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GEORGE ELIOT'S VISION OF ARTISTIC

PSYCHOLOGISM: EMOTION, EMPATHY, AND MORAL THOUGHTS

Abstract. *The article explores the concept of artistic psychologism in George Eliot's novels Middlemarch and The Mill on the Floss, focusing on how empathy and moral cognition function as central stylistic and philosophical categories in her prose. The study reveals that Eliot transforms emotion into an epistemological tool and empathy into a moral act, creating a new model of psychological realism in Victorian literature. By analyzing her narrative techniques, particularly free indirect discourse and internal reflection, the research demonstrates that Eliot's fiction unites intellectual analysis with emotional depth. The article concludes that Eliot's artistic style embodies a synthesis of feeling and thought, establishing literature as a medium for ethical understanding and human consciousness.*

Keywords: *artistic psychologism, empathy, moral cognition, psychological realism, George Eliot, Victorian literature, narrative empathy, moral philosophy, free indirect discourse, female prose.*

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ВИДЕНИЕ ХУДОЖЕСТВЕННОГО ПСИХОЛОГИЗМА В ТВОРЧЕСТВЕ ДЖОРДЖ
ЭЛИОТ: ЭМОЦИИ, ЭМПАТИЯ И МОРАЛЬНОЕ МЫШЛЕНИЕ

Аннотация. В статье исследуется понятие художественного психологизма в романах Джордж Элиот «Мидлмарч» и «Мельница на Флоссе». Автор анализирует, как эмпатия и моральное познание функционируют в прозе писательницы как центральные философские и стилистические категории. Показано, что Элиот превращает эмоции в инструмент познания, а эмпатию - в акт нравственного понимания, создавая новую модель психологического реализма в викторианской литературе. Анализ повествовательных приёмов, в частности внутреннего монолога и свободной косвенной речи, демонстрирует, что её стиль соединяет интеллектуальный анализ с эмоциональной глубиной. В заключение подчеркивается, что художественный стиль Элиот представляет собой синтез чувства и мысли, утверждая литературу как средство нравственного осмысления человеческого сознания.

Ключевые слова: художественный психологизм, эмпатия, моральное познание, психологический реализм, Джордж Элиот, викторианская литература, нарративная эмпатия, моральная философия, свободная косвенная речь, женская проза.

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J.ELIOT ASARLARIDA BADIY PSIXOLOGIZM TALQINI:

HISSİYOT, EMPATIYA VA AXLOQIY TAFAKKUR

Annotatsiya. Maqolada Jorj Eliotning “Midlmarch” va “Flosdagi tegirmon” romanlarida badiiy psixologizm tushunchasi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda yozuvchining empatiya va axloqiy idrokni o‘z asarlarida markaziy falsafiy va uslubiy kategoriyalar sifatida qo‘llagani yoritiladi. Eliot hissiyotlarni bilish vositasiga, empatiyani esa axloqiy harakatga aylantirib, viktoriya davri

adabiyotida yangi psixologik realizm modelini yaratgan. Uning ichki monolog, erkin bilvosita nutq va tafakkur jarayonlarini aks ettirish uslublari tahlil qilinarkan, yozuvchining asarlari aql va his uyg'unligiga asoslanganini ko'rsatadi. Xulosa sifatida, Eliot uslubi his va tafakkurni birlashtirib, adabiyotni inson ongini va axloqni anglash vositasi darajasiga ko'targani ta'kidlanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: *badiiy psixologizm, empatiya, axloqiy idrok, psixologik realizm, Jorj Eliot, Viktoriya davri adabiyoti, narrativ empatiya, axloq falsafasi, erkin bilvosita nutq, ayol nasri.*

INTRODUCTION

Victorian period in England was the period of intellectual awakening and moral re-evaluation that profoundly influenced literary creativity, XIX century literature with its tension between faith and reason, individual conscience and social order, provided fertile ground for writers who sought to understand the nature of human consciousness. Within this cultural and philosophical context, George Eliot emerged as one of the most intellectually refined figures in English prose, whose works represent the synthesis of emotion, reason, and ethical reflection. Her novels stand as bridges between Romantic idealism and modern psychological realism, uniting the moral sensitivity of the human heart with the analytical power of the intellect.

