

**DETERMINATION AND ITS IMPACTS IN GEORGE ELIOT'S *ADAM BEDE*****TONOUEWA Mèdessè Emile**

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After dealing with the concept of determination through self-confidence, optimism and courage in George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, it is shown that this quality has both advantages and disadvantages. In fact, the advantages pointed out are professional integrity, admiration, consideration and praise from neighbours whereas the drawbacks are the overwork, hardness and hardship which have led to some unhappy situations that are the signs of failure.

**Keywords:** Determination; Advantages; Drawbacks; Neighbours; Failure

**Résumé**

Après avoir montré l'existence de la détermination à travers la confiance en soi, l'optimisme et le courage dans le roman *Adam Bede* de l'écrivaine Anglaise George Eliot, il est démontré que cette qualité a à la fois des avantages et méfaits. En effet, les avantages découverts sont la conscience professionnelle, l'assiduité au travail, la considération et les louanges de la part des voisins, alors que les méfaits sont les faits de se surcharger, d'être trop rigoureux et sévère envers les collègues ce qui a engendré des conditions de vie difficiles et par conséquent des situations malheureuses, faisant penser à un échec.

**Mots clés:** Détermination, Avantages, Méfaits, Voisins, Echec

## Introduction

In our daily life, determination is regarded as a driving force to success. This belief can be deduced for instance from the proverb: "where there is a will, there is a way". But, in her novel *Adam Bede*, George Eliot has written: "Like all strong natures, Adam had confidence in his ability to achieve something in the future. But he had too cool a head not to estimate to the full the obstacles that were to be overcome. And the time would be so long!" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 175). Analysing the above passage one can say that a determined person is likely to face some unpleasant problems. So, it can be admitted that determination does not only lead to success. Thus, the objective of this research work is to show both the positive and negative sides of determination. Consequently, to reach my goal, I will successively deal with the concept and the impacts of determination throughout the novel basing Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis.

### 1. The Concept of Determination in *Adam Bede*

According to Freud, in order to survive, every human being must repress himself to some degree and this repression may become excessive and make us ill. This theory may be applied to Adam Bede's determination in the novel. In fact, in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Ninth Edition*, determination is the quality that makes you continue trying to do something even this is difficult. This definition lets say a determined person will do whatever he believes is good. With state of mind it is probable he will consciously or unconsciously violate certain regulations and will obviously cause some problems to both himself and his neighbours. In *Adam Bede*, George Eliot has underlined Adam's determination through the latter's self-confidence, optimism and courage, which has shown his eagerness to succeed and to what extent he has deprived himself of some pleasure.

#### 1.1. Self-Confidence in *Adam Bede*

According to *Chambers Universal Learner's Dictionary*, Self-Confidence is the belief or trust in one's own powers. It can be said that George Eliot is pointing out this kind of belief in Adam Bede's personality when she says, making reference to him: "All passion become strength when it has an outlet from the narrow limits of our personal lot in the lab out of our right arm, the cunning of our right hand or the still creative activity of our thought" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 178).

Through the statement, one can notice that Adam always believes in his own ability to be successful in his work. This lets suppose he has an enormous capacity for hard work. But can one really succeed in doing whatever he wants only through his determination? The question is worth asking since in reality a human being cannot reach all his goals. The author has even written about him: "Whenever Adam was strongly convinced of any proposition, it took the form of a principle in his mind: it was knowledge to be acted on, as the knowledge that damp will cause rust" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 176). The above passage underlines that if Adam is certain of any suggested ideas or plans, he will decidedly work on them. This means Adam always wants to take advantage of any profitable situation. Then it can be admitted that he is so confident in himself that he believes that all exploit is possible. So, it is thinkable that he is optimistic about his future.

#### 1.2. Optimism in the Novel

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Ninth Edition*, Optimism is the feeling that good things will happen and that something will be successful. George Eliot wants surely to show us that Adam Bede is faithful about a good future when she writes about him: "He had good hope that he should be firmer on his legs by and by; but he could not be satisfied with a vague confidence in his arm and brain; he must have definite plans, and set about them at once" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 177). The author's speech underlines both Adam's Optimism and realism about his future. In fact, he is conscious that his goal will not be reached without some objectivity. Accordingly, he will probably plan all his activities in order to avoid any misfortune. The author is not saying less when she writes:

Adam thought that he and Seth might carry on a little business for themselves in addition to their journeyman's work, by buying a small stock of superior wood and making articles of household furniture, for which Adam had no end of contrivances. Seth might gain more by working at separate jobs under Adam's direction than by his journeyman's work, and Adam, in his over-hours, could do all the nice work, that required peculiar skill. The money gained in this way, with the good wages he received as foreman, would soon enable them to get beforehand with the world so sparingly as they would all live now (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 177).

