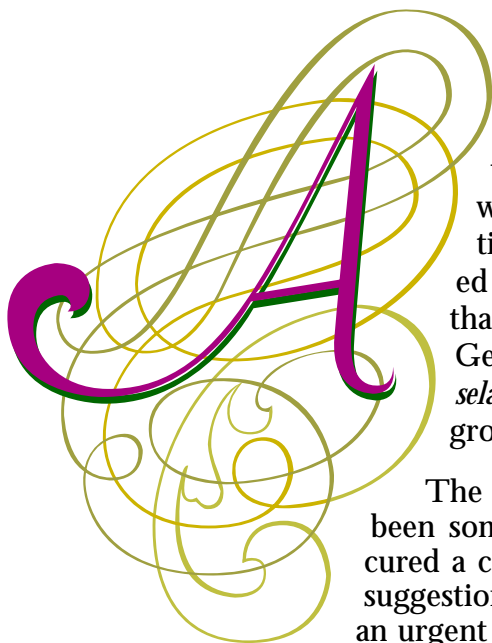


## Introduction

### The Role of Will in Two Evolutionary Plays by Bernard Shaw

#### Shaw, Will and Evolution: The Problem



August Weismann conducted an experiment in which he attempted to prove whether or not acquired characteristics were inheritable. Weismann's experiment involved the amputation of the tails of mice. The tailless mice were then bred to see if their descendants would have tails. The mice in the succeeding generation that had tails (all of them) had their tails amputated and were bred again. Eventually Weismann concluded that acquired characteristics could not be inherited. George Bernard Shaw, in the Preface to *Back to Methuselah*, criticizes Weismann's experiment on these grounds:

The scientific form of his experiment would have been something like this. First, he should have procured a colony of mice highly susceptible to hypnotic suggestion. He should then have hypnotized them into an urgent conviction that the fate of the musque world depended on the disappearance of its tail, just as some ancient and forgotten experimenter seems to have convinced the cats of the Isle of Man. Having thus made the mice desire to lose their tails with a life-or-death intensity, he would very soon have seen a few mice born with little or no tail. These would be recognized by the other mice as superior beings, and privileged in the division of food and in sexual selection. Ultimately the tailed mice would be put to death as monsters by their fellows, and the miracle of the tailless mouse completely achieved.<sup>1</sup>

This is just one instance of Shaw's emphasis on a will behind evolution. Other instances, such as "The will to do anything can and does, at a certain pitch of intensity set up by conviction of its necessity, create and organize new tissue to do it with," can be found scattered throughout the preface and throughout other Shawian writings (II, xviii).<sup>2</sup>

Shaw's emphasis on will may strike us as strange now. In the wake of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and Schrodinger's *Gedankenexperiment* (thought-experiment) with his unfortunate, even though imaginary, cat, the idea that we can have no causal explanation for events at a certain level of existence is commonly accepted. Just as we have no causal explanation for the emission of an alpha particle from a particular atom of uranium, there may be no causal explanation for the mutation of a particular gene.

Shaw links his version of creative evolution not with Bergson's philosophy but with Lamarck's theory of evolution.<sup>3</sup> His comment on the Neo-Lamarckians shows what he considers to be the hallmark of Lamarck's theories:

<sup>1</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *Complete Plays with Prefaces*, vol. II, (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1962) lii. All subsequent references are to this edition and are cited by volume and page in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Notably *Man and Superman*.

Lamarck, whilst making many ingenious suggestions as to the reaction of external causes on life and habit, such as changes of climate, food supply, geological upheavals and so forth, really held as his fundamental proposition that living organisms changed because *they wanted to*. [Italics mine.] As he stated it, the great factor in Evolution is use and disuse. (II, xxii)

Shaw identifies the desire or will to change, to acquire habits, with Lamarck. But is this really the case? To what extent does Lamarck believe in the will as a determining factor in evolution, and if Shaw misstates Lamarck's fundamental proposition, then where did Shaw get the idea that it is possible to will to acquire certain characteristics? How important is the idea of will in Shaw's evolutionary plays, particularly *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah*, and how is it instantiated in these dramatic texts? If the evolutionary idea does not come directly from Lamarck, where else could it come from? These questions are central to understanding the origin of Shaw's ideas on evolution and the way that he uses them in his dramatic and expository prose.

