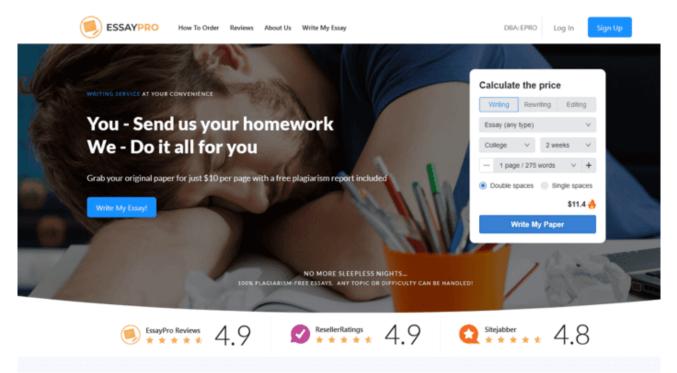
Social and Spiritual Energy in Middlemarch



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I do not believe that it is sufficient to say that Middlemarch explores the ways in which social and spiritual energy can be frustrated; it would be more appropriate to say that Middlemarch explores the ways in which social and spiritual energies (ideals if you will) are completely destroyed and perverted. One need only look to Lydgate to see an example of idealism being destroyed by the environment in which it is found. At the start of the novel, we are introduced to the "young, poor and ambitious" and most of all idealistic Doctor Lydgate, who has great plans for the fever hospital in Middlemarch. Throughout the novel, however, we see his plans frustrated by the <u>designs</u> of others, though primarily the <u>hypocritical</u> desires of Nicholas Bulstrode. The second example of the idealism of the young being destroyed by the old is that of <u>Dorothea</u>. This can be seen by her continuing desire to "bear a larger part of the world's misery" or to learn Latin and Greek, both of which are continually thwarted by Casaubon, though this ends after his death, with her discovery of his selfish and suspicious nature, by way of the codicil.

The character who has their ambitions and ideals brought most obviously low is Lydgate. The earliest example is when he has to make the choice between Fairbrother and Tyke. Both of these characters are rather poor examples of the clergy (Fairbrother because of his gambling, and Tyke because of his rather lazy attitude). Our sympathies are clearly with Fairbrother for a number of reasons; he doesn't gamble because he wants to, but because the wage he receives from running his parish alone is too small to support him and the various members of his family that rely on him. Lydgate has to make the choice between some one he likes as a person (Fairbrother) and someone who he needs help from (Bulstrode). It is clear that Lydgate is very similar to Fairbrother in a number of ways; both are scientists, and both have great hopes for the future. It would therefore seem to be the case that Lydgate would automatically support Fairbrother. However, Bulstrode uses his money and his influence to ensure Tyke's success.

Bulstrode is another example of a character that has had his idealism and destroyed, though not by Middlemarch.

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