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A STUDY OF GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, THE REFORMER

A Thesis
Presented to
Faculty of the Graduate School
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Ann Tharp Clifford
July 1948

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The purpose of this study is to present George Bernard Shaw as an artist-philosopher who used his plays and prefaces as a means of dramatizing the weaknesses of the twentieth century. An attempt is made to show that he consistently tried to prod mankind into reform by holding up to ridicule the frauds and artificialities of the present-day system. Shaw's penetrating attacks on the current conditions and his suggestions for reform have been grouped under related heads so that the reader might get a composite summary of his philosophy.

The conclusions reached in this thesis were derived from the plays -- the lines, the action, and the stage directions -- and from the prefaces to the plays. Shaw's other material -- novels, essays, political discourses -- have not been used except as explanatory background for the ideas found in the plays. For these conclusions, thirty plays listed in the bibliography have been used. Other commentary on Shaw is referred to as a matter of interest or as support of an established point.

Shaw's plays reveal him as a dramatist who was sincere in his effort to reform the maladjusted social order of the twentieth century. His message throughout his work was consistent.

Shaw showed that in a system of Capitalistic society,

a just distribution of wealth was impossible. He felt that no practice of political economy in the twentieth century could give man the possibility of his full attainment. To him the present practice of democracy was a delusion. Communism could not be achieved since the forcing of men to work precluded its failure. A dictatorship was efficient but temporary -- good only for the life of the dictator. Shaw advocated a Social-Democracy and made suggestions listed in the body of this thesis, for its accomplishment. His final conclusion was that government was necessary and that any form could be good if the proletariat took responsibility for its success, and that no system would work without that responsibility.

Shaw said that the practice of Christianity had been defeated by the Church. He did not believe in the present system of revenge and atonement, but in responsibility for one's "irrevocable acts." The virtue of humility he found less Christian than joyousness and courage to act. His God was no Jehovah, but an impersonal one who was experimenting with man toward a higher form of life. This process he called Life Force or Creative Evolution.

Shaw thought that the institutions under which man conducted his daily life were stupid and immoral. He said that modern education inhibited learning. He did not approve of

the institution of marriage, but thought that it was necessary until his suggested reforms might improve conditions. To him the present interpretation of law was stupid as well as immoral. Shaw found that the practice of medicine in the twentieth century was outrageous, and should be improved by a program of preventive medicine. In science, the current practice of experimentation, vivisection, and destruction encouraged morbid curiosity rather than knowledge. The soldiering of the British Empire promoted moral degeneration in the participants and in the nation. Shaw felt that journalism and the stage should be instruments for public enlightenment, forums for the discussions of public problems.

To Shaw, any lip-service to the orthodoxies meant the reversal of honest goodness. Conventional goodness was not morality: passion, courage, responsibility, and optimism were the moving forces of the world.

Comedy was a form of expression particularly adapted to Shaw's purpose and to his personality. As a master of that form Shaw ranked with Molière and Mark Twain.

The current problems of political and social conditions have already changed somewhat (thanks in part to Shaw's effort). However, the qualities and aspirations

of his characters will probably be true for many generations. Since his wit and cleverness are superb, readers will continue to find much pleasure in his works.

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PREFACE

There are many different kinds of heat. The sun gives varied warmths. In the spring, there are the benign rays that draw forth the life that has slept through the winter. Responding to its gentle persuasion the sap pulses through all forms of vegetation. The world feels the resurgent force of life. In the autumn, the weakened rays linger, gently warming the decreascent life before it returns to the somnolent earth. In the winter, the cold oblique sunlight seems indifferent to growing things. Pale and aloof, it leaves life to its own devices. In the summer, the intense heat of the sun excoriates the earth revealing the scars and ugliness that gentler seasons had kept secret. It burns and destroys to make possible the birth and growth of newer, better life.

People, too, have varied warmths. There are the kindly, benignant persons who dispense sympathy to the strong and the weak. Gently they feed the needs of those with whom they come in contact, awakening them to their greatest possibilities. Also there is the colorful, warm personality which leaves a glow of well-being with any whom it touches. There are the cold, introspective people who are so much involved in the pursuit of their own interests or knowledge that humanity

seldom feels any warmth although their ideas may be fruitful. Last there are the ardent, active people who espouse great causes. These are the ones who attack the evils of the world courageously. With great selflessness, they try to drive the world to greater heights, sparing neither themselves nor others in the grip of passion for the betterment of humanity. Vigorously they destroy to make way for a newer, better way of life.

Such a person was George Bernard Shaw. His kindness was not the gentle warmth of sympathy, but the ruthless heat of antipathy. Anything less than the best that man could achieve he hated. His was the white heat of passion that withered with ridicule the feeble and the maudlin, always leaving the way open for the forceful and vigorous way of life. He served society whole-heartedly, never losing faith in the fundamental social consciousness of man.

Ann Tharp Clifford

July 1948

CHAPTER I

PURPOSE, ORGANIZATION, AND PROCEDURE

There is, of course, much literature on George Bernard Shaw. He has been considered as a Socialist, a Communist, an Anarchist; a dramatist, a novelist, a journalist, and an orator; a saint and a clown, an Irishman and an Englishman -- the list is paradoxical and almost endless.

The purpose of this study is to present Shaw as an artist-philosopher who used his plays and prefaces as a means of dramatizing the weaknesses of the twentieth century. An attempt is made to show that he consistently tried to prod mankind into reform by holding up to ridicule the frauds and artificialities of the present-day system. Shaw's penetrating attacks on the current conditions and his suggestions for reform have been grouped under related heads so that the reader might get a composite picture of his philosophy.

Since Shaw is familiar to the general public from the readers of newspapers who are interested in the value of soap and water as opposed to the value of cold cream as a cleanser for the skin¹, to the readers of The Atlantic

1. The Charlotte Observer (North Carolina), July 22, 1948, p.1

Monthly² who are debating the value or justice of capital punishment, his ideas have wide circulation. Shaw avowedly intended to disturb the complacency of his fellowman; therefore his startling remarks have often seemed crude and ridiculous when disassociated from his philosophy. A study of what he actually said shows him a great thinker who used the theater much as the medieval church was used -- a device for teaching.

A survey of Shaw's plays presents his attacks on the orthodoxies of the twentieth century. These ideas may be grouped into four heads: political economy, religion, social institutions, and personal morality. Though it is difficult to separate man's responsibility toward his fellowman from his responsibility toward himself, such a grouping tends to clarify what he has said consistently. In connection with Shaw's philosophy it is interesting to notice his effective technique. He has used comedy as an exposure of the prohibited spectacle of people stripped of their artifices. His outstanding success with comedy is increased by his clever dialogue and amusing use of paradox. Many audiences have laughed at his brilliant witticisms while

2. George Bernard Shaw: "Capital Punishment", The Atlantic Monthly, June 1948

they were impressed at the same time by the somber message beneath.

The conclusions reached in this study were derived from his plays -- the lines, the action, and the stage directions -- and from the prefaces to these plays. The thirty plays listed were analyzed. Other commentary on Shaw is referred to as a matter of interest or as support of an established point. His essays, novels, political discourses have not been used except as explanatory background. From the plays any information that would pertain to Shaw's theories on the above headings was selected and listed; thus a complete survey of his ideas on a particular problem could be reviewed. The resulting summary portrays Shaw as a man who was enough interested in humanity to be determined to improve the conditions of the world.

CHAPTER II

THE PUBLIC FIGURE

In 1948 the English Speaking world hailed George Bernard Shaw as the greatest playwright of all times, damned him as a mischievous playboy, exalted him as a saint and sneered at him as the devil's advocate. His views and activities have been so brilliant and exhaustive that the man could be discussed under many headings: i.e., journalist, Socialist, critic of art, music, literature, or drama; economist; minister; novelist; philosopher; dramatist; or even under other titles. Of these heads his work as a dramatist -- his use of the drama and the preface as a vehicle for his philosophy -- is one of the most fascinating.

Shaw's greatness is a two-sided question. If greatness in an artist is to be judged by the success with which he captures honor, riches, fame, love, and power, then the story of Bernard Shaw is a success story. If, however, greatness is to be judged by the degree to which a philosopher accomplishes the aims set for himself, then Shaw is justified in the feeling of sadness which pervades his age. Since Shaw chose the drama as the medium for expres-

sing his ideas, his philosophy and his art must be considered together.

At the death of Anatole France in 1924, Shaw was left the great literary figure of the world. His plays had been produced in America and in all European countries except Turkey, Greece, and Portugal, commanding the talents of the greatest actors and actresses. A new play by Bernard Shaw was a world event. His popularity and financial intake have continued to be impressive. During the season of 1947-1948, Maurice Evans's production of Man and Superman in New York grossed more than \$100,000 for its author, and as early as 1907 the production in America of The Devil's Disciple gained for him financial independence. 3. His fame has become so great that the public apparently no longer cares what he says just so he says something. His power^s of penetrating analysis and biting comment are feared and respected.

Shaw, however, has not been satisfied with entertaining the public; he has considered himself "a man with a mission." His aim has been to change the mind of the contemporary world and to save civilization. Judged by the present world shambles, Shaw has made little progress

3. The Charlotte (North Carolina) Observer, June 6, 1948.

in his avowed purpose. In considering his own efforts, Shaw referred to the fate of the advice of the gospels, of Dickens, and of Plato saying, "You may well ask me why, with such examples before me, I took the trouble to write them. I can only reply that I do not know. There was no why about it. I had to: that was all." ⁴ In his own career, he has experienced the paradox that he used so effectively in his drama: "the tragedy of greatness," fame and prestige but little real understanding.

Even though each year since 1905 has seen many articles about Shaw, it is still too early to evaluate him dispassionately. The forces that he reacted to are still felt, and the problems that he occupied himself with (apparently every field of modern life) cannot be viewed with perspective. Nevertheless, as Bentley says, everybody has his say about Shaw:⁵ critics of drama have praised him, and time has justified some of his philosophy; famous men have spoken against him. Leon Daudet called Shaw "a fool"; Ezra Pound, "an intellectual cheese-mite;" Winston Churchill, "the world's most famous intellectual clown and Pantaloon in one, and the charming Columbine of the capitalist pantomime;" Edwin Arlington Robinson, "red rags

4. Eric Bentley: Bernard Shaw, The Makers of Modern Literature, New Directions, Norfolk, Conn. p. 199.

5. Ibid., pp. X-XII

with white corpuscles;" W. B. Yeats, "A barbarian of the barricades;" W. H. Auden, "a Fabian Figaro".

His religion also has been attacked from opposite points: agnostics have considered him friendly to traditional religion; Catholics have thought him paganistic and eclectic -- a combination of rationalism, science and Christianity.

At these attacks, Shaw probably rubbed his hands, gloating with devilish perversity, not caring what was said, only feeling elated that he had provoked some thought. Seldom did he become embroiled in an argument. He merely began another attack.

To dig beneath the exaggerated modesty and vanity, the apparent contradictions -- to discover the real Shaw is a fascinating undertaking. He once wrote in a letter to Dr. Archibald Henderson:

The miraculous Shaw, the wonderful personality, the witty, the paradoxical, the accomplished critic of a thousand arts, the maker of a half dozen -- this admirable creature never did or could or will exist under the heavens.⁶

However, beneath the blarney, the irony, and the half truths with which a great thinker chose to irritate the public (he once said that unless you say something irritatingly you

6. Archibald Henderson: Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet, D. Appleton and Co., New York, London, 1932, p.31.

might as well not say it), there is an overflow of ideas on all subjects -- ideas worth taking seriously if not literally.

The readers of Shaw fall into two groups: the hasty readers and the careful readers, and between them there is a wide difference of opinion. The author stated that his plays must be read and reread or that the reader would get nothing from them -- only what he brought with him.⁷ So the somewhat shallow reaction in this group is naive praise or garbled blame. They enjoy the trivial anecdotes which show him a master of the unexpected. They enjoy the sheer wit and scintillating observations with which he sketches modern society. Perhaps they enjoy his flippant and often impudent sallies -- none of which he ever considered serious enough for explanation or recanting. The great public delights in his mental ingenuities, his intellectual vagaries and fantastic turns of thought. To this category belongs Winston Churchill, who said that he liked Shaw as long as he was not asked to take him seriously.

Enjoying the same attributes of Shaw but going beyond then is the second group who do not dismiss Shaw as a sort of malicious imp sneering at the things at which

7. Bernard Shaw: Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, Preface.

they would like to sneer. They ignore the poseur for the philosopher. These readers want to explore with him the problems of human ideals and their relation to practice.

About these, the dramatist said:

My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals. In particular I regard much current morality, economic and sexual relations as disastrously wrong; and I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in England today with abhorrence. I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinion in these matters.⁸

Connected with this public view of Bernard Shaw is his portrait of himself, which also is paradoxical. He sometimes admits -- or openly boasts of -- the weighty problem of being a genius. However, the Shaw the public knows best, and apparently the Shaw whom the critics find best copy, is the man who wants to be shocking, not the man who writes great plays, not the great philosopher who urged reform of civilization against total destruction.

