

Chapter Three

Back to Methuselah

Shavian Drama Between *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah*



Shavian drama between *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah* does not deal extensively with the topic of evolution. Shaw makes no effort between these two plays to present a coherent body of evolutionary doctrine, but references in some of his texts may clarify his relationship to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and other figures that we have dealt with here. The major plays of this period, plays such as *Major Barbara*, *Androcles and the Lion*, and *Heartbreak House* may relate, even if indirectly, to his evolutionary stance.

Major Barbara contains several statements about Shaw's philosophical predecessors, and his preference for purely English, or British, philosophers over their continental counterparts. *Androcles and the Lion* contains a critique of Christianity that at first reading suggests Nietzsche's critique, while *Heartbreak House* relates to the events of World War I, events that caused Shaw to despair of humanity and to present his doctrine of the need for the extension of human life to 300 years. All of these plays are important and interesting in their own right.

Major Barbara

Between 1903 and June of 1906, when Shaw wrote the preface to *Major Barbara*, his attitude towards Schopenhauer and Nietzsche seems to have changed. In 1903 Shaw associated himself with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, but by the time he wrote the later play he attributed his philosophy to the work of minor British writers. Shaw wrote to William Archer in a letter dated August 27, 1903 and said, "My men are Wagner, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, who have, as you know, nobody to fight for them..." (*Letters*, II, 350). Archer replied:

You say "your men are Wagner, Ibsen, Tolstoy, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche"—I should reverse it & say you are *their* man. Why should this be? Why should you always be flying somebody else's banner and shouting somebody else's war cry, with only the addition of your own Irish accent? (*Letters*, II, 356)

Shaw in his reply to Archer, dated September 2, 1903, retorts:

In the fougue of your theme, which is that the book [*Man and Superman*] is a mere rechauffée of stale Shavianized Nietzsche &c, you say that the cycle theory is Nietzschean.... It is news to me that Nietzsche ever alluded to the subject—I must really read some of his stuff. (*Letters*, II, 357)

If Shaw's statement is true, then he never read *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, and was unaware of Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence. The passage that Archer had referred to occurs in the dream sequence of *Man and Superman*. The Devil has told Juan that, "all his-

tory is nothing but a record of the oscillations of the world between these two extremes [Heaven and Hell].” Juan continues the image by referring to “the clockmaker’s pendulum,” and saying that, “the history of each oscillation . . . is but the history of the last oscillation” (III, 644–45). In the omitted portion of Shaw’s reply he had attributed the cycle theory to Thomas Tyler. Shaw, in his preface to *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, gives a description of Tyler and his cycle theory. The theory is a “hideous conception . . . according to which the history of mankind and the universe keeps eternally repeating itself without the slightest variation throughout eternity” (II, 619).

Archibald Henderson, Shaw’s authorized biographer, received a letter from Shaw that gives his opinion on Nietzsche’s work:

...his [Nietzsche’s] erudition I believe to be all nonsense: I think he was academic in the sense of having a great deal of secondhand booklearning about him, and don’t care for him except when he is perfectly original—that is, when he is dealing with matters which a peasant might have dealt with if he had brains enough, and had the run of a library. You feel how clever and imaginative he is, and how much he has derived from writers of genius and from his own humanity about men and nations; but there is a want of actual contact knowledge about him; he is always the speculative university professor or the solitary philosopher and poet, never quite the worker and man of affairs or the executive artist in solid materials. . . . It annoys me to see English writers absolutely ignoring the work of British thinkers, and swallowing foreign celebrities—whether philosophers or opera-singers—without a grain of salt. It shows an utter want of intellectual self respect; and the result of it is that Nietzsche’s views, instead of being added soberly to the existing body of philosophy, are treated as if they were a sort of music-hall performance. (*Letters*, II, 553)¹

This represents a change of attitude from Shaw’s earlier statements and an explanation for his implicit rejection of his previously stated affinity. When Shaw wrote the preface to *Major Barbara*, he attempted to play down his erudition:

Whenever my view strikes them as being at all outside the range of, say, an ordinary suburban churchwarden, they conclude that I am echoing Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Strindberg, Tolstoy, or some other heresiarch in northern or eastern Europe.

I confess there is something flattering in this simple faith in my accomplishment as a linguist and my erudition as a philosopher. (I, 299)

Shaw continues his protestations of linguistic and philosophical incompetence by describing Charles Lever’s book *A Day’s Ride* and then asking why his critics:

derive me from a Norwegian author of whose language I do not know three words, and of whom I knew nothing until years after the Shavian *Anschaung* was already unequivocally declared in books full of what came, ten years later, to be perfunctorily labeled Ibsenism? (I, 300)

¹ The letter is dated September 5, 1905. Also quoted in Archibald Henderson, *George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century*, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956) 770.

Shaw's prose does not normally use foreign phrases, except for his references to operas and to music, and yet in this passage he introduces the German word *Anschauung* when the English words "view," or "viewpoint" would have been equally clear.² The reason for this may be that he is replying to critics who have used similar terms in discussing his plays. Holroyd has described Shaw's first encounter with Ibsen:

In January 1886, on the first floor of a Bloomsbury lodging house, while chatting and munching caramels, Shaw had gone through the part of Kogstad in *A Doll's House*, while Eleanor Marx played Nora Helmer; but he had "a very vague notion of what it was about." Ibsen's name does not appear in his letters before 1889, and we have Archer's word that he had "barely heard Ibsen's name" two years before. But by 1891 he has appropriated him.³

Shaw's point about knowing Ibsen's language is falsely ingenuous. To know an author thoroughly it is necessary to know his language, particularly in the case of poetry and prose style. To know his thought, it is not always necessary to know the language; much of the thought of an author can be gleaned from translations. In order for the events of a plot, the thing to which Aristotle assigned primacy, to have an effect it is only necessary to see the drama or read the novel even in translation.⁴ Shaw's knowledge of Ibsen may have derived from Archer's translations but that does not preclude him from knowing and understanding things such as the plot, the thought, and the structure of the Norwegian dramatist's work.

Shaw is also at pains to deny his affinity with Schopenhauer:

Long before I ever read a word by Schopenhauer, or even knew whether he was a philosopher or a chemist, the Socialist revival of the eighteen-eighties brought me into contact, both literary and personal, with Ernest Belfort Bax, an English Socialist and philosophic essayist and philosophical essayist, whose handling of modern feminism would provoke romantic protests from Schopenhauer himself, or even Strindberg. As a matter of fact I hardly noticed Schopenhauer's disparagements of women when they came under my notice later on, so thoroughly had Bax familiarized me with the homoist attitude, and forced me to recognize the extent to which public opinion, and consequently legislation and jurisprudence, is corrupted by feminist sentiment. (I, 301-02)

Shaw could have known Schopenhauer in translation, but he was at pains to deny a direct knowledge of Nietzsche because of his lack of German. We have already seen that in a 1912 footnote to *The Quintessence* he mentioned Miss Borchardt, the German mathematician, and her comment on Nietzsche. The story is first given publicly in the preface to *Major Barbara*, and it is here that Shaw protests his lack of German.⁵ Shaw contends that, "Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, is the victim in England of a single much quoted sentence containing the phrase 'big blonde beast.'" He further asserts that his understanding of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is not that one that looks "for the salvation of society to the des-

² Shaw uses another German phrase somewhat later when he refers to the proletariat and its "damned wantlessness" (*verdammte Bedürfnislosigkeit*) (I, 311).

³ Holroyd, *Love*, 199-200.

⁴ See Aristotle's comments in *Poetics*, 14. Bekker number 1453^b2-3. "The plot should be so constructed that even without seeing the play anyone hearing of the incidents thrills with fear and pity as a result of what occurs. So would anyone feel who heard the story of Oedipus. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 49.

⁵ Shaw gave the same story to Henderson in the letter previously quoted. See Shaw, *Letters*, II, 553.

potism of a single Napoleonic Superman...” (I, 303). Shaw mentions Stuart-Glennie’s theory that:

Christianity is part of an epoch... produced by the necessity in which the numerically inferior white races found themselves to impose their domination on the colored races by priestcraft... Here was the slave-morality of view formulated by a Scotch philosopher long before we all began chattering about Nietzsche. (I, 304)

Stuart-Glennie’s theory, assuming that Shaw’s presentation of it is accurate, is a racial theory, something that Nietzsche’s was not. The slave morality and the master morality belong to different types of people, and it is not necessary to be an Aryan to subscribe to the master morality, or to be a Dravidian to subscribe to the slave morality.⁶ Shaw recognizes this distinction but implies that he subscribes to the view of Stuart-Glennie:

As this process is in operation still, and can be studied at first hand not only in our Church schools and in the struggle between our modern proprietary classes and the proletariat, but in the part played by Christian missionaries in reconciling the black races of Africa to their subjugation by European Capitalism, we can judge for ourselves whether the initiative came from above or below. (I, 303-4)

Shaw is distancing himself from Nietzsche’s view that slave morality is a form of psychic compensation that rewards the slave for his submissiveness and patience. He has already done this implicitly by beginning his description of Nietzsche’s views with, “Nietzsche, as I gather....” The implicature of “as I gather” is that Shaw is disclaiming direct acquaintance with Nietzsche’s work.

Shaw is deliberately, for whatever reason, attempting to distance himself from the continental philosophers and at the same time to boost their British counterparts. Shaw’s knowledge of Nietzsche was neither detailed nor profound, and this may account for Shaw’s shift in attitude.

Shaw uses Nietzsche, in this preface, as a way of boosting Samuel Butler:

It drives one almost to despair of English literature when one sees so extraordinary a study of English life as Butler’s posthumous *Way of All Flesh* making so little impression that when, some years later, I produce plays in which Butler’s extraordinarily fresh, free and future-piercing suggestions have an obvious share, I am met with nothing but vague cacklings about Ibsen and Nietzsche.... In Sicily there is a Via Samuele Butler. When an English tourist sees it, he either asks “Who the devil was Samuele Butler?” or wonders why the Sicilians should perpetuate the memory of the author of *Hudibras*. (I, 313)⁷

Shaw’s play derives its dramatic force from the interaction of the Barbara, Undershaft, Cusins triad. Undershaft, like Cusins, may be modelled on a real person (Holroyd mentions Alfred Nobel, Friedrich Alfred Krupp, and Basil Zaharoff as possible candidates), but

⁶ Shaw’s letter to Henderson also mentions Stuart-Glennie. He regards Nietzsche’s theory as “an impression, and Stuart-Glennie’s [as] a piece of history.” Shaw, *Letters*, II, 554.

⁷ Shaw may have seen the street during one of his cruises. Holroyd mentions Shaw’s cruise on the SS *Lusitania* in 1899, and his trip to Italy in 1903, but does not specifically say if or when Shaw went to Sicily. Holroyd, *Power*, 6, 60–62.

in a symbolic sense the opposition is that of the man of action and that of “the fastidious scholar trying to find his place in the political world.”⁸ Undershaft’s open selling of armaments to either side in a conflict resembles the Schopenhauerian will; it is open to both good and evil. The weapons that Undershaft makes can be used by Cossacks to oppress people in the streets or by the same people to kill Cossacks. The armaments are morally neutral in this respect, “Undershaft embodies Shaw’s concept of the Life Force, a mindless, aimless power for good-or-evil depending (like all technology) on what human beings decide to do with it.”⁹ The Barbara, Undershaft, Cusins triad can be read as superego, id, and ego, or in terms of the Shavian categories of *The Quintessence* as idealist, philistine, realist. The third act, coming after Barbara’s loss of faith, with its deliberate echo Christ’s words on the cross, is an attempt to integrate the triad into a unity. The union of Barbara and Cusins is in effect a union of Cusins’ “intelligence and imagination,” Barbara’s “spiritual passion,” and Undershaft’s “money and material strength.”¹⁰ This union is like the union of Tanner and Ann that is the final goal of *Man and Superman*. Tanner needs Ann in order to move from the wholly immaterial world into the practical, real world, to immerse himself in the details of “flesh and blood,” and Ann needs Tanner in order to fulfill her mission of bringing to the world the Superman. *Major Barbara*, like *Man and Superman*, closes with the comic gamos in which the disparate elements are united. Cusins exhibits the political idealism of Gilbert Murray, who with Romain Rolland, was partly responsible for the inspiration of *Geneva*, and the decision to “make war on war” is the decision of someone who has accepted the reality of his passion for changing the world and the reality of the power represented by Undershaft (I, 440, 443).¹¹

Major Barbara is, in a sense, a capitulation to the Devil of *Man and Superman*’s Hell scene. The power that wins over Barbara and Cusins is the power of making “more efficient engines of destruction.” This is not a force of life, but a force of death and seems to bring it into line with the Devil’s great speech that begins, “And is man any the less destroying himself” (III, 619–21). Holroyd describes it as “the night mare of a man with ‘honour and humanity on my side, wit in my head, skill in my hand, and a higher life for my aim’, who has a vision of world war to come.” When the war came, it was not only the young survivors who emerged changed and embittered; it so affected Shaw that it was only “through the fantasy of *Back to Methuselah*” that he was able to “refashion humankind in the image of his heart’s desire.”¹²

***Androcles and the Lion* and the Shavian/Nietzschean Critique of Christianity**

In 1888, at the height of the murder of London prostitutes in Whitechapel, Shaw had written a letter to *The Star* and signed it with the initials “J. C.” Shaw’s letter, as has already been said, is similar to Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity, insofar as it suggests that Christianity is primarily the invention of Paul. What is noteworthy in the letter is that there is an implicit repudiation of retributive justice revealed in the phrase, “my father’s old lines of an eye for an eye,” and a Marxist/Socialist critique of Paul and his epistles (i.e., “an aris-

⁸ Holroyd, *Power*, 101, 104–5. The suggestion that it may be Krupp Holroyd attributes to William Manchester.

⁹ Holroyd, *Power*, 109.

¹⁰ Holroyd, *Power*, 110.

¹¹ For the role of Gilbert Murray and Romain Rolland in suggesting *Geneva* see the program note to that play (V, 649–50).

¹² Holroyd, *Power*, 115.

tocrat of the Roman set,” and “the silliest middle class stuff on record”). These comments do not necessarily derive from Nietzsche, nor could they, given the fact that *Der Antichrist* was not published until 1895, derive from that work. Criticisms of Christianity that derived from the Germanic “Higher Criticism” were the source of much controversy in the Victorian era, and we have already seen how David Strauss and his book *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet* had influenced English life and letters.¹³ What these remarks do show is an attitude towards Christianity that was similar to Nietzsche’s attitude but not necessarily identical to it.

Shaw’s preface to *Androcles and the Lion* asserts a position much like the one of Stuart-Glennie described in connection with *Major Barbara*:

... a little religion is good for children and serves morality, keeping the poor in good humor or in awe by promising rewards in heaven or threatening torments in hell.... (V, 330–31)

This is clearly a position that affirms the top-down imposition of morality by a master class upon a class of slaves. Shaw continues with this sociological critique by contrasting justification by works and justification by faith. He finds the root of justification by faith in the inability of the poor to afford sacrifices and “subscriptions to charities” and other works:

... this quickens the moral criticism of the poor to such an extent, that they soon find the moral law within them revolting against the idea of buying off the deity with gold and gifts, though they are still quite ready to buy him off with the paper money of praise and professions of repentance. (V, 332)

Thus, even when the poor decide that the method of purchasing salvation by offering rams and goats or bringing gold to the altar must be wrong because they cannot afford it, we still do not feel “saved” without a sacrifice and a victim. (V, 333)

The second citation comes in the course of Shaw’s explanation of the substitutional nature of the atonement. In order to make salvation attainable for all, it is necessary to make it cheap. This cheapening is done by making one person the victim who suffers for all; his sacrifice thus takes the place once and for all of all other sacrifices. Salvation is essentially cheapened by substituting the one perfect victim. The completion of this cheapening is made when it is affirmed, by Luther and Calvin, that works are nonsalvific and that the only virtue that counts is faith. Shaw’s view is that Luther “may be said to have abolished the charge for admission to heaven. Paul had advocated this; but Luther and Calvin did it” (V, 335).