Eliot's artistic method is rooted in what modern criticism calls artistic psychologism—a mode of representation that seeks to reveal the workings of the human mind through narrative structure, language, and moral reflection. In contrast to her male contemporaries, Eliot developed a new kind of psychological realism based not on external action but on the inner movement of thought and feeling. Her fiction transforms emotion into cognition: feelings become instruments of moral understanding, and sympathy evolves into an epistemological principle. This creative philosophy allowed Eliot to construct characters whose moral growth and intellectual struggle reflect the complexity of real human experience.

Among Eliot's major works, *Middlemarch* (1871–1872) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) stand as exemplary studies of the moral and emotional life of individuals within society. In *Middlemarch*, the author explores the relationship between social idealism and personal ethics, presenting empathy as a form of moral cognition. The novel's protagonist, Dorothea Brooke, embodies the human desire for spiritual integrity in a world governed by compromise and misunderstanding. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot turns to the sphere of family and gender relations, portraying Maggie Tulliver's inner conflict as a struggle between emotional spontaneity and moral restraint. Both novels illustrate Eliot's conviction that genuine understanding of others is inseparable from moral responsibility—a view that defines her contribution to the evolution of psychological realism.

Eliot's philosophical background and her engagement with contemporary science also shaped her literary psychology. Influenced by Auguste Comte's positivism, David Hume's moral philosophy, and Charles Darwin's ideas about the interconnectedness of life, she perceived sympathy as both a natural and moral instinct. For Eliot, the ability to “feel with” another person was not mere sentimentality but a higher form of cognition—a way to know the truth about human existence. This synthesis of ethical reasoning and emotional sensitivity allowed her to articulate what may be called a moral psychology of empathy, a concept that places her at the forefront of nineteenth-century thought.

The relevance of studying George Eliot's artistic psychologism lies in its continuing resonance with modern discussions about consciousness, morality, and empathy in literature. Her narrative strategies—particularly free indirect discourse, internal reflection, and symbolic parallelism—anticipate modernist explorations of the mind while preserving the ethical dimension of realism. Eliot's vision unites aesthetics and ethics, suggesting that art can serve not only as a mirror of life but also as a moral laboratory for the human spirit.

Therefore, this research aims to investigate how George Eliot constructs artistic psychologism through emotion, empathy, and moral thought, with particular attention to *Middlemarch* and *The Mill on the Floss*. By analyzing her narrative perspective, psychological depth, and moral philosophy, the study seeks to reveal how Eliot's fiction transforms human feeling into intellectual and ethical insight, establishing a distinctive model of feminine and philosophical realism in Victorian literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The exploration of artistic psychologism in George Eliot's prose has developed through diverse scholarly perspectives, uniting discussions of moral philosophy, psychology, and literary form. While early critics viewed Eliot primarily as a moralist and intellectual realist, later researchers have illuminated her as a pioneer of psychological depth and ethical introspection in the novel. This evolution in interpretation reflects the shifting focus of literary studies from external morality to the inner workings of human consciousness.

E. Showalter (1977), in *A Literature of Their Own*, identifies George Eliot as a leading figure in the emergence of the female intellectual voice in Victorian prose. Showalter argues that Eliot transformed moral sentiment into a form of artistic cognition, bridging domestic realism with philosophical inquiry. Building on this perspective, S. Gilbert and S. Gubar (1979) in *The Madwoman in the Attic* demonstrate that Eliot's portrayal of female subjectivity marked a turning point in nineteenth-century literature, where emotional and ethical conflicts became the foundation of female authorship and psychological realism.

The philosophical background of Eliot's creativity has also attracted considerable attention. M. Beer (2000), in *Darwin's Plots*, examines Eliot's engagement with Darwinian and positivist thought, showing how her concept of sympathy combines scientific rationalism with moral idealism. Beer concludes that Eliot's realism operates simultaneously on empirical and ethical planes, connecting

natural observation with the moral life of the individual. This synthesis of science and ethics defines what scholars call her ethical realism, a key component of her artistic psychologism.

Building upon these philosophical readings, S. Shuttleworth (1996) situates Eliot within the broader development of Victorian psychology. She argues that Eliot's depiction of emotion and cognition anticipates modern theories of moral psychology, as her characters' ethical decisions emerge from processes of emotional struggle and reflection. This perspective shifts critical attention from external morality to the dynamics of inner life, demonstrating how Eliot transforms feeling into a mode of knowledge.

