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ROMANTIC LOVE AS A SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP? A BUDDHIST RE-READING OF GEORGE ELIOT

By Richard Winter

Introduction

Like most of George Eliot's fiction, *Daniel Deronda* can be read as a story about the possibility of redemption. Gwendolen Harleth's vanity and ambition make her vulnerable to Grandcourt's desire for dominance, and their marriage is a disaster. Belatedly, Gwendolen comes to recognise that a marriage to Daniel Deronda instead of Grandcourt might have rescued her from her egotism and led to her moral and emotional salvation. But for Deronda finding a wife is part of exploring a wider social and spiritual significance for his existence – i.e. his Jewish cultural origin and the Zionist religious, historical, and political obligations he feels this entails. This stance towards his own life gives him a level of self-understanding that enables him to seek Mirah (who shares his general life aims) as his wife while responding to Gwendolen's advances with supportive compassion. On the day of Deronda's wedding to Mirah, he receives the following letter from Gwendolen:

Do not think of me sorrowfully on your wedding day. I have remembered your words – that I may live to be one of the best of women, who make others glad that they were born. I do not yet see how that can be, but you know better than I. If ever it comes true, it will be because you helped me... You must not grieve any more for me. It is better – it shall be better with me because I have known you.¹

This is from the last pages of George Eliot's published fiction. But whereas the study of Gwendolen's downfall has been generally recognised as a masterpiece, the portrayal of Deronda as a redemptive hero has been greeted by many, if not most critics with scepticism. Leavis, writing in 1946, called it 'unrealistic', excessively 'emotional', and a failure of 'creativity' and 'intelligence'.² More analytically, in the 1990s, the problem of Deronda's supposed implausibility has been related to the general failure of realism as a genre³ and to the failure of the ethic of universal sympathy.⁴ And in 1997 Rosemary Ashton is still 'puzzled': 'Why does an agnostic...set out without irony a religious ideal? Moreover, is the history of Judaism any less fraught with superstition, narrowness, exclusiveness than that of Christianity?'.⁵

This dichotomous response – admiration for George Eliot's 'realist' observation of human weakness and disdain for her 'idealistic' fables of redemption – is not, of course, limited to *Daniel Deronda*. Henry James complained that all George Eliot's novels are 'moralized fables' and are 'only indirectly the products of observation'⁶ and Leavis agrees with James that the moralized fable 'gives us the unsatisfactory half' of George Eliot.⁷ Consequently, for Leavis, not only is Daniel Deronda 'a prig' but Adam Bede's love for Dinah is 'merely charming', Rufus Lyon is 'a bore', and the characterization of Maggie Tulliver is 'immature'.⁸ And in 1982 Barbara Hardy writes of 'the discontent which modern readers have felt with the complacency or simplicity of the idealistic strain' in all her novels.⁹

Back in the 1960s I, like others, admired George Eliot's analysis of human egotism and self-delusion but was unconvinced by her portrayals of idealistic love. Now, however, re-reading her work after several years of studying and practising Buddhism, her love stories seem not at all 'unrealistic' but (on the contrary) an essential part of her portrayal of human life as a search for moral and spiritual meaning. Indeed, her explorations of the varieties of compassion and social commitment seem to offer interesting links with Buddhist ideals; and what I wish to suggest in this article is that the Buddhist concepts of Sangha and Bodhisattva can throw a fresh light on the nature of George Eliot's fiction and its ambiguous critical reception through a reading of the novels (and, in particular, *Felix Holt*) as a series of attempts to explore a model of 'love' that transcends the accepted dichotomy between romantic/sexual attraction and 'spiritual' companionship.