The yearning for chiliastic fulfillment, the Utopian fantasies of the poor who are “hopelessly... cut off from enjoyment in this world,” finds its fulfillment in a belief that “the end of the world is at hand, and that it will presently pass away and be replaced by a kingdom of happiness, justice, and bliss in which the rich and the oppressors and the unjust shall have no share” (V, 337). This same yearning, and Shaw does not acknowledge this, although it can be found in Nietzsche’s critique of socialism, can take the form of a vast resentment that sees the destruction of the capitalist classes and the establishment of “the dictatorship of the proletariat” as its ultimate goal. Shaw deliberately ignores at this point

¹³ See page 27, above.

the similarity to be found in the dreams of Marxist dialecticians and Christian millenarianists.

Shaw, in order to drive home his point that Jesus does not believe in the “inveterate superstition that suffering is gratifying to God,” fails to attribute “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” to Hosea and instead assigns it to Jesus as a frequent saying of His.¹⁴ The point of this is not to accuse Shaw of faulty scholarship or deficient learning in the Bible, but to reemphasize that Shaw chooses a romantic interpretation of the Bible and ignores the fact that the New Testament values have their counterparts in the Old.

Shaw’s evaluation of Paul is not that he was a convert to Christianity, but that Paul converted Christianity to a religion that suited him:

The conversion of Paul was no conversion at all: it was Paul who converted the religion that had raised one man above sin and death into a religion that delivered millions of men so completely into their dominion that their own common nature became a horror to them, and the religious life became a denial of life. (V, 396)

This conversion of Jesus’s religion into Pauline Christianity brought with it the doctrine of original sin, and this original sin is found not in an act but in our consciousness:

The original sin was not the eating of the forbidden fruit, but the consciousness of sin which the fruit produced. The moment Adam and Eve tasted the apple they found themselves ashamed of their sexual relation, which until then had seemed quite innocent to them; and there is no getting over the hard fact that this shame, or state of sin, has persisted to this day and is one of the strongest of our instincts. (V, 397)

Shaw has implicitly accepted Milton’s version of the fall in *Paradise Lost*, one which saw Adam and Eve as indulging in sexual relations prior to the fall and which sees the shame of nudity and sex as being postlapsarian. Shaw had previously equated the “terror of sin and the terror of death” with the “terror of sex and the terror of life” (V, 395). These terrors he found to be present in Paul, and as a result of Paul’s hysteria and delirium Shaw is able to say that “There is not one word of Pauline Christianity in the characteristic utterances of Jesus” (V, 399). Paul is “more Jewish than the Jews, more Roman than the Romans... full of startling confessions and self-revelations that would not surprise us if they were slipped into the pages of Nietzsche” (V, 401–2).

Shaw’s evaluation of Jesus’s theological and economic doctrine is that:

...Jesus was talking the most penetrating good sense when he preached Communism; when he declared that the reality behind the popular belief in God was a creative spirit in ourselves called by him the Heavenly Father and by us Evolution, Élan Vital, Life Force and other names....(V, 409)

The fact that Jesus made good economic sense also makes it “impossible ... for us to believe that he was talking equally good sense when he so suddenly announced that he was himself a visible concrete God; that his flesh and blood were miraculous food for us” (V, 409).

Shaw again distorts the meaning of certain phrases and teachings. The Heavenly Father does not appear to be some vague creative spirit, but Shaw wants to claim Jesus for himself,

¹⁴ The quotation can be found in Hosea 6:6. An inspection of several concordances failed to yield a New Testament source.

so any differences between his thought and that of Jesus must be eliminated. He therefore equates the Heavenly Father with the doctrine of Creative Evolution; Jesus thus becomes a precursor of Bergson and Shaw.

How does this compare to Nietzsche? Nietzsche had found, in *Der Antichrist*, that the essential thing about Jesus was his practice:

This “bringer of glad tidings” died as he had lived, as he had taught—*not* to “redeem men” but to show how one must live. This practice is his legacy to mankind: his behavior before the judges, before the catchpoles, before the accusers and kinds of slander and scorn—his behavior on the *cross*. He does not resist, he does not defend his right, he takes no step which might ward off the worst; on the contrary, he *provokes* it. And he begs, he suffers, he loves *with* those, *in* those who do him evil. *Not* to resist, *not* to be angry, *not* to hold responsible—but to resist not even the evil one—to *love* him. (*Antichrist*, 35)¹⁵

Christ’s legacy, in Nietzsche’s view, is his practice, his deeds or works. Nietzsche held that Luther required justification by faith because he was unable to perform works. In order to achieve the certainty of salvation that he required Luther substituted faith. This, of course, is very convenient, since all one has to do is ask if one believes, and upon finding that one does, an immediate feeling of reassurance can flood over one.

Shaw’s critique of Christianity is not the same as Nietzsche’s criticisms in books such as *Beyond Good and Evil* or *The Antichrist*. Examples of his attitude in *The Antichrist* will be discussed and a final comparison made to Shaw’s ethics and knowledge of Nietzsche.

Shaw, we saw in our discussion of *Major Barbara*, had summarized Nietzsche’s views on noble and slave morality. Nietzsche, in aphorism 5 of *The Antichrist*, had applied this distinction to Christianity:

Christianity has sided with all that is weak and base, with all failures; it has made an ideal of whatever *contradicts* the instinct of the strong life to preserve itself; it has corrupted the reason even of those strongest in spirit by teaching men to consider the supreme values of the spirit as something sinful, as something that leads into error—as temptations.¹⁶

This sees Christianity as a phenomenon that arises from the dispossessed, what Nietzsche describes as the *chandala* mentality, that of the outcast, the untouchables of the Hindu caste system.¹⁷

The good tidings, the *evangel* of Christianity is for Nietzsche the discovery that, “There are no longer any opposites; the kingdom of heaven belongs to the *children*.” This is a form of infantilism that has “receded into the spiritual.” This faith is its own reward and is expressed in a series of signs (32).¹⁸ This concept leads to Nietzsche calling Jesus an anti-realist:

For this anti-realist, that not a word is taken literally is precisely the presupposition of being able to speak at all. Among Indians he would have availed himself of Sankhya concepts; among the Chinese, of those of Lao-tse—without having felt any difference. Using the expression somewhat tolerantly one

¹⁵ Quoted previously on page 53, above.

¹⁶ Nietzsche, *Portable*, 571–72.

¹⁷ See Nietzsche’s comment on Paul in aphorism 58. Nietzsche, *Portable*, 649.

¹⁸ Nietzsche, *Portable*, 604–5.

could call Jesus a “free spirit”—he does not care for anything solid: the word kills, all that is solid kills.... He speaks only of the innermost: “life” or “truth” or “light” is his word for the innermost—all the rest, the whole of reality, the whole of nature, language itself, has for him only the value of a sign, a simile. (32)¹⁹

The following aphorism repeats a variation on the theme of the evangel:

“Sin”—any distance separating God and man—is abolished: *precisely this is the “glad tidings.”* Blessedness is not promised, it is not tied to conditions: it is the only reality—the rest is a sign with which to speak of it.

The consequence of such a state projects itself into a new practice, the genuine evangelical practice. It is not a “faith” that distinguishes the Christian: the Christian *acts*, he is distinguished by acting *differently*: by not resisting, either in words or in his heart, those who treat him ill....

The life of the Redeemer was nothing other than *this* practice—nor was his death anything else. He no longer required any formulas, any rites for his intercourse with God—not even prayer. He broke with the whole Jewish doctrine of repentance and reconciliation; he knows that it is only in the *practice* of life that one feels “divine,” “blessed,” “evangelical,” at all times a “child of God.” Not “repentance,” not “prayer for forgiveness,” are the ways to God: *only the evangelical practice* leads to God, indeed, it *is* “God”! (33)²⁰

The whole aphorism reads almost like a sermon exhorting one to a more Christian way of life, but one which does not countenance the distinction between faith and works. Nietzsche’s emphasis on evangelical practice stands in contrast to what Shaw sees as the Lutheran/Calvinist cheapening of salvation by making it dependent on faith. Nietzsche’s conception advanced here does not depend on future rewards, since the promise of blessedness has, in his view, been abolished because that blessedness is immanent, not transcendent. A parable by Christ becomes a σημειον (sign) that refers to the reality of this immanent blessedness. This understanding of Nietzsche’s produces a reading of an utterance such as “The kingdom of heaven is within you,” that differs from Shaw’s understanding of it as some principle that is identical to the Life Force.

For Nietzsche Christ was the glad tidings:

The “evangel” *died* on the cross. What has been called “evangel” from that moment on was actually the opposite of that which *he* had lived: “*ill* tidings,” a *dysangel*. It is false to the point of nonsense to find the mark of the Christian in a “faith,” for instance, in the faith in redemption through Christ: only Christian *practice*, a life such as he *lived* who died on the cross, is Christian. (39)²¹

The good news of the evangel is that he has abolished the concept of guilt and done away with any cleavage between God and man. The life of Christ is a living out of the unity of God and man. Paul is responsible for logicalizing the conception of the evangel, so that it becomes an “obscenity” when he says, “*If* Christ was not resurrected from the dead, then our faith is vain.” The evangel then becomes “the most contemptible of all unfulfillable

¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Portable*, 605.

²⁰ Nietzsche, *Portable*, 606–7.

²¹ Nietzsche, *Portable*, 612.

promises, the *impertinent* doctrine of personal immortality” (41).²² Paul is referred to not as someone who brings good news but as a conveyor of ill tidings, as a “dysangelist.”

How much this dysangelist sacrificed to hatred! Above all, the Redeemer: he nailed him to *his own cross*. The life, the example, the doctrine, the death, the meaning and the right of the entire evangel—nothing remained once this hate-inspired counterfeiter realized what alone he could use. (42)²³

Nietzsche’s ultimate evaluation of Paul and of Paul’s conception of God is summed up in a Latin epigram: “*deus, qualem Paulus creavit, dei negatio*” (47).²⁴

Nietzsche, at the end of *The Antichrist*, returns to the concept of the noble morality. He sees the Renaissance as the period of history when there was a possibility for a “*revaluation of Christian values*,” a period during which an attempt was made to bring “the counter-values, the noble values to victory.” This is the period that Luther, a monk, “with all the vengeful instincts of a shipwrecked priest in his system,” was outraged against. “Luther saw the *corruption* of the papacy when precisely the opposite was more than obvious: the old corruption, the *peccatum originale*, Christianity no longer sat on the papal throne.”²⁵ What was enthroned on the chair of Peter was life, “the triumph of life,” a force that said, “yes to all high, beautiful, audacious things” (61).²⁶

Shaw and Nietzsche agree in seeing Paul as the founder of what passes for Christianity in polite society, but Shaw’s other evaluations are sharply divergent from Nietzsche’s. Shaw sees the primary message of Jesus as being one that urges the adoption of a Communist economic system. Nietzsche’s Jesus is apolitical, rather like Nietzsche himself, and his doctrine is focused on practice.²⁷ Shaw sees Jesus as believing in his soteriological role, one which Shaw denies, but he sees the belief in atonement as being cheapened, made more readily available to the masses by the emphasis on faith that is in Paul and that is emphasized again by Luther and Calvin. Shaw sees things through the perspective of a Marxist or Socialist sociology that postulates a class struggle. This is implicit in his adoption of the notions of Stuart-Glennie’s. This postulate serves a rhetorical purpose; it is possible for an agitator to say to the mass of slaves that their masters have imposed certain things on them (names, religion, whatever) to rob them of their resistance. It makes a good rallying cry regardless of its truth. Nietzsche’s description of slave morality, however, sees the numerically greater slaves as being able to impose their values on the masters. This seems to be a more coherent view than the view of Shaw and Stuart-Glennie. Finally, Nietzsche evaluates the Protestant reformation as a disaster because it led to the destruction of the Renaissance. Shaw, except for an interest in Michelangelo, does not seem to have cared much about the Renaissance; to Shaw, especially in a play like *Saint Joan*, the Reformation was about the elevation of the individual at the expense of oppressive structures such as the Church and about the expression of the individual’s relation to God on his own terms.

Shaw may ultimately have read more of Nietzsche between 1903 and 1915, but the influence that Nietzsche had on his thought seems to have been largely confined to suggest-

²² Nietzsche, *Portable*, 613.

²³ Nietzsche, *Portable*, 617.

²⁴ Nietzsche, *Portable*, 627. Translated by Kaufmann as “God, as Paul created his, is the negation of God.”

²⁵ Luther’s trip to Rome took place in 1510. Julius II, Michelangelo’s patron, was on the Papal throne.

²⁶ Nietzsche, *Portable*, 653–54.

²⁷ This should not be taken as implying that Nietzsche’s portrait of Jesus was a self portrait, only that in his view of Christ emphasized this non- or apolitical image.

ing the term Superman that Shaw was to use in his first evolutionary drama. Shaw shows little sympathy for Nietzsche's conceptions of the *Übermensch*, and no understanding of his critique of Christianity or Christian ethics.

Heartbreak House

Heartbreak House, although it is independent of *Back to Methuselah*, is in a sense a prelude to the later play. The theme of disillusionment that pervades Shaw's later play is present in *Heartbreak House* as well. The idea that the human race needs to evolve to a higher level of moral development is likewise present in the earlier play.

Shaw describes *Heartbreak House* as being "cultured, leisured Europe before the war" (I, 449). This group included people like Arthur Balfour and has been described as, "that exquisite group of intellectuals with artistic and aristocratic tastes who... spun for themselves a fashionable paradise between the Athenaeum in London and various grand country houses at weekends." This group of people was to "find an obituary in *Heartbreak House*."²⁸ Part of the mental and cultural equipment of the inhabitants of the house was an acquaintance with the works of the advanced poets and novelists, the "revolutionary biologists and economists," so that it was possible for Shaw to say:

Without at least a few plays by myself and Mr Granville Barker, and a few stories by Mr H. G. Wells, Mr Arnold Bennett, and Mr John Galsworthy, the house would have been out of the movement. You would find Blake among the poets, and beside him Bergson, Butler, Scott Haldane, the poems of Meredith and Thomas Hardy, and, generally speaking, all the literary implements for forming the mind of the perfect modern Socialist and Creative Evolutionist. (I, 451)

This is intended as a description of the leisured and cultured classes of the Edwardian era, but it also describes Shaw and his own literary furnishings, furnishings that consisted of fragments of Blake and Bergson and Nietzsche and others. The judgment that is implied is that this society is a failure, that the phrase *mene, mene tekel upharsin* applies not only to Belshazzar but also to this society. A corollary to this failure of the cultured, leisured classes is the failure of the electorate and of democracy:

It is said that every people has the Government it deserves. It is more to the point that every Government has the electorate it deserves; for the orators of the front bench can edify or debauch an ignorant electorate at will. Thus our democracy moves in a vicious circle of reciprocal worthiness and unworthiness. (I, 452)

The ignorance of the electorate is the result of "a pseudo-science as disastrous as the blackest Calvinism." The predestination of Calvinism leaves the individual, who is without knowledge of his election or reprobateness, without a means of ascertaining his salvation, except his behavior as one of the elect. Positivistic science, however, had removed the categories of salvation and damnation (election and reprobation) from the sphere of thought of the nineteenth century intellectual but had asserted that

²⁸ Holroyd, *Power*, 120.