The lithe, erect figure -- the blazing hair and beard -- the bushy eyebrows and piercing eyes were a natural for his showmanship. This fantastic caricature -- G.B.S. -- perhaps his best fictional character -- he used to snare

8. Henderson, op. cit., p. 528.

the attention of the English people who he early realized would not take him seriously. He had once said in reference to Samuel Butler's having died practically unknown that England deserved to have no great men because she never recognized them.⁹ To remedy this fault, he waged a relentless battle in behalf of George Bernard Shaw.

And this journalistic clowning prevented him from being known. After he made a business of being funny, everything that he said was considered side-splitting. G.B.S., the lunatic jester, who was selfless enough not to care what the world thought if it listened to his ideas, knew that he was a genius and was willing to pay the price if he could be heard!

9. Ibid., p. 334.

CHAPTER III

THE BURGEONING GENIUS

Shaw was born in Dublin on July 26, 1856. He later said that he proved himself a real Irishman by leaving Ireland as soon as possible. All of his life he refuted any pride in his nationality, insisting that the world had the wrong picture of the "indelible brand of Erin" as the stamp of a rollicking sense of hilarity touched with sentiment and melancholy. In the preface to John Bull's Other Island, he wrote:

When I say that I am an Irishman I mean that I was born in Ireland, and that my native language is the language of Swift, not the unspeakable jargon of the mid XIX century London newspapers.

To have been born in Ireland and to have won fame in England tickled his sense of the topsy-turvy! His gift of blarney and his passionate interest balanced by his control of sympathy and emotion and by his demand for the practical rather than the visionary somewhat typify these two influences. Having been born in an Ireland that was almost seventeenth century and having lived through half of the twentieth century, Shaw has seen staggering social changes.

The influences of Shaw's early life helped the unfolding of genius. Shaw is what he is because he was

unmolded. His family was middle class with adequate income for the social rank claimed and with the intense feeling of that class. Thus he had little of the poverty that plagued Ireland and little of the social snobbery that might have colored his outlook.

Shaw's father was an easy-going, good-natured parent who was not disturbed by a lack of business competence. Through him the comic instinct was intensified in the son. The boy was introduced to the Bible by his father's reading, in which the power and music of the passages were enjoyed and the inconsistencies labeled and ridiculed as lies. He, too, could never resist knocking the proprieties from their stilts. From his father's drinking, Shaw early got the idea that "if you cannot get rid of a skeleton, you might as well make it dance." Henderson says, "The family's comic disregard of the father's inebriety helped George develop an attitude of irreverence toward conventionally sacred subjects -- fatherhood, filial respect, reverence for home, education, religion." 10.

His uncle also encouraged this somewhat shocking levity. When at the home of the Shaws he delighted the boy with stories of wild exuberance and irreverent wit. From him the great comedian learned that humor need not

10. Ibid., p. 43

depend on coarseness or perversion.

Perhaps the most influential person in Shaw's life was his mother. Definitely she spoiled ordinary women for him though there was no sentiment lost between them. She was never a domestic woman, but Shaw loved and admired her for her musical gifts. She brought into the home great music. The whole family joined in musical appreciation and performance. The best in music became the accepted.

Though there was no scandal attached to the affectionate relation between the great conductor George John Vandaleur Lee and Mrs. Shaw, his presence in the home was a powerful influence on young Shaw. Association with the musician, who was a heretic to musical convention, directed the taste of the child who was to become England's greatest music critic.

This delightful woman who left home to follow music to London was the real modern woman -- the inspiration for that new Shavian character. She might also represent the type that he satirized in The Philanderer.

In reaction to her own upbringing, she allowed her children to develop freely. Thus from neither his father nor his mother did Shaw feel pressure or discipline, and toward neither of his parents did he feel any sentimentality. Quite early he dismissed romanticism.

Shaw said that his education consisted of the art galleries, the music societies of Lee, and Dalkey Hill (the summer home of the family). His lack of restraint made it possible for him to enjoy these so freely that he often referred to these years as his "voluptuous youth." In contrast to these meaningful hours, school was a hated experience. In spite of having learned to read before he could remember and having a precocious command of the language, Shaw was generally at the bottom of the class, refusing to read school books and keeping others from doing so, although during this time, he read much of the world's best literature. He tried several private schools, but would have none of the university. Already he was priding himself on being a rebel. He learned nothing at school; he did not like school; he did not believe in it. And having the courage of his convictions, he quit school. He later said:

Admirable as universities are for turning out theorists, they have not devised any method by which the crude shocks of the world are prepared for. 11.

At fifteen, he became an office boy and for four years served as a clerk acquiring the habit of keeping his nose to the grindstone. At twenty, disgusted with

11. Sir Patrick Braybrooke: The Genius of George Bernard Shaw, J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia, Pa., 1925, p. 17.

Dublin but hoping little from London, he fled there. Being full of art, literature, and music at that age, Shaw dismissed his early years there saying that London was not ready for him.

After a brief period of drawing a salary from the telephone company, Shaw found his first congenial work when he became art critic for the London World. To him the work of a critic was to educate the public taste. He had no patience with any journalist who accepted the public ignorance and prejudice and wrote to that level. Good criticism was good medicine -- and beneficial to the public. His competent work enjoyed a large circulation.

His next job earned for him the title of the world's greatest music critic and interpreter. In this field he continued his mission by fighting against the academic in music and opposing analytical criticism. Musicians should keep contact with people to retain the warmth and vigor of a vital art. Perfect execution should enhance the emotion and art of the composer.

His third crusade was for better drama. Shaw objected to the narrow limits of subject matter and the artificial conventions imposed by the Victorian theater

which, he said, excluded everything but clandestine adultery. The theater should present the ideas and problems of the period as the medieval church had done. Lines written in stilted and unnatural prose could not picture character. Without fresh, forceful language and living, vital material, the artist could not show heights of achievement or vision. With these standards, he championed Ibsen, whom he recognized as a penetrating thinker. Shaw fought for intellectual and spiritual emancipation emphasizing the power of naked facts as opposed to illusion.

For several years Shaw was an effective force in the progress of the theater. Finally deciding that he could stand no more of the stage, he resigned to become one of the world's greatest playwrights.

In a consideration of Shaw's drama, a passing reference to his other literary output, the essay and the novel, reveals the scope of his work. Journalism was his first love, and some critics think his most successful field. His Fabian essays, which might be limited in appeal sold more than 70,000 copies between the years 1839 and 1930 -- the days before really high pressure salesmanship and the book clubs of today. His critical

essays are still being republished.

In his first years in London before he undertook drama Shaw attempted the novel. The necessary description and explanatory material in this literary form, however, were unappealing. Among his five novels, the Unsocial Socialist, a somewhat brutal burlesque, is the best known. In his maturer art, Shaw developed with more success heroes who could defy conventional good taste. The book is probably best remembered for its hero Trefusis, who embodies the author's faith that the hardest duty is to oneself.

During these years the ambitious young dynamo was plagued by poverty. He wanted recognition, and his only good clothes were a well-brushed evening suit. He was independent by nature but now he lived in his mother's house and was supported in part by an allowance his father could ill afford. He tried to make himself felt by startling and amusing any people whom he wanted to impress. He was determined never to recognize his shyness. However, all of his life, Shaw was painfully shy. As a child he loved to shock his elders and cover any lack of skill with tomfoolery; as a man he became an actor who played many parts. The world knew the Shaw who was glib and confident; but the lonely artistic self

put him outside the pale of society, though he had many steadfast friends. The lines that Marchbanks speaks in Candida ring with the loneliness that Shaw must have felt:

Marchbanks: that is the reason there are so few love affairs in the world. We all go about longing for love: it is the first need of our natures, the first prayer in our hearts; but we don't dare utter our longing: we are too shy. Oh, Miss Garnett, what would you not give to be without fear, without shame. Wicked people means people without love; therefore they have no shame. They have the power to ask love because they don't need it: they have the power to offer it because they have none to give.

But we, who have love, and long to mingle it with the love of others cannot.

In Shaw's tragic dread of society, his method of drawing people to him was to contradict them, a sure means of alienating them. Thus he came finally to the only course that he understood -- to laugh at himself and at them, never openly acknowledging that he was a complete outsider but later writing, "I was at ease only with the mighty dead."

Closely related to shyness is sensitivity. The lithe, muscular body of Shaw might be considered indicative of the aesthete. To fulfill his genius and his responsibility, he kept himself in perfect physical condition, having a definite program of exercise, diet

and rest. His remark that he like Shelley was an aesthete, an atheist, and a vegetarian¹² was surpassed only by his classic defense of his diet. He said,

"The enormity of eating the scorched corpses of animals -- cannibalism with the heroic dish omitted becomes impossible the moment it becomes consanguinary instead of thoughtlessly habitual." ¹³

Such rigid control really made him, with Shelley and Wagner, an arch-voluptuary who revelled in sensory stimulants that were imperceptible to those whose sensitivity had been dulled.

The Shavian drama reflects the author's immense energy. He was a human dynamo! Though he laughed at Victorian platitudes about shining in use, Shaw felt that the fulfillment of life was to wear out in use. He has been an indefatigable server on committees; and for twelve years of Fabian activity, he averaged two or three speeches of one to four hours in length every two weeks. Without notes he discussed rent, interests, profit, liberalism, socialism, communism, democracy, the suitability of human nature to just moral laws, ad infinitum. This accumulation of knowledge, he used in his drama for attack on most forms of human endeavor and morals.

12. Henderson: op. cit., "Address to Audience" at a meeting, Shelley Society, p. 129.

13. Ibid., p. 234

CHAPTER IV

THE OPPONENT OF CAPITALISM

With a background conducive to the expanding of genius, with a personality slanted toward the artistic, with the knowledge of the social order and of human nature, and with the most extensive mental powers -- Shaw understood his work: the reform of a maladjusted social order. In the preface to Man and Superman, he summarized his dedication:

This the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one, the being worn out before you're thrown in the junk heap, the being the force of nature instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

And also the only real tragedy in life is the being used by personally minded men for purposes which you recognize to be base.

For art's sake, I would not face the task of writing a single sentence. Style is a result of beliefs.

I will supply you with an electric light to see existing conditions.

Shaw's first attack was on capitalism as a form of society and against the social system which it had bred. It was not human nature that he quarreled with, but the institutions which worked against man rather than for him, leading him toward destruction and death

rather than toward life. In Man and Superman, the Devil summarized the playwright's views:

In the arts of life, man invents nothing; but in the arts of death, he outdoes Nature herself. Man measures his strength by his destructiveness. What is his religion? An excuse for hating me. What is his law? An excuse for hanging you. What is his morality? Gentility! An excuse for consuming without producing. What is his art? An excuse for gloating over pictures of slaughter. What are his politics? Either worship of a despot because a despot can kill, or parliamentary cockfighting... The power that governs the earth is not the power of Life but of Death.

To awake man to the wickedness of his institutions was a burning passion with Shaw.

The political economy of the twentieth century, he considered in need of great reform. His idea was that political economy should concern the worker versus the idler; that political talent should be developed to remove the political incapacity of present rulers; and that an unintelligent electorate should be limited in power. He felt that no nation had gone far in the direction of freedom and liberalism or would advance in that direction until there was a change in people from apathy to responsibility; from ignorance to knowledge. He wanted to arouse people to the present practice of political economy as summed up by Undershaft:

I am the government of your country. I and

Lazarus. Do you suppose that you and a half dozen amateurs like you sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft? No, my friend; you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us, and keep peace when it doesn't. You will find out that trade requires certain measures when we have decided on the measures... In return you shall have the support and applause of my newspapers and the delight in imagining that you are a great statesman. Government of your country! Be off with you and play with your causes and leading articles and burning questions and all the rest of your toys. I am going back to pay the piper and call the tunes. 14.

In Shaw's political theory, the cardinal virtue of practice, he considered, responsibility. In the preface to Major Barbara, he attacked each of the major political theories for trying to shift this responsibility. According to him, the Liberals shift this responsibility to the law of supply and demand; the Marxists, to the laws of history; the anarchists, to laws of Nature; the Darwinists, to mechanical causes, -- pure luck; and the Christians, to God. Through many of his plays, he repeats his chorus: No political theory will work until man takes the burden of responsibility on his own shoulders.

Unlike Ibsen, Shaw believed that man could not operate without some form of control. He knew human nature well enough to believe that under the best forms, a few would still govern. To him the political relationship would be like that in the Undershaft Munitions plant unless well

directed.

Undershaft: I don't keep men in order, the one just above him does that. The men snub the boys and order them about; the carmen snub the sweepers; the artisans, the unskilled laborers; the assistant engineers find fault with the foremen; the department managers worry the chiefs; and all the clerks have tall hats and hymn books and keep up the social tone by refusing to associate with anybody on equal terms.