N. Armstrong (1987), in *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, further deepens this analysis by connecting Eliot's narrative form to what she calls the "domestic construction of subjectivity." For Armstrong, Eliot's heroines achieve moral awareness through ordinary domestic experiences, where private emotions acquire public and philosophical significance. Thus, Eliot's fiction redefines the moral potential of the everyday, transforming domestic life into a space of intellectual and ethical discovery.

This emphasis on moral dialogue and internal reflection resonates strongly with M. Bakhtin's (1975) concept of dialogic consciousness. The polyphonic structure of *Middlemarch*—where multiple moral voices coexist and interact—embodies Bakhtin's idea that truth emerges through dialogue rather than assertion. Eliot's narrative empathy thus operates as a dialogic process, inviting both author and reader into ethical participation rather than passive observation.

From a psycho-literary perspective, L. S. Vygotsky's (1991) theory of the psychology of art offers further insight into Eliot's creative method. Vygotsky posits that emotion in art functions as a mechanism for cognitive and moral transformation—a notion that parallels Eliot's belief that feeling is an instrument of understanding. Through this lens, her novels appear not merely as depictions of

psychological states but as experiments in how empathy can lead to moral and intellectual insight.

Contemporary scholarship continues to expand this interpretation. T. Dolin (2011) regards Eliot's fiction as a form of moral pedagogy that teaches readers to "think and feel with others." In this view, Eliot's narrative is both aesthetic and ethical: it creates a moral laboratory where compassion becomes an active process of learning. Her narrative empathy replaces moral instruction with moral participation, a quality that anticipates modern theories of reader-response ethics.

In recent Uzbek literary criticism, interest in artistic psychologism has deepened through new comparative perspectives. Rashidova (2024) examines Eliot's synthesis of empathy and cognition, emphasizing her role in shaping the moral and intellectual dimension of Victorian prose. This approach highlights Eliot's enduring relevance for today's discussions of emotional intelligence, moral reasoning, and ethical aesthetics, particularly within the global study of women's literature.

Considered all things, these studies demonstrate that George Eliot's artistic psychologism cannot be confined to moral didacticism or psychological introspection alone. Rather, it represents a synthesis of emotion, intellect, and ethical reflection. Her fiction unites the moral philosophy of the Victorian age with a modern psychological awareness, establishing a literary model in which empathy becomes both a way of knowing and a way of being. Through this integration of feeling and thought, Eliot stands not only as a moral philosopher of her time but also as a forerunner of twentieth-century psychological realism.

METHODOLOGY

The present research applies an interdisciplinary and comparative-analytical approach to examine how George Eliot develops artistic psychologism through emotion, empathy, and moral reflection in her novels *Middlemarch* (1871–1872)

and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860). The object of the study is the artistic style of Eliot's prose, while the subject involves the mechanisms by which emotion and intellect interact within her narrative structure and philosophical vision.

The main purpose of the study is to identify the principles that determine Eliot's transformation of emotion into moral cognition and to show how her artistic style integrates psychological insight, ethical reasoning, and narrative form. The research aims to demonstrate that Eliot's prose functions as both an aesthetic and cognitive system, where empathy becomes an instrument of moral knowledge[8,15][3,118].

To achieve these goals, several interrelated methods were used:

Comparative-historical method – to situate Eliot's works within the Victorian intellectual tradition, revealing the influence of moral philosophy, positivism, and the early psychology of the nineteenth century[1,23]. Textual and stylistic analysis – to investigate narrative techniques such as free indirect discourse, internal monologue, and moral commentary that convey psychological depth and ethical self-reflection [9,74]. Psycho-literary method – to interpret the interaction of consciousness, emotion, and ethical choice in the formation of character psychology, following the theoretical ideas of L. S. Vygotsky on the creative transformation of feeling[10,45]. Hermeneutic interpretation – to uncover the symbolic and moral dimensions of Eliot's imagery and to explain how her prose transforms private emotion into universal ethical experience[2,324].

If we discuss elements of feminist literary criticism it can assess the representation of female subjectivity and moral autonomy in Eliot's heroines, linking her narrative empathy to the broader development of the woman's literary voice[8,117];[6,338].