...salvation and damnation are all nonsense, and that predestination is the central truth of religion, inasmuch as human beings are produced by their environment, their sins and misdeeds being only a series of chemical and mechanical reactions over which they have no control. Such figments as mind, choice, purpose, conscience, will, and so forth, are, they taught, mere illusions, produced because they are useful in the continual struggle of the human machine to maintain its environment in a favorable condition, a process incidentally involving the ruthless destruction or subjection of its competitors for the supply (assumed to be limited) of subsistence available. (I, 454–55)

Shaw's thesis here is that substitution of Darwinism for Calvinism and Protestantism generally does not represent an advance in thought. Mechanical and chemical views of man eliminated moral qualities from consideration. Coupled with a Malthusian view of the relations of population and food supply ("subsistence"), war becomes an inevitable consequence of the need to expand into additional territories in order to secure food. This creed is not accepted by Shaw; he terms it "imbecile and dangerous" and proposes to answer the question of how it "ever came to be accepted by intelligent beings" in his "next volume of plays," presumably *Back to Methuselah*, "which will be entirely devoted to the subject."

The war was a disaster, not only in the historical sense, but also in the moral sense. Shaw's sense of relatedness to other people included the Germans:

To the truly civilized man, to the good European [an echo of Nietzsche], the slaughter of the German youth was as disastrous as the slaughter of the English. Fools exulted in "German losses." They were our losses as well. Imagine exulting in the death of Beethoven because Bill Sikes dealt him his death blow! (I, 465)

The echo of Nietzsche here reminds us that Nietzsche viewed himself not as a citizen of the Germany of Bismarck and the Kaiser, but in the total context of Europe, particularly the culture of France and Italy. The war is not a disaster for England, or Belgium alone but for that entire cultural field that is to be found in Europe. The contrast of Beethoven and Bill Sikes is not just the contrast of German culture and English hooliganism but a statement that Beethoven belongs to England just as much as he belongs to Germany.

Shaw could see the war as a conflict in which fields of Shakespeares and Platos squared off against fields of Goethes and Beethovens, but he seems to have been strangely deficient in any sense of personal involvement:

To me, with my mind full of the hideous cost of Neuve Chapelle, Ypres, and the Gallipoli landing, the fuss about the Lusitania seemed almost a heartless impertinence, though I was well acquainted personally with the three best-known victims, and understood, better perhaps than most people, the misfortune of the death of Lane. (I, 467)

This concern for the fates of thousands or millions seems a strange distancing from the effects of the war. It is as if Shaw could not exhibit his concern for his friends and acquaintances who were at the front and had to hide behind the mask of concern for the larger effort. This feeling of despair, the sense of loss at seeing the "flower of English youth," disappear at the Somme and the Marne, is reflected in the preface and text of *Back to Meth-*

uselah. It is, in fact, the war that gave the impetus to Shaw to return to the topic of evolution and to predicate as a serious proposition that the span of human life must be extended to three hundred years if the human race is to survive. This extension of life is necessary because though it is “as Byron said, ‘not difficult to die,’” it is “enormously difficult to live,” and the attainment of the knowledge of how to live will take at least three hundred years (I, 474).

Both Heartbreak House and Horseback Hall are doomed at the hands of social revolutionaries:

Meanwhile the Bolshevik picks and petards are at work on the foundations of both buildings; and though the Bolsheviks may be buried in the ruins, their deaths will not save the edifices. Unfortunately they can be built again. Like Doubting Castle, they have been demolished many times by successive Great-hearts, and rebuilt by Simple, Sloth, and Presumption, by Feeble Mind and Much Afraid, and by all the jurymen of Vanity Fair. Another generation of “secondary education” at our ancient public schools and the cheaper institutions that ape them will be quite sufficient to keep the two going until the next war. (I, 475)²⁹

Wise social policy is here identified with Bolshevism, but, like his earlier *Devil*, Shaw notes the successive demolition and reconstruction of the edifices of Heartbreak House and Horseback Hall. Shaw’s conclusion on the events of the war is savage in its condemnation and despair: “If men will not learn until their lessons are written in blood, why, blood they must have, their own for preference” (I, 485).

Shaw’s conclusion in the preface echoes the theme that of the “good European,” that he had struck earlier:

To the theatre it will not matter. Whatever Bastilles fall, the theatre will stand....Imperial Romanoff, said to have perished miserably by a more summary method of murder, is perhaps alive or perhaps dead: nobody cares more than if he had been a peasant...Prime Ministers and Commanders-in-Chief have passed from a brief glory as Solons and Caesars into failure and obscurity as closely on one another’s heels as the descendants of Banquo; but Euripides and Aristophanes, Shakespear and Molière, Goethe and Ibsen remain fixed in their everlasting seats. (I, 486)

Shaw asserts the primacy of art over politics, a position that may not be that far from the *Devil*’s revilement of man for not inventing anything in the “arts of peace.”³⁰ In his explaining why he did not write plays during the war Shaw says, “You cannot make war on war and on your neighbor at the same time.” This, however, was something that Shaw, who had already mentioned Euripides and Aristophanes, and who was a friend of the classicist Gilbert Murray, should have known was just the time when the two Athenian artists made war on war.

The play itself is in many ways a cry of despair at the stupidity of humanity. Captain Shotover asks:

²⁹ Social revolutionaries are not to be confused with the pre-revolutionary Russian political group termed Social Revolutionaries. It is interesting to note that at present it seems to be the Bolsheviks and not the Heartbreakers or Horsebackians that have the edifice crumbling around them.

³⁰ See the speech beginning “And is man...” (III, 619–21).

What then is to be done? Are we to be kept for ever in the mud by these hogs to whom the universe is nothing but a machine for greasing their bristles and filling their snouts? (I, 525)

Within these questions is a recognition of the despair brought about by a mechanistic view of the universe, one in which mind has been banished. Politicians become not men but hogs, and the entire universe is reduced not to a Satanic mill but to a machine to care for the hogs. The recipe for dealing with the hogs is given by Hector Hushabye:

I tell you I have often thought of this killing of human vermin. Many men have thought of it. Decent men are like Daniel in the lion's den: their survival is a miracle; and they do not always survive.... What are our terrors to theirs? Give me the power to kill them; and I'll spare them in sheer—
CAPTAIN SHOTOVER [*cutting in sharply*] Fellow feeling?
HECTOR. No. I should kill myself if I believed that. I must believe that my spark, small as it is, is divine, and that the redlight over their door is hell fire. I should spare them in simple magnanimous pity. (I, 526–27)

Hector's method is not that of the Cheka, and neither is it the method of Shaw himself; it is not what he desires or what the end of the play indicates. When the apocalyptic raid comes, it is precisely the human vermin, Boss Mangan and Billie Dunn, who seek refuge in the gravel pits and are blown to bits. The Zeppelin raid, however, brings a change to the inhabitants of Heartbreak House. There is an almost sexual aspect to Mrs. Hushabye's "But what a glorious experience! I hope they'll come again tomorrow night" and Ellie Dunn's, "Oh, I hope so" (I, 598).

This sexual excitement, although voluptuous, is not creative, not in the evolutionary sense. The bombing raid that closes the play is earlier misidentified as a train and identified by Hector as "Heaven's threatening growl of disgust at us useless futile creatures." Hector continues with lines that anticipate Lilith in *Back to Methuselah*:

I tell you, one of two things must happen. Either out of the darkness some new creation will come to supplant us as we have supplanted the animals, or the heavens will fall in thunder and destroy us. (I, 578)

The Boss is, like the short-lived people in *Back to Methuselah*, a child. Hector compares Mangan and his group to children:

Think of the powers of destruction that Mangan and his mutual admiration gang wield! It's madness: it's like giving a torpedo to a badly brought up child to play at earthquakes with. (I, 592)

These children have no interest, as the Devil pointed out, in the arts of life. Shotover gets £500 for a lifeboat, but gets £12,000 for the "ship with the magnetic keel that sucked up submarines." The expenses of Shotover's household are such that they "cannot afford life-saving inventions." Shotover, to make money, should invent "something that will murder half Europe at one bang" (I, 528).

Heartbreak House is a prelude, as already pointed out, to the last major evolutionary play, *Back to Methuselah*. The themes of the later play are already here. These themes are: the incapacity of Europe's statesmen to lead in either peace or war; the need for man's evolution to keep pace with his armaments before he destroys himself; elimination of the po-

litically unfit. The elimination of the unfit is a theme that will be found in his minor evolutionary play *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*. These themes and their relation to the question of Shaw's evolutionary views are explored in the sections that follow.

The Evolutionary Drama of *Back to Methuselah*

Shaw had headed one section of his preface to *Heartbreak House* "The Wicked Half Century," and he picked up the theme again in the opening of his preface to *Back to Methuselah*, which is headed, "The Infidel Half Century." Shaw, in the earlier preface, had begun an attack upon Darwinism and the faith in natural selection. The attack is continued in the preface to *Back to Methuselah*, and it begins by asserting that Darwin is not the discoverer of evolution. Shaw's assertion is that:

If Darwin had really led the world at one bound from the book of Genesis to Heredity, to Modification of Species by Selection, and to Evolution, he would have been a philosopher and a prophet as well as an eminent professional naturalist, with geology as a hobby. (II, x)

Darwin, according to Shaw, came to be accredited not just as an evolutionist, "but as *the* evolutionist." In order to distinguish themselves from those who knew Darwin, "by his spurious reputation," the people who concentrated on Circumstantial Selection as the method of evolution "were obliged to distinguish themselves...as Neo-Darwinians" (II, xi).

The question of Darwinism and Lamarckism is a political question to Shaw. The relevance of these biological theories to the everyday world of practical politics lies in the inability of man to govern himself. This inability produced World War I and with it the result that "one half of Europe, having knocked the other half down, is trying to kick it to death...a procedure, which is, logically, sound Neo-Darwinism" (II, xii). This procedure, implemented in the treaty of Versailles, is the result of a cowardice born of the lack of a religion. Shaw's postulate, and one that he develops in the course of the preface and the play, is that his religion, that of creative evolution, is to be the modern religion that will enable man to live with his neighbor.

The religion of the past is thoroughly exploded, for Shaw, by the fact that the Bible can be shown not to be literally true. The existence of fossil bivalves in mountain strata invalidates the account of the flood, and the existence of multiple authors for the Torah invalidates the concept of Mosaic authorship. Shaw's record, in the preface, shows that he had experienced this loss of faith in his teens.³¹

The loss of faith is a personal catastrophe for the individual; for a mass of men to lose their faith is a catastrophe for society. The loss of faith in the Bible and in revealed religion meant, in Shaw's view, a substitution of faith in Darwinism for faith in the Biblical religions. Such a Darwinist religion cannot move man to remedy social ills, to improve the human breed because, "Improvement can come only through some senseless accident which must, on the statistical average of accidents, be presently wiped out by some other equally senseless accident" (II, xviii).

The Shavian doctrine of Creative Evolution holds that the accidental nature of evolution is not proved. As Shaw observes of the Creative Evolutionists:

³¹ See II, ix, xx. See also Holroyd, *Love*, 14, 17, 29, 30, 38-9. Holroyd records that Shaw wrote a letter to *Public Opinion* regarding a pair of religious revivalists in 1875. Shaw was then 19 (*Love*, 39).

They have observed the simple fact that the will to do anything can and does, at a certain pitch of intensity set up by the conviction of its necessity, create and organize new tissue to do it with. (II, xviii)

Shaw then draws a comparison between a weight lifter and a philosopher:

If the weight lifter, under the trivial stimulus of an athletic competition, can “put up a muscle,” it seems reasonable to believe that an equally earnest and convinced philosopher could “put by a brain” (II, xviii).



Scene From Barry Jackson's Production of *Back to Methuselah*

This is another case of seeing identities where only similarities exist. Shaw has also confused types of causation. The athletic contest is the final cause of the athlete's activity, but the efficient cause, what actually generates the muscle, is the anabolic response of the muscle during the interval between training sessions. The brain is physiologically different from a muscle, such as the biceps or the quadriceps, and there is no evidence that flooding the brain with blood, as happens to muscles during physical exercise, would be beneficial. This may not be, and probably is not, what Shaw meant, but he has drawn an analogy between the brain and the muscle, so that it does seem obvious to ask how a philosopher would enlarge his brain as an athlete enlarges his muscles. Shaw's contention is that both building muscle and building brains are “directions of vitality to a certain end” and that evolution has produced all sorts of physical arrangements already (II, xviii).

It follows, for Shaw, that death is, as postulated by Weismann, “An expedient to provide for continual renewal without overcrowding” (II, xviii). Shaw's voluntaristic interpretation of nature asserts itself here:

If on opportunist grounds Man now fixes the term of his life at three score and ten years, he can equally fix it at three hundred, or three thousand, or even at the genuine Circumstantial Selection limit, which would be until a sooner-or-later-inevitable fatal accident makes an end of the individual.

Shaw was to show Adam and Eve being disturbed by the sight of a dead fawn, a fawn with a broken neck (II, 3). The sight of the first death is what prompts Eve to raise the question of the possibility of Adam's death. The death of Adam would leave Eve alone, and with her death “There would be only the things on all fours, and the birds, and the snakes.” This condition “must not be” (II, 4). The thing that opposes death is birth, and the concept of birth is introduced to Eve by the Serpent. The serpent in introducing the concept to her

describes how she “thought and thought and thought” and how she has also “willed and willed and willed.”³² As a result of this thinking and willing, the Serpent was able to gather “a part of the life in my body, and shut into a tiny white case made of the stones I had eaten.” The case contains the Serpent’s eggs, and it is from these eggs that more snakes come. The reproductive process seems to have been asexual; there is no mention of a male snake. The principal point to be made is that the snake introduces an alternative form of immortality.³³ The continuity of offspring through birth and reproduction is substituted for personal immortality in the flesh.

The honor of inventing sexual reproduction does not belong to the Serpent; it belongs to Lilith. Lilith, in rabbinical lore, is supposed to be Adam’s first wife, but Shaw’s description of her pictures her as the protohuman out of whom the sexes evolved:

I remember Lilith, who came before Adam and Eve. I was her darling as I am yours. She was alone: there was no man with her.... She had a mighty will: she strove and strove and willed and willed for more moons than there are leaves on all the trees of the garden. Her pangs were terrible: her groans drove sleep from Eden. She said it must never be again: that the burden of renewing life was past bearing: that it was too much for one. And when she cast the skin, lo! there was not one new Lilith but two: one like herself, the other like Adam. You were the one: Adam was the other. (II, 9)

Lilith is female, and we have already seen in *Man and Superman* that Shaw held that man was a product of sexual differentiation by the female, that “She invented him, differentiated him, created him in order to produce something better than the single-sexed process can produce” (III, 624).³⁴

Eve’s response is to ask how this miracle of reproduction can occur, and the Serpent locates the original impulse within imagination:

THE SERPENT.... You imagine what you desire; you will what you imagine; and at last you create what you will.

EVE. How can I create out of nothing?

THE SERPENT. Everything must have been created out of nothing. Look at that thick roll of flesh on your strong arm! That was not always there: you could not climb a tree when I first saw you. But you willed and tried and willed and tried; and your will created out of nothing the roll on your arm until you

³² The serpent is usually thought of as male, partly because of *Paradise Lost*, but Shaw’s stage direction says, “She rears her head...” (II, 6). The picture on the preceding page shows a scene from the Birmingham performance of the first part of the play. Reproduced from Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw: The Lure of Fantasy 1918–1950*, (New York: Random House, 1991) between 84–85. The photograph shows Edith Evans as the Serpent, Gwen Ffrangçon Davies as Eve, and Colin Keith-Johnson as Adam. Also reproduced in Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Theatrical Companion to Shaw: A Pictorial Record of the First Performances of the Plays of Bernard Shaw*, (London: Rockliff, 1954; n.p.: Folcroft Library Editions, 1971; n.p.: Norwood Editions, 1977) 191. The photographs on pages 191–97 of Mander and Mitchenson show that the first production in New York (spread out over February 27, March 6, and March 13, 1922) was expressionistic in its staging. The Birmingham production was apparently more realistic in its stage design. Cast information from Mander and Mitchenson, 184.