Cusins: It's all horrible, frightfully, immorally, and unanswerably perfect.¹⁵

Since Shaw recognized the need of some kind of control his preoccupation with evolving a workable form,

Capitalism, he attacked as immoral, not the capitalists. He argued that no one could justifiably blame a Rhodes or a Rockefeller and that nothing could come from a nagging attack on them. In a letter, he said:

You will resist moral evil. So, please observe will Rockefeller. But, you say, Rockefeller is robbing the poor all the time. So are you. So am I. Society leaves us no alternative. But in no way calls for us to expiate the evil. If Rockefeller deserves hanging (an expression which belongs to your moral system) so does every man who would do the same as Rockefeller if he got the chance, say 99 per cent of his indignant fellowman. You cannot hang everybody including yourself; and yet morality leads to that or nothing.¹⁶

Shaw continued his argument with the point that it was better to serve Mammon than Jehovah since Mammon could be

15. Bernard Shaw: loc. cit.

16. Henderson: op. cit., Letter from Shaw to Hyndman, p.187.

developed into a Socialistic power as men became socialistically minded. This idea is also elaborated upon in his plays. The capitalist Undershaft in Major Barbara and the landlord Sartorius in Widowers' Houses are forceful men who have no desire to grind the poor and who sincerely feel that the lives of the poor are better for the activities of the business men. With great pride Undershaft points to the modern housing and the sanitary surroundings which his employees have been able to achieve through him.

Shaw insisted that the capitalistic system is buttressed by the workers rather than by the capitalists themselves. He referred to the philosophies and activities of Ruskin, Morris, Tolstoi, Marx and Hyndman as illustrations of this truth. Its defenders were the armies of laborers, artisans, and employees who followed the short-sighted policy of favoring capitalism because their immediate welfare was bound to that of the capitalists. Typical of this theory is the sniveling rent-collector, Llickcheese, who became a cheap imitation of the capitalist when he acquired the trick of a sort of genteel bribery. Another illustration of this practice is the butler in Arms and the Man, who caged money and gloated over his opportunities

for getting more from men who had just returned from the war.

Another argument employed against the system was its wastefulness. Production had been well-taken care of, but the lack of just distribution made an apparent over-production. According to Shaw, four hours of well-organized work would make each person economically self-supporting and would provide for an accumulation of national capital so that everybody would be able to enjoy eight hours of real leisure -- all of which had been sacrificed that a few people might be dishonestly idle, monstrously rich, and mostly unhappy all of the time.¹⁷ The ineffective Trench, in Widowers' Houses, the rather decadent Charteris in The Philanderer, and the women (other than Ann) in Man and Superman are certainly examples of discontent.

Under Capitalism no satisfactory system of government had developed. In the plays and prefaces, Shaw made jokes of the failure of Democracy, Monarchy, and Dictatorships, and suggested modifications of ideal situations in which any one of them might work.

17. Bernard Shaw: The Apple Cart, Preface

"Democracy," he stated positively, "is impossible of achievement."¹³ His dislike of the impractical and the illusive rather than reality has embittered his attack on this form of government. The Apple Cart is really a discussion of why Democracy will not work. Here he very cleverly made his points about responsibility, violence, the danger of idealistic illusion, the weakness of administrators and the impossibility of a functioning electorate. In the preface he stated that Democracy could not be the government of the people but only government by the consent of the people and that there could be no democracy until the whole population understood and accepted responsibility for politics.

One of the greatest weaknesses of the system was that with so many voters, no one person held the candidate responsible. With a community larger than one in which a town meeting might operate successfully there was no possibility for the electorate to know the ability or training of the candidate. Since good intentions do not guarantee intelligent practice, he emphasized the necessity for the beginning in childhood of training in political

¹³, Bernard Shaw: The Apple Cart, Preface.

economy and political responsibility.

The next target in the Democratic form of government was the choice of administrators who were more often selected because of business ability than for political experience. These men he insisted, should have nothing to recommend them except their aptitude for public work and should have nothing to gain except the gratification of that aptitude. (Such an aptitude is a fact of natural history just as a certain number of people are born with one for music, poetry, philosophy, or specialized crime.) Shaw said:

If music were managed by the deaf, our painting by the blind, and so forth, we should get much the same results in fine arts that we get in politics and social organization by our pseudo-democratic system of having men whose speciality is making money elected by employee majorities.¹⁹

In the preface of The Apple Cart, he also indicted the legislative system of Democracy:

People cannot make their own laws. It is easier to write a good play than make a good law, and there are not a hundred men in the world who can write a play good enough to stand the daily wear and tear as long as a law must. ²⁰

In trying to jolt people out of their complacency about Democracy, Shaw did not want to discard all of the machinery

19. Bernard Shaw: The Apple Cart, Preface.

20. Ibid.

of this government; in fact, he seemed to aspire toward a Social-Democracy. This achievement would be reached, not by denying the perils of Democracy, but by providing against them. His question was whether Democracy as a form of government could keep pace with changes forced on the world by international corporate action.

Parallel to the expose' of Democracy was Shaw's sly defense of Monarchy -- often with his tongue in his cheek as when he caricatured Amanda as the real queen, powerful because she could mimic people and could make them laugh. The play seemed to illustrate the idea that one man who knew his own mind could beat ten men who did not -- by trickery, if not by logic.

In the play King Magnus made a powerful plea for the dignity of a political career saying that it had once been the center of attraction for ability, but that it was now scorned by men of talent and had become the refuge for fanciers of public speaking. It is an interesting sidelight that Shaw stopped the action of the play for almost fifteen minutes for this speech.

Here again Shaw stressed responsibility; the chief advantage of monarchy was that the monarch could be held responsible. Another argument in its favor was that the king worked continuously, not being in and out of office

or working under expediency as demanded by a short term. Also a Monarch's whole training was for responsibility; he knew the cost of irresponsibility. Since he had always known authority, he did not enjoy displays of temper or violence, but conformed to the popular idea of dignity and good breeding. Shaw insisted that if the cards were not stacked, the monarch would always win against the popular candidate because he played with greater skill. Furthermore, he could give a better administration because his effectiveness was not blocked with opposition.

Whether the conclusions established in The Apple Cart are honest is a debatable question. History does not show that monarchs have always had the welfare of their subjects nearest their hearts. Not all unopposed Kings have given good rules, nor have they assumed the dignity and wisdom that their training, according to Shaw, should have given them -- perhaps they have lacked the Shavian intelligence and charm portrayed in King Magnus.

The third form of government discussed under the capitalistic system was the dictatorship. Some of the philosopher's most typical comment -- sly, ironic, and thought-provoking -- is found in Caesar and Cleopatra. Other arguments -- and possibly good objections to dictatorship -- may be found in and inferred from Man of

Destiny. (Napoleon, who said that his only superiority to other men was a greater insight into reality and an ability to face it, might be compared to some of the recent dictators who had their own illusions.) For the dictator he made the same point that he made for the monarch: An absolute ruler must assume responsibility (his recurrent theme). He extolled the courage of a dictator who had the opportunity of standing by his convictions rather than playing safe.

Shaw was on the side of any efficient tyrant against corruption and chaos. Indeed, in real life, he shocked his admirers by his support -- in words -- of Mussolini and Lenin, both ruthless in their efficiency. He was so exasperated with wordy party warfare and government irresponsibility that he announced:

Mussolini was entirely sound in saying that the people were tired of parliamentary twaddle and would follow any leader who preached discipline, obedience, punctuality, efficiency, silence, and to hell with liberty.²¹

In spite of the preceding favorable remarks, Shaw somewhat reversed himself in his summary of the progress of Socialism under the Fabians, at the time of his resignation in 1911. In that speech he said that personal

21. Henderson: Op. cit., p. 229.

dictatorships were as mortal as men even though they saved the situation for the moment. He urged that personal dictatorships be succeeded by effective modern constitutions and governments which do not take their orders from secret dictatorships of private industries -- such as exemplified by Undershaft and Lazarus.

Opposed to Capitalism, Shaw evaluated Communism. Fourteen years before the world heard of Lenin, the playwright made his statement of a communistic creed which is today the basis of the present organization. These ideas he summarized in a manifesto having grouped them under three heads: 1. Life interest in the land and capital of the nation. 2. Equal share in national industry. 3. Equal suffrage for men and women.²² The reader of Widowers' Houses will remember that the university-trained Trench argued in favor of life interest in the land and in favor of an equal share in national industry. Later his university theories and his idle-rich stamina gave way before the logical-sounding explanation of the capitalist landlord. In The Devil's Disciple, Shaw almost gained sympathy for the despised mother by having a scene in which she bemoaned the injustice of having been willed out of her own dowry at her husband's death.

22. Ibid., Quotation from "Manifesto of the Fabian Society." pp 156-157.

In the preface to The Apple Cart, Shaw gave his strongest argument for Communism. He spoke of the successful communistic framework in operation today: public roadways, streets, bridges, water supplies, lighting, tramways, teachers, schools, inspectors, police, and so forth. He concluded that since these forces operated to prevent loss of life and spread of disease, further communistic planning would advance civilization. However, Shaw was always practical: He concluded that communistic labor was impossible to attain since the only way to get some people to work was by use of force, a practice which would defeat communistic theory.

Less wicked than Capitalism, less impractical than Communism, Socialism offered the greatest hope to Shaw. He had a great passion for social justice; to him the only hope for escape of civilization from complete annihilation was the spread of this passion to whole populations. He seems almost to have foreseen the atom bomb thirty years before its accomplishment. He felt that there was a tragic danger of man's inventing weapons of destruction faster than his character was developing, faster than he would take responsibility for their use.

The Socialism that he advocated was not the social upheaval or socialist revolution, but the Fabian Socialism

of educating, agitating (for legislation), organizing, and permeating. (By which methods, incidentally, the Fabians had accomplished more in thirty years than they had expected to accomplish in three hundred.) This type of Socialism was often referred to as the parlor pink because it was developed along the aristocratic line. Burke, Huxley, Newman, Carlyle had introduced the idea that a gentleman was the combination of the democrat and the aristocrat, the follower and the leader. Shaw did not believe in equality; he firmly believed in an aristocracy, not of birth or wealth but of the intellect and spirit. He thought that the aristocrat should not be superseded but made a basic part of democracy, contributing his knowledge and leadership. Tanner, in Man and Superman, embodied this ideology; he is the philosophic aristocrat who has a moral passion for social justice in reality. Roebuck Ramsden is the caricature. He, in the words of Tanner, considered the world a moral gymnasium for the exercise and strengthening of an Englishman's character. His trousers were an indefinable color, neither black nor blue; and his principles harmonized with them. Roebuck believed in fine arts with all the "robustness of a man who doesn't understand them". In the same play in the scene with the bandits and their leader, Mendoza, Shaw slapped playfully at the Socialists. With all their talk of freedom, of lack

of restraint, and of harmony among men, there was none. The only leadership displayed was the forceful bullying of Mendoza.

In Fanny's First Play, the aristocratic count wanted, not "beautiful romances but beautiful realities." This thing of man's using his talents and his material possessions for humanity possessed Shaw. In the preface to Major Barbara, Shaw made a full statement of this belief. The aristocrat with a developed sense of life (Ruskin, William Morris, Kropotkin) had enormous appetites not being satisfied with the best just for themselves, but demanding fine cities, leisure and health for every man, woman and child.

Shaw believed that the constitutional Socialism of the Fabians offered the greatest opportunity for social justice, but he was too much of a realist to consider any Socialism a cureall. It would not satisfy the human yearning for more freedom and happiness than men can endure. He also pointed out that the poor man did not want the simple esthetic life of social equality but wanted instead the display of possessions. He advocated the policy of allowing such to surfeit themselves in vulgarities.

Shaw and his fellow theorists realized that Socialism could be as wicked as any other form of government, but argued that it was the best instrument by which men might attain a

better life. He also realized that while the socialization of economy might be a relatively speedy affair, the progress of liberalism was slow. His final conclusion completely fits into his theory of evolution rather than revolution:

I myself am firmly convinced that Socialism will not prove worth carrying out in its entirety -- that long before it has reached every corner of the political and industrial organizations it will have so completely relieved the pressure to which it owes its force that it will recede before the next great movements in social development, leaving relics of untouched Individualistic Liberalism in all directions among the relics of feudalism which Liberalism has left.²³.

23. Henderson: Loc., cit., George Bernard Shaw; "The Illusions of Socialism", p. 239.

CHAPTER V

THE STATESMAN

In his plays Shaw dealt directly with three outstanding political problems that had to be solved whether England's political economy was Capitalistic, Communistic, or Socialistic: the colonial question in Ireland, the question of reform of government, and the question of distribution of wealth. Having been born in Ireland and having lived there twenty years, Shaw understood the difficulties of the country. In John Bull's Other Island he attacked the injustice of England's colonial policy and the disasters resulting from the religious oppression by the Catholic Church. It was the picture of a sad country in which the realism represented by Larry Doyle and the idealism represented by Father Keegan were far apart. The unfrocked priest was an ideal spectator, but the point of view of the dramatist was in no way detached. With all his journalistic skill, Shaw argued political points in the preface, and with great dramatic skill, he presented his own ideals in the play.

One of the great speeches through which Shaw reached the readers was the appeal for Home Rule:

Even if Home Rule were as unhealthy as an Englishman's eating, as intemperate as his drinking, as

filthy as his smoking, as licentious as his domesticity, as corrupt as his elections, as murderously greedy as his commerce, as cruel as his poisons, and as merciless as his streets, Ireland's claim to self-government would be as good as England's ²⁴.

Although he was trying to prove that an Irishman was as capable of self-government as an Englishman, the argument is not based on logic but on a sense of what is right. Keegan spoke of a man's natural political rights, and the audience seldom questioned what a natural political right might be. There is no apparent logic in listing irrelevant vices of Englishmen to prove that Ireland should have political freedom. It was not the protest of cold reason; it was the passionate protest of a man interested in social justice.

