit., pp.37-54.

for its hostility. He wrote to Carlyle that Enfantin had appeared 'ludicrous' in his trial, smacking of "quackery and charlatanerie'.[1] But 'Saint-Simon really for a Frenchman was a great man'. His followers 'have done much good and are still doing some'. He deplored, however, their degeneration into Barrault's search for the Femme Libre in an eastern harem: 'This seems greater madness than I had imputed to them'.[2]

The second Saint-Simonian mission to Britain, in 1834, led by Fontana and Prati, received less sympathy from Mill, except in their championship of divorce. The Saint-Simonians abandoned British intellectuals for the working-class press. They were remembered with affection, for instance by Hennell and Mazzini in the 1840's. But their influence was eventually 'restricted to that of sowing ideas which other movements would reap'.[3] Positivism was one of these movements. Mill himself turned to Comte, in whom he found greater intellectual coherence.

Carlyle inadvertently attracted the attention of the Saint-Simonians by his anonymous essay in the Edinburgh Review of June 1829, in which he depicted certain "Signs of the Times" as illustrating the disintegration of society. Gustave d'Eichthal immediately sent him a large parcel of Saint-Simonian publications. Replying over a year later, Carlyle found 'little or nothing to dissent from' as far as the spirit of their teaching was concerned. He mentioned them to Goethe as 'instituting a new Religion in the world'. Goethe warned him to keep aloof from them. Carlyle accepted his advice, but found them 'earnest, zealous, and nowise ignorant men', who had discovered 'this momentous and now almost forgotten truth, Man is still Man'. They were 'a true and remarkable Sign of the Times'.[4] He used almost the

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1. Pankhurst, op. cit., pp.72-6.
2. Ibid., p.96; Elliot op. cit., I 44.
3. Pankhurst, op. cit., pp.108 and 132-46.
4. Ibid., pp.29-32; C.E. Norton,ed., Correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle, London and New York, 1887, pp.214-5, 226 and 258-9.

same words in Sartor Resartus, where he discussed the way in which religion was 'weaving for herself new Vestures'.[1]

Writing to Mill in 1832, Carlyle criticised Southey's conventional attack on the Saint-Simonians. He sympathised with them in their trials and expressed to Mill his admiration of their movement, although it was 'sure to die with the existing "Father of Humanity"'.[2] It is difficult to assess to what extent Carlyle was influenced by the Saint-Simonians, and to what extent he merely shared some of their views.[3] But Sartor Resartus (1836), The French Revolution (1837), an Essay on Sir Walter Scott (1838), On Heroes and Hero-Worship (1841), and Past and Present (1843) all concerned themselves with the central aim both of Saint-Simonism and Positivism: the reconstruction of religious belief to hold together a disintegrating society.

Teufelsdrockh has to learn to avoid the extremes of dogmatism, the clinging to old forms, and sansculottism, the abandonment of forms altogether. This is at the heart of the 'clothes-philosophy'. He goes through the critical stage, the "Everlasting No" to emerge with the "Everlasting Yea" of belief and unity. One of the most important aspects of this positive stage is the recognition of great men in history. The meaning of the French Revolution, once unravelled, amounts to a similar belief in the need for belief. Carlyle never ceased to express his scorn for 'an age at once destitute of faith and terrified at scepticism'. Such an age found the highest role of literature 'that of harmlessly amusing indolent languid men'. Sir Walter Scott's one virtue was that his historical novels taught that 'the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men'.[4]

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1. Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, London, (1836) 1934, p.178.
2. Pankhurst, op. cit.,pp.60 and 95.
3. Hill Shine, Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians, Baltimore, 1941
   K.J. Fielding, "Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians (1830-32): New Considerations", in John Clubbe, ed., Carlyle and his Contemporaries, Durham, North Carolina, 1976, pp.34-59.
4. Thomas Carlyle, Essay on Sir Walter Scott, London and Toronto, (1838) 1925, pp.63, 95 and 101.

This Carlyle also attempted to achieve in his portrait of heroes of all kinds and in his linking of the Past and Present.

Carlyle's veneration of great men and his insistence on continuity can be compared with the teaching of Saint-Simon and Comte. So can his contempt for constitutional remedies, the Morrison's pills which would make everybody better. But his general view of history was vastly different. Carlyle worshipped heroes at the expense of ordinary men and of the scientific laws of history on which Comte and the Saint-Simonians placed such importance. Another difference was his transcendentalism. His pages are sprinkled with Germanic capitalised essences and representations of the Infinite in which no self-respecting Positivist could believe. But Congreve, for instance, regarded him highly. Comte wrote in 1852 that Congreve had represented Carlyle as 'le seul penseur véritable que possède aujourd'hui l'Angleterre et fort rapproché du vrai positivisme tant social qu' intellectuel'. Comte proposed to send him copies of the Système and the Catechism.[1] Carlyle's response to Comte was less enthusiastic. He is reported to have told Lewes, "I looked into Comte once, found him to be one of those men who go up in a balloon, and take a lighted candle to look at the stars."[2]

George Eliot certainly admired Carlyle. After reading Chartism in October, 1840, and Sartor Resartus the following year, she called Carlyle 'a grand favourite of mine'. She particularly admired his hero-worship, writing of his preface to the first English edition of Emerson's essays, 'This is a world worth abiding in while one man can thus venerate and love another'.[3] In 1848 she praised his lack of 'cold reservations and incredulities'.[4] Her review of his Life of

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1. AC, CI I 96.
2. Hirst, op. cit., I 41.
3. GEL I 71, 122 and 274.
4. Ibid., I 253.

Sterling in 1852, described it as 'a touching monument of the capability human nature possesses of the highest love, the love of the good and the beautiful in character, which is, after all, the essence of piety'. In 1855 she argued that his 'concrete presentation" of characters made him more of an artist than a philosopher.[1] But her "Recollections of Berlin 1854-5" understood Varnhagen's repulsion at Carlyle's 'rough, paradoxical talk' and 'the despotic doctrines which it has been his humour to teach of late'.[2] In 1857 the Leweses read the French Revolution and Cromwell, moving on the following year to Frederic the Great, Heroes and Hero-Worship and the Life of Sterling. After this, their enthusiasm appears to have waned. He displayed unrelenting hostility towards her, but she still signed the commemorative address on his eightieth birthday.[3]

It would be mistaken to look for detailed correspondence between Carlyle and George Eliot. His influence, like that of Feuerbach, was more emotional than intellectual. There are Carlylean elements in Adam Bede, Felix Holt and Caleb Garth: all hard-working, blunt-mannered, but reverent working men. Her presentation of Savonarola is reminiscent of his portrait of "The Hero as Priest". But these are small details of a more pervasive spirit which helped to add emotional weight to the detailed system offered by Comte.

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1. Essays, pp.51 and 215.
2. GE Journal, "Recollections of Berlin, 1854-5", f.29.
3. Ibid., 19-23 and 8/4/57, 29/10, 16 and 24-5/11/58; G.S. Haight, "The Carlyles and the Leweses", John Clubbe ed., op. cit., pp.181-203.

CHAPTER II

The Development of George Eliot's Positivism

I Essays of the 1850's

This chapter attempts to trace George Eliot's increasing reference to Positivism in her non-fictional writing. The first section examines her essays of the 1850's to show the development in her understanding and use of Comtean ideas. Her contributions to the Leader were rather more explicitly Comtean than those in the Westminster Review, but even there she betrayed the source of some of her ideas. Later sections in the chapter will examine the direct commentary on Comte in her letters, notebooks and journals, her use of his ideas in her letters and finally the part he played in the development of her aesthetic theories. This will clear the ground for the subsequent treatment of Positivism in her novels.

George Eliot's first recorded reference to Comte came in her review of Mackay's Progress of the Intellect in the Westminster Review of January 1851. It reveals an only partial knowledge of his philosophy. She argues against those who 'hold with Auguste Comte' not only that the principles of positive science have replaced metaphysical and theological speculation but that we should not devote our energies to the retrospective study of history. As if Comte himself had not emphasised the importance of continuity, she suggests that a critical examination of the past would complement the discoveries of positive truth, by showing how 'each age and each race necessarily has had a faith and a symbolism suited to its need and its stage of development'. She displays no recognition either of Comte or Lessing behind the belief that 'every past phase of human development is part of that education of the race in which we are sharing'. She seems still to support 'the mythical theory' and 'a more enlarged idea of providential

evolution', such as she had found in Strauss. She reveals a ripeness for the Religion of Humanity in her praise of Mackay's

> 'recognition of the presence of undeviating law in the material and moral world - of that invariability of sequence which is acknowledged to be the basis of physical science, but which is still perversely ignored in our social organisation, our ethics and our religion'.

But her hope for 'a development of the Christian system corresponding to the wants and the culture of the age', and based on a positive knowledge of the external world and of man's moral nature, has no specifically Comtean features.[1]

A similar sympathy for vaguely Christian theism emerges in her review of W.R. Greg's Creed of Christendom for the Leader in September of that year. She welcomes 'the vigorous and rapid growth of free religious inquiry' among English Protestants. Dogmatic theology, she argues, can have no hold on the masses. The 'great aim of education' must be the study of God's laws. She ends by noticing the change in attitude reflected in the 'respectful reception' of Greg's work as opposed to the hostile neglect of Hennell's similar Inquiry twelve years before.[2] There is nothing particularly Positivist in this, as there is nothing Comtean in her discussion of 'the spiritual development of humanity' in her review of Carlyle's Life of Sterling in the Westminster the following January.[3]

When George Eliot took over from Lewes the "Literature" section of the Leader in April 1854, however, she continued his defence of Comte. Her first contribution referred to the previous week's notice on the 'long and able article on Comte' in the British Quarterly Review, in which Lewes had welcomed the hostile but honest discussion of Comte's ideas which could only help to draw attention to them. The following week she ridiculed the description of Comte in that article

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1. Essays, pp.28-42.
2. Leader II (1851) 897-9.
3. Essays, p.47.

as 'the most unblushing unbeliever'. She pointed to the absurdity of criticising a man for attacking a theory he sees as mistaken: "To say that an unbeliever is "unblushing" is ... to pronounce a eulogy on his moral strength.'[1]

In May, George Eliot noticed another review of Comte, this time in the North British Review, 'written in a calm and courteous, though thoroughly antagonistic spirit'. Perhaps wary of committing herself too far, she contented herself with defending Comte against the charge of plagiarism.[2] The following July, in an essay on Professor Gruppe and "The Future of German Philosophy" in the Leader, she welcomed 'the fact that a German professor of philosophy renounces the attempt to climb to heaven by the rainbow bridge of "the high priori road" and is content humbly to use his muscles in treading the uphill à posteriori path'.[3] This was the essence of the Positive method.

"The Natural History of German Life", in the Westminster in July 1856, contains an appreciation of Riehl's ideas which reveals a more definite allegiance to Positivism than her previous work for that paper. George Eliot added a note to the effect that, 'Throughout this article, in our statement of Riehl's opinions, we must be understood not as quoting Riehl, but as interpreting and illustrating him.' In fact, there was progressively more Comte and less Riehl. She praised his appreciation that the "systematic co-operation' necessary for revolution required 'general conceptions and a provisional subordination of egoism' not yet achieved. She admired his 'social-political conservatism' which saw European Society as 'incarnate history'. But she gave this belief a positive, physiological foundation. Like Comte, she illustrated the 'gradual operation of necessary laws' of development by the

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1. Leader V (1854) 354 and 377.
2. Ibid., p.447.
3. Essays, p.153

example of the growth of language, which was organic, not mechanical. She insisted, like him, that the 'nature of European men has its roots intertwined with the past', and acknowledged that this 'vital connexion with the past is much more vividly felt on the Continent than in England'.

George Eliot then went on to give an unmistakable paraphrase of Comte's Classification of the Sciences:

'It has not been sufficiently insisted on, that in the various branches of Social Science there is an advance from the general to the special, from the simple to the complex, analogous with that which is found in the series of the sciences, from Mathematics to Biology. To the laws of quantity comprised in Mathematics and Physics are superadded, in Chemistry, laws of quality; to these again are added, in Biology, laws of life ... And in this series or ramification of the sciences, the more general science will not suffice to solve the problems of the more special. Chemistry embraces phenomena which are not explicable by Physics; Biology embraces phenomena which are not explicable by Chemistry; and no biological generalization will enable us to predict the infinite specialities produced by the complexity of vital conditions. So Social Science, while it has departments which in their fundamental generality correspond to mathematics and physics, namely, those grand and simple generalizations which trace out the inevitable march of the human race as a whole ... has also ... what may be called its Biology, carrying us on to innumerable special phenomena which outlie the sphere of science, and belong to Natural History.' [1]

George Eliot achieves the rare distinction of being even more complex and long-winded than Comte.

In her attacks on Dr. Cumming and the poet Young in the Westminster, George Eliot, as we have seen, drew on Feuerbach. But Comte also contributed to her rejection of Christianity in these essays. In the first she repeated his emphasis on morality as the increase of our faculties of humanity as opposed to those of animality:

'Amiable impulses without intellect, man may have in common with dogs and horses; but morality, which is specifically human, is dependent on the regulation of feeling by intellect.'

His analysis of the egoism involved in theological belief is reflected in her comment that Dr. Cumming's works were 'more likely to nourish

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1. Ibid., pp.283-90.

egoistic complacency and pretension ... instead of a reverent contemplation of great facts, and a wise application of great principles'. Cumming's God, she added, did nothing to help the social sentiments, such as benevolence, 'those impulses that tend to give humanity a common life in which the good of one is the good of all'.[1] At the risk of oversimplifying, one could say that Feuerbach supplied the venom in this essay, and Comte the reconstruction.

The same is true of her attack on Young in January 1857. His "Night Thoughts" are characterised as the reflex of 'a mind in which the higher human sympathies were inactive'. He exemplifies 'the mistake which substitutes interested obedience for sympathetic emotion, and baptises egoism as a religion'. For moral action based on immortal hopes is 'still in the stage of egoism, and has not yet attained the higher development of sympathy'. The contrasted terms, egoism and sympathy, were Comte's. Both he and Feuerbach had portrayed theological belief as 'egoism turned heavenward', and morality as the cultivation of 'direct sympathetic feeling and action and not as the recognition of a rule'. But there is something more characteristic of Comte, with his emphasis on continuity and scientific knowledge, in her contrast of Young with Cowper:

> 'In Young we have the type of that deficient human sympathy, that impiety towards the present and the visible, which flies for its motives, its sanctities, and its religion, to the remote, the vague and the unknown: in Cowper we have the type of that genuine love which cherishes things in proportion to their nearness, and feels its reverence grow in proportion to the intimacy of its knowledge.'[2]

George Eliot's later writing, in the Fortnightly Review, Blackwood's Magazine and Theophrastus Such provides further examples of Comte's influence. But these will be treated thematically with the novels, as will her discussion of the "Woman Question". Here I have been

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1. Ibid., pp.166, 182 and 188.
2. Ibid., pp.358, 374, 378-9 and 385.

concerned merely to show the progress of her Positivism, from the vague references of her early contributions to the Westminster Review to her specific exposition of Comte's ideas in her later essays. She only once used his name in the Westminster, and that when she was unfamiliar with his ideas. Already she seems to have been eager to avoid the stigma of public recognition as a Comtist.

II Commentary on Comte

George Eliot rarely made direct comments on Comte. In the contemporary controversies which raged over Positivism, as we saw in Part Two, she tended to sympathise with his followers and to condemn the unthinking attacks to which they were often subject. To Sara Hennell, she called Comte 'a great thinker', while accepting that Positivism was 'one-sided'. She told Mrs. Congreve that she was 'greatly moved by the "Discours Préliminaire".' She was particularly warm in her admiration for the first chapter of the final volume of the Système, "The Theory of the Great Being", which she classed 'among the finest of all, and the most finely written'. She continued,

> 'My gratitude increases continually for the illumination Comte has contributed to my life. But we both of us study with a sense of having still much to learn and to understand.'[1]

How closely she studied Comte was made apparent in the final chapter of Part One. She corrected the misapprehension of her friends about Comte. To Mrs. Taylor she explained that he was no atheist, going on to express her fundamental agreement with his position:

> 'Apropos of what you say about Mr. Congreve, I think you have mistaken his, or rather Comte's, position. There is no denial of an unknown cause, but only a denial that such a conception is the proper basis of a practical religion. It seems to me pre-eminently desirable that we should learn not to make our own personal comfort a standard of truth.'[2]

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1. GEL III 439; IV 111 and 333.
2. Ibid., IV 367.

Philip Hamerton told his wife how Mrs. Lewes vehemently defended the practice of 'prière selon Comte':

'Elle soutient que c'est raisonnable dans le sens d'expression de vif desir, de concentration de l'esprit vers son but.'[1]

We have already seen how she and Lewes attempted to correct Sara Hennell's false view of Positivism.[2]

All these comments and arguments stem from the 1860's in which George Eliot's intellectual development was bound up with her study of Comte. Her only extended commentary on Comte which survives is from the 1870's, in the notebook from which Charles Lewes extracted her "Leaves from a Notebook". Lewes left out these particular 'leaves', continuing George Eliot's public reticence on the subject. George Eliot began with a discussion of ethics, which she found unhelpful to consider 'apart from social and psychological evolution'. For ethics rested on the existence of benevolent instincts or 'sympathetic impulses'. These supplied 'the emotions which bind us into one family'. There was no point in mere antagonism to Christianity whose 'habits of feeling and conduct' were 'wedded to outmoded beliefs and observances' which had themselves been 'efforts after a more complete social condition'. What was needed was the 'gradual spread of advanced knowledge'. Meanwhile, clergymen were useful so long as they represented the belief in goodness and its eventual triumph. Christian services also performed a useful function:

'by the meeting of all ranks together in the church there is maintained a collective consciousness that the obligations of the divine law extend to all members of the community and make a supreme bond'.

But it could not be right to 'sanction by our presence ... what our highest conscience pronounces to be false as statement, and debasing as sentiment'.

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1. Philip Hamerton, An Autobiography, London, 1897, p. 324.
2. See Part II, ch.III (vii).

In relation to this problem, George Eliot went on, under the title "Historic Guidance", to discuss 'Continuity (in human history) and Solidarity (in the members of the race)' as facts which could become motives 'to determine beneficiently the existence of our posterity'. Continuity she regarded as less powerful a motive than solidarity for the egoist, who was more immediately affected by what happened to his neighbours. But it was developed by family love:

> 'The widening of sensibility through the love of children, even the care for a son in its lowest form of transferred egoism is a stage on the way to a care for posterity in general.'

So far, George Eliot was in complete agreement with Comte. But now she began to differ. She used his terms to describe the crucial distinction

> 'between the Static and Dynamic - between what is an inherent quality or characteristic or need of the human being ... and what is modifiable or doomed to disappear under successive changes'.

Comte, she argued, failed to observe this distinction in his uncritical acceptance of the organisation of the medieval Catholic Church as a model for the philosophic priesthood of the future, with its potentially tyrannical control over doctrine. She accepted that the clergy were likely to survive for some time as moral guides and teachers, but hoped for the development of 'a sort of universal congregationalism'. She predicted a split between liberal and conservative clergy, those who would verge towards 'the fuller type of knowledge' (such as Kenn and Farebrother) and those who would 'exaggerate the aspects of ecclesiastical and theological schools'. To this prospect, 'which we are obliged to watch rather than control', she resigned herself with Positive fatalism:

> 'Comte himself has finally recommended us to extend our resignation to social as well as natural evils where they are unmodifiable.'[1]

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1. "More Leaves from GE's Notebook", pp.364-76.

This is the clearest direct exposition of her view of Comte's religious construction that George Eliot left. As she said in the last year of her life, she could not submit her intellect to Comte's control.[1] She permitted herself the liberty of intelligent criticism of his system. But this was conducted on his own terms, using his own principles to solve the problems of religious faith which he had attempted to solve.

III Letters

Comtean ideas recur throughout George Eliot's letters. After recognising some of the difficulties and dangers involved in the positive identification of the source of these ideas, I will attempt to show that Comte's teaching on resignation and activity and on subjective immortality were of great importance to George Eliot. Also, her opposition of egoism and altruism in explanation of moral development, her discussion of the 'Woman Question", in which she stressed the need for proper education and the sanctity of marriage, and her recommendation and practice of positive worship, all derived from him. The emphasis on continuity in her letters and their discussion of politics and of openness can also be related to Positivism.

Verbal similarity alone is insufficient evidence of influence. As early as 1849, for example, George Eliot wrote of 'verités positives'.[2] But it would be inadmissable to assume on such slender evidence that she was referring to Comte. In the same year, she praised his favourite work, the Imitation. But the terms in which she spoke of 'its foundations in the depth of the divine-human soul' were foreign to his

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1. See Appendix.
2. GEL, I 316.

anti-theistic standpoint.[1] In 1874, her praise of the same work was more Comtean. She wrote of her 'attempt to interpret the unchangeable and universal meanings of that great book'.[2] But the influence is still by no means certain. It attempting to attribute to Comte the following ideas expressed in her letters, it will be important to seek definite evidence, if not actual acknowledgement on her part, a breadth of context which can deepen the significance of isolated references, and as much circumstantial detail as is available.

As early as 1842, George Eliot wrote about resignation. She tried to strengthen its spirit in her father in 1849.[3] In 1851, when she had definitely read Comte, there is more likelihood that she was referring to him, especially when she coupled resignation with action: 'there are but two words of very vital significance for you and me and all mortals - Resignation and labour'.[4] The source is unquestionable in her two quotations of 1853: '"Notre vraie destinée", says Comte, "se compose de resignation et d'activité".'[5] In the sixties and seventies she referred frequently to this teaching of Comte's. Richard Congreve's suffering made her feel that human endeavour would long 'be taken up with resignation rather than action'. Letters to Mrs. Taylor, and Clifford Allbutt preached the need for 'absolute resignation':

'Never to beat and bruise one's wings against the inevitable but to throw the whole force of one's soul towards the achievement of some possible better'.[6]

George Eliot recognised that her frequent reiteration of Comte could be tiresome, and tried to avoid being so priggish as to alter all our old proverbs into agreement with new formulas'. She adopted

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1. Ibid., I 278.
2. Ibid., VI 89.
3. Ibid., I 136 and 283.
4. Ibid., I 359.
5. Ibid., II 127 and 134.
6. Ibid., IV 115, 128, 316 and 499.

different terms for Madame Bodichon, to whom she wrote of 'a doing-without more or less patiently'. But she combined her recommendation of 'patience and resignation' to the bereaved Mrs. William Smith with a reference to her husband's subjective immortality: 'every day will be sacred with his memory - nay, with his presence'. She also explained the Comtean principle of living for others: "With that renunciation for ourselves which life inevitably brings, we get more freedom of soul to enter into the life of others". She argued that the other's continuing life of benevolence was an example of this. It

'must seem to you like a closer companionship with the gentleness and benignity which you justly worshipped while it was visibly present, and still more perhaps now it is veiled, and is a memory stronger than vision of outward things'.1

Mrs. Smith was not unaware of the nature and source of the Leweses' sympathy, nor of their admiration of her husband's poem on "Christian Resignation". She wrote to Noah Porter, President of Yale,

'To them ... the charm probably lay in the renunciation of a future bliss, the acceptance of love and sorrow here. You know they are Positivists'.

She added that she retained her belief in objective immortality: 'I could not let Mrs. Lewes suppose for a moment I thought as she did.'[2]

George Eliot wrote about her own resignation 'to all my unchangeable imperfections' and to the death of Lewes's son, Herbert. She continued to recommend it to Sara Hennell and Elizabeth Phelps.[3] Her journal entry for the last day of 1877 recognised that she must expect life to become less fruitful in old age:

'The difficulty is,to decide how far resolution should set in the direction of activity rather than in the acceptance of a more negative state.'4

The following year, she repeated to Charles Ritter this teaching which she had taken from Comte:

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1. Ibid., V 102, 104, 323 and 406; VI 65.
2. Ibid., VI 65.
3. Ibid., VI 3, 165, 311 and 418.
4. Ibid., VI 439-40.

'The great division of our lot is that between what is immodifiable and is the object of resignation and that which is modifiable by hopeful activity.'[1]

George Eliot frequently had to struggle against severe depression, to which it is arguable that Comte's ideas may have added. Her journal recorded her 'mental depression' in 1860, when she urged herself to 'more bravery, resignation and simplicity of striving'.[2] Balfour was to argue before the Church Congress of 1888,

'the "positive" view of the world must needs end in a chilling scepticism concerning the final worth of human effort, which can hardly fail to freeze and paralyse the warmest enthusiasm and the most zealous energy'.[3]

This seems to have been its effect on George Eliot in the 1860's. Her Journal entry of July 17th, 1864, anticipates Balfour's very words: 'Horrible scepticism about all things - paralyzing my mind'. She described Congreve's third lecture on May 19th, 1867 as 'chilling'. And she wrote to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe in 1869 of 'the paralyzing despondency in which many days of my writing life have been past'. The letter described the development of a religion of sympathy and responsibility as opposed to one of personal consolation or pantheism.[4] Her temperament from the start may have been depressive, but her acceptance of Positivism did little to cheer her up.

George Eliot frequently preached to others Comte's doctrine of subjective immortality. She wrote to Mrs. Taylor that the late Mrs. Hare was now 'quite out of reach except for memory, which makes all dear human beings undying to us as long as we ourselves live'. She sympathised with Queen Victoria's devotion to her late husband.[5] To Mrs. Congreve her terminology was explicitly Positivist: 'it is good that we shall soon pass from this objective existence'. Her

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1. Ibid., VII 56.
2. GE Journal, 28/11/60; GEL III 360.
3. A.J. Balfour, The Religion of Humanity, London, 1888, p.23.
4. GEL IV 158 fn.5 and 363 fn.8; V 29-31.
5. Ibid., IV 135 and 417.

journal entry on New Year's Day, 1873, made the same distinction, with additional Positivist terminology:

'Hardly anything could have happened to me which I could regard as a greater blessing, than the growth of my spiritual existence when my bodily existence is decaying. The merely egoistic satisfactions of fame are easily modified by toothaches ... That he /Lewes/ rejoices in them is my most distinct personal pleasure in such tributes.'[1]

She told Mrs. Lytton that relationship with the dead provided 'a very tranquil and sweet tie, safe from change and injury'.[2]

Blackwood disapproved of the Positive influence on her after Lewes's death. He reported that she was 'evidently getting all right and will I hope soon shake off the pretended sympathisers who encourage morbid notions about poor Lewes' memory'.[3] She does seem to have cultivated his memory in Comtean fashion, in order to overcome the shock of his death. She wrote to Mrs. Stowe in April 1879,

'the past is not dead, and in all I do it is a living influence. But I am still rebellious - not yet resigned to the cutting short of a full life'.

Her diary records, 'His presence came again', on May 28th.[4] But she appears to have realised that such devotion was unhealthy. To the outrage of the Positivists, she married John Cross, joyfully announcing to his sister, 'The springs of affection are reopened in me'. To Charles Lewes she wrote, 'marriage has seemed to restore me to my old self'. Henry James, who visited the Crosses after the marriage, wrote to his mother after George Eliot's death, that she 'had begun a new (personal) life: a more healthy, objective one than she had ever known before'.[5]

There are over thirty references to egoism in George Eliot's letters. Again, the mere use of the word, frequent even in the 1840's, does not imply Positivism. The earliest reference which might suggest

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1. Ibid., IV 429 and V 357.
2. Ibid., V 171.
3. Ibid., VII 121.
4. Ibid., VII 132 and 152.
5. Leon Edel, Henry James: The Conquest of London,1870-1883, London, 1962, pp.370-1

her reading of Comte was in February 1848, when she wrote to John Sibree about egoism, sympathy and "a power of self-amelioration'. The next month she wrote to him about Saint-Simonism, critical and organic epochs, and chivalrous feelings. In May she even suggested he 'study mental hygiene'.[1] It is possible, then, that she read some Comte as early as this. Her discussion with Sara Hennell of the simultaneous increase of sympathy and decrease of egoism, in April 1849, could stem from either Bray or Comte. In January 1851, when she first quoted Comte, she again contrasted 'egotistic thought and feelings' with 'old sympathies'.[2] The same arguments apply to her frequent use of 'reverence' and 'love', two qualities of great importance for phrenologists as well as for Positivists. George Eliot's first reference to 'veneration' were in two letters to Charles Bray in October 1851.[3] She confessed to Sara Hennell in June 1857 her 'love of approbation', another faculty common to Bray and Comte. As she wrote to Sara Hennell in February 1861, she loved 'every form of piety - which is venerating love'.[4] Positivism was merely one system which attempted to incorporate Reverence and Love. Forms of the word 'reverence' certainly recur throughout her letters from 1859 through the 1860's.[5] But again, the mere use of the word is insufficient to substantiate the source.

More significant are the passages in her letters in which George Eliot explains these terms within a whole framework of morality which derived from Positivism. We have already examined her letter to Charles Bray of 1857 in which she stated her basic agreement with him, but in Positivist terms. She wrote to D'Albert-Durade in 1861 of 'the complex mystery of our organisation' and her attempts 'to summon to

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1. GEL I 251, 254 and 261.
2. Ibid., I 280 and 344.
3. Ibid., I 365-6.
4. Ibid., II 342 and III 376.
5. Ibid., III 164, 166, 185, 366; IV 129, 134, 145, 201, 202, 395, 469; V 31.

my aid all the deepest motives' for good. She explained to him, the following year,

'I think the affections, instead of being dulled by age, have acquired a stronger activity - or at least their activity seems stronger for being less perturbed by the egoism of young cravings.'[1]

Earlier that year she had written to Madame Bodichon of 'the need for the education of mankind through the affections and sentiments as a basis for true development'.[2] She also explained to Morley her belief in 'moral evolution' and to Oscar Browning her pleasure in her own progress along Comte's moral scale. She described

'the growth of a maternal feeling towards both men and women who are much younger than myself. In this way the roots of affection may continue to spread as long as one's mind last. An affection springing from the perpetuity of relations is the main strength and the main regulation of life'.[3]

It is the regulation of affection which is characteristic of Comtism.

The Progress of Humanity, George Eliot learnt from Comte, depended upon the development of feeling. She explained to Mrs. Ponsonby that the 'progress of the world ... can certainly never come at all save by the modified action of the individual beings who compose the world.'[4] One example of the strengthening of a particular feeling by an otherwise regrettable means was provided by the effect of war. Comte thought that war was a product of the theological state, a useful discipline in its time, but replaced in the positive state by the industrial spirit. George Eliot wrote to Blackwood that she hated war but loved 'its discipline, which has been an incalculable contribution to the sentiment of duty'. She expressed a similar idea to Mrs. Burne-Jones, that 'the devotion of the common soldier to his leader' was 'full of promise for other and better generations'.[5]

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1. Ibid., III 448 and IV 68.
2. Ibid., IV 13.
3. Ibid., IV 364 and V 5.
4. Ibid., VI 99.
5. Ibid., VI 123 and VII 17; cp. Raymond Aron, War and Industrial Society, trans. Mary Bottomore, London, 1958.

The stress which Comte had placed on woman's role in the education of the feelings and her consequent need for a proper education was reflected in George Eliot's treatment of the subject. In 1853 she seemed unconcerned that the '"Enfranchisement of women" only makes creeping progress', arguing that 'woman does not yet deserve a much better lot than man gives her'. Four years later she told Charles Bray that she refused to get entangled on the "Woman Question", but admired those of her friends, such as Madame Bodichon and Bessie Parkes, who did. In 1858 she deplored the stupidity of the Bavarian women who left all philosophical discussion to the men. She hoped for a 'gradual modification' through the influence of the North Germans.[1] Her later attitude was more fully expressed. In a letter to Morley in 1867, she conceded, 'as a fact of mere zoological evolution', that woman had 'the worse share in existence'. But Comtean resignation could make a virtue of that necessity:

'in that thorough recognition of that worst share, I think there is a basis for a sublimer recognition /diplography for resignation?/ in women and a more regenerating tenderness in man'.

She still hoped for as much equality as could 'be secured by the effort of growing moral force to lighten the pressure of non-moral outward conditions'.[2]

The special function of women was the amelioration of man's nature. George Eliot upbraided Sara Hennell in 1867 for canvassing for the 'doubtful good' of Women's Suffrage. To Emily Davies the following year she explained that her position, like Comte's, rested on physiological and sociological considerations:

> '1. The physical and physiological differences between women and men ...
> 2. The spiritual wealth acquired for mankind by the difference of function founded on the other, primary difference; and the preparation that lives in a woman's peculiar constitution for a special moral influence.'

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1. GEL II 86, 396 and 454.
2. Ibid., IV 364-5.

Mankind could not afford to lose 'that exquisite type of gentleness, tenderness, possible maternity suffusing a woman's being with affectionateness'. But women should receive a full education; they needed to have 'opened to them the same store of acquired truth or beliefs as men have'.[1] The importance of a complete education was further elaborated in a letter of 1869 to Mrs. Senior, which explained why she supported the foundation of Girton College while remaining doubtful on other aspects of the "Woman Question". She adduced the same reasons as Comte:

> 'Women ought to have the same fund of truth placed within their reach as men have: that their lives (i.e. the lives of men and women) ought to be passed together under the hallowing influence of a common faith as to their duty and its basis.'

Like the Priest in the Catechism, she told Mrs. Lytton that 'women are always in danger of living too exclusively in the affections and should therefore cultivate wider interests.'[2]

George Eliot agreed with Comte that the main influence of women was within the family. She always accepted the sanctity of the ties of marriage and family. She explained to Mrs. Bray that her elopement with Lewes was not a vindication of relaxation in this respect:

> 'Light and easily broken ties are what I neither desire theoretically nor could live for practically. Women who are satisfied with such ties do not act as I have done - they obtain what they desire and are still invited to dinner.'

Their union, though not legal, was 'regarded by us as a sacred bond'. She found no difficulty fourteen years later in deploring the publicity given to Byron's life, 'the heavy social injury of familiarising young minds with the desecration of family ties'.[3]

George Eliot's frequent reference to 'guardian angels' suggests Comte's influence.[4] But again, she first used this phrase in 1842,

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1. Ibid., IV 390 and 467-8.
2. Ibid., V 58 and 107.
3. Ibid., II 214 and 349; V 56.
4. Ibid., I 131, 160, 332; IV 362, 363, 388, 399; VII 174, 316 and 323.

well before any established reading of Comte. Of greater significance are the indications that she regarded Positivist worship as a beneficial practice both for herself and for her friends. A letter to D'Albert-Durade of 1863 bears a definite resemblance to Comte's description of prayer:

> 'I hardly need any help in bringing you and Maman before me, and hearing the tome of the two voices. I have the happiness of being able to recall beloved faces and accents with great clearness, and in this way my friends are continually with me.'

The same year she explained how the 'contemplation of whatever is great is itself religion and lifts us out of our egoism'. She wrote to Mrs. Cash of the moral influence of her mother on her life, adding, 'Every good woman I have known is an influence that seems to gather strength as my life advances.'[1] In her 1865 Diary she wrote of Lewes, 'How I worship his good humour ... That worship is my best life'.[2] She permitted others besides Lewes to worship her. Edith Simcox used to express ardent devotion to her 'Madonna'. To Elma Stuart George Eliot wrote, 'It is good for you to worship as long as you believe that what you worship is good.'[3] She was so moved by the Sistine Madonna in Dresden in 1858 that she and Lewes used frequently to visit the gallery for 'quiet worship of the Madonna'. Venice provided more Madonnas in 1864. With Cross in 1880 she sought out 'my remembered Madonna' in Santa Maria Formosa.[4] She also referred to the worship of saints such as the Newman brothers, whose good deeds 'live in others' after their death. This provided 'a <u>partial</u> salvation, a <u>partial</u> redemption of the world', less complete than Christianity but also less illusory.[5]

As early as 1842 George Eliot wrote of rejoicing in 'all the joys

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1. <u>Ibid</u>., IV 80-1, 104 and 108.
2. GE Diary, 25/3/65; <u>GEL</u> IV 184.
3. <u>GEL</u> VI 27.
4. <u>Ibid</u>., II 471-2, 476; GE Journal, 19-20/5/64; GE Diary, 12/6/80.
5. <u>GEL</u> I 282 and IV 158.

of humanity'. Ten years later this view of mankind as a whole was combined with Comte's sense of continuity, when she wrote to Mrs. Bray of 'the glorious distinction of humanity, looking before and after'. in 1863 she praised Renan for helping to show the continuity of the sacred past and present.[1] But her appreciation of the importance of a sense of solidarity and continuity, especially in worship, owed something to Comte. She wrote to Sara Hennell in 1861 of the need for 'a temple ... a place where human beings ... meet with a common impulse'.[2] Her frequent expressions of admiration for continental cathedrals emphasised both solidarity and continuity. St. Paul's, Antwerp, at least attempted 'to make the past vividly present'. The music in the Catholic church at Nuremberg, she wrote, 'makes one feel part of one whole, which one loves all alike, losing the sense of a separate self'. She wrote to Sara Hennell of the 'feeling of brotherhood' it gave her. Mass in the Russian church in Paris in 1865 similarly moved her:

> 'The bass voice of the officiating priest alternating with the rapid chant of the choir, the sense of being in a church like those of the Byzantine christian ages ago ... all impressed me deeply'.

She returned there with Cross in 1880. The Leweses visited all kinds of churches, including a Portuguese Synagogue at Amsterdam in 1886, where they found 'real devoutness'.[3] Deronda, we shall see, shares this Comtean sense of continuity.