³³ The OED does cite stone as meaning testicle in its eleventh principal definition. This usage is dated to 1154. Shaw’s context leaves no doubt that he is not using this ancient meaning.

³⁴ See page 111, above. Strictly speaking this is, within the realm of ontogeny, true. The fetus does not become male until it receives an influx of androgen from the mother. Whether it is true within the realm of phylogeny is probably unknowable.

had your desire, and could draw yourself up with one hand and seat yourself on the bough that was above your head. (II, 10)

Shaw has instantiated the theory of will that he proclaimed in the preface. His theory places the creation of organic tissue in the will to possess the tissue. This theory and his subsequent development of it are open to an objection: the descriptions he gives result in the acquisition of more tissue of an already existing kind, i.e., more muscle, a bigger biceps. For his theory to be a evolutionary theory he must account for the introduction of new kinds of tissue, e.g., for the acquisition of a cornea in a life form that previously had none.

The ultimate point of introducing sexual reproduction is that it gives Adam the choice to die. This choice releases him from the burden of eternal life, and he binds himself to a span of a thousand years (II, 17). This has the effect of binding the future and of removing Adam's fear. This section of the play reflects the philosophy presented in the preface. The preface, up to the point we left off the discussion, is in a sense a commentary on the action of the drama. The Genesis story, as adapted by Shaw, serves as a symbolic representation of the differentiation of woman into man and the linkage of sexual reproduction and death.

Shaw's preface, after proclaiming that *Back to Methuselah* is "a contribution to the modern Bible," continues with a history of the idea of evolution. Shaw sees traces of the idea in Empedocles, who "opined that all forms of life are transformations of four elements, Fire, Air, Earth, and Water, effected by the two innate forces of attraction and repulsion, or love and hate" (II, xix-xx).³⁵ The poet Goethe is described as having "leaped over the facts to the conclusion." Goethe, according to Shaw, held, "that all the shapes of creation were cousins," and there was "some common stock from which all the species had sprung." Erasmus Darwin and Treviranus are described as early evolutionists along with Buffon and Lamarck.

Shaw's description of Lamarck's theory is interesting because he concludes with an image that suggests Gould's theory of punctuated equilibrium:

Lamarck... declared that species were an illusion produced by the shortness of our individual lives, and that they were constantly changing and melting into one another and into new forms as surely as the hand of a clock is continuously moving, though it moves so slowly that it looks stationary to us. We have since come to think that its industry is less continuous: that the clock stops for long time, and then is suddenly "put on" by a mysterious finger. (II, xxii)

Stephen Jay Gould is associated with a similar theory that holds that periods of relative evolutionary inactivity are interludes between periods of activity. Shaw gives a reason for the return to evolutionary creativity; it is to be found in the will, in desire:

If you have no eyes, and want to see, and keep trying to see, you will finally get eyes. If, like a mole or a subterranean fish, you have eyes and dont want to see, you will lose your eyes. If you like eating the tender tops of trees enough to make you concentrate all your energies on the stretching of your neck, you will finally get a long neck, like the giraffe. (II, xxii-xxiii)

Lamarck had said that animals, such as the subterranean fish, that belonged "to a plan of organization of which eyes were a necessary part, must have originally had them." The loss of the eyes he attributes to "the results of a permanent disuse of that organ."³⁶ The stretch

³⁵ This idea is usually associated with Heraclitus.

of the neck of the giraffe is attributed to stretching to reach the leaves of the trees.³⁷ This is the action of use and disuse. It is not stated by Lamarck that either the fish or the giraffe actively wants or wills anything at all. It is possible that Shaw could argue that such a wish is present in the subtexts of the relevant passages, but an equally determined opponent could insist on the surface meaning and deny that Lamarck, in these instances, believed that evolution was willed.

Shaw continues his argument by asserting that when a person learns a new skill he has “a new faculty, and must have created some new bodily tissue as its organ” (II, xxiii). This argument rests upon an assertion that is questionable, i.e., that the acquisition of a new physical skill demands new tissue. The first grader who learns how to write his name does not acquire a new set of brain cells or new muscles in his wrists; he has simply learned to use existing tissue in a new way.

Shaw’s central idea for the mechanism of acquired characteristics is that of recapitulation, by which he means the principle that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. (The individual developing as a fetus repeats the evolution of the race.) This leads him to the belief that all habits are acquired, and since organs are an expression of those habits, man is infinitely malleable:

If you can turn a pedestrian into a cyclist, and a cyclist into a pianist or violinist, without the intervention of Circumstantial Selection, you can turn an amoeba into a man, or a man into a superman without it. (II, xxiv)

The process by which a man is turned into a bicyclist, or whatever, is through recapitulation, as an embryo, of the same stages that the race went through in its development. This compression of evolutionary time to the limits of fetal time means that it may be possible that even those characteristics that have been acquired only recently, such as artistic skills, may be passed on to future generations:

The time may come when the same force that compressed the development of millions of years into nine months may pack many more millions into even a shorter space; so that Raphaels may be born painters as they are now born breathers and blood circulators. (II, xxvi)

Shaw uses this phenomenon of condensed recapitulation to enable the young of the fifth drama of the cycle to be born already speaking. The newly born, in fact, is speaking and demanding to be born while she is still an egg (II, 215).

The Lamarckian/Darwinian Opposition

Shaw, in his preface, after giving his theory of condensed recapitulation, returns to a history of evolutionary theory and to the need for a modern religion to replace the outworn evangelical faiths. Shaw is at pains to link evolutionary theory to a non-materialistic and transcendent force. He turns to Lorenz Oken, a contemporary of Lamarck, who in 1809 “defined science as ‘the science of the everlasting transmutations of the Holy Ghost in the world’” (II, xxxi). Shaw’s conception of the Holy Ghost is not a theological concept, i.e., he is not interested in the same things that interest Aquinas or Anselm in writing about the Holy Ghost, but a metaphysical concept, one that is more similar to Schopenhauer’s

³⁶ Originally cited on page 16, above. See also Lamarck, 116.

³⁷ Originally cited on page 16, above. See also Lamarck, 122.

concept of the Will than to the concepts of Aquinas. Shaw confirms the analogy to Schopenhauer's doctrine by saying:

In 1819 Schopenhauer published his treatise on *The World as Will*, which is the metaphysical complement to Lamarck's natural history, as it demonstrates that the driving force behind Evolution is a will-to-live, and to live, as Christ said long before, more abundantly. (II, xxxii)

This is an interesting statement, and the naive reading of it would indicate that Shaw knew Schopenhauer's work and found a metaphysical underpinning for Lamarckian ideas in it. Schopenhauer, however, denies the truth of Lamarckian doctrine and regarded it as asserting that heat and electricity are the thing-in-itself, something that is an "absurdity."³⁸

Darwin's great contribution lay in removing the metaphysical implications of evolution. It became possible, through natural selection, to postulate a mechanism for producing organic change without invoking a metaphysical force or a Deity. Shaw sees a turn "in weary disgust from Neo-Darwinism and Mechanism to Vitalism and Creative Evolution," but he raises the question, "how this new departure of Darwin's could possibly have appealed to his contemporaries as exciting, agreeable, above all as hopeful[?]" (II, xxxiii).

Shaw's contrast of the religion of his youth with the religion of the 1920's is that on the one hand contemporary people do not demand of religion "that it shall explain the universe completely in terms of cause and effect, and present the world to us as a manufactured article and as the private property of its Manufacturer." On the other hand, "We did then" (II, xxxv). The existence of the world implies its manufacture, and its manufacture in turn implies a manufacturer. This is the argument from efficient causation; it is impossible to have an endless chain of efficient causes, and therefore there must be a first cause that is uncaused. Shaw tells us that Father Addis attempted to use the argument as a prelude to his conversion to Roman Catholicism. Shaw, according to his record, simply scoffed and said that he could accept the idea that the universe made itself more readily than the idea that it was made, because he could see the universe and its maker was just a hypothesis (II, xxxvi).³⁹

Shaw's exposition of Paley's watch repeats Paley's argument that the existence of the world implies its creation and hence a creator. Man is a machine like a watch and has an intricate arrangement of "cords and levers, girders and kingposts, circulating systems of pipes and valves, dialysing membranes, chemical retorts, carburettors [sic], ventilators, inlets and outlets, telephone transmitters in his ears, light recorders and lenses in his eyes" (II, xxxviii). All of these things imply a designer. The fact that a man can make his eyes, is according to Shaw, not very remarkable, but what is interesting is the purpose behind his seeing. Shaw asks, "Why did he want to see if not to extend his consciousness and his knowledge and his power?" (II, xxxviii)






It seems appropriate to raise a basic epistemological question here and ask how an organism that cannot see and that has never had the capacity of seeing can know that it wants to organize certain proteins in such a way that there is a transparent lens containing an automatically adjusting diaphragm that admits electromagnetic radiation to a more or less

³⁸ Schopenhauer, I, 142. Originally cited on page 28, above.

³⁹ The argument from efficient causes has some appeal, but mathematicians deal with concepts that involve infinity on a fairly routine basis, and Shaw would have had a better argument if he had raised that issue to Father Addis.

flat plane that responds to a stimulus as small as one photon and transforms the radiant energy into a series of chemical messages. In short, how does a non-seeing organism know that it wants to see? Presumably a blind person knows, because he has heard others talking

Examples of Cambrian Era Trilobites^a

 <p><i>Asaphiscus wheeleri</i> Wheeler Formation, Middle Cambrian, Antelope Springs, Utah, U.S.A.</p>	 <p><i>Elrathia kingii</i> Wheeler Formation, Middle Cambrian, Antelope Springs, Utah, U.S.A.</p>	 <p><i>Olenellus sp.</i> Forteau Fm., Late Cambrian, Mt. St. Margaret, Car Bay, Northern Peninsula, Newfoundland, Canada.</p>
 <p><i>Olenoides serratus</i> From the middle Cambrian Burgess Shale Walcott Quarry, Stephen Formation, near Field, British Columbia, Canada. "Olenoides serves a fair example of the basic trilobite form - a cephalon (the head shield), a segmented thorax with seven jointed parts, and a semicircular pygium (after-end or rump.) The long, curved antennae were well preserved in the Burgess Shale. The middle legs, near their base, bore a series of spines that could be used to grasp the soft-bodied animals it preyed on and then to move them forward toward the mouth. The thin limbs tell us that this was not a swimmer. Instead, it was an active predator and scavenger moving about the muddy seafloor. The fossilized tracks it left in bottom sediment shows that it crawled along the bottom and dug in after its food.. The soft parts of the Burgess Shale Olenoides fossils were particularly well preserved, showing limbs, gut traces, and other soft tissues, and making it one of the most completely well known of all trilobites. Fossil sizes range up to four inches."^b</p>		 <p><i>Peronopsis interstricta</i> Wheeler Shale, Middle Cambrian, House Range, Utah. An agnostid (Order Agnostida) trilobite, with only two thoracic segments.</p>

a. All pictures are from Andrew MacRae's page *The Semi-Complete Trilobite*, <http://earth.ics.ucl.edu/faq/trilobite>.

b. <http://nmnhgoph.si.edu/paleo/polen.htm>

about it, or because he remembers having had sight. This does nothing to explain how trilobites, to take an example from the Cambrian era, were able to evolve eyes from their sightless precursors of the even more remote pre-Cambrian era. Shaw ignores this epistemological question, which can be simplified into "How do I know I want to do something, such as see, when I have no idea what seeing involves?"

Shaw has reinstated teleology into evolutionary theory by using Lamarck and asserting that Lamarck's writings implied that animals evolve because of a will to evolve. The will is not without purpose; to will something is to will a goal, or a purpose, and therefore all will implies teleology.

Darwin's triumph, according to Shaw, lay in showing how it was possible to have the appearance of design and purpose in the universe without having a designer. Shaw refers to the division of science and theology into two separate and distinct areas, neither interfering with the practice of the other, as being a compromise that was in effect during the Middle Ages. Newman used the concept of the two books of science and religion to remove the possibility of any conflict between the two areas. "The nineteenth century," according to Shaw, was too "steeped in a socially and politically powerful ignorance inconceivable by Thomas Aquinas or even Roger Bacon," and was accordingly, "incapable of so convenient an arrangement." This compromise between science and religion, which recognized that there were "two different orders of truth, religious and scientific," is known as an accommodationist position, i.e., that scripture was written to accommodate itself to the intellectual and moral needs of a primitive, nomadic people. It was Bellarmine's failure to accept this principle of accommodation that led him to maintain that Scripture was to be preferred over an astronomy that offered only probable explanations. The acceptance of the principle of accommodation by the modern church allows it to accept not only Galileo but also the Higher Criticism and evolution (II, xl).

The atheism that accepts evolution and the removal of teleology from the universe as a benefit to mankind is, Shaw says, a mere negation that accounts for nothing. Science cannot accept this kind of atheism because it is, "The business of science to account for everything that was plainly accountable" (II, xl). This is where the genius of Darwin comes in. Shaw returns to the example of the giraffe and gives three possible ways to account for the long neck of the animal: first, Lamarck's answer, that the animal wanted to stretch its neck; second, that a prehistoric stockbreeder had selected animals for neck length and had cultivated them. "Both these explanations, you will observe, involve consciousness, will, design, purpose, either on the part of the animal itself or on the part of a superior intelligence controlling its destiny." The third way is that of Darwin: "If your neck is too short to reach your food, you die" (II, xli). This amounts to saying that the short-necked animals "go away." This in fact is what seems to have happened to the short-lived people in between the fourth and fifth plays of the *Methuselah* cycle.

Allowing the short-necked giraffes to die out means that the same result can be achieved without referring to the will of the animal, or to a prehistoric stockbreeder. There is a will at work: "the blind will to satisfy hunger." The problem is that this "blind will" is "in effect a will to live" and effectively "gives away the whole case." Darwinian selection, despite the purpose that underlies it, i.e., the will to live, is, in contrast to "the open-eyed intelligent wanting and trying of Lamarck," capable of being "described as a chapter of accidents" (II, xlii). Shaw expresses his view of and ultimate reaction to Darwin's theory in these words:

There is a hideous fatalism about it, a ghastly and damnable reduction of beauty and intelligence, of strength and purpose, of honor and aspiration, to such casually picturesque changes as an avalanche may make in a mountain landscape, or a railway accident in a human figure. To call this Natural Selection is a blasphemy, possible to many for whom Nature is nothing but a casual aggregation of inert and dead matter, but eternally impossible to the spirits and souls of the righteous. If it be no blasphemy, but a truth of science, then the stars of heaven, the showers and dew, the winter and summer, the fire and heat, the mountains and hills, may no longer be called to exalt the Lord with

us by praise: their work is to modify all things by blindly starving and murdering everything that is not lucky enough to survive in the universal struggle for hogwash. (II, xlii–xliii)

This description of intellectual horror is not how Darwin was usually received. He “was hailed as Deliverer, Savior, Prophet, Redeemer, Enlightener, Rescuer, Hope Giver, and Epoch Maker,” and Lamarck was swept into history’s dustbin. Darwinism succeeded because it got rid of Paley and the “Disorderly Designer,” as well as the Shelleyan “Almighty Fiend” (II, xliii).