Through the author's statement one can notice that Adam believes that if he and his brother Seth work harder they will get more money which will be used for good purposes. As he is relying on hard work for his success, it can be said that Adam is not a fatalistic man. In other words, he believes that he can improve or change his destiny by working hard. And his behaviour is comparable to the one of some people who are eager to lead better lives. So, it can be said that he is a good example to follow. Consequently, it is believable that the author wishes to show us one of the best ways to be successful in life. Thus, all this lets suggest his outstanding bravery.

### **1.3. Adam Bede's Courage throughout in the Novel.**

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Ninth Edition*, courage is the ability to do something dangerous, or face pain or opposition without showing fear. Adam Bede is showing his courage when he says:

There's nothing but what's bearable as long as a man can work, he said to himself: the natur o' things doesn't change, though it seems as if one's own life was nothing but change. The square o' four is sixteen, and you must lengthen your lever in proportion to your weight, is as true when a man's miserable as when he's happy; and the best o' working is, it gives you a grip hold o' things outside your own lot (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 96).

The above passage lets say that Adam has had no fear to face any problems. In other words, it can be said that he thinks that he can overcome any difficulties by working. His belief is in accordance with the one of courageous people. In addition, his speech lets suppose that he is aware that life is made of problems or he does not mind facing any consequences of his actions. Saying that he believes that the job can provide him with money, sufficient to meet his needs is not totally wrong. He has also shown his bravery when he makes Arthur Donnithorne know: "If we're men, and have men's feelings, I reckon we must have men's troubles. We can't be like the birds, as fly from their nest as soon as they've got their wings, and never know their kin when they see 'em, and get a fresh lot every year" (E. George, 1859, p. 139).

Adam is telling Arthur Donnithorne that men should be courageous to dominate the difficult situations. He acknowledges that troubles are imminent in life and men have to deal with them. So, he believes that human beings cannot lead successful life unless they are brave. In other words, he is convinced that courage is an outlet from some difficulties. Thus, let find out the profits he has got and the problems he has to endure because of his self-confidence, optimism and courage throughout the novel.

## **2. The Impacts of Determination on Adam's Life.**

Adam's determination has led to his professional integrity, hard work, admiration, consideration, and praise by his neighbours, which can make think that he is leading a good life. But in his eagerness to lead a good life, he has also faced some problems such as being overworked, too hard and harsh towards his fellow workers and creating some unpleasant situations for both himself and his neighbours. Thus, it can be said determination has both positive and negative impacts on his daily life.

## 2.1. The Positive Impacts of Determination in the Novel

### 2.1.1. Professional Integrity in *Adam Bede*

According to *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Ninth Edition*, integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. Adam Bede has shown Arthur Donnithorne his good will to do well his job through the following dialogue

You're going to Broxton, I suppose? said Arthur, putting his horse on at a show pace while Adam walked by his side. Are you going to the Rectory?

No, sir, I'm going to see about Bradwell's barn. They're afraid of the roof pushing the walls out; and I'm going to see what can be done with it before we send the stuff and the workmen (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 138).

Through the dialogue, Adam has shown that it is an obligation for him to know what is going wrong with Bardwell's barn, though he is not obliged by Bardwell to do so. His self-consciousness of what he should do as far as the work is concerned underlines his self-motivation for his job. His self motivation shows he is eager to do well his job. This kind of behaviour is rare among the employees who often wait for external motivation before doing some jobs. So, it can admitted that Adam is not an ordinary worker. He even makes Arthur know:

A foreman, if he's got a conscience, and delights in his work, will do his business as well as if he was a partner. I wouldn't give a penny for a man as 'ud drive a nail in slack because he didn't get extra pay for it.

I know that, Adam; I know you work for him as well as if you were working for yourself. But you would have more power than you have now, and could turn the business to better account perhaps (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 138).

Adam is telling Arthur that a conscious worker who is charge of other building workers should do some work even if he is not paid for. His speech points out his determination to serve well regardless bad working conditions. In other words, his behaviour lets suppose he will not demonstrate against his employer because of a low salary. Such a worker will never go on strike. Thus, his speech points out once more he is not expecting his employer's motivation before doing any extra work. Then his behaviour underlines his kindness and the fact that he is ready to help at every time. So, it is imaginable that he is a type of citizens who can contribute to his employer's business and his country's the development.