All these personal experiences seem to have added depth to George Eliot's understanding of Comte's teaching on continuity, and also to have been to some degree interpreted or inspired by it. She explained her attitude to Christian worship in an 1869 letter to Cross very similar to her discussion of the same problem in relation to Comte in the "Leaves from a Notebook" analysed in the previous section:

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1. Ibid., I 125; II 10 and IV 95.
2. Ibid., III 452.
3. GE Journal, July 1854, 14/4/58 and 30/8/65; GEL II 452; GE Diary, 9/5/80; GHL to Charles and Gertrude Lewes, 12/6/66, Yale MS II

'All the great religions of the world historically considered, are rightly the objects of deep reverence and sympathy - they are the record of spiritual struggles which are the types of our own."

She herself, she continued, felt this particularly with Judaism and Christianity. She would have liked to attend Christian services 'for the sake of the delightful emotions of fellowship' which they inspired. Conformity was often better than negation, but not 'a consciousness of hypocrisy'. The distinct differences between her beliefs and those of Christianity precluded her participation.[1]

The practical teaching of Positivism is sometimes reflected in George Eliot's letters. The Leweses both supported the Positivists in their attacks on imperialism. They deplored the English treatment of China. George Eliot sat for eight hours in the House of Commons to hear the debate on Abyssinia and condemned the Zulu war.[2] In 1867, when the Positivists were deeply committed to defending the Trades Unions against widespread attack, she wrote to Sara Hennell and Madame Bodichon about the 'want of public spirit' in her countrymen.[3] The Leweses refused to live abroad, which would have been greatly beneficial to their health, for patriotic reasons, which derived at least in part from Comte's analysis of the development of altruism:

'We cannot bear to exile ourselves from our own country, which holds the roots of our moral and social life. One fears to become selfish and emotionally withered by living abroad'.[4]

The question of openness is less clear. In 1849 George Eliot refused to maintain a clandestine correspondence with Mary Sibree. But when she began to publish her novels she and Lewes defended her right to keep her authorship secret. She was furious at Spencer's giving her away. Bridges wrote to express his disagreement with secrecy on the Comtean principle which the Congreves must also have

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1. GEL V 447-8.
2. Ibid., III 263, IV 404, VII 132 and 174.
3. Ibid., IV 411 and 419.
4. Ibid., VI 246.

maintained. The Leweses decided to make a virtue of necessity, and George Eliot wrote to Madame Bodichon of her 'resolution of no longer concealing the authorship'.[1] They insisted on signature in the Fortnightly Review.

In all these questions, George Eliot undoubtedly knew Comte's teaching and to some extent accepted it. She was profoundly influenced by him, but did not commit herself to the details of his position. She wrote to Madame Bodichon in 1860,

> "I have faith in the working-out of higher possibilities than the Catholic or any other church has presented, and those who have strength to wait and endure, are bound to accept no formula which their whole souls - their intellect as well as their emotions - do not embrace with entire reverence.'[2]

Her adherence to Comte's system grew during the 1860's but, even at the end of her life, she could not commit herself to his direction. What is remarkable is the way in which her letters and her novels present and develop his ideas.

IV Aesthetic Theory

George Eliot's familiarity with Comte's view of art, perhaps originating in Lewes's work and certainly evident in her correspondence with Harrison, has already been discussed. Here I will attempt to show that her essays and letters reveal an early understanding of the central aspect of his aesthetic theory, the development of moral sympathy. She soon developed from her evangelical dismissal of art, to a realisation of its importance. Mrs. Cash attributed the disturbances of her faith in part to the presentation of morality as independent of theology in the novels of Walter Scott and Maria Edgeworth.[3] Wordsworth and Ruskin contributed to her belief in the

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1. Ibid., I 306; II 494 and III 106.
2. Ibid., III 366.
3. Life I 393-6.

expression of sympathy and the accurate observation of nature, the cardinal principle of all Romantic aesthetic theory. But Comte helped to clarify her appreciation of the moral value of art.

A series of articles in the Westminster Review in 1852-3, while George Eliot was editor, discussed the "Contemporary Literature" of England, America, Germany and France, often in Positivist terms. Of composite authorship, these referred to the 'rich fields of positive science' which extended to ethics, history and sociology. They included a defence of utopian visions as leading to practical results, presenting a Comtean view of the sexes and on woman's particular contribution to the novel.[1] These articles, which George Eliot cannot fail to have read, present another possible source for Comte's indirect influence on her.

George Eliot's own essays in the years immediately preceding her emergence as a novelist frequently discussed the relation of art to morality. In 1855 she attacked the clumsy didacticism of Kingsley's Westward Ho!: 'Art is art, and tells its own story.'[2] Two articles in the Leader of that year explained the more subtle way in which art could make people better. In her appreciation of Thomas Carlyle, she wrote of the exercise and consequent strengthening of the altruistic instincts:

> 'He is the most effective educator ... who does not seek to make his pupils moral by enjoining particular courses of action, but by bringing into activity the feelings and sympathies that must issue in noble action.'

"The Morality of Wilhelm Meister" was also of this nature. She defended Goethe's choice of subject against criticism on moral grounds:

> 'the novelist may place before us every aspect of human life where there is some trait of love, or endurance, or helplessness to call forth our best sympathies'.[3]

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1. WR ns I (1852) 629-30, 625-6 and 656-8, ns II (1852) 262, 551-2 and 567-8, ns III (1853) 285; cp. Dodd, op. cit., pp.429-31.
2. Essays, p.123.
3. Ibid., pp.213 and 146.

"The Natural History of German Life", in 1856, presented a Comtean outline of the moral value of art as well as his classification of the sciences. She praised Ruskin's concept of realism, the humble and faithful study of nature. But she attacked a sentimental romanticism:

'The selfish instincts are not subdued by the sight of buttercups ... To make men moral, something more is requisite than to turn them out to grass.'

She criticised Dickens' portraits of 'preternaturally virtuous poor children and artisans', which encouraged 'the miserable fallacy that high morality and refined sentiments can grow out of harsh social relations, ignorance and want'. The view of the artist that she presented was identical with that of Comte:

'The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies. Appeals founded on generalizations and statistics require a sympathy ready-made, a moral sentiment already in activity; but a picture of human life such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment.'[1]

George Eliot's savage treatment of "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists", also in 1856, argued the same point. The

'really cultured woman ... does not write books to confound philosophers, perhaps because she is able to write books that delight them ... She does not give you information, which is the raw material of culture, - she gives you sympathy, which is its subtlest essence.'

Her criticism of Young's poetry, the following year, maintained that this sympathy was elicited by accurate observation of particulars rather than by abstractions.[2]

George Eliot's clearest acknowledgement of the positive motives in her art came in a letter of August, 1868, to Clifford Albutt, himself familiar with Comte's work and a possible model for Lydgate. She feared that in conversation with him she had 'misrepresented the dearest beliefs'. She told him that their fullest presentation came

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1. Ibid., pp.266 and 270-2; cp. Part I ch. V (iii)
2. Ibid., pp.317 and 371.

through her art. She wished to provide a substitute for Christianity with a scientific basis, which would bind facts into unity and spread sympathy more widely:

'My books are a form of utterance that dissatisfies me less, because they are deliberately, carefully constructed on a basis which even in my doubting mind is never shaken by doubt, ... my conviction as to the relative goodness and nobleness of human dispositions and motives. And the inspiring principle which alone gives me the courage to write is, that of so presenting our human life as to help my readers in getting a clearer conception and a more active admiration of those vital elements which bind men together and give a higher worthiness to their existence; and also to help them in gradually dissociating these elements from the more transient forms on which an outworn teaching tends to make them dependent.'

She pointed to the evolution of a higher religion which would be much more satisfactory than 'the shifting compromise called "philosophical theism"'.[1]

George Eliot later claimed that there had been 'no change in the point of view from which I regard our life' from Scenes of Clerical Life to Daniel Deronda. To the end she described herself as an artist, in Comte's terms:

'My function is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher - the rousing of the nobler emotions, which make mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures'.[2]

The rest of this thesis illustrates how closely she followed Comte in fulfilling this function.

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1. GEL IV 472.
2. Ibid., VI 318 and VII 44.

CHAPTER III

Philosophy

I Positive Knowledge

Discussing "The Influence of Rationalism" in 1865, George Eliot complained that Lecky gave too little prominence to "the gradual reduction of all phenomena within the sphere of established law'. She continued,

> 'The great conception of universal regular sequence, without partiality and without caprice - the conception which is the most potent force in the modification of our faith, and of the practical form given to our sentiments - could only grow out of that patient watching of external fact, and that silencing of preconceived notions, which are urged upon the mind by the problems of physical science.'[1]

This was the basis of the Positive Philosophy, and it plays an important part in George Eliot's novels. Many of her characters are judged by their failure to recognise the operation of the law of consequences, that certain actions lead to irrevocable results. Those who rely on Chance, Fortune or Providence are seen to be building their hopes on shifting grounds. Comte and Eliot both treated the concept of Providence as an intellectualisation of egoism. Her novels are merciless in exposing the various forms which egoism can take. They also attack mysticism when it precludes close study of the observable. They teach that a wide understanding of the real relations of things is the source of Positive knowledge and happiness.

The Scenes of Clerical Life are concerned with small worlds, into which the outside world only occasionally breaks. George Eliot is more concerned to enlist our sympathies with the small lives of her characters than to present a picture of the immense universe which surrounds them. Even so, Tina's sufferings are put in perspective. While she was agonising over Captain Wybrow, 'Nature was holding on

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1. Essays, p. 413

her calm inexorable way', and the 'stream of human thought and deed was hurrying and broadening onward'.[1]

Adam Bede presents a clear contrast between the hero, 'at once humble in the region of mystery, and keen in the region of knowledge',[2] and Arthur Donnithorne, with his faith in Providence. Arthur, we are told, was never firmly impressed with 'the scheme of things'. As a child he compensated the gardener for the loss of a pitcher of broth by the gift of a knife and pencil-case. He retains the desire to take the consequences of his own 'hobbles', along with a naive belief in Providence. When the lameness of his horse prevents his resolve to go fishing for a week and thus break Hetty's spell, he feels it 'culpable in Providence to allow such a combination of circumstances'. He cannot accept 'the irrevocableness of his deeds', believing that he can make up for Hetty's suffering by his care for her in the future. He retains his faith that 'Providence would not treat him harshly'.[3] Hetty's own 'vision of consequences' never rises above a narrow 'calculation of her own probable pleasures and pains'.[4]

'The mind of St. Ogg's' is well below the Positive stage. Opinions, such as Mr. Riley's recommendation of Mr. Stelling as a teacher, tend not to be 'based on valid evidence'. To Mr. Tulliver, 'it seemed impossible that past events should be so obstinate as to remain unmodified when they were complained against'.[5] Maggie escapes into the dream-worlds created by Byron and Scott. She remains

'quite without that knowledge of the irreversible laws within and without her, which, governing the habits, becomes morality, and, developing the feelings of submission and dependence, becomes religion '.[6]

Godfrey Cass is cast in the same mould as Arthur Donnithorne.

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1. SCL I 221-2.
2. AB I 70.
3. Ibid., I 184 and 189; II 33-5 and 40.
4. Ibid., II 76.
5. MF I 35 and 114.
6. Ibid., II 31-2.

His deity is not Providence, but Chance. George Eliot elaborates on his failure to appreciate the laws of the external world:

'Favourable Chance is the god of all men who follow their own devices instead of obeying a law they believe in ... The evil principle deprecated in that religion, is the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a crop after its kind.'[1]

Tito holds a similar faith in Fortune, which finally deserts him.[2] David Faux, the villain in "Brother Jacob", believes in Providence. He prays when there are no other resources to hand. Rather too obviously, he is made to complain of a world in which 'a man could not take his mother's guineas comfortably' and in which his plans are foiled by idiot brothers.[3] Mrs. Transome also finds her trust in a personal Providence ill-founded.[4] Esther is portrayed as in danger of repeating some of Mrs. Transome's mistakes, but is rescued by Felix Holt's firm teaching that each individual must realise that "the universe has not been arranged for the gratification of his feelings".[5]

Middlemarch is a study of the different forms which egoism can take. There is a common failure to appreciate the impartial laws of the universe: 'We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves'. George Eliot uses the image of a pier-glass, whose scratches arrange themselves around any candle that illuminates it, to illustrate the way in which every-one makes himself the centre of his own world.[6] Fred Vincy, like Arthur Donnithorne, felt confident that the 'universal order of things would necessarily be agreeable to an agreeable young gentleman'. He regards the insufficiency of his uncle's money to cover his debts as an affront to 'the fitness of things'. His hopes in Providence are

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1. SM pp.112-3.
2. R I 122 and 146
3. SM pp.353-8.
4. FH I 19 and 31.
5. Ibid., II 293.
6. MM I 323 and 403.

shattered.[1] Casaubon is represented as similarly 'liable to think that others were providentially made for him'. Its clearest mark of favour is the gift of Dorothea.[2] Bulstrode interprets his financial dishonesty as being sanctioned by a series of remarkable providences. He explains 'the gratification of his desires into satisfactory agreement' with his beliefs. He regards Caleb Garth's silence on Bulstrode's acquaintance with Raffles as a further instance of the protection of Providence. He continues to pray that God's will be done, by which he means his own. His belief in Providence leads him to the conscious negligence which causes Raffles' death.[3]

Rosamund too 'had a Providence of her own', an abstraction of her own egoism which is shattered by the problems of her married life. She dreams of an 'Arabian Nights' happiness a paradise where everything is given to you and nothing claimed', a world without law. But she eventually discovers that 'the world was not ordered to her liking'.[4] Mary Garth, in contrast, 'having early had reason to believe that things were not likely to be arranged for her peculiar satisfaction', teaches Fred to overcome his providential egoism. She has little patience with the illusions of others. Her eyes are described as 'clear windows where observation sat laughingly'.[5] Mirrors and windows recur throughout Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda to symbolise the distorting reflexions of egoism as opposed to the clear observation of the external world.[6]

In Daniel Deronda also, George Eliot remarks that 'a great deal of what passes for likelihood in the world is simply the reflex of a wish'. Gwendolen's failure at roulette, her family's financial

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1. Ibid., I 351 and 203.
2. Ibid., I 126 and II 10.
3. Ibid., III 252, 262 and 283.
4. Ibid., I 403, II 312 and III 176.
5. Ibid., II 64-5 and I 209.
6. Ibid., III 126 and 392; cp. Brian Swann, "Eyes in the Mirror: Imagery and Symbolism in DD", NCF XXIII (1969) 434-45.

disaster, and her marriage to Grandcourt are successive bruises to her 'belief in her star'. She finds this world "extraordinary" in the way it fails to gratify her desires. At the end of the novel, as Deronda explains his plan of founding a national centre for the Jews, she feels that the 'world seemed getting larger'. She is 'for the first time being dislodged from her supremacy in her own world!'.[1]

Some of George Eliot's lesser works continue her attack on egoism. The Spanish Gypsy pours scorn on illusory hopes, the eschatological impatience with the operation of invariable law, which makes the stars

'keep their course
And make no pathway for the coming Judge.'[2]

Theophrastus Such presents a series of different examples of 'that inward squint which consists in a dissatisfied egoism. Theophrastus attacks 'the consolations of egoism'. He argues,

'Examining the world in order to find consolation is very much like looking carefully over the pages of a great book in order to find our own name'.

We find that 'our preoccupation has hindered us from a true knowledge of the contents'.[3] There follows a whole stream of egoists: Merman, reading widely 'for the chance of finding details to corroborate his own views'; Lentulus, conceited and slow to praise; Touchwood, whose bad temper causes him to adhere suddenly to opinions solely out of personal antagonism; the arrogant Mordax; Ganymede, whose view of himself as precocious becomes a part of his identity which he defends 'against a ten years' siege from ruthless facts; Pepin, "The Too Ready Writer", whose habitual judgement before being adequately informed makes him lose the power of contemplating an object with accuracy;

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1. DD I 143, 353 and 400; III 398-9.
2. SG p.6.
3. TS pp.12-4.

and Vorticella, who suffers from the 'disease of magnified self-importance belonging to small authorship'.[1] These vignettes, sketchy though they are, represent variations on the central theme of failure accurately to observe the world and its invariable laws. The novels turn such diagrams into pictures.

Mysticism, like egoism, sins against Positive law. Romola hammers home this point. Bardo is the first to attack 'a dim mysticism which eludes all rules of human duty as it eludes all argument'. But Romola experiences for herself the weakness of mystical Christianity. She herself is 'too keenly alive to the constant relations of things to have any morbid craving after the exceptional'. The plot is arranged so that Dino knows about Tito's abandonment of Baldassare. But instead of asking after Romola and her father and thus discovering her plan to marry Tito, Dino reveals his prophetic dream. The ending of the chapter underlines the message. Dino's vision was

> 'such as comes from the shadowy region where human souls seek wisdom apart from the human sympathies which are the very life and substance of our wisdom; the revelation that might have come from the simple questions of filial and brotherly affection had been carried into irrevocable silence'.

Romola rebels later against Camilla's 'vain dreams and wilful eye-shutting', which is sanctioned by Savonarola.[2]

Felix Holt also attacks mysticism. He reproaches Esther for admiring Réné's vague and mystical yearnings: "Your dunce who can't do his sums always has a taste for the infinite."[3] Mathematics is the basis of the Positive study of relations. Deronda studies Mathematics at Cambridge, where he reacts violently against the concentration on 'excessive retention and dexterity without any insight into the principles which form the vital connections of knowledge'.[4]

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1. Ibid., Chs. III, IV, VI, VIII, XII, XIV and XV.
2. R I 194, 243 and 246; II 235.
3. FH I 184.
4. DD I 269.

Mystical hopes are replaced by the study of laws, scientific observation of the world, and the pursuit of interests outside the merely personal. Felix, like Deronda, acquires 'the look of habitual meditative abstraction from objects of mere personal vanity or desire, which is the peculiar stamp of culture'. Mrs. Transome's misery is partly a result of her lacking any 'perennial source of interest in things not personal'. The 'great story of this world' was 'reduced for her to the little tale of her own existence'.[1] Lydgate's unhappiness is different. He never thinks of 'a stupendous self and an insignificant world'. But he is driven to egoistic fears in spite of his sense 'that there was a grand existence in thought and effective action lying around him'.[2]

Gwendolen has to learn positive knowledge of herself and of the world. Klesmer teaches her painfully what a real concern for music and art involves. He tells her, "you have not said to yourself, 'I must know this exactly', 'I must understand this exactly', 'I must do this exactly'".[3] Exactness is the essence of positive knowledge. Daniel Deronda, who displayed 'a meditative yearning after wide knowledge' even at Eton, teaches her, "Try to care for what is best in thought and action - something that is good apart from the accidents of your lot." He uses another of Comte's synonyms for 'positive': "Some real knowledge would give you an interest in the world beyond the small drama of personal desires".[4] She goes to church but is unable to connect the service with 'any larger order of the world than ... social fashions'. Just as Dorothea, with nothing to do (everyone being well and no-one's pig having died), takes out a map of Asia Minor for close study, so Gwendolen on her yacht tries to

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1. FH II 867, I 42 and II 136-7.
2. MM III 174.
3. DD I 381.
4. Ibid., I 265; II 258 and 266.

'interest herself in sugar-canes as something outside her personal affairs'.[1] It may be slightly ridiculous, but it is the beginning of Positive knowledge.

II Subjective Synthesis

The Religion of Humanity attempted to give unity and meaning to human experience. This concern to bind thought, feeling and action into harmony is a major characteristic of George Eliot's novels. Her stress, like Comte's, was increasingly on the role of feeling in fusion with thought until, for instance in Mordecai, it reached an almost visionary intensity. Feeling could overcome the harsh realities of the world, the most obvious example of which is death. Subjective immortality is the subject of many of George Eliot's poems, although her interpretation of this concept differs slightly from Comte's.

Religion is binding. As Comte recognised, it unites the soul. The effect of the evangelical revival in Milby is to leave each true convert 'no longer a mere bundle of impressions, desires and impulses',[2] but a person whose thoughts, feelings and actions are united in the service of others. Maggie Tulliver's need is a religious one in this sense. She wanted 'something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life, and give her soul a sense of home in it '. George Eliot defends her comparison of Maggie's sufferings with those of other heroic contributors to the progress of humanity on Positivist grounds:

> 'We need not shrink from this comparison of small things with great; for does not science tell us that its highest striving is after the ascertainment of a unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest ?'[3]

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1. Ibid., III 91 and 193; MM III 416-8.
2. SCL II 163.
3. MF I 369 and II 6.

Comte would have agreed, but not Huxley.

Felix Holt preaches Positivism to Esther - scientific, unifying and religious. Before she met him,

'Her life was a heap of fragments, and so were her thoughts: some great energy was needed to bind them together.'[1]

She ponders his effect on her: 'he had seemed to bring at once a law, and the love that gave strength to obey that law'. He had brought the 'first religious experience of her life ... the first voluntary subjection'. George Eliot again gives away the source of her ideas, without mentioning any names. She admits that Esther was partly right in feeling that the limiting conditions of her life were final and unalterable:

'It is only in that freshness of our time that the choice is possible which gives unity to life, and makes the memory a temple where all relics and all votive offerings, all worship and all grateful joy, are an unbroken history sanctified by one religion.'[2]

Only Comte's religion laid such stress on unity and continuity.

Dorothea's temperament and aspirations, as George Eliot emphasises in the Prelude to Middlemarch, are also religious. She requires a spiritual authority and treats Casaubon as 'a Protestant Pope'. His erudition keeps her for some time in awe, but its effect is anti-religious. It stifles

'her usual eagerness for a binding theory which could bring her own life and doctrine into strict connection with that amazing past, and give the remotest sources of knowledge some bearing on her actions'.

Positive knowledge with her was combined with 'sympathetic motive' to produce 'action' - the harmony of thought, feeling and action which Comte himself sought.[3] Finally disillusioned with Casaubon in Rome, she still attempts to fit the pieces of her life together: 'Permanent rebellion, the disorder of a life without some loving reverent resolve, was not possible to her'.[4]

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1. FH I 256.
2. Ibid., II 45-6 and 286.
3. MM I 73 and 127-9.
4. Ibid., I 298.

Thought and emotion, Comte taught, had to be fused. George Eliot frequently reiterates this teaching. Adam Bede calls feeling "a sort o' knowledge", and undergoes an education in sympathy which brings 'a sense of added strength' like 'the growth of faculty'.[1] In an essay on "Servants' Logic" in 1865, George Eliot warned, 'Reason about everything with your child, you make him a monster, without reverence, without affection'.[2] Tito is just such a monster. After Dino delivers Baldassare's message, Tito explains away the claims of gratitude: 'Tito's thought showed itself as active as a virulent acid, eating its rapid way through all the tissues of sentiment'. He dismisses the calculations of the consequences for Baldassare as 'too problematical to be taken into account'.[3] He would have done better to have obeyed his feelings. For certain areas are impenetrable by intellect alone. As Dorothea explains to Celia, who cannot comprehend her love for Will, "You would have to feel with me, else you would never know."[4]

Theophrastus Such defines morality as 'the conduct which, in every human relation, would follow from the fullest knowledge and the fullest sympathy'.[5] George Eliot insists all too frequently that her heroes combine both these qualities. Felix Holt possesses a 'long-trained consciousness in which thought and emotion had been more and more completely mingled'. Even Rufus Lyon achieves this ideal. Explaining his ideas to Felix, 'his brown eyes were bright with the lasting youthfulness of enthusiastic thought and love'.[6]

Daniel Deronda illustrates the complete fusion of feeling and intellect. He is interested in knowledge and action only if they can

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1. AB II 336 and 365.
2. Essays, p.396.
3. R I 177 and 278-9.
4. MM III 442.
5. TS p.241.
6. FH II 76 and I 227.

be 'gathered up into one current with his emotions', in the Comtean trinity. He combines analysis with synthesis. The problem for him, as for the translator of Strauss, is to 'pound the objects of sentiment into small dust, yet keep sentiment alive and active'. His intellect doubts the validity of his emotional faith in the visionary Mordecai: 'that keenly perceptive sympathetic emotiveness which ran along with his speculative tendency - was never more thoroughly tested'.[1] He teaches Gwendolen that "affection is the broadest basis of good in life". She interrupts, "I should have thought you cared most about ideas, knowledge, wisdom, and all that." He replies, "But to care about them is a sort of affection." On another occasion he explains that "the higher life must be a region in which the affections are clad with knowledge."[2] Mirah and the Jewish tradition between them satisfy both sides of Deronda's nature.

Mordecai practises a fully-fledged subjective method. George Eliot explains his visionary power, as far as it is capable of explanation, as 'an emotional sequence of Mordecai's firmest theoretical convictions; it had been wrought from the imagery of his most passionate life'. His imagination is fed by visits to art galleries. When Deronda fulfils Mordecai's visions by appearing in the Thames sunset, the prophet's joy is described as that of a scientist celebrating predicted results. What occurs corresponds to 'what in the fervour of concentrated prevision his thought has foreshadowed'.[3] Later, George Eliot again likens Mordecai's abnormal insight to the preconception involved in the formation of hypotheses for experiment. In his case, it is a form of 'passionate belief which determines the consequences it believes in'. She explains the interaction of belief,

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1. DD II 132-3 and 332.
2. Ibid., II 213 and 266.
3. DD II 308 and 327-8.

motive and action: 'enthusiasm may have the validity of proof, and, happening in one soul, give the type of what will one day be general'. Emotions aid the intellect, as they did in the later Comte, 'the more comprehensive massive life feeding theory with new material as the sensibility of the artist seizes combinations which science explains and justifies'.[1] Dino's vision, similarly 'fed by youthful memories and ideal convictions',[2] also proves to be accurate. But the subjective method should only be used to complement the objective, when that is insufficient. Dino fails to ground the ideal in the real. Mordecai, fortunate as he is to discover Deronda, bases his teaching on historical fact.

The subjective method is used in an attempt to overcome the problem of death. George Eliot frequently refers to subjective immortality, or the influence of the dead over the living. Milly's love lives on in Milby, and Annette's in Rufus Lyon's heart.[3] There is an element of rebellion against Comte's teaching in George Eliot's sympathy with Dorothea's refusal to be bound by Casaubon's will. Dorothea feels 'a deep difference between that devotion to the living and that indefinite promise of devotion to the dead'. After her husband's death, she is compelled only by 'the ideal and not the real yoke of marriage'.[4] George Eliot here stresses the difference between the objective and the subjective. But in Daniel Deronda the subjective synthesis is treated with complete sympathy. George Eliot's understanding of the Kabbala accords with Comte's explanation of 'subjective assimilation':

> 'Intellect and emotion ... may pass into another brain, so as to be fused with the results attained by that other brain itself, supposing the two beings to be in sufficient harmony.'[5]

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1. Ibid., II 358-9.
2. R I 243.
3. SCL I 123 and FH I 134.
4. MM II 314 and 317.
5. AC, Pol IV 90.

Mordecai speaks in similar terms of "spiritual perpetuation" and the fusion of souls. His final question, "Have I not breathed my soul into you ?", is clearly answered by Deronda's undertaking the mission to Jerusalem.[1]

George Eliot's favourite form of subjective immortality, understandably, was through literature. Romola tells Lillo of her father's failure to use his learning "so that he might still have lived in his works after he was in his grave."[2] The poem that was used as a Comtean hymn expressed her own wish for continued subjective life through the 'undying music' of her books:

> 'O may I join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence'.[3]

"The Death of Moses" describes how that prophet lives in the Jewish people through the Ten Commandments. They are told, in the last line of the poem, "He dwells not with you dead, but lives as Law."[4] George Eliot began writing "The Legend of Jubal" at Thornton Lewes's sick-bed, completing it after his death.[5] It attempts to deal with this harshest reality of life. Just as Comte argued that the short duration of human life increased the rate of human progress and innovation,[6] George Eliot describes the way in which death spurs greater activity. When death entered the world,

> 'Work grew eager, and Device was born.
> It seemed the light was never loved before,
> Now each man said, "'Twill go and come no more".'

Jubal lives in others through his music. He is angry when his race fails to recognise him on his return from travelling the world, but a vision persuades him to forsake individual existence for his eternal share in the 'growth of song'.[7]

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1. DD II 332 and 398; III 408.
2. R II 444.
3. LJ p.(301).
4. Ibid., p.289.
5. Haight, GE., p.241.
6. AC, Phil II 151
7. LJ pp.8 and 40-1.

There was no easy solution to death. George Eliot's use of the subjective method, like Comte's, allowed for no illusions. Religion discovered unity and created harmony where it could, but it was unable to change the external order of the world. The proper responses to this order, they both taught, was a compound of resignation and activity.

III Resignation and Activity

George Eliot's letters and journals, show her battling towards the combination of resignation and activity which Comte advocated and which she in turn preached to others. Her novels record a similar struggle to find the right balance in the different situations they portray. Like Comte, she saw life as a conflict between Will and Destiny. Like him too, she saw phenomena as becoming more modifiable as they grew more complex. After describing her attitude as expressed in two essays and her "Notes on The Spanish Gypsy", I will illustrate the way in which her characters grapple with the same problems and grope towards a similar solution.

George Eliot would accept no softening of the concepts of duty and renunciation. In July 1855, she attacked the view of sacrifice presented in Constance Herbert, in which the heroines renounce lovers who turn out to be villains after all, and thus illustrate the maxim that "Nothing they renounce for the sake of a higher principle, will prove to have been worth the keeping". She argued, on the contrary, that 'it is the very perception that the thing we renounce is precious ... which constitutes the beauty and heroism of renunciation'. She dismissed as the 'cant of optimists' the 'notion that duty looks stern, but all the while has her hands full of sugar-plums, with which she will reward us by-and-by'.[1] She began a short philosophical essay

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1. Essays, p. 135.

"Es ist dafur gesurgt dass die Bäume nicht in den Himmel aachsen", which she interpreted, 'everything on this Earth has its limits which may not be overpassed'. Among these limits she included 'certain unchangeable wants' in mankind.[1] What was unmodifiable had to be accepted.

The Comtean source of George Eliot's view of resignation is clear in her "Notes on The Spanish Gypsy", where she recognises the need for the 'adjustment of our individual needs to the dire necessities of our lot'. Tragedy, she argues, consists in the difficulty of this adjustment to the invariable laws of the universe, which include those of our physiological constitution. The inheritance of some grave disease, for instance, requires

> 'large resignation and acceptance of the inevitable, with as much effort to overcome any disadvantage as good sense will show to be attended with a likelihood of success'.

She equates the 'divine will' with 'so much as we have ascertained of the facts of our existence which compel obedience at our peril'. Just as Comte rested his belief in progress on the possibility of individual actions achieving modifications which could be transmitted by heredity, and the existence of benevolent instincts which it was the object of his religion to develop, so these "Notes" proclaim the two consolatory elements in The Spanish Gypsy to be 'the importance of individual deeds' and 'the all-sufficiency of the soul's passions in determining sympathetic action'. Feeling becomes piety, 'enormously enhanced by wider vision of results - by an imagination actively interested in the lot of mankind generally'. Titian's Annunciation is taken as an idealised example of the call for submission to a required duty.[2] This image, and that of disease or maiming, recur throughout the novels in their presentation of the need for resignation.

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1. "Three Short Philosophical Essays", Parrish Collection, Princeton University Library, 1 (1).
2. Life III 34-49.

The world of invariable law presented in The Spanish Gypsy is certainly a harsh one. Don Silva and Fedalma hope to overcome the difficulties which face the union of a Spanish Duke and a Gypsy Princess. But they cannot escape the duty to honour the 'sacred ties' of race above personal love. Don Silva is driven into 'fatal secrecy' and abrogates his responsibility to defend Bedmar. 'The imperious and inexorable Will' insists that he feel guilt and remorse. Repentance cannot alter the consequences of his action. He has to accept that there is no forgiveness, and is left watching Fedelma sail into the night. He could hope for nothing,

> 'and knew not if he gazed
> On aught but blackness overhung by stars.'[1]

So ends the 'less tragic' version of the story. In her original plans, apparently, both Fedalma and Don Silva were killed.[2] But even George Eliot could not resign herself to that.

Resignation is a recurrent necessity in the Scenes of Clerical Life. "Thy will be done" are the final words of Milly Barton's epitaph.[3] In "Janet's Repentance", George Eliot gives this Christian teaching a Positive interpretation. She writes of the 'unseen elements which often frustrate our wisest calculations', and continues,

> 'such unseen elements Mr. Tryan called the Divine Will, and filled up the margin of ignorance which surrounds all our knowledge with the feelings of trust and resignation'.[4]

He lives among the people, otherwise he could not 'preach resignation'. He counters Janet's rebellion against her lot with the ideal of "entire submission, perfect resignation". Janet also has the example of her mother's resignation. She finally learns to respond to Tryan's death with 'quiet submissive sorrow' and 'resigned memory'.[5]

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1. SG pp.340 and 375.
2. GEL IV 431.
3. SCL I 122.
4. Ibid., II 254.
5. Ibid., II 139, 232, 111, 203, 311 and 316.

Renunciation is also a theme of Adam Bede. Irwine renounces the joys of marriage to look after his mother and sisters. Adam himself resolves to marry Hetty, in spite of her affair with Arthur, "concentrating in one emotion of heroic courage and resignation all the hard-learnt lessons of self-renouncing sympathy'. He finds it difficult to accept resignation to Hetty's inevitable suffering, which no activity can prevent, "T' have to sit still, and know it, and do nothing". But he accepts that 'he must bear the unalterable'.[1] Dinah sets a good example by submitting to the resolution of the Methodist Conference against women preachers.

The Mill on the Floss presents some of the difficulties and dangers of resignation and renunciation. Maggie has the unfortunate example of her father's bitterness at failure. Mr. Tulliver's financial disappointments destroy his morale. 'He could not be reconciled with his lot', relapsing into the frequent lament, "This world's been too many for me".[2] Maggie feels even more keenly the harshness of the world. She is pictured 'in her brown frock, with her eyes reddened', pondering the unhappy world outside her books, and personifying the 'contrast between the outward and the inward'.[3] Her dream-worlds fail to satisfy her:

> 'She wanted some explanation of this hard, real life ... some key that would enable her to understand, and, in understanding, endure the heavy weight that had fallen on her young heart.'

That key is supplied by Thomas à Kempis. She takes up the copy of the Imitation given to her by Bob Jakin and reads the passages marked in pencil. These teach,

> "the love of thyself doth hurt thee more than anything in the world ... Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy much inward peace".

As if to confirm that hers is a Positivist reading of the book, as

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1. AB II 98, 257 and 266.
2. MF II 15 and 143; cp. I 141.
3. Ibid., I 368-9.

recommended by Comte, George Eliot explains that the Imitation 'remains to all time a lasting record of human needs and human consolations'. She elaborates on society's need for

> 'an emphatic belief ... something, clearly, that lies outside personal desires, that includes resignation for ourselves and active love for what is not ourselves'.[1]

The combination of resignation and activity clinches the real source of her teaching.

Maggie is characteristically extreme in her resignation. She tells Philip, "Our life is determined for us"; we must only "think of bearing what is laid upon us". But her need for love conquers her resolution. It is 'as peremptory as the other hunger by which Nature forces us to submit to the yoke, and change the face of the world'.[2] Activity must balance resignation. Nancy Lammeter also goes too far in the direction of determinism. Her 'unalterable little code' opposes adoption as the attempt 'to try and choose your lot in spite of Providence'.[3] Positivists encouraged adoption as increasing the voluntary nature of the sacred tie of paternity. But Nancy rightly encourages Godfrey Cass to accept Eppie's choice of Silas Marner as father: "My only trouble would be gone if you resigned yourself to the lot that's been given us." Godfrey agrees; they can mend their attitude, if nothing else.[4]

Romola learns from Savonarola what à Kempis taught Maggie. On their first meeting he preaches the Cross and gives her a crucifix. When he intercepts her attempted escape from Florence, Savonarola accuses Romola of "seeking to escape from the lot God has laid upon you". He asks, "can man or woman choose duties ?" Again, he preaches the Cross, and again George Eliot uses Positivist terminology

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1. Ibid., II 28-38.
2. Ibid., II 54.
3. SM p.234.
4. Ibid., p.264.

which makes him sound like the Priest in the Catechism: "The higher life begins for us, my daughter, when we renounce our own will to bow before a Divine law."[1] Romola's dilemma, before she leaves Tito the second time, is expressed in terms which recall George Eliot's Annunciation imagery in the "Notes on The Spanish Gypsy", and which present the need for action as well as resignation. Her predicament is that of all men and women of the modern period:

> 'No radiant angel came across the gloom with a clear message for her ... The helping hands stretched out to them were the hands of men who stumbled and often saw dimly, so that these beings unvisited by angels had no other choice than to grasp that stumbling guidance along the path of reliance and action which is the path of life, or else to pause in loneliness and disbelief, which is no path, but the arrest of inaction and death.'[2]

Men need both resignation and action.