### Possible Sources

Shaw, despite leaving school at fifteen, acquired a substantial education at the British Museum. Shaw's course of study at this institution has been briefly described by Michael Holroyd:

It became his club, his university, a refuge, and the centre of his life for almost a decade.... He worked here daily for some eight years, applying for more than three hundred books each year, advancing through the entire *Encyclopedia Britannica* (though skirting some of the scientific articles), conquering Himalayas of medical and municipal statistics for future articles, lectures and letters to the press, adding to his musical knowledge by the study of treatises and works on elocution, and completing his long literary apprenticeship.<sup>4</sup>

This may not by itself suggest great erudition, but it does suggest the possibility that Shaw acquired some familiarity with a wide number of authors. So too does the well-known story of William Archer meeting Shaw at British Museum while Shaw was pondering a French translation of Marx's *Capital* and the score of *Tristan und Isolde*.<sup>5</sup> Since this is the case, who are some of the authors that constitute possible sources for this idea of will that is present in the Shavian metabiological drama and in other plays as well?

There are several authors who could have influenced Shaw. One of the most obvious is Bergson, but his major book on evolution, *Creative Evolution*, was published in 1907. This is four years after *Man and Superman*, and so it came out too late to have been an influence on that play. Shaw's ideas on the importance of will had already been formulated

<sup>3</sup> An examination of the *Concordance to the Plays and Prefaces of Bernard Shaw* conducted in 1972 yielded five references to Bergson in the prefaces. These are *Androcles and the Lion* (V, 381–82, 475), *Heartbreak House* (I, 451, 455) and *Geneva* (V, 646). Additional references can be found in *Sixteen Self-Sketches* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1949) 125, 126, 160, and in Warren Sylvester Smith, ed., *The Religious Speeches of Bernard Shaw* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1963) 77. The relation of Bergson to Shaw was previously discussed by the present author in "Varieties of Evolutionary Doctrine in the Plays of Bernard Shaw," thesis, George Washington University, 1973, 94–120. Bergson was a critic of Neo-Lamarckism but will not be dealt with at length here.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Holroyd, *The Search for Love 1856–1898*, (New York: Random House, 1988) 84, vol. 2 of *Bernard Shaw*. All subsequent references to Holroyd's work are cited by volume and page in the text.

<sup>5</sup> See Holroyd (I, 134–5).

prior to *Man and Superman*, so that the Bergsonian aspect of his thought can be dismissed for the present. It is possible that Lamarck could have held the ideas that Shaw claims and that he was a direct influence on him.

Darwin's theory of evolution supplanted that of Lamarck, and it is possible Darwin exerted a negative influence on Shaw. Darwin could represent something that Shaw reacted against, for whatever reason, intellectual or emotional, and Lamarck could be a kind of marker, or counter representing what Shaw was for. It is possible, in other words, that Shaw could have been pro-evolution but anti-Darwin and that he identified this position with the Lamarckian or Neo-Lamarckian position as he understood it.

Some philosophers are identified with doctrines concerning the will. Shaw, in a well-known sentence from the preface to *Man and Superman* lists "The writers whose peculiar sense of the world I recognize as more or less akin to my own" (III, 507). Among the dozen people that he mentions are Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Both of these are known as philosophers who wrote extensively on the will, and Nietzsche is specifically mentioned in the *Don Juan in Hell* episode of *Man and Superman* (III, 648–9). Schopenhauer is mentioned even earlier, although not as dramatically, in the Preface to *Three Plays for Puritans* (written in 1900). Shaw complains that he taught his critics the little philosophy that they know in his *Quintessence of Ibsenism* (published in 1892) and castigates them in these terms:

Ingrates: who was it that directed your attention to the distinction between Will and Intellect? Not Schopenhauer, I think, but Shaw. (III, xlvi)

Another possible source for Shaw's evolutionary ideas and their emphasis on the will is Samuel Butler. References to Butler are scattered throughout the Preface to *Back to Methuselah* and throughout other plays.<sup>6</sup> Butler's novel *Erewhon* incorporates pro-Darwinian material. His later work, however, especially his books on evolution, *Evolution, Old and New; Life and Habit; Luck, or Cunning; and Unconscious Memory* as well as his posthumously published novel *The Way of All Flesh*, show a shift to an anti-Darwinian position.