Arthur, on his side has acknowledged his assertion, which means he is ware of Adam's honesty and loyalty to his employer. His professional integrity is also revealed when he tells Arthur: "I've allays had health and strength and brains to give me a delight in my work; and I count it a great thing as I've had Bartle Massey's night-school to go to. He's helped me to knowledge I could never ha' got by myself" (E. George, 1859, p.139). His statement lets say that he always does his job with joy. The speech also points out his eagerness to improve his knowledge which lets suppose is aware of the fact that he needs some information or training to do well his job. So, it can admitted that he will not wait for any outside pressure before doing well what he must do. It can also be said he will put a lot of effort into any job and do it well.

### 2.1.2. Hard Work in *Adam Bede*

George Eliot has shown Adam Bede's eagerness to do well his carpentry job through the following passage:

Adam alone had gone on with his work as if nothing had happened. But observing the cessation of the tools, he looked up, and said, in a tone of indignation.

Look there, now! I can't abide to see men throw away their tools i' that way, the minute the clock begins to strike, as if they took no pleasure i' their work, and was afraid o' doing a stroke too much (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 6).

The passage is pointing out that despite the death of Adam's father, Adam is assiduous in his work. In fact, shortly after his father's death, Adam is working very hard and taking great care that everything is well done as they must be done. The speech is also pointing out that he hates laziness or idleness. Thus, this assertion lets suppose he will do any work seriously and will be too hard towards his fellow workers. And he will probably be harder if he is leading a group of workers. As a leader, he can often be profitable for a company and a country. In consideration of such an assiduity, one can guess that he will give himself the necessary energy to do well a lot of jobs. It can also be admitted that he will have the desire to give his fellow workers some workable ideas. So, his being a hardworking man may profit both himself and his workmen. The author has also shown Adam as a hardworking man when she mentions:

Adam had been refreshed by his long rest, and, with his habitual impatience of mere passivity, he was eager to begin the new day, and subdue sadness by his strong will and strong arm. The white mist lay in the valley; it was going to be a bright, warm day and he would start to work again when he had had his breakfast (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 96).

Through the above passage George Eliot probably wishes to show that Adam is never tired of working. It is also likely she wants to show that Adam's occupation gives him some joy. So, she is teaching us that we should always consider our work as a joyful occupation. In other words, we should not wait to be forced to work. A focus has equally been put on his good will to work through the following statement:

The reason Adam was walking along the lanes at this time was because his work for the rest of the day lay at a country house about three miles off, which was being put in repair for the son of a neighbouring squire; and he had been busy since early morning with the packing of panels, doors, and chimney-pieces, in a wagon which was now gone on before him, while Jonathan Burge himself had ridden to the spot on horseback, to await its arrival and direct the worker men (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 174-175).

Although Adam has been busy packing panels, doors and chimney-pieces in a wagon since the morning, he is not tired to go to his work place which is far away from his house. So, it can be admitted that his devotion to his job leaves him with very little free time. Such a man can do nothing, but catch the admiration of other people who will obviously have some good feeling for him.

### **2.1.3. Admiration in *Adan Bede*.**

It is likely that Arthur Donnithorne is expressing his admiration for Adam Bede when he says about him to Irwine: "I should like to see him well settled in this parish; he would be ready then to act as my grand-vizier when I wanted one. We could plan no end of repairs and improvements together" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 84-85).

Arthur Donnithorne probably wishes Adam to become his best friend. In fact, he believes that Adam will be ready to work with him for some improvements. So, it can be said that Adam is loved for his hard work. Arthur's behaviour is common in our societies where a hardworking man or woman is preferred to a lazy one. This is probably one of the reasons why some employees are losing their jobs while others are getting some job opportunities. It can also be said it is the same reason that leads some employers to have a talk with an applicant for a job before giving the latter the job opportunity. Poyser on his side has also made his niece Dinah know: "I'll be bond for him any day as he'll be a good son to the last. Did he say he'd be coming to see us soon?" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 120). Poyser is telling his niece Dinah that he admires Adam. Since Adam is a poor carpenter it is obvious that he is loved because of his seriousness and his assiduity in his work. Such a sort of love is common in our societies where hardworking people

are preferred to the lazy ones. Thus, George Eliot is showing how a serious and an assiduous worker may be admired. Obviously, people who love Adam will think carefully about his future.