Savonarola himself has to deepen his understanding of renunciation. He discovers that 'the lowest depth of resignation is not to be found in martyrdom', but in recognising his own unworthiness to be a martyr. In his final days, in place of martyrdom or triumph; 'had come a resignation which he called by no glorifying name'.[3] Romola, like Maggie, throws 'all the energy of her will into renunciation'. She tells herself, after her disillusionment with Savonarola, and subsequent loss of faith, "if the glory of the Cross is an illusion, the sorrow is only the truer". She passes on what she has learnt to Lillo:

> "no man can be great ... unless he gives up thinking much about pleasures and rewards, and gets strength to endure what is hard and painful ... calamity falling on a base mind ... is the one form of sorrow that has no balm in it".[4]

In Felix Holt, George Eliot praises Rufus Lyon's 'sublime power of resolved renunciation'. In contrast, Jermyn and Mrs. Transome had tried to make life 'delightful in spite of unalterable external conditions'.[5] George Eliot does not therefore imply that one should

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1. R I 238-40 and II 100-8.
2. Ibid., II 54.
3. Ibid., II 382 and 434.
4. Ibid., II 116,413 and 445-6.
5. FH I 115 and 328.

submit entirely to fate. Felix attacks the "Byronic-bilious" school as "more given to idle suffering than to beneficient activity". Esther feels initially that 'half-sad half-satisfied resignation' to 'middling delights' is all that she can attain to. But she is eventually able to tell Felix, "I made a deliberate choice" to reject her inheritance and marry him.[1] This choice is repeated by Dorothea. They both illustrate the importance of determination in areas which are not themselves already determined.

Mrs. Garth, in Middlemarch, achieves the correct balance:

'She had that rare sense which discerns what is unalterable, and submits to it without murmering.'[2]

Lydgate wavers between resignation, fatalism and rebellion. Rosamund reduces him to 'giving up remonstrance and petting her resignedly' emitting only the occasional 'resigned murmer'. George Eliot comments,

'It always remains true that if we had been greater, circumstances would have been less strong against us.'[3]

Lydgate becomes cynical and complains against the irresistable empire of Chance. But his own choices contribute to his difficulties. It is his conscience about not ordering an inquiry into Raffles' death which leads to his 'renewed burst of rebellion against the oppression of his lot'.[4] He tells Dorothea of his irrevocable involvement in Raffles' death: "the business is done and can't be undone". But she encourages resistance: "I cannot bear to rest in this as unchangeable."[5]

Mr. Vincy exemplifies a too inactive resignation: 'the force of circumstances was easily too much for him'.[6] Dorothea progresses from too much hope in activity to too little before achieving the right balance. Her early optimism is soon crushed. Her disillusionment in Rome leads to 'visions of more complete renunciation, transforming

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1. Ibid., II 34, 281 and 354.
2. MM I 369.
3. Ibid., II 281, III 75 and 82.
4. Ibid., III 196 and 314.
5. Ibid., III 354.
6. Ibid., II 109.

all hard conditions into duty'. She abandons 'young hope' for a 'resolved submission'.[1] She is so completely without hope after Casaubon's death that 'she thought only of bowing to a sad necessity which divided her from Will'. When she discovers him seeming to flirt with Rosamund, she believes that 'the irrevocable had happened'. But her fears are unfounded. She eventually gains Ladislaw, and Will for once triumphs over Destiny.[2]

Images of maiming lend a harsh note to the emphasis on resignation throughout Middlemarch. Casaubon is a 'lamed creature' whom Dorothea must help. Lydgate has to lower his hopes:

> 'the tender devotedness and docile adoration of the ideal wife must be taken up on a lower stage of expectation, as it is by men who have lost their limbs'.

Rosamund is more of a burden than a help, but he 'accepted his narrowed lot with sad resignation ... He must walk as he could, carrying that burden pitifully'.[3] Harriet Bulstrode has to overcome the shock of discovering her husband's hypocrisy:

> 'She needed time to get used to her maimed consciousness, her poor lopped life, before she could walk steadily to the place allotted to her.'[4]

Will Ladislaw has to be prepared to renounce life with Dorothea and to face the prospect of a life without enjoyment, as if 'his limbs had been lopped off, and he was making his fresh start on crutches'. But there are limits to the need for resignation, and he rightly argues, "it is intolerable to have our life maimed by petty accidents".[5] George Eliot relents, lays down her axe, and allows him to realise his chief hope.

The same somewhat grotesque imagery recurs in "Armgart". The eponymous heroine is an ambitious and talented singer unable to

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1. Ibid., I 304, and II 232-4
2. Ibid., III 15 and 402.
3. Ibid., II 235; III 181 and 409
4. Ibid., III 333.
5. Ibid., III 413 and 426.

contemplate failure or even second place, with 'high hope shrunk to endurance'. After a year of success she is afflicted with a throat disease which ruins her voice. She has to live,

> 'A self accursed with consciousness of change,
> A mind that lives in nought but members lopped'.[1]

She tells Walpurga, her lame cousin, to stop cajoling her to accept her 'crippled life'. But Walpurga teaches her the resignation she has learned, to find happiness 'in another"s life' and to call her new life, 'Maimed, as you said, and levelled with the crowd', a new birth from her previous 'monstrous Self".[2] In this poem, the bare skeleton of a work of art, George Eliot"s philosophical framework is all too evident. She has dramatised and put into verse a lesson on resignation and its potential moral helpfulness. The novels begin with the same framework, but attain a living body.

Daniel Deronda retains some of this imagery but integrates the philosophical problem into a work of art. George Eliot presents us immediately with the dramatic opening chapters in Leubronn, in which Gwendolen loses both her necklace and her financial security in two successive gambling disasters, one at the roulette table, the other in the stock market. The massive flashback to the previous year at Offendene is underscored by this opening. We look out for signs of her readiness for such a calamity. It is ominous that she finds the world unequal to 'the demands of her fine organism'. She sees Grandcourt as 'the rescue from helpless subjection to an oppressive lot', entering marriage in the mistaken belief that it will give her 'a fuller power of managing circumstance'.[3] Disillusioned, she turns to Deronda to learn how "to bear inevitable sorrow". He tells her that she must submit to the consequences of her own wrong-doing as

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1. LJ pp.92 and 113.
2. Ibid., pp. 124, 129 and 133.
3. DD I 115; II 39 and 117.

irrevocable, "as men submit to maiming or a lifelong incurable disease".[1] She eventually achieves the 'peaceful melancholy which comes from the renunciation of demands for self ... a salvation that reconciles us to hardship'. Her resignation has to withstand Deronda's departure for the East. George Eliot likens the scene to the Annunciation, although on this occasion the angel is departing. There are times, she claims, when an Invisible Power imposes itself on an individual.

> 'Then it is that the submission of the soul to the Highest is tested ... and a religion shows itself which is something else than a private consolation.'[2]

The philosophical implications of Comte's teaching on resignation and activity are raised in the discussion in the "Hand and Banner". Deronda wonders how far the laws of development which Lilly has outlined are inevitable and to what extent progress can be hastened or retarded. He points out "the danger of mistaking a tendency which should be resisted for an inevitable law that we must adjust ourselves to". Mordecai argues for powerful activity, for instance to resist the decline of national feeling. Such a process can be reversed if men oppose determination to determinism.[2]

George Eliot's philosophical discussion of the problem here and in her essays and notes reveals a thorough understanding and acceptance of Comte's position. Her letters display the importance she attached to his teaching. Her novels, describing the individual responses to different situations by different characters, add an intensity and complexity of insight lacking in Comte. The imagery of maiming and of the Annunciation are her own, indelibly associated with the basic ideas. But these ideas undoubtedly derived from Positivism.

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1. Ibid., II 257 and 264.
2. Ibid., III 385-6 and 398-9.
3. Ibid., II 378.

CHAPTER IV

History and Sociology

I Solidarity: Felix Holt

In each of the sections in this chapter I will concentrate on a particular novel which seems most clearly to embody one of Comte's main concepts in the field of history and sociology. But I will refer also to other novels where they are relevant. In this section, after showing how George Eliot gave additional emphasis to Comte's teaching on the solidarity of the human race, for example in Theophrastus Such, I will illustrate its appearance in the early novels, especially in The Mill on the Floss. I will then outline Felix Holt's preaching of Positivist solidarity, both in the novel and in his "Address to Working Men".

We have seen that George Eliot questioned Comte's assertion that continuity was more important than solidarity. She tended to reverse their relative importance. Theophrastus Such complains that we seem to have 'a greater charity for other portions of the human race than for our contemporaries'. He continues,

> 'All reverence and gratitude for the worthy Dead on whose labours we have entered, all care for the future generations whose lot we are preparing; but some affection and fairness for those who are doing the actual work of the world ... Otherwise, the looking before and after, which is our grand human privilege, is in danger of turning to a sort of other-worldliness'.
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> He keeps 'a stronger attachment to what is near'.[1]

Mr. Irwine teaches human interdependence: "Men's lives are as thoroughly blended with each other as the air they breathe".[2] This message is amplified by Dr. Kenn, who gives a more specifically Comtean analysis of the breakdown of the old order of society. George Eliot has already noted the lack of a Christian sense of community in

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1. TS pp.28-9.
2. AB II 205.

St. Ogg's, apart from 'a sectarian church, which gets some warmth of brotherhood by walling in the sacred fire'. She has attacked fine society as remote from any conception of a 'wide and arduous national life'.[1] Maggie goes to Dr. Kenn for advice after her ignominious return from her attempted elopement with Stephen. He recognises the virtues of her motives and explains, in supererogatory detail which owes an unlikely and anachronistic debt to Comte, precisely why St. Ogg's reacts as it does. He calls her wish to return to her closest ties "a true prompting, to which the Church in its original constitution and discipline responds". He adds,

> "the Church ought to represent the feeling of the community, so that every parish should be a family knit together by Christian brotherhood under a spiritual father. But the ideas of discipline are entirely relaxed".

They only exist "in the narrow communities of schismatics". He believes that "the Church must ultimately recover the full force of that constitution which is alone fitted to human needs". He ends with an explanation of the connection between solidarity and continuity, both of which contribute to an understanding of duty:

> "At present everything seems tending towards the relaxation of ties - towards the substitution of wayward choice for the adherence to obligation which has its roots in the past."[2]

The only priest who would really talk like that would be a Positivist one, such as Richard Congreve, with whom the Leweses were in constant contact during the year in which The Mill on the Floss was written. Perhaps it is his voice that takes over in this passage.

The most powerful preacher of solidarity among George Eliot's characters is Felix Holt, whom Holyoake dubbed 'the Chartist of Positivism'.[3] Felix argues that he is a special kind of radical: "A Radical - yes; but I want to go to some roots a good deal lower than

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1. MF II 19 and 37.
2. Ibid., II 358.
3. George Holyoake, Bygones Worth Remembering, London, 1905, I 92

the franchise." There are aspects of his teaching which are reminiscent of Carlyle, in particular his ranting against "a pence-counting parcel-tying generation", and against vendors both of pills and propositions.[1] As we have seen, he bears some resemblance to Frederic Harrison. His views, again anachronistically, stem from Comte. Besides the general doctrine of solidarity, he preaches the specifically Positivist ideal that workers should stay within their own class and support each other, should educate themselves particularly in the sciences, and should concentrate on the moral power of public opinion rather than the vote.

Felix has little sense of continuity. He tells Esther, "I am a man of this generation". His 'family' are his contemporaries. He explains to her father, "I mean to stick to the class I belong to". He wants to convince people by example "that there's some dignity and happiness for a man other than changing his station".[2] Comte regarded men's drinking-clubs as a good place for the development of public opinion through the dissemination of Positivist ideas and Felix rubs shoulders with the Sproxton miners in the "Sugar Loaf" for this very purpose. He interrupts the political agent, Johnson, when he follows a free round of beer by ridiculing the idea that colliers in Sproxton should care about the condition of their counterparts in Newcastle. Felix does not actually mention Trades Unions, but like the English Positivists, he attempts 'to establish a school'. He invites the miners to meet on Saturday evenings "in the room where Mr. Lyon, or one of his deacons, habitually held his Wednesday preachings'. He argues,

"That's what a man would do if he had a red-hot superstition. Can't one work for sober truth as hard as for megrims ?"

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1. FH II 44; I 96 and 100.
2. Ibid., II 42, I 93, and II 294.

He attempts to attract them by the magnetism of science, and actually carries a magnet in his pocket with which to draw their attention. He makes at least one disciple, named Brindle, who calls him "master".[1]

At Duffield on nomination-day Felix again interrupts a political speech on the need for universal suffrage: "No ! - something else before all that". That something else is Comte's doctrine of moral regeneration working in politics through the power of public opinion. Felix preaches another sort of power than the vote. He tells the assembled multitudes that they must abandon "thoughts that don't agree with the nature of things". These natural laws are revealed by science, which invents steam-engines and other symbols of industrial progress. The force that must drive political engines, he claims, "must come out of human nature - out of men's passions, feelings, desires". It is neither the place nor the time to explain Positivist cerebral theory. Felix therefore contents himself with an exposition of the power of "public opinion - the ruling belief in society about what is right and what is wrong". He argues that politicians must be shamed out of their corruption, and he begins with Johnson, attacking the system of bribes and other inducements.[2] Altogether, it is a strange speech to find before the First Parliamentary Reform Bill.

George Eliot reveals her concern with Positivism and politics throughout the novel. Even Rufus Lyon is made to adhere to a Positivist understanding of politics. Like Mill, whose discussion of this very subject, itself derived from Comte, she quoted in her notebook for Felix Holt, Rufus opposes the secret ballot. It attacks the root of "political morality", he argues, by

"shutting the door against those influences whereby the soul of man and the character of a citizen are duly educated for their great functions".[3]

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1. Ibid., I 206 and 191-6.
2. Ibid., II 85-92.
3. Ibid., I 268.

George Eliot herself justifies her discussion of Treby politics on the grounds of interdependence: 'there is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life'.[1] Her review of Lecky the year before had expressed an optimistic belief that railways, steam-engines and electric telegraphs, the paraphernalia of modern industry, were 'demonstrating the interdependence of all human interests, and making self-interest a duct for sympathy'.[2] Just as Comte grew increasingly critical of classical political economy, so George Eliot in Felix Holt expresses scepticism about the predictability of men motivated solely by self-interest. The Treby riot dramatises her view. It is the result of'multitudinous small wickednesses of small selfish ends, really undirected towards any larger result'.[3]

George Eliot retained some of her initial optimism to the end. Theophrastus Such argues that any individual 'working towards his own interest in an orderly way' must come to realise that 'his interest is included in that of a larger number'. He develops quite naturally 'a faint feeling of fraternity'. Spike realises that the interest of his neighbours is his own and so becomes a champion of reform: 'the nature of things', in which Felix puts such trust, 'transmuted his active egoism into a demand for a public benefit'.[4] Quite in keeping with Comte, then, George Eliot seems to have regarded solidarity as something which could arise spontaneously, but which was more predictable if consciously directed.

Gratified by letters of appreciation from working men and encouraged by the conservative John Blackwood,[5] George Eliot wrote another "Address to Working Men, By Felix Holt", in which he was even

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1. Ibid., I 72.
2. Essays, p.402.
3. FH II 128; cp. II 65 and 71.
4. TS pp.(109) and 114.
5. GEL IV 359, 395 and 398.

more blatantly used as a mouthpiece for a Positivist political standpoint. After a few references to contemporary issues, Felix begins with an exposition of the law of consequences: 'The deepest curse of wrong-doing ... is that its effects are difficult to be undone'. He gives the analogy of hereditary disease to explain 'the law by which human lives are linked together'. He argues that 'it is in our own interest to stand by each other'. Like Comte, he advocates 'the turning of Class Interests into Class Functions or duties'. Also like Comte, he explains how public opinion should enforce each man's fulfilment of his duty:

> 'each class should be urged by the surrounding conditions to perform its particular work under the strong pressure of responsibility to the nation at large ... In this way, the public judgment would sift out incapability and dishonesty from posts of high charge, and even personal ambition would necessarily become of a worthier sort, since the desires of the most selfish men must be a good deal shaped by the opinions of those around them'.

Positivism thus channels egoism into altruistic courses and puts 'fellow-feeling in the place of selfishness'.[1]

Felix reiterates the Positivist insistence on the preservation of 'public order'. It is maintained by a proper sense of continuity. He teaches respect for

> 'that treasure of knowledge, science, poetry, refinement of thought, feeling, and manners, great memories and the interpretation of great records, which is carried on from the minds of one generation to the minds of another'.

He presents Comte's notion of a spiritual and a temporal power. Each must be properly chosen, and instilled with a sense of their responsibility. Those 'who hold the treasure of Knowledge' must remember 'that they hold it on trust'. It is important to 'get the chief power into the hands of the wisest. Then we will get our life regulated according to the truest principles mankind is in possession of'. He repeats his faith 'in the supreme unalterable nature of things'.[2]

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1. Essays, pp.418-22.
2. Ibid., pp.422-8.

The conclusion of the "Address" is unmistakably Comtean in its emphasis on continuity, Positive knowledge, resignation and activity. Felix urges submission to 'the great law of inheritance', and to 'that religion which keeps an open ear and an obedient mind to the teachings of fact'. It is essential to 'discern between evils that energy can remove and the evils that patience must bear'.[1] The astonishing closeness of Felix Holt's ideas to the main principles of Positivism has gone remarkably unnoticed. Written at the height of George Eliot's association with the Religion of Humanity, the novel suffers from her failure sufficiently to distance herself from her hero and his creed.

II Utopianism: Middlemarch

If Felix Holt demonstrates the extent of George Eliot's agreement with Comte, Middlemarch clarifies her differences. Many of the basic principles she accepted, but not all the details. Nor could she accept the possibility or even the desirability of the establishment of his rigid social system within the immediate future. Society, at least in England, and certainly in Middlemarch, was not ready for it. To a large extent she blamed society, but Utopianism itself she displayed as often unrealistic and illusory. Human nature was larger than any system. The early Comte had recognised that no constitutional remedy for society should expect an exceptional amount either of goodness or evil from its citizens. This is certainly true of the middling people described in Middlemarch. I will concentrate here on showing first that George Eliot intended to write about Comte's Utopia and studied his early life for the background of the novel. Then I will illustrate how Middlemarch displays the unreadiness of

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1. Ibid., pp.429-30.

English society for the reception of Positivist ideas.

Comte had seen one of the functions of art to be the construction of utopias. Frederic Harrison stressed this possibility in a long letter to George Eliot in July, 1866. He suggested a setting in Normandy or North Canada, in which revolution and progress had destroyed 'all strictly dogmatic religions'. Instead, the 'normal relations' of Positivist society could be displayed, including "the teacher, the ruler, the capitalist, the labourer, the wife, the mother, the child". The spiritual power 'would be represented by the local physician for instance'. His influence on society, and the 'systematic intervention of the feminine influences', could also be illustrated. She could make 'a fair representation of a new society, without supposing anything but a French village of the nineteenth century'.[1]

It was in reply to this letter that George Eliot wrote about the difficulties of making 'certain ideas thoroughly incarnate' and the importance of subordinating idealism to realism, thus avoiding the lapse 'from the picture to the diagram'. But she praised his understanding of her aims.[2] In May 1868 Harrison reminded her of his idea of 'the idealisation of the Positivist vision of society'. She assured him that she had always kept his earlier letter at hand, constantly re-reading it. But she felt it better for him to realise the idea as 'a frankly Utopian construction'.[3] In November 1869 Harrison wrote an article for the Fortnightly Review on "The Positivist Problem", which reiterated the Positivist faith in gradual social change through moral regeneration rather than legislative machinery. Positivism alone, he claimed, combined progress and order to effect 'revolutionary ends by a truly conservative spirit'. He attacked society's unfairness towards the new movement, which it persecuted

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1. Ibid., IV 284-9.
2. Ibid., IV 300-1.
3. Ibid., IV 448.

as 'a malignant sect'.[1] George Eliot expressed admiration for the 'general value' of this article on a second reading in January, 1870.[2]

Comte's utopia was clearly in George Eliot's mind when she began to write Middlemarch. She wrote to John Blackwood in February 1869,

'I mean to begin my novel at once, having already sketched the plan ... The various elements of the story have been soliciting my mind for years - asking for a complete embodiment'.[3]

Her diary records 'some conversation about Saint-Simonism' with Professor Masson on July 18th 1869, and reading Reybaud's Études sur les Reformateurs Contemporains, ou Socialistes Modernes on the 22nd. Presumably from this work she 'read aloud Fourier and Owen, and thought of writing something about Utopists'.[4] Her "Middlemarch Miscellany" quotes two important passages Reybaud selected from Saint-Simon:

'La religion doit diriger la societé vers le grand but de l'amélioration la plus rapide possible du sort de la classe la plus nombreuse et la plus pauvre.
A chacun selon sa capacité; à chaque capacité selon ses oeuvres'.[5]

On the 25th July George Eliot turned to Littré, probably for details of Comte's early life, which would also have been furnished by the correspondence with Valat, which she read the following year.[6]

Utopianism is rampant among the inhabitants of Middlemarch. Lydgate spent some time in Paris about 1829, when 'he had thought of joining the Saint-Simonians'. Trawley, who had shared Lydgate's apartment there, "was hot on the French social systems and talked of going to the Blackwoods to found a sort of Pythagorean community". But instead he went to a German spa and married a rich patient, foreshadowing Lydgate's similar narrowing of aims.[7] Dorothea harbours

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1. FR ns VI (1869) 486-90.
2. GEL V 75.
3. Ibid., V 16.
4. GE Diary, 18, 22 and 24/7/69.
5. John Pratt, "A Middlemarch Miscellany: An Edition, with introduction and notes, of GE's 1868-1871 Notebook", Princeton, Ph.D., 1965, p.xix; f.31; from Louis Reybaud, Études sur les Reformateurs Contemporains, ou Socialistes Modernes, Paris, 1841, pp.60 and 65.
6. GE Diary, 25/7/69 and 27/10/70; GEL V 119.
7. MM I 227 and 263.

'delightful plans' for 'a little colony' in which she 'should know every one of the people and be their friend'.[1] Ladislaw too develops a 'new interest in plans of colonisation'. In the "Quarry", George Eliot wrote of him, 'Means to go to Utopia'. In the novel itself these plans are the reason for his later return to Middlemarch, which is not, as in the "Quarry", in response to Rosamund's outpouring of feeling:

> 'there had come a reason quite irrespective of Dorothea, which seemed to make a journey to Middlemarch a sort of philanthropic duty. Will had given a disinterested attention to an intended settlement on a new plan in the Far West'.

He plans to use Bulstrode's money on this venture. It is the main subject of his letter to Lydgate.[2]

Dorothea and Ladislaw seem to be planning Owenite communities. Lydgate has more connections with Saint-Simon and Comte. Among the many doctors who have been seen as 'germs' of Lydgate is Mrs. Congreve's father, Dr. Bury, one of the two surgeons at the Coventry and Warwickshire Hospital, who attended George Eliot's father in his last illness. George Eliot wrote to Mrs. Congreve for details of the 'conditions of my hero' in September 1869.[3] The most probable "germ" of the young Lydgate', according to Anne Kitchel, was Dr. Clifford Allbutt, whom the Leweses visited in September 1868, when they saw the 'Leeds House of Recovery, one of the earliest fever hospitals in the country'. He had been its physician since 1861. Dr. Allbutt's career had been determined by his reading of the Positive Philosophy. George Eliot had discussed the Religion of Humanity with him in conversation and in correspondence.[4]

Lydgate has many Positivist aspirations. He takes up medicine because it offers the 'most direct alliance between intellectual

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1. Ibid., III 26-7
2. Ibid., III 339 and 411; A.T. Kitchel, Quarry for 'MM', NCF IV (1950) 61.
3. A.T. Kitchel, op. cit., pp.13 and 44
4. Ibid., pp.2-5 and GEL IV 471 fn. 7.

conquest and the social good'. He follows up Bichet's discoveries in the search for 'the primitive tissue'. He has 'the ambition of making his life recognised as a factor in the better life of mankind - like other heroes of science'.[1] He practises Positive worship of these heroes: George Eliot comments,

'A man conscious of enthusiasm for worthy aims is sustained under petty hostilities by the memory of great workers who had to fight their way not without wounds, and who hover in his mind as patron saints, invisibly helping.'

Thoughts of Vesalius, reviled as a body-snatcher, revive his flagging spirits. Rosamund refers scathingly to "your great heroes", but he finds sympathy from Dorothea, whom he treats as his guardian angel:

"That voice of deep-souled womanhood had remained within him as the enkindling conception of dead and sceptered genius had remained within him'.[2]

Comte was by no means the only scientist interested in "Cell Theory". George Eliot quoted an article on the subject by Thomas Huxley in her "Quarry". She also annotated Russell's Heroes of Medicine.[3] But these works served only to add detail and strength to ideas whose derivation from Comte is attested by the reference to 'patron saints' and the connection with the worship of women.

Lydgate shares Comte's weakness as well as his principles. Littré had described Comte's moving into grand lodgings after his marriage to Caroline Masson. He furnished them expensively: 'ne pas épargner la dépense était, on le sait, dans les goûts de M. Comte'. He had soon to move.[4] Lydgate encounters similar financial difficulties in his attempt to maintain a high standard of living: 'In warming himself at French social theories he had brought away no smell of scorching'.[5] These social theories are partly Comte's. Viewing

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1. MM I 219, 223-5 and 251
2. Ibid., II 277-9 and III 91.
3. A.T. Kitchel, op. cit., pp.25-31.
4. Littré, op. cit., p.35.
5. MM II 114.

himself as the spiritual power, the physician who is to enlighten his community, Lydgate makes an alliance with the temporal power, represented by Bulstrode. He prides himself on 'making a good social use of this predominating banker', in spite of the narrow opinions and motives he detects in Bulstrode.[1] But George Eliot represents this as fatally unrealistic. The banker cannot escape from his limited evangelistic outlook, and Middlemarch is totally unprepared for Lydgate's new ideas. The time is simply not ripe for Positivism.

In some respects George Eliot applies a Comtean analysis to Middlemarch society. Casaubon represents the decay of the spiritual power. In its final metaphysical stage, Protestantism turns to vague and useless speculation. Brooke's unceremonious treatment by Dagley, his tenant, in a scene whose purpose Beaty describes as 'not immediately apparent',[2] illustrates the complete breakdown of feudal order. The chivalry which led the strong to protect the weak and the weak to respect the strong is totally absent from this relationship. The power of public opinion is strong in Middlemarch, illustrated in the treatment Bulstrode receives. There is nothing for which he is legally held responsible. But he is hounded out of his hypocritical complacency by the general condemnation of his behaviour. The opinion which the public holds is often inaccurate, especially with regard to medicine. But George Eliot shows that it is a power which, better educated, could function effectively in the way Comte described.

George Eliot's position in Middlemarch seems to be Positivist in analysis but unconvinced of Comte's utopian synthesis. The Prelude emphasises the lack of 'coherent social faith and order' in the modern period. The Epilogue attacks a society which cannot even understand renunciation and idealism.[3] When she discusses Bulstrode, George

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1. Ibid., III 222.
2. Jerome Beaty, 'MM' from Notebook to Novel, Urbana, 1960, p.63.
3. MM I 2; for the different versions of the last page, see Jerome Beaty, "The Text of the Novel", 'MM' Critical Approaches to the Novel, ed. Barbara Hardy, London, 1967, pp.59-60.

Eliot recognises that hypocrisy is not limited to evangelicals. It is a common feature of the human race, even those members whom Comte would include in Humanity. Hypocrisy, she argues,

> 'shows itself occasionally in us all, to whatever confession we belong, and whether we believe in the future perfection of our race or in the nearest date fixed for the end of the world; whether we regard the earth as a putrefying nidus for a saved remnant, including ourselves, or have a passionate belief in the solidarity of mankind'.[1]

The moral regeneration of mankind has a long way to go before any utopia can succeed. It is the recognition that the world needs a definite faith and order but that even the most promising of systems cannot yet replace the old order, that underlies the melancholy which all have felt to be the dominant tone of Middlemarch. George Eliot remains, in the words of Matthew Arnold which she quoted in her "Middlemarch Miscellany",

> 'Wandering between two worlds, one dead
> The other powerless to be born.'[2]

III History: Romola

Middlemarch portrays the Protestant stage of the Western Revolution, the intellectual and social disintegration of Catholicism which Comte traced from the later Middle Ages. Romola goes back to the beginning of that movement in the fifteenth century, the period of spontaneous decline. It follows quite closely the model of the Positivist historical novel as outlined by Comte. This was to depict Catholicism sympathetically while comparing it unfavourably with the Religion of Humanity. It would represent the successive phases of the development of Humanity.[3] After illustrating George Eliot's own theory and practice with regard to the historical novel, I will examine first the

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1. MM III 132.
2. Pratt, op. cit., p.145.
3. See above, Part I, Ch. III (iii) and V (iii).

way in which Romola presents a Comtean picture of the life and times of Savonarola and then how the novel embodies the Positivist philosophy of history in general. Among the characters, Romola and Tito in particular carry considerable symbolic weight.

Both George Eliot and George Lewes at various times ridiculed the contemporary fashion of historical novels. George Eliot complained that 'the least readable of silly women's novels are the modern-antique species'.[1] Pepin, in Theophrastus Such, intends like Frederic Harrison to write a historical novel about the decline of the Roman Empire, full of sound and fury, and signifying everything. But he lacks historical accuracy and "reverential feeling' for the past.[2] Lewes concocted a satirical recipe for success in the genre, which involved the study of Scott, cramming for information about customs and costumes, and re-christening the types already created by others.[3] In Rose, Blanche and Violet he portrayed "Another Literary Soiree" full of elderly ladies

> 'described by Cecil as poor faded creatures, who toiled in the British Museum, over antiquated rubbish which they extracted and incorporated with worse rubbish of their own ... who drivelled in religious tales - compiled inaccurate histories - '[4]

and generally behaved in a manner very similar to George Eliot.

Lewes himself introduced Eliot to the British Museum in November, 1861.[5] She compiled notes from her researches both there and in Florentine libraries which far exceed the purposes of the novel. Her accumulation of detail was presumably in the interest of accuracy. That she was thinking in Comtean terms while she transcribed these details is clear from the interspersed references to the Religion of Humanity among her "Italian Notes".[6] An awareness of the Positive

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1. Essays, p.320.
2. TS pp.209-11.
3. WR XLV (1846) 34-5.
4. GHL, RBV, Book V, Ch. II, vol.III 11-2.
5. GE Diary, 14/11/61.
6. See Part I, Ch. VI.

potential of the historical novel is also reflected in her own comments. In 1855 she praised Westward Ho ! for helping people to understand the Elizabethan age as one of those which form 'a nodus, a ganglion, in the historical development of humanity'.[1] Her review of Lecky's History of Rationalism, ten years later, insisted,

'The torch must be turned on the worst errors of heroic minds - not in irreverent ingratitude, but for the sake of measuring our vast and various debt to all the influences which have concurred, in the intervening ages'.[2]

Her "Leaves from a Note-book" include a passage on the "Historic Imagination" in which she describes her ideal:

'I want something different from the abstract treatment which belongs to history from a doctrinal point of view, and something different from the schemed picturesqueness of ordinary historical fiction.'[3]

Romola had already attempted to achieve this aim.

Savonarola, the central historical figure in the novel, is a Positivist saint. In the Epilogue, Romola cultivates his moral influence by setting aside a day in his memory. He is also a representative figure. George Eliot takes great care to describe

'certain moral emotions to which the aspect of the times gave the form of presentiments: emotions which had found a very remarkable utterance in the voice of a single man'.[4]

He is a flawed hero. George Eliot analyses both his strengths and his weaknesses, acknowledging 'a reverence that needs no shutting of the eyes to fact'. For the recognition of his faults detracts in no way from his service to Humanity:

'the victim is spotted, but it is not therefore in vain that his mighty heart is laid on the altar of men's highest hopes'.[5]

Among the ways in which he anticipates Positivism are his preaching of the 'subjection of selfish interests to the general good', his

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1. Essays, p.131.
2. Ibid., p.404.
3. Ibid., p.447.
4. R I 316-7.
5. Ibid., I 358-60.

study of the past in order to predict the future, and his vision of 'the whole world become subject to the one true law'. Like Comte, he belongs to the Joachite tradition.[1]

Comte taught that the

'grand social characteristic of Catholicism was that by constituting a moral power, wholly independent of the political, it infused morality into political government'.

But he insisted that the two powers be kept separate:

'as the spiritual power relates to education, and the temporal one to action, the influence of each must be sovereign in its own department, and only consultative in that of the other'.[2]

Savonarola succeeds in establishing an independent moral power. He errs in becoming too involved in Florentine politics. Romola loses faith in him when he fails to insist on Bernardo's right of appeal against the sentence of death. George Eliot adds a footnote disputing Villari's claim that the law went further than Savonarola wished, since the Dominican himself boasted of securing this right for the Florentine people.[3] Romola accuses him of failing to intervene for her godfather as he had for Tornabuoni, because Bernardo was a better man and therefore a more dangerous political opponent. Savonarola's involvement in politics forces him to equate God's interest with his own. He insists, "The cause of my party is the cause of God's kingdom."[4] After his trial, confession and death, Savonarola is seen as 'a man in whom the seductions of a public career had warped the strictness of his veracity'. He confesses to illusory inspiration but insists to the end that he had always laboured for "the very highest end - the moral welfare of men'.[5] This is what Romola treasures as worthy of commemoration.

Many of the other characters in Romola are based on historical

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1. Ibid., I 32.
2. AC, Phil II 263
3. R II 292 fn.1.
4. Ibid., II 308-9.
5. Ibid., II 428-31.

figures. "George Eliot's Notebook for Romola" reveals that Romola herself was based on Alexandra Scala, whose 'extraordinary beauty' was 'surpassed by the endowments of her mind', and Tito on 'the Greek Marullus', writer of epigrams, to whom she 'gave her hand'. These models are mentioned early in the novel.[1] But there is more to them than that. Piero di Cosimo sees deeper than the surface, with his allegorical paintings of Magdalen, Stoic and Satyr, and of Bacchus crowning Ariadne, and the readers are expected to do the same. For Tito and Romola between them represent the major phases of the historical development of Humanity.

Tito is morally primitive. He chooses to be identified with Bacchus. He conjures up in Romola images of savage joy, primitive dancing and chanting, 'all objects and all sounds that tell of Nature revelling in her force'.[2] A student of classics, he exemplifies the Greek elaboration of intellect at the expense of the affections. Comte had warned,

> 'mental superiority ... can never realize its highest expansion unless it is subordinated to a lofty morality ... Without this condition, the best developed genius must degenerate into a secondary instrument of narrow personal satisfaction'.[3]

This is precisely what happens to Tito. His intellect, as we saw in the previous chapter, destroys the remnants of his conscience. He shoulders Comte's dislike of the Renaissance, with its 'development of pride and vanity ... in conjunction with the basest selfishness'.[4] His moral degeneration, to be analysed more closely in the following chapter, is a Positive lesson in both history and morality. He is finally drowned by his symbolic significance.

If Tito carries into oblivion all that is inhuman in the history of mankind, Romola represents Humanity in her moral development. She

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1. BM Add. MS 40768, f.20; R I 45, 50, 107 and 197.
2. Ibid., I 274.
3. AC, Phil II 288-9.
4. AC, Cat, p.412.

begins with fetichism. At eighteen, she reads her own feelings into Tito 'as easily as primitive people imagined the humours of the gods in fair weather'.[1] She passes through the intellectual elaboration of her classical upbringing to theological faith as a disciple of Savonarola. Disillusioned by his weakness and repelled by the superstitious elements in Catholicism, she loses all faith, and drifts into the negative stage. But she emerges from this as a true Positivist, an eternal widow, caring for Tessa's children, commemorating Savonarola's anniversary and teaching Comte's principles in the Epilogue.

In case we might overlook these symbolic meanings, George Eliot draws our attention to the representative nature of individual actions: She claims that 'the eager theorising of ages is compressed, as in a seed, in the momentary want of a single mind'. She repeats,

'The great world-struggle of developing thought is continually foreshadowed in the struggle of the affections, seeking justification for love and hope.'[2]

Romola is depicted as Comte's Goddess of Humanity, both when the Florentines treat her as 'the visible Madonna', and when she appears to the youth Jacopo in the plague-stricken village with a child in her arms and a naturalistic halo caused by the sun.[3] The novel's combination of idealism, its inner meaning, and realism, its attempt at historical accuracy, is considered in the second section of chapter six.

Other influences besides that of Positivism may have contributed to the historical bias of the novel. Pugin, for example, portrayed Savonarola as a martyr who had warned against 'the terrible danger in the then new rage for classic and pagan styles that were beginning to usurp the place of Christian art and feeling'.[4] Ruskin, too, attacked

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1. R I 104.
2. R I 274 and II 236.
3. Ibid., II 146 and 404
4. A.W.N. Pugin, Contrasts, Leicester (1841), 1969, p.iv.

the pride and infidelity of the Renaissance. Quotations from his Stones of Venice are included with other Italian material in George Eliot's Commonplace Book.[1] Tito's distaste for the "hideous smoked Madonnas" and "fleshless saints" in the Baptistery qualifies him for Ruskin's scorn:

'the man must be little capable of receiving a religious impression of any kind, who, to this day, does not acknowledge some feeling of awe, as he looks up to the pale countenances and ghastly forms which haunt the dark roofs of the Baptisteries of Parma and Florence'.[2]

George Eliot went to many sources for her understanding of fifteenth-century Florence. But the key to the overall plan of Romola is to be found in Comte.