Four of these authors could then be possible intellectual sources for Shaw's association of will and purpose. The fifth, Darwin, can be taken as representing theory and thought that Shaw was reacting to in forming his conception of evolution. Darwin, because of his dominance and widespread acceptance, could be taken as a thesis, and Lamarck, Schopenhauer, et al. as the antithesis in a Shavian dialectical triad.<sup>7</sup>

## Previous Critics

The critical response to Shaw's evolutionary dramas and philosophy has been as diverse as his readership. D. R. Oldroyd refers to Don Juan's speech, in *Man and Superman*, beginning "And I, my friend, am as much a part of Nature as my own finger is a part of me" as "an uncomfortable amalgam of Lamarck, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Hegel" (III, 645–46).<sup>8</sup> Shaw's description of how Darwinism washed away social self-righteousness is described by him as "largely a misrepresentation of Darwinian theory."<sup>9</sup> David Daiches

<sup>6</sup> References to Butler can be found in the following places: Preface to *Back to Methuselah* (II, xiv, li, lxxii) "Postscript After Twentyfive Years" (II, cv), Preface to *Androcles and the Lion* (V, 381-2), Preface to *Heartbreak House* (I, 449, 451, 455), and the Preface to *Geneva* (V, 646). This list is not exhaustive. The dates of the material cited here span the period 1914–45.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Holroyd in *The Pursuit of Power 1898–1918* (New York: Random House, 1989), vol 2 of *Bernard Shaw* explores the presence of triadic formations in some of Shaw's plays, notably *John Bull's Other Island* (II, 84–90).

has also recognized that Shaw “rejected Darwin and accepted Lamarck and Butler,” but has not pursued the question of Shaw’s evolutionary plays to any great depth.<sup>10</sup> Dwight Culler dissents from these critics to some extent by seeing the intellectual content of *Man and Superman* as being Lamarckian but within a Darwinian comic structure.<sup>11</sup> Culler has also noted that Shaw “inherited his philosophy of Creative Evolution from Butler,” and that both Shaw and Butler had reintroduced teleology.<sup>12</sup> Frank Miller Turner has grouped Shaw with Spencer, Pierce, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Freud as having “as many or more traces of Lamarckian ideas as of Darwinian traits.”<sup>13</sup> Miller follows this by asserting that “voluntarists and twentieth-century existentialists hold an essentially Lamarckian position.”<sup>14</sup> Bernard F. Dukore concentrates on Shaw’s drama as a platform for discussion, and has described *Back to Methuselah* as being primarily a discussion. He asserts that in this play Shaw “does without or nearly without . . . plot and character.”<sup>15</sup>

Critics who have discussed Shaw’s philosophical predecessors have tended to see the influence of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in his writings. Georg Roppen contends that Shaw uses Schopenhauer’s concept of the will and Nietzsche’s concept of the Superman.<sup>16</sup> He modifies this several pages later by describing Shaw’s knowledge of Schopenhauer as “vague and general.”<sup>17</sup> Roppen notes that Shaw felt the need to defend teleology “against the demon of fatalism.” He shares this recognition, as noted, with Dwight Culler.<sup>18</sup> In discussing *Man and Superman* he says that Tanner is a clown and indicates that the recognition of this fact must color our interpretation of the questions raised by Tanner’s putative pamphlet.<sup>19</sup> In the play that Shaw regarded as his masterpiece, *Back to Methuselah*, Roppen finds the influence of Samuel Butler and says that Shaw “has learned a great deal, both in technique and argument, from Butler’s *Evolution Old and New*.”<sup>20</sup>