Darwinism, however, is not finally refutable because even though it may fail to account for a great many things, such as Darwin’s own life, it is always possible to postulate “other soulless factors” that will account for a Jesus or a Shakespeare (II, l). Shaw admits that Lamarckism is also unprovable. The Shavian doctrine is that species evolve because they will to develop new tissues to further their goals. This requires that the experimenter is able to know the mind of the animal. This may be possible in a limited sense, e.g., I know that when my cat scratches the door and begins pacing in the kitchen she is hungry, but I do not have direct knowledge of her mind. In this particular instance I have observed her perform these actions before, and cease performing them when she has been fed. My conclusion, that she wants to be fed, is an inference based on observations of past behavior. In other instances she may make sounds that seem to have no relation to pain or hunger, and I do not know what her attempt to communicate means. The further down in the evolutionary scale one goes, the less probable it seems that this kind of observational knowledge is available.

Shaw objects to Weismann and his amputation of the tails because it did not involve getting into the mind of the mouse. The same objection can be made to the midwife toad experiment, that it did not involve any alteration of the toad’s mind. Use and disuse as agents of change should be capable of proof or disproof; one merely has to contrive a way for an organ not to be used for numerous generations, and see if the organ atrophies. It is the mental part that is not capable of proof or disproof, and it is this part that Shaw is most insistent upon.

Darwinism is a metaphysical hypothesis, just as Lamarckism, and essentially unprovable because metaphysical ideas cannot be experimented upon; they can only be thought about. This metaphysical idea does eliminate the problem of evil, but it does so by proposing that what appears to be evil is merely the result of chance accidents. This destroys the idea of God’s omnipotence, but it also clears “God from a hideous charge of cruelty.” It is a substitution of an impersonal force for a Devil-God and this “blind, deaf, dumb, heartless, senseless mob of forces that strike as a tree does when it is blown down by the wind, or as the tree itself is struck by lightning” is worse than the previous personal being (II, lvii).

In Shaw’s view the problem of evil is also soluble by the doctrine of Creative Evolution. The power that causes evolution is omnipotent only in the restricted sense “that there seems no limit to its final achievement.” Creative Evolution uses the method of trial and error, so that “The world must be full of its unsuccessful experiments.” This leads to the conclusion that “If all our calamities are either accidents or sincerely repented mistakes, there is no malice in the Cruelty of Nature and no Problem of Evil in the Victorian sense at all” (II, lvii–lviii).

Evolution also places us on a footing of equality, so that there is no moral distinction between the killing of an animal and the killing of a human. The conclusion that Shaw, as a vegetarian, is implying is that it is morally wrong to do both. A contrary conclusion can also be drawn: that if it is justifiable to kill animals for food, clothing, and other needs, it is justifiable to kill human beings too. Shaw focuses on an optimistic interpretation, when he says that "This sense of the kinship of all forms of life is all that is needed to make Evolution not only a conceivable theory, but an inspiring one" (II, lix). This inspiring theory was not to be found in the combination of Darwinism and Materialism. Shaw expresses the relation of Darwinism and Materialism to religion in these words:

Between the two of them religion was knocked to pieces; and where there had been a god, a cause, a faith that the universe was ordered however inexplicable by us its order might be, and therefore a sense of moral responsibility as part of that order, there was now an utter void. (II, lxxv).

The void left by the Materialist and Darwinian rejection of the old faiths is carried on into the realm of politics, where the political necessity of evolution motivated Shaw in the writing of the play and the preface. Shaw sees the Darwinian-Materialist faith as producing, "an atmosphere of fatalism," with the result that "it matters little what the opinions of the individual statesmen concerned may be." As a result is the Kaiser, the Prime Minister, and the General are all charged with executing a policy, "but the policy itself will be one of unprincipled opportunism." The ultimate judgment to be passed on these leaders is that "their way is the way to destruction" (II, lxxix). This destructive path led to the World War and was a result of a political Darwinism:

Now all this, it will be noticed, was fundamentally nothing but an idiotic attempt on the part of each belligerent State to secure for itself the advantage of the survival of the fittest through Circumstantial Selection. If the Western Powers had selected their allies in the Lamarckian manner intelligently, purposely, and vitally, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, as what Nietzsche called good Europeans, there would have been a League of Nations and no war. (II, lxxx-lxxxi)

The way out of the morass of Materialism and Darwinism is for people "to look round for a religion. And the whole purpose of this book is to shew them where to look." The reaction to Darwinism has been not only the allopathic poisoning of public life and discourse but also the homeopathic reaction to the toxin. The homeopathic reaction has rallied "our vital force not only to resist it and cast it out, but to achieve a new Reformation and put a credible and healthy religion in its place" (II, lxxii). This issue has been confused by the division of physiologists into Materialists and Vitalists. The Vitalists account for the difference between a live body and a dead body by postulating the existence of a Vital Force. Shaw breaks the latter group into two subgroups that he calls the Old and the New Vitalists. The religion of Vitalism, however, "has always been with us," and Shaw finds it in the mystical ecstasies of the saints, and in the Quaker tradition of the inner light.⁴⁰ Shaw sees himself as not creating a new religion but as "redistilling the eternal spirit of religion." In his view this redistillation will serve to extricate it "from the sludgy residue of tempo-

⁴⁰ Shaw does not refer to the Quakers or the Society of Friends explicitly in the passage under consideration. For his general attitude towards the Friends see the prefaces to *Saint Joan* and "In Good King Charles's Golden Days" (Quotes are in title).

ralities and legends that are making belief impossible, though they are the stock-in-trade of all the Churches and all the schools" (II, lxxiv).

All of the religions have been found wanting, so that Shaw can decry "the Church of England, the Church of Rome, the Greek Church, and the rest" as "dwindling sects" and say that if they "persist in trying to cramp the human mind with the limits of these grotesque perversions of natural truths and poetic metaphors," they should be "banished from the schools," and left to perish or they must "discover the soul that is hidden in every dogma" (II, lxxvi–lxxvii).

For Shaw universality is the touchstone of dogma.

As long as the Church of England preaches a single doctrine that the Brahman, the Buddhist, the Mussulman, the Parsee, and all the other sectarians who are British subjects cannot accept, it has no legitimate place in the counsels of the British Commonwealth, and will remain what it is at present, a corrupter of youth, a danger to the State, and an obstruction to the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. (II, lxxvii)

Shaw's purpose is not merely to lambaste the Anglican church, but to push his own belief that truth must be universal rather than particular. This urge to universalize a statement is the same urge that compels him to say that similar beliefs are identical, or that new beliefs are merely new versions of older ones. Shaw uses this kind of reasoning to assert that the concept of the Superman is "as old as Prometheus" and to argue that Schopenhauer's concepts of Will and Representation are the same as Justification by Faith and Justification by Works. Shaw's attitude towards differences might be called an anti-structuralist position. The structuralist linguist might look at words such as "hot" and "hat" and see the different vowel sounds as constituting the distinguishing features of the words. A Shavian approach to linguistics would postulate that the similarity in initial and terminal letters is more important than any distinguishing differences between the words. This position leads to erroneous results in linguistics, and it leads Shaw to overlook the very real and very important differences that exist between concepts. Underlying this insistence on similarity there seems to be an insistence that everybody must believe the same thing, hence the Anglican must not believe anything that the Parsee cannot believe. This would have the effect of removing any differences among religions and making them all into one confused hodgepodge of belief. Shaw does not consider the possibility that the Anglicans and the Parsees can ignore their differences and work towards a common goal.

Shaw's solution to the problem of religious differences appears to be some kind of religious syncretism in which the legends of various lands are shared by each other. "China would share her sages with Spain, and Spain her saints with China," and this would have the result that, "we could enter into the heritage of all faiths" (II, lxxix). The religious spirit, when alive and vital, has, according to Shaw, enriched art and "Art has never been great when it was not providing an iconography for a live religion" (II, lxxxi). The religion that he proposes to replace the old creeds is Creative Evolution. In this faith he finds compliance "with the first condition of all the religions that have ever taken hold of humanity: namely, that [they] must be, first and fundamentally, a science of metabiology" (II, lxxxvii–lxxxviii).

Shaw considered his use of the Don Juan legend in *Man and Superman* as a contribution to the creation of a scientific religion that encapsulates metabiology. He refers to the ma-

terial that surrounds the prior play as “an imposing edifice,” and says that, “The effect was so vertiginous, apparently, that nobody noticed the religion in the centre of the intellectual whirlpool” (II, lxxxviii–lxxxix). Shaw sees *Back to Methuselah* as “a second legend of Creative Evolution,” but one without the “erotic associations” of the Don Juan legend. Shaw’s final hope is that younger hands will continue the new Bible of Creative Evolution.

Shaw’s views on evolution, and on the contrast between the Lamarckian and the Darwinian theories can be summarized briefly. First, Darwinism removed God and purpose from the universe. This eliminated the necessity of believing in an anthropomorphic God who inflicted, or permitted, evil to happen to people. Second, the removal of God and purpose left a moral and religious vacuum. The application of Darwinian ideas led to the First World War and the disasters of the trenches in France. The application of Darwinism in social policy also led to a number of moral disasters. The logical counter to Darwinism is Lamarckism, or Creative Evolution. This doctrine replaces a philosophy that sees life as a series of accidents with one that sees a force behind life, but it postulates that the force has a purpose and proceeds by a method of trial and error. This accounts for the appearance of evil in the world; evil things are simply the result of a bungled attempt on the part of the creative force to reach its goal. In a geological sense this would mean that the trilobites that emerged in the Cambrian era and dominated the seas of the early world were evolutionary mistakes, and that their extinction occurred because they were in some sense a dead end that obstructed life from reaching its goal. The force that creates life is capable of superseding any part of it that fails to live up to the goal of that force. Shaw’s purpose in writing his play is to embody the religion of Creative Evolution in an artistic form. Shaw acknowledges that both Darwinism and Creative Evolution are, as metaphysical beliefs, unprovable, but he sides with the belief that allows for the existence of purpose and mind in the universe.

Shaw’s Debt to Butler

The most important influence in forming the Shavian concepts of evolution is probably Samuel Butler. Butler held that there was a connection between a man and his parents that goes back to the primal amoeba out of which everything evolved. This is mirrored in the section of the preface entitled “How One Touch of Darwin Makes the Whole World Kin.” Shaw attributes this concept of relatedness to Darwin, and it is derivable from him, but it is explicitly stated by Butler as well. Further, Butler insists on the voluntarist reading of Lamarck. Butler knew Lamarck through secondary sources before he knew him at first hand. This means in a practical sense that he knew things about Lamarck, even if they were untrue, or only partially true, before he knew the writings and that this prior knowledge influenced and shaped his subsequent reading of Lamarck. Shaw’s reading of Butler would accordingly shape any subsequent reading of Lamarck, and may have altered any prior perception as well.

Butler sees will and knowledge even in vegetable matter. This is in accord with Schopenhauer’s idea that the forces of magnetism and gravitation are unified as aspects of the will: when the magnet overcomes gravity, it is because the will of the magnet is stronger. The convergence of the two ideas enables Shaw to use this aspect of Butler’s philosophy without abandoning Schopenhauer.

Shaw does part company with Butler in one very important way. Shaw believes that it is possible for man to recapitulate events that are geologically recent, and to be born walking, talking, and painting, as are the long-lived people in the fifth part of *Back to Methuselah*. Butler does not share this belief. In his essay “The Deadlock in Darwinism” he gives three stages of development.

I. That we are most conscious of and have most control over such habits as speech, the upright position, the arts and sciences — which are acquisitions peculiar to the human race, always acquired after birth, and not common to ourselves and any ancestor who had not become entirely human.

II. That we are less conscious of and have less control over eating and drinking (provided the food be normal), swallowing, breathing, seeing and hearing — which were acquisitions of our prehuman ancestry, and for which we had provided ourselves with all the necessary apparatus before we saw light, but which are still, geologically speaking, recent.

III. That we are most unconscious of and have least control over our digestion and circulation — powers possessed even by our invertebrate ancestry, and geologically speaking, of extreme antiquity.⁴¹

Butler, it should be noted, is quite specific that the arts and sciences are always acquired after birth. This proposition asserts that consciousness and control exist over certain things such as speech; that these things are peculiar to the human race, and do not belong to any other animal grouping; and that they are not shared with any non-human ancestor. Shaw’s statements in the preface to *Back to Methuselah*, and the oviparous birth of the Newly Born in the fifth part, contradict this assertion. Shaw believed, as we have seen, that it was biologically possible for future baby Raphaels to be born fully equipped for life.

The primary source for Shaw’s evolutionary philosophy is not Nietzsche, from whom Shaw took the word Superman; nor is it even Lamarck, who did not believe that there was a metaphysical will, or that animals low in the scale of life could will; it is Butler, from whom Shaw took most of his interpretation of Darwin and Lamarck. This stream of thought from Butler to Shaw can be shown to be present in other plays, such as *Major Barbara*, in which Shaw mirrors Butler’s attitudes towards money, religion, and other topics.

The Racial Question of the Third Play

A number of subsidiary questions need to be resolved in our understanding of Shaw’s evolutionary philosophy. The first two plays of the cycle, *In the Beginning* and *The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas*, consider longevity to be the cure for human ills. The same is true of the fourth and fifth plays, *The Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman* and *As Far as Thought Can Reach*. The third play in the pentateuch, *The Thing Happens*, seems strangely out of place, and in some places, because of its implied racial attitudes, somewhat disturbing. Questions remain that relate to the Superman and whether he is present in the drama; and to the nature of the vortex and whether it has any immediate antecedents.

We have considered *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah* as philosophic works, not as dramas, but perhaps the fairest summary of them as works of philosophy is that given by Eric Bentley:

⁴¹ Butler, *Essential*, 397. Butler is quoting from *Life and Habit* (42). Also cited on 73–4, above.

If *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah* are philosophic treatises they are very faulty ones. There are contradictions as well as gaps. For example, a double change of line on the central question of how to improve our civilization. Three different recipes are given.... In *Back to Methuselah*, as a whole, it is longevity. In *Back to Methuselah*, Part III, it is something else again. The fairly Utopian England of a.d. 2170 has not been attained by prolonging the lives of men (though some "long livers" have already appeared) but by replacing British civil servants with Chinese: a recipe that might be called idealistic racism.⁴²

The racial stereotypes that Bentley points out are one of the disturbing parts of this drama. The Chinese sage, Confucius, like his nefarious predecessor Fu Manchu in Sax Rohmer's novels, is almost preternaturally gifted with intelligence. His intelligence leaves the British President breathless with admiration. All he has to do is utter the word metempsychosis, and Burge-Lubin, who does not have the sense to respond with Molly Bloom's "Oh, rocks," can only say, "What a brain, Confucius! What a brain!" (II, 105).

The British Parliament is filled with lunatics. This forecast for the year 2170 means that the bureaucracy, in order to govern the country, must be filled with competent people. Confucius says that "The Englishman is not fitted by nature to understand politics. Ever since the public services have been manned by Chinese, the country has been well and honestly governed. What more is needed?" The election of lunatics to Parliament is not a change: "The English people always did elect parliaments of lunatics." This does not make any difference as long as the "permanent officials are honest and competent" (II, 95).

When Burge-Lubin refers to Confucius as a "fat yellow lump of conceit," the reply that Confucius gives is that an Englishman of an opposite description would bring back "the anarchy and chaos of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries." It was this chaos that forced the British to recognize that "Government is absolutely necessary to civilization," that it cannot be maintained through economic competition, and that the British are "congenitally incapable" of the art of government (II, 97).

Burge-Lubin carries on a long distance video telephone love affair with the Minister of Health, a negress.⁴³ The romance is as frustrating as Shaw's epistolary romances with Ellen Terry and Mrs. Campbell must have been, and when the President almost gives in to the temptation to consummate the love affair by a visit, he is deterred by the thought of being immersed in water.