IV Continuity: Daniel Deronda

Romola recognises the place of Catholicism in the development of Humanity, Daniel Deronda her debt to Judaism. Comte argued that Catholicism itself was guilty of the offence against continuity involved in the persecution of the Jews. In his view, the Jewish and Greek nations were both sacrificed for the progress of the whole race, 'the former by its premature adoption of Monotheism, the latter by its exaggerated devotion to the intellect'. Judaism provided a ritualistic and philosophical tradition for Christianity. Therefore,

'Catholicism owes a debt of gratitude to Judaism which it has never paid; Positivism alone can discharge it, as the systematic organ of the gratitude of the Great Being to all her servants collective as well as individual'.[3]

George Eliot wrote to Harriet Beecher Stowe that her intention in Daniel Deronda was to help pay this 'debt'. The usual Christian intolerance towards Judaism, she argued, was inconsistent with the

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1. GE Commonplace Book, ff. (46-7), qs.95 and 99.
2. R I 49; John Ruskin, The Stones of Venice, Orpington, (1853) 1886, II 110, and vol. III, "The Fall of Venice"
3. AC, Pol III 345.

'peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment' of the two faiths. Failure to appreciate this strong link was 'the worst kind of irreligion'. It illustrated 'the intellectual narrowness ... which is still the average mark of our culture'.[1] She was particularly pleased when Jews responded to the novel with enthusiasm.[2]

The sense of continuity, inseparable from the sense of solidarity, was what George Eliot admired most about Judaism. She praised the Jews, in Theophrastus Such, for their 'feeling of race, a sense of corporate existence, unique in its intensity'. She admitted evidence of their degeneration from 'the adverse moral influences of alienism', but this had been counteracted by their religion, their deliberate cultivation of historic memories and family affectionateness.[3] Significantly, in one of her notebooks for Daniel Deronda which included "Oriental Memoranda arranged alphabetically", she made the following entry,

'The unknown teacher to whom we are indebted for the Book of Daniel, is entitled to the praise that he was the first who grasped the history of the world, so far as he knew it, as one great whole, as a drama which moves onward at the Will of the Eternal One.'[4]

Her own book of Daniel insists on this same sense of continuity. I will examine first the historical interests of her hero prior to his association with Judaism and then how these are developed by Mordecai's teaching. I will attempt to demonstrate the considerable amount of common ground between Positivism and Mordecai's brand of Judaism. Central to both is the belief in tradition. This teaching of historical continuity I will then trace through George Eliot's other novels.

Deronda's interest in history is never antiquarian. We are told

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1. GEL VI 301-2.
2. Ibid., VI 275, 316 and 404.
3. TS pp.270 and 279.
4. Pforzheimer MS 710, f. (14).

that one of his favourite protests was against the severance of past and present history'.[1] Deronda loves traditions. At Topping Abbey, he tells Gwendolen, "To delight in doing things because our fathers did them ... enlarges the range of affection". When they enter the ruined choir, restored as a stable for horses, Deronda instinctively removes his hat, as if they had entered an 'actual church'.[2] Mirah's feeling for Jewish religious traditions kindles Daniel's interest in that religion as 'something still throbbing in human lives'. His visit to the Jewish synagogue in Frankfurt also stirs 'that fibre of historic sympathy' in his character. He is 'intensely conservative', in the manner of Riehl and Comte. He is 'loath to part with long-sanctioned forms'. Therefore, on this occasion,

> 'the forms of the Juden-gasse, rousing the sense of union with what is remote, set him musing on two elements of our historic life which that sense raises into the same region of poetry:- the faint beginnings of faiths and institutions, and their obscure lingering decay'.[3]

He is attracted later by the simple Jewish traditions maintained by the Cohens, their benediction of the children, blessing of bread and thanksgiving.[4] In all these ways he is prepared for the teaching of Mordecai.

Mordecai bases his ideas on those of historical Jewish rabbis. He quotes Jehuda Halevy's Chozari,

> "Israel is the heart of mankind, if we mean by heart the core of affection which binds a race and its families in dutiful love".

But from Gratz's summary of Halevy's teaching, which George Eliot copied into her "Notebook for Daniel Deronda" now in the Berg Collection, she selected for Mordecai only those sentiments, like the one above, which accord with Positivism. The supernaturalism is toned down, and

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1. DD I 244-5 and 307.
2. Ibid., II 213 and 218.
3. Ibid., II 129-34.
4. Ibid., II 181-7.

key words such as 'binding' and 'dutiful' are added. Mordecai's creed is thus transformed from that of Halevy to that of Comte.[1] Mordecai gives special emphasis to the doctrine of continuity, which he links, like Comte, to the family: "the past becomes my parent, and the future stretches towards me the appealing arms of children". Deronda envies his escape from selfishness into a wider life in the past and future of his race. He sees Mordecai poor and sick,

> 'but living an intense life in an invisible past and future, careless of his personal lot, except for its possibly making some obstruction to a conceived good which he would never share except as a brief inward vision - a day afar off, whose sun would never warm him, but into which he threw his soul's desire, with a passion often wanting to the personal motives of healthy youth'.

This passion, we are told, was greater even than the love of parents for their children.[2]

Mordecai assures Deronda that the Jewish inheritance is not "dug from the tomb", like that of Greece and Rome, but still alive. He repeats, "In my ears I have the prayers of generations past and to come."[3] He relives the day in Trieste on which he first felt himself to be a part of Humanity:

> "I felt myself in the flood of a glorious life, wherein my own small year-counted existence seemed to melt ... I had been released as it were to mingle with the ocean of human existence, free from the pressure of individual bondage".[4]

In the previous chapter I explained how Mordecai practises a form of the subjective method, and how the Kabbala can be likened to Positivist subjective assimilation. Similarly, the Shemah is regarded by Mordecai as a recognition of the solidarity of the human race and an embodiment of the principle of religious synthesis. He tells Daniel,

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1. Ibid., II 384; "Notebook for DD", Berg Collection, NYPL, f.166 and Index, y2; cp. William Baker, GE and Judaism, p.177
2. DD II 381 and 389.
3. Ibid., II 394 and III 49.
4. Ibid., II 400.

"the Shemah, wherein we briefly confess the divine Unity, is the chief devotional exercise of the Hebrew; and this made our religion the fundamental religion for the whole world; for the divine Unity embraced as its consequence the ultimate unity of mankind. See then - the nation which has been scoffed at for its separateness, has given a binding theory to the human race."[1]

When Daniel finally accepts Mordecai's teaching and assumes his mission to Jerusalem, he is assenting to nothing to which a whole-hearted Positivist could object.

The sense of continuity which Deronda achieves is very much the Positivist concept of incorporation in Humanity. Significantly, George Eliot chose as the epigraph to chapter LXIX the very passage from The Prelude which she later sent to Frederic Harrison along with other extracts from poems which might be useful in the creation of a Positivist liturgy. Wordsworth, like Comte, taught that religious reverence was cultivated by a sense of history:

> "The human nature unto which I felt
> That I belonged, and reverenced with love,
> Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
> Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
> Of evidence from monuments, erect,
> Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
> In earth, the widely scattered wreck sublime
> Of vanished nations."[2]

The Jews are not the only race with national traditions. Deronda likens the apparent hopelessness of Mordecai's cause with that of Mazzini. Yet Italy had achieved liberation and unification by building on national hopes and memories.[3] Frederic Harrison had campaigned in their cause. George Eliot turned to their example when encouraging Britain to preserve her national memories. In "The Modern Hep! Hep! Hep!", Theophrastus Such claims that Greece and Italy won their freedom by cultivating the memory of 'a majestic past that wrought itself into a majestic future'. It is this historical continuity, 'the divine gift of a memory which inspires the moments with a past, a present and

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1. Ibid., III 289.
2. Ibid., III 382; GEL VII 261.
3. Ibid., II 392-3.

a future', which brings 'the sense of corporate existence that raises man above the ... brute'.[1]

Klesmer also expresses the belief that British foreign policies would be better if based upon similar ideals rather than merely economic considerations. He admires the Crusades because "they had a banner of sentiment round which generous feelings could rally".[2] Theophrastus attempts to re-awaken British national sentiment. Like Comte, he sees the love of one's country as an important step in the development of altruism. He stresses 'the connection between the patriotic affection and every other affection which lifts us above emigrating rats and free-loving baboons'. We cannot yet feel strongly bound to a 'common humanity', he argues. But we need to belong to something greater than ourselves:

'Our dignity and rectitude are proportioned to our sense of relationship with something great, admirable, pregnant with high possibilities, worthy of sacrifice, a continual inspiration to self-repression and discipline by the presentation of aims larger and more attractive to our generous part than the securing of personal ease or prosperity.'[3]

Theophrastus looks forward to the eventual fusion of races, but he follows Mill rather than Comte in welcoming the escape from uniformity offered by the profusion of different national traditions. He applies to nations the teaching of a 'modern book on Liberty ... that from the freedom of individual men to persist in idiosyncrasies the world may be enriched'.[4] This is a good example of George Eliot's modification of principles derived from Comte.

George Eliot's review of Lecky describes tradition as

'the basic of our best life. Our sentiments may be called organised traditions; and a large part of our actions gather all their justification, all their attraction and aroma, from the memory of the life lived, of the actions done, before we were born.'[5]

Her novels continually illustrate the importance of a sense of historical

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1. TS pp.260-2.
2. DD I 362.
3. TS pp.263-7.
4. Ibid., pp.285 and 292.
5. Essays, p.409

continuity. Cennini defends Florentine traditions on these Comtean grounds. Without them,

"the vulgar would be conscious of nothing beyond their own petty wants of back and stomach, and never rise to the sense of community in religion and law".

To hold tradition in contempt is to be "like the puddle that was proud of standing alone while the river rushed by".[1] Wesleyan Methodism, as portrayed in Adam Bede, achieved a similar sense of continuity. It provided its followers with

'a faith which was a rudimentary culture, which linked their thoughts with the past, lifted their imagination above the sordid details of their own narrow lives'.[2]

In The Spanish Gypsy, George Eliot admires the traditions of Christian, Gypsy and Jew alike.[3] It is the broadening of outlook beyond self to Humanity which is the common feature of these different faiths.

George Eliot displays little sympathy with those who neglect historical continuity. St. Ogg's, for example, 'carries the traces of its long growth and history like a millennial tree'. The old Norman hall records 'the thoughts and hands of widely-sundered generations'. Yet the community lacks all sense of continuity: 'The mind of St. Ogg's did not look extensively before or after. It inherited a past without thinking of it'.[4] As a result, Maggie

'had come out of her school life ... with no other part of her inherited share in the hard-won treasures of thought, which generations of painful toil have laid up for the race of men, than shreds and patches of feeble literature and false history'.[5]

In the celebrated chapter which opens Book Four of The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot contrasts the ruins on the Rhine with those on the Rhone. The latter, like many of the useless elements in St. Ogg's, 'will be swept into the same oblivion with the generations of

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1. R I 139.
2. AB I 52.
3. SG pp.64 and 70
4. MF I 178-9 and 182.
5. Ibid., II 31.

ants and beavers'. But the castles on the Rhine 'belong to the grand historic life of humanity'. Maggie's troubles also claim our interest, as part of the 'suffering ... which belongs to every historical advance of mankind'.[1] George Eliot's poem, "Agatha", is set on the banks of the Rhine. The saintly heroine preserves the faith which originally built the monastery that now lies empty. Continuity is maintained:

> 'the bells,
> Pealing on high from two quaint convent towers
> Still ring the Catholic signals, summoning
> To grave remembrance of the larger life
> That bears our own, like perishable fruit
> Upon its heaven-wide branches'.

Agatha goes on pilgrimages to increase her sense of unity with the saints of old.[2]

Rome provides a centre for historical consciousness in Middlemarch. For Comte, Rome symbolised the continuity of western civilisation. It was the natural centre for papal authority, 'that one city in which alone the ancient order merged without interruption into the modern'.[3] George Eliot calls it 'the city of visible history'. She acknowledges,

> 'To those who have looked at Rome with the quickening power of a knowledge which breathes growing soul into all historic shapes, and traces out the suppressed transitions which unites all contrasts, Rome may still be the spiritual centre and interpreter of the world.'[4]

Ladislaw gains a new sense of history from Rome. But Dorothea, 'fed on meagre Protestant histories', and seeing all the ruins 'set in the midst of a sordid present', cannot appreciate the city. She is not helped by Casaubon's dry antiquarian researches:

> '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'.[5]

Without a sense of continuity in the life of Humanity the world becomes a series of 'tossed ruins'. Casaubon carries 'his taper among the tombs of the past' without concern for the present, except in the

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1. Ibid., II (3)-6.
2. LJ p.49.
3. AC, Phil II 271.
4. MM I 295-6.
5. Ibid., I 296 and 301.

form of his critics. Dorothea comes to recognise his work as mere 'fragments of a tradition which was itself a mosaic wrought from crushed ruins'.[1] The subjective synthesis was needed to bind the parts together.

Romola emphasises the continuity of human history. The Proem stresses 'the broad sameness of the human lot' over the centuries. Men have 'the same great needs ... we still resemble the men of the past more than we differ from them'. Dante's returning Florentine spirit notices little change in his city.[2] Romola inherits Bardo's obsession with the past. Her academic upbringing leaves her with 'nothing but memories ... that lay embedded in dark mines of books'. She 'had been accustomed to think of heroic deeds and great principles as something antithetic to the vulgar present'. But she learns from Savonarola that the past must be connected with the present. He tells her that she is well below a Christian believer who sees himself as part of the redemption which is "the history of the world".[3] Once again, George Eliot presents a traditional faith in the most Positive possible way.

The message is repeated throughout the novels. The exact nature of any tradition is unimportant. What matters is that the believer is incorporated into an historical life wider than his own. Judaism and Christianity, the traditions of the West, fulfil this special function even within the Religion of Humanity. They lend their traditions to Positivism.

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1. Ibid., I 124, II 223 and 312.
2. R I 2-12.
3. Ibid., I 90 and 376; II 107.

CHAPTER V

Ethics

I Cerebral Theory

Many of the elements of Comte's cerebral theory recur with remarkable regularity in George Eliot's novels. Of the egoistic propensities, Vanity, the love of approbation, is the most common. Against the varieties of egoism battle the three altruistic instincts, Attachment, Reverence and Benevolence. Some of the plots appear to be schematised almost as rigidly as Comte's own "Classification of the Internal Functions of the Brain". The combination of reverence and love is repeatedly invoked from the Scenes of Clerical Life to Daniel Deronda. I will examine here some of the clearest examples of George Eliot's characterisation on Comtean principles.

Theophrastus Such finds within himself "a permanent longing for approbation, sympathy,and love'.[1] So do many of George Eliot's other characters. The same basis egoistic and altruistic instincts reside, in varying proportions, in every single person. The struggle between the two, simplified into a contest between Vanity and Attachment, occurs in both Hetty Sorel and Arthur Donnithorne. Hetty is indisputably vain. She revels in imaginary scenes in which Arthur kisses her while 'everybody else is admiring and envying her'. Dinah notices her absence of affection. She 'saw too clearly the absence of any warm, self-devoting love in Hetty's nature'. When Arthur fails to appear in church, Hetty begins to weep, but soon controls her emotion. This is attributed to

> 'her vain little nature: she would have borne anything rather than be laughed at or pointed at with any other feeling than admiration'.[2]

Hetty improves under the influence of her attachment to Arthur. She blushes when Adam treats her kindly in the Poysers' garden. For

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1. TS p.8.
2. AB I 230, 236 and 299.

'the anxieties and fears of a first passion, with which she was trembling, had become stronger than vanity, had given her for the first time that sense of helpless dependence on another's feeling which awakens the clinging deprecating womanhood even in the shallowest girl that can experience it, and creates in her a sensibility to kindness which found her quite hard before'.[1]

Since she can only wear the ear-rings Arthur gives her in the bedroom, her love of approbation is frustrated, 'the essence of vanity being a reference to the impression produced on others'. Her 'passion and vanity' mingle and struggle together. Eventually the egoistic instinct triumphs. She becomes engaged to Adam, although 'Adam's attachment to her, Adam's caress, stirred no passion in her, were no longer enough to satisfy her vanity'.[2]

The same two instincts dominate Arthur's character. 'His own approbation was necessary to him', along with that of others. The plans for his estate which he outlines to Mr. Irwine include all the labourers "touching their hats to me with a look of goodwill". At his Birthday Feast, he feels a 'twinge of conscience' about his behaviour to Hetty, but it is 'too feeble to nullify the pleasure he felt in being praised'.[3] Yet Arthur's egoism is confronted by a measure of altruism. He is 'at once affectionate and vain'. He has 'a loving nature. Deeds of kindness ... were the common issue of his weakness and good qualities, of his egoism and his sympathy'.[4] The constant repitition of Comte's terminology grows wearisome, unsupported by the psychological insight with which George Eliot transforms the Positivist diagram into a convincing picture. But it is important to recognise the scheme behind the plot.

Maggie overcomes a similarly vain disposition. There is mingled egoism and altruism in her looking forward to Philip Wakem's 'affectionate admiring looks'. She tells him, "I thought you wanted to remind me

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1. Ibid., I 332.
2. Ibid., I 375; II 46 and 107.
3. Ibid. I 184, 254 and 399.
4. Ibid.,II 13 and 33.

that I am vain, and wish every one to admire me most."[1] Her love for Philip represents the altruistic side of her nature, her infatuation with Stephen the egoistic. She recognises the superiority of her attachment to Philip:

'in him the appeal was more strongly to her pity and womanly devotedness than to her vanity or other egoistic excitability of her nature'.

George Eliot acknowledges Maggie's

'excessive delight in admiration ... But there were things in her stronger than vanity - passion, and affection, and long deep memories of early discipline and effort'.[2]

This is the simple moral scheme with which George Eliot appears to have started. But in the course of giving imaginative life to the situations she created, the novelist complicated and confused the position of the moralist, so that it is quite possible for readers to take a completely different view of the two relationships. The original diagram, however, reveals itself in the terminology.

Pride and Vanity re-appear in Daniel Deronda in the persons of Grandcourt and Gwendolen. Pride, the love of power, weds Vanity, the love of approbation. Grandcourt's one aim in life is to exercise power over others, over his dogs, his horses, and his wife. He admires Gwendolen's spirit as worth mastering.[3] Gwendolen shares her husband's delight in horses, 'the symbols of command and luxury'. But, under his quiet domination, she is reduced to maintaining appearances. In the opening scenes in Leubronn and in her many other theatrical performances, she revels in admiration. Her 'wounded egoism' resents the criticism offered by Klesmer and Deronda.[4] Her gradual development under Daniel's guidance will be treated in the following section.

The egoistic instincts, horribly clear to the enhanced perception

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1. MF II 91 and 103.
2. Ibid., II 225 and 266.
3. DD I 233.
4. Ibid., II 43 and I 68.

of Latimer in "The Lifted Veil",[1] are balanced, in Comte's cerebral theory, by the existence of innate benevolence. George Eliot shared this belief. Even in someone as degenerate as Lawyer Dempster there are indestructible elements of altruism. His good moods are

'due to those stirrings of the more kindly, healthy sap of human feeling, by which goodness tries to get the upper hand in us whenever it seems to have the slightest chance'.

His love for his mother shows 'the deep-down fibrous roots of human love and goodness'.[2] George Eliot explains the reason why the sick-room is often a successful refuge from doubt:

'As we bend over the sick-bed, all the forces of our nature rush towards the channels of pity, of patience and of love, and sweep down ... our clamorous selfish desires.'[3]

Love and reverence are the two fundamental altruistic instincts on which Comte and George Eliot built their faith in human nature. The maxim to be inscribed on George Eliot's plaque in Westminster Abbey, taken from the Scenes of Clerical Life, explains quite clearly, 'The first condition of human goodness is something to love; the second, something to reverence.'[4] Variations on the word, 'reverance', or 'veneration' occur frequently in "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story".[5] The opening of "Janet's Repentance" regrets the lack of reverence among the parishioners of Milby. But by the end of the novel they have made ample amends. Mr. Jerome displays 'veneration and pity'; Miss Eliza Pratt achieves 'affectionate reverence'. This happy combination of the two altruistic instincts is only slightly varied for Mr. Tryan's sick-room visitors, who are 'led thither by venerating affection'.[6]

The words tend to grow hollow through over-use. George Eliot refers first to 'love and reverence' and then to 'reverence and love' in chapter XVII of Adam Bede.[7] Seth has 'this blessed gift of

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1. SM pp.295 and 307.
2. SCL II 121 and 128.
3. Ibid., II 271.
4. Ibid., II 164.
5. Ibid., I 131, 135, 142, 153, 171, 175 and 176.
6. Ibid., II 59, 169, 175 and 312.
7. AB I 271 and 278.

venerating love'. We are constantly reminded of the 'large fund of reverence' in Adam's nature, his 'great need of love and reverence'. There is even a hint of cerebral localisation in George Eliot's explanation that his 'tenderness lay very close to his reverence, so that the one could hardly be stirred without the other'.[1]

Maggie Tulliver's strongest need is for love. But reverence recurs in Silas Marner and "The Lifted Veil".[2] In Romola, Tessa reveres Tito, Tito Romola, and Romola Savonarola. Romola's only law is 'personal love and reverence'. This means that her whole faith is injured by her rebellion against Savonarola, 'bruising her own reverence'. George Eliot explains the consequences of losing 'faith in a fellow-man whom he has profoundly loved and reverenced'. However, even after Savonarola's Trial by Fire, his followers continue to offer him 'venerating love'.[3] In Felix Holt, Harold Transome lacks the disposition to revere, but George Eliot venerates Rufus Lyon's reverence. Esther pours abundant reverence on Felix. She shudders from the prospect of a fate such as Mrs. Transome's, whose

> 'dreary waste of years empty of sweet trust and affection ... seemed to.... urge her towards the life where the draughts of joy sprang from the unchanging fountains of reverence and devout love'.[4]

Daniel Deronda positively bulges with love and reverence. Daniel himself reveres Mrs. Mallinger and her daughters. For his real parents he feels even more. He asks Sir Hugo about his father 'with a tremulous reverence in his voice'. He overwhelms his mother with his reverence.[5] Daniel and Mirah form a society for mutual veneration. Her 'reverential gratitude' towards him is unwearying. He returns 'ardent reverential love'. He proposes 'in a tone of reverent adoration' and is accepted with 'religious gratitude'.[6] Daniel

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1. Ibid., I 52, 70 and 245; II 9 and 157.
2. MF I 52-4; SM pp.148, 226, 231 and 279.
3. Ibid., II 48, 301, 323 and 379.
4. FH I 164 and 273; II 112, 249 and 349.
5. DD I 267; III 105 and 135.
6. Ibid., I 288, 302, and 337-8; III 25, 165, 319 and 380.

always treats Mordecai as the 'venerated elder brother' he becomes.[1] Both Daniel and Mirah fear that their friends and relatives may be lacking in this faculty. Mirah venerates the Meyricks, but Daniel fears they may have insufficient 'reverential emotion' to appreciate Mordecai. Mirah suffers shame and grief because her father is so 'unreverenced'. In her humiliation, she represents 'the stabbed heart of reverence'.[2] Among others, Gwendolen and Hans both revere Deronda while Lush conspicuously lacks this innate quality.[3]

George Eliot clearly believed very strongly in the need for reverence. Theophrastus deplores as "Debasing the Moral Currency" the sense of humour which turns all serious things into jokes and so degrades 'the healthy appetites and affections of our nature'. We cannot, he argues, 'soak our children in habits of contempt and exultant jibing' and expect them to remain 'reverent'.[4] George Eliot displayed the same seriousness. She regarded love and reverence as the inherited wealth of human nature, to be treasured and cultivated, not squandered. This belief so penetrates her writing that the words recur with monotonous regularity and become themselves a debased currency. In this respect she inherited not only Comte's ideas, but his lack of humour.

II The Subordination of Egoism to Altruism

Comte believed, on physiological grounds, that human nature was capable of improvement through the habitual exercise of the altruistic instincts and the channelling of egoism to benevolent purposes. George Eliot's novels illustrate the formation of moral traditions in this

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1. Ibid., III 41; cp. II 332 and 405; III 157.
2. Ibid., I 301; III 51, 294 and 298.
3. Ibid., II 234 and 280; III 83.
4. TS pp.148-52.

manner. 'Character', she explains in Middlemarch, 'is a process and an unfolding'. Farebrother tells Dorothea, "character is not cut in marble". Lydgate could therefore be guilty of collaboration with Bulstrode. But Dorothea sees that if he had degenerated to that extent he could also be healed. For the physiological laws work both ways.[1] George Eliot's novels show some of her characters ameliorating their nature while others exercise and strengthen only their egoistic instincts.

The process is definitely physiological. Tryan and the Evangelical revival bring to Milby 'that idea of duty ... which is to the moral life what the addition of a great central ganglion is to the animal life'.[2] George Eliot's optimism was based on the Positivist physiological arguments developed first by Comte and then by Lewes. Frederic Harrison recalled her springing up on one occasion and saying,

> "Yes ! the day will come when it will be a natural instinct to stretch out a hand to help one who needs support, as automatic and irresistible as it is now to use our hands to keep ourselves from a fall."[3]

Her novels continually refer to fibres of affection, tissues of sentiment, and channels of feeling. These are more than metaphors. For she believed with Comte that the formation of moral traditions depended upon the continual exercise of the appropriate instincts and the consequent development of habitual physiological reflexes.

The subordination of egoism to altruism was not to be achieved by asceticism, which Comte deplored. Maggie attempts to stifle all her instincts. Philip tells her that she is "starving into dulness all the higher powers of your nature". He warns her, "every rational satisfaction of your nature that you deny now, will assault you like a savage appetite".[4] His predictions are fulfilled in the sixth

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1. MM I 226 and III 310.
2. SCL II 163.
3. Frederic Harrison, Memories and Thoughts, pp. 159-60.
4. MF II 94 and 97.

chapter of Book VII, "Illustrating the Laws of Attraction". Maggie feels the 'intoxicating effect' of a life of pleasure after 'years of privation'. She confesses to Philip that one result of her "starved life" was a too eager craving for egoistic satisfaction.[1] Philip succeeds in subordinating his egoism and developing his altruism. His moving letter to Maggie after her return to St. Ogg's talks of "those terrible throes that love must suffer before it can be disembodied of selfish desire". His love and endurance bring about the birth of strong sympathy" and initiate him into "that enlarged life which grows and grows by appropriating the life of others".[2] To live in others is the height of altruism to which every Positivist aspires.

Tito and Romola illustrate all too clearly the separate moral traditions of egoism and altruism. Tito's successive submissions to his egoistic desires strengthen them and destroy him. He decides to sell Baldassare's jewels and invest the money with Cennini rather than go in search of his adoptive father. George Eliot remarks that already,

> 'in this first distinct colloquy with himself ... the little rills of selfishness had united and made a channel, so that they could never again meet with the same resistance'.[3]

After Dino delivers Baldassare's message that he has been enslaved and taken probably to Antioch, George Eliot analyses "Tito's Dilemma" a second time. More 'tissues of sentiment' are destroyed.[4] Eighteen months later she records 'the final departure of moral youthfulness' displayed in Tito's conscious adoption of a part. He denies Baldassare to his face, in a completely automatic reflex. Again, George Eliot explains,

> 'Tito was experiencing that inexorable law of human souls, that we prepare ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil which gradually determines character.'[5]

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1. Ibid., II 209 and 231.
2. Ibid., II 371-2.
3. R I 153.
4. Ibid., ch. XI, I 177.
5. Ibid., I 329 and 340.

The change in Tito's nature is symbolised by his adoption of armour under his tunic. Romola declares, "I could fancy it a story of enchantment - that some malignant fiend had changed your sensitive human skin into a hard shell." She has to admit that he is morally altered when he is unable to look up at her to say goodbye.[1] He becomes a triple agent without a shred of conscience. George Eliot once more gives a thorough explanation:

'Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind at large makes a moral tradition for the race; and to have once acted nobly seems a reason why we should always be noble. But Tito was feeling the effect of an opposite tradition: he had won no memories of self-conquest and faithfulness from which he could have a sense of falling.'[2]

Romola belongs to this 'opposite tradition'. Her concern for the danger which forces Tito to wear armour 'made a channel for the sweet habit of kindness'. Once she has nursed the plague-stricken villagers back to life, her thoughts naturally revert to her beloved Florentines:

'Her work in this green valley was done, and the emotions that were disengaged from the people immediately around her rushed back into the old deep channels of use and affection.'[3]

Adam Bede and Rufus Lyon both develop altruism through their experience of love and suffering. Adam gains 'new fibres' of affection which make him cling more closely to his family and the Poysers: 'the power of loving was all the while gaining new force within him'.[4] Rufus nurses Annette for three years during which the continual 'self-suppression and life in another ... induced a more thorough renunciation than he had ever known'. Not only is his altruism developed but his egoistic instincts are usefully channelled:

'The good Rufus had his ire and his egoism; but they existed only as the red heat which gave force to his belief and his teaching.'[5]

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1. Ibid., I 383 and 422.
2. Ibid., II 88.
3. Ibid., I 382 and II 413.
4. AB II 303.
5. FH I 132 and 76.

Felix modifies his anger by 'habitual preoccupation with large thoughts'. Esther develops hidden resources of altruism which effect a complete change of character. George Eliot comments,

'life is measured by the rapidity of change, the succession of influences that modify the being; and Esther had undergone something little short of an inward revolution'.[1]

Among those who tread the downward path of moral degeneration are Jermyn, Featherstone and Lapidoth. Jermyn uses Mrs. Transome quite shamelessly. George Eliot remarks that his change of manner is not extraordinary. Sudden impulsive sinners are

'much fewer than those who are led on through the years by the gradual demands of a selfishness which has spread its fibres far and wide through the intricate vanities and sordid cares of an everyday existence'.

His original selfishness had been 'well-encouraged' to such an extent that he is reduced to the impulses of "a hunted brute'. George Eliot again traces the 'gradual development' of egoism.[2] Similarly, in Middlemarch, she explains how a monster of egoism such as Featherstone came into being. There may have been some innate virtue in him, but it had been 'easily discouraged ... by unabashed vices'.[3] Lapidoth's unscrupulousness is also the result of a gradual process. George Eliot claims, 'Lapidoth was not born with this sort of callousness: he had achieved it.' The comfort of Mirah's care 'made a change of habits seem impossible to him'. But the process of degeneration has gone too far. As with Cecil in Lewes's Rose, Blanche and Violet, gambling has become for him an idée fixe.[4]

Both moral traditions are open to Gwendolen. She has the 'inborn energy of egoistic desire' which can be channelled or subordinated to altruism. But she lacks tenderness, curling up and hardening like a sea-anemone against Rex's love. She fears, "I can't love people".[5]

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1. Ibid., II 76 and 340.
2. Ibid., II 235-6 and 325.
3. MM II 76.
4. DD III 355 and 358-9.
5. Ibid., I 57, 116 and 119.

After Klesmer's judgement on her artistic potential, her "better self ... made a desperate effort to find its way above the stifling layers of egoistic disappointment and irritation'.[1] But her marriage brings out the worst in her. She puts her 'trust in the hardening effect of use and wont that would make her indifferent to her miseries'. Deronda marks her 'hardening' from daily 'suppression of feeling'. She tells him, "I am afraid of getting wicked".[2] It is under his guidance that her moral regeneration becomes possible. Her struggles of mind, initiated by his promptings, 'wakened something like a new soul' in her. He advises her to develop her faculty of fear into moral conscience by means of meditation, thus channelling her innate instincts. Her remorse after Grandcourt's death is a sign of her 'recoverable nature'.[3] When she returns to her mother she behaves more considerately. Deronda explains to her that she can now follow the path of altruism and abandon egoism:

"You have had a vision of injurious, selfish action - a vision of possible degradation; think that a severe angel, seeing you along the road of error, grasped you by the wrist, and showed you the horror of the life you must avoid."

She begins 'the struggling regenerative process' with determination: "I shall live. I shall be better."[4]

Dorothea draws unselfishness even out of Rosamund, who delivers her soul under 'impulses which she had not known before'. But the formation of a benevolent moral tradition requires the habitual exercise of the altruistic instincts, which Rosamund cannot maintain. Lydgate, as a doctor, benefits from having habitually to think of the needs of others. Bulstrode's hypocrisy derives from his failure to do so. George Eliot remarks,

'There is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out

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1. Ibid., I 393.
2. Ibid., II 222; III 91 and 99.
3. Ibid., II 83 and 268; III 232.
4. Ibid., III 345, 347 and 403.

our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men.'[1]

Dorothea's constant thought for others creates 'a current into which all thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow'. She treats Ladislaw's first visit as 'an opportunity for active sympathy'. When she cannot help her neighbours actively, she still exercises her sympathies by thinking about their problems. This enables her to help them better when the situation arises, as in Lydgate's case:

> 'All the active thought with which she had before been representing to herself the trials of Lydgate's lot, and this young marriage union ... - all this vivid sympathetic experience returned to her now as a power: it asserted itself as acquired knowledge asserts itself and will not let us see as we saw in the day of our ignorance.'[2]

Daniel Deronda begins with an 'ardently affectionate nature'. But he increases his altruism by exercise, both active and imaginative. He displays a 'subdued fervour of sympathy, an activity of imagination on behalf of others'. His sensibilities are 'enlarged by his early habit of thinking himself imaginatively into the experience of others'.[3] He determines not to hate Grandcourt, 'clinging to the kindlier affections within him as a possession'. He hopes to channel the energy derived from the satisfaction of egoistic desires into the general cause, 'that the very best of human possibilities might befall him - the blending of a complete personal love in one current with a larger duty'.[4] He is fortunate that there is no clash between his love for Mirah and his mission to Jerusalem. The one is subsumed in the other.

In all these novels, George Eliot is demonstrably working within a Comtean moral framework. Egoism must be subordinated to altruism before her characters can achieve happiness. She illustrates the formation of moral traditions through the habitual exercise of the innate instincts.

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1. MM III 406, 206 and 133.
2. Ibid., I 311-2 and III 391.
3. DD I 255 and 266; II 355.
4. Ibid., II 5 and III 118.

She does not describe the precise physiological activity which accompanies the moral processes. Like Comte, she is more concerned to show that these processes are regular, predictable and even controllable. For both, the most important domain of free will is the possibility of amelioration through the conscious formation of moral habits.

III The Family

Comte taught that the family played a crucial part in the education and exercise of the feelings. Family relationships formed the link between egoism and altruism, the love of self and the life for others. Filial reverence developed the sense of continuity, conjugal love solidarity, and paternal love benevolence. All these relations are portrayed in George Eliot's novels, fulfilling the educational function which Comte described. She expressed most clearly the wider significance of family love through Theophrastus Such. He deplores the narrowing of the word 'moral' to apply solely to sexual mores. A financial swindler should not be excused because he is 'an excellent family man':

> 'the relation of the sexes and the primary ties of kinship are the deepest roots of human wellbeing, but to make them by themselves the equivalent of morality is to cut off the channels of feeling through which they are the feeders of that wellbeing. They are the original fountains of a sensibility to the claims of others, which is the bond of societies'.

They are contaminated by being made merely personal.[1]

Maternal love, Comte taught, is in itself egoistic. But its energy can be channelled into altruism, so long as the mother purges her emotion of selfishness. It then forms a link between egoism and altruism. In "Janet's Repentance", George Eliot exclaims,

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1. TS pp.233-5.

'Mighty is the force of motherhood ... it makes selfishness become self-denial, and gives even to hard vanity the glance of admiring love.'[1]

She likens Adam Bede's feeling for Hetty to that of a benevolent mother whose love is 'that completest type of the life in another which is the essence of real human love'.[2] Mrs. Tulliver's 'self-devoting maternity ... found a future to rest on in the life of this young thing', her daughter.[3] But Mrs. Transome fails to make the transition from egoism. She is bitterly disappointed in her son. But George Eliot explains that this is not wholly his fault:

'The mother's love is at first an absorbing delight, blunting all other sensibilities; it is an expansion of the animal existence; it enlarges the imagined range for self to move in; but in after years it can only continue to be joy on the same terms as other long-lived love - that is, by much suppression of self, and power of living in the experience of another.'[4]

Filial reverence is equally important. It is the one healthy feature in Lawyer Dempster, one of the many in Adam Bede. It is the foundation of Comte's morality in so far as it is the prime source of the sense of continuity. In The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot concentrates on the childhood days of the Tullivers, because 'the thoughts and loves of these first years would always make part of their lives'. We would have no secure foundation for morality, she argues, 'if the loves and sanctities of our life had no deep immovable roots in memory'.[5] Maggie's morality depends completely on the sense of duty to the ties of kinship and the past. She tells Philip, "I desire no future that will break the ties of the past." It is ominous that she and Stephen revel in the present to the neglect of the past: 'Memory was excluded.'[6] After a momentary lapse into spontaneity, when she drifts with Stephen along the river, Maggie

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1. SCL II 186.
2. AB II 216.
3. MF II 13.
4. FH I 32.
5. MF I 58-9 and 235.
6. Ibid., II 278 and 311.

awakens to a sense of broken continuity: 'she had rent the ties that had given meaning to duty'. She had had "no guide but the wayward choice of her own passion'. She attacks his concept of "natural law", which would

> "justify breaking the most sacred ties that can ever be formed on earth. If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie ? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment."

She returns to her family, refusing to make her pleasure out of their pain. Philip's letter comforts her and stirs 'all the fibres that bound her to the calmer past'.[1] Of her family only Lucy is made any happier by her decision, but Maggie feels that she has preserved her precious sense of continuity by remaining faithful to them.