The colonial question of British South Africa, he did not present in dramatic form; however, it is interesting to notice that the plan for federation which he suggested in pamphlet form was later followed, although the statesman may not have consciously followed it.

The insistence of government reform runs through Shaw's plays almost as steadily as the insistence on responsibility. In the preface of Back to Methuselah, he referred to the forty years spent by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in a

24. Bernard Shaw: John Bull's Other Island, Preface.

preliminary work formulating a plan for a political structure suitable for modern civilization. Here he emphasized the necessity for trained political thinkers and the necessity for free time to devote to such a piece of work. In the preface of Major Barbara, he gave suggestions for the choice of leaders with political aptitudes rather than aptitudes for making money.

For the selection of ministers, he worked out the following plan:

1. Basic representation in Congress to keep in touch with subjects.
2. Local chiefs of industry elected by Congress.
3. Provincial chiefs of industry elected by local chiefs.
4. National chiefs elected by provincial chiefs.
5. A thinking cabinet and an administrative cabinet elected by national chiefs.

Associated with the idea of selection of qualified administrators is the suggestion in the preface of Too True to Be Good. Here Shaw explained the advisability of having tested personnel serving in different departments of administration: "Panel A would be for diplomacy, Panel B for municipal and county affairs, Panel C for national affairs, Panel D for village councils and so forth". This use of ability in its proper niche had been made necessary by the complicated structure of modern civilization which needed experts in each field. Such a plan would increase the

efficiency of the government and would eliminate much of the present waste.

In the preface to The Apple Cart, as explained earlier, he referred to the same point and further discussed the impossibility of having an intellectual electorate. At the same time, he discussed the inadequacy of laws made by a legislative body trained in lawmaking. To alleviate this evil, he recommended (as did the Webbs) replacing that body with a bicameral system consisting of a Political and a Social Parliament. In these two prefaces and in the preface to Major Barbara, he spoke of wastefulness and lack of efficiency in the Party System. He felt that instead of being a check such a system was a block, which monarchs and dictators easily by-passed.

Such government reform would not eliminate the need for leadership (in opposition to the theories of Marx and others). Shaw strongly advocated a leader who would not only carry out the will of the people, but one who could organize, administer, and persuade the populace. In Heartbreak House, he showed the tragedy of a leaderless generation. In a much lighter tone the same theme is treated in Too True to Be Good. He almost approaches hero-worship in his praise of Bismarck in the preface to Caesar and Cleopatra and in his characterizations

of Caesar and Napoleon.

In such a government, new agents for authority in coordinating federal work would have to be created. A dependable civil service organization would be needed. His program included the following points:²⁵

1. Equalization of public privileges of men and women.
2. Better sanitary conditions.
3. Municipalization of such industries as promised to give people at large better value for their money than private business.

The need for these reforms was made vivid in Getting Married, Widowers' Houses, Major Barbara and in other plays. Edith and the Puritan mother in Devil's Disciple, complained of the unequal privilege of men and women in political, civil, and economic rights. In Widowers' Houses, the unsanitary conditions of the landlord's property furnished the moral shock that upset Trench. The whole play was an indictment of slum housing. In Major Barbara, the model housing of the workers in the plant was much superior to that of similar income groups under municipal supervision.

Shaw pointed out changes in the world brought about by advancement in communication, travel and "corporate action." He argued that government must also advance to operate in this new world.

25. Bernard Shaw: Major Barbara, Preface.

The second problem in political economy was dearest to Shaw's heart. A just distribution of wealth was to him the most vital point in any workable social system. Political morality, social morality, and personal morality -- all of these depended on money, or the lack of it. He said:

In primitive communities, people feed and lodge themselves without the help of the government. When civilizations becomes complicated, the first business of the government is to provide for production and distribution of wealth and the sharing of leisure and labor. A man is compelled not only to behave himself but to work productively.²⁶

Shaw preached over and over again that a just distribution of wealth determined the political, moral, and social welfare of the nation. In his three Unpleasant Plays -- Widowers' Houses, The Philanderer, and Mrs. Warren's Profession -- he presented the immorality of man's shutting his eyes to social horrors if the correction of those horrors would touch his pocketbook. In the first, the middle-class respectability of Sartorius and the gentility of Trench prospered from the filth of slum housing. In the second, the decadence and unhappiness of people rich enough not to work productively showed an unpleasant moral situation. In the third play, a society which had organized itself so

26. Bernard Shaw: Too True to Be Good, Preface.

that men and women could be financially secure by the prostitution of their bodies or of their real sentiments (lawyers, doctors, journalists, ministers, and so forth) had no moral code. Selling yourself was the ultimate horror to Shaw!

It was a two-sided picture of wealth and Shaw gave: not only were the poor debased by a lack of money, but his millionaires might be morally bankrupt with a surplus of it. Since a point is reached at which the power of money to bring happiness vanishes, the Shavian rich -- unless they had a conviction of responsibility to a Vital Force-- had no satisfaction, not being personally needed.

The millionaire Undershaft was a type who had become intellectually and spiritually conscious that the worst of all crimes was poverty. He felt that a man's first duty was to achieve wealth which made a good life possible. In Pygmalion, the power of money changed a flower girl into a duchess and a duchess into a woman, the only difference between the first two (according to Eliza) being money.

Shaw preached that the atrocious economic policy of capitalism was short-sighted. In the preface of Major Barbara, some of his most impassioned lines were given:

If a man is indolent, let him be poor; if a man is drunken, let him be poor; if a man is not a gentleman, let him be poor; if a man is addicted to the fine arts or to pure science, let him be poor.

Let nothing be done for the poor.
 Let him be ignorant. Let him be a nucleus of disease.
 Let him be a standing example of ugliness and dirt.
 Let him drag his fellow workers down to his level.
 Let his habitations turn our cities into slums.
 Let his daughters infest our young men with disease.
 Let his sons revenge him by turning the nation's man-
 hood into scrofula, cowardice, cruelty, hypocrisy,
 political imbecility. Let the undeserving become less
 deserving, and let the deserving lay up for himself,
 not treasures in heaven, but horrors in hell upon
 earth!

With this magnificent irony, the prophet-playwright gave his message.

Any prosaic suggestions about the wisdom of allowing poverty seem anti-climatic, but with true Shavian topsyturviness, Shaw gave his. Prosperous burglars and unpunished murderers would do less harm to society than the present system; all adults making less than £365 a year ought to be drowned and all hungry children ought to be fed and clothed. Such a policy, said Shaw, might stop the evil that had destroyed other civilization and was destroying this one.²⁷

Two measures suggested by Shaw and the Fabians to enable every man to have enough to live on were the Legal Minimum Pension and Old Age Pensions (both of which are now in operation). The Conservative Mallock believed that men would not work for the love of producing, or for the state

27. Bernard Shaw: Major Barbara, Preface.

that would appropriate their earnings. Shaw, being a firm believer in the theory of the necessity of obeying the inner drive, did not face this problem. The Shavian argument was that if everyone had money it would no longer have any value and the lack of it would not be "the root of all evil."

Another particular problem in the economic plan was that of wives and mothers. Under the present system women generally sacrifice their earning power when they marry and become involved in domestic duties. As a solution for this problem Shaw planned for the state to pay the home-maker a certain salary for operating a household, so much for each child that she bore and so much for each child whom she supervised. Such a plan would eliminate the humiliation of asking for money from "her lord and master" or of degrading poverty in the home. This plan would also ease the strain on marriages. In Getting Married, Edith ardently voiced these ideas. She even refused to face the ceremony until her economic independence could be planned for.

In regard to all problems, Shaw's idea for alleviation of economic injustice was to put wealth into the hands of all.

CHAPTER VI

THE THEOLOGIAN

Shaw was constantly angry, as are many brilliant people who live among the less brilliant. He had the moral indignation of a reformer. The stupidity of the religious practices of the twentieth century were just as offensive to him as those of the political economy. The idolatry of lip-service he considered blasphemous to any religion. To him the mixture of paganism and mythology with the teachings of Christ was an outmoded form of thinking and worship that needed revision. Jehovah, who chained men's minds with superstition and servility, was not a divine conception but a beastly one, less preferable than Mammon.

Shaw felt that the teachings of Christianity were not the teachings of Christ but the teachings of the church. He did not believe in the soul-degrading philosophy of humility. Vitality and joyousness as represented by the drum and blood of the Salvation Army was to him the divine plan for man's fulfillment. The revenge and punishment, the gibbet, the "Crosstianity", were not so moral as the courage to stand or fall on one's own responsibility. The satisfaction of wiping the slate clean by confession and absolution, by the taking of punishment, was denied Bill by Major Barbara

because he wanted to pass his responsibility to someone else. Martyrdom was further ridiculed in Androcles and the Lion; neither Lavinia nor the captain knew why the state demanded her death. Christianity should be on the side of the poor, but the Church must be on the side of the police and the State (or cease to exist). Honest morality demanded equality which Caesar and Napoleon dared to show in appointing officers, but which the Church did not practice in the same situation. According to Shaw the poor and the rich scattered conscience money because they did not dare face the knowledge that their acts were irrevocable.²⁸

The ministers of the church were automatons or business executives instead of men interested in the welfare of humanity. In Saint Joan, the Archbishop said:

You are not so accustomed to religion as I am.
It is a part of my business... If I were a simple man and had not to rule men, I should seek peace for my spirit with Aristotle and Pythagoras rather than with the saints and their miracles.

In the Doctors' Dilemma, ministers referred to were not men of religious convictions -- merely officials carrying out the routine of marrying, baptizing and burying communicants. Morrell in Candida expressed his horror at discovering himself in this light.

28, Bernard Shaw: Major Barbara, Preface

In contrast to this theology of the Church, Shaw established his own religious theories that he felt were more moral. Like Undershaft, he seemed to have made a religion of wrongness, preaching revolution and practicing conservatism. Also like Undershaft, to him the seven deadly sins were food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability, and children! And poverty the worst of all! Like Major Barbara and Father Keegan, he believed in humanity, feeling that hatred toward it was a virtue compared to indifference.

The God of his religion was less perfect and less personal than the gods of most religions. This God did not tyrannize or become sentimental over man. Also unlike the gods of other religions, Shaw's God was still experimenting and still learning by trial and error (a philosophy that few would have the courage to face). His God was a symbol of ethics; to him, God was man and man was God.

Shaw's devil instead of having all the evils of mankind had just one -- the lack of dedication to a higher service than his own. He wanted joy, love, happiness, sympathy of heart. The illusions of goodness and happiness were to Shaw the by-product of working for a higher purpose.

To Shaw, heaven, in the words of Don Juan, was the home of the masters of reality -- a place of greatest joy for helping life in its upward struggle. In John Bull's

Other Island, Father Keegan summed up his own (and Shaw's) idea of heaven in "the dream of a madman." After Larry Doyle had given his nightmare of heaven as a place of illusion, "a sort of pale blue satin," Father Keegan spoke:

In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people; three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is the godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine; three in one and one in three.

Always there is the combination of religion and ethics.

Hell in this religion was the home of the unreal and of the seekers of happiness. In Man and Superman, Don Juan said, "Hell is like the earth with no hard facts to contradict, no human comedy, nothing but romance." In John Bull's Other Island the heresy of Father Keegan was the regarding of this world as hell. It was to him:

... a place where the fool flourishes and the good and wise are hated and persecuted, a place where men and women torture each other in the name of love, where children are scourged and enslaved in the name of parental duty and education; where the weak in body are poisoned and mutilated in the name of healing, and the weak in character are put to the horrible torture of imprisonment, not for hours but for years, in the name of justice.

Again there is the religious belief presented as ethical conceptions.

Eric Bentley summarized Shaw's theological creed in a paraphrase of his joke in the essay "On Going to Church", as follows:

... that he is a sort of Protestant in his belief in protest and individualism in conscience; yet a Catholic too in that he wants a universal faith; a believer also in the sanctity of birth, fatherhood, motherhood, sonship, daughterhood, and in the kinship of the great men of the spirit, in the dignity of all life; and in the potential earthly ubiquity of heaven.²⁹

This secular conception of religion was attacked from all sides. Catholics, Protestants, rationalists, conservatives, radicals considered it unsound and faddish. Count Leo Tolstoy wrote that he could not agree with what Shaw called his theology. He felt Shaw had jested about a problem too important to be spoken of lightly.³⁰ As a system of theology, it, of course, had many fallacies and incomplete ideas; but as a constructive idealism it had something to offer. Shaw had lost faith in Christianity, in self-sufficiency, and in political measures as the final answer; however, through different stages of belief he had arrived at a constructive faith -- or perhaps wishful thinking.

29. Eric Bentley: The Makers of Modern Literature, New Direction Books, Norfolk, Conn. 1947, P. 70.

30. Henderson: op. cit., Letter from Count Leo Tolstoy to Bernard Shaw, p. 531.

From these phases he evolved the theory of Life Force. This theory of Creative Evolution, of direction of Vitality toward a certain end was the real religion of Bernard Shaw. He felt that he had a duty toward himself to act according to the force within him; he further believed that this force was using him for an unknown purpose through the agency of his passion. Such was his faith.

An explanation of the Vitalists' theory is necessary for the understanding of Shaw.