'Bodhisattava' and 'Sangha' as Ideals of Individuality and Human Relationship

'Sangha': 'close contact or combination' (sanskrit) and hence an 'assembly' (pali) of people whose 'close contact' is derived from a unifying set of ideals and purposes, i.e. (in particular) a shared model of spiritual development. In early Buddhism the Sangha refers to a specific community of monks or nuns, but there is another, more general sense, closer to the dictionary meanings, to which Sangharakshita refers when he writes of 'individuality' as 'the essence of Sangha'.¹⁰ In this sense, 'Sangha' refers to *all* potential members of the ideal form of human companionship that is embodied in a spiritual tradition and its ethical precepts. The 'Bodhisattva' ideal of the Enlightened Being embodies the later (Mahayana) strand of the Buddhist tradition, in which development towards the ideal ('enlightened') form of full human individuality is explicitly a progress towards compassionate engagement with others' suffering, whereas in the older (Theravada) strand the focus is rather more on seeking personal enlightenment, mainly through renunciation of worldly involvements.

Together, then, 'Sangha' and 'Bodhisattva' can be seen as delineating an integrated and potentially universal ideal of caring, supportive companionship and of the human capacity for unlimited individual growth that is fostered by such relationships.¹¹ The 'Sangha' relationships that constitute the ideal of 'spiritual companionship' can operate at different levels, but all have the following characteristics:-

1. a shared vision of the ideals of human life, conceived in universal and spiritual terms;
2. forms of communication between individuals who are dedicated to their mutual growth in autonomy and understanding, i.e. the sort of communication through which each grows in *self*-knowledge;
3. the exercise of mutual compassion, i.e. each seeking the well-being of the other.

The Sangha, then, at all levels, envisages a process of mutual support specifically dedicated to individual development, a deep engagement with others that provides the resources for discovering our own 'path'.

4. In this way, as the Buddha said, spiritual friendship is, the whole of the spiritual life,¹² and embraces the whole network of human relationships – husband/wife, parent/child, employer/employee, teacher/student, cleric/layperson – within its

overall framework of ‘companionship’.¹³

The Bodhisattva ideal of individuality may be amplified in terms of the emotional and intellectual qualities involved in breaking the first set of ‘fettters’ that normally inhibit our spiritual development – a transformation of both ‘mind’ and ‘heart’:-

5. acceptance that one’s self [‘personality’] is not fixed but is in a continuous state of creative, imaginative development;
6. integration of scattered, ambivalent, perplexed and contradictory intellectual and emotional impulses;
7. avoidance of purely formal compliance with cultural observances and conventions as ends in themselves;
8. freedom from attachment to merely sensuous experience;
9. avoidance of negative emotions, such as anger, irritation, envy and ill-will.¹⁴
10. Above all, the Bodhisattva recognises that the apparent boundary between oneself and others is an illusion. Hence the ‘explosive’ grief of Avalokiteshvara, literally ‘torn apart’ by his simultaneous identification with the sufferings of all beings.¹⁵ We can only ‘re-integrate’ our own being, and thereby alleviate our own suffering, through engagement with the suffering of others.

However, this vision of a potentially universal spiritual companionship and general altruistic engagement presents a tension between the universalism of the spiritual life and the relative narrowness of conventional romantic/sexual attachments. The latter can be interpreted as placing a boundary on one’s interests and sympathies and as being based on mutual dependence and egotistical exploitation. Subhuti, for example, suggests that the idealism of the romantic relationship (‘Falling in Love’) is often the outcome of unrealistic mutual ‘projections’ – the illusory perception in the other of qualities we value but (consciously or unconsciously) lack.¹⁶ Romantic love, then, can be analysed from a Buddhist perspective (and from other perspectives, of course) as in many respects *opposed* to spiritual companionship – as a commitment based on egotistical craving or exploitative calculation rather than on compassionate wisdom. The spiritual life is concerned with the *wise* choice of companions, the *refinement* of emotional responses, and *breadth* of sympathy. Romantic attachments, in contrast, treat the ‘desirability’ of the Other in terms of crude, narrowly focused perceptions and impulses – a form of alienation from a full understanding of one’s own and others’ individuality and from a full grasp of one’s place in the world.