Silas Marner's removal from Lantern Yard destroys his sense of the reality of the past. His eremetic life in Raveloe affords little opportunity for the exercise of altruism. He becomes like a discarded piece of machinery, 'a handle or a crooked tube, which has no meaning standing apart'. Yet his grief over a broken water-pot 'showed that the sap of affection was not all gone'. He thinks of future guineas 'as if they had been unborn children'.[2] What he needs is a real child to exercise his affections, and George Eliot provides him with precisely that. Eppie immediately connects him with his past. He thinks she is 'his little sister come back to him in a dream'. Her arrival is 'a message from that far-off life: it stirred fibres that had never been moved in Raveloe'.[3] He recovers 'a consciousness of unity between his past and present'. She also connects him with his community, reinforcing his sense of solidarity:

> 'the child created fresh links between his life and the lives from which he had hitherto shrunk continually into narrower isolation ...
>
> the little child had come to link him once more with the whole world'.[4]

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1. Ibid., II 322, 329 and 390.
2. SM pp.29-30.
3. Ibid., pp.170-1.
4. Ibid., pp.213, 192 and 200.

She performs the function of the child as prescribed by Comte.

The absence of maternal love and filial reverence is noticeable in the Cass family, in which the Squire's wife has died. The Red House lacks 'that presence of the wife and mother which is the fountain of wholesome love and fear in parlour and kitchen'. George Eliot suggests that this accounts for both sons turning out ill. It requires the arrival of Nancy Lammeter to restore to 'the Red House the habit of filial reverence', by preserving the various relics of the Squire after his death.[1]

Tito lacks all sense of filial reverence and gratitude, "the love that is rooted in memories'. He deliberately sells the ring Baldassare gave him, because it might provoke recognition. It symbolises 'a claim from the past'.[2] For Romola, in contrast, the preservation of her father's library becomes a 'sacramental obligation' of 'piety towards his memory'. Tito attacks her "futile devotion" to the wishes of the dead.[3] When he sells the library, she leaves him. Yet the marriage tie is also binding. Romola's thoughts, after she discovers the existence of Tessa and her children, are portrayed in anachronistically Positivist terms reminiscent of those used by George Eliot after her elopement with Lewes. The 'sanctity attached to all close relations' makes her feel 'that the light abandonment of ties, whether inherited or voluntary, because they had ceased to be pleasant, was the uprooting of social and personal virtues'.[4] She always returns to Tito, no matter how wicked he has been.

Love of family, in the Comtean scheme, leads to love of country. Tito displays neither. Bernado describes him as "one of the demoni, who are of no particular country". He even suggests leaving Florence,

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1. Ibid., pp.34 and 226-7.
2. R I 151 and 216.
3. Ibid., I 374-5 and 435.
4. Ibid., II 272.

in an attempt to destroy Romola's sense of continuity: "I should like to dip her a little in the soft waters of forgetfulness."[1] Comte stated clearly,

'The man who is incapable of deep affection for one whom he has chosen as his partner in the most intimate relations of life, can hardly be expected to be believed when he professes devotion to a mass of human beings of whom he knows nothing.'

Romola is similarly suspicious that Tito 'professed to appropriate the widest sympathies and had no pulse for the nearest'.[2]

Harold Transome lacks any feeling for his mother. He shocks her on his return by announcing his newly-acquired Radicalism, but merely reads the paper while she struggles with the news. George Eliot remarks that he

'had no wish opposed to filial kindness, but his busy thoughts were imperiously determined by habits which had no reference to any woman's feelings'.[3]

Esther contemplates the life she could expect as heir to the Transome estate and recognises 'the incongruity of that past which had created the sanctities and affections of her life with that future which was coming to her'.[4] Like Eppie, she chooses to stay with the father she has known and the husband she has chosen.

Don Silva is the least fortunate of the rebels against continuity. His personal love for Fedalma leads him to abrogate his responsibility to defend Bedmar against the gypsies. The 'heritage inevitable' makes his remorse take the form of all the sacred images of the past, in particular the faces of his family. George Eliot warns,

'Such revenge
Is wrought by the long travail of mankind
On him who scorns it, and would shape his life
Without obedience.'[5]

Neglect of the family becomes a sin against Humanity.

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1. Ibid., I 294 and 433.
2. AC, Pol I 189; R 436.
3. FH I 25.
4. Ibid., II 186.
5. SG pp.145 and 314.

Gwendolen begins very badly by pawning a necklace which belonged to her father. Irreverent towards his memory, she also lacks a home in which affection can take root.[1] She dominates both her mother and her sisters. Mirah, as Deronda explains to his mother, cultivates the memory of her family: "she has clung with all her affection to the memory of her mother and the fellowship of her people".[2] Gwendolen herself eventually learns to behave considerately towards her mother. She even thinks affectionately of Offendene and plans to return there to her family.

Deronda, of course, is a model of filial reverence. But in his case, as with many other Eliot characters, the preservation of family ties is developed into Positivist worship. The deliberate treatment of women as madonnas who represent Humanity and as angels whose worship develops altruism, enters another level of Comtean significance. It will be examined more fully in the following chapter.

IV Public Opinion

George Eliot illustrates in detail what Comte had simply stated, that public opinion is an important external factor in the strengthening of conscience. To live openly is to ensure that temptations can be kept under control. Concealment fosters evil desires; once confessed they lose some of their power to corrupt. These processes are dramatised in the novels, where concealment is continually contrasted with openness. George Eliot clearly recognised the power of public opinion. But she also recognised the need to bring it to a higher level of understanding before it could function ideally in the way that Comte described. Otherwise it remained an apotheosis of Mrs. Grundy.

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1. DD I 22 and 26-7.
2. Ibid., III 183.

Adam Bede illustrates the corrupting influence of concealment. Arthur Donnithorne needs the strengthening power of public opinion. For him, 'other men's opinions' is the air on which his feelings 'grew strong'. Mr. Irwine feels that Arthur's need for respect is a sufficient safeguard against whatever temptations he faces.[1] Arthur himself, when he realises the dangers in Hetty's charms, resolves to confess but he shies away at the crucial moment. George Eliot charts the progressively corrupting effect of this decision. At his Birthday feast, she notices that he looks as 'open-looking and candid' as Adam Bede, but warns that 'secrets leave no lines in young faces'.[2] Adam argues, "You know it couldn't be made public as you've behaved to Hetty as y'have done". But George Eliot explains, 'Arthur was in the wretched position of an open, generous man, who has committed an error which makes deception seem a necessity." He cannot meet Adam's trust 'with frank confession'.[3] The evil resulting from his affair with Hetty is increased by the fact that the 'whole thing had been secret'. Irwine is left to wish that 'he himself had been less fastidious about intruding on another man's secrets'.[4]

Hetty's suffering is partly a result of her failure to live openly. Her 'sparkling self-engrossed loveliness' is contrasted with Dinah's

> 'calm pitying face, with its open glance which told that her heart lived in no cherished secrets of its own, but in feelings which it longed to share with all the world'.

Dinah is incapable of 'deceptive concealment', and confesses quite openly her love for Adam.[5] Hetty, however, encourages Adam only in case her uncle and aunt 'suspect her of having some secret lover'. She 'hugged her secret ... with gratified pride'. When Adam tells her that Arthur cannot possibly contemplate marriage, he only increases

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1. AB I 413 and 260.
2. Ibid., I 384.
3. Ibid., II 14 and 26.
4. Ibid., II 36 and 180.
5. Ibid., I 210 and II 353.

her 'determination to conceal what she felt still governed her'. She looks white and ill. But Adam's warning not to return to her family straight away 'recalled to her the necessity of rallying her native powers of concealment'. She is 'buoyed up by a secret hope that the letter would contradict everything he had said'.[1] Disappointed, the habit of concealment continues: 'she had to conceal her misery'. She soon has to conceal her pregnancy. Leaving Hayslope, she begins for the first time to value her old life, when she had had 'nothing to hide from anyone'. For she 'could conceive no other existence for herself in future than a hidden one'. Even when she and the baby are discovered, she persists in denying her crime, until Dinah finally elicits a confession.[2]

Maggie Tulliver has also to battle against secrecy. Her conscience warns her that to arrange "accidental" meetings with Philip 'implied secrecy' and that the 'doubleness would act as a spiritual blight'. She feels that she destroys 'the simplicity and clearness of her life by admitting a ground of concealment'. She tells Philip, "concealment is bad, however it may be caused".[3] George Eliot reinforces 'Maggie's true prompting against a concealment that would introduce doubleness into her own mind'. For one year, she remarks, 'Maggie had had the burden of concealment on her mind'. When Tom discovers her secret and forces her to promise never again to meet Philip in private, Maggie feels a welcome sense of 'deliverance from concealment' along with resentment at his harshness.[4] As an openly avowed friend, Philip becomes a source of strength, 'a sort of outward conscience to her'. But her relationship with Stephen becomes secret and unhealthy.[5]

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1. Ibid., II 45-6 and 49-53.
2. Ibid., II 67, 125 and Ch. XLV.
3. MF II 56 and 91.
4. Ibid., II 98, 110 and 127.
5. Ibid., II 225, 262 and 307.

What Maggie needs to bolster her conscience is public opinion. When she returns to St. Ogg's, she 'craved that outward help to her better purpose which would come from complete, submissive confession'.[1] Dr. Kenn fulfils this need. But public opinion is so backward in the town that it cannot perform its proper function. This was apparent earlier. Bob Jakin, for example, had wanted chivalry but that 'fine moral aroma would not have been thought much of by the public opinion of Kennel Yard'. Maggie had been sensitive to every expression of disapproval. Her barber's '"tut-tut-tut!" ... was equivalent to the strongest expression of public opinion'.[2] Now, in the second chapter of Book VII, "St. Ogg's Passes Judgment" and George Eliot illustrates the failure of the towns-people to provide the moral support Maggie so desperately needs. In St. Ogg's, 'public opinion', which is 'of feminine gender', would have accepted her returning with Stephen after a decent interval. But to return home alone is unacceptable. Dr. Kenn's attempt to set an example by employing her as a governess gives rise to unhealthy rumours. She has to resign to avoid 'the appearance of evil - an "appearance" that is always dependent on the average quality of surrounding minds'.[3] As Levine has observed, the final chapters of The Mill on the Floss suggest 'both the power of public opinion and the need to develop it more consistently to a higher level of sympathy'.[4]

Godfrey Cass also suffers from a 'hidden bond'. He hides the existence of his wife, Molly, 'in the darkest corner of his heart'. He has a 'kindly disposition', but, George Eliot warns, 'no disposition is a security from evil wishes to a man whose unhappiness hangs on duplicity'.[5] Like Arthur Donnithorne, Godfrey resolves to confess

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1. Ibid.,II 340.
2. Ibid., I 76 and 128.
3. Ibid., II 350 and 386.
4. David Levine, "Intelligence as Deception: MF", PMLA LXXX (1965) 405.
5. SM pp.164 and 175.

everything, but his nerve fails when he actually confronts his father. Similarly, he is afraid to tell Nancy about Eppie 'after that long concealment'. But when Duncey's crime is discovered, Godfrey accepts that "sooner or later ... our secrets are found out". He confesses everything to Nancy and resolves, "I'll be plain and open for the rest o" my life."[1] Concealment contributes also to Latimer's problems. He keeps his abnormal perception a secret even from his old friend, Charles Meunier, thus drawing closer 'the shroud of concealment'.[2]

Tito's moral degeneration is hastened by secrecy. George Eliot utilises the most trivial incident to illustrate the harmfulness of habitual concealment. Tito denies knowing Tessa when Nello catches him waving to her in the crowd.[3] Because no one in Florence knows about Baldassare, Tito escapes the moral pressure to conform to accepted standards of behaviour. Many Greeks had made sacrifices 'for the sake of freeing relatives from slavery to the Turks. Public opinion did not regard this as exceptional virtue.' Tito had acted on impulse to 'conceal half the fact' by saying that Baldassare was "lost". This concealment, George Eliot argues, leads him to be 'tempted to baseness rather than that the precise facts of his conduct should not remain for ever concealed'. She contrasts his secret cherishing of guilty wishes with 'the purifying influence of public confession', which banishes all hope in the satisfaction of those wishes.[4]

Romola cannot bear secrecy. She relieves her guilty feelings over visiting Dino, for the first time doing something unknown to her father, by telling Tito, who fears that his own secrets will be revealed. She is ashamed of her 'studied concealment' when she escaped in the guise of a nun.[5] She attempts to return to 'a frank

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1. Ibid., pp.99-102, 238 and 246.
2. Ibid., pp.332-3.
3. R I 143.
4. Ibid., I 150-3.
5. Ibid., I 205 and II 61

relation' with Tito, through 'open speech'. She complains, "You will be open with me about nothing", not even the reason for his chain-armour. But it is impossible for him to be open: 'Genuineness implied confession of the past'. He has too many 'hostages to deceit'.[1]

The Transomes also treasure concealment. Mrs. Transome harbours 'secrets which her son must never know'and Harold himself entered into a 'long-concealed marriage'. The secrecy is continually stressed. Mrs. Transome is described as 'secretly dependent on a man who is beneath her in feeling'. That man turns out to be Jermyn, 'whose brand she secretly bore'.[2] Rufus Lyon manages to escape from the constrictions of secrecy. His early 'inability to speak of the past ... came from an initial concealment'. Esther is unaware that she is not his daughter, and 'there were other things yet more difficult for him to be open about'. He comes to see that his concealment was wrong. He tells her everything, and 'regarded his narrative as a confession'. He insists, "we ought to strive that our affections be rooted in the truth". As with Godfrey Cass, the minister's openness brings unexpected results. Esther deliberately continues to call him "Father", and asks forgiveness for her own lack of love.[3]

The first section of chapter four describes Felix Holt's belief in the power of public opinion. George Eliot also describes how this works in the case of Harold Transome. Christian offers to sell him the information about Esther's parentage for two thousand pounds and to leave the country for an even greater sum. Harold resists the temptation, thinking how it would appear if such conduct on his part became public knowledge: 'Thus the outside conscience came in aid of

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1. Ibid., II 166, 187, 191 and 204.
2. FH I 23, 35, 173 and 175.
3. Ibid., I 116-7 and II 24-8.

the inner.'[1] Not that the society that George Eliot describes is morally elevated above the average. She directs her sarcasm against the "North Loamshire Herald" and the "Duffield Watchman", 'these large-minded guides of public opinion'.[2] But she certainly recognises the potential moral influence of public opinion.

Middlemarch dramatises the power of public opinion. A note in the Quarry for Middlemarch makes this quite clear:

> '[The idea which governs the plot about Bulstrode is, that there is nothing which the law can lay hold of to make him responsible for: the Nemesis is wrought out by the public opinion determined against him]'.[3]

Sir James Fitzjames Stephen was so delighted with the legal subtlety of the plot that he suggested further ramifications, which included Bulstrode confessing to Farebrother while Ladislaw takes careful notes concealed under a bed, only to have his evidence rejected in court.[4] As well as over dramatising, Stephen missed the point. The trouble with Bulstrode is that he cannot confess or live openly. After deliberate negligence which causes Raffles' death, his conscience, lacking the stimulation of public opinion, is 'soothed by the enfolding wing of secrecy'. He tells his wife nothing. But since 'it was in her nature strongly to object to such concealment', she reacts against his 'odious deceit'. But 'concealment had been the habit of his life, and the impulse to confession had no power against the dread of a deeper humiliation'.[5]

Bulstrode's downfall is eventually brought about by public opinion. George Eliot cannot sympathise with the mode of its operation but recognises its effectiveness. She refers scathingly to the quality of candour in Middlemarch, where it entails letting friends know that they are no longer respected and objecting to a wife looking happier

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1. Ibid., II 152.
2. Ibid., I 163.
3. A.T. Kitchel, Quarry for 'MM', p.54.
4. Sir James Fitzjames Stephen to GE, 4/11/72, Yale MS III.
5. MM III 272, 328, 333 and 444.

than her husband's character warrants. There, 'regard for a friend's moral improvement' is displayed by gloomy remarks accompanied by melancholy staring at the furniture. The Liggins controversy no doubt added bitterness to George Eliot's comment that public opinion in Middlemarch never thinks a book is not written by someone else. The public reception of her own behaviour is reflected in the judgement Middlemarch makes of Dorothea.[1]

The principles behind the Positivist faith in public opinion are seen to operate in Middlemarch. Fred Vincy is enabled to recover because he confesses his follies both to his father and to Caleb Garth. Farebrother also believes in living openly. He tells Fred of his own love for Mary Garth. This openness secures himself against the temptation to take advantage of the young man's stupidity.[2] Lydgate displays a 'proud openness'. He attacks Rosamund for "acting secretly" in going to Trumbull and writing to Sir Godwin without consulting him. He assures her, "nothing can be so fatal as a want of openness and confidence between us". Again he insists, "you seem not to see how any concealment divides us ... I should never be angry with you if you would be quite open with me." Yet he himself slips into the habit of not telling her everything. He confesses to Dorothea, "I ought to be more open".[3] This basic Positivist maxim remains unquestioned.

The dichotomy between secrecy and openness recurs throughout Daniel Deronda. Young Rex has 'no more notion of concealment than a sick animal', while for Gwendolen, having something to conceal has 'a bracing quality'. She tells her mother neither about Grandcourt nor Deronda. George Eliot more than once refers to her 'proud concealment".[4]

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1. Ibid., III 320-1, 456 and 464.
2. Ibid., III 218.
3. Ibid., I 187; III 199, 202-4, 341 and 358.
4. DD I 125 and 221-2; cp. II 214 and 222.

Grandcourt's life is 'full of secrets' such as Mrs. Glasher. Deronda views Gwendolen as having 'wedded her fresh hopes to old secrets'.[1] Yet under his influence she grows increasingly more open. At the New Year's Eve Ball Deronda becomes 'almost alarmed at Gwendolen's precipitancy of confidence towards him, in contrast with her habitual resolute concealment'. He notices that 'she was curiously free from alarm lest he should think her openness wanting in dignity'.[2] She summons him to her library and confesses everything to him. He in turn urges her, "Confess everything to your husband; leave nothing concealed".[3] After Grandcourt's death, she treats Deronda as 'a terrible-browed angel from whom she could not think of concealing any deed'. She insists on confessing to him her murderous wish. Her 'proud secrecy was disenthroned' in his presence.[4] Her conversion, at least in this respect, is complete.

Daniel's dislike of concealment stems from his own background: 'He had learned to hate secrecy about the grand ties and obligations of his life'.[5] He is tempted to keep secret his discovery of Ezra Cohen, but remembers his own suffering as a result of others' ordering his life against Comte's maxim, "Vivre au grand jour". This had meant that 'he had not open daylight on all its relations, so that he had not, like other men, the full guidance of primary duties'. It made him regard 'concealment as a bane of life'. He chooses rather 'that openness which is the sweet fresh air of our moral life'.[6] Mirah also insists to Daniel, "I must tell you everything". He admires her 'disposition to reliance and openness', and in turn confesses everything about his past to Mordecai.[7] Mirah contemplates

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1. Ibid., II 34 and 239.
2. Ibid., II 255-6 and 261.
3. Ibid., III 98-100.
4. Ibid., III 196, 220 and 343.
5. Ibid., I 309.
6. Ibid., II 160-3 and 177.
7. Ibid., I 315; II 287 and 341.

shielding Mordecai from knowledge of his father, but Mrs. Meyrick tells her, "You must not have concealments of that sort".[1] Daniel's visit to his mother brings out his anger against 'the concealments' in his life. She argues that concealment is a woman's weapon against male tyranny, but he urges her to forsake "concealments" for the sake of truth.[2]

George Eliot repeatedly insists on the necessity of living openly and avoiding concealment. Her analysis of the feelings of guilt and alienation which accompany secrecy are a result of her own psychological insight. But the basic teaching derives from Comte, as does her recognition of the role of public opinion in bolstering conscience. Theophrastus Such certainly values 'the wholesome restraining power of public opinion'. Such public disapproval 'incorporates the best social life of the race'.[3] But neither he nor George Eliot are prepared to accept the moral judgements of an uneducated public. Comte's ideal can only function properly in a more advanced society, but it is still better for individuals to live openly than to cherish secrets.

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1. Ibid., III 162.
2. Ibid., III 119, 133, 137 and 180.
3. TS p.189.

CHAPTER VI

Religion

I. Women

George Eliot's view of the role of women in society was similar to Comte's and in some respects derived from his. She believed that their 'normal' function was the education of the feelings in the home. But in order to accomplish this task they themselves needed a proper education. Her novels continually attack the pettiness and narrow-mindedness of women who fail to realise their mission. I will illustrate these views as outlined first in her essays and poems before considering the women portrayed in her novels. In the following section I will show how many of them are worshipped as angels and madonnas in the manner prescribed by Comte.

Like Comte, George Eliot based her position on physiological grounds. In an article in the Westminster Review of 1854, "Women in France: Madame de Sablé", she recognised that women were different from men:

> 'her comparative physical weakness... exaggerated by a vicious civilization... introduces a distinctively feminine condition into the wondrous chemistry of the affections and sentiments'.

But they were not intellectually inferior. Their special contribution to literature had been generally recognised, but they were not held worthy of a scientific education. Yet women in France became superior to other women 'by being admitted to a common fund of ideas, to common objects of interest with men'. This was 'the essential condition at once of true womanly culture and of true social well-being'.[1]

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1. Essays, pp.53 and 80.

The following year, in the Leader, George Eliot reviewed works by "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstencraft". She praised Fuller's moderation and largeness of view, quoting her attack on "feeble-minded women... unacquainted with the importance of life and its purposes, trained to a selfish coquetry and love of petty power". She accepted that absolute definitions of women's nature were inadequate. For example, talented singers should be allowed to follow a musical career. She agreed also that the limitation of women to trivialities was to the detriment of both sexes. Anticipating the fate of Lydgate, she continued:

> 'Men pay a heavy price for their reluctance to encourage self-help and independent resources in women. The precious meridian years of many a man of genius have to be spent in the toils of routine, that an "establishment" may be kept up for a woman who can understand none of his secret yearnings, who is fit for nothing but to sit in her drawing-room like a doll-Madonna in her shrine.'

She used the same arguments against champions of women's superiority as she had used against Dickens' virtuous poor. If it were true, reform would be unnecessary. Both Fuller and Wollstencraft had seen women as they were and as they could become. The present situation needed to be changed: 'we want freedom and culture for women, because subjection and ignorance have debased her, and with her, Man'. Without education, woman's greatest strength, her affections, could be misdirected. As Wollstencraft warned, "the clinging affection of ignorance... may mostly be resolved into selfishness".[1]

George Eliot's poem, "Armgart", explores the position of an exceptionally talented woman. The heroine, a fine singer, is introduced rejoicing over her latest success. But the Graf feels, 'Too much ambition

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1. Essays, pp.200-5.

has unwomaned her'. He tells her,

"A woman's rank
Lies in the fulness of her womanhood."

As the prelude to a proposal, he advises her that she would suffer less hardship,

"Concentrating your power in home delights,
Which penetrate and purify the world."[1]

But Armgart has no intention of fulfilling the Positivist ideal. She tells him to find someone

"who has not yet found
A meaning in her life, nor any end
Beyond fulfilling yours. The type abounds."

She opts for a career on the stage. But when this is cut short by illness, she is left inadequately educated,

"Prisoned in all the petty mimicries
Called woman's knowledge, that will fit the world
As doll-clothes fit a man."[2]

The poem is about resignation as much as the role of women. Its message is certainly not that women should never pursue a professional career. It teaches that if they do so, as Klesmer warns Gwendolen, they should know exactly what is required of them. They should never neglect their affections, as Daniel's mother does. For the normal role of women remains the cultivation of their greatest attribute.

George Eliot had no time for dogmatic statements about the nature of women. Male chauvinists are always ridiculed in her novels. Mr. Tulliver thinks Maggie "too cute for a woman". He feels "a woman's no business wi' being so clever". Tom 's prejudices are reinforced by Mr. Stelling's judicious condemnation of women. But their position is balanced by Philip's. He ponders Maggie's 'wealth of love' and resolves to develop her intellect.[3]

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1. LJ pp.76, 95 and 97.
2. Ibid., pp.105 and 126-7.
3. MF I 12, 20 and 232; II 63.

In Romola, Bardo holds a low opinion of "the wandering, vagrant propensity of the feminine mind", along with "the feeble powers of the feminine body". His daughter achieves "a man's nobility of soul", he tells her, through being kept "aloof from the debasing influence of thy own sex". She cannot replace his lost son, but he recognises that no son could have treated him so gently.[1]

George Eliot did not regard women as being necessarily weaker than men, although their conditions often made them so. But she does seem to have accepted Comte's generalisation that men's strength lay in their mind and body, women's in their affections. In this respect, Romola epitomises woman. As Bernardo says, "the cramming with Latin and Greek has left her as much a woman as if she had done nothing all day but prick her fingers with the needle".[2] When she first appears, her face is 'transfigured to the most lovable womanliness by mingled pity and affection'. Her 'fibres of affection and pity' are naturally strong, but she remains in a 'state of girlish simplicity and ignorance concerning the world outside her father's books'. This is partly a result of her environment:

> 'All Romola's ardour had been concentrated in her affections... Romola had had contact with no mind that could stir the larger possibilities of her nature; they lay folded and crushed like embryonic wings'.[3]

She is exaggeratedly feminine. She plans to leave Tito because 'there could be no law for her but the law of her affections', and she no longer loves him. It is a weakness that

> 'she had appropriated no theories: she had simply felt strong in the strength of affection... Her mind had never yet bowed to any obligation apart from personal love and reverence.'[4]

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1. R I 78 and 82.
2. Ibid., II 152.
3. Ibid., I 75, 88 and 376.
4. Ibid., II 47-8.

In the dispute over Bardo's library, Tito relies on Romola's 'affectionateness and unexpected submissiveness'. His rationalisations are contrasted with her feelings of loyalty to her father's memory. He is the stronger, physically and intellectually. She cannot compete with his 'masculine effectiveness of intellect and purpose'.[1] Her faith is a matter of the heart alone. She 'thought little about dogmas'. Savonarola and the Church merely keep alive her 'unselfish emotion'. She judges the friar unfairly because 'she looked with the eyes of personal tenderness, and he with the eyes of theoretic conviction'. George Eliot herself underlines the difference of sex. The male tendency, she argues, can degenerate into egoism, the female into timidity and scepticism 'towards the larger aims without which life cannot rise into religion'. This means that when Bardo and Bernardo are dead, Tito unfaithful and Savonarola hypocritical, Romola has no reason to live. She lacks 'some form of believing love' to help her to fulfil her duty once the 'bonds of all strong affection were snapped'.[2] The Woman needs the Priest at least as much as the Priest needs the Woman.

Harold Transome and Felix Holt express contrasting views on the role of women. Harold returns from the East with the intention not to remarry: "I hate English wives... They interfere with a man's life." He tells his mother that she has had to worry about "things that don't properly belong to a woman", but she can now relax and "be grandmamma on satin cushions". He believes it unimportant what women think, since "they are not called upon to judge or to act". He retains his prejudice against western women because 'they showed a transition from the feebly animal to the thinking

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1. R I 437 and II 187.
2. Ibid., II 148-9 and 320-3.

being which was simply troublesome'.[1] The unregenerate Esther is everything that Harold admires. But to Felix fine ladies are inadequate for "the business of life". They are more concerned with "taste" than "opinions", small subjects rather than great. He rebukes Esther for failing to live up to the Positivist ideal:

> "You have enough understanding to make it wicked that you should add one more to the women who hinder men's lives from having any nobleness in them."

He too decides against marrying, because it would entail betraying his "fine purpose".[2]

The Positivist view of women makes them little freer. Esther complains that a woman cannot choose her lot:

> "She is dependent on what happens to her. She must take meaner things, because only meaner things are within her reach."

Her assessment of the situation is accurate. She has to rest content with Felix breaking off his sentence and leaving without expressing his love, 'like a woman as she was - a woman waiting for love, never able to ask for it'. The choice she eventually makes is manufactured by the plot. Even in choosing Felix, she chooses to be subordinate. "I am weak," she admits, "My husband must be greater and nobler than I am."[3] Mrs. Transome is understandably embittered by her powerlessness. But George Eliot offers little advice besides resignation and fulfilling her moral function. When Mrs. Transome cannot resist a remark on her son's election defeat, George Eliot comments, sadly:

> 'In this way poor women, whose power lies solely in their influence, make themselves like music out of tune, and only move men to run away.'[4]

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1. FH I 26-8 and 56; II 159.
2. Ibid., I 105, 182-3 and 109.
3. Ibid., II 43, 111 and 356.
4. Ibid., II 136.

Felix Holt is powerful as an expression of the problem of women in the nineteenth century, but provides no convincing solution apart from that advocated by Comte.

The women of Middlemarch fare little better than those of Treby. Casaubon certainly resents the criticism offered by Dorothea in place of 'the uncritical awe of an elegant-minded canary-bird'.[1] Rosamund is the prize product of Mrs. Lemmon's school, 'adorned with accomplishments for the refined amusement of man'. She fits perfectly Lydgate's original ideal of 'perfect womanhood', and he in turn protects her from the outside world.[2] George Eliot scarcely restrains her satire. But even Mrs. Garth believes her own sex 'framed to be entirely subordinate', though properly educated.[3] Dorothea gradually modifies her own expectations. She tells Will, "I used to despise women a little for not shaping their lives more, and doing better things". But she ends by restricting her influence to the home. The Positivist role is the best available:

> 'Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done'.[4]

Gwendolen, like Mrs. Transome, Esther and Rosamund, has an education which comprises 'unexplained rules and disconnected facts', with a little French and music. George Eliot contrasts her small concerns with the great movements taking place in the outside world. She asks, 'what are girls in this "mighty drama"?' The reply is the same Positivist ideal dressed up in grander rhetoric:

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1. MM I 307.
2. Ibid., I 409-11 and II 120.
3. Ibid., I 370-1.
4. Ibid., III 18 and 461.

> 'They are the Yea or Nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting. In these delicate vesels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections.'[1]

George Eliot is again more convincing in satirising the shortcomings of the conventional ideal of womanhood than in portraying the Positivist alternative. But her presentation of Comtean angels and madonnas and their role in the education of the feelings will now be more closely examined.

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1. DD I 54 and 181-2.

II. Worship

Comte advocated the worship of women as men's guardian angels and as representatives of Humanity. Fixed meditation on idealised women developed men's own affective faculties, he claimed. George Eliot appears to have accepted this theory. She often portrays her heroines as angels and madonnas in a sense which goes beyond conventional imagery. For she shows that the men who worship them succeed in developing their capacity for altruism. Worship is a mode of exercising the benevolent instincts which her women also practise. After analysing her portraits of angels and madonnas I will consider the moral implications of the varieties of Positivist worship which she describes.

The Madonna and the Angel in the House, as Eric Trudgill has shown, were common features of Victorian fiction, poetry and painting. They abound in domestic magazines of the 1850's. Tracts on the duty of women to be a moral influence in the family can be traced back to the eighteenth century. Trudgill observed that George Eliot, although capable of ridiculing the meek young ladies portrayed as madonnas in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists", was herself, like other Comtists, captivated by the Madonna-ideal.[1] I will attempt to show that although she sometimes lapses into conventional references to angels and madonnas, she often substantiates such imagery by an analysis of their moral function in distinctly Comtean terms.

Theophrastus Such certainly believes in the worship of women. He argues that 'our civilisation... is helplessly in peril without the spiritual police of sentiments or ideal feelings'. He deplores the debasing of 'our sense of a noble womanhood' by brazen and emancipated women.[2]

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1. Eric Trudgill, op.cit., "Home, Sweet Home", pp.38-64, and "The Rise and Fall of the Madonna", pp.251-76.
2. TS, pp.152-3.

George Eliot clearly attempts to provide ideal portraits of women. Whenever she advocates realism, she tends to put in an additional plea for idealism. In the third of her "Three Short Philosophical Essays", now in Princeton, she writes, 'Let none decry ideal portraits seeing that these must include our most precious pictures of sacred types'. She welcomes Rembrandt's realism because she believes that to shut one's eyes to what men are in order to conceive what they ought to be is to display 'the utmost possible scepticism as to human goodness'.[1] Similarly, she begins her defence of realism in Adam Bede, 'Paint us an angel, ... paint us yet oftener a Madonna'.[2] This is precisely what she herself does, intermingling her ideal portraits with sufficient numbers of carrot-scraping old women to gain a reputation as a realist.

Milly Barton is the first of George Eliot's idealised women, 'a large, fair, gentle Madonna ... with large, tender, short-sighted eyes'. The short-sightedness quickly deflates the idealism. But there follows an apostrophe which begins, 'Soothing unspeakable charm of gentle woman-hood!'[3] There is no suggestion yet of Positivist worship, only of Amos Barton's failure to appreciate his wife. Dinah Morris is the first fully-fledged human Madonna to be worshipped in the Positivist sense. To Lisbeth, Dinah appears like the angel on the tomb after the resurrection, pictured in Adam's bible.[4] Mr. Irwine notices the influence of 'tenderness, refinement, and purity' in Dinah. Arthur Donnithorne confesses, "I could worship that woman".[5] Both Seth and Adam do. The way in which Seth cultivates his altruism by meditating upon her virtues is specifically Comtean. He is

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1. "Three Short Philosophical Essays", ff. (7)-(8).
2. AB I 270.
3. SCL I 24-6.
4. AB I 208 and II 319.
5. AB I 414 and II 275.

unhappy at the dance in her absence:

> 'Dinah had never been more constantly present with him than in this scene, where everything was so unlike her. He saw her all the more vividly after looking at the thoughtless faces and gay-coloured dresses of the young women - just as one feels the beauty and the greatness of a pictured Madonna the more, when it has been for a moment screened from us by a vulgar head in a bonnet. But this presence of Dinah in his mind only helped him to bear the better with his mother's mood, which had been becoming more and more querulous for the last hour.' [1]

For Adam too, 'in the darkest moments of memory the thought of her always came as the first ray of returning comfort'.[2]

The worship of women is treated more humourously in The Mill on the Floss. Mrs. Glegg plans to give Tom some of her linen, and expresses the hope that

> '"he'll lie down in it and think of his aunt."
> Tom thanked Mrs. Glegg, but evaded any promise to meditate nightly on her virtues.' [3]

Bob Jakin promises to abandon his pedlar's thumb-trick if Maggie disapproves of it: 'Maggie, thus exalted into Bob's directing Madonna, laughed in spite of herself'. But George Eliot continues more seriously,

> 'The days of chivalry are not gone... they live still in that far-off worship paid by many a youth and man to the woman of whom he never dreams that he shall touch so much as her little finger or the hem of her robe.' [4]

In Silas Marner, George Eliot again recalls the days of chivalry. She speculates about Godfrey's 'rural forefathers':

> 'perhaps the love of some sweet maiden, the image of purity, order, and calm, had opened their eyes to the vision of a life in which the days would not seem too long'.

Godfrey wooes Nancy 'with tacit patient worship, as the woman who made him think of the future with joy'. He feels, 'it would be easy, when she was always near, to shake off those foolish habits'. Her influence would

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1. AB I 423-4.
2. Ibid., II 304.
3. MF II 297.
4. Ibid., II 26-7.

be like 'the voice of the good angel, inviting to industry, sobriety, and peace'.[1] Angelic influence of a filial kind is exercised by Eppie, who is frequently described in angelic imagery.[2]

Romola's function as a representative of Humanity has already been described. But as well as being mistaken for the Madonna by plague-stricken villagers and starving Florentines, she does for a time draw the best from Tito. He feels with her 'that loving awe in the presence of noble womanhood, which is perhaps something like the worship paid of old to a great nature-goddess'. He calls her "My Romola! my goddess!". Even in his decline, she resembles 'his good angel pleading with him'. Also, when she rescues Tessa from the marauding followers of Savonarola in search of fuel for their Bonfire of Vanities, the peasant girl feels 'as if the Holy Madonna were speaking'.[3] The imagery, combined with the ideal portrait of Romola's goodness, directs the reader to meditate upon her virtues. Sara Hennell recognised Romola as an idealised figure, 'a Goddess not a woman', who 'must be worshipped as a beautiful saint'. In reply, George Eliot agreed that Romola represented an ideal which was a constant reproof even to herself. She confessed that the "Drifting Away" and the "Village with the Plague" belonged to her earliest plans. But, she continued, the 'various strands of thought I had to work out forced me into a more ideal treatment'.[4] The problem of subordinating the ideal to the realities of fifteenth-century Florence became too great, as she confessed in the novel itself:

> 'In Florence the simpler relations of the human being to his fellow-man had been complicated for her with all the special ties of marriage, the State, and religious discipleship'.[5]

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1. SM pp.44-6.
2. Ibid., pp.186, 191 and 201.
3. R I 144 and 270; II 187 and 215.
4. GEL IV 104.
5. R II 412.

In this case, the ideal, or the 'normal', sits uneasily beside the real.

Felix Holt tries his hardest to create an object of worship out of Esther. Taking a respite after his violent attack on Byron and his followers, Felix looks up at her,

> 'quite calmly, very much as a reverential Protestant might look up at a picture of the Virgin, with a devoutness suggested by the type rather than by the image'.

He speculates aloud on the force for good of woman's beauty.[1] Their relationship remains positively platonic. When Felix resolves to leave Esther and devote himself to the working classes, he tells her, "We shall always be the better for thinking of each other". He would continue to worship her: 'Felix wished Esther to know that her love was dear to him as the beloved dead are dear.'[2] Esther is left in similarly subjective widowhood. Her experience with him is

> 'embalmed and kept as a relic in a private sanctuary... She lived with him in the past... He was an influence above her life... The best part of a woman's live is worship'.[3]

Eventually, they are allowed to enjoy each other in the present.