The theory of evolution was an old one before the time of Charles Darwin though he had the task of making it appeal to the popular mind. Earlier evolutionists had believed that all different species were a modification of one primal stock. Darwin's contribution was the theory of Circumstantial Selection: The strongest and fittest were able to provide for their survival and were left to carry on the race after the unfit had been eliminated. The second theory was a corollary; Nietzsche and Lamarck did not believe in accidental selection but in adaptation by the will and the striving to survive. A third theory was that of accidental variation.

From Lamarck's theory that a stock of life could develop certain tendencies by wanting and trying, the philosophers believed that man could develop his character the

sane way. As Shaw said, "If a weight-lifter could put up a muscle, it seemed reasonable that a philosopher could put up a brain."³¹ Their belief was that self-control, dominating and regulating the appetite would survive all changes of circumstances, because man could thus adapt himself to them. That quality would distinguish the fittest for survival. They felt that will "can and will do anything." At a certain pitch of intensity, will had created and organized new tissue to satisfy the conviction of its necessity.

Shaw followed Weismann in the theory of longevity. The biologist had pointed out that death was not an eternal condition of life, but an expedient to provide for continual renewal without crowding. Shaw argued that an increase in expectation of life would produce more serious, responsible, far-sighted conduct while the present shortness of life produced recklessness. He felt that men did not live long enough for the purpose of higher civilization. These philosophers also thought the only thing necessary for man to extend his present span was a tremendous catastrophe that would convince him of the necessity of "at least outliving his taste for golf and cigars," ³². if the race

31. Bernard Shaw: Back to Methuselah, Preface.

32. Ibid.

was to be saved.

To the argument that life was nothing but physical action, the Vitalists pointed out the Vital Force as the difference between the live and the dead body which had the same chemical content. Since the theory of Vitality could not be proved, it became a matter of faith; and Shaw, strongly influenced by Butler, championed this religion.

Shaw called his religion the religion of the twentieth century, but pointed out that the pursuit of an inner light was an old movement. It became the redistilling of the spirit of religion from the ashes of pseudo-Christianity and scepticisms. Since a religion needed "stories and image-makers to give it sweetness," 33. Shaw's part in this movement was the writing of Man and Superman and Back to Methuselah.

In Man and Superman, Shaw actually wrote two plays. In the first and last acts, he presented John Tanner ("Having every virtue except a sense of shame" ... by his own account) as a product of the Life Force, a philosopher pilot. He was a hero "who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world -- and in action to do that will by the so discovered means." 34. Ann Whitefield represented the creative

33. Ibid

34. Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman

effort of the Life Force. Roebuck was the ironic foil for Shaw's philosophy (opposition to the conventional good works). In Act III Shaw presented Don Juan in hell. Shaw did not portray Don Juan, the libertine, but Don Juan as pictured by Mozart. He was the philosopher chosen by Nature to help the upward spiral of life -- a man who knew enough to distinguish between right and wrong and one who followed his own instincts without regard for law. For Shaw, he said:

It is not the killing and dying that degrade us but base living and accepting wages and profits of degradation.

In heaven I seek no other joy, but the work of helping the life struggle upward... What a piece of work is man... but what a blunderer.³⁵

The ironic attacks on the Socialism of Mendoza and on the conventional goodness of Ramsden delight the audience. The comic determination of Ann Whitefield to use Tanner for the fulfillment of the "eugenic breeding" of her children adds to the hilarity of the audience. A heavy dose of philosophy is highly entertaining as well as thought-provoking.

Shaw considered Back to Methuselah a part of the Bible of Creative Evolution. "In the Beginning" presented the theory of will. Lilith through this power had created Adam and Eve, and Eve further willed through Adam her own offspring .

35. Ibid.

"The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas" dealt with longevity. Here Shaw built the theory that people died because they lacked the will to live. The third selection presented the beginning of longevity, the variation of the pattern by will. Shaw concluded that three hundred years would be necessary for any real accomplishment. Here he showed that the imminence of death made striving seem futile. After Adam had a finite date for death, weeding the garden seemed useless. The short-lived people visiting the oracles were considered children. Shaw's land of highest evolution was England 31,920 A.D. In this land the conflict of sex was over; children were hatched from eggs. There was no useless passion, no war, no love, no error, no sensual art. It was Tanner's land of pure thought.

Throughout this whole philosophy of Creative Evolution, Shaw pictured man not as the end of creation, but as a link on which God was still experimenting. Shaw stated in the preface of Eack to Methuselah that if man failed, a higher form would emerge just as the form of man had emerged from the failure of the monkey.

In justice to those who find Shaw too didactic it is only fair to point out that Shaw had greater trouble with his own isms than with those of other people. With keen

insight he attacked the weaknesses of other religions, but in presenting his own theories he became involved and often dull. He considered Back to Methuselah his greatest drama; certainly it is his most ambitious. However, for most readers it lacks the witty drama and the brilliance that is typically Shavian.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOCIALIST

Shaw preached reform in social organization just as he did in political economy and religious practice. He attacked the military, journalism, medicine, science, and law throughout his plays, and against each of these phases of modern life he wrote a particular play of pointed attack.

A lack of intimate knowledge of the field under discussion never deterred Shaw, although he never attacked worthy institutions. Apparently he did not know much about the business of soldiering, but he had a great dislike for war and for its illusions; in his attack on the one he included the other.

Heartbreak House shows the stupidity of war and beyond that the sluggish mentality of man that allows it. In this play he followed the influence of Chekhov and The Cherry Orchard. The desultory wandering of the plot and the delicate musical dissonance present a depressing pattern. This picture of England after World War I shows Shaw almost a pessimist. In Back to Methuselah, he suggested doing away with war by will; if people really objected to the horror, they would simply cease, by will, to be victims of military exploitation.

In Arms and the Man, Shaw presented the soldier from another point of view. This play was an attempt, by request from the theater manager, at a pleasant play. There was no obvious message, only hilarity at the expense of the three different types of soldiers. The Swiss officer was not the conventional romantic soldier. As Shaw said in the preface, "He suffers from want of food and sleep, his nerves go to pieces after three days under fire; he has found by experience that it is more important to have a few bits of chocolate to eat in the field than cartridges for his revolver." He had no idealism about war. Ironically enough, he was the one capable soldier in the group. To the father, the silly artifice of promotion was a career. The blunder of an ignorant officer had made him a hero though his offense against conventional warfare kept him from being promoted. All of this good sense tangled with witty nonsense and the avid pursuit of Shaw's possessive female made Arms and the Man, a very pleasant play.

In The Devil's Disciple, Shaw resorted to history for a bitter report on the incompetence of military command. With Shavian ideas of what history could have been, Shaw presented Burgoyne as a scapegoat for a superior officer who went to the country instead of taking care of the business of war.

The code of instructions (based on the general's own) was a clever dramatic criticism of English military procedure. Shaw was still the reformer.

As early as 1907 Shaw was preaching the same theory that the scientists who worked on the atom bomb have given the public -- a combination of military and political science. In "The Preface for Politicians" to John Bull's Other Island, he said:

A political scheme that cannot be carried out except by soldiers will not be a permanent one. The soldier is an anachronism of which we must get rid. Among people who are proof against the suggestions of romantic fiction, there can no longer be any question of the fact that military service produces moral inability, ferocity, and cowardice, and that the defense of nations must be undertaken by the civil enterprise of men enjoying all the rights and liberties of citizenship, and trained by the exacting discipline of democratic freedom and responsibility. The soldier has the easiest of lives: he has no freedom and no responsibility.

While most people agree with Shaw's attitude toward war, many disagree with his sweeping statements about soldiers. Sir Patrick Braybrooke said: "He has succumbed in Arms and the Man to the playwright's most popular fault; that is, a complete failure to realize that even genius has its limits." 36.

36. Sir Patrick Braybrooke: The Genius of George Bernard Shaw, J. P. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia, 1925., p. 25.

Journalism was for Shaw the highest type of literature; he was convinced that it would live as long as any literature, and that it would be of use as long as it lived. He defined it as the art of stating public problems brilliantly, and in his own journalism practiced such complete candor that he constantly brought trouble on himself. His journalism championed all forms of art in which beauty and truth were presented without idealistic falsification or romantic coloring. His sensitive and intelligent literary and musical criticism was considered original and profound. His cleverness and brilliance set standards too high for other journalists to achieve.

This use of journalism is not confined to essays. His prefaces to the plays are examples of some of the best of his art, one of the most outstanding being that for the Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant. Often he inserts long journalistic discussions in his plays. Many critics of drama have objected to this use of journalism.

They feel that the structure of drama is unbalanced by such technique. King Magnus's defense of political science and Louis's accolade for art are examples of this "weakness" which can be so inspirational to an audience if the actor is great enough to carry the part. In Man and Superman, some

of his discussion of music is presentation of that same art. Some of Undershaft's speeches are excellent evaluations of current economic practices. Shaw's plays are weighted with journalism.

Fanny's First Play ridiculed critics in a genial way. Shaw led the public to laugh at them. He was impertinent enough to caricature specific reporters. By this device he won a partial victory against prejudice, malevolence, and superciliousness. In Major Barbara, the father made a sly remark about the profession when he thought it a proper business for his son who knew nothing and could do nothing. However, Shaw's jarring caricature of the journalist in The Doctor's Dilemma was almost unforgivable except as a device of discord to heighten the drama of death. The inability of the reporter to spell, to get facts, his total lack of sensitivity -- all these qualities grated in the poetic death scene. The resentment shown in these illustrations might have been Shaw's anger at ignorance. He harped on responsibility and felt that in many cases journalists were dodging it. Perhaps the exasperated idealist spoke.

With his interest in socialized institutions, Shaw would be expected to take up the banner for socialized medicine and most certainly for the municipal health program.

(He must feel that England's present plan for Socialized medicine is partially due to his effectiveness). In The Doctors' Dilemma, he called the present medical set-up a marvelous absurdity. Here he based his case against the doctors on an inverted psychology. He showed how ill health paid the premium and that good health through the practice of preventive medicine ought to pay it. He argued that doctors were like other Englishmen and could not be expected to have a conscience when their financial security depended on their finding something wrong with the patient. Each doctor in the play had his own particular fad for relief of any ailment. Shaw held these fads up to ridicule; another amusing piece of satire was that of the oldest doctor remembering that each discovery had been made approximately fifteen years before.

The craze for operations also offended Shaw. He charged that many unnecessary ones were performed and that all were successful if the patient left the hospital alive. To prosecute doctors, he said, was impossible because they would not testify against each other and all juries considered them omnipotent.

Shaw referred to statistics showing that inoculation had proved unsatisfactory; he banned it as the refuge of

poor doctors who used immunization as a meal ticket.

Naturally the practice of vivisection was abhorrent to the sensitive vegetarian. He protested that it satisfied man's lust for cruelty and did nothing for the advancement of medical knowledge. His statement that if you began by baking a dog for three days, you would end by baking your grandmother for longer 37. was considered extravagant, but the atrocities of the German concentration camps make it seem pale.

Shaw protested that his plays were not an attack on doctors, that he had high regard for medicine well-handled, but he considered the poor doctor a dangerous enemy of society. His verdict about the medical practice of his day has since been justified.

His answer to the medical problem was the following: a health officer whose reputation depended upon his keeping people well, 2. a medical organization which would leave the real doctor free from silly routine and the demands of the patients, 3. Socialism in medicine (a body of trained men) to keep people well, 4. Private practitioners released from corrupting slavery to patients. 38.

This play is one of startling contrasts. The silly

37. Bernard Shaw: The Doctors' Dilemma, Preface.

38. Bernard Shaw: The Doctors' Dilemma, Preface.

opsonic rhythm, the bacteriology, the retailing of a patent prescription of phosphate and water, and the dilemma of the doctors are fantastic and highly amusing. In contrast, the discordant death scene, the appealing characterization of the wife and the serious dedication of the hero to art are melodramatic and poetic. With its cleverness, it is one of the most brittle plays and one of Shaw's best.

The knowledge of a science was somewhat like that of the military profession with Shaw. He had little experience with it and knew little about it except by feeling. He made jokes about the experiments to prove what was self-evident from deduction -- for example, the tailless mice. He attacked it for its blocking the upward spiral of mankind. Knowledge without wisdom, he said in the preface of Saint Joan, was worse than ignorance. Here he also blamed the progress in the arts of destruction on this "scientific attitude." Hypochondria, melancholia, stupidity, muck-raking curiosity were an outgrowth of scientific fact-finding. In casting aside hallucinations as unsatisfactory, science had disregarded the things that they stood for. To him, the deafness and blindness to the calls and visions of the inexorable power that had made man would result in his destruction.

Most of Shaw's plays attack the law as a relic of a

preceding civilization. His first quarrel with it was that it was established by men who were not law-abiding and who knew nothing about political economy, sociology, or psychology.

In Captain Brassbound's Conversion and in The Devil's Disciple, he presented the evils of law in a melodramatic form. In the first, the law represented different things: to the judge it was the law of the jungle; to Brassbound, revenge (a primitive and romantic urge); to Hallum, it represented the fraud of civilization. In the second, a miscarriage of justice and the technical satisfaction of the law (when all of the prosecutors recognized the punishment as unnecessary and undesirable) are ridiculed by a melodramatic last-minute escape. In the Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet the administration of the law by thieves, prostitutes, bloodless housewives and men who lusted for blood -- none of whom had the ethical idealism of the victim -- presented a tragic picture of the forces of law.