George Eliot’s ‘Spiritual’ Love Stories

No one analyses more incisively than George Eliot the egotistical vanities and self-deceptions that go to construct the conventional romantic attachment. All her novels describe such relationships but perhaps the most elaborately portrayed is the marriage of Lydgate and Rosamond Vincy in *Middlemarch*. Gradually, the hopes and idealisations that attract them to each other are shown on both sides to be founded on illusions; both discover in the other, to their mutual disappointment and frustration, a fundamentally opposed ego that they had not, in the initial glow of their ‘love’, suspected. But egotistical romantic self-delusion is just the starting point of George Eliot’s vision: in the course of most of the novels at least one of the characters slowly traverses the difficult emotional path towards a contrasting conception of

life, in which a marriage partner is indeed a 'spiritual companion', a sharer of a wider sense of 'meaning' and a source of mutual 'growth'. Let us trace this path in detail in the case of *Felix Holt*, examining it in relation to the Buddhist themes listed above.

The central moral and spiritual trajectory in the novel is that of Esther Lyon as she gradually overcomes the temptation to construct her life around her sexual appeal and her inherited wealth, and recognises the deeper existential opportunities of a marriage to Felix, who has chosen a life of principled poverty devoted to working for the moral and social betterment of the working class. In Buddhist terms, she moves from her own highly boundaried egotism to identify with Felix's commitment to the amelioration of others' sufferings – see points 1 and 10 above. Early in the story Esther is aware that she wants someone to admire her physical beauty ('a possible somebody who would admire her hands and feet, and delight in looking at their beauty, and long, yet not dare, to kiss them'¹⁷ – see point 8). Esther goes on to reflect, 'But it was precisely this longing after her own satisfaction that Felix had reproached her with. Did he want her to be heroic? That seemed impossible without some great occasion. Her life was a heap of fragments, and so were her thoughts: some great energy was needed to bind them together.'¹⁸ The reference to spiritual progress as the integration of fragmentary impulses is a key Buddhist theme – see point 6 – as is the recognition of the 'heroism' required by the task. Later she muses: 'If Felix Holt were to love her, her life would be exalted into something quite new – into a sort of difficult blessedness, such as one might imagine in beings who are conscious of painfully growing into the possession of higher powers',¹⁹ evoking quite precisely the Buddhist belief in the possibility of personal growth, as a challenging creative project – see point 5. George Eliot also suggests that Esther's love for Felix involves an increase in self-knowledge: Felix 'had taught her to doubt the infallibility of her own standard, and raised a presentiment of moral depths that were hidden from her'²⁰ (point 2), and it is clear that even when Felix is criticising Esther we are intended to see that his purpose is her own spiritual welfare (point 3): 'I thought you might be kindled to a better ambition'.²¹ In the end, Esther is indeed kindled to a better ambition. She rejects Harold Transome, whose corrupt and ultimately egotistical politics contrasts with Felix Holt's moral idealism, rejects also the Transome fortune she has inherited, and differentiates herself decisively from the fate of Mrs Transome, whose story – within the scheme I am suggesting – represents the inevitable failure of worldly egotism.

The 'Boddhissatva' ideal refers to all human relationships – see point 4. Thus we see the detail of Felix's relationships in the role of son, friend, teacher, politician and even as a quasi-foster-parent. And we see the developing compassion of Esther as a daughter and as a friend to Mrs Transome. But Felix also has things to learn in the course of the novel, and his spiritual mentor is Rufus Lyon. Rufus warns Felix that his high gifts bring with them the temptations of pride and scorn, which are diversions from the 'the track of truth'²² and Felix confesses: 'Perhaps I am too fond of banging and smashing'.²³ Felix's moral growth is also embodied in the plot of the novel: although his involvement in the election violence (leading to his imprisonment) is well intentioned, it is also due in part to a specified 'weakness', 'his liability to be carried completely out of his own mastery by indignant anger' which in some circumstances could render him 'dangerous'²⁴ – which we may link with point 8 in our list of Buddhist principles. Rufus himself, whose spiritual integrity renders him 'preposterous' in the eyes of 'respectable Church people',²⁵ is a key figure in the expression of point 6 – the importance of the distinction

between genuine spirituality and mere religious observance, one of George Eliot's favourite themes and always central in Buddhist texts.