George Eliot acknowledged that Fedalma was based on the Madonna of Titian's "Annunciation".[4] Don Silva likens her to the Blessed Virgin "Before the Angel spoke the word, 'All hail!'". He protects and worships her in Positivist fashion:

> 'He enshrines
> Her virgin image for the general awe
> And for his own will guard her from the world,
> Nay, his profaner self, lest he should lose
> The place of his religion.'[5]

She is his 'goddess with pure rites' who makes 'pure worship'. She also exercises angelic influence over Zarca, who acknowledges her as the source

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1. FH II 39.
2. Ibid., II 112-3.
3. Ibid., II 177.
4. Life III 34.
5. SG pp.83 and 37.

of his pity for the Duke's circle, whom he selects for decent burial. He bears his daughter in his heart:

> "she keeps me so
> From hardening with the hardness of my acts."[1]

'Widowed' of Don Silva's touch, Fedalma eventually fulfils the mission unfolded to her earlier by Zarca, 'To be the angel of a homeless tribe'.[2]

Dorothea is immediately likened to Italian representatives of 'the Blessed Virgin'. Naumann calls her "the most perfect young Madonna I ever saw", and she receives from him 'new notions as to the significance of Madonnas'.[3] Lydgate's worship of her has already been described. His meditation on her goodness preserves his altruism in spite of Rosamund's inadequacy. In the same way, George Gissing, tutor to Frederic Harrison's son, makes Golding, married to a slut, ennoble himself by his chaste love for Helen Norman, 'a sweet and placid-faced Madonna'.[4] Lydgate thinks that Dorothea

> "has a heart large enough for the Virgin Mary... as if she wanted nothing for herself but a chair to sit in from which she can look down with those clear eyes at the poor mortals who pray to her".[5]

Rosamund sees that Will too is a "devout worshipper" of Dorothea. She herself keeps in 'religious remembrance the generosity which had come to her aid in the sharpest crisis of her life'.[6] Dorothea's night of meditation leaves her with 'the pale cheeks and pink eyelids of a mater dolorosa'. Tantripp, the maid, describes her as an angel.[7] Once again, the imagery confirms that Dorothea is another ideal example of womanhood, worthy of Positivist worship.

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1. SG pp.112 and 328-9.
2. Ibid., pp.373 and 147.
3. MM I 7, 290 and 327-8.
4. George Gissing, Workers in the Dawn, London, 1880, III 171.
5. MM III 361-2.
6. Ibid., II 246 and III 461.
7. Ibid., III 392-3.

Deronda is eager to worship women. Sir Hugo has to remonstrate with hi "You are always looking tenderly at the women, and talking to them in a Jesuitical way". His earliest worship is of Lady Mallinger and her three daughters.[1] Daniel tells Gwendolen that it is worse for a woman to gamble, "because we need that you should be better than we are". He thinks of her after Grandcourt's death as an eternal widow. Hans Meyrick reproaches him for questioning her need to remarry,

> "do you want her to wear weeds for you all her life - burn herself in perpetual suttee while you are alive and merry?"

Eventually, Mirah takes 'her place in his soul as a beloved type - reducing the power of other fascination'. The 'indwelling image' of Mirah protects him from Gwendolen's more dangerous charms.[2]

The woman who occupies Daniel's thoughts more than any other is his mother. Book VII, "The Mother and the Son", presents a remarkable picture of the breakdown of Positivist Worship when insufficiently grounded in reality. All women remind Daniel of 'a mother who had not had all her dues whether of reverence or compassion'. He had made so much of her in imagination that his 'ideal' meetings seem more 'real' than the actual event. He tells her, 'I have thought of you more than of any other being in the world". He treats her as a representative of Humanity:

> "Mother! take us all into your heart - the living and the dead. Forgive everything that hurts in the past. Take my affection."[3]

But his mother resents being treated as a goddess, and Daniel is left, after the first meeting, 'conscious of a disappointed yearning - a shutting out

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1. DD II 126 and I 267.
2. Ibid., II 90; III 392-3 and 306.
3. Ibid., III 112, 121-2 and 135.

for ever from long early vistas of affectionate imagination'. His mother's repeated coldness 'made the filial yearning of his life a disappointed pilgrimage to a shrine where there were no longer the symbols of sacredness'.[1] There is no future, George Eliot implies, in continuing to worship an inadequate object. The ideal must be subordinate to the real.

Mirah worships her mother with greater success. She dreams and daydreams about her, even "without shutting my eyes", as Comte had prescribed. She connects her mother with all that is good: "if I got wicked I should lose my world of happy thoughts where my mother lived with me". She sings an old Hebrew hymn which her mother sang over her cot, with 'her head at an angle which seemed to be directed to some invisible face bent over'. She has 'a religious desire to know of her mother's death'.[2] The influence of Positive religion in this instance leads to writing which is both sanctimonious and sentimental. When George Eliot is in this mood even Gwendolen becomes an object of devotion. Rex worships her in a way which George Eliot recognises can degenerate into 'blind animalism':

> 'But when this attaching force is present in a nature not of brutish unmodifiableness, but of a human dignity that can risk itself safely, it may even result in a devotedness not unfit to be called divine in a higher sense than the ancient.'[3]

The verbosity cannot conceal a Comtean view of the development of altruism through the worship of idealised womanhood.

Many of George Eliot's characters practise Positivist prayer in a less objectionable manner. They purify their feelings and strengthen their benevolent instincts by meditating on the needs of others. Dinah tells Hetty how she sits alone with her eyes closed, as Comte had recommended, and

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1. DD III 145 and 176.
2. Ibid., I 316-9; II 146 and 160.
3. Ibid., III 253.

conjures up the sight and sound of people she knows. She closes her eyes also to feel the 'Divine Presence' of love and sympathy. Her 'imagination and sympathy' strengthen each other. She pictures Hetty struggling in 'a thorny thicket of sin and sorrow'. Her letter to Seth refers to her frequent thinking about those at Hall Farm, whom she feels to be in trouble. She explains, "the children of God... bear one another about in their thoughts continually as it were a new strength".[1] What makes all this as much Positivist as Methodist is that it is immaterial whether God hears these prayers or not. They still strengthen the affections.

Maggie Tulliver tells Philip, "I think about everybody when I'm away from them".[2] Even Rufus Lyon's prayer is given a Positivist interpretation. He pursues 'a sort of prayerful meditation' on his daughter's situation:

> 'He was striving to purify his feeling in this matter from selfish or worldly dross - a striving which is that prayer without ceasing,[3] sure to wrest an answer by its sublime importunity.'

Dorothea's meditation on Lydgate's problems, which strengthens her own ability to help him, has already been described. But an earlier night of meditation fits even more closely the Positivist pattern of prayer. On this occasion Casaubon is the object of her pity:

> 'It cost her a litany of pictured sorrows and of silent cries that she might be the mercy for[4] those sorrows - but the resolved submission did come.'

Deronda sits up 'half the night' reliving his discovery of Mirah through 'emotive memory' and 'inward vision'. He considers carefully all the 'possibilities of what had been and what might be'. In this way he prepares himself to face whatever comes. He indulges in 'passionate

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1. AB I 211, 234-6 and II 61.
2. MF I 288.
3. FH II 185-6.
4. MM II 234.

meditation', in which Mordecai and Mirah are always present.[1] He tells Gwendolen how Positivist prayer works. She too can develop and purify her feelings:

> "Fixed meditation may do a great deal towards defining our longing or dread. We are not always in a state of strong emotion, and when we are calm we can use our memories and gradually change the bias of our fear, as we do our tastes. Take your fear as a safeguard. It is like quickness of hearing. It may make consequences passionately present to you. Try to take hold of your sensibility,[2] and use it as if it were a faculty, like vision."

In these examples, George Eliot extends the practise of prayer as Comte had described it beyond the limits of mother, wife and daughter. But the principles remain the same. The purpose is the development of altruism, the amelioration of human nature. The method is that of controlled meditation.

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1. DD I 306 and III 211.
2. Ibid., II 268.

III. Priests, Saints and Working-men

George Eliot incorporated very few of the details of Comte's regime into her novels. She was content to draw upon his basic principles. She even satirises some of the elements of Positivist ritual in the Meyrick daughters' worship of Daniel Deronda:

> "Kate burns a pastille before his portrait every day," said Mab. "And I carry his signature in a little black-silk bag round my neck to keep off the cramp.[1] And Amy says the multiplication-table in his name."

The combination of maths and mumbo-jumbo was not to George Eliot's taste. Accordingly, the Nine Sacraments find no place in her writing. But the idea of an unofficial priesthood of Humanity, the worship of the Saints of Humanity, and the admiration of ideal working-men work their way into her novels.

Dr. Kenn, whom Stephen calls a "real apostle", holds Comtean hopes for a reconstruction of Church discipline, quoted in chapter four above. It is with reference to him that George Eliot records her agreement with Comte's opinion, that the 'middle-aged... should surely be a sort of natural priesthood, whom life has disciplined and consecrated'.[2] Other Anglican clergy, such as Mr. Gilfil, Mr. Irwine, and Mr. Farebrother, wield moral influence rather through their experience and example than by their theology. Felix Holt, as we have seen, fulfils the educational function of the spiritual power. Daniel Deronda is the clearest example of a secular priest:

> 'Persons attracted him... in proportion to the possibility of his defending them, rescuing them, telling upon their lives with some sort of redeeming influence.'[3]

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1. DD I 336.
2. MF II 174 and 264.
3. DD II 71 and 201.

Both Gwendolen and Sir Hugo live in fear of his disapproval. George Eliot refers to 'that ideal consecration of Gwendolen's' by which, 'without the aid of sacred ceremony or costume, her feelings had turned this man, only a few years older than herself, into a priest'. We are told that Daniel shrinks from hearing her confession after Grandcourt's death, and claims, 'He was not a priest'.[1] But throughout the novel he behaves as if he were.

Both Romola and Lydgate have already been shown to commemorate their own saints of Humanity. Lydgate's heroes are pioneers of medicine. Adam Bede is supposed to have

> 'no ideal world of dead heroes; he knew little of the life of men in the past; he must find the beings to whom he could cling with loving admiration among those who came within speech of him.'

But even he preserves the memory of Moses, after whom Comte named one of the months of the Positive Calendar. Moses, according to Adam, was an example of selfless industry, a model capitalist:

> "He carried a hard business well through, and died when other folks were going to reap the fruits".[2]

Zarca explains to Fedelma that, even in failure, heroes like himself

> "feed the high tradition of the world,
> And leave our spirit in our children's breasts".

She accepts the grandeur of heroic death, which leaves "faith in human hearts".[3] Deronda is moved by Kalonymous, who had worked with his grandfather, to feel 'something like what one feels in the solemn commemoration of acts done long ago but still telling markedly on the life of today'.[4] All these examples fit the Comtean pattern of hero-worship, which was itself part of a larger Victorian tradition.

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1. DD II 201, 234 and III 221.
2. AB II 9 and 298.
3. SG pp. 163 and 291.
4. DD III 269.

The ideal working-man is another figure held by Comte in common with his contemporaries. Felix Holt I have already shown to preach specifically Comtean ideas. In the case of George Eliot's other ideal working-men, Adam Bede and Caleb Garth, the label is less obviously applicable. But Adam's praise of work, for giving "a grip hold o' things outside your own lot", fits the Positive philosophy. So does George Eliot's insistence that men such as Adam do exist,

> 'with an inheritance of affections nurtured by a simple family life of common need and common industry, and an inheritance of faculties trained in skilful courageous labour'.[1]

He is completely free from metaphysical curiosity, possessing 'that rough dignity which is peculiar to intelligent, honest, well-built workmen, who are never wondering what is their business in the world'. He respects rank and works gratuitously, enjoying the tributes of Arthur Donnithorne and Mr. Irwine "a good deal more than any wages". It is his aim "to leave the world a bit better than he found it".[2] In all these respects he resembles Comte's ideal type of the working-man.

Caleb Garth has a 'veneration' which amounts to 'religious regard' for "business". He creates from work 'a religion without the aid of theology'. He welcomes the chance to manage the Freshitt and Tipton estates, which enables him to satisfy his sense of solidarity and continuity by ensuring "that those who are living and those who come after will be the better for it". He too treats labour as gratuitous, in the Positivist sense: "A man without a family would be glad to do it for nothing". He has Comte's sense that "Things hang together".[3] "Stradivarius", in George Eliot's poem, has

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1. AB I 171 and 320-1.
2. Ibid., I 405-6.
3. MM I 382; II 196 and 201.

a similar delight in 'Fact', in drawing straight lines, and in making good violins.[1] These working-men all fit the Positivist ideal closely enough to be regarded as part of the Religion of Humanity which George Eliot derived from Comte.

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1. LJ pp. 213-4.

CHAPTER VII

The Extent and Limit of George Eliot's Positivism

I. The Extent

In this last chapter of the thesis I will attempt to draw some general conclusions about the nature and degree of Comte's influence upon George Eliot. I will first consider the extent of her indebtedness to him. One of the disadvantages of thematic treatment is that it loses a sense of the organic unity of individual novels. In the first section of this chapter I will concentrate on particular passages in the novels in order to illustrate the density of George Eliot's Positivism. Her thinking was so deeply penetrated by Comte's ideas that whole paragraphs emerge as chunks of undiluted Positivism. Many of her poems, I will illustrate in the second section, preach a message which is unmistakably Comtean. To appreciate this is to make them comprehensible though scarcely more readable. Even her unwritten novels for which we have only her tentative plans, the subject of the third section, illustrate the manner in which she seems to have constructed her novels along Comtean guidelines.

There are some aspects of her writing which distinguish her from orthodox Positivism. These will be considered in the final section of this chapter. Her attachment to Christianity was deeper than Comte's. The symbols of the cross and teaching of Jesus always retained a powerful meaning for her. She preserved a sense of mystery which was more positive than strict Positivists permitted. She was less of a hedgehog than Comte. Satisfied by no system, she retained an appreciation of the everyday, the trivial and the weakest aspects of humanity which far exceeds the limits of Comte's religion. Without the philosopher's help the novelist would not

have written as she did. But without her own keenness of perception and sympathy her novels would have remained as unread as the textbooks of orthodox Positivism. The difference of form expresses a difference of content.

It should be clear from the sheer weight of examples illustrating Positivist themes in George Eliot's novels that the extent to which they embody Comte's ideas is considerable. But as well as providing specific examples, the novels often contain whole sections in which the Religion of Humanity is strongly propounded. The 'excess of analysis', of which Henry James complained,[1] has a distinctly Comtean flavour. I will attempt here to analyse some of these passages and so demonstrate the density as well as the range of Positivism in George Eliot's novels.

The third chapter of The Mill on the Floss, Book IV, is one place where a number of Comtean themes intermingle. This contains Bob Jakin's worship of Maggie Tulliver and her struggles to achieve resignation to a harsh and unmodifiable world. Her deficient education leaves her without an adequate sense of historical continuity or any appreciation of the invariable laws which give rise to Positive religion and morality. But her reading of Thomas à Kempis as a record of human needs and their fulfilment compensates for the failure of Christianity in St. Ogg's. All these themes have been described in the preceding chapters, but it is important to recognise that they all occur in one chapter of the novel in which Professor Haight found 'little sign of Positivism'.[2]

Romola is perhaps the most densely Comtean of all George Eliot's novels. As an illustration of this, I propose to examine one short passage from the

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1. Henry James, "MM", in G.S. Haight, A Century of GE Criticism, London, 1965, pp. 80-7.
2. Haight, GE, p.302.

novel, in which ten distinct aspects of the Religion of Humanity are mentioned. Some of these ideas, on their own, might not clinch the source of influence, but together their evidence is overwhelming. I will list the ten points in order of appearance:

1. The worship of idealised women as Madonnas.
2. The clash of objective law and subjective impulse, resolved by resignation to the unmodifiable and activity where possible.
3. The following of moral guides or priests.
4. The insistence that a woman's place is in the home.
5. The formulation of laws by induction.
6. The sanctity of all human ties, especially marriage.
7. The cultivation of saints of Humanity, whose influence continues after death.
8. The solidarity of each individual with the whole community.
9. The raising of duty into religion.
10. The sense of solidarity and continuity with Humanity.

Romola has just returned Tito's son, Lillo, to his mother, who looks upon her as the Blessed Virgin. She attempts to overcome the shock of discovering the extent of Tito's unfaithfulness:

> 'She was thrown back again on the conflict between the demands of an outward law, which she recognised as a widely ramifying obligation, and the demands of an inner moral facts which were becoming more and more peremptory. She had drunk in deeply the spirit of that teaching by which Savonarola had urged her to return to her place. She felt that the sanctity attached to all close relations, and, therefore pre-eminently to the closest, was but the expression in outward law of that result towards which all human goodness and nobleness must spontaneously tend; that the light abandonment of ties, whether inherited or voluntary, because they had ceased to be pleasant, was the uprooting of social and personal virtue. What else had Tito's crime towards Baldassare been but that abandonment working itself out to the most hideous extreme of falsity and ingratitude?
>
> And the inspiring consciousness breathed into her by Savonarola's influence that her lot was vitally united with the general lot had exalted even the minor details of obligation into religion. She was marching with a great army; she was feeling the stress of a common life.'[1]

This passage represents the novel in abstract. It discusses the plot in terms of Positivist ideas. But it is not mere propaganda. Comte's ideals

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1. R II 272-3.

are tested by the circumstances George Eliot creates. Just as Dorothea rejects the concept of eternal widowhood, so Romola questions the indissolubility of marriage. Immediately after this passage, Romola realises that her marriage is irretrievably ruined. Her situation mirrors that of Savonarola, who had found it necessary to disobey an iniquitous Pope:

> 'All her efforts at union had only made its impossibility more palpable, and the relation had become for her simply a degrading servitude. The law was sacred. Yes, but rebellion might be sacred too.'[1]

The question is never really solved. Romola eventually returns to Tito, only to discover that he is dead. Dorothea is similarly relieved of her promise to Casaubon. But in both cases George Eliot displays dissatisfaction with the clear-cut doctrines of Comtism.

Felix Holt's advocacy of Comte's political theory, both in the novel and in his "Address to Working-Men", has been clearly illustrated in chapter four. So have Lydgate's Positivist leanings. Dorothea's are described in Middlemarch, chapter ten, analysed above in chapter four. Her 'trust and veneration' for Casaubon as a spiritual authority is linked with her desire for a 'binding theory' which will satisfy her sense of continuity and her thirst for knowledge. The same chapter discusses how, like Comte, she strives to unite thought, feeling and action, in a religious synthesis.[2]

Daniel Deronda has recurred throughout the preceding chapters as a model of Positivism. He illustrates every single theme. The complaints of numerous critics, that he never really comes to life, have some validity.

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1. R II 273.
2. MM I 127-9.

George Eliot herself realised the dangers involved in her idealism. Her deliberate addition of insignificant details, such as his turning up his coat collar, in the attempt to give him character independent of meaning, was mocked by Henry James.[1] Daniel even carries a cigar case to the meeting of the philosophers' club at the "Hand and Banner" because he fears 'turning himself into a sort of diagram'.[2] But it is to little avail. The ideals which animate him are insufficiently subordinated to the real, the diagram fails to develop into a picture. But this part of Daniel Deronda is an exception in the corpus of George Eliot's work. Her generally successful incorporation of the ideal into the real is sufficiently demonstrated by the failure of most critics even to identify the diagram.

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1. Henry James, "DD: A Conversation", in F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition, London (1948), 1962, pp. 252-3.
2. DD II 374.

II. The Poetry

Certain Victorian critics recognised George Eliot as 'the poet of Positivism'. They also regarded her poems as highly characteristic of 'the spirit of her teaching', her 'most concentrated expression of herself'.[1] In her poetry, George Eliot makes no attempt to subordinate the ideal to the real. Consequently, Comte's influence emerges more clearly. The major obstacles to its recognition have been the tortuous obscurity and verbosity of her diction. But a knowledge of Comte's system helps to clarify the meaning.

George Eliot's pious wish to join "the choir invisible" has been commonly recognised as a Positivist hymn. It was frequently used at their services. But it has not been so commonly remarked that as well as recording her wish for subjective immortality, the poem describes her religious purpose in writing, her desire to achieve Comte's balance of resignation and activity, and her idealisation of human goodness for Positivist worship. Through this the two main altruistic instincts could be developed. Her own words refer to

> 'our rarer, better, truer self,
> That sobbed religiously in yearning song,
> That watched to ease the burthen of the world,
> Laboriously tracing what must be,
> And what may yet be better - saw within
> A worthier image for the sanctuary,
> And shaped it forth before the multitude
> Divinely human, raising worship so
> To higher reverence more mixed with love.'[2]

Only to the initiated in Comte does the poem reveal itself as a confession of her Positivist purpose in writing. That does not make it a good poem.

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1. G.W. Cooke, op.cit. pp. 374-5 and 359; F.W.H. Myers, op.cit. p. 271.
2. LJ p. 302.

"A Minor Prophet", written in 1865, begins by satirising an American crank who is both vegetarian and phrenologist. George Eliot confesses to a lack of enthusiasm for his utopia, stressing her love for humanity as it is in the present, with all its imperfections. But she retains a faith in progress towards 'man's perfection'. In case the target of her satire be mistaken, she expresses her admiration of the synthesis of beauty, truth and goodness:

> - 'the earth yields nothing more Divine
> Than high prophetic vision - than the Seer
> Who fasting from man's meaner joy beholds
> The paths of beauteous order, and constructs
> A fairer type, to shame our low content.'

She still believes in the Positive qualities of 'order, justice, love', invariable law and a sense of continuity. The poem culminates in a vision of 'better things on earth' which includes reverence and love, the subordination of egoism, and 'thoughts, like light, that bind the world in one'.[1]

Among George Eliot's other poems, "Self and Life" teaches resignation and 'reverence' for the heroes of 'the solemn, splendid Past'.[2] "Brother and Sister" both assume the roles assigned to them by Comte. He behaves chivalrously towards her, exercising the control of 'inward vision over impulse'. She recognises the continuity of her life, referring to 'My present Past, my root of piety', and learns to subject her fantasy to fact, 'by "What is", "What will be" to define'.[3]

Another poem which discusses Positivism is "A College Breakfast-Party". First written in May 1874, after a visit to Cambridge the previous year,

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1. LJ pp. 186-94.
2. Ibid., p.273.
3. Ibid., pp. 205, 202, and 206.

this poem was sent to Blackwood in July 1877, after Frederic Harrison had roused her from her 'resignation to being of no use'.[1] It puts into verse the earnest discussion of a group of undergraduates who derive their names from Hamlet but at least some of their views from Comte. Guildenstern, the Positivist in the poem, attacks the priest's 'rainbow-bridges' of thought. Reference to George Eliot's essays explains this shorthand for à priori reasoning. He argues that the only 'real' evidence of Christianity is the history of the Church.[2] Rosencranz attacks 'relativism' and the worship of progress.[3] Guildenstern replies by posing the religious question in Comtist terms:

> "Where get, you say, a binding law, a rule
> Enforced by sanction, an Ideal throned
> With thunder in its hand?"

He gives Comte's answer: from the recognition of invariable law in the universe, resignation to the unalterable 'Outward', and active amelioration of human nature, 'Urging to possible ends the active soul'. Moral values develop from the existence of innate human benevolence:

> 'God, duty, love, submission, fellowship,
> Must first be framed in man, as music is,
> Before they live outside him as a law.'

Individualism must be replaced by the sense of solidarity generated by the study of sociology, which

> 'Widens dependence, knits the social whole
> In sensible relation more defined.'

The Religion of Humanity, he argues, can command faith even in a decaying universe:

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1. GEL V 409-10 and VI 387-8.
2. LJ p. 232.
3. Ibid., pp. 239 and 241.

'they who mourn for the world's dying good
May take their common sorrows for a rock,
On it erect religion and a church,
A worship, rites, and passionate piety -
The worship of the Best though crucified
And God-forsaken in its dying pangs.'[1]

George Eliot contributes her own pessimism and her love for Christian symbolism into an otherwise Comtist exposition.

Rosencranz objects that such a religion will find few communicants, an accurate enough prediction. Osric finds it wanting in beauty. The poem ends with Hamlet going down to the river, where he ponders the problems discussed. He dreams of an even stranger symposium, which provides a key to the source of the ideas. For Comte appears among the ancient philosophers. George Eliot concludes with characteristic reticence which is a reproach to those such as Frederic Harrison who claim too much certainty:

'And then he dreamed a dream so luminous
He woke (he says) convinced; but what it taught
Witholds as yet. Perhaps those graver shades
Admonished him that visions told in haste
Part with their virtues to the squandering lips
And leave the soul in wider emptiness.'[2]

George Eliot's poems occasionally rise above propaganda, but they contain more Positivism than poetry. •

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1. LJ pp. 245-8.
2. Ibid., pp. 260-1.

III. The Construction of the Novels

George Eliot's novels, I have argued, were constructed on a Positivist scheme. Comte provided their philosophy of life, their historical and sociological viewpoint, their ethical framework, some of their characterisation, and the ideal types behind the surface realism. The manuscript evidence helps to establish this conclusion. Most of the note-books which survive, were compiled in the early stages of the creative process, as repositories of possibly useful information rather than actual plans of plot or characterisation. Yet even these, as I have shown, contain quotations from Comte and copies of his diagrammatic illustrations of the Positivist cerebral theory and calendar of saints. What is missing is any written evidence of the intermediate stages. If George Eliot did actually construct Comtean diagrams for her novels, for which there is some evidence, she did so entirely in her head, or she destroyed the written plans. A third possibility is that her mind was so deeply penetrated by Comte's ideas that the framework I refer to was an entirely subconscious one.

In this section of the thesis I intend to consider two works that George Eliot never wrote but only planned. Although it may seem far-fetched to discuss the Positivism in her unwritten works, it may in fact help to illuminate the creative process behind the novels she finished. From the late 1860's she intended to write about the ancient Greek hero Timoleon. Her journal entry on the first day of 1869 includes among her tasks for that year 'a long poem on Timoleon'. Her "Middlemarch Miscellany" contains notes she took from George Grote's History of Greece, published in 1862. Grote, as we have seen, was himself influenced by Comte. Among the

Positivist ideas noted by George Eliot in this notebook are a reference to 'Fetichism', a word not used by Grote, illustrated by Cyrus' attempt to reduce the power of the River Gyndes by dispersing its water into small canals.[1] She also refers to the 'worship of the heroes of Marathon', to 'Family sacred rites' and to Timoleon's use of Epaminondas as a model.[2] Epaminondas appears in Comte's calendar, to be commemorated in leap years on the seventh day of the fifth month. George Eliot's "Notebook for Daniel Deronda", in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, into which she copied the Positivist Calendar, contains further material relating to Timoleon. The only additional Comtean element is the role of public opinion in his killing of the tyrant of Corinth and being 'acquitted by public voice'.[3] But there is already sufficient evidence that she was thinking in Comtean terms while collecting material for "Timoleon".

In the late 1870's George Eliot seems to have been contemplating an historical novel set in the time of Napoleon. One of the Pforzheimer notebooks(which contains quotations from Comte, also) demonstrates her interest in this period.[4] A card calendar for 1876, now at Yale, contains jotted notes of potential characters, including a widow, a teacher, and an 'Ideal Working Vicar'.[5] This provides indisputable evidence of her basing real characters on ideal models. "George Eliot's Notebook for an Unwritten Novel", now at Princeton, describes one of the characters who appears to have been constructed in the Comtean mould:

> 'Cyril Ambrose a man of inventive power in science as well as philosophy, married young, is very poor, has a family to support. His chief ambition, the most fervid yearning of his life, is to complete the development of a philosophic system which will make an epoch in the advancing thought of mankind.'[6]

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1. John Pratt, op.cit. p. 12; cp. George Grote, History of Greece, London, 1862, III 181-2.
2. John Pratt, op.cit. pp. 13, 14 and 17; George Grote, op.cit. III 307, II 267ff. and VII 630-1.
3. "Notebook for DD", Berg Collection, NYPL, f.23.
4. Pforzheimer MS 707, ed. William Baker, ff. 98-111.
5. Yale MS I.
6. Jerome Beaty, "GE's Notebook for an Unwritten Novel", PULC XVIII (1957)175.

Like Lydgate, he is suspected of a great crime of which he is innocent, while guilty of a real error, the neglect of philosophy, which the public regard as common sense.[1]

The final form these works might have taken remains a subject of mere speculation. But it is interesting that even in the earliest stages of planning, George Eliot should think along Positivist lines. In the absence of any definite evidence, and in the light of her working habits as revealed in Jerome Beaty's study of Middlemarch, it seems most likely that there was no intermediate written stage between the notebooks which survive and the autograph manuscripts of the novels. She first collected background information. She then worked on her main characters, frequently using ideal types derived from Positivist cerebral theory and worship. After pondering both characters and situations, she seems to have launched straight into the writing itself. The Middlemarch Quarry for Book VI, for example, shows her first sketching the characters, then listing the major events and situations, before finally dividing them into scenes and chapters. Although she had a good idea of the major events of the novel early in its composition, the 'greatest "planning" stage was the writing itself', as Beaty demonstrates. He qualifies George Eliot's romantic account of her writing the Rosamund-Dorothea meeting without alteration, erasure or planning, from possession by a "not-herself". He prefers John Blackwood's explanation of what she meant by saying that some of Daniel Deronda had passed 'into the irrevocable':

> 'She thinks and thinks over what she is going to write. It "simmers" in her mind as she says and then when she puts it upon paper it seems to pass into a reality not to be altered.'[2]

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1. Jerome Beaty, "GE's Notebook for an Unwritten Novel", PULC, pp. 180 and 179.
2. Jerome Beaty, 'MM' from Notebook to Novel, pp. 77 and 99-107.

An entry in Lewes's journal for July, 1875, seems to confirm this process:

'After breakfast Polly laid out her scheme for Daniel Deronda'.[1]

In attempting to explain the pervasiveness of Comte's influence on George Eliot, I would suggest that many of the Positivist elements involved in the structure of the novels, such as the function of public opinion in Felix Holt and Middlemarch, the worship of women, Romola's embodiment of the Positivist philosophy of history, and Daniel Deronda's peculiar form of Judaism, were deliberately planned. But much of the philosophical and ethical teaching which I have traced to Comte's influence may have been so deeply ingrained in her own view of life that they emerged unconsciously as she wrote. Close analysis of the text clinches the derivation. Her intentions, of course, remain ultimately unverifiable and unimportant. The meaning of the novels, inseparable from their form, is what matters.

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1. GHL Journal, 23.7.75.

IV. The Limits

One major difference between George Eliot and Comte was the respect she retained for traditional Christianity. Some of this may have been tactical. She could not afford to antagonise her readers. But even allowing for some insincerity in her capitalisation of human qualities, there still remains a deep attachment to Christianity. Her sense of mystery was greater than Comte's. That too emerges in the novels. Finally, her understanding of humanity was much more closely related to human beings than his. As a result, her version of the Religion of Humanity is more convincing than his, although she derived most of its details from him.

Christianity is prominent in most of George Eliot's novels. Clergymen abound. Yet they tend to speak a very stilted, watered-down language. Dr. Kenn and Savonarola have both been shown to preach Positivism as much as Christianity. Even Mr. Tryan tones down his evangelism. As Josiah Royce complained,

> 'He uses the conventional terms of orthodoxy, to be sure; but we feel, as we read, that the force is not intended by the author to be in them.'[1]

Mr. Tryan talks in 'a low and silvery tone' about the divine qualities in mankind. It is scarcely surprising that Janet finds 'the tone and the words were so unlike what she expected to hear' from an evangelical preacher.[2] Her own faith is expressed in terms of human qualities given apotheosis through capital letters. Within fifty pages we encounter 'Divine Love', the 'Divine Sufferer', the 'Divine sympathy', the 'Divine Presence', 'Infinite Love' and 'Divine Love' again.[3]

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1. See B.J. Paris, Experiments in Life, p. 99.
2. SCL II 89 and 181.
3. Ibid., II 272, 290, 292, 294, 309 and 316.

Dinah Morris tones down her Methodism in the same way. Her letter to Seth talks of the "Divine strength", the "Redeemer's cross", the "Man of Sorrows", "Infinite Love itself" and "Divine Love".[1] The same process takes place in Silas Marner. The manuscript shows that phrases such as 'the evil one', 'the invisible' (twice), 'the power in which he had vainly trusted', 'heaven' and 'unseen love' were all capitalised in the proof stage. Quick suggests that this was to emphasise their remoteness.[2] But it seems to be more of a compromise between Christianity and Positivism. The reader, if he chooses, may envisage a person behind the quality, or, like Dolly Winthrop, a number of persons. Even Savonarola is made to speak of the "Invisible Throne", the "Supreme Offering", "Supreme Love" and "Divine charity".[3] The anachronism and the disingenuousness are transparent.

Adam Bede actually groans, "O God",[4] since he is a straightforward man. But when Daniel Deronda exclaims, "Great God!", an explanation is required. He cannot surely refer to a real Being, but neither would he be irreverent. George Eliot solves the dilemma:

> 'the words escaped Deronda in a tone so low and solemn that they seemed like a prayer become unconsciously vocal... The old thought had come now with a new impetus of mingled feeling, and urged that exclamation in which both East and West have for ages concentrated their awe in the presence of inexorable calamity.'[5]

This represents liberal humanism at its mimsiest. It results from the attempt to appease convention. Comte was at least free from this vice, and in George Eliot it is mercifully rare.

Genuine and undiluted Christianity does appear in George Eliot's novels.

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1. AB II 59-60.
2. Jonathan R. Quick, "A Critical Edition of GE's SM", pp. xliv, 2, 5, 19, 2 23 and 130.
3. R II 105-7.
4. AB II 209.
5. DD I 285.

Dinah preaches Christ most movingly in the second chapter of Adam Bede. It is the cross which most powerfully symbolises the resignation which à Kempis recommends. At the end of The Mill on the Floss, Maggie exclaims, "I have received the Cross". But even in this novel, resignation is given a Positivist interpretation and the 'Unseen Pity' makes an (invisible) appearance.[1] Savonarola in public preaches a full-blooded Christianity. But George Eliot specifically comments that his sermon in the novel is based on his actual preaching.[2]

As her letters indicate, George Eliot remained sympathetic towards Christianity. After her death, "One Who Knew Her" quoted her as saying, "to Christianity I feel no objection but its want of evidence".[3] This is not quite true. Chapters one and three above show that, following Feuerbach and Comte, she associated belief in Providence with egoism. Theology was incompatible with Positivism. But her novels illustrate what Comte also believed, that Christianity and Judaism had contributed greatly to the moral development of Humanity. The difference may lie in the fact that Comte had returned to an appreciation of the historical and sociological benefits of Catholicism from the position of atheism, while George Eliot had retained her evangelical faith until the age of twenty-one. There is certainly a depth of feeling in her appreciation of Christianity which is missing in Comte.

George Eliot, as I have shown in chapter three, shared Comte's belief that the laws of the universe were invariable, to be ignored at men's peril. She attacked mysticism where it neglected human love and duty.

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1. MF II 390-1.
2. R facing I 444.
3. CR XXXIX (1881) 181.

But she had a more powerful sense of mystery than Comte, who was content to forget the metaphysical questions which remained beyond human understanding. While accepting scientific explanations, for instance of evolution, she remained aware of 'the mystery that lies under the processes'. Mysticism had a place, as she said of Goethe:

> 'I think he had a strain of mysticism in his soul, - of so much mysticism as I think inevitably belongs to a full poetic nature - I mean the delighted bathing of the soul in emotions which overpass the outlines of definite thought.'[1]

This quality emerges in her novels.

In Adam Bede George Eliot accepts Dinah's belief in inspiration, but in a manner far removed from Methodism:

> 'After our subtlest analysis of the mental process, we must still say, as Dinah did, that our highest thoughts and our best deeds are all given to us.'

She likens Seth's love for Dinah to religious feeling, explaining that in love, as in art or music, men pass beyond the object contemplated to 'the sense of divine mystery'.[2] Philip Wakem certainly believes that "there are stores laid up in our human nature that our understandings can make no complete inventory of". He too gives the examples of painting and music.[3]

Silas Marner and "The Lifted Veil" provide more complex evidence of George Eliot's attitude to mystery. She writes about Silas that 'culture had not defined any channels for his sense of mystery, and so it spread itself over the proper pathway of inquiry and knowledge'.[4] She seems to suggest here that the desire for metaphysical knowledge is culturally conditioned, rather than innate. In "The Lifted Veil", Latimer clamours for a sense of mystery: 'no matter how empty the adytum, so that the veil be thick enough'. The tone is partly satirical:

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1. GEL III 227 and VI 89.
2. AB I 168 and 51.
3. MF II 58.
4. SM p. 11.

> 'So absolute is our soul's need of something hidden and uncertain for the maintenance of that doubt and hope and effort which are the breath of its life, that if the whole future were laid bare to us beyond to-day, the interest of all mankind would be bent on the hours that lie between.'[1]

The satire continues when Bertha alone preserves 'the blessed possibility of mystery', since her thoughts alone remain obscure to Latimer. But his one 'oasis of mystery in the dreary desert of knowledge' disappears. She becomes 'no longer a fascinating secret, but a measured fact'.[2] This strange tale is partly, as Gillian Beer suggests, a study in hyperaesthesia. Latimer's romantic sensibility is over-developed. But Beer remains duly sceptical of George Eliot's attempt to 'stabilise its meaning in acceptably positive terms' by the addition in 1872 of the motto,

> "Give me no light, great heaven, but such as turns
> To energy of human fellowship;
> No powers save the growing heritage
> That makes completer manhood.'[3]

If "The Lifted Veil" is a parody of romantic reaction against the spread of Positivism, it misfires. For the strength of the need for mystery which it describes is tragic rather than comic.