One of the more interesting approaches to Shaw’s evolutionary philosophy is Daniel J. Leary’s article on “The Evolutionary Dialectic of Shaw and Teilhard: A Perennial Philosophy.” Leary discusses Shaw in relation to the evolutionary theories of Teilhard de Chardin. The Shavian evolutionary philosophy is described as “evolutionary Pantheism with Manichean and Pelagian tendencies.”<sup>21</sup> Leary says that “This evolutionary dialectic subsumes [sic] a working knowledge on Shaw’s part of the writings of Bergson, Schopen-<sup>8</sup> D. R. Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts: An Introduction to the Darwinian Revolution* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1983) 235.

<sup>9</sup> Shaw’s passage is the one beginning “Now Darwinism made a clean sweep of all such self-righteousness” (II, lx–lxi). Oldroyd’s comment can be found on 326 of *Darwinian Impacts*.

<sup>10</sup> David Daiches, “Literature and Science in Nineteenth-Century England,” *The Modern World*, 1972, Vol 5 of *Literature and Western Civilization*, ed. David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby, (London: Aldus, 1972–76) 453.

<sup>11</sup> Dwight Culler, “The Darwinian Revolution and Literary Form,” *The Art of Victorian Prose*, ed. George Levine and William Madden, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968) 236.

<sup>12</sup> Culler, 236.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Miller Turner, *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973) 191.

<sup>14</sup> Miller, 191.

<sup>15</sup> Bernard F. Dukore, *Bernard Shaw, Playwright: Aspects of Shavian Drama*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973) 110.

<sup>16</sup> Georg Roppen, *Evolution and Poetic Belief: A Study in Some Victorian and Modern Writers*, (Oslo: Oslo University Press, 1956) 352.

<sup>17</sup> Roppen, 354.

<sup>18</sup> Roppen, 358.

<sup>19</sup> Roppen, 362.

<sup>20</sup> Roppen, 369.

<sup>21</sup> *Shaw Review* 9 (1966): 15.

hauer, Hegel, Marx, Lamarck, and Nietzsche.”<sup>22</sup> This assumption on Leary’s part assumes a great deal. Shaw makes little or no mention of Hegel and may never have read him. Shaw’s mentions of Marx are also relatively infrequent, although again he may have been exposed to Marx through a medium such as the Fabian Summer School. Leary does, in connection with Marx, make the point that “In the Marxian dialectic, matter with its concomitant evils shared the ambivalent role that matter holds in Shaw’s and Teilhard’s theories of evolutionary emergence.”<sup>23</sup> This is interesting for the possible light it may shed on Lilith’s speech in *Back to Methuselah*, in which she describes matter and life as binary opposites. Since Shaw makes no pretence of being a Marxist, or a dialectical materialist, it seems best to avoid an enquiry that is not related to our main topic. Leary sees Shaw as using the Schopenhauerian concept of the will. He contends that Schopenhauer’s will, despite its “endless striving,” is essentially purposeless, whereas Shaw’s Life Force is purposeful.<sup>24</sup>

Critics that have dealt with Shaw’s relation to his predecessors have sometimes seen Shaw’s philosophy as a pastiche. Eric Bentley quotes a description by Max Beer of the process that leads to the evolution of hero worship in the Social Democrats. Beer, a Marxist, suggests a Social Democratic phase, followed by an Ibsenite period and then by an infatuation with Nietzsche, a process that parallels Shaw’s intellectual evolution.<sup>25</sup>

More explicitly, a description of this concept is the Max Beerbohm cartoon described by both Reinhold Grimm and Michael Holroyd that shows Shaw bringing a tailor a suit made up of patches from various philosophers, including Nietzsche. Grimm and Holroyd accept Nietzsche’s influence on Shaw. The principal dissenter from this categorization of Shaw as a Nietzschean is David Thatcher, whose *Nietzsche in England* gives an extensive discussion of Shaw and Nietzsche. Thatcher finds that Shaw is not well acquainted with Nietzsche.