There are numerous references to miscegenation throughout the drama, and when Mrs. Lutestring mentions that women and their favorite story writers are beginning to "talk about men with golden complexions," Confucius responds with a smile and Burge-Lubin with, "Well, what of it, madam? Have you read a very interesting book... suggesting that the future of the world lies with the Mulatto?" (II, 126-27). The response of the two long-lived members of the scene is given in this patch of dialogue:

MRS LUTESTRING [*rising*] Mr Archbishop: if the white race is to be saved, our destiny is apparent.

THE ARCHBISHOP. Yes: our duty is pretty clear.

MRS LUTESTRING. Have you time to come home with me and discuss the matter?

THE ARCHBISHOP. [*rising*] With pleasure. (II, 127)

⁴² Bentley, *Bernard Shaw*, 54.

⁴³ Shaw's word.

The evident racism in this exchange and in Burge-Lubin's earlier exclamation, "This is treason to the white race," are as disturbing as the racism in popular British writers contemporary with Shaw. For example, in Sax Rohmer's popular series of Fu Manchu books that began appearing in 1914 there is a similar portrait of the Chinese sage as a threat to the white race. Shaw's sage, also a threat, is more benevolent than the popular villain, but there is still a sense that the abandonment of the serious business of government to the black and yellow peoples of the empire has meant a loss to the white race. Shaw's point is not just that the Chinese and Negroes are better administrators than the British, but that by relegating responsibility to other races the British risk remaining in a childish state of underdevelopment. This is at least part of the threat to the white race. Another part is the sexual attraction that is finally acknowledged between the members of the different races. Miscegenation, if practiced widely, would result in the eventual elimination of pure races.

Is this racism related to the central topic of the play, or is it in some sense tangential to the main thrust of the drama? Is it possible that a naive reading, one that sees racism in the play, is as mistaken as the current condemnation of Huck Finn for using the word "nigger," in speaking of Jim?

A satirical reading of this part of the drama, one that emphasizes irony, would proceed along the following lines. First, this section of the drama serves to point up the incompetence of the British governing class. Burge-Lubin is the descendant of the two Prime Ministers who appeared in the second part of the cycle, and as such may be taken to have inherited many of their qualities. The two earlier Prime Ministers are satirical representations of Asquith and Lloyd-George.⁴⁴ Their leadership during the period of the First World War brought England and Europe to a series of disasters, and the satirical point of the third part of the drama may lie in the incompetence of British statesmanship to resolve any of the pressing issues of the peace. This incompetence can be remedied only by the reduction of the British figures to a purely ceremonial role. The political and chief executive positions are filled by people of demonstrated competence, and because the British people have no use for any kind of demanding labor, the necessary tasks of government must be done by people from outside the British isles, by the black and yellow races. The drama can now be read in the form of one or more conditional syllogisms:

If the British people will not take up the serious study of political science, then they must be governed by those who will, and these are the yellow and black people that they believe to be their inferiors.

If the British people will not become mature, by choosing to live three hundred years, then they will be superseded by those peoples that are mature, and these are also the black and yellow peoples.

A third version is possible. Shaw could also be asserting the inferiority of the British. This would be consistent with his position as an Irishman, one of those oppressed by the colonial and imperialist power. The thrust of the satire then is an inversion of the claims of the imperialists that they were uniquely qualified to govern. For the "white man's bur-

⁴⁴ The Lord Chamberlain's Office laid it down as a condition of licensing *Back to Methuselah* for performance, "That Burge and Lubin not be made-up to resemble Lloyd George and Asquith." Dan H. Laurence's headnote to Shaw's letter of June 25, 1923 to Bache Matthews. Shaw's letter indicates that he had permission from both statesmen to use their physical images on the stage. Shaw, *Letters*, III, 839-41.

den” Shaw has substituted the “colored man’s burden.” This is still a racist position, but it places the dispossessed and the aboriginal inhabitants at the top of the society.

A better reading of the racism of the play is to see it as a satirical portrait of the racism of a society that sees itself as superior to the colored races that are part of the Empire and that are dominated by the superior British race. In this reading the play shares some of the same irony that is present in Huck Finn’s fear that he will go to hell for helping Jim escape. The irony present in the play is that the British people are potentially the most mature race, as shown by the fact of their long childhood, but that they die before achieving their full potential (II, 131).

The Shavian point of this drama is that the British people must put away childish things. Given the exigencies of a world war and the necessities of enforcing a global peace, they must no longer think as children. The failure to put these things away means that they must lose out in the long run to the people who are currently subjugated by the Empire or be superseded by those who can live long enough to be capable of higher things. The racism of the drama is thus changed to a satirical statement of the incapacity of the British people to govern themselves and others. This reading accounts for the appearance of the racially tinged elements in a drama that is otherwise concerned with the question of long life.

Does the Superman Disappear in the Drama?

In 1903 Shaw was insistent on the need for a biological evolution that would produce a creature that he called the Superman. In his later drama he is equally insistent that the way to biological salvation is to be found in the decision to live for three hundred years. Has Shaw stopped insisting on the Superman, or has the nature of the Superman changed?

In the second act of the first part of the cycle Shaw introduces us to Cain, the first murderer. Cain is more than a murderer; he is also a bit of a poet:

I have imagined a glorious poem of many men, of more men than there are leaves on a thousand trees. I will divide them into two great hosts.... Think of that! all those multitudes of men fighting, fighting, killing, killing.... That will be life indeed: life lived to the very marrow: burning, overwhelming life. (II, 22)

Cain wants his mother to make more men so that he can carry on these wonderful combats, but he is also aware that, “There is something higher than man. There is hero and superman.” Eve’s reply is to condemn Cain as an “Anti-Man.” Cain describes himself in terms that sound reminiscent of the distinction between slave and master morality:

... here I stand unslain, whilst the cowards who have never slain, the men who are content to be their brother’s keepers instead of their masters, are despised and rejected and slain like rabbits. He who wears the brand of Cain shall rule the earth. (II, 26)

Is this to be taken as a parody of popular Nietzscheanism, or as a rejection of the earlier conception of the Superman? It seems to be primarily the first. Adam rejects Cain’s claim because his life “does not last for a thousand years.” Cain’s way of life has caused a diminution in the race of mankind so that people have trouble breathing, their bowels malfunction-

tion, and they die before their time (II, 27). Cain's embrace of death has led him to create a religion that believes in a heaven, "a life infinitely splendid and intense, a life of the soul alone: a life without clods or spades, hunger or fatigue." Eve calls this dream, "idle and selfish" (II, 28-9). Adam tells Cain, "The heavens are empty, child. The earth is fruitful." Cain's vision of struggle involves cannibalism and revolts Eve: "He wants to be a bear and eat children. Even a bear would not eat a man if it could get honey instead." Cain does not want to be a bear; his aspiration is "to be something higher and nobler than this stupid old digger [Adam] whom Lilith made to help you to bring me into the world" (II, 29-30).

Eve rejects Cain's claim to be a superman, and she rejects Adam's agricultural pursuits. Her love is given to other children:

My sons and my sons' sons are not all diggers and fighters. Some of them will neither dig nor fight: they are more useless than either of you: they are weaklings and cowards: they are vain; yet they are dirty and will not take the trouble to cut their hair. They borrow and never pay; but one gives them what they want because they can tell beautiful lies in beautiful words. They can remember their dreams. They can dream without sleeping.... There are others who cut reeds of different lengths and blow through them, making lovely patterns of sound in the air.... And others make little mammoths out of clay.... And others think of numbers without having to count on their fingers.... And there is Tubal, who made this wheel for me.... And there is Enoch, who walks on the hills, and hears the Voice continually.... They never want to die, because they are always learning and always creating either things or wisdom, or at least dreaming of them. (II, 31-2)

The types of men that Eve prefers to Cain and the military superman are the storytellers, the musicians, the artists, the mathematicians and scientists, the artisans, and the prophets. All of these are united in longing for eternal life, a life that is more than fighting and digging. It is the shortening of life that prevents us from developing the capacity for the artistic and scientific pursuits. Digging and fighting are living for bread alone, and Eve believes that "There is something else," and that when they find out what that something else is that, "there shall be no more digging nor spinning, nor fighting nor killing" (II, 34).

This rejection of the militaristic concept of the Superman is also present in the fourth part of the drama. The Emperor of Turania, Cain Adamson Charles Napoleon, is gifted with a mesmeric field that is, compared to those of the long-lived peoples, feeble, but one that is still, "the strongest I have yet observed in a shortliver," according to the Oracle (II, 176). The field is so highly developed in the long-lived people that the Oracle merely has to lift her veil for Napoleon to cringe before her. The mesmeric field and its presence are not Napoleon's problems, however. The problem lies in his need to exercise his military talents by making men die in wars. This presents him with a dilemma, insofar as the fact that his military talent and his capacity for winning wars makes him loved by his countrymen; at the same time the magnitude of destruction that he inflicts, and the loss of his people's children in war make him hated. He asks the oracle to show him how he can exercise his talent for war and still retain his position of leadership. Her answer is "To die before the tide of glory turns," and she attempts to shoot him.

The ultimate judgment on the type of Superman represented by Cain and Napoleon is that their type is too violent to endure on the earth. The best that the wisdom of the long-lived people can do for them is urge them to die, and, if necessary, kill them. The

earth is to be left to Eve's dreamers and artisans, not to the military heroes. These people are the ultimate inheritors of the world, but even such dreamers and the scientists are but a stage on the way toward the philosophers and mystics who are represented by the Ancients. These Ancients resemble Don Juan's conception of the Superman and are preoccupied with contemplation of life. Even the Ancients dream of being surpassed, but the agency that will surpass them is no longer man, but pure mind, the vortex.

The Vortex and the Disappearance of the Body

Shaw dreams of a vortex and of a body that disappears, a condition in which the mind will be freed from its material prison. It is unclear what he means by a vortex. A vortex is normally thought of as a whirlpool, a shape given to water as it goes down a drain, or a tornado, or a hurricane. The shape is indistinguishable from the matter that forms it, i.e., there can be no form without a material cause as well. The vortex forms the subject of the following exchange between Acis and the He-Ancient:

ACIS. But even a vortex is a vortex in something. You can't have a whirlpool without water; and you can't have a vortex without gas or molecules or atoms or ions or electrons or something, not nothing.
THE HE-ANCIENT. No: the vortex is not the water nor the gas nor the atoms: it is power over these things. (II, 255-56)

The nature of the vortex may be gleaned from one of Shaw's jokes. The following dialogue is obviously intended to get a laugh from the audience, but unless we can determine the reference of the last word it does not seem very amusing:

THE NEWLY BORN [*to the He-Ancient*] But you can't be nothing. What do you want to be?
THE HE-ANCIENT. A vortex.
THE NEWLY BORN. A what?
THE SHE-ANCIENT. A vortex. I began as a vortex: why should I not end as one?
ECRASIA. Oh! That is what you old people are. Vorticists. (II, 255)

Ecrasia's line seems to be a joke, and if it is a joke it must have reference to an artistic movement called vorticism current in the 1920's and led by Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis. Pound chose the name for the movement deliberately, deriving it from the work of an acquaintance, Allen Upward. Pound had described the vortex in the first issue of *BLAST*: "The vortex is the point of maximum energy. It represents, in mechanics, the greatest efficiency...."⁴⁵

The immediate source for Pound's name is to be found in Allen Upward's book *The New Word* in which he dismisses, "the usual view of the physical universe as Matter and Power." Upward's view is that there is a "whirl-swirl" that is "both matter and power at the same time." He finds this ideal whirl-swirl to be "the true beat of strength," and to be something that is felt, "in ourselves, and in our starry world, the beat that is called Action and Reaction."⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Quoted from Humphrey Carpenter, *A Serious Character: The Life of Ezra Pound*, (New York: Delta, 1988) 246. Upward makes an appearance, with Basil Bunting, in Canto CX.

⁴⁶ Carpenter, 247.

The “whirl-swirl” of Upward, as described by Carpenter, seems to be a more monistic conception than Shaw’s idea of the vortex. A reading of the full text in Upward’s book shows that this initial reading of Carpenter’s quote is somewhat misleading. Upward means that the whirl-swirl includes both matter and power as distinct entities, not that matter and power are simply different ways of looking at this whirl-swirl. Shaw’s passages on the vortex appear towards the end of the fifth part of the cycle and begin with the passage quoted above. Somewhat earlier he has had the Ancients express the wish to live without a head; to be disembodied spirits (II, 252–53). The Shavian vortex is to be pure thought freed from its slavery to matter. In other words, it is to be Mind without Matter. The final description of the vortex is given by Lilith in the last speech of the play:

...after passing a million goals they press on to the goal of redemption from the flesh, to the vortex freed from matter, to the whirlpool in pure intelligence that, when the world began was a whirlpool in pure force....I am Lilith: I brought life into the whirlpool of force, and compelled my enemy, Matter, to obey a living soul. But in enslaving Life’s enemy I made him Life’s master; for that is the end of all slavery; and now I shall see the slave set free and the enemy reconciled, the whirlpool become all life and no matter. (II, 261–62)

This is a dualistic, almost Manichean, conception of the contrast between Life and Matter. What is noticeable is that Shaw refers to the vortex, or whirlpool, and to the contrast between Life and Matter. Shaw sees the opposition between Life and Matter in terms of enmity. This Manichean dualism is not present in the major figures that influenced Shaw, but it does appear to be present in Upward’s book. Ecrasia’s use of the word “Vorticists,” then, is not just a satirical sally aimed at Pound and Lewis, but an indication of a possible source for Shaw’s thought about Matter and Life in this part of the play.

Richard Godden has noted that Pound met Upward at the soirées given by Yeats in 1911 and has said that, “It is probable that even as he was constructing his ‘vortex’ he had in mind Upward’s figure for energy.”⁴⁷ The energy that concerns Upward is the energy that manifests itself in various forms within the material world. Upward’s book is a prolonged meditation on idealism; a meditation that was prompted by Alfred Nobel’s provision that the prize for literature go to works of an idealist tendency. In the chapter “The Magic Crystal” Upward describes the biological shape of this energy. He opens the chapter by asserting that, “the whirl-swirl is a mathematical figure.” In this aspect it is “a word, like Euclid’s triangle. It is Pure Verihood.” If the whirl-swirl is to be more than a mere word, “it must take shape.” It is Upward’s contention that, “Verihood must put on falsehood ere it can dwell among us.”⁴⁸ This idea, that truth, “Verihood,” must be immersed in its opposite, sounds very similar to Lilith’s speech about Life becoming immersed in matter.⁴⁹

Upward opens the second section of his chapter with a paragraph on the cross:

⁴⁷ Richard Godden, “Icons, Etymologies, Origins and Monkey Puzzles in the Languages of Upward and Fenollosa,” *Ezra Pound: Tactics for Reading*, ed. Ian F. A. Bell, (London; Totowa, NJ: Vision; Barnes & Noble, 1982) 225. For additional articles on Upward see Donald Davie, “The Mysterious Allen Upward,” *The American Scholar* Winter 1990, 53–65; and Paul Skinner, “Of Owls and Waterspouts,” *Paideuma: A Journal Devoted to Ezra Pound Scholarship*, Spring 1988, 59–68.

⁴⁸ Allen Upward, *The New Word*, (London, A. C. Fifield, 1908) 188.

⁴⁹ See page 160, above.