#### **2.1.4. Consideration in the Novel.**

Arthur Donnithorne has expressed his consideration for Adam through the following passage: "Well, Adam, how are you? said Arthur, holding out his hand, he never shook hands with any of the farmers, and Adam felt the honour keenly. I could swear to your back a long way off. It's just the same back, only broader, as when you used to carry me on it do you remember?" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 138).

The statement shows that Arthur is overwhelmed by joy when he meets Adam. His joy is pointed out by the fact that he does not hesitate to shake hand with Adam, though it is not his habit to do so. Then, it is believable that it is a great honour for Adam to be greeted in such a way, since he is a mere carpenter. Thus, the author is showing how our occupation can give us some consideration if it is very often well done. Consequently, her writing may make some readers take care of their jobs and try to be known. Arthur's consideration for Adam is so great that he thinks it will be profitable for Burge to have confidence in him: "Burge trusts almost everything to you now, Adam, doesn't he? I should think he will make you his partner soon. He will, if he's wise" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 138). Arthur believes that Adam is the right worker to whom Burge should entrust all his business. His consideration may encourage Adam and fortify his determination to succeed in life. In other words, Arthur's speech may make him continue to behave in the same way. In this state of mind he will probably always say good things about Adam.

#### **2.1.5. Praise in *Adam Bede*.**

Poyser has told his niece Hetty about Adam Bede: "Adam knew a fine sight more o' the natur o' things than those as thought themselves his betters" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 80). He is telling his niece that Adam can know the nature of things better than anyone else. Thus, it seems that he wants the niece to be interested in Adam. Consequently, his speech on Adam lets suppose that he has some confidence in his ability to do things in a good way. In other words, he is conscious that Adam is not an ordinary man. His praise when Adam is not present at the place shows he greatly loves him and is expecting to do good things for him. Such a praise could have encouraged Adam if it had been done in front of him. He even makes the niece know: "Adam Bede may be working for wage now, but he'll be a master man some day, as sure as I sit in this chair. Mester Burge is in the right on't to want him to go partners and marry his daughter, if it's true what they say; the woman as marries him 'ull have a good take, be't Lady-day or Michaelmas" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 81).

Poyser believes that in some days, Adam will be in charge of a group of other building workers. In other words he is sure that Adam will become a great leader in his work. Maybe, he thinks that owing to his assiduity, Adam will make a big progress and will become a man of respect and admiration, which is a success for him. But in his eagerness, will he not create for his neighbours some problems as well for himself?

## **2.2. The Drawbacks of Determination in the Novel.**

### **2.2.1. Over-work in *Adam Bede***

George Eliot's following speech is possibly the way she wants to tell us that Adam is always eager to do more than he must normally do:

Look at Adam through the rest of the day, as he stands on the scaffolding with the two-feet ruler in his hand, whistling low while he considers how a difficulty about a floor-joist or a window-frame is to be overcome; or as he pushes one of the younger workmen aside, and takes his place in upheaving

a weight of timber, saying, 'Let alone, lad! Thee'st got too much gristle 'l' thy bones yet;' or as he fixes his keen black eyes on the motions of a workman on the other side of the room, and warns him that distances are not right (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 178).

One can notice that Adam, in addition to do what he should do, is concerned with the work of the other fellow workers. In other words, he is used to doing some extra work. In such a situation he may not have time enough for his rest, which means he is almost a slave of his work. So instead of making his colleagues work or giving them some advice which can motivate them to work, he is working at their place. Such behavior may lead to laziness among the workers as some of them may count on his good will to help them do their jobs. The author is likely pointing out the lack of freedom in his working habit in the statement below:

Look at this broad-shouldered man with the bare muscular arms, and the thick firm black hair tossed about like trodden meadow-grass whenever he takes off his paper cap, and with the strong baritone voice bursting every now and then into loud and solemn psalm-tunes, as if seeking an outlet for superfluous strength, yet presently checking himself, apparently crossed by some thought which jars with the singing (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 178).