The theoretical foundation of the research is based on the works of E. Showalter (1977), S. Gilbert and S. Gubar (1979), N. Armstrong (1987), S.

Shuttleworth (1996), and M. Beer (2000), whose studies clarify the correlation between gender, consciousness, and literary form. The philosophical framework also draws upon M. M. Bakhtin's concept of dialogic consciousness (1975) and L. S. Vygotsky's psychology of art (1991), which together illuminate the ethical and cognitive nature of Eliot's artistic language.

The novelty of this research lies in its holistic interpretation of artistic psychologism as a triadic unity of feeling, thought, and moral insight. Previous studies often treated Eliot's prose as moral didacticism or social realism; this study instead emphasizes the epistemological function of empathy-its role as both an emotional and intellectual act that allows literature to serve as a moral laboratory for human understanding[4,49].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of George Eliot's novels *Middlemarch* and *The Mill on the Floss* demonstrates that her artistic style is grounded in the deep interconnection between psychological experience, emotional empathy, and moral reflection. Through her narrative technique, Eliot creates a world in which the understanding of others becomes both an ethical act and a cognitive process. This fusion of intellect and feeling constitutes the essence of her artistic psychologism - a literary phenomenon that transforms psychological depth into moral philosophy[8,15].

In *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot presents Maggie Tulliver's inner conflict as a vivid example of psychological duality. Torn between moral duty and emotional impulse, Maggie's consciousness reflects the Victorian struggle between social conformity and individual passion. The novel's introspective narration and use of internal monologue allow the reader to experience Maggie's ethical dilemmas as a continuous process of self-examination[9,74]. Eliot's technique of psychological narration goes beyond mere description of emotions; it represents the act of thinking and feeling as intertwined states. According to S. Shuttleworth, Eliot's

approach reveals the influence of contemporary moral philosophy, where emotion is understood as a rational component of ethical judgment[9,112].

In *Middlemarch*, the complexity of Dorothea Brooke's moral and emotional development exemplifies Eliot's mature vision of empathy as a form of moral cognition. Dorothea's moral consciousness evolves through her ability to sympathize and reflect on the inner lives of others. Her quest for meaning is presented not as a romantic ideal but as a process of intellectual and ethical awakening[3,123]. The narrative technique of free indirect discourse allows Eliot to merge the narrator's moral insight with the character's internal voice, creating what E. Showalter calls "the moral texture of consciousness"[8,117]. Through this stylistic device, thought becomes emotion and emotion becomes knowledge - a process that redefines the boundaries between psychology and philosophy.

George Eliot's artistic psychologism also derives from her philosophical worldview, which integrates scientific rationalism and moral idealism. Her engagement with Auguste Comte's positivism and Darwin's theory of interconnection informed her belief that sympathy is both a natural instinct and a moral virtue[3,118]. As M. Beer notes, Eliot's realism is not confined to external reality but extends to the moral and psychological structures of human life. In her artistic universe, empathy becomes a scientific as well as spiritual mechanism for understanding human behavior.

From a narrative perspective, Eliot's prose demonstrates what N. Armstrong defines as the "domestic construction of subjectivity" - the formation of moral identity through everyday experience[1,23]. Both Dorothea and Maggie undergo moral trials that reveal the ethical significance of emotion. Their inner transformations reflect Eliot's conviction that genuine moral progress depends on one's capacity for self-reflection and compassion. Thus, Eliot's fiction elevates domestic life to the level of philosophical inquiry, portraying private emotion as a foundation of public morality.

T. Dolin [4,49] interprets this dimension of Eliot's art as a pedagogical act - a way of teaching readers to "feel and think with others." In this sense, Eliot's novels operate as moral laboratories, where readers participate in the process of empathic understanding. Her narrative empathy does not impose moral lessons but invites ethical dialogue, anticipating what M. Bakhtin [2,324] later defined as the dialogic principle of consciousness. In *Middlemarch*, for example, the coexistence of multiple perspectives - from Dorothea to Lydgate and Casaubon - forms a polyphonic structure that reflects the complexity of human thought and moral judgment.