Admittedly, as a 'spiritual love story' *Felix Holt* is somewhat one-sided. We are shown Esther's spiritual and moral growth through her love for Felix, but Felix himself remains in the role of spiritual teacher. This point has been rightly emphasised by feminist readers,²⁶ but it is important to note that in *Adam Bede* there is a similar story of spiritual growth through Romantic love where the gender roles are reversed. Adam gradually overcomes his deluded infatuation with Hetty Sorel's prettiness and discovers that he not only admires but 'loves' the Methodist preacher Dinah Morris, of whom he observes:

She is better than I am – there's less o' self in her and pride. And it's a sort o' liberty, as if you could walk more fearless, when you've got more trust in another than in yourself. I've always been thinking I knew better than them as belonged to me, and that's a poor sort o' life, when you can't look on them nearest to you t' help you with a bit better thought than what you've got inside you already.²⁷

These two novels present the basic theme – the possibility of general spiritual fulfilment through Romantic love – in its most optimistic form. *Middlemarch*, in contrast, is more pessimistic. Dorothea marries Causaubon only to discover that their relationship is based on fundamentally egotistical illusions: neither really knows the other, only what they think they need from the other. When she marries the artistic, reformist politician and journalist, Ladislaw, it is clear that the relationship is based on genuine sympathy, equality and shared social commitments, and thus enables each to 'grow' emotionally. But it is also made clear, in the Epilogue, that in this marriage, like her previous one, domesticity restricts the scope of her activity, albeit *not* its ultimate spiritual influence.

In *The Mill on the Floss* Maggie Tulliver becomes entangled in an egotistical relationship with Stephen, seduced by his superficial charm and betrayed by her own emotional neediness, but, having recognised her error, she cannot bring herself to choose the available 'spiritual' alternative, Philip Wakem. In many ways her relationship with Philip has a genuinely spiritual awareness. For example, Philip repeatedly points out to her that her strategy of repression and renunciation is doomed to failure,²⁸ on one occasion Maggie says to Philip, 'Your mind is a sort of world to me',²⁹ and towards the end of the novel Philip writes to Maggie: 'You have been the blessing of my life... Nothing but such complete and intense love could have initiated me into that enlarged life which grows and grows by appropriating the life of others'.³⁰ But psychological oppression by her family has destroyed Maggie's ability to act against their hostility to Philip, and Philip himself is undermined by his self-doubt and by his lack of any consistent wider purpose; so the outcome of their story is renunciation cut short by untimely death.

So, in George Eliot's general 'fable' (that human beings can transcend delusion and egotism and find meaning and satisfaction in an altruistic commitment to the well-being of humanity) marriage to the 'right' partner is sometimes only a partial solution (Dorothea Brooke) and sometimes only a theoretical possibility that cannot be realised (Maggie Tulliver). And sometimes not even envisaged as a possibility, as in the case of Romola, who, after

involvement with the egotisms of her husband, her father, her brother and Savonarola, achieves spiritual peace only through a sequence of exile and renunciation.

George Eliot and Buddhism: 'Transcendental' Humanism?

But now we come to an important paradox about George Eliot's fiction and my main reason for exploring a Buddhist re-interpretation. For, irrespective of the different emphases noted in the previous section, there is a strange ambiguity in the way George Eliot portrays *all* her main characters' search for a wider sense of existential meaning. She abandoned all formal belief in Christianity in 1842, at the age of 23,³¹ and by the time she began to publish fiction she was an agnostic, one of the leading humanist intellectuals of her time, immersed in the scientific social philosophy of Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer (with whom she briefly fell in love) and G. H. Lewes (her partner). And yet she sets much of her fiction in the context of an elaborately portrayed Evangelical Christianity. So the Christian theology she no longer believed in becomes a key element of the discourse within which her characters explore their moral choices. Dorothea Brooke is presented as a latter-day Saint Theresa – religious mystic and reformer of the Carmelite Order of nuns; Maggie Tulliver conceives of her struggle with her egotism in terms of Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*; Adam Bede's love is a Methodist preacher; and the impact on Esther Lyon of her developing love for Felix Holt is interpreted as progress towards Christian 'Grace'.³² Particularly interesting, in this respect, is the story 'Janet's Repentance' from *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Again the central male character is an Evangelical preacher, Mr Tryan (distrusted and derided by many of the local church members) who provides support for the wife of one of his opponents, Janet Dempster, after she has been brutally beaten by her husband and taken the (in those times) extreme step of leaving him, having previously found solace in alcohol. The consolation that Tryan gives to Janet has the form of a lengthy Christian sermon: '[I]t is you Christ invites to come to Him and find rest ... He neither condemns nor reproaches you for the past, He only bids you come to Him that you may have life...'.³³ But the story makes it clear that the basis for Tryan's spiritual authority, for his ability to provide effective support, is his admission to Janet that he has experienced moral failing, guilt and suffering comparable to that of Janet herself. So the story turns on the difference between formal Christianity and the mutual exchange of human compassion but expresses that compassion through the rhetoric of formal Christianity.