The above passage is showing that Adam Bede is a tireless carpenter. In other words, he does not allow himself any time of rest, which is not totally advantageous for him as an African proverb has stated: "all work and no play make Jack a dull boy," meaning everybody needs a certain amount of relaxation. It is to say that, it is not good to work all the time. But it seems Adam does not care having any problems:

It had cost Adam a great deal of trouble, and work in over-hours, to know what he knew over and above the secrets of his handicraft, and that acquaintance with mechanics and figures and the nature of the materials he worked with, which was made easy to him by inborn inherited faculty-to get the mastery of his pen, and write a plain hand, to spell without any other mistakes than must in fairness be attributed to the unreasonable character of orthography rather than to any deficiency in the speller, and, moreover, to learn his musical notes and part-singing (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 178).

Analysing the speech, one can notice that Adam has suffered a lot before he gets the secret of his carpentry job. This kind of effort is natural and necessary to master anything, but it may become harmful if it is excessive. So his determination has partially been a problem for him. In the same way, the situation faced by this carpenter is very often noticeable in our societies where some workers have to find at any cost solutions to certain problems related to their work.

### **2.2.2. Hardness and Hardship in the Novel.**

In his eagerness, Adam has treated his neighbours in a very severe way. He has for instance told Wiry Ben: "I hate to see a man's arms drop down as if he was shot, before the clock's fairly struck, just as if he'd never a bit o' pride and delight in's work. The very grindstone 'ull go on turning a bit after joy lose it" (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 6). Adam's speech shows that he wishes his fellow workers would work every time. His behaviour underlines that he is a hardworking man. But, the strong will to work and compel other people to work will obviously make some of the workers get angry and hate him secretly or openly by speaking out their disagreement. And it is not rare to witness that some hard working men are criticized by their fellow workers and other jealous people. Perhaps, in his eagerness to reach at any cost his goal, he is not aware of the consequences of his behaviour or he does not worry about any drawbacks of his actions. The author has even written about him:

He had too little fellow-feeling with the weakness that errs in spite of foreseen consequences. Without this fellow-feeling, how are we to get enough patience and charity towards our stumbling, falling companions in the long and changeful journey? And there is but one way in which a strong determined soul can learn it-by getting his heart-strings bound round the weak and erring, so that he

must share not only the outward consequence of their error, but their inward suffering (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 176).

George Eliot is making us know that it is difficult for Adam Bede to collaborate fairly with his neighbours because of his lack of patience. So, she is implicitly showing Adam's lack of sympathy for his neighbours. This behaviour may help him to reach his goal because he will always mind his own business. However, it is likely, as he has very little fellow affection, he will not forgive any mistake or laziness as far as the work is concerned. And he will surely create some unpleasant situation for himself.

### 2.2.3. Unhappiness in *Adam Bede*

One can notice Adam's sadness throughout the following speech, when he is making himself the following reproaches:

Ah! I was always too hard. It's a sore fault in me as I'm so hot and out o' patience with people when they do wrong, and my heart gets shut up against 'em, so as I can't bring myself to forgive 'em. I see clear enough there's more pride nor love in my soul, for I could sooner make a thousand strokes with th' hammer for my father than bring myself to say a kind word to him (G. Eliot, 1859, p. 169).

Through the above statement Adam has acknowledged that he has always been too hard towards his neighbours. It is obvious he has become conscious of his wrong doings. In other words, he is aware he has harmed some of his neighbours through his determination to always do well. In addition, it is noticeable through his speech that what is making him suffer a lot is his harsh behaviour towards his father. So, it can be admitted that he is badly psychologically affected, regretting some of his bad behaviour. In such a context it is believable that his determination is not a total success for him since after some years of harsh behaviour he has become somewhat uncomfortable. His uneasiness can also be noticed throughout the following speech he has made: "Mayhap the best thing I ever did in my life was only doing what was easiest for myself. It's allays been easier for me to work nor to sit still, but the real tough job for me 'ud be to master my own will and temper, and go right against my own pride" (G. Eliot, 1859, p.169). In his speech Adam is confessing that he has been a selfish man being content with what is good for himself. This means he acknowledges he has neglected his neighbours' interests. His self-reproach lets suggest that he is conscious he has been an evil for both himself and other people, which points out his partial failure.

### Conclusion

Showing both advantages and drawbacks of determination George Eliot probably wishes to make us know the importance of being patient and sensitive in order to be successful and helpful. Her belief is clearly shown in *Daniel Deronda* when she writes: "We must be patient with the inevitable makeshift of our human thinking- whether in its sum total or in the separate minds that have made the total" (G. Eliot, 1876, p.438). It is likely, she believes that human beings should take into account the realities of their environment to be successful. So, the African proverb which states: "Diligence is the mother of good fortune," meaning hard work brings rewards, may not be true under some circumstances.



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