Gwendolen has a sense of mystery. She suffers from 'fits of spiritual dread... Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her'. Astronomy makes her tremble. In the Frankfurt synagogue, even Deronda feels 'a yearning to escape from the limitations of our weakness'. Mordecai is rightly described by Hans Meyrick as "a sort of philosophical-allegorical-mystical believer".[4] In this novel, George Eliot seems to extend the range of her Positivism by

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1. SM p. 318.
2. Ibid., pp. 322 and 306.
3. Ibid., p.(276); see GEL V 379-80 and Gillian Beer, "Myth and the Single Consciousness: MM and 'The Lifted Veil'", in This Particular Web, ed. Ian Adam, Toronto, 1975, pp. 95-9.
4. DD I 89-90; II 136 and III 148.

admitting the sense of mystery in the way Lewes had recommended. Comte had neglected that region, constructing his own self-consciously subjective symbolism for the controlled exercise of the feelings. George Eliot is more humble in the face of the universe.

George Eliot was certainly less fond of systems than Comte. Silas Marner teaches that 'human beliefs, like all other natural growths, elude the barriers of system'.[1] Her only certainty was in the limits of her knowledge. She comforted Frederic Myers with this faith:

> "I gather a sort of strength from the certainty that there must be limits or negations in my own moral powers and life-experience which may screen from me many possibilities of blessedness for our suffering human nature. The most melancholy thought surely would be that we in our own persons had measured and exhausted the sources of spiritual good."[2]

In The Mill on the Floss, George Eliot delivers a violent attack on 'men of maxims'. She argues,

> 'moral judgements must remain false and hollow, unless they are checked and enlightened by a perpetual reference to the special circumstances that mark the individual lot'.[3]

It is this belief which made her a novelist rather than a philosopher. Systems and generalisations were necessary. They provided a clear framework from which to begin the detailed observation which verifies the original hypotheses. Many of the generalisations from which she began derived from Comte, as I have shown. But her novels were 'a set of experiments in life' which tested these generalisations. As she explained to Joseph Payne, she needed to clothe formula in 'some human figure and individual experience'. She concluded, 'if I help others to see at all it must be through that medium of art'.[4] The nature of her Positivism shaped the form of its

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1. SM p. 236.
2. F.W.H. Myers, op.cit., p. 274.
3. MF II 362.
4. GEL VI 216-7.

expression.

Another difference between Comte and George Eliot lies in their concept of Humanity. For Comte, the Great Being did not include all human beings but only those worthy of incorporation. He had little sympathy with the mass of mankind. George Eliot was totally different. She could not stress too much the mediocrity of the hero of her first novel, "Amos Barton". She claimed, 'my only merit must lie in the truth with which I represent to you the humble experience of ordinary fellow-mortals'.[1] Chapter seventeen of Adam Bede makes the same point. Whereas Gwendolen objects to being dull and middling, Daniel Deronda has 'a fervour which made him easily find poetry and romance among the events of everyday life'.[2] These are random examples of the nature and range of George Eliot's sympathy with the humblest representatives of Humanity.

One of George Eliot's greatest strengths is her ability to show the moral significance of the smallest acts. She explains, for example, why Tito can no longer look up at Romola,[3] why Esther stays with her father one Sunday evening instead of escaping to her room,[4] and how Dorothea manages to recover sufficient love to offer Casaubon her arm after he has previously rejected it. These events seem insignificant, but George Eliot explains, 'it is in these acts called trivialities that the seeds of joy are for ever wasted', or, alternatively bear fruit.[5] Comte was not concerned with such minutiae. He never succeeded in explaining more than the outlines of his moral philosophy. It required the novelist to illustrate the maxims of the philosopher.

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1. SCL I 94.
2. DD II 204 and I 305.
3. R I 422-3.
4. FH I 232.
5. MM II 231-3.

In this concluding section, I have stressed the differences between the novelist and the philosopher in order to restore the balance which was upset by the long study of their similarities in the rest of the thesis. It was my aim to illustrate the extent of George Eliot's debt to Comte and to analyse her novels as an expression of the Positivist synthesis. Those aspects of her genius which have no connection with Comte have been sufficiently explored in many other works. I have constantly attempted to illustrate the ways in which George Eliot deepened Comte's original insights. A comparison of each theme in Part One with the corresponding section of Part Three demonstrates her consistent addition of the qualities of humility, tolerance, sympathy and a sense of humour to the dry dogmas of Comte's Positivism. But these doctrines are still recognisably present in her work, and until the similarities are clarified, the differences remain obscured. The main difference is difficult to encapsulate. It is a matter of the nature and quality of understanding and sympathy. It is, oversimplified, the difference between philosophy and art. Before George Eliot, the Religion of Humanity, which many would deny the title of religion, distinctly lacked the quality of humanity.

Appendix A: Critical Recognition of George Eliot's Positivism

A survey of the rise and fall of the notion of Comte's influence on George Eliot provides a history of criticism interesting in its own right. The two major scholars of George Eliot and of Positivism have given the subject inadequate treatment. Positivism remains the one great lacuna in Gordon Haight's monumental research on George Eliot. Even his fine edition of her letters betrays inaccuracy in this area. In one volume he mistakes her reference to the Synthèse Subjective for the fourth volume of the Système, deprives Professor Beesly of the chair of History at University College, London, and calls Littré head of the Positivists after 1857, whereas that position belonged to Laffitte.[1] In his biography, Haight relies entirely on W.M. Simon to dismiss the question of Comte's influence.[2] Haight's reluctance to read Comte is understandable, but Simon's reluctance to read George Eliot is not. Simon argues, surprisingly, that 'concerning her own attitude the evidence of the literary works is not necessary'. He likens her to Frederic Harrison, since, unlike other partial adherents to Positivism, she was attracted by its religious aspects. But he limits the influence to her poems and 'half a dozen brief passages in The Spanish Gypsy'.[3] His bulky footnotes give a misleading impression of thoroughness. As Royden Harrison noticed, he failed to consider the Harrison and Beesly papers, and his whole work is vitiated by his lack of sympathy with Comte.[4]

Simon accounts for the notion of Positivism in George Eliot's work as originating in Congreve's remarks that The Spanish Gypsy was a 'mass of positivism' and then perpetuating itself 'without much further thought'

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1. GEL IV 227 fn9, 232 fn4, and 328 fn1.
2. Haight, GE, pp. 302 and 405.
3. Simon, European Positivism in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 210-3.
4. VS VII (1964) 397-9.

through a handful of critics.[1] This is simply not what happened. Assessing printed comments alone, George Eliot's debt to Comte was soon recognised by Christian critics, who used the Positivist stigma to beat George Eliot's dogma. It received more neutral attention from a number of reviews in the 1870's and was acclaimed by some of the Positivists. It became a controversial subject on her death and was resurrected by Cross's Life in 1885. Although largely neglected in France it remained a commonplace of George Eliot criticism right through the first four decades of this century, in which Positivism finally expired, while few read her works. With the revival of George Eliot criticism since the Second World War, the debt has been recognised in some short studies of specific novels, by those who have worked on her manuscript notebooks and diaries, by the wide-ranging studies of Knoepflmacher and Paris, both of whom give prominence to Feuerbach and treat Comte only as one of many similar influences, and by one Indian thesis.

The first magazine to mention Comte in its reviews of George Eliot was the Ultramontane Dublin University Magazine in 1861 and 1862.[2] These were followed the next year by the liberal Catholic Richard Simpson in the Home and Foreign Review, who attacked Lewes and Eliot as 'a double mouth-piece of a single brain'. As well as noticing the influence of Goethe, Strauss and Feuerbach he saw Eliot as modifying Comte to base her system more on Christianity and to make it less systematic. He pointed specifically to her attack on Providence, her interpretation of Comte's worship of mother, wife and daughter and her belief in confession as opposed to concealment. He attacked her positivist condescension but ended by

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1. Simon, op.cit., p.210.
2. DUM LVII (1861) 198 and LIX (1862) 400.

rejoicing that she had grown so cunning that her meaning remained hidden, leaving only the Christian disguise.[1] Cruder recognitions of George Eliot's Positivism came in The Month and Catholic Review at her death and on the publication of Cross's Life.[2]

Perhaps the best Catholic treatment of Eliot was by Lord Acton, who revised and then reviewed the Life at Cross's request. He expressed privately the difference in tone between her translation of Feuerbach, 'an aggressive, subversive, angry book', and the tolerance displayed in her novels.[3] His review attributed this change to her increasing submission to Comte's influence:

> 'It was the second Comte, the dogmatising and emotional author of the Politique Positive, that she revered... She continued to analyse and illustrate with increasing fertility and accuracy; but she was in the clasp of the dead hand, and the leading ideas recur with constant sameness.'

Like the French Catholic reviewers, Acton noticed with approval that Comte's influence had the effect of increasing her sympathy with the real Catholicism.[4]

George Eliot came under fire from other Christian critics. R.H. Hutton attacked her translation of Feuerbach as a 'series of reiterated assumptions'. He earned her gratitude for his appreciation of Romola, but he complained of her exaggerating the sins of Middlemarch society in order to protect her positivist characters. He deplored the 'change in the drift of her teaching' from individual to sociological 'positivist morality', evident in the later novels and in Theophrastus Such. His review of Cross's Life attacked the artificiality of her humanist beliefs,

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1. HFR III (1863) 522-49.
2. Month XLII (1881) 272-8 and LIII (1885) 473-82.
3. Yale MS III, John Acton to J.W.Cross, 6/2/(84).
4. NC XVII (1885) 464-85, q.483.

pointing to her failure to sustain the belief in subjective immortality after Lewes's death.[1]

W.H. Mallock turned his satirical attention to George Eliot and Positivism in the late 1870's. In an article entitled "Is Life Worth Living?", he suggested that George Eliot and John Stuart Mill failed to show that it was. Fresh from his 1878 attack on Frederic Harrison and the Positivists in The New Paul and Virginia, or Positivism on an Island, he pointed to George Eliot's novels as 'the first concrete examples of the working of the new religion of humanity... a gradual setting forth of a philosophy and religion of life, illustrated by a continuous succession of diagrams'.[2] The Saturday Review, in two articles on George Eliot's Essays and Cross's Life, was less subtle in its attack on 'the goody-goodiness of Positivism' and 'the gush of Positivism and Nihilism'.[3]

Other critics in the 1870's recognised George Eliot's debt to Comte with less hostility. George Lewes 'read with tears of delight'[4] Dowden's exposition of the inner meaning of her novels. Noticing in particular the subordination of 'the egoistic desires' to 'the social affections' and the importance of the binding past, Dowden referred first to Clotilde de Vaux, then to George Eliot as fulfilling her mission under the influence of Comte. Five years later Dowden treated Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda in terms of Comtean aesthetics, especially his attack on 'Art dissociated from the reason and the conscience'. Dowden saw the influence as beneficial, encouraging her to continue and strengthen her Positivist ties: 'It is essential to the highest character of her art that she should not isolate herself from the chief intellectual movement of her time'.[5] Both of these

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1. "The Atheistic Explanation of Religion", in Theological Essays, London, (1871) 1888, pp. 25-38; "R", Spectator (18/7/63) 2265-7, see GEL IV 96-7; "MM", BQR LVII (1873) 414; "GE's Ideal Ethics", LLA CXLII (1879); "GE", CR XLVII (1885) 372-91.
2. "Is Life Worth Living?", NC II (1877) 251-73; "TS", ER CL (1879) 565.
3. SR LVII (1884) 320-1, and LIX (1885) 181-2.
4. GHL Diary, 14/8/72.
5. CR XX (1872) 403-22, and XXIX (1877) 348-69.

reviews are in the Eliot collection at Yale and were known to her. She was displeased by his criticism of the scientific and didactic tone of Theophrastus Such.[1] His final estimate stressed her religious temperament, which 'consecrated her life to the highest and best equally in the days of Comtism'. He praised her for deepening 'the Comtist view of society' but he ended with an appreciation of the dangers as well as the merits of the 'Tendenz-roman'.[2]

Sidney Colvin was another critic to link George Eliot's reputation with that of 'the positive synthesis'. He saw that her religion 'governs all she writes'. Comparing her with George Sand he found Eliot's philosophical ground firmer but feared that 'her art lays bare its moral and intellectual grounds too much'.[3] This feeling was encapsulated in a parody of the Congreve-Huxley controversy, that George Eliot was 'George Sand plus Science and minus Sex'.[4] Other reviews complained of her 'casting the most modern of all Philosophers' into the mouths of Spanish Gypsies, found 'the key note' of Middlemarch in Comtism and discussed 'the quasi-Positivist doctrine of the Cabala' in Daniel Deronda.[5]

Two anonymous reviews dealt quite thoroughly with George Eliot's Comtism. One began by speculating on future histories of literature and their treatment of English Positivism. It claimed,

> 'the writer, for whose sake the little circle will hereafter arrest attention, will, it may without hazard be predicted, be the novelist and poetess known under the name George Eliot'.

Felix Holt, the Spanish Gypsy and Middlemarch were all seen to illustrate 'the views of Comte', and George Eliot was rather quaintly portrayed as

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1. GEL V 29, VI 333, and VII 165; Athenaeum (7/6/79) 719-20.
2. Athenaeum (31/1 and 7/2/85) 145-6 and 175-6.
3. FR ns XIII (1873) 142-7 and XX (1876) 614.
4. W.E.Henley, View and Reviews: Essays in Appreciation, London, 1890, p.132.
5. PMG VII (1868) 43-4; Athenaeum (7/12/72) 725-6; MM XXXVI (1877) 101-11.

hoping for the revival of medieval Catholic fervour in the Religion of Humanity 'especially for the sake of high-souled women'.[1] The other, entitled "George Eliot and Comtism", declared,

> 'In her the teaching of Comte in its general spirit, and indeed on many individual points, finds, so it seems to us, a supremely high artistic expression.'

The Positivism, almost undiscernible in the early works was seen to begin with The Mill on the Floss and to consist mainly in a reverence for the past, the belief in subjective immortality and the recognition of inexorable law.[2]

Among those associated with Positivism, John Morley, Frederic Harrison and Leslie Stephen all wrote on George Eliot. Morley's early reviews praised her elevation of thought but it was not until 1868 that he mentioned Comte in reference to her sense of past inheritance and of the tragic laws of life illustrated in The Spanish Gypsy. His review of Cross's Life acknowledged her debt to Comte but also attacked her bookishness and artificiality.[3] Harrison's review of the Life described George Eliot's 'active relation with the Positivist movement generally' in spite of her non-adherence, and referred ironically to Comte as '"the grotesque French pedant"... by whose intellectual impulse the genius of George Eliot was saturated'.[4] Ten years later Harrison recorded the inevitable reaction against her artificiality. He noticed the paradox that the philosophic power both ennobled and maimed her art, surprisingly following the line that her novels declined with Romola.[5] In "Reminiscences of George Eliot : 1901", he traced the detailed biographical links between her and himself,

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1. QR CXXXIV (1873) 336-69.
2. LQR XLVII (1877) 446-71, q.450-1.
3. See SR XVI (1863) 124-5 and XXI (1886) 722-4; BQR XLV (1867) 141-78; MM XVI (1866) 272-9, XVIII (1868) 281-7), and LI (1885) 241-56.
4. FR XLIII (1885) 309-22.
5. FH, GE's Place in Literature, London, (1895) 66-78.

from their meeting on New Year's Day 1860, through his constant visits to the Priory and advice on legal matters in the novels, to her correspondence on Comtean aesthetics. He explained,

> 'George Eliot had been a careful student of all his works for many years, and through the Congreves she was familiar with every phase of the Positivist ideal, with the general idea of which she had entire sympathy'.

Harrison accepted that her adherence to Comte was limited but demonstrated that she showed a great deal of sympathy and practical co-operation with the English Positivists. He related how she sided with him against Matthew Arnold on Culture in 1867, disagreed with his personal dissociation from Congreve's Comtism in 1869, and was won over by him to help in the construction of a Positivist liturgy in 1877. He concluded, 'we were all anxious to see this sympathy develop into a full adhesion, which it never did'.[1] At the same time, Alfred Haggard was claiming in the Positivist Review that George Eliot 'derived all her main poetic inspiration from Positivism. We may describe her novels as Positivist poems'.[2]

In 1902 Leslie Stephen brought out the first in Morley's series on 'English Men of Letters', George Eliot. He recognised Comte's importance in her development, that she 'drew nearer to the Positivist than to any other school'. He attributed her break with Sara Hennell to the latter's criticism of Comte and recorded her intimacy with Congreve, Harrison and Beesly. But he found the Positivist influence on her novels unhealthy, complaining of Fedalma's sacrifice for the sake of the community, Romola's anachronistic desertion to the Religion of Humanity, and Deronda's resemblance to a prophet in that Church. According to Stephen, it was her

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1. FH, Memories and Thoughts, pp. 143-60.
2. PR IX (1901) 28.

embodiment of Positivist themes which accounted for the decline in her popularity.[1] Harrison, in his review of Stephen, denied the Positivist source of the stress on race in the Spanish Gypsy, but recognised Comte's general influence on her novels, complaining that there was too much literary criticism and too little interest in 'the great ideals she sought'. Harrison was still alive to participate in the Positivist convention of the centenary of George Eliot's birth, when a letter of his was read to the assembly.[2]

George Eliot's death received official recognition and mourning by Positivists on both sides of the channel. Pierre Laffitte wrote in his 33rd circular,

> 'Je cite sa mort comme une perte pour le positivisme, comme elle l'a été pour la littérature anglaise, parce qu'il est certain, de l'avis des meilleurs juges, qu'elle est demeurée le peintre le plus fidèle des côtés poétiques et subjectifs du positivisme et que, sans s'être jamais ralliée à tous les aspects de cette religion, elle en a été plus touchée que M. Mill, Lewes ou Grote eux-mêmes. Du reste, la participation de Mme Cross au subside positiviste établit nettement son degré d'adhésion.'[3]

Professor Beesly, in his Annual Address, delivered at the Cavendish Rooms, Mortimer Street, recognised that her work would always have

> 'a special interest for Positivists. For her powerful intellect had accepted the teaching of Auguste Comte, and she looked forward to the reorganization of belief on the lines which he had laid down.'

On the basis of eighteen years of acquaintance, on the evidence of her diligent and constant reading of Comte and of her regular subscription to the movement, Beesly could claim her general support. But he accepted that she was not satisfied with some of Comte's details, and that 'she was first an artist and then a philosopher'. She therefore felt it better 'to paint

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1. L. Stephen, GE, pp. 43, 24, 138, 165 and 199-200.
2. PR X (1902) 159-62, and XXVII (1919) 279-81.
3. Circulaires annuelles de Pierre Laffitte et Charles Jeanolle, 1864-1913, Musée d'AC, 33e Circulaire, 1881, p. 13.

humanity as it is than as she would have it to be'.[1] Beesly and Harrison wanted more public recognition of George Eliot, for instance in Westminster Abbey. But their enthusiasm, as we have seen, was dampened by continual disapproval of her relationships with Lewes and Cross both among Positivists and outside.[2]

In other obituaries George Eliot's Positivism was a matter of controversy. The Daily Telegraph attributed her melancholy in part to 'a philosophy which has vainly endeavoured to develop a religion without a future life'. The Standard was more explicit:

> 'Most of the literary charm of George Eliot disappeared, as far as the general public were concerned, when she began to introduce so largely into her writings the technical diction of Positivism and the esoteric phrases culled from the vocabulary of Comte and his disciples.'

To counteract such rumours the Pall Mall Gazette published a special article on "The Religious Views of George Eliot", recognising her acquaintance with positivism but claiming that her adherence to Comte had been greatly exaggerated. She was far too wise and good, the readers were assured, far too tender towards the Church of England, ever to identify with its enemies.[3] John Blackwood in Blackwood's Magazine and James Sully in Mind kept Comte's name out of their appreciation of George Eliot's humanism.[4] The Athenaeum limited itself to quoting George Eliot's 'Comtean hymn' and C. K. Paul reported her as having said of Comte 'more than once in the closing months of her life, "I will not submit to him my heart and my intellect"'.[5] Edith Simcox tried to explain George Eliot's preference that her 'reverence and gratitude' towards Comte 'should be exaggerated in

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1. ESB, Some Public Aspects of Positivism, p. 7.
2. MM III 464; see Part II, Ch.II.
3. Daily Telegraph, 24/12/80; PMG, 30/12/80, among a collection of GE obituaries, Bod MS Don c 73.
4. BEM CXXIX (1881) 255-268; Mind VI (1881) 378-94.
5. Athenaeum (1/1/81) 21; HNMM I (1881) 912-23.

the conception of the public rather than that she should be ranked with those who are admired for the cheap wisdom of dissidence'.[1]

W.M.W. Call gave extensive coverage to George Eliot's positivism, recognising Romola as the representative symbol of Humanity and Felix Holt as 'the ideal workman of Auguste Comte'. Her faith was 'unquestionably the religion of humanity', with its reverence for the dead and for all sacred ties. He quoted her as confiding to him earlier that her position towards Comte was similar to that of Lewes, and during the spring of 1880 revealing 'her dissatisfaction with some of his speculations'. She was not 'an absolute disciple of Comte' but accepted his reorganisation of belief, subject to modification and revision.[2]

Mathilde Blind's book on George Eliot of 1883 adduced the same evidence as Call and came to a similar conclusion, that she was greatly indebted to Comte but that 'she was not a Positivist in the strict sense of the word'. Blind further limited Eliot's adherence to Comte's philosophy, rather than his social policy.[3] In the same year F.W.H. Myers also recognised her 'working-out of the fundamental dogma of the so-called Religion of Humanity'.[4] But it was left to G.W. Cooke to study the question in detail. He traced 'the successive philosophic influences' on George Eliot from Bray, Feuerbach, Hennell and Lewes to Comte, placing her among those who accepted only the philosophy, not the religious and social reconstructions. But he found Comte's teaching on Humanity, altruism, duties versus rights, subjective immortality and renunciation fully represented in her work, particularly in Romola, Daniel Deronda and the

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1. NC IX (1881) 782.
2. WR LX (1881) 154-98. Call also listed her as an adherent of Comte in the Translator's Preface to his translation of Comte's Preliminary Discourse on the Positive Spirit, London, 1883, p. 9.
3. Mathilde Blind, GE, London, 1883, pp. 280-3.
4. F.W.H.Myers, Essays-Modern, London, 1883, p. 266.

poetry. Although she preferred traditional Christian symbolism to Comte's, hers was the Religion of Humanity 'as interpreted by a woman, a poet and a genius'. Positivism, Cooke concluded, gave her novels a definite purpose, moral vigour and thoughtfulness, but deprived them of freedom, spontaneity and hope.[1]

John Cross's biography of George Eliot in 1885 provided further evidence of her links with Positivism. It recorded her frequent reading of Comte and acknowledgement of his influence and showed her close contacts with the Congreves, Harrison, Beesly and the other Positivists. Of particular significance was the passage in which he described her attitude to Comte at the end of her life:

> 'During her illness I read aloud, amongst other books, Comte's 'Discours Préliminaire', translated by Dr. Bridges. This volume was one of her especial favourites, and she delighted in making me acquainted with it. For all Comte's writings she had a feeling of high admiration, intense interest, and very deep sympathy. I do not think I ever heard her speaking of any writer with a more grateful sense of obligation for enlightenment. Her great debt to him was always thankfully acknowledged.'

Her appreciation was 'selective', however, and her adherence 'limited'.[2]

Many of the reviews of Cross's Life alluded to George Eliot's sympathy with Positivism.[3] Blackwood's produced an array of quotations demonstrating her belief in human goodness, subjective immortality and the need for resignation and activity. It claimed she was a natural Positivist:

> 'Had she never heard of Comte or Dr. Congreve, she would have been a disciple of the religion of humanity. Its shaping effect was not on her nature but on her works. When it had assumed for her an organised form, she became its apostle.'[4]

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1. G.W.Cooke, GE: A Critical Study of her Life, Writings and Philosophy, London, 1883, 189-94, 231-2, 250-1, 375, and 413.
2. Life III 368-9.
3. BQR LXXXI (1885) 330; Spectator (31/1/85) 151-3.
4. BEM CXXXVII (1885) 172-4.

But after this the subject seems to have suffered the fate of all too easily accepted generalisations. Everybody knew George Eliot was sympathetic towards Positivism, so nobody bothered to prove it, especially when the numbers interested in either dwindled to a small minority, left over, like Frederic Harrison, from a previous age.

In France the recognition of Comte's influence was rare and almost uniformly hostile. As in Britain, however, a Catholic magazine was among the first to recognise George Eliot's Positivism. Critics in the Correspondant and the Revue Générale treated it as latent or disguised Catholicism.[1] Léo Quesnel included Comte among those who influenced her.[2] So did Edmund Scherer, although he suggested that she may have exaggerated her expressions of admiration to please Congreve and Harrison: 'to others, she confessed that Positivism seemed to her narrow and exclusive'.[3] Madame Dronsart wrote of George Eliot's creating a new religion of humanity:

> 'Nous disons créer, car, tout en adoptant les principes fondamentaux de la doctrine positiviste, tout en reconnaissant que les oeuvres de Comte ont illuminé son esprit, elle se sépare de lui sur certains points.'[4]

The main source for French criticism of George Eliot is the Revue des Deux Mondes. There Émile Montegut elicited her thanks for his reverential treatment of Adam Bede as early as 1859. But his attitude, expressed in 1883, was that altruism was the same whether Christian or Positivist. He attributed more influence to Spinoza than to 'Auguste Comte, dont elle n'eut connaissance que plus tardivement et lorsqu'elle était engagée déjà dans la vie littéraire'.[5] Two Comte scholars recognised her Positivism but Émile Caro stressed her development of Comte's views, for instance in

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1. G.de Prieux, Correspondant CIV (1876) 672-83; P.du Quesnoy, Correspondant, CXIII (1878); V.Valmont, RG ns II (1873) 525-43.
2. RPL 3e Ser. Tom.I (1881) 4.
3. E.Scherer, Essays on English Literature, trans. George Saintsbury, New York, 1891, 298.
4. M.Dronsart, Portraits d'Outre-Manche, Paris, 1885, 236.
5. GEL III 109-10; RDM XXI (1859) 867-97, and LVI (1883) 78 and 87.

the "Choir invisible", and Lévy-Bruhl linked her rather with Spinoza, Feuerbach, Strauss, Goethe and Spencer.[1] Arvède Barine, in his review of Cross, described her specific allegiance to Comte:

> 'elle prenait part au mouvement positiviste, et ce fut en faveur de Comte qu'elle renonça à l'independence intellectuelle qui avait suivi sa rupture avec la religion. Sans accepter une autorité, elle se soumit derechef à une discipline mentale.'[2]

In the 1880's and '90's George Eliot became part of the controversy over literary cosmopolitanism. While Vogué attacked Zola's realism from the standpoint of Le Roman Russe, Brunetière championed George Eliot as a realist who retained idealism and morality. Zola counter-attacked, 'Elle ne connait l'humanité que par les livres'. But Brunetière defended novels which contained theses, describing that of George Eliot's as 'une prédication positiviste'. Spencer and Lewes were particularly influential on her: 'Moins familière avec cette grand école anglaise de psychologie positive, elle n'eût pas écrit Adam Bede ou Silas Marner?'[3]

Early in this century the Abbé Bremond wrote of George Eliot's joyful encounter with Comte confirming her own ideas and renewing her confidence. He recognised that although she never adhered to the Positivist Church her sympathy was both profound and detailed.[4] Hovelaque also referred to Comte's influence on her,[5] the clearest recognition of which came in Madeleine Cazamian's Le Roman et les idées en Angleterre in L'Influence de la Science (1860-1890). This described 'son adhésion intime aux theories d'Auguste Comte'. With Lewes, 'elle communia dans la vénération d'Auguste Comte'. She rejected the details of his cult but was inspired by the Système as a whole. Cazamian saw that George Eliot's meliorism derived

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1. E-M.Caro, RDM LII (1882) 493; Lévy-Bruhl, RDM CX (1892) 371.
2. RDM LXX (1885) 127-8.
3. F.Brunetière, RDM CXXXI (1895) 634, and Le Roman Naturaliste, Paris, 1897, 249; see J.P.Couch, GE in France: A French Appraisal of GE's Writings, 1858-1960, Chapel Hill, 1967, Ch.III, "Brunetière, GE and Literary Cosmopolitanism".
4. RDM XXXVI (1906) 787-822.
5. H.Hovelaque, Pages Choisies des Grands Écrivains, Paris, 1909, xxiv.

from Comte's positivism, pointing to her insistence on the solidarity and continuity of Humanity, in particular to Deronda's filial piety and respect for the past.[1] E.J. Pond found the influence too pervasive to isolate examples:

> 'George Eliot subit profondément l'influence des doctrines de Comte; les preuves en sont si nombreuses dans ses travaux qu'il est difficile d'y faire un choix. L'intrigue principale de ses grands romans semble d'être forgée dans le seul but d'exposer la doctrine positive.'

He followed Cooke in attributing to Comte's influence many of her ideas on heredity, morality and the subjective life.. He claimed that she also approved of Comte's emphasis on the need for social and religious organisation.[2]

Bourl'honne limited his study to the early influence on her development, which he regarded as essentially complete by the time she encountered Comte. His influence did not begin to appear in her works until 1862, in her conception of historical continuity, heredity and human solidarity as the basis for duty, the role of sympathy and intelligence in the development of the moral sentiments, the subordination of egoism to altruism, the need for renunciation, and the subjective life. Bourl'honne found her reluctant to sacrifice the individual to Comte's large and vague Great Being and concluded, surprisingly after his list of similarities, that 'l'influence d'Auguste Comte est assolument négligeable'.[3] More recent French critics seem not even to have raised the question.

Outside his own country, however, Comte continued to receive honour as a major prophet at least in George Eliot's eyes. Charles Gardner saw the

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1. M.L. Cazamian, Le Roman et les idées en Angleterre: L'Influence de la Science (1860-1890), Strasbourg, 1923, pp. 98-9, 141, 152 and 170-1.
2. E.J.Pond, Les Idées Morales et Religieuses de GE, Paris, 1927, pp. 79-82.
3. P.Bourl'honne, GE: Essai de Biographie Intellectuelle et Morale, 1819-54, Paris, 1933, pp. 146-9.

Religion of Humanity as the natural outcome of her previous criticism:

> 'Anyone who had followed George Eliot's mental and spiritual growth up to the time of her translation of Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity, might have prophesied with tolerable certainty that she would sooner or later fall under the spell of Auguste Comte.'

Lewes 'strengthened her leaning in that direction' since he 'had made a fuller surrender to Comte than she'. Yet Positivism was only 'a temporary resting place'. It pervaded her novels and poems of the sixties, but Gardner regarded Daniel Deronda as her greatest work, in which she approached Judaism from the Religion of Humanity to achieve a reconciliation of Positivism and Mysticism.[1] Mary Deakin also recognised the place of George Eliot's study of Comte in clarifying and strengthening her ideas. Deakin found Comtean ideas even in the early works, in the recognition of inexorable law, in her large social sympathy and in Adam's satisfaction with his station and service of posterity. The influence, Deakin claimed, increased with the later works.[2]

The First World War seems to have dampened enthusiasm for the study of optimistic humanism. But Elizabeth Haldane noticed George Eliot's links with the Positivists and her admiration of Comte's writing.[3] Surveys of English literature referred to the subject.[4] But it was left to writers overseas to explore it in any detail. Ingeborg Tegner devoted a chapter of her thesis to the positivism in George Eliot's poetry.[5] Minoru Toyoda traced the successive influence of the Brays, Hennells, Strauss, Feuerbach and Comte. He recognised the strong influence of Comte on Lewes, especially on the Problems of Life and Mind, dating Eliot's enthusiasm for Comte from

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1. Charles Gardner, The Inner Life of GE, London, 1912, pp. 197-8 and 231.
2. Mary Deakin, The Early Life of GE, Manchester, 1913, pp. 168-9.
3. Elizabeth Haldane, GE and Her Times, London, 1927, pp. 304-5.
4. Oliver Elton, A Survey of English Literature, 1830-80, 2 vols., London, 1920, I 74-5; Ernest Baker, History of the English Novel, London, 1937, VIII 250.
5. Ingeborg Tegner, GE: En Studie i Hennes Religiösa Och Filosofiska Utreckling, Lund, 1929, Ch.X.