The Cross is the rude picture of a knot. As such it is the sign of Matter; and the Man on the Cross signifies the thought that Matter is Evil. The Cross by itself is pure ugliness. The Man on the Cross is a tremendous allegory, whose full interpretation has yet to come.⁵⁰

Upward, like Lilith, has identified matter with evil. The dualistic interpretation of Life and Matter was not explicitly stated in *Man and Superman*. The dualism is implicit in the older play, and can be found in Don Juan's, and Shaw's, insistence on the development of the brain and thought over the physical and non-mental aspects of existence. *Back to Methuselah* is the most extreme statement of a dualistic, almost Manichean, antithesis between the mind and the body. The ideal whirl-swirl, on the other hand, "has no outline, except eternity." To be clothed with a skin it must be encased in matter.⁵¹

Upward sees a process in which there is a continual flowing in and out which he describes with the word "*Metastrophe*," defined in this way:

I mean, not growth and decay, but growth turning into decay, and decay turning into growth. I mean involution in the midst of evolution. I mean life turning inside out. And I mean more than life; I mean also the expression of life.⁵²

This cyclical description of *metastrophe* is similar to the cyclical description given by the Devil in *Man and Superman* of the progression from Heaven to Hell and back again.⁵³ The cycles of evolution and involution also appear in *Farfetched Fables*.⁵⁴ The similarity between Upward's thought and Shaw's strongly suggests that Shaw was influenced in his later philosophy by Upward.

There is no definite evidence for Shaw's acquaintance with Upward. There is circumstantial evidence, the fact that both he and Pound contributed to Orage's *New Age*, where Pound's review of Upward appeared, and Shaw's acquaintance with Pound.⁵⁵ This was not a particularly friendly relationship, at least as evidenced by Shaw's letters to Pound regarding Joyce and *Ulysses*.⁵⁶ The problem of the vortex and its origin seems to be referable to the work of this minor British author rather than some well known philosopher.

Thought and Plot in *Back to Methuselah*

Back to Methuselah differs from *Man and Superman* not only in its length, but also in its lack of dramatic action. What happens throughout the series of plays is primarily through discussion. Things are talked about; they are rarely done. It is only in the fourth part, *The*

⁵⁰ Upward, 191.

⁵¹ Upward, 195.

⁵² Upward, 200.

⁵³ See page 128, above.

⁵⁴ See page 170, below.

⁵⁵ Carpenter, 247.

⁵⁶ Shaw, *Letters*, III, 763, 765-66. Pound and Shaw met in 1909 (Carpenter, 107). Carpenter also records Pound's ambiguous attitude towards Shaw and notes that "in 1916 he called him 'an intellectual cheesemite' and attacked him for trivializing Ibsen." In 1917 Shaw supported an exhibition of Vorticist photography, and Carpenter says, "They got on well when they met" (114). Shaw is mentioned in Canto XLVI, which Pound read in a broadcast from Italy on February 12, 1942 (Carpenter, 591). Holroyd mentions Pound only in connection with Florence Farr and his acquaintance with her after her husband disappeared (*Love*, 251-52). Holroyd does not mention Upward at all; he does mention that Shaw, in 1894, rejected an opportunity to join the staff of *New Age* (*Love*, 328). Shaw's contributions to the magazine lasted until 1921 and numbered "more than two dozen" (*Power*, 192).

Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman, that there is any action, i.e., a series of events that involve something other than discussion. This means that a discussion of relations between thought and plot in *Back to Methuselah* is largely about the things that are said and not the things that are done. It was possible to show how the action of *Man and Superman* reflected the thought of the preface and the dialogue in Hell; *Back to Methuselah* is less difficult to interpret because of the absence of action and the presence of a direct representation of the thought of the preface.

The first part of the play, *In the Beginning*, opens with Adam and Eve discovering a dead fawn. This prompts the couple to reflect upon the horror of death and the prospect of living without each other. Adam leaves with the dead fawn and the Serpent, a cobra, appears and reveals to Eve that death can be conquered by birth (II, 3–7). Shaw had introduced this idea in his preface:

Weismann... pointed out that death is not an eternal condition of life, but an expedient introduced to provide for continual renewal without overcrowding. (II, xviii)

Shaw's position is that death is something chosen by species. Some species, such as the amoeba, appear to have individuals that can live forever. There is no way to account for the different lifetimes of members of different species, and man does not appear to live long enough to acquire wisdom (II, xix).

The Serpent's revelation of the possibility of birth, however, means that Adam and Eve will be freed from the burden of immortality. Shaw has, within the drama, accepted the tradition that the unfallen Adam and Eve were gifted with immortality and that they lost it. He postulates, again within the drama, that eternal life would be a burden and that there was always the possibility that either one of them could die through a fatal accident (II, 5). The Serpent reveals to Adam and Eve that it is possible to reproduce sexually, though she keeps the details from them until the end of the first act and then reveals it to Eve, who blushes (II, 8, 19). The snake reveals that Adam and Eve were the result of Lilith willing to split herself into two parts, the male and the female parts (II, 9). Shaw had, in *Man and Superman*, said:

Man is Woman's contrivance for fulfilling Nature's behest in the most economical way. She knows by instinct that far back in the evolutionary process she invented him, differentiated him, created him in order to produce something better than the single-sexed process can produce. (III, 624)

Lilith's differentiation into Adam and Eve is a reflection of this earlier statement. Shaw had, in *Man and Superman*, assigned primacy in sexual pursuit to the woman. Apparent passivity on the part of the woman is only apparent, not real. What is real is that woman weaves snares with which to ensnare the male. The fact that the human species will be able to reproduce sexually carries with it a price; there is a reduction in urgency in attending to commonplace matters. Adam is annoyed by the thistles and briars in the garden, and the Serpent suggests that he can neglect the garden and leave its care to "the new Adams" (II, 13). This foreshadows the decline that will set in on the human species and result in the radical shortening of life. The Serpent invents the word *procrastination* to describe Adam's tendency to put things off till the next day. When it is objected that Adam will never fulfill his promise to die, he is urged to bind his will by a vow (II, 17). The vow is that he will live

a thousand years and then die. This establishes death as a means of clearing the ground for the new generation. At this point Shaw has instantiated his interpretation of Weismann's remarks on death. Shaw has also related a biological event, death, to a metaphysical event, the binding of the will. Death has become an instrument of change chosen for a species by its earliest representative. The will is then effectively linked to the ability to bring about organic change.

This ability to will organic change is specifically cited by the Serpent in describing how Eve acquired a muscular biceps:

Look at that thick roll of hard flesh on your strong arm! That was not always there: you could not climb a tree when I first saw you. But you willed and tried and willed and tried; and your will created out of nothing the roll on your arm until you had your desire....(II, 10)

This comes in the midst of the Serpent asserting that everything must have been created out of nothing. The Serpent asserts that the muscle on Eve's arm was created from nothing by an act of the will, but this neglects the actual facts of muscular hypertrophy and the opposite actions of catabolism and anabolism in building muscular tissue. The assertion made by the Serpent is primarily that the will acts on tissue and creates an organic adaptation in response to the act of the will.

Within the framework of the first act of this part of the play Shaw has asserted dramatically the primal position of woman, her differentiation into sexes, the choice of death as a means of controlling population and enabling the future specimens to be born, and the role of will in creating organic adaptations. The second act will present a variant on the Superman theme.

In the second act of this part Cain makes his appearance. Cain is not only the first murderer, he is also a warrior and a poet. Cain imagines something higher than mere man; he imagines "hero and superman" (II, 24). His proclamation of the superman is greeted by Eve's denunciation of him as "Anti-Man." Cain's concept of the superman is framed in militaristic terms, while Eve looks not to the "diggers and fighters," but to the artists, such as Tubal, and the prophets, such as Enoch. It is in these that she recognizes something better than either Adam's agriculture or Cain's slaughter. The first part closes with Eve expressing the longing for something other than "bread alone" (II, 31-2, 34).

The second part of the play, *The Gospel of the Brothers Barnabas*, is a domestic comedy in genre. It also includes some bitter satirical sallies aimed at Asquith and Lloyd George and some criticism of the established church. The second of the five parts, however, focuses primarily on the proclamation by the two brothers that in order for man to attain to political wisdom it is necessary for him, as a species, to live to a term of three hundred years.

The first glimmer of the idea that long life might be dependent on act of the will comes when Conrad tells the cook, "you know you could live a devil of a long life if you really wanted to" (II, 44). The idea is fully explained when the brothers ask Burge and Lubin if they are interested in their program for extending human life. Lubin is prompted to ask "What is your elixir, Dr Barnabas? Lemons? Sour milk? Or what is the latest?" (II, 73). Franklyn responds by presenting the case of Adam and Eve:

Adam and Eve were hung up between two frightful possibilities. One was the extinction of mankind by their accidental death. The other was the prospect of living for ever. They could bear neither. They decided that they would just take a short turn of a thousand years, and meanwhile hand on their work to a new pair. Consequently, they had to invent natural birth and natural death, which are, after all, only modes of perpetuating life without putting on any single creature the terrible burden of immortality. (II, 75)

This carries the mythology and symbolism of the first part into the present era. Franklyn's conception of life is that it is devoted to "the pursuit of omnipotence and omniscience" (II, 76).

The mythology of the first part is used to describe Adam's, and man's, fall from the Edenic situation into his present decadence. The steps in his decline are: wife-beating, meat-eating, murder, and war (II, 77). Franklyn says that "our fathers came crashing down all the steps of this Jacob's ladder that reached from paradise to a hell on earth." In this environment "they [our ancestors] had multiplied the chances of death from violence, accident, and disease until they could hardly count on three score and ten years of life" (II, 77).

The brothers postulate that unless humanity chooses to live three hundred years and attain political wisdom "that a new form of life, better adapted to high civilization, will supersede us as we have superseded the ape and the elephant." This form of life will not be "the superman," but will be "some being quite different from us" (II, 81). Franklyn is moved to say: "Man is not God's last word: God can still create. If you cannot do His work He will produce some being who can" (II, 81). This will be echoed by Lilith in her speech at the end of the play (II, 261-2). It also echoes Don Juan's speech on the failure of previous species (III, 619).

Conrad Barnabas defends the proposition that the power Franklyn terms God "proceeds by the method of Trial and Error; and if we turn out to be one of the errors, we shall go the way of the mastodon and the megatherium and all the other scrapped experiments" (II, 82). The blundering Life Force of the earlier play is used again and put in the position of God. Conrad's use of alliterative "mastodon and megatherium" also echoes the earlier play. (The megatherium is an extinct species of sloth.)

The force that is to propel man to a life span of three hundred years is not mere wishful thinking. Franklyn cautions Burge that he "not mistake mere idle fancies for the tremendous miracle-working force of Will nerved to creation by a conviction of Necessity" (II, 84). Shaw has followed his interpretation of Lamarck's doctrine and placed willed evolution at the heart of the drama. This speech encapsulates the earlier statement, by the Serpent, on the creation of muscle through the action of the will. Both organic developments, muscular hypertrophism and evolution, come about through the will of the organism. The will to this miracle is made "under inner compulsion," and the men who achieve this "will hide what they are doing from themselves" (II, 84).

The second part ends with the exit of Burge and Lubin, after which the remaining members of the party assure each other that whoever lives for three hundred years, it will not be one of them. This is greeted with Franklyn's "How do you know?" (II, 88). The third part, *The Thing Happens*, shows us the aftermath of the dinner party. The young curate, Haslam, has lived for almost three hundred years, and the parlormaid, a minor character in the previous part, has lived until 2170 and become the Domestic Minister. The

drama of this part of *Back to Methuselah* revolves around the discovery that two, and possibly more, people have lived for almost three hundred years.

The racism that we saw in the third part of the play is present in a rather offhanded way in the fourth part, *The Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman*. Zozim mentions that the Colonizers have thought of beginning the extermination of the short-lived in North America. He explains that “the Red Men of that country used to be white” (II, 189). Their complexions have changed as a result of the climate. Zozim’s response to the possibility of their colony turning red is to dismiss the racial aspect:

That wont matter. We are not particular about our pigmentation. The old books mention red-faced Englishmen: they appear to have been common objects at one time. (II, 190)

The focus of this part of the Shavian pentateuch is on the inadequacy of the short-lived human species. The envoy can only ask the Oracle to answer trivial questions of party politics; the man of destiny can think only of how to maintain his reign of military supremacy, and the Elderly Gentleman becomes discouraged because he cannot make himself understood to the inhabitants of Ireland.

The fourth part, like the second, contains at least one reference to the tragedy of the First World War. In part two both Lubin and Burge (Asquith and Lloyd George) have lost sons in the war (II, 87). Zoo makes a statement that echoes letters Shaw wrote to Robert Lorraine and St. John Ervine when each faced the loss of a leg:

One does not mind the accidental loss of an arm or a leg or an eye: after all, no one with two legs is unhappy because he has not three; so why should a man with one be unhappy because he has not two? (II, 172)

Shaw had written to Lorraine, when he was injured in the war, “I suppose one can play Hamlet with a property leg.” He had also advised Lorraine that his possible lameness might mean a “lifetime of Richard III, unless I write a play entitled *Byron*.” To St. John Ervine, who did lose a leg, Michael Holroyd records that Shaw sent “hasty congratulations on his being ‘in a stronger position.’” Holroyd also records that Shaw asked when he, Shaw, with his two legs had “ever groused because he did not have three?”⁵⁷

The philosophical, as opposed to the personal, material of the play and the preface is recapitulated in a series of speeches in the dialogue between the Elderly Gentleman and Zoo. The Elderly Gentleman is described by Holroyd as “supposed to be modelled on the Dean of St Paul’s, W. R. Inge, but is Shaw’s partial self-portrait.”⁵⁸ His function, in this part of the drama, is to present a synopsis of the thousand years of history between the 1920s and his era. The Elderly Gentleman presents a number of ideas and traces their development. Among these ideas is the notion that astronomical space is only a sort of room over the earth, and that souls go into this room when people die. This idea, according to Shaw’s spokesman, was dissolved when telescopes became prevalent. This meant that the Deity who was supposed to live in the sky disappeared along with his home, which became endless space. Science, according to him, replaced religion. The scientists became the priests of a new religion, and the end of this was that men “looked into their own bodies with microscopes,” and the result of this was that they found, “not the soul they had for-

⁵⁷ Holroyd, *Power*, 395.

⁵⁸ Holroyd, *Lure*, 50.

merly believed in, but millions of micro-organisms" (II, 158–59). The microscope is responsible for making men terrified of microbes, "poor harmless little things that die at the touch of a ray of sunshine, and are themselves the victims of all the diseases they are supposed to produce" (II, 161). This idea will appear almost a dozen years later in the opening of *Too True to be Good* (IV, 634). All of the foolishness of man has, according to Zoo, vanished with "the extension of human life to three hundred years," and has "made short work of such childish stuff" (II, 161).

These patches of dialogue in the fourth part of the play serve as a dramatic presentation of Shaw's idea that the loss of religious faith, and its replacement with Darwinistic scientism had been the path leading to the First World War. Shaw's assignment of responsibility for the Great War to the Darwinistic faith assigns primacy to religious and psychological factors as causes of the conflict. The argument is that the loss of faith, when linked to the competitiveness of capitalism, led to competition between nations. This competition took the form of trying to "do the other fellow down," i.e., extinguishing him. The war followed as a consequence of this loss of faith. The only replacement possible is another faith, which, for Shaw, is creative evolution. The further evolution of the human species thus has the extension of human life as its corollary.

The fifth part of the play, *As Far as Thought Can Reach*, repeats several of the themes that were present in the preface and in the preceding parts. The human race has evolved into a life of long-livers, and their pursuit is contemplation. The young are born oviparously, and undergo a childhood of four years. Their childish activity is characterized by love-making, art, and science. Shaw has, like Milton in *Paradise Regained*, chosen to relegate humanistic pursuits to a place of lesser importance. The signs of advancing adolescence, before settling down into the maturity of the ancients, are boredom with "dancing and singing and mating," a lack of interest in clothing, and a fascination with mathematics, among other signs (II, 207, 209).

