

THE IMPACT OF LUDWIG FEUERBACH AND AUGUSTE COMTE ON GEORGE ELIOT'S MORAL VISION

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Abstract: In this paper I have focused on the moral views of George Eliot. It is said that the characters of George Eliot are dominated by morality. Eliot thinks that this morality is essential for every human being and by following this morality one can touch the status of god. Feuerbach and Auguste Comte are two philosophers who emphasized the morality in human relationship and supported the fulfillment of social duties for man otherwise he may suffer a lot. George Eliot has been greatly influenced by these philosophers.

[Anuradha Pawar. THE IMPACT OF LUDWIG FEUERBACH AND AUGUSTE COMTE ON GEORGE ELIOT'S MORAL VISION. *Rep Opinion* 2012;4(9):1-2]. (ISSN: 1553-9873). <http://www.sciencepub.net/report>.

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Keywords: moral; morality; human; philosopher

STUDY:

George Eliot introduces a new definition of religion based on the brotherhood among men rather than the personal satisfaction of his ego. She believes that the true religion should both satisfy the individual's need for faith and teach man to take responsibility for his fellows on the basis of humanity. She expects that this religion will be a religion of humanity, not of divinity. Then we shall be happy to have a human-oriented religion rather than a God-oriented religion in the traditional sense. In this way, she teaches a lesson of humanity as well as morality.

In her earlier days when she was developing her understanding of religion which implies a Godless universe, Eliot studied the literature of her age and read the works of many philosophers like **Ludwig Feuerbach(1804-1872) and Auguste Comte(1798-1853)**, both of whom had a great impact on Eliot's moral views. Ludwig Feuerbach, a moral philosopher, was deeply influenced Eliot's literary and intellectual outlook. Eliot translated his work *The Essence of Christianity* in which Feuerbach reviewed the definition of God from "God is love" in Christianity to "Love is God". For Feuerbach, God is the reflection of man's ideal rather than its source. Love is not apart from the concept of God instead, love is the path to god. He strongly believes that the concept of God comes from man's inclination towards love, which inevitably takes humanity toward the idea of God. God is, therefore, a reflection of love. Feuerbach argues that God is the mirror of man because God may be understood as a projection or reflection of humanity's ideals. He also establishes a close relation between the divine and human nature as follows. Feuerbach opines that the ethical potential of God is dormant in all of us, in our capacity for sympathizing with human beings.

According to him human beings have heavenly qualities within themselves. That is why he thinks that instead of divinity, humanity should be taken as an object of worship. He also shows his faith in man on account of man's huge potential for sympathizing one another.

Eliot's focused on the relationship between the cosmic and moral order that compels her to raise questions on the issues of determinism and free will. She does not agree with the thought that the harshness of cosmic order prevents man from humanity. Although she believes in technical determinism, she favors that morality has no relation with this kind of determinism. The man may face a lot of obstacles in his way of doing good for others but he should choose the better over worse. By using his intellect he can overcome the difficulties and if he determines, he can act morally. She aims at inspiring the humans to use their potential for the welfare of humanity.

The impact of Feuerbach and Auguste Comte played an important role in making Eliot's understanding of Christianity. Feuerbach believed that human beings may prove their superiority over animals by developing a sense of sympathy for humanity. Comte wanted to lead man to altruism and did not believe in individualism because he focused on the order and progress of society. He knew the fact that man is confused between his selfish, personal instincts and social pressure and if he wants to attain salvation, he has to ignore his egoism. In the same way Eliot focuses on man's inclination to treat each other humanely. She considers egoism as 'moral stupidity'. She preaches on human values and suggests man to widen his perspective. She believes that the success of human life depends on his capacity to work for society. It is not difficult to attain this capacity as he has the

quality of “goodness” known as a God like quality. Feuerbach requests human beings to act on behalf of one another without expecting reward. But man should always keep the fear of divine retribution in mind. One can perform religious duty by adopting divine qualities like love, justice and sympathy. Her views of morality are far away from the conventional religious rituals instead she is in favor of the goodwill that may establish a society where people do feel their own responsibility towards it. She believes that our religion should teach a lesson of humanity rather than of divinity. So that we shall be happy to have a religion that is human – oriented in place of God oriented.

CONCLUSION:

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

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7/7/2012