The most extensive piece to deal with Shaw’s intellectual forbears is Carl Mills’s dissertation on the intellectual background of *Man and Superman*.<sup>26</sup> Mills deals solely with *Man and Superman*, and his interests diverge considerably from those that form the topic of this dissertation. Mills’ concern with Schopenhauer and Shaw, for instance, is with the process of sexual attraction described by Schopenhauer in one of his essays. The principal point of interest of the present discussion of Schopenhauer is his doctrine of the will and how that is present or not present in the views that either Schopenhauer or Shaw expressed about evolution. Further, the sole text considered in the present instance is Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Idea*. Mills dismisses the Nietzschean *Übermensch* as a version of Carlyle’s hero. Nietzsche himself dismisses this idea with an expression of contempt, and there seems no valid reason to dissent from Nietzsche’s views. The three writers that deal with evolution (Lamarck, Darwin, and Butler) are dealt with either in a summary fashion (Lamarck), or not at all (Darwin and Butler).

Except for Mills critics have largely neglected Shaw’s relationship to Lamarck, or have tacitly acquiesced in the idea that Shaw is presenting a correct reading of Lamarck as a voluntarist. This reading of Lamarck, though it is extremely popular, is not necessarily cor-

<sup>22</sup> Leary, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Leary, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Leary, 19, 20.

<sup>25</sup> Eric Bentley, *Bernard Shaw* (New York: New Directions, 1957)14–15.

<sup>26</sup> Carl Henry Mills, “The Intellectual and Literary Background of George Bernard Shaw’s *Man and Superman*,” diss., University of Nebraska, 1965.

rect, and it is possible that a voluntarist reading of Lamarck, such as Shaw's, is actually a misreading.<sup>27</sup> If the voluntarist reading is a misinterpretation of Lamarck, it is still necessary to trace the possible reasons for this misinterpretation. The search for the possible source of Shaw's misreading of Lamarck has not been done before now, and the present study attempts to remedy this neglect by showing how Shaw could have derived his understanding of Lamarck through secondary sources.

Due to the limitations of Mills's study, i.e., its concern with *Man and Superman* and the relations between the sexes, it seems advisable to concentrate on Schopenhauer's views on the will and evolution and their relation to Shavian philosophy. The recent bibliography of literature on Shaw and Nietzsche is somewhat larger. Between 1966 and February 1991 ten articles or books discussing Shaw and Nietzsche have appeared. Some of these, such as Reinhold Grimm's essay "Shaw and Supershaw: Shavian Nietzscheanism Reconsidered" have appeared in journals (*Studi Germanici*) that are not generally available in the United States. Others, such as Marc Poitou's essay *Du pelerin de Bunyan au surhomme de Nietzsche: La Curieuse Genealogie du heros shavien* are not relevant to our concerns. For this reason alone it seems worthwhile to take a fresh look at Nietzsche and his reputed influence on Shaw.

Daiches and Culler have noted Shaw's relationship to Butler, but have left unexplored the exact nature of his debt to his predecessor. Georg Roppen has also seen traces of Butlerian argument in the preface to *Back to Methuselah*, but has failed to detail Shaw's debt to Butler and whether Butler may have also colored Shaw's reading of Lamarck.

This study will focus on Shaw's relation to these four men and to Darwin. The critics already cited who have mentioned Darwin and Shaw, including Culler, have noted that Shaw dissented from Darwin's implicitly anti-teleological stance. Culler's position is that Darwinism is reflected in the structure of *Man and Superman*. He finds Darwinism in the comic peripeteia that affects the structure of the play. His idea is interesting, but more relevant to our concerns is Darwin's use of language and the way in which he appears to slip into a "Lamarckian" position that appears to attribute agency to animals and to nature.