Moreover, Eliot's prose establishes a distinctive feminine model of intellectual realism. As E. Showalter[8,15] emphasizes, Eliot's narrative voice synthesizes reason and emotion, creating an aesthetic balance often absent in male-dominated Victorian fiction. While her male contemporaries tended to separate intellect from feeling, Eliot united them in a harmonious moral vision grounded in empathy and reflection. This integration represents not only a stylistic innovation but also an ethical breakthrough in the history of the English novel.

In Eliot's artistic system, emotion is epistemological - a means of knowing the world. Her characters' moral insight arises not through abstract reasoning but through the lived experience of compassion and suffering. As Vygotsky [10,45] observed, emotion in art serves as a mechanism for the transformation of consciousness. Eliot's prose exemplifies this principle: feeling becomes the foundation of understanding, and empathy becomes a form of moral thought. The psychological realism of her novels thus anticipates modernist explorations of inner life while preserving the moral sensibility characteristic of the Victorian tradition.

From my perspective, George Eliot's contribution to English literature lies in her ability to merge aesthetic beauty with ethical depth. Her artistic psychologism transforms the novel into an intellectual and moral experiment - one that examines

the processes of human perception, conscience, and empathy. Both *Middlemarch* and *The Mill on the Floss* illustrate that the human capacity for moral understanding is inseparable from emotional awareness. In this synthesis of thought and feeling, Eliot's prose achieves what may be called an ethics of empathy, establishing literature as a path toward self-knowledge and compassion.

CONCLUSION

The conducted analysis reveals that George Eliot's artistic psychologism represents one of the most significant achievements in the development of nineteenth-century English literature. Her novels *Middlemarch* and *The Mill on the Floss* demonstrate how emotion, empathy, and moral thought can function as interdependent categories of artistic cognition. Eliot's prose transforms psychological depth into philosophical reflection, elevating the emotional experience of individuals into a universal understanding of human consciousness. Through her narrative style, she created a new type of psychological realism that unites ethical insight, intellectual reasoning, and aesthetic sensitivity.

In Eliot's artistic vision, empathy is not a mere emotional response but a moral and cognitive process that reveals the essence of human interconnectedness. Her heroines-Dorothea Brooke and Maggie Tulliver-embodiment the moral potential of feeling, showing that compassion and self-reflection are the true sources of moral growth. The internal conflicts they experience mirror the broader philosophical tension of Victorian culture between reason and emotion, intellect and conscience. By integrating these dualities into her prose, Eliot develops a literary model where moral truth emerges through emotional awareness.

The study also confirms that Eliot's narrative technique-especially her use of free indirect discourse, psychological introspection, and polyphonic structure-serves as an artistic embodiment of moral consciousness. These methods enable readers to perceive thought as emotion and emotion as a form of knowledge. As S. Shuttleworth [9,112] observes, Eliot's narrative empathy transforms moral

reflection into a dynamic process of psychological discovery. Similarly, E. Showalter [8,117] highlights that her fiction replaces moral preaching with moral participation: the reader becomes a participant in the ethical dialogue of the text.

From my authorial standpoint, George Eliot's prose should be interpreted not merely as moral fiction but as a philosophy of feeling. Her novels articulate an ethics grounded in emotional intelligence, where the act of understanding another person's inner life becomes a form of moral enlightenment. This perspective allows us to recognize Eliot as both an artist and a moral thinker whose creative method unites aesthetic form with ethical depth. Her artistic psychologism thus transcends gender and historical boundaries, offering a timeless vision of how literature can cultivate empathy, conscience, and self-knowledge.

Eliot's contribution to English literature lies in her transformation of the novel into a moral and psychological laboratory-a space for exploring the consciousness of humanity. Her synthesis of intellect and emotion anticipated many of the key ideas later developed by modernist writers and psychologists alike. By turning empathy into a philosophical and aesthetic principle, Eliot established a foundation for twentieth-century psychological prose.

In conclusion, George Eliot's vision of artistic psychologism affirms that true artistic creation begins where feeling meets understanding. Her novels teach that empathy is not weakness but wisdom; that moral cognition grows from compassion; and that literature, when written from the depths of human consciousness, becomes a form of ethical revelation. Eliot's artistic legacy continues to illuminate the path of modern literature, reminding us that the harmony of heart and mind remains the highest form of human and artistic truth.

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