Why? Why does George Eliot the agnostic humanist so often seem to impersonate a Christian theologian? The conventional explanation is in terms of her nostalgia for the world of her childhood, in which evangelical Christianity was a strong influence. From this perspective, *Romola* and *Daniel Deronda* are unfortunate interruptions, the work of an overly academic interest in social history, cutting her off from the first-hand observation of experience that is the real root of her inspiration as a novelist and leading her into abstraction and sentimentality.³⁴ But, as I suggested earlier, George Eliot's *observation* of human experience needs to be understood within her spiritual 'fables' of the possibility of *transcending* that experience. And from this perspective *Romola* and *Daniel Deronda* may be seen as symptoms that George Eliot was aware that her characters' quests for a transcendental sense of purpose and meaning could not fully be expressed within her humanist intellectual culture, and that her 'nostalgic' solution might be tending to oversimplify and limit her spiritual theme.

As an alternative explanation, then, for the paradoxical invocation within her novels of a

religious vocabulary that in her own thinking she had left behind, let us consider what limitations (from her point of view) she might have found in her immediate intellectual resources – requiring, as a sort of remedy, the reintroduction of the rhetoric of passionate Christianity. Comte’s humanism is explicitly presented as a ‘Religion of Humanity’, but he opposes any form of quasi-Protestant individual search, proposing instead a form of clerical imposition of the new ethic, once it has been fully formulated,³⁵ whereas George Eliot’s novels focus *always* on the struggles and moral dilemmas of the individual. Spencer, at the time when George Eliot was in love with him, thought that all religions contained a kernel of truth and that all human beings had an intuitive awareness of the Absolute, but his whole system of thought is scientific and determinist: the individual is simply destined to ‘accommodate’ to the social environment³⁶ – good news for a sociologist, perhaps, but not for a novelist of the individual conscience. Feuerbach (whose major work George Eliot translated) saw Christianity as a projection of an ideal of human behaviour, while being scathing about religious faith; he thus gives a strong underpinning for George Eliot’s critique of those whose compliance with religious observance is belied by their lack of compassion for their fellows. But his emphasis on a theoretical human ‘essence’ provides no space for analysis of the contradictions and complexities of human behaviour that are George Eliot’s all-pervading topic.³⁷ Spinoza, (whose *Ethics* she also translated, just before beginning to write fiction, although it was not published) derives his ethic of generosity and public-spiritedness from the abstract perfection of God. He thus provides a transcendental basis for belief in human altruism but sees human behaviour as wholly determined by God’s ‘natural laws’: consequently, human beings are free only to understand themselves, not to choose a course of action.³⁸ George Eliot’s novels, in contrast, are all about choices of action and their moral consequences.

In certain respects, then, George Eliot’s immediate intellectual culture did not, quite, provide her with what she needed as the basis for her novels. What she needed was a transcendental basis for conceiving of human action in terms of individual moral freedom, a transcendental ideal of human beings’ capacity for spiritual development and of the relationships that will, with the right understanding and effort, facilitate this possibility. She needed a sense of existential meaning that is both transcendent in inspiration and yet focuses both on the practical ethics of individual relationships and on commitment to the welfare of humanity in general. She needed a strong sense of a spiritual tradition and yet a clear understanding that mere observance of religious convention is at best irrelevant and at worst a cloak for cultural oppression. In short, in order to resolve the central paradox in her thinking, what George Eliot ‘needed’ (as it were) was a Buddhist version of a transcendently based ethics, as outlined above and also in the portrayal of the ‘Sangha’ and ‘Bodhisattva’ ideals presented earlier.