In Saint Joan, Shaw discussed the problem more judicially. The court in which Joan was tried was an assembly of able men who gave Joan a fair trial -- much fairer than she would have had today, said Shaw. And perhaps, a much fairer one than any of the recent trials at Nuremberg. The decision was strictly according to law: a development which fits well into the conflict of the play, that of the original versus the orthodox.

In this administration of law, the orthodox won over right (as the canonization of Saint Joan in 1925 showed).

In spite of the words that he put into the mouths of his characters, in his plays Shaw showed that the law was stronger than the strongest person -- even than soldiers with the Victoria Cross, he said.

Shaw's beliefs about crime and punishment are related to those about the administration of law. To Shaw all crime stemmed from poverty, therefore should be the responsibility of the state rather than of the individual. He seemed to agree with Barbara, who said, "There are no scoundrels or good men either -- just children of one Father (for Shaw, just children of one state)." 39.

He felt that crime should not be dramatized:

Crime like disease is not interesting. It is something to be done away with by general consent. It is what men do at their best -- with good intentions -- what men and women find they will do in spite of their intentions -- that concerns us. 40.

The whole theory of punishment, in Shaw's eyes, was wrong. Man should not be allowed that comfort. When Bill wanted punishment (as atonement), the worst punishment was

39. Bernard Shaw: Heartbreak House, Preface,

40. Bernard Shaw: Major Barbara, Preface.

its being withheld. To Shaw, the world would be better when men realized that their deeds were irrevocable.

He felt that no normal man could incarcerate the body of another and remain normal. When Joan had a choice of punishment, she chose burning at the stake rather than imprisonment. He showed that men were seldom wise enough for this power. In The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet, in a group of men seeking revenge, the foreman said, "We mean to hang you, Blanco, but we mean to do it fair." Also men were seldom good enough to assume this power -- every man had his price: the derelicts of the center, Cusins, Major Barbara, even the churches and the Salvation Army (in order to continue operating).

Shaw's answer was that crime should be met with forgiveness; but that, if the offenses continued, the offender should be put to death with many apologies and no fanfare.⁴¹

Crime and punishment did not stop with the courts and prisons. It went into school room. Education as an institution of the twentieth century was an anathema to Shaw. He detested the subject matter, the methods, and the pedagogues of the system. One of his most famous utterances was his answer to the request to use some sections of Saint Joan in

41. Ibid.

a text book. His word left no doubt of his opinion:

No. I lay my eternal curse on whomsoever shall now or at any time hereafter make school books of my work, and make me hated as Shakespeare is hated. My plays were not designed as instruments of torture. All the schools that lust after them will never get any other answer from G. Bernard Shaw. ⁴².

The first fault was the artificiality of education: it was useful only in places of education. Vivie, the daughter of Mrs. Warren, was the illustration of this statement. After the shock of discovering her mother's profession, she was determined to have nothing more to do with her. However, the education that the mother so much admired, could do nothing for the daughter. She had no moral or physical toughness; she had no knowledge or training with which to earn a living. She could only withdraw. Undershaft objected to the same weakness. He was trying to find a successor whose mind had not been warped by education. He said:

.....(any foundling) who shows the least ability is fastened on by the school masters; trained to win scholarships; crammed with second hand ideas; drilled and disciplined into docility; and lamed for life so that he is fit for nothing but teaching. ⁴³.

In the preface to Back to Methuselah, Shaw said that the capitalistic system could not stand a real education.

⁴². Henderson: Op.cit., p. 3, "Letter to Hyndman," June 30, 1901 .

⁴³. Bernard Shaw: Back to Methuselah, Preface.

Any teacher who attempted to give one would find himself penniless, because the teaching of political science and citizenship would undermine the morality of capitalism.

The schools were operated on the theory that the educated man was a greater nuisance than the uneducated one. As a result of the inefficiency and sham of education he was drifting down the midstream of ignorance rather than crashing and finding something better. Shaw had no respect for any assistance that ethical behavior would get from education.

The methods of teaching he found equally vicious.

"It is certain that if you teach a man anything he will never learn it." ⁴⁴. He attacked the present method of cramming knowledge into pupils as a method which "lamed and enslaved" them. ⁴⁵. When faced with the success of some of the products of education, he referred to Voltaire and Butler as having been strong enough to overcome the effects of formal schooling. ⁴⁶. His own suggested method of helping pupils to learn was to inoculate them with small doses of false knowledge and false doctrines which should be overcome by real knowledge, (a method comparable to vaccination). ⁴⁷. Although this theory would offer great oppor-

⁴⁴. Bernard Shaw: Back to Methuselah

⁴⁵. Loc. cit.

⁴⁶. Loc. cit.

⁴⁷. Loc. Cit.

tunities for learning, the technique might be somewhat difficult when many pupils were involved.

In addition to "the ignoramuses, dupes, parasites, and snobs" fostered on society, Shaw portrayed the "cricketeers" who worshipped the physical enough to develop any skills in sports that were needed. In relation, he probably thought of his own strenuous physical discipline, observed to increase his mental output.

In contrast to the spurious education discussed, Shaw depicted the honest and efficient technical instruction which had enabled people to wipe out civilization by teaching the use of such "powers of destruction which could only be entrusted to infinite wisdom and benevolence." 48.

Shaw upheld his indictment of education by characters in his dramas. Hector in Man and Superman was the magnificent body; the characters from The Philanderer, the snobs and ignoramuses; the chauffeur in Man and Superman, the technical skill without knowledge; only the people who had not been warped by the schools were sane, effective members of society. Joan of Arc, who could neither read nor write but who could dictate, who understood household arts, and who knew more about the political and military situation in France than most modern

48. Bernard Shaw: Back to Methuselah, Preface.

French women, had a social conscience and religious purpose for the upward spiral of life. However, her education was not a product of the schools. Nor was Shaw's!

Another social problem that preoccupied Shaw was the institution of marriage and its attendant problems of sex, types of women, children, and economic uncertainties. Most of his ideas appeared in the discussion play, Getting Married, but they entered all of his plays. One of his most amusing presentations is found in You Never Can Tell. The theme of sex is an underlying one that always offers conflict in the plays of Shaw.

Shaw preached that the marriage laws of England were a product of the tenth century and that they were totally unsatisfactory for the complicated life of the period. He brought out this point often by the remarks of his women. The most ardent cry against it was that of Candida when she felt that Morrell enjoyed her management of the home and of him but had never really known her as a person. She was resentful of his willingness to place her in a niche as he would have a piece of furniture. The women in The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet were pitiful chattels who had become lifeless through their position in marriage.

Shaw advocated putting the economic problems of marriage on the state. Most women of the middle class submitted to marriage from economic necessity. In the play, Edith spoke

for Shaw when she insisted on keeping her self-respect and independence by being paid to keep house and to bear children.

All sentimentality in marriage should be removed. The ridiculous picture of the General who kept weeping at the mention of his lost love's name -- a memory of twenty years -- put such imitation of emotion in its proper place.

Shaw was convinced that human nature could not stand the arrangement:

Man and wife do not live together; they only breakfast together, dine together, and sleep in the same room.⁴⁹

and

There are couples who dislike one another furiously for several hours at a time; there are couples who dislike each other permanently; there are couples who never dislike one another; there are people who are incapable of disliking anyone.

and

Single-room couples resort to blows, and the leisure class has no real family life. (The father was at the club, the boys at school, the girls with the governess.)⁵⁰

There was no magic in marriage! The institution was outmoded. To Shaw marriage was an honest attempt to make the best of a commercial contract. In Getting Married, Collins summed up this view:

49. Bernard Shaw: Getting Married, Preface.

50. Bernard Shaw: Getting Married.

There's as many different marriages as there are sorts of people -- young things that marry for love-- old things that marry for money, comforts, and companionship -- people that marry to have children -- people that don't intend and aren't fit to have children -- people run after by the other sex, people that want a new experience -- you'll have to have a half dozen contracts,

In the preface of the same play, Shaw made eight suggestions for reform:

1. Make divorce as easy and cheap as marriage.
2. Grant divorce at request of either party.
3. Confine power of dissolving marriage for misconduct to the state with power of setting and collecting alimony.
4. Make it impossible for marriage to be used as punishment. Substitute the Penal Colony.
5. Do not condemn innocent, decent people to wedlock.
6. Place the work of a wife or mother on the same footing with any other work.
7. Adapt the system to human nature.
8. Do not leave the law to the judges or religion to the bishops,

Though he made these suggestions with much levity, Shaw got some of them from highly civilized countries, notably Sweden. They were not a final answer to him, but might lead to better situations.

While acknowledging that he did not approve of the marriage practices of this period, Shaw had no solution. Avowedly illicit unions became tyrannical and were as difficult to escape from as marriage. Clandestine irregularities could not be an alternative to marriage because they were uncomfortable and undignified. Reform in the divorce law, at

least, would remove such silly discomforture as Reginald felt in his ridiculous arrangement to give evidence for a divorce which he was eager to grant. The whole picture in Getting Married is one of almost insoluble difficulties.

Marriage, however, seemed to offer, for his characters, the most satisfactory kind of life. In the words of the Bishop it was better to marry than not to marry. The highest felicity in marriage was companionship as summed up by Collins in the same play. The Bishop and his wife had companionship, the Mayor and Mrs. George had it, and even with Adam and Eve that was the quality that made longevity bearable. Such unions were the product of wisdom and control (again the will to accomplish); and the aspirations and striving that made the success possible would keep it permanent. Again the Bishop spoke: "Whom God hath joined, no man can put asunder."

To Shaw, the problem of children had nothing to do with marriage (he once dismissed children as one of the seven sins). To him, they were the biological and psychological fulfillment of their parents, and the present marriage laws were causing race suicide.⁵¹ He further said that the nations could not afford to leave children with unfit parents. In the limited number of children in the modern family, they did not get the group influence that was necessary for their development.

51. Bernard Shaw: Back to Methuselah, Preface.

Shaw believed with Carlyle that new customs and practices should call for a retailoring of moral precepts; the practice of birth control had necessitated the set-up of a new plan for rearing children.

In the farcical You Never Can Tell, he gave the amusing situation in a family with modern ideas. Here each member of the family was unrestrained and had absolute privacy and independence. Such practices had made the children defenseless and impractical. The conclusion was that parents owed the obligation to children rather than the reverse. In Misalliance, he presented the same problem of parents and children. In this play modern ideas of sex education were added to the other ideas. The conflict was the diversity and the mysteriousness of the reactions of different members of the family to one another.

In his discussion of marriage, Shaw assembled what he considered the different types of womanhood. To each type marriage presented a problem. There was the efficient Edith, capable and unromantic like Candida and Vivie, to whom marriage posed the problem of economic dependence. To Lesbia the problem was one of fastidiousness; she wanted children and would have been a good mother, but she did not want a man in the house. She wanted her privacy inviolate. (She represented the famous Shavian remark that old maids should be allowed to

have as many children as they wanted with no questions asked.) Leo wanted husbands like a collection of records -- a suitable one for every occasion. Collins' wife was the mother type, who didn't know her husband because she had had no experience with other men. Her children had left home to escape her; Collins stayed because to do so was easier. Mrs. George had made the happiest home, although she could never resist love in whatever man she found it. She was the really grand figure who was not erotic because she was natural; as she said, "I have been myself."

Other women types came in other plays. Ann Whitefield was the embodiment of the Life Force. While Tanner talked about Life Force, she fulfilled its purpose for women. Tanner considered marriage the most dangerous enemy of every man; Ann in the clutches of Life Force thought it the business of every woman.

Mrs. George, as were Lina, Eliza, and Jennifer, was the woman who "made men dream." In Getting Married, the former said in defense of love:

When you loved me I gave you the whole sun and stars to play with. I gave you eternity in a single moment, strength of the mountains in one clasp of your arms, and the volume of all the seas in one impulse of your soul. A moment only--but was it not enough? Were you not paid then for all the rest of your struggle on earth? Must I mend your clothes and sweep your floors as well?

Was it not enough? I paid the price without bargaining: I bore children without flinching: was that a reason for heaping fresh burden on me? I carried a child in my arms: must I carry the father too?

To these women, sex and marriage were not synonymous.

Barbara, Jennifer, and Joan represented still another type -- that of the innocent, unworldly girl. These were the embodiment of passion for an ideal. None was masculine. Each of them thought of marriage somewhere in the future. Each was engrossed in a passion nearer at hand.

These characters all had something in common; they represented Shaw's practice of disentangling sex and marriage. In attacking marriage as a sacrament, in the same play, Shaw contested that marriage was the most licentious of human institutions since the purpose of sex was the propagation of the race.

To Shaw, sex was a battle between the sexes with woman as the huntress and man, the quarry. In Man and Superman, he worked out this theory and inserted the idea of eugenic breeding. It was based in a society in which the business of sex was left to woman. Shaw disdained even the shallow pretense that man was the pursuer. From the living room in England to the highest passes in the Pyrenees, Ann was relentless in the chase and without scruples about her methods. It was a tragic and comic pursuit.