The festival of the arts that is to include sculptural exhibitions by Arjillax and Martellus and culminates in the exhibition of Pygmalion's automatons, is dismissed by the He-Ancient as a form of playing with dolls (II, 244, 246). Shaw has, by reducing art and science to a form of childish activity, placed contemplative activity at the forefront of the drama and his thought. The Ancients, however, do not seem to spend their time contemplating any clearly definable object. The thing which the Ancients contemplate is life, but where a biologist might contemplate life as embodied in the form of crustaceans, the ancients seem to contemplate life in its abstract form. It is arguable that this contemplation of life divorced from an empirical object leads to flights of fancy that have no relation to reality. To a certain extent this seems to be true of what Shaw has predicted as the final result of evolution. If Shaw's play and the description of the biology of the future are taken seriously, it would seem that he has no real sense of evolutionary development. The change to oviparous birth is actually a backwards step in terms of evolution. (Oviparous birth leaves the young exposed to predators.) The elimination of reproductive, digestive, and eliminative capacity is not probable; all organisms need to get rid of the waste generated by an assimilation which must be incomplete.⁵⁹ If the features of the biology of the future are only symbolic, then they clearly symbolize Shaw's own feelings about sex, and the reality

⁵⁹ This would seem to be covered by the second law of thermodynamics. The second law states that the efficiency of a system can never be 100%. The waste energy must be dissipated. This means that the general tendency of the universe is to disorder and waste.

of the digestive, eliminative processes. This means that Shaw's future Utopia is precisely that vision of Hell that was expressed 18 years earlier. It is a place where there are "no sanitary questions" (III, 616).

The ultimate dream of the Ancient, and of Shaw, is to be a disembodied spirit, a vortex. The play closes with a summation by Lilith in which she describes the chaos of the period between the fall and the emergence of mankind into the race of long-lived humans. She contemplates the possibility of bringing forth a new species; a possibility that was raised in the second part, and decides to wait because she is curious. She peers into the future and concludes that for what may lie beyond her vision it is sufficient "that there is a beyond" (II, 262).

Shaw has placed his evolutionary thought at the forefront of the drama by making it the principal object of discussion. This has meant the elimination of action, or of plot, in large portions of the drama. The thought is most perfectly related to action in the fifth part. It is here that the Shavian rejection of art and science is represented by the death of Pygmalion and his creations. These ancestral forms, that are clearly modern humans,⁶⁰ are dismissed as automata (II, 228, 234).

The Post-Methuselah Drama of Evolution

Shaw's dramas after the peak of *Back to Methuselah* and *Saint Joan* show a falling off of dramatic power. Occasional plays are of interest, such as *The Apple Cart* and *Too True to be Good*, but even these plays are not as interesting as Shaw's earlier work. Shaw returned to evolutionary themes in two of his later plays, but added nothing really new to the expression of his evolutionary thought. The first of Shaw's post-Methuselah dramas is *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, which bears the subtitle, *A Play in a Prologue and Two Acts (A Vision of Judgment)*. This play can be seen as providing a means for weeding the garden of the unfit. The second play is *Farfetched Fables*, written between 1949–50, and for all practical purposes Shaw's last word on the subject of evolution. This drama recapitulates much of Shaw's teachings on evolution and our treatment of both plays will be brief, possibly even to the point of being perfunctory.

⁶⁰ Modern in the anthropological sense, i.e., not Cro-magnon or Neanderthal.

The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles



The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, Warsaw 1935

Shaw's vision in the *Simpleton* can be put simply. Some people are incapable of leading decent lives, and if they cannot be intimidated by legends and the threat of punishment they must be restrained or, "as the Russians gently put it, liquidated" (VI, 528). The appearance of this statement, even in 1935,

close to the time of the Kirov assassination and the ensuing purges, had to have been as disturbing to some of Shaw's contemporaries as it is to us. Shaw's point is the need for reformation of economic morals. The Russian system is an adaptation of "the views of the Bolshevik prophets whose invectives and warnings fill the last books of the Old Testament, and the Communist principles of Jesus, Peter, and Paul" (VI, 530). This leads Shaw into comparing the Quaker preacher George Fox with Russian malcontents, "who dissent from the State religion of Soviet Russia." The malcontent is "an active, violent venomous saboteur. He plans and carries out breakages of machinery, falsifies books and accounts to produce insolvencies...." Shaw's list continues with the dreary, idiotic charges of the purge trials. All of this is designed to lead up to his praise of the Tchecha, or "Gay-pay-oo" as a necessary step in the reformation of Russian economic morals.

All of this material in the preface seems to have nothing to do with evolution. Shaw admits that his "eugenic experiment in group marriage" is an expedient "to bring into the story the four lovely phantasms who embody all the artistic, romantic, and military ideals of our cultured suburbs" (VI, 540-41). It is precisely these phantasms who will be eliminated in the last judgment by the angels.

The link with Shaw's evolutionary theories comes through the instrument of death. The angel of judgment has just quoted one of the New Testament judgment day prophecies, and the following exchange takes place:

PROLA. There is nothing new in this taking of the one and leaving the other: natural death has always been doing it.

THE ANGEL. Natural death does it senselessly, like a blind child throwing stones. We angels are executing a judgment. The lives which have no use, no meaning, no purpose, will fade out. You will have to justify your existence or perish. Only the elect shall survive. (VI, 598)

When the judgment is finally carried out and people start disappearing, Hyering describes it as “weeding the garden;” people who are useless and mischievous “are dissolving into space, which is the simplest form of matter” (VI, 606).

The notion of extermination of those unfit for life in the Shavian Utopias is not unique to this play. It forms part of the doctrine of the Colonizing party in part four of *Back to Methuselah*, and we have seen reference to it in *Man and Superman*.⁶¹ The idea of forced elimination of the unfit from society is also present in *The Perfect Wagnerite* and in Shaw’s essay on imprisonment. The evolutionary function of this forced extermination is to speed the elimination of those elements hostile to the new kind of man that will be formed in the Shavian Utopia, and to make the human race into a race of supermen.

Farfetched Fables

Farfetched Fables is, as the title indicates, a series of sketches, and the preface is a collection of a number of Shaw’s musings. Some of these have been overtaken and modified by recent events:

The Marxist Church, called Cominform, is like all the other Churches. Having ceased to believe in the beneficently interfering and overruling God of Adam Smith and Voltaire, no less than in the vicarage of the Pope and his infallibility in council with the College of Cardinals, Cominform makes Karl Marx its Deity and the Kremlin his Vatican. (VI, 469)⁶²

Shaw’s other beliefs, including his belief in the evolutionary capacity of the human species are not quite as questionable as his belief in the Cominform. Shaw’s statement may sound mocking, but he died an unrepentant admirer of Stalin.

Shaw’s first two sketches show a young man being inspired to invent a lighter than air poison gas. This would be of obvious military value because the gas would kill people and then disperse.⁶³ The second fable shows the poison gas being used in a war created by “the South African negro Hitler, Ketchwayo the Second” (VI, 495).⁶⁴ The third fable shows

⁶¹ See III, 703, for Shaw’s comments on the role of the glutton in evolution, and III, 710 for his comments on Fabian policy and the police.

⁶² Dan H. Laurence in a headnote to Shaw’s letter of July 1, 1928 to Rutland Boughton mentions that Shaw sent Lenin a copy of *Back to Methuselah* with this inscription: “to Nicholas Lenin the only European ruler who is displaying the ability, character and knowledge proper to his responsible position form Bernard Shaw.” George Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters 1926–1950*, ed. Dan H. Laurence, (New York: Viking, 1988) 103. Hereafter cited in the text “*Letters*, IV.” See also *Letters*, IV 257.

⁶³ This sounds like a fantasy, but the reason that Iraq did not use poison gas during the recent fracas there was because the gases tended to disperse and were hard to control. These gases, according to the news reports, were lighter than air.

⁶⁴ Possibly a misspelling of Ketchwayo, also known as Cetewayo. The original Cetewayo (1836–84) was king of the Zulu (1856–79, 1883). An anti-imperialist and military leader. He was defeated by the British at Ulundi in 1879.

an anthropometric laboratory that is devoted to the measurement of human capacity by, “Analyzing their secretions and reactions and so on” (VI, 500). This appears to be Shaw’s answer to what he saw as the primary problem of politics, “the discovery of a trustworthy anthropometric method” (III, 732). The idea of anthropometric testing appears also in *The Apple Cart*, in which he advocates a series of tests of political, economic and aesthetic capacity, and in *Everybody’s Political What’s What*.⁶⁵ In the preface to *Farfetched Fables* Shaw suggests that humans be tested in the spheres of economics, statistics, aesthetics, and sub-conscious capacities. The fourth play is a report, dictated by the Diet Commissioner. The report summarizes the effects on humans as the diet moved from “restricted cannibalism in which only fishes, frogs, birds, sheep, cows, pigs, rabbits, and whales were eaten,” to vegetarianism, and from vegetarianism to a diet of air and water (VI, 504–6). The fifth fable is about sex and reproduction, and introduces a hermaphroditic character. The hermaphrodite seems to have some role in reproduction, but this is not spelled out in detail. The sixth play produces a disembodied spirit who has taken on a body. This disembodied spirit, named Raphael, says, “Evolution can go backwards as well as forwards. If the body can become a vortex, the vortex can also become a body.” The re-embodied spirit has no sensual passions, only passions for mathematics, and for “discovery and exploration: the mightiest of all passions” (VI, 520).

The main theme of Shavian evolutionary thought, that mankind must will to change, may not seem to be present in either *The Simpleton*, or in *Farfetched Fables*, but it is there in the subtexts. These subtexts, the underlying, if unstated, motivation for the action of the dramas, and for Shaw’s creation of them, is that mankind must will to evolve in order to overcome his political difficulties. Shaw’s despair and pessimism over the future of the human race led him to write to Sidney Webb shortly after the Japanese surrender:

The war and the atomic bomb have produced a situation which is far beyond the political capacity not only of our new rulers but of mankind. I seriously think that unless the term of the human prime of life can be extended to 300 years, and political careers begin instead of ending at our age, which is biologically possible, we shall be superse[ded] by some superFabian species capable of behaving decently. (*Letters*, IV, 757)⁶⁶

Shaw’s last two evolutionary plays hold out little hope for the human race. Mankind will change only under the pressure of extraordinary events, the last judgment—in the case of *The Simpleton*—or a global war that threatens mass extermination—in the case of *Farfetched Fables*. The only hope is that these events will spur mankind to will to change, to evolve and to become that “superFabian species capable of behaving decently.”

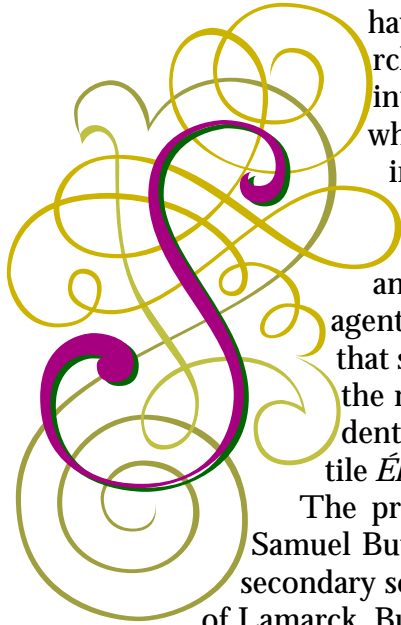
⁶⁵ George Bernard Shaw, *Everybody’s Political What’s What?* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1945) 309–321.

⁶⁶ See also Henderson, 389.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Shaw and the Biologists



Shaw uses Lamarck as a counter to Darwin and finds in Lamarck a voluntarist who believes that animals will evolve. This interpretation of Lamarck is a fairly common one, but one which David Hull and Loren Eiseley have shown to be a misinterpretation of Lamarck. Neither Lamarck nor Darwin held that animals willed to change. The misinterpretation comes about in part because of the use of personification and metaphor. These things make “Nature” appear to be an agent that performs actions and suggests a unified personality that stands behind natural laws. Where a biologist may see only the mutation of a gene, the image may suggest some transcendent force. Another source of misinterpretation is Cuvier’s hostile *Éloge* of Lamarck, in which he caricatures Lamarck’s doctrine. The primary source of Shaw’s information about Lamarck was Samuel Butler. Butler’s earliest comments on Lamarck derived from secondary sources and colored his later reading of the French editions of Lamarck. Butler may have used Lamarck as a means of getting at Darwin because of the strain in their personal relations, but that topic, though interesting, is not relevant. Butler’s doctrines and arguments were absorbed by Shaw and were utilized in forming his Vitalist religion.

It is also through Butler and Butler’s arguments that we find Shaw advocating the idea that animals and plants can will. The influence of Butler also shows up in parts of the dramas; Arjillax, in part five of *Back to Methuselah*, echoes Butler when he says:

The statue comes to life always. The statues of today are the men and women of the next incubation. I hold up the marble figure before the mother and say, “This is the model you must copy.” We produce what we see. Let no man dare to create in art a thing that he would not have exist in life. (II, 254–55)

This derives from the narrator’s comments on Charlotte’s visit to the Royal Academy in *The Way of All Flesh*.

Shaw and the Philosophers

Shaw had proclaimed himself a disciple of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and he has usually been taken at his word. His acquaintance with the work of Schopenhauer appears to have been real. He accepts the idea of a transcendental force that creates the world, but where Schopenhauer saw the necessity for escaping from the world of representation by ascetic or artistic practices, Shaw sees the possibility of embracing the world and reforming it. This leads him to reject Schopenhauer’s pessimism while apparently affirming his metaphysics, the division of the world into will and representation. Shaw accepts the division, but he contends that it is a variation on one of a number of themes, e.g., faith versus

works, or original sin versus divine grace. This assimilation of Schopenhauer into a framework of previous doctrine generates a major problem in Shavian philosophy: he saw identity where only similarity may exist. The refusal to discriminate and the need to reduce disparate doctrines to a watered down identity are constant themes in Shaw's writings and lead to what are at times absurd utterances.

Shaw's acquaintance with Nietzsche has been shown to be minimal at best. His early review of Nietzsche, mentioned at the end of Chapter One, can be described charitably as the work of a man who has not bothered to read the book, or if he has read it, has not understood it. His idea of the Superman is that of a biological phenomenon, which is not Nietzsche's idea of the *Übermensch*. Shaw's Superman will enforce a revaluation of ethics that will apparently include a disposal of property and marriage. Nietzsche's revaluation of all values is a critique of ethics more than it is a reconstruction of new ethical formulae. Shaw accepts Socialism; Nietzsche rejects it. Shaw's critique of Christian ethics has more in common with his description of Stuart-Glennie's racial and class struggle than it does with Nietzsche's distinctions of slave and noble morality.

Shaw contends that he could not have known Nietzsche before writing *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* because of the lack of English translations. (He does not mention that he had read Marx in French. If he could read *Das Kapital* in French, he could have read Nietzsche in the French translations, which came out before England was even aware of Nietzsche.) He is ultimately driven to confess that his knowledge of Nietzsche is negligible and that he does not know German. Any influence that Nietzsche exerted on Shaw may have come through secondary sources, writings *about* Nietzsche, including those by Nietzsche's sister.

Shaw does show some understanding of the doctrine of the will to power. In the preface to *Back to Methuselah* he equates it with self-control. To Nietzsche it was a form of self-overcoming and involved looking into one's self and overcoming the baseness that dwelt there. In a personal sense it may mean overcoming a fear of falling, or the kind of panic that overtakes a novice scuba diver when his mask suddenly fills with water. This is distinct from self-control, unless one takes that term as meaning the ability to control one's fear and panic. Shaw's use of the term seems to mean the ability to control the appetites, another aspect of Nietzsche's belief in the will to power.

Shaw's debt to Nietzsche lies primarily in the word Superman, which he appropriated from the German *Übermensch*. Shaw's ultimate debt to Nietzsche is in this word *Übermensch*; in the other realms that Nietzsche dealt with, there is little, outside of their Lamarckism, that Shaw and Nietzsche have in common.