But George Eliot, of course, like most of her contemporaries, would not have recognised the series of statements in the previous paragraph as in any way portraying ‘Buddhism’. The only reference to Buddhism in her letters is a brief note of thanks (26 November 1862) to her lifelong friend Sara Hennell for her book on the subject, to which she then makes no further reference.³⁹ And Hennell’s writing on Buddhism makes it clear why her conception of Buddhism would have been of little relevance in George Eliot’s search for a transcendental basis for a humanist ethics. ‘Lacking a monotheistic kernel’, Hennell writes, Buddhism lacks ‘efficacy’ and has had no practical impact on ‘the abiding human relations and on, thence, the real making of the individual human being’. In Buddhism, spirituality is ‘dispersed ... into

shadowiness'. Its morality is 'abstract ... without point for human progress'; its 'Nirvana' is a 'refuge in an imagined divine nothingness ... by a previous emaciating of all active capacities in man: a dwindling down of selfhood to the narrowest means of holding itself together'. In the end, she seems to imply, Buddhism is little more than a blasphemous form of prolonged suicide.⁴⁰ This negative interpretation of Buddhism as a form of nihilism, created in large part by the combined missionary and colonial process through which Buddhist ideas and texts had recently been discovered and transmitted,⁴¹ meant that any *contemporary* perspective on Buddhism would have seemed to George Eliot quite unhelpful for her artistic purposes. In contrast, modern understandings of Buddhism, informed by more careful historical scholarship and greater sympathy towards non-Christian versions of spirituality, seem to express quite precisely George Eliot's desire for a transcendental grounding for human compassion – a desire which she herself expresses paradoxically by reintroducing rhetorically the Christianity she had abandoned in practice, and, in her last novel, by trying to resolve her paradox in terms of a Zionist elaboration of religious Judaism.

Of course, one would probably argue that it is precisely the paradox in George Eliot's thinking – the tension between her humanism and her sense of the transcendental – that creates her 'fable' and motivates her fiction. In that sense she did not, of course, 'need' Buddhism; she 'needed' to write her novels! Nevertheless, as we have seen, many critics have responded negatively to this tension in her work, tending to value only her humanism and attacking the Christian/idealistic aspects of her stories as sentimental and unconvincing. My argument, in contrast, is that when her work is interpreted metaphorically through the Buddhist ideals of the Sangha and the Bodhisattva, the so-called 'immaturity', the paradoxes and sentimentalities disappear, and her stories can be seen as a series of coherent and persuasive visions – of the transcendental human capacity for transformation. Her archetypal fables of *spiritualised* Romance, I suggest, open up a question that is of key importance for contemporary culture, including Buddhism: can the quest for a 'couple relationship' be the foundation for a commitment to a life project based in shared spiritual and social values? In other words, what Buddhism offers to a reading of her novels is a way of delineating and fully appreciating the intellectually and emotionally *integrated* structure of her inspiration.

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Notes

- 1 *Daniel Deronda*, ed. Graham Handley, London: Oxford University Press (World's Classics Edition) 1988, pp. 694-5 [first published 1876].
- 2 F. R. Leavis: 'George Eliot's Zionist Novel', *Commentary*, October, 1960.
- 3 T. Jackson: 'George Eliot's "New Evangel": *Daniel Deronda* and the ends of realism' [1992], in Stuart Hutchinson (ed.), *George Eliot – Critical Assessments*, Moundfield, East Sussex: Helm Information, 1996, Vol. 3, pp. 476-93.