Such an attitude toward sex is that of most observers of human nature. Shaw recognized this fact when he said, "I find in my own plays that Woman projecting herself dramatically behaves just as Woman did in the plays of Shakespeare." 52.

The difference in theory, however, is that the Shavian woman had no choice. She was in the grip of a creative force and drove herself mercilessly to fulfill her mission. In the final dramatic scene where Ann tried to force Tanner to her will she was left exhausted.

An extension of this normal conflict is that between a man of genius and the mother woman. To Shaw, man was the philosophic phase of life and woman represented its fecundity. Shaw said, "The great work of the world is done by the people free from the universal dominion of sex. In art sex is superseded, is a secondary power." 53. The man of genius could resist domesticity because he was the darling of Life Force. Thus the battle between these two forces was the most ruthless in his plays. Tanner considered himself a philosopher, but he was defeated by Ann. Don Juan was not defeated. Marchbanks, who was a genius, wanted the mothering that Candida gave him.

52. Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman, Preface.

53. Loc. cit.

Critics have denied that Shaw used sex, and he did use none of the parlor, bed-room, and bath variety. However, there is always a firm undertone of sex in his plays. In Candida it was too strong in the cool, efficient heroine to be unloosed by either of the men dependent on her. In Vivie it was a fear that she withdrew before. In Shaw's women of "abundant" life, it was the warmth with which they inspired men. Captain Brassbound, The Devil's Disciple, and Caesar and Cleopatra have been used to illustrate a lack of sex in his plays; and it is true that all three were somewhat melodramatic and could not develop sex in too great detail. However, in The Devil's Disciple part of the conflict was the newly-awakened love of the minister's wife and the wrecking of the carefully constructed union of the Andersons. In Caesar and Cleopatra, the same possibility of a love affair hovered through the play until Cleopatra recognized that Caesar was above love.

A lack of sex did not plague his plays. The satire in The Philanderer marked the spurious from the real. Sex in reality was a warmth that was a force in the lives of people who were at home with themselves.

In Shaw's philosophy, other passions might be of equal importance. To Joan and to Barbara they were. The Pleasant Plays seems to imply that other interests were equal -- home, empire, perhaps any real job.

Contrary to popular convention, sex was not a product of marriage in Shavian drama, nor were marriages based on sex drive the most satisfactory. His characters preferred marriages for money, for companionship, or for other reasons as being more satisfactory -- Candida, the Bishop's wife, (and the Bishop), Mrs. George, the fathers in The Philanderer, and others. Collins found many reasons for marriage, sex being the least important.

Shaw's plays seem to point to two conclusions: 1. That companionship was the most successful basis for marriage; and 2. that the practiced philosophy should be the recognized one.

The theater as considered by Shaw was another social institution. He said that it should be a form for the most advanced ideas on contemporary, social, economic, scientific and religious problems. It should be a vehicle for constructive and reformatory ideas about current institutions.⁵⁴ In the preface to Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, he gave a great example of his journalistic skill in his plea for such a theater; in the preface to The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet he had detailed suggestions for reforms of the current plan and practice. He attacked the censorship of the theater as a hindrance to real service and suggested licensing of theaters as an improvement.

⁵⁴. Bernard Shaw: The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet, Preface.

Shaw pointed out the injustice to the playwright of having to pay to have his play accepted or refused and later to be liable to having his play banned if the censor reconsidered. Censorship was an impossible job. The censor was a political appointee who might know coal-mining or merchandising but who seldom knew anything about art or drama. If he were capable of judging, the task of reading such a quantity of material would be an impossible one. The censor had no law, as the magistrate had, only his own opinion. The public should be the real censor.

Shaw said that it was an injustice to drama to set limits under which the works of Huxley, Spencer, Ruskin, Carlyle, and Butler would have been discarded. He contrasted the freedom of the press with the lack of it in the theater, emphasizing that anything comparable to the freshness and vigor of The Way Of All Flesh would have been banned by the censor. The church, the bench, science, art, literature -- no other field was subject of such discrimination as the theater. Under the present censorship, Hamlet would never have reached the public!

The battle against established customs and morals was the same as the one against the political economy and religion; conventional ideas of morality based on established customs versus original and ethical judgment. Shaw believed

that a toleration of heresy and shocks to morality were essential to the welfare of a people. His campaign made possible the presentation of plays with ideas and issues of modern life. Ibsen was one of the instruments through which he fought.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MORALIST

Shaw was a revolutionary who attacked the orthodox in political economy, in religion, in social institutions and in personal morality. With him, to attack the conventional was almost a sport. He fenced with opponents deftly, never allowing himself to be put on the defensive, always countering with another thrust. In his plays, many of the conflicts are between human vitality and the artificial system of morality. Joan of Arc opposed the conventional law of the Church and the state; Blanco Posnet, the penal code (and dared to be an enemy of God); Dick, the military code of the regular army; Father Keegan, the Catholic Church.

Not only did Shaw revolt against the moral code as practiced by organizations, but as practiced by individual persons. To him one of the most irritating phases of modern life was the senselessly romantic idolatry that he saw. In Misalliance and in You Never Can Tell, he directed his humor at the romantic conception of home and family relations being sacred. In Hearbreak House and The Apple Cart, any illusions about the sacredness of a fatherland were exploded. The romantic conception of love was ridiculed in all of his plays.

This picture has been referred to in the discussion of marriage. Ann Whitefield's avid chase of Tanner (to be the father of Superman) was an exact antithesis of the Victorian lady who was supposed to wait patiently for her lover.

His most notorious attack on romantic conceptions was that against Bardolatry. In the preface to Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, Shaw praised Shakespeare as the greatest English dramatist, one whose plays had held their own for over three hundred years.

However, when he made a critical remark for the public, he got the clamor that he so delighted in. Shaw wanted to substitute intelligent understanding for blind worship. He said:

Shakespeare's supreme power lies in word-music which gives fascination to his blackguardly repartee and sublimity to his hollowest platitudes, besides raising to the highest force all his great gifts as an observer, an imitator of personal mannerisms and characteristics, a humorist and a story-teller.⁵⁵

He further added that Shakespeare was not a great philosopher, but had beauty of form, grace of mood, a fund of genius. He considered him one of the greatest poets, but could not resist shocking his readers further. He said:

When I began to write, William was a divinity and a bore. Now he is a fellow-creature."⁵⁶

55. Bernard Shaw: Caesar and Cleopatra, Preface.

56. Archibald Henderson: Op. cit., p.330.

Shaw was opposed to economic and idealistic slavery. In the preface to Major Barbara, he exhorted the poorer people to break the power of the capitalist, saying that the rich would never do so. To him the existing state of things was not sacred. Conventional ideas, he found, were products of someone's desire to make life easier for himself. The Swiss soldier⁵⁷ had no illusions about any glory in duty to one's country; humility was not a virtue to Father Keegan.⁵⁸ Modesty was no merit in Ann's⁵⁹ eyes; Blanco Posnet⁶⁰ laughed at the ideal of sacrifice, yet tried to save the life of a child with croup. Tanner⁶¹ acted on his own instinct of morality. Captain Shotover⁶² was a believer in vital goodness.

57. Bernard Shaw: Arms and the Man.

58. Bernard Shaw: John Bull's Island.

59. Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman.

60. Bernard Shaw: The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet.

61. Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman.

62. Bernard Shaw: Heartbreak House.

Against these examples of vital morality, he used his "progressive people" who had had their ideas for a long time. Roebuck⁶³ was a liberal; Mrs. Clandon and Gloria advocated women's rights;⁶⁴ and Debedat⁶⁵ followed Bernard Shaw. All of this group were amusing caricatures of the conventional idea of goodness.

Shaw had no interest in great systems of philosophy or in personal coaxes of thought; they were all illusions. In his faith there was one goal: to do well what was easiest for one to do. To him each person had some inherent qualities which Creative Evolution had distilled in him. In the preface to Androcles and the Lion, Shaw said that it was conceit rather than hypocrisy that made men think that they were guided by principles rather than by instinct.

To Shaw a policy of natural goodness did not mean the dull grayish monotone of Ibsen. In his naturalism there were the mixed colors of reality. The forceful villain sometimes

63. Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman.

64. Bernard Shaw: Too True to Be Good.

65. Bernard Shaw: The Doctor's Dilemma.

did more good than the passive man of greater piety. Undershaft⁶⁶ had the red of courage, the blue of clear vision, and perhaps the white of truthfulness or seeing things in their proper perspective. Napoleon had the same piercing insight into reality but little gray or monotone. Caesar was the combination of varied colors. He was the ruthless conqueror and the sensitive instructor, the man of action and the dreamer; he was decisive and intuitive. The theory of Naturalism meant a subordination of the good and the bad for one aim. With this combination, man through nature strove to fulfill his possibilities.

From this practical morality, Shaw's works had a sense of reality. His vital characters were free from illusion. Thus Caesar⁶⁷ is great and Napoleon⁶⁸ pompous. Ann Whitefield,⁶⁹ Shotover,⁷⁰ King Magnus⁷¹ were free from any self-delusion.

66. Bernard Shaw: Major Barbara.

67. Bernard Shaw: Caesar and Cleopatra.

68. Bernard Shaw: Man of Destiny.

69. Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman.

70. Bernard Shaw: Heartbreak House.

71. Bernard Shaw: The Apple Cart.

Only the minor characters failed to know reality. Heaven to Shaw was the home of reality and hell the habitation of illusion.⁷²

Shaw was impatient with dreams and idealism; yet this form of illusion is inherent in his plays. Perhaps he could not escape the combination of visionary Irishman and practical Englishman. In the preface to Back to Methuselah he attacked twentieth century education because it destroyed the wisdom that the illusions stood for. Yet he explained that Joan's illusions were the materialization of her intense feeling about the needs of France at that time. Jennifer's illusions about her husband had brought her happiness, had awakened her to an aliveness that was real. This combination of real illusions and illusive reality (as the right decision in the court that tried Joan) is a point of conflict in Shaw's plays.

He apparently intended to show that bare reality would repel or crush most men -- only the highest products of Life Force could stand it.

To Shaw, passion, vitality, and courage were the prime movers of life. Without these qualities, man only ate, breathed and slept; there was no life. The object of health

72. Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman.

was to spend it.⁷³ John Tanner spoke for Shaw in Man and Superman:

All other passions were in me before, but they were idle and aimless: mere childish greediness and cruelties, curiosities and fancies, habits and superstitions grotesque and ridiculous to the mature intelligence. When they suddenly began to shine like newly-lit flames, it was no light of their own but by the radiance of the dawn in moral passion. That passion dignified them, gave them conscience and meaning, found the mob of appetites and organized them into an army of purposes and principles. My soul was born of that passion.

This faith of Shaw's in the courage to speak for or against the common faith of man and to act according to his own convictions made morality a very positive thing. He did not speak against crime or vice, but spoke for a better life through passion for the right.

Closely related to passion was theme of Shaw's life-responsibility. He felt a strong duty to himself and a strong duty to other men. His horror of selling oneself was discussed under an earlier head.

There were different ways of being a public man. The first and simplest way was a personal way, to have a lack of indifference to humanity, as expressed by Dick⁷⁴ when he was

73. Bernard Shaw: Back to Methuselah, Preface.

74. Bernard Shaw: The Devil's Disciple.

gentle to the orphan whom others had despised. The second was to use one's energy in directions that benefited humanity. Undershaft told Cusins⁷⁵ that business men did not own the business but were owned by it because they were forced to expend themselves to make possible a good life for their employees. Joan⁷⁶ felt her responsibility of serving France so strongly that she went to the stake for that faith. She said:

Minding your own business is like minding your
own body the quickest way to make yourself sick.

The summary of Shaw's ideas on responsibility seem to indicate that goodness or the full life is attained by working for a higher object than oneself. Shaw's strong characters all did so — Joan, Barbara, Undershaft, Magnus, Shotover, and others.

Critics of Shaw's drama have accused him of having witty epigrammatical ideas personified as people rather than the flesh and blood characters of actual life. Such an accusation rose from his emphasis on the intellectual instead of the sensual. In the preface to Back to Methuselah, Shaw stated that

75. Bernard Shaw: Major Barbara.

76. Bernard Shaw: Saint Joan.

the power of will and thought could do anything. It could eradicate evil and abolish poverty. Here he also stated that society moved according to the will of the most enlightened. In Man and Superman, through the arguments of Don Juan and the Devil, Shaw analyzed civilization as the conflict between human will and cruel will.

Though Shaw realized the power of thought and will, he did not think that reason should dominate emotion; he felt that the two should move together. Bentley summarized Shaw's feeling in the following passage:

The feelings are our motor power. Destroy them and you destroy yourself. Try to make your reason dictator and you will be first a neurotic and soon a suicide. True, the result of dispensing with reason -- if possible -- would be equally disastrous.⁷⁷

Shaw in his attack on morality based on conventional ideas showed faith in the foundation of civilization, but a lack of faith in the cheap morality that had grown on this foundation. His idea of intellectual and spiritual emancipation was to destroy the superficial morality and construct a code worthy of man's possibilities. In Major Barbara, Undershaft

77. Eric Bentley: Op. cit., p. 43.

gave this view when he said:

What do we do when we spend years of work and thought and thousands of pounds on a new gun or an aerial battleship that turns out just a hair's breath wrong after all? Scrap it. Scrap it without wasting another hour or pound on it.. That's what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps obsolete steam engines and dynamos; but it won't scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political constitutions. What's the result? In machinery it does very well; but in morals and religion and politics it is working at a loss that brings it nearer bankruptcy every year.