1859. He outlined Comte's teaching on resignation and activity, the importance of feeling, subjective immortality, and the subordination of the individual to larger units of the family, race and Humanity, all of which he found in George Eliot's novels. He concluded that, although she was 'logically compelled to reject the Religion of Humanity', her sympathy with it was profound, especially in her final novel, Daniel Deronda.[1] Ben Euwema also traced the successive influences up to Comte, who 'increased George Eliot's desire for a more positive religious attitude'. He claimed, 'the fact of George Eliot's indebtedness to Comte has been often pointed out and rather exhaustively treated'.[2] Unfortunately, the first half of the statement was more accurate than the second. Another judicious assessment of George Eliot's relation to Comte, unsubstantiated by detailed study, came from Blanche Williams, who confined Comtean ideas to the poetry.[3]

After the Second World War came a spate of general works on George Eliot, her mind and her art. First came Leavis's revaluation,[4] then Gerald Bullett's book with a suggestive passage on Auguste Comte from Lewes's History of Philosophy in the Appendix.[5] There was similar significance in Basil Willey placing his chapter on Comte immediately before his study of George Eliot in Nineteenth-Century Studies. Comte's influence on her was specifically recognised, but without elaboration.[6] Joan Bennett placed more emphasis on the earlier influences which prepared George Eliot for Comte's ideas, which 'tended to confirm and enlarge, not to alter, the conceptions she developed at Coventry'.[7] The Hansons provided biographical

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1. Minoru Toyoda, Studies in the Mental Development of GE in relation to the Science, Philosophy, and Theology of her day, Tokyo, 1931, Ch.XII, pp. 193-7, 211-7, and 233-4.
2. Ben Euwema, The Development of GE's Ethical and Social Theories, Chicago, 1936, p. 13.
3. Blanche Williams, GE, New York, 1936, pp. 316-7.
4. F.R.Leavis, Scrutiny XIII (1945) 172-87 and 257-71, and The Great Tradition, pp. 29-125.
5. Gerald Bullett, GE: Her Life and Books, London, 1947, pp. 243-5.
6. Basil Willey, Nineteenth-Century Studies, p. 198.
7. Joan Bennett, GE: Her Mind and Her Art, Cambridge,(1948) 1966, pp.25 and 6

material on George Eliot's relations with the Congreves supplied by their niece. They acknowledged Eliot's voracious reading of Comte but stressed her reaction against his 'later extravagances'.[1]

Two major works on George Eliot's art mentioned Comte incidentally. Barbara Hardy referred to his contribution to Eliot's emphasis on feelings, the role of women in the development of moral sympathies, and the education of the egoist. But she was quick to distinguish the breadth of the artist's vision from the narrowness of the philosopher's 'anti-feminist condescension to women'. She adduced the Harrison correspondence to demonstrate that 'the tentativeness of her meliorism is something far removed from Comte's dogmatic blueprints for the Positivist Society'.[2] W.J. Harvey also turned to those letters to illustrate his study of 'idealization' in George Eliot's novels,[3] as did Ian Milner.[4] Rosemary Sprague recounted Eliot's familiarisation with Comte's ideas through Lewes, Harrison and the Congreves. She portrayed Eliot's accepting Comte's notion of the moral influence of women, but not their abandonment of intellectual pursuits, which she incorrectly attributed to him.[5] Marghanita Laski referred to George Eliot's 'meliorism' as opposed to positivism.[6] Felicia Bonaparte described her meliorism and her teaching of resignation and activity with only occasional reference to Comte, along with seemingly random combinations of Hume, Mill, Lewes, Spencer, Darwin 'and others', who held very different views.[7] Neil Roberts, exhausting the possible titles for such general studies of George Eliot: Her Beliefs and Her Art, accepted

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1. Lawrence and Elizabeth Hanson, Marian Evans and GE, Oxford, 1952, pp. 210-1, 141, 169 and 246.
2. Barbara Hardy, The Novels of GE, London, 1959, pp. 53-7 and 236.
3. W.J.Harvey, The Art of GE, London, 1961, pp. 177ff.
4. Ian Milner, The Structure of Values in GE, Prague, 1968, Ch.IX, "The Idealized Hero and R"; see also his recognition of previous writers on Comte's influence, pp. 2-4.
5. Rosemary Sprague, GE, Philadelphia, London and New York, 1968, pp. 104-5, 167, and 243-5.
6. Marghanita Laski, GE and her World, London, 1973, p. 69.
7. Felicia Bonaparte, Will and Destiny: Morality and Tragedy in GE's Novels, New York, 1975, pp. 5, 90 and 210.

that she became 'profoundly interested' in Comte's work, which he saw as contributing to her attack on egoism and her emphasis on continuity. Roberts identified Felix Holt's political views as Positivist rather than Radical, but found her sympathies with Feuerbach greater. He claimed that her insistence on the importance of the individual heightened the intensity of a tragic vision beyond the range of Comte's concentration on the species.[1] Valentine Cunningham noticed her link with Comte.[2]

A number of articles on George Eliot have treated positivist aspects of her writing without adequately recognising their source. David Carroll analysed 'the movement from illusion through disenchantment to regeneration' and the importance of historical continuity in her novels with reference to Strauss and Emerson, rather than Comte and his three stages.[3] Miriam Allott's study of George Eliot's constant depression in the 1860's as she faced 'the more sombre implications of her own doctrines' would have been illuminated by reference to her strong adherence to Positivism during this period.[4] Carole Robinson saw only Feuerbach in Romola's search for God in men. She recognised Comte's influence on Deronda's reverence for the past, but still called him 'a Feuerbachian hero' and 'an acolyte of the religion of fellow-feeling' without noticing any details from Comte's system.[5] C.B. Cox contrasted George Eliot's emphasis on social duties with 'the humanist desire for individual self-development', but concluded that she 'has nothing practical to offer except simple Christian truisms'.[6] Ian Ker attacked the vagueness of her higher religion, especially in the later novels. Maggie, Felix Holt, Dorothea and Deronda are in turn chastised for

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1. Neil Roberts, GE: Her Beliefs and Her Art, London, 1975, pp. 10, 25, 30-1, 50, and 145.
2. Valentine Cunningham, Everywhere Spoken Against: Dissent in the Victorian Novel, London, 1975, pp. 143 and 281.
3. David Carroll, "An Image of Disenchantment in the Novels of GE", RES ns XI (1960) pp. 29-41.
4. Miriam Allott, "GE in the 1860's", VS VI (1961) pp. 93-108.
5. Carole Robinson, "Romola: A Reading of the Novel", VS VI (1962) 29-42; "The Severe Angel: A Study of DD", ELH XXXI (1964) 278-300.
6. C.B.Cox, The Free Spirit: A Study of Liberal Humanism in the Novels of GE, Henry James, E.M.Forster, Virginia Woolf and Angus Wilson, London, 1963, p.37.

their lack of convictions. Ker observed that if the novels had been set in a later period, Eliot could have depicted belief in a definite creed such as Comtean Positivism. He failed to observe that this creed still does supply the intellectual foundation of her novels, although George Eliot's reticence may have contributed to her choice of chronological settings which precluded its open identification.[1]

Some studies of other subjects refer briefly to George Eliot's Positivism. Anthony Cockshut observed with amazement her reverence for Comte and Frank Kermode also noticed the link.[2] Mario Praz alluded to her Comtist faith in progress and described Comte as placing the final seal on her 'tendency towards democratisation of the heroic'.[3] Richard Stang discussed her sympathy with the Positivist movement in connection with the Harrison correspondence and a series of articles on the novel in the Westminster Review under her editorship.[4]

Two strong affirmations of Eliot's debt to Comte were strangely toned down when the material was published in a different form, perhaps to keep in line with critical orthodoxy. Mark Schorer's analysis of the metaphorical consistency of Middlemarch divided into five groups the metaphors of unification, antithesis, progress, 'creative purpose towards the end of absolute order' and '"muted" apocalypse'. These metaphors were shown to reveal 'the thinking that underlies the dramatic structure'. They embodied the Religion of Humanity, which preached precisely the same unification of human knowledge, progress, the creation of social order and the revelations

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1. I.T.Ker, "GE's Rhetoric of Enthusiasm", EC XXVI (1976) 134-55.
2. A.O.J.Cockshut, Anglican Attitudes, p.25; Frank Kermode, Continuities, London, 1968, p.142.
3. Mario Praz, The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction, trans. A.Davidson, London, New York and Toronto, 1956, pp. 329-30 and 344.
4. Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, 1850-1870, London, 1959, pp. 41-2 and 146-8.

of science. Schorer's own vision was curiously muted in a subsequent essay which referred simply to 'the religion of progress'.[1] Alice Kaminsky linked George Eliot's aesthetic theory with that of Lewes, a translation of the positivistic views of Comte from the language of the sociologist into the language of the artist'. But perhaps because of Haight's attack, she played down this aspect of Comte's influence in her book on Lewes.[2]

Several critics since 1960 have recognised and illustrated Comte's importance in specific novels. George Levine noticed that, except in Daniel Deronda, heroism for George Eliot took the form of resignation, and that, in spite of her determination, she maintained the primacy of duty. He linked this to Comte and Mill.[3] He drew on Wolff's thesis in tracing many of the ideas in The Mill on the Floss to Comte and Feuerbach. But he tended to group these thinkers together, as if their teaching were identical rather than complementary, attributing to Feuerbach the growth from egoism to altruism more systematically treated by Comte. But he recognised Comte's teaching on the family as the first step in this development, on historical continuity, on the influence of public opinion, and on the need for spiritual guidance.[4] Thomas Pinney traced Eliot's development from the Wordsworthian to the less personal Comtean sense of continuity illustrated by Deronda's devotion to the Jewish cause. He edited the notebook in which George Eliot expressed reservations on this aspect of Comte's teaching, whose unfortunate influence he saw at its height in Romola and the Spanish Gypsy. Here, 'the Religion of Humanity

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1. Mark Schorer, "Fiction and the 'Matrix of Analogy'", KR XI (1949) 550-9; cp. "The Structure of the Novel", in "MM": Critical Approaches to the Novel, ed. Barbara Hardy, London, 1967, pp. 19-22.
2. Alice Kaminsky, "GE, GHL, and the Novel", PMLA LXX (1955) 998-1013, and GHL as Literary Critic.
3. George Levine, "Determinism and Responsibility", PMLA LXXVII (1962)268-79.
4. George Levine, "Intelligence as Deception: MF", PMLA LXXX (1965) 402-9.

utterly destroys the law of affection'.[1] Barry Bullen has described Romola as a 'Positivist allegory', to be explained in terms of Comte's view of art, the instrument of education and worship, and of history, in particular of Medieval Catholicism.[2]

William Myers recognised Comte's influence in Eliot's distaste for politics in the narrow sense, as practised by Tito Melema and Harold Transome, and for constitutional without moral reform. Comte is particularly prominent in Felix Holt's assumption of the role of the Medieval Catholic priesthood and in his teaching on public opinion. He, Esther and the miners are seen to represent Comte's alliance of philosophers, women and workers for the regeneration of society. But Middlemarch and Daniel Deronda 'modify the sanctimonious idealism of Felix Holt', as Eliot, according to Myers, grew increasingly independent both of Comte and Spencer.[3] James Scott related the Comtean utopia, of which Frederic Harrison wrote, to Middlemarch. Casaubon represents the collapse of spiritual authority in Protestant metaphysics and Lydgate, the scientist, allies with Bulstrode, the capitalist, in the service of the community. The difficulties they encounter afford a critique of Comte's social theories and an illustration of 'the differences that separate Eliot from doctrinaire Positivism'.[4] Michael Mason found Comte's ideals of continuity and solidarity implicit in Eliot's criticism of Middlemarch society, and related her concern about scientific method 'the issue of subjectivity and objectivity' to Comte, as well as to Lewes, Spencer and Mill.[5]

Two unpublished theses have discovered Comtean influence in their

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1. Thomas Pinney, "The Authority of the Past in GE's Novels", NCF XXI (1966) 131-47; "More Leaves from a Notebook", HLQ XXIX (1966) 353-76.
2. J.B.Bullen, "GE's R as a Positivist Allegory", RES XXVI (1975) 425-35.
3. "Politics and Personality in FH", RMS X (1966) 5-33; and "GE: Politics and Personality", in Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century, ed. John Lucas, London, 1971, pp. 105-29.
4. James Scott, "GE, Positivism, and the Social Vision of MF", VS XVI (1972) 59-76.
5. Michael Mason, "MM and History", NCF XXV (1971) 417-31, and "MM and Science: Problems of Life and Mind", RES XXII (1971) 151-69.

analysis of George Eliot's intellectual position prior to her novels. Michael Wolff tended to overlook Comte's later career in contrasting his objectivity with Feuerbach's subjectivity. But he showed George Eliot's progress from her inaccurate reference to Comte in her 1851 review of Mackay to her strong defence of Comte in the Leader in 1854. Her essays on Gruppe and Riehl are seen to embody Comte's concepts of objectivity and continuity, the essays on Cumming and Young his views on theological egoism. Other Comtean elements noticed in her essays are the opposition to abstract social systems, the emphasis on the function of art in education and worship, and the recognition of national and racial loyalty as a step towards incorporation in Humanity. Wolff clearly recognised that these themes were developed in her novels, but, apart from occasional references, limited his study to their elaboration in the essays.[1] Valerie Dodd was similarly limited chronologically, and was therefore unable to make use of George Eliot's late notebook on Comte which she described in a "Supplementary Note" to her thesis. She emphasised Comte's debt to Saint-Simon, even suggesting that Comte drew heavily on Bazard's 1829 Exposition. She placed George Eliot with Lewes and Mill, as turning Comte's method against his own specific proposals. But she recognised Comte's influence on her decision to write fiction and traced his concepts of Humanity, the three stages, the classification of the sciences, sociology and ethics, in the essays.[2]

Other unpublished theses refer to Comte's influence on George Eliot. Linda Eastin recognised his ideal of a moral leader of society in some of

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1. Michael Wolff, "Marian Evans to GE: The Moral and Intellectual Foundations of her Career", Princeton University Ph.D., 1958.
2. V.A.Dodd, op.cit., pp. 237-59, 429, and 443-4.

her clergymen, notably Gilfil, Irwine, Farebrother and Gascoigne. Eastin detected Comte behind George Eliot's attitude to the past but saw Feuerbach as superseding Comte with his greater subjectivity.[1] Thomas Deegan recognised George Eliot's admiration of Comte in the 1860's, especially his treatment of social development.[2] Stewart Hudson traced Lewes's evolutionism in Eliot's novels without adequately recognising Comte as the common source of their cerebral and social theory, and their 'monism'.[3] It is difficult to unravel Gennaro Santangelo's final position on the importance of Comte's influence on George Eliot, but he wrote of her purpose in Romola, 'to condemn sins against the Religion of Humanity' and to illustrate 'the working of moral laws based on the Religion of Humanity'.[4]

Most of the critics who have worked on George Eliot's manuscript notebooks and diaries have not failed to recognise her debt to Comte. Pinney, Dodd and Santangelo are cited above, while Knoepflmacher and Paris remain still to be discussed. Anne Kitchel recorded the journal references of the Leweses to discussions of the Religion of Humanity with the Congreves in 1859, and 'the recrudescence of interest' in Positivism marked by their heavy reading of Comte at the time of Felix Holt and the Spanish Gypsy.[5] Fred Thomson noticed George Eliot's reading and annotation of Mill and Comte for Felix Holt, 'the Chartist of Positivism'.[6] More detailed annotation of Comte is revealed in William Baker's edition of the Pforzheimer notebooks which Eliot kept for Daniel Deronda, although Baker failed to notice the similarity of MS 707 to the notebook at Nuneaton. He

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1. Linda Eastin, "GE's Clergymen: The Priesthood of Humanity", Exeter M.A., 1969.
2. Thomas Deegan, "GE's Historical Thought and her Novels of the Historical Imagination", Northwestern University Ph.D., 1970, pp. 33-9.
3. Stewart M.Hudson, "GHL's Evolutionism in the Fiction of GE", University of South California, Ph.D., 1970.
4. Gennaro Santangelo, "The Background of GE's R", University of North Carolina, Ph.D., 1962, pp. 54-5 and 85-6, but see 11-2, 35, 40, 51-2, 82, 115-6, and 202.
5. A.T.Kitchel, op.cit., pp. 187-96, and 237-46.
6. "The Genesis of FH", PMLA LXXIV (1959) 576-84.

did recognise that Comte's notion of the solidarity and continuity of Humanity is crucial to many of her works, in particular to Daniel Deronda where they are merged with orthodox Judaism.[1]

The two critics who have explored George Eliot's religious humanism in greatest depth are Ulrich Knoepflmacher and Bernard Paris. Knoepflmacher has covered Feuerbach's influence very fully, especially in the early novels. He has also outlined the wider context of similar attempts to science, morality and historicism in such contemporaries of Eliot's as Mrs. Humphry Ward, William Hale White, Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater and Samuel Butler. But his treatment of Comte is inadequate. The Religion of Humanity is disparagingly introduced along with Bray's phrenology as one of the pseudo-scientific creeds to which Eliot was temporarily attracted. Little is made of her Positivist Calendar in her notebook for Daniel Deronda in the Berg Collection. While it is true that Feuerbach was free from Comte's rigid dogmatism, Knoepflmacher claimed too much for Feuerbach, even transferring to him some of Comte's ideas, for example in his reference to the 'Feuerbachian stereotypes, an earthly "Madonna" and a working-man "Saviour"'. Knoepflmacher overemphasised Eliot's disagreement with Comte. Dorothea's escape from Casaubon's 'Dead Hand' certainly contradicts Comte's teaching that 'the living are more and more governed by the dead'. But her stress on the need for imaginative vision as well as scientific accuracy is fully in keeping with Comte's own development from objective analysis to subjective synthesis.[2]

Paris traced clearly the development of "George Eliot's Religion of

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1. William Baker, Some GE Notebooks, GE and Judaism, pp. 61-7, "The Kabbalah, Mordecai, and GE's Religion of Humanity", YES III (1973) 216-21.
2. U.C.Knoepflmacher, "GE, Feuerbach and the Question of Criticism", VS VII (1964) 306-9; Religious Humanism in the Victorian Novel, Princeton, 1965, pp. 38-41, 53-5, 61, and 112; GE's Early Novels, Berkeley, 1968.

Humanity" from the pantheism of the Brays and Hennells, Strauss and Spinoza, to the positivism of Feuerbach and Comte, Mill, Spencer and Lewes. But he too concentrated most on Feuerbach. Although he devoted three chapters to "The Three Stages" through which George Eliot and many of her characters are seen to develop, he described the third stage as 'some version of Feuerbach's religion of humanity'. Paris defined his aim as not so much to substantiate influence as to present a picture of George Eliot's 'intellectual milieu'. This may account for his failing adequately to distinguish the significantly different positivists he introduced. He paid no attention to the Comtists as such, Congreve, Beesly and Bridges, although he mentioned Harrison twice. But he clearly recognised that Comte contributed substantially to George Eliot's intellectual development, notably in the demand for an accurate view of 'the nature of things' and for a wise combination of resignation and activity, the objective and the subjective methods, realism and idealism.[1]

The most explicit and detailed exposition of Comtism in the Novels of George Eliot has been written by Thakur Guru Prasad. He recognised Comte's influence in much of her social, moral and psychological analysis, in her treatment of history and the Great Being, and in her incorporation of ideal angels, madonnas, priests and working-men into her realism. But Prasad claimed too much, beginning with the absurd notion of Comte as 'the power behind most of the creative literature of nineteenth-century Europe', and quoted too much, on the ground that many of the novels both of Comte and of Eliot were out of print in India. He rested his extremely early dating of

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1. B.J.Paris, "GE's Religion of Humanity", ELH XXIX (1962) 418-43; Experiments in Life: GE's Quest for Values, Detroit, 1965, pp. 129 and 148; for his later change of approach, see "The Inner Conflicts of Maggie Tulliver", Ch. V of A Psychological Approach to Fiction, Bloomington and London, 1974.

her knowledge of Comte on the flimsy evidence of Sara Hennell's added comment on a letter from George Eliot to her in October 1839, 'Note the root here of true Positivism'.[1] He limited George Eliot's adherence to the earlier Comte, yet many of the ideas he considered were only elaborated in the later works. Inaccurate in some details (poor Beesly, the butt of everyone's mis-spelling, he renamed Richard) and unable to see many important manuscripts, Prasad certainly resurrected the possibility of Comte's extensive influence on George Eliot.[2]

There have been many brief recognitions of this influence in the various histories of Positivism. A German Jesuit saw the importance of George Eliot's novels to the Positivist movement. After finally accepting Comte's religion, according to Gruber, 'elle mit tout son talent d'écrivain à faire partager cette opinion à ses lecteurs'. Gruber dated Eliot's commitment to Comte from the end of 1850 but detected a rebellion of sentiment against intellectual sophisms, which led her towards the greater consolation of the truly Catholic faith.[3] Equally unsympathetic towards Comte for completely opposite reasons, J. M. Robertson attributed George Eliot's attachment to Comte to her emotional, dependent temperament. He dated 'her emotional swing to Comtism' around 1857. He identified her as the friend introduced into his works by Lewes to explain Comte's later ideas and referred to her vehemently defending Positivist prayer against an unbeliever.[4] J. E. McGee recorded her diligent reading of Comte, and her subscription to the Positivist subsidy, concluding that the Religion of Humanity made a strong impression upon her and appeared in both her poetry

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1. GEL I 32.
2. Thakur Guru Prasad, Comtism in the Novels of GE, Lucknow, 1968, pp. i, ii, 34, 65, and 128.
3. R.P.Gruber, S.J., Le Positivisme depuis Comte jusqu'à nos jours, trans. M.l'Abbé P. Mazoyer, Paris, 1893, pp. 159-66.
4. J.M.Robertson, A History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century, New York, 1930, I 70, 242-3, 246, and 251.

and the novels.[1] Gilbert Murray also included her among those deeply impressed by Comte.[2] Rudolf Metz described her as sharing Lewes's enthusiasm for Comte: 'her novels, as has often been noted, show plainly the traces of Comtian influence'.[3] These writers have more excuse than critics of George Eliot for failing to do more than notice the influence of Comte.

Among the theses on Positivism in England, Nyland devoted a chapter to George Eliot, dating her transference of allegiance from Spinoza in 1849: 'From this time onwards she was a firm believer in Comtism'. He repeated Pond's excuse for refraining from detailed analysis, that the examples of Positivism in her works were too numerous to mention.[4] Murphy described her as 'the best-remembered example of such sympathy without adherence' to Comte's system, inaccurately lamenting her having left no explanation of her views on Positivism.[5] Presswood saw her as forming 'the strongest liaison between the two sections of positivist opinion', religious and intellectual, both by her personal contacts and by the degree of her adherence to Comte. Her novels spread Comte's religion without his details. He concluded, 'Through George Eliot Positivism achieved its most permanent influence'.[6]

More recently, Hayek recognised Eliot and Lewes along with Mill as among Comte's English adherents who were 'decisive for Comte's effect on European thought'.[7] Two of the Comte Memorial Lectures referred to her admiration of him.[8] Charlton numbered her among those influenced by

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1. J.E.McGee, op.cit., pp. 55-6 fn3.
2. Gilbert Murray, Stoic, Christian and Humanist, London, 1940, p.189.
3. Rudolf Metz, A Hundred Years of British Philosophy. London, 1938, pp. 120 and 173.
4. T.Nyland, "The English Positivists", University of London M.A., 1937, Ch.VI, p. 49.
5. James Murphy, op.cit., pp. 139-42.
6. W.L.Presswood, op.cit., pp. 284-6.
7. F.A.Hayek, op.cit., pp. 186-7.
8. Morris Ginsberg, Reason and Experience in Ethics, London, 1956, p. 6; Ronald Fletcher, AC and the Making of Sociology, London, 1966, p. 21.

Harriet Martineau's translation of the Cours,[1] and Lenzer similarly included her among the English 'luminaries who discussed and acclaimed his work'.[2] Owen Chadwick observed, 'George Eliot became a Positivist because of the religious Comte without whom she would not have been drawn to the scientific Comte'.[3] But here, as in all the other recognitions of Comte's influence upon George Eliot, the generalisation is unsubstantiated by any close analysis of the novels. It has been the aim of this thesis to fulfil this urgent need.

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1. D.G.Charlton, op.cit., p. 24.
2. Gertrude Lenzer, op.cit., p. xiii.
3. Owen Chadwick, op.cit., p. 238.

Appendix B: Positive and Phrenological Tables

p. 457 Comparative Table of Faculties: Gall, Spurzheim and Combe

p. 458 Comte's Cerebral Theory, from the Appendix to the Catechism

p. 459 Comte's Positivist Calendar, from the Appendix to the Catechism

Comparative Table of Faculties

	Gall	Spurzheim	Combe
1.	Instinct of Generation	Destructiveness	Amativeness
2.	Love of Offspring	Amativeness	Philoprogenitiveness
3.	Friendship, Attachment	Philoprogenitiveness	Concentrativeness
4.	Courage, Self-Defence	Adhesiveness	Adhesiveness
5.	Wish to Destroy	Inhabitiveness	Combativeness
6.	Cunning	Combativeness	Destructiveness
7.	Sentiment of Property	Secretiveness	Secretiveness
8.	Pride, Self-Esteem	Acquisitiveness	Acquisitiveness
9.	Vanity, Ambition	Constructiveness	Constructiveness
10.	Cautiousness	Cautiousness	Self-Esteem
11.	Educability	Approbativeness	Love of Approbation
12.	Local Memory	Self-Esteem	Cautiousness
13.	Memory for Persons	Benevolence	Benevolence
14.	Verbal Memory	Reverence	Veneration
15.	Memory for Languages	Firmness	Firmness
16.	Sense of Colours	Conscientiousness	Conscientiousness
17.	Music	Hope	Hope
18.	Mathematics	Marvellousness	Wonder
19.	Mechanical Aptitude	Ideality	Ideality
20.	Comparative Sagacity	Mirthfulness	Wit or Mirthfulness
21.	Metaphysical Depth	Imitation	Imitation
22.	Wit	Individuality	Individuality
23.	Poetry	Configuration	Form
24.	Good Nature	Size	Size
25.	Mimicry, Imitation	Weight and Resistance	Weight
26.	Theosophy, Religion	Colouring	Colouring
27.	Firmness of Character	Locality	Locality
		28. Order	Number
		29. Calculation	Order
		30. Eventuality	Eventuality
		31. Time	Time
		32. Tune	Tune
		33. Artificial Language	Language
		34. Comparison	Comparison
		35. Causality	Causality

Compiled from George Combe, A System of Phrenology, Boston, 1835, pp.xiv-xv, and H.D. Spoerl, "Faculties versus Traits: Gall's Solution", Character and Personality IV (1936) 222.

TABLE C.

HUMANITY. LIVE FOR OTHERS.

POSITIVE CLASSIFICATION
OF THE EIGHTEEN INTERNAL FUNCTIONS OF THE BRAIN,
OR
SYSTEMATIC VIEW OF THE SOUL.

PRINCIPLE.

TO THINK, TO ACT). AFFECTION, THINK TO ACT.

10 AFFECTIVE MOTORS. Propensities, when active; feelings, when passive.

7 PERSONAL.

INTEREST ..
- Instincts of Preservation.....
  - of the Individual, or *nutritive Instinct*..... 1
  - of the race, or....
    - *sexual Instinct*..... 2
    - *maternal Instinct*..... 3
- Instincts of Improvement.....
  - by destruction, or *military Instinct*..... 4
  - by construction, or *industrial Instinct*..... 5

AMBITION ..
- Temporal, or Pride, desire of power..... 6
- Spiritual, or Vanity, desire of approbation..... 7

3 SOCIAL.

Special.
- ATTACHMENT..... 8
- VENERATION..... 9

General.
- BENEVOLENCE or Universal Love (sympathy), *humanity*.....10

IMPULSION. (THE HEART.) Decrease of energy, increase of dignity, from the back of the head to the front, from the lower part to the higher, from the sides to the middle.

MEANS.

5 INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONS.

CONCEPTION ....
- Passive, or Contemplation, hence objective materials.
  - Concrete, or relative to Beings, essentially *synthetical*..... 11
  - Abstract, or relative to Events, essentially *analytical*..... 12
- Active, or Meditation, hence subjective constructions.
  - Inductive, or by comparison, hence *Generalisation*..... 13
  - Deductive, or by co-ordination, hence *Systematisation*..... 14

EXPRESSION.....Mimic, oral, written, hence *Communication*..... 15

COUNSEL. (THE INTELLECT.) Knowledge, or vision, for the sake of prevision, with a view to provision.

(TO LOVE, ACT FROM

RESULT.

3 PRACTICAL QUALITIES.

ACTIVITY..
- Courage..... 16
- Prudence..... 17

FIRMNESS, hence *Perseverance*..... 18

EXECUTION. (THE CHARACTER.)

SUMMARY OF THE CEREBRAL THEORY.

These eighteen organs together form the cerebral apparatus, which, on the one hand, stimulates the life of nutrition, on the other, co-ordinates the life of relation, by connecting its two kinds of external functions. Its speculative region is in direct communication with the nerves of sensation, its active region with the nerves of motion. Its affective region has no direct communication except with the viscera of organic life; it has no immediate correspondence with the external world, its only connection with which is through the other two regions. This part of the brain, the essential centre of the whole of our existence, is in constant activity. It is enabled to be so by the alternate rest of the two symmetrical parts of each of its organs. As for the rest of the brain, its periodical cessation of action is as complete as that of the senses and muscles. Thus, our harmony as living beings depends on the principal region of the brain, the affective; it is from this that the two others derive their impulse, and in obedience to this impulse, the two others direct the relations of the animal with the external agencies which influence it, whether such relations be active or passive.

(*Positivist Catechism*, p. 179.)

ESPECIALLY INTENDED FOR THE FINAL PERIOD OF TRANSITION THROUGH WHICH THE WESTERN REPUBLIC HAS TO PASS: THE REPUBLIC WHICH, SINCE CHARLEMAGNE, HAS BEEN FORMED BY THE FREE COHESION OF THE FIVE LEADING POPULATIONS, THE FRENCH, ITALIAN, SPANISH, BRITISH, AND GERMAN.

		FIRST MONTH. MOSES. THE INITIAL THEOCRACY.	SECOND MONTH. HOMER. ANCIENT POETRY.	THIRD MONTH. ARISTOTLE. ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY.	FOURTH MONTH. ARCHIMEDES. ANCIENT SCIENCE.	FIFTH MONTH. CÆSAR. MILITARY CIVILISATION.	SIXTH MONTH. ST. PAUL. CATHOLICISM.	SEVENTH MONTH. CHARLEMAGNE. FEUDAL CIVILISATION.
Monday	1	Prometheus — *Cadmus.*	Hesiod.	Anaximander.	Theophrastus.	Miltiades.	St. Luke — *St. James.*	Theodoric the Great.
Tuesday	2	Hercules — *Theseus.*	Tyrtæus — *Sappho.*	Anaximenes.	Herophilus.	Leonidas.	St. Cyprian.	Pelayo.
Wednesday	3	Orpheus — *Tiresias.*	Anacreon.	Heraclitus.	Erasistratus.	Aristides.	St. Athanasius.	Otho the Great — *Henry the Fowler.*
Thursday	4	Ulysses.	Pindar.	Anaxagoras.	Celsus.	Cimon.	St. Jerome.	St. Henry.
Friday	5	Lycurgus.	Sophocles — *Euripides.*	Democritus — *Leucippus.*	Galen.	Xenophon.	St. Ambrose.	Villiers — *La Valette.*
Saturday	6	Romulus.	Theocritus — *Longus.*	Herodotus.	Avicenna — *Averrhoes.*	Phocion — *Epaminondas.*	St. Monica.	Don John of Austria. *John Sobieski.*
Sunday	7	NUMA.	ÆSCHYLUS.	THALES.	HIPPOCRATES	THEMISTOCLES.	ST. AUGUSTIN.	ALFRED.
	8	Belus — *Semiramis.*	Scopas.	Solon.	Euclid.	Pericles.	Constantine.	Charles Martel.
	9	Sesostris.	Zeuxis.	Xenophanes.	Aristæus.	Philip.	Theodosius.	The Cid — *Tancred.*
	10	Menu.	Ictinus.	Empedocles.	Theodosius of Bithynia.	Demosthenes.	St. Chrysostom — *St. Basil.*	Richard I. — *Saladin.*
	11	Cyrus.	Praxiteles.	Thucydides.	Hero — *Ctesibius.*	Ptolemy Lagus.	St. Pulcheria — *Marcian.*	Joan of Arc — *Marina.*
	12	Zoroaster.	Lysippus.	Archytas — *Philolaus.*	Pappus.	Philopœmen.	St. Genevieve of Paris.	Albuquerque — *Sir W. Raleigh.*
	13	The Druids — *Ossian.*	Apelles.	Apollonius of Tyana.	Diophantus.	Polybius.	St. Gregory the Great.	Bayard.
	14	BOUDDHA.	PHIDIAS.	PYTHAGORAS.	APOLLONIUS.	ALEXANDER.	HILDEBRAND.	GODFREY.
	15	Fo-Hi.	Æsop — *Pilpay.*	Aristippus.	Eudoxus — *Aratus.*	Junius Brutus.	St. Benedict — *St. Antony.*	St. Leo the Great — *Leo IV.*
	16	Lao-Tseu.	Plautus.	Antisthenes.	Pytheas — *Nearchus.*	Camillus — *Cincinnatus.*	St. Boniface — *St. Austin.*	Gerbert — *Peter Damian.*
	17	Meng-Tseu.	Terence — *Menander.*	Zeno.	Aristarchus — *Berosus.*	Fabricius — *Regulus.*	St. Isidore of Seville — *St. Bruno.*	Peter the Hermit.
	18	The Theocrats of Thibet.	Phædrus.	Cicero — *Pliny the Younger.*	Eratosthenes — *Sosigenes.*	Hannibal.	Lanfranc — *St. Anselm.*	Suger — *St. Eligius.*
	19	The Theocrats of Japan.	Juvenal.	Epictetus — *Arrian.*	Ptolemy.	Paulus Æmilius.	Heloise — *Beatrice.*	Alexander III — *Becket.*
	20	Manco-Capac — *Tamehameha.*	Lucian.	Tacitus.	Albategnius — *Nasir-Eddin.*	Marius — *The Gracchi.*	The Arch'ts of Mid. Ages. *St. Benezet.*	St. Francis of Assisi. *St. Dominic.*
	21	CONFUCIUS.	ARISTOPHANES.	SOCRATES.	HIPPARCHUS.	SCIPIO.	ST. BERNARD.	INNOCENT III.
	22	Abraham — *Joseph.*	Ennius.	Xenocrates.	Varro.	Augustus — *Mæcenas.*	St. Francis Xavier. *Ignatius Loyola.*	St. Clotilde. [cany.
	23	Samuel.	Lucretius.	Philo of Alexandria.	Columella.	Vespasian — *Titus.*	St. Ch. Borromeo. *Fredk. Borromeo.*	St. Bathilda. *St. Mathilda of Tus-*
	24	Solomon — *David.*	Horace.	St. John the Evangelist.	Vitruvius.	Hadrian — *Nerva.*	St. Theresa. *St. Catharine of Siena.*	St. Stephen of Hungary. *Mathias Cor-*
	25	Isaiah.	Tibullus.	St. Justin — *St. Irenæus.*	Strabo.	Antonius — *Marcus Aurelius.*	St. Vinc't de Paul *The Abbé de l'Epée.*	St. Elizabeth of Hungary. [vinus.
	26	St. John the Baptist.	Ovid.	St. Clement of Alexandria.	Frontinus.	Papinian — *Ulpian.*	Bourdaloue — *Claude Fleury.*	Blanche of Castille.
	27	Haroun-al-Raschid. *Abderrahman*	Lucan.	Origen — *Tertullian.*	Plutarch.	Alexander Severus — *Aetius.*	W. Penn — *G. Fox.*	St. Ferdinand III — *Alfonso X.*
	28	MAHOMET. [*III.*	VIRGIL.	PLATO.	PLINY THE ELDER.	TRAJAN.	BOSSUET.	ST. LOUIS.

		EIGHTH MONTH. DANTE. MODERN EPIC POETRY.	NINTH MONTH. GUTENBERG. MODERN INDUSTRY.	TENTH MONTH. SHAKESPEARE. THE MODERN DRAMA.	ELEVENTH MONTH. DESCARTES. MODERN PHILOSOPHY.	TWELFTH MONTH. FREDERIC II. MODERN POLICY.	THIRTEENTH MONTH. BICHAT. MODERN SCIENCE.
Monday	1	The Troubadours.	Marco Polo — *Chardin.*	Lope de Vega — *Montalvan.*	Albertus Magnus *John of Salisbury.*	Marie de Molina.	Copernicus — *Tycho Brahé.*
Tuesday	2	Boccaccio — *Chaucer.*	Jacques Cœur — *Gresham.*	Moreto — *Guillem de Castro.*	Roger Bacon — *Raymond Lully.*	Cosmo de Medici the Elder.	Képler — *Halley.*
Wednesday	3	Rabelais — *Swift.*	Vasco de Gama — *Magellan.*	Rojas — *Guevdra.*	St. Bonaventura — *Joachim.*	Philippe de Comines. *Guicciardini.*	Huygheus — *Varignon.*
Thursday	4	Cervantes.	Napier — *Briggs.*	Otway.	Ramus — *The Cardinal of Cusa.*	Isabella of Castille.	James Bernouilli. *John Bernouilli.*
Friday	5	La Fontaine — *Burns.*	Lacaille — *Delambre.*	Lessing.	Montaigne — *Erasmus.*	Charles V. — *Sixtus V.*	Bradley — *Römer.*
Saturday	6	De Foe — *Goldsmith.*	Cook — *Tasman.*	Goethe.	Campanella — *Sir Thomas More.*	Henry IV.	Volta — *Sauveur.*
Sunday	7	ARIOSTO.	COLUMBUS.	CALDERON.	ST. THOMAS AQUINAS.	LOUIS XI.	GALILEO.
	8	Leonardo da Vinci — *Titian.*	Benvenuto Cellini.	Tirso.	Hobbes — *Spinosa.*	L' Hôpital.	Vieta — *Harriott.*
	9	Michael Angelo — *Paul Veronese.*	Amontons — *Wheatstone.*	Vondel.	Pascal — *Giordano Bruno.*	Barneveldt.	Wallis — *Fermat.*
	10	Holbein — *Rembrandt.*	Harrison — *Pierre Leroy.*	Racine.	Locke — *Malebranche.*	Gustavus Adolphus.	Clairaut — *Poinsot.*
	11	Poussin — *Lesueur.*	Dollond — *Graham.*	Voltaire.	Vauvenargues. *Mme. de Lambert.*	De Witt.	Euler — *Monge.*
	12	Velasquez — *Murillo.*	Arkwright — *Jacquard.*	Metastasio — *Alfieri.*	Diderot — *Duclos.*	Ruyter.	D'Alembert — *Daniel Bernouilli.*
	13	Teniers — *Rubens.*	Conté.	Schiller.	Cabanis — *George Leroy.*	William III.	Lagrange — *Joseph Fourier.*
	14	RAPHAEL.	VAUCANSON.	CORNEILLE.	LORD BACON.	WILLIAM THE SILENT.	NEWTON.
	15	Froissart — *Joinville.*	Stevin — *Torricelli.*	Alarcon.	Grotius — *Cujas.*	Ximenes.	Bergmann — *Scheele.*
	16	Camoens — *Spenser.*	Mariotte — *Boyle.*	Mme. de Mottoville. *Mme. Roland.*	Fontenelle — *Maupertuis.*	Sully — *Oxenstiern.*	Priestley — *Davy.*
	17	The Spanish Romancers.	Papin — *Worcester.*	Mme. de Sévigné. *Lady Montagu.*	Vico — *Herder.*	Mazarin — *Walpole.*	Cavendish.
	18	Chateaubriand.	Black.	Lesage — *Sterne.*	Fréret — *Winckelmann.*	Colbert — *Louis XIV.*	Guyton Morveau — *Geoffroy.*
	19	Walter Scott — *Cooper.*	Jouffroy — *Fulton.*	Mme. de Staël — *Miss Edgeworth.*	Montesquieu — *D'Agueseau.*	D'Aranda — *Pombal.*	Berthollet.
	20	Manzoni.	Dalton — *Thilorier.*	Fielding — *Richardson.*	Buffon — *Oken.*	Turgot — *Campomanes.*	Berzelius — *Ritter.*
	21	TASSO.	WATT.	MOLIERE.	LEIBNITZ.	RICHELIEU.	LAVOISIER.
	22	Petrarca. [*and Bunyan.*	Bernard de Palissy.	Pergolese — *Palestrina.*	Robertson — *Gibbon.*	Sidney — *Lambert.*	Harvey — *Ch. Bell.*
	23	Thomas à Kempis *Louis of Granada*	Guglielmini — *Riquet.*	Sacchini — *Grétry.*	Adam Smith — *Dunoyer.*	Franklin — *Hampden.*	Boërhaave — *Stahl. Barthez.*
	24	Mme. de Lafayette. *Mme. de Staël.*	Duhamel (du Monceau) *Bourgelat.*	Gluck — *Lully.*	Kant — *Fichte.*	Washington — *Kosciusko.*	Linnæus — *Bernard de Jussieu.*
	25	Fénélon — *St. Francis of Sales.*	Saussure — *Bouguer.*	Beethoven — *Handel.*	Condorcet — *Ferguson.*	Jefferson — *Madison.*	Haller — *Vicq-d'Azyr.*
	26	Klopstock — *Gessner.*	Coulomb — *Borda.*	Rossini — *Weber.*	Joseph de Maistre — *Bonald.*	Bolivar — *Toussaint-L'Ouverture.*	Lamarck — *Blainville.*
	27	Byron. *Elisa Mercœur and Shelley.*	Carnot — *Vauban.*	Bellini — *Donizetti.*	Hegel — *Sophie Germain.*	Francia.	Broussais — *Morgagni.*
	28	MILTON.	MONTGOLFIER.	MOZART.	HUME.	CROMWELL.	GALL.

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Additional Day in Leap-years — Festival of HOLY WOMEN.

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The names in Italics are those of the persons who in Leap-years take the place of their principals.

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