- 4 L. Daring: "The Concept of dread: Sympathy and ethics in *Daniel Deronda*" [1993], in Hutchinson (ed.), op.cit., Vol. 3, pp. 494-518.
- 5 Rosemary Ashton, *George Eliot, A Life*, London: Penguin, 1997, p. 347.
- 6 Quoted in F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, London, Chatto and Windus, 1955, p. 38.
- 7 Ibid., p. 38.
- 8 F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, chapter on George Eliot.
- 9 Barbara Hardy, 'George Eliot on Imagination' [1982], in Hutchinson (ed.), op.cit. Vol. 4, pp. 318-336 (p. 336).
- 10 Sangharakshita: *What is the Sangha?*, Birmingham: Windhorse Publications, 2000, chapter 3.
- 11 The following outline is based on the argument in the chapter by Sangharakshita previously noted.
- 12 *Samyutta Nikaya*, Vol. 1, 'Kosala', Oxford, Pali Text Society, trans. Rhys David, 1989, p. 113 [first published 1917]: 'Verily, the whole of this life in religion consists in righteous friendship, righteous intimacy, righteous association.'
- 13 As outlined in the *Sigalaka Sutta*, in *Digha Nikaya*, trans. Maurice Walshe, Somerville MA: Wisdom Publications, 1987, pp. 466-8.
- 14 See *Mahamalunkya Sutta*, in *Majima Nikaya*, trans. Bikkhu Nanamoli and Bikkhu Bodhi, Somerville MA: Wisdom Publications, 1995, pp. 537-541.
- 15 Geshe Wangyal, *The Door of Liberation* (Translations from the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition), New York: Lotsawa, 1978, p. 35; G. Landaw and A. Weber: *Images of Enlightenment*, Ithaca NY: Snow Lion Publications, p. 58.
- 16 Subhuti, *The Buddhist Vision*, 2nd Edition, Birmingham, Windhorse Publications, 2001, p. 127.
- 17 *Felix Holt*, London: Oxford University Press (World's Classics Edition) 1913, pp. 177-8
- 18 Ibid., p.178.
- 19 Ibid., p. 235.
- 20 Ibid., p. 259.
- 21 Ibid., p. 130.
- 22 Ibid., p. 68
- 23 Ibid., p. 69.
- 24 Ibid., p. 292.

- 25 Ibid., p. 53.
- 26 See, for example, Bonnie Zimmerman: 'Felix Holt and the true power of womanhood' [1979], in Hutchinson, op. cit., Vol. 3, pp. 294-309.
- 27 *Adam Bede*, London: Oxford University Press (World's Classics Edition) 1904, p. 586.
- 28 *The Mill on the Floss*, London: Oxford University Press (World's Classics Edition) 1903, pp. 380-1.
- 29 Ibid., p. 389.
- 30 Ibid., p. 585.
- 31 Ashton, p. 44.
- 32 *Felix Holt*, p. 259.
- 33 *Scenes of Clerical Life*, ed. Thomas A. Noble, London: Oxford University Press (World's Classics Edition), 2000, p. 260.
- 34 F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, chapter on George Eliot; Thomas Pinney: 'The authority of the past in George Eliot's novels', in George Creeger (ed.): *George Eliot – A Collection of Critical Essays*, Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970, pp. 37-54.
- 35 Harriet Martineau, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte, Freely Translated and Condensed*, London: Chapman Hall, 1853, pp. 262, 344, 466. Comte's *System of Positive Polity*, published in French in 1851 and in English in 1875 (London: Longmans Green), is subtitled 'Treatise on Sociology, Instituting the Religion of Humanity'.
- 36 Herbert Spencer, *First Principles (Collected Writings, Vol. 5)*, London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press, 1996, pp. 14-5, p. 16, p. 88. The first edition of this work was published in 1862, but Spencer conceived of the outline ideas in 1857 (see Introduction, p.v), i.e. when he was still in close contact with George Eliot and before her first fiction was published.
- 37 Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (trans. George Eliot), Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989, p. 3; p. 23; pp. 249-50 [first published 1855].
- 38 Spinoza, *Ethics*, London: Dent, 1992, p. 32; p. 75; p. 155; pp. 58-9 [first published 1678].
- 39 *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight, 9 vols, New Haven and London: Oxford University Press, 1954-78, IV, p. 67, pp. 70-2.
- 40 S. S. Hennell, *Present Religion: as a Faith owning Fellowship with Thought*, London, Trübner & Co, 1865, Vol. 2, p. 590, p. 595; Vol. 3, pp. 479-80.
- 41 See S. Batchelor, *The Awakening of the West*, Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1994, pp. 234-5; p. 244.