Unlike Dickens, Ibsen, or Shakespeare, Shaw was an optimist. Dickens pictured life as a collection of details that led to no recognized faith. Shakespeare presented a stage and let his players act their part; here too there was no constructive philosophy. Ibsen presented his characters as caught in the deadening struggle of naked facts of the social forces of his day. But Shaw had a passion for life; he believed in the will to strive. These were conceptions for living -- for optimism. In Book IV of Back to Methuselah, Shaw referred to the sin of discouragement. Here the Elderly Gentleman was told by the oracle that discouragement meant death.

In Shaw's plays, the climax is often the moment of disillusionment, after which intelligent hope triumphs, as in the case of Cusins and Barbara in Major Barbara. Reason triumphed

over the romantic when Candida sent Marchbanks⁷⁸ away. The will of Caesar⁷⁹ and the will of Joan⁸⁰ triumphed over the weaknesses that they saw in the political and military situations that faced them. These three qualities -- passion for living, courage, and the power of thought and will -- indicate an optimistic view of the importance of living.

Shaw's annoyance with man is another indication of his belief in the ultimate good of man. Convinced that man could do better Shaw derided his lack of effort. By this attitude the philosopher showed a determination to push mankind toward a higher plane than his institutions and his moral code reflected.

78. Bernard Shaw: Candida.

79. Bernard Shaw: Caesar and Cleopatra.

80. Bernard Shaw: Saint Joan.

CHAPTER IX

THE PLAYWRIGHT

Drama was the most effective means that Shaw could have chosen for his "mission of reform". His nature was histrionic. Even when he was a child, impersonation was his means of expression. Always his ideas were dramatic; he enjoyed the conflict of ideas. To him the theater was what the Medieval Church had been; he called it a pulpit for the investigation of ideas. In the audience he hoped to have a three-fold appeal: to those interested in entertainment, in ideas, or in art. Certainly the Shavian drama had this triple appeal.

Of the forms of drama, comedy was the type most suited to Shaw's expression. Shaw himself had a robust sense of humor. He once complained that he could never be dramatic. Just as the emotional pitch got high, he was tricked by a sense of comedy; he could never resist the laugh, the more unexpected the better. He even made a creed of his joy:

The church is giving way to an older church
to which I belong, the church where the oftener
you laugh, the better, because by laughter only
can you destroy evil, offering good fellowship
without mawkishness.⁸¹

⁸¹. Henderson: Op. cit., "Preface to Dramatic Opinion",
By Shaw, published New York 1907.

The very structure of comedy made it a perfect vehicle for Shaw. Van Doren said:

If comedy is to be properly destructive it must be informed wit. Shaw bristled with ideas.

and

Shaw destroys error by laughter. His comic effects are often the result of quickness, directness, accuracy of vision, amusing to people who have not seen or understood.

and

He is a master of devices that elicit laughter -- from horse-humor to eloquence. 82

Shaw laughed at sex, at love, at parents, at children, at political inefficiency, at economic injustice, at religious hypocrisy, at marriage, at science, at education, at himself. By this ability to laugh he impressed his message on his audience. By distortion and by elements out of focus, he attempted to abolish stupid theories.

Shaw felt the best comedy was closest to tears, and from this theory used a sort of tragi-comedy. The clown, however, overcame the tragedian, and the audience got the Shavian anti-climax of Pygmalion, Doctors' Dilemma, Caesar and Cleopatra, and other of his most delightful comedies. In these plays there was the fusion of both elements.

82. Van Doren; American and British Literature Since 1390, Century Co., New York, 1925., p. 350.

Out of stock techniques, Shaw developed something new for the stage, the discussion play. In most of his plays there is discussion, but in the new type, the discussion is the conflict. The ideas battle for supremacy. In Getting Married, the discussion is long and takes place before the action; in Candida the personal is more important and the discussion follows the action. Between these two extremes, Shaw's other plays can be ranged.

In Shaw's drama, the characters embody ideas. The major characters are disciples of the vital force theory or they struggle against it. The minor characters represent conventional ideas. Occasionally one character may be the synthesis of the two as was Cusins in the case of Barbara's idealism and Undershaft's materialism.

To the stock characters of the stage, Shaw added the "unwomanly woman." These women -- Mrs. George, Lina, Jennifer-- represented the abundant creative force of woman. This new form was a shocking departure from Victorian woman seen in the theater.

Five of Shaw's characters are considered his spokesmen. Morrell and Marchbanks typify the two Shaws: the glib Shaw that the public knew and the sensitive Shaw whom so few saw. King Magnus is his spokesman for political reform, and Tanner for reform of religious hypocrisy. Keegan is the visionary

Irishman that Shaw resented in himself and Larry Doyle the practical worldly Englishman to whom visions were impractical.

Captain Shotover is the really great creation that would guarantee Shaw a place among the great dramatists. He also was like Shaw. Both were battling for a union of wisdom and power. Van Doren said:

"Captain Shotover in Heartbreak House is a fulfillment of dramatic genius. He has a life independent of the author's genius. Shotover is Shotover, just as Falstaff is Falstaff. 53

Shaw's drama is made more effective by the use of music. His dialogue, while sounding a simple and straightforward, is resonant and full of tone. Knowing music well, he said that he absorbed from Mozart the ability to be serious without being heavy. Some of the harmonies and dissonances of his drama are associated with musical technique. The death scene of Dubedat and the playful lightness interwoven with heaviness in Caesar and Cleopatra are good illustrations of this skill.

In Heartbreak House music is paramount. The scenes are strung together as though a tired musician were improvising with delicate, suggestive phrases, clear and beautiful but with no theme. As a critic with a keen ear, he skillfully changed the tone in the dialogue making it suit the character and even the mood of the character.

The poetic and mystic are somewhat out of place in comedy but are found in several of Shaw's plays. In Heartbreak House both are combined. Dubedat's death speech is written in blank verse -- which Shaw considered easier to write than good prose. Mrs. George's speech is full of the images of poetry. Keegan is mystical and poetic, as is Marchbanks, and Shaw as a poet, is sensitive to everything. He cannot remain untouched. The visionary Irishman occasionally broke through.

Shaw knew history as he knew science -- intuitively. Such an attitude made his use of history highly original. He was not interested in the characteristics of the period but in the qualities of people that had not changed. Since he posed twentieth century problems for these dramatic discussions, the hero is never the historical figure of popular imagination. Critics have complained that he threw history out of focus by this technique; however, by humanizing the hero, Shaw gave history continuity and vividness.

The tricks of Shavian drama are known wherever the name of Shaw is known. His irony is one of his most delightful qualities. Since his comments are friendly and clever, they brought^{no} resentment. Another trick of irony is his use of inverted dramatic form: the villain becomes the hero, the ignoble defeat the noble and in turn become noble, the climax

is disillusionment, which is not defeat but victory.

His witty dialogue and brilliant verbalism snare the unwary as bait for his serious message. The paradox has become a by-word for Shaw -- it is found in his life, in his philosophy, and in his characters. The topsy-turviness that is so entertaining he took from Butler. This technique extends through familiar phrasing to ideas, characters and plots.

All of Shaw's drama is polemical. He slanted every remark and every stage direction to drive home his point. His first consideration was what could be done with the audience, and he succeeded in arousing interest and comment on many phases of modern life.

CHAPTER X

SHAW, THE IMMORTAL

From the beginning of his career, Shaw has had the support of some groups. His crusade for a theater in which ideas could be treated seriously has made him almost a patron saint of the independent theater group -- particularly The Theater Guild. His use of the theater as a means of appealing to the social conscience of his "congregation" has given him a far-reaching power because this faith in humanity has a universal appeal. A brief summary of his ideas shows his message to be consistent. He was a born reformer who courageously fought for justice, equity, and humanity.

The political economy of the twentieth century was one of Shaw's chief targets. To him a just distribution of wealth under Capitalism was impossible. He considered the present practice of democracy a delusion. Communism could not be achieved since the forcing of men to work precluded its failure. A dictatorship was efficient but temporary -- good only for the life of the dictator. Shaw advocated a Social Democracy and made the suggestions listed earlier for its accomplishment.

Religion he attacked with some of his grimmest wit. Shaw said that the practice of Christianity had been defeated by

the Church. He did not believe in the present system of revenge and atonement, but in responsibility for one's irrevocable acts. The virtue of humility he found less Christian than joyousness and courage to act. His God was no Jehovah, but an impersonal one who was experimenting with man toward a higher form of life. This process he called Life Force of Creative Evolution.

Shaw thought that modern education inhibited learning. He did not approve of the institution of marriage, but thought that it was necessary until his suggested reform might improve conditions. To him the present interpretation of law was stupid as well as immoral. Shaw found that the practice of medicine was outrageous, and should be improved by a program of preventive medicine. In science, the current practice of detailed experimenting, vivisection, and passing fads encouraged morbid curiosity rather than accurate results. The soldiering of the British Empire promoted moral degradation in the participants and in the nation. Shaw felt that journalism and the stage should be instruments for public enlightenment, forums for the discussions of public problems.

To Shaw, any lip-service to the orthodoxies meant the reversal of honest goodness. Conventional goodness was not morality: passion, courage, responsibility, and optimism were, to him, the moving forces of the world.

Comedy is a form of expression particularly adapted to Shaw's purpose and to his personality. Above all, he is a great humorist, an artist in presenting comedy. He has used this great comic sense as a solvent of unpalatable truths.

The problems that Shaw posed are still current though he has seen tremendous advancement in the socialization of his own country and of the world. By his ability to see things as they are and by his irresistible brilliance, he has kept questions before the public. If he has fallen short of his "mission" of reform, he has performed great service in his use of propaganda. In the preface to Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, he said: "I had not achieved success, but I had produced an uproar." In his later years as his powers waned, he felt sad at the slow process by which society changed.

It may be still too early to consider Shaw's chance of permanence. He has covered contemporary civilization with hasty sketches of politics, religion, society, and personal morality. Although his pictures have been brilliant and penetrating rather than exhaustive, the impression on the public has been deeper because of these qualities. The lazy minority has punished him by finding everything that he did humorous or mystifying; for these readers, the sincerity of his message was entirely lost in the paradox.

Those who enjoy his intellectual acuteness and his wonderful sense of the ridiculous will enjoy his drama even though the discussion becomes dated. The touching scenes of Saint Joan will continue to be great drama, and the fantastic treatment of family relations will find a sympathetic audience. Man and Superman with all of its wit and wisdom will be a delight to the generations that follow this age which found it a great literary and dramatic masterpiece.

Archibald Henderson has said that Shaw and Shakespeare are the immortals of English drama. Certainly a critical review of Shaw's drama points to that conclusion. His plays have encircled the globe. He has received wide acclaim in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Holland, and Finland. Germany has played Shaw more constantly and more widely than either Great Britain or America. He is one of the few English dramatists frequently translated into Russian. More than three hundred performances of his plays have been given in Poland. Hungary also has been most successful with his plays. Spain, Italy, and France have been slower in adopting his drama but have had subsequent success with it. Through the productions of Mansfield, Daly, and Lorraine, America did much to establish Shaw as a dramatist. England has supported his plays and has given him conspicuous recognition in the Malvern Festivals.⁸⁴

84. Henderson: Op. cit., pp. 302-330.

Shaw has been one of the few English authors to attain international literary recognition during his lifetime. Furthermore, Shaw has attained world-supremacy as a dramatist under the same conditions. With such remarkable contemporary success it seems reasonable to prophesy that Shaw has won the laurel of enduring fame.

Of the many acclaims received by Shaw, Winston Churchill has probably voiced the opinion of the man in the street -- the man whose lot Shaw was trying to better. Churchill said:

It is a source of pride to any nation to have nursed one of those recording sprites who can illumine to the eye of remote posterity many aspects of the age in which we live. Saint, sage, and clown; venerable, profound, and irresistible, Bernard Shaw receives, if not the salute, at least the hand-clapping of a generation which honors him as another link in the humanities of peoples, and the greatest living master of letters in the English-speaking world.⁸⁵

⁸⁵. Winston Churchill: Great Contemporaries, New York, G.P. Putnam Sons X, p. 44.

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LIST OF PLAYS BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
USED FOR THIS STUDY

1. Androcles and the Lion
2. Arms and the Man
3. Back to Methuselah
4. Caesar and Cleopatra
5. Candida
6. Captain Brassbound's Conversion
7. Cymbeline
8. Fanny's First Play
9. Getting Married
10. Heartbreak House
11. John Bull's Other Island
12. Major Barbara
13. Man and Superman
14. Man of Destiny
15. Misalliance
16. Mrs. Warren's Profession
17. On the Rocks
18. Overruled
19. Pymalion
20. Saint Joan
21. The Apple Cart

22. The Dark Lady of the Sonnets
23. The Devil's Disciple
24. The Doctors' Dilemma
25. The Philanderer
26. The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet
27. Too True to Be Good
28. Village Wooing
29. Widowers' Houses
30. You Never Can Tell