## Limitations

This study necessarily emphasizes the intellectual aspects of Shaw's work, and yet despite his frequent claims that his plays were intended to be didactic, he did not write in an emotional vacuum.<sup>28</sup> His characters have passions, even if they are mathematical passions, as in *Buoyant Billions*.<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil* states as one of his tenets that:

Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir; also that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constituted the real germ of life from which the whole plant had grown. (*Beyond*, 6)<sup>30</sup>

Eric Bentley put the Shavian position on passion and intellect well in his book on Shaw:

<sup>27</sup> Critics such as Oldroyd, Loren Eiseley and David Hull deny the voluntarist reading of Lamarck.

<sup>28</sup> For example, his claim that *Pygmalion* is about phonetics (I, 194). It is not about phonetics; it is a romance or fairy-tale with a phonetician as a love interest. It is the fairy-tale aspect that enabled it to be transformed into *My Fair Lady*.

<sup>29</sup> See I, 803.

He destroys the antithesis of intellect and emotion by declaring that “thought is a passion.” This is not mere logomachy. Shaw is saying that man is a creature of his passions but that the passions are many and various. There are refined passions like chastity and low passions like lust. There are intellectual passions like that for art and there are physical passions like that for gymnastics. The business of living consists not in the suppression of passions by something else—which in practice often means the conquest of harmless passions by ugly ones—but the training and sorting out of all passions, harmless, ugly, intellectual, or physical. “It is not emotion in the raw but as evolved and fixed as intellectual conviction that will save the world.” We must take comfort from the fact that human nature gives rise to altruism as well as selfishness, to conscience as well as cruelty. The hope of the race is that the passions of generosity, restraint, and goodness may prove as strong as those of egoism, aggression, and cruelty. “It is quite useless,” Shaw says, “to believe that men are born free if you deny that they are born good.” Conversely, if the passions were uniformly as bad as their reputation the world would be lost.<sup>31</sup>

John G. Demeray referred to the cosmology of *Back to Methuselah* as being “exactly patterned after Shaw’s psychological needs.”<sup>32</sup> These needs arose out of Shaw’s familial and sexual relationships and have been described by Demeray and Holroyd among others.

These psychological factors are more important in determining *why* Shaw believed what he did than are any intellectual factors, but for an analysis of these factors to be truly useful the material to be used should be as close to a *viva voce* encounter as possible. An analysis that concentrates on predominantly expository prose will not find the symbolic material of dreams, allegory, and so forth to be available to it that are available in an analytic encounter. Even if we accept the premise that Freud employed in his study of *Gradi-va*, that the literary text represents a dream fulfillment, we are still faced with the problem that the material does not appear in a spontaneous and uncensored form but has been shaped by a process of revision and editing.<sup>33</sup> This process will distort our results so that any psychological speculations are precisely that and may be of minimal usefulness. This study is therefore limited to what is perhaps the most easily reducible aspect of Shavian canon and neglects what is possibly the most important aspect of these two plays, their relation to the Shavian psyche. It is more fruitful to concentrate on the question of intellec-

<sup>30</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: The Modern Library, 1968) 203. Hereafter cited as “Nietzsche, *Basic*.” This volume contains *The Birth of Tragedy, Beyond Good and Evil, On the Genealogy of Morals, The Case of Wagner*, and *Ecce Homo*. To facilitate reference across editions and translations of Nietzsche’s works all subsequent references will have a short title and aphorism number cited in the text and a page reference to the particular translation in the form of a footnote. Kaufmann’s translations of Nietzsche began in the 1950’s and have been published in two collections, the *Basic Writings*, cited above, and *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Viking, 1954). Hereafter cited as “Nietzsche, *Portable*.” This volume includes the complete texts of *Thus Spake Zarathustra, The Twilight of the Idols, The Antichrist*, and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*. The latter volume was responsible for the postwar restoration of interest in Nietzsche, and the texts are standard translations. Kaufmann’s translations have also been published as individual volumes. Since there should be no difference between Kaufmann’s translation of *Zarathustra*, for example, whether it is printed as a separate volume or as part of an anthology, I have used the anthology to facilitate reference for the reader who wishes to consult the translations.

<sup>31</sup> Bentley, 49-50

<sup>32</sup> John G. Demeray, “Bernard Shaw and C. E. M. Joad: The Adventures of Two Puritans in Their Search for God,” *PMLA* 78 (1963) 267

<sup>33</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Delusion and Dream and Other Essays*, ed. Philip Rieff (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1956) 25, 27.

tual descent and the problem of textual incorporation of this intellectual material on the level of language than to engage in this psychological kind of speculation.

In tracing the influence of an author or authors on another it may be useful to distinguish between two kinds of knowledge; first, knowledge that comes from a direct encounter with the author through reading his writings; second, knowledge that comes about through an indirect means, through reading about an author in reviews, essays, and so on. The second kind of knowledge may account for an author's reputation or legend, and may be important, but it is secondary to any attempt to account for a direct relationship between author and reader. The question at issue here is not Shaw's knowledge from indirect sources, his *reading about*, but his knowledge from a direct encounter with his predecessors, his *reading of* them.

### The Question of Shaw's Knowledge

Shaw, as we have already seen, read voluminously for a time, but even the most avid reader cannot be expected to have read everything. The English writers, Darwin and Butler, were contemporaries of Shaw and published in English, so there is no inherent difficulty in assuming that Shaw knew, or could have known, the writings of each of these men. The implication of Shaw's description of his conversation with his rich and dogmatic uncle in the preface to *Back to Methuselah* is that Shaw was acquainted with Darwin's works by the 1870's (II, ix).

Samuel Butler's work spans the period from the 1870's to 1902 and is contemporary with Shaw's intellectual development into a Fabian Socialist. Michael Holroyd notes that Shaw reviewed *Luck, or Cunning* in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (Love, 212). This, by itself, is not necessarily proof that Shaw was intimately familiar with Butler's work, but it does indicate that Shaw was at least familiar with Butler. Shaw was, in fact, on social terms with Butler, and paid him at least one visit.<sup>34</sup>

Shaw's knowledge of the French and German authors is more problematic. Books published in foreign languages are not necessarily available to an international audience immediately. Even if one can read the given work in the original language, there may still be a problem in obtaining the book. Shaw evidently knew French well enough to read an economic treatise (*Das Kapital*) in that language, but his knowledge of German seems to be more problematic. This in itself presents no great difficulty except that in dealing with the question of Nietzsche's influence on Shaw there is a large period of time intervening between Nietzsche's publication in German and his translation into English. If Shaw knew Nietzsche through English translation, this greatly limits the number of works that he could have known before writing *Man and Superman*.

The problem of Shaw's knowledge can be summarized briefly. Shaw knew Darwin's works by his teens, as shown by his prefatory statement in *Back to Methuselah*. He knew Butler's work by the 1880's, when he reviewed *Luck, or Cunning*. His knowledge of Lamarck may have been first hand, through reading Lamarck in the original, or it may have come from secondary sources, such as Butler. His knowledge of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche may depend on his knowledge of German and the relative dates of exposure to

<sup>34</sup> Butler records his "dissatisfaction" with Shaw in a notebook entry dated 2 January 1897. *Samuel Butler's Notebooks: Selection*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes and Brian Hill (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951) 45-6. Also Reprinted in *Shaw: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. A. M. Gibbs (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991) 273-4.



these philosophers. If Shaw knew little or no German, then his exposure is largely dependent upon the dates of English translations of these philosophers.

### **The Philosophers, Evolution, and Shaw**

Lamarck, Darwin, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Butler all deal with the will in some way, and all of them have something to say about the will's relation to the world. The problems each of them raises are all somewhat different. In Lamarck the chief question that concerns us is an interpretation of the doctrine of acquired characteristics. Does this doctrine involve the will, or any sort of purpose in evolution? In Darwin the problem is not acquired characteristics but the absence of purpose in evolution. Darwin has produced an account of nature that does not leave room for teleology. Schopenhauer raises the will to a metaphysical concept, and here the problem is the relation of the will to the objective world. Nietzsche raises many questions that pertain to Shaw. These include the question of the nature of the Superman, the ethical valuations that are made by the Superman, and the nature of the will to power. Butler's work is replete with paradoxes and witticisms that are not that far from the Shavian spirit, but the question of concern here is with Butler's views on evolution and how he views Lamarck and the will in evolution.

The problems raised by Darwin and Lamarck extend into the realm of language. Both Darwin and Lamarck deal with the realm of biology, and biology is not one of the sciences that can express its problems with mathematical formulae. The language of biology is the language of everyday use, and inherent in everyday usage is the play of denotation, connotation, and imagery. This means that the word, or statement, is subject to misreading and misinterpretation, at least as regards the author's intentions. It also means that it is possible for a scientist to say, "Nature does this," and for the non-scientific reader to infer that nature is a personalized entity. This problem is crucial to understanding how a voluntarist reading of either Lamarck or Darwin is possible.

The work of Darwin undermined popular teleological conceptions. The substitution of natural selection and evolution for eternally static species denied purpose in the universe. The teleological problem is also a psychological problem. If my life has no purpose, why should I continue to live, why should I continue to be conventionally moral? These problems, once recognized as problems, plagued both Butler and Shaw and were important determinants in their work.

Shaw's identification of himself as a partisan of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche raises the question of interpretation, or reading, again. The question is different from the question of Shaw's knowledge of each author and reaches into the realm of understanding. Did Shaw actually understand what Schopenhauer and Nietzsche meant? To arrive at some conclusion about this it is necessary to arrive at some sense of a correct reading of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Correct, in this instance, meaning one that is in accord with the author's intentions. This can then be juxtaposed with Shaw's interpretation of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and the results can then be used to determine whether the putative influence of these authors extends as far as has been supposed.

Butler's work is less problematic than that of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and the question of Shaw's interpretation of Butler is less urgent. The nature of Butler's work is that of an intelligent layman who is speculating in realms where he has little or no formal training, i.e., biology and philosophy. In this respect he is much like Shaw, and there is less of a problem in understanding how Shaw read Butler and used him in his work.

## The Modern Inheritance

The problem raised by Darwin, and the psychological and religious response to Darwin's abolition of teleology did not die with Shaw in November of 1950. The negative psychological reaction can be seen in events as notorious as the Scopes "Monkey trial" of 1927, or in the frequent demand that special creation be taught alongside evolution in the public schools. The question of purpose and of man's relationship to God can be seen in books written for the lay audience by scientists such as Stephen Weinstein, Robert Jastrow, Stephen Hawking, and Paul Davies. Weinstein's *The First Three Minutes* accepts the idea that the universe is purposeless. Jastrow in his books deals with the problems of the beginning of the cosmos and the evolution of life. Hawking has described his enterprise as being an attempt to know the mind of God. Paul Davies' *The Mind of God* is an attempt to arrive at some understanding of the implications of science for philosophy.

More directly in tune with some of the concerns raised by Butler is the question of the nature of artificial intelligence. Butler's ascription of consciousness to vegetables and cellular life forms is not without its modern heirs in the realms of popular culture and serious science. The work of people such as Stanley Kubrick, George Lucas, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert A. Heinlein, James Hogan and others in the realms of film and science fiction deals with the issues raised by Butler. Can consciousness exist in non-biological systems? What is the nature of that consciousness, and does it duplicate human consciousness, or is it something else? The work done at universities such as MIT, and at corporations such as UNISYS, on artificial intelligence and expert systems is in a sense an attempt to elevate machines to a kind of consciousness and awareness. This work is in many respects an attempt to deal with the questions that Butler raised with respect to Darwinism and evolution. Even a recent book such as Roger Penrose's *The Emperor's New Mind*, which affirms that we cannot understand consciousness until we understand quantum mechanics and quantum gravity better, is dealing with the same issue, non-biological intelligence and consciousness, that Butler raised in the 1870's.

The issues that Shaw raises through his reading of Darwin, Lamarck, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Butler are still present and still current. The modern heirs of these men may or may not realize their indebtedness, but the issues of evolution, teleology, and consciousness